

Transcription of Interview with Dr. Daniel Wren, University of Oklahoma

STOCK: Good morning (afternoon). My name is James Stock, a professor of Marketing and Logistics at the University of South Florida. We are here today to conduct an interview with one of the luminaries in the academic discipline of Management. The purposes of this interview are several. First and perhaps foremost is to get to know the personal side of one of the leading Management academicians; a person who has had significant influence on their profession. We often read the person's books and journal articles, listen to their presentations at academic and/or professional meetings, and sometimes even have individual discussions with them at various events and venues. However, we rarely get to "know" the person beyond the professional aspects of their careers.

In the field of literature and art for example, researchers often consider the "what, why, how, who, and when" of a particular book or painting, short story, poem, and so on. They speculate on what might have motivated the writer or artist to write the book or paint the painting, to determine the message or story of the text or the art, and the writer or the artist perception of the contributions of their work. In the same way, through this and other interviews that will be conducted of leading business scholars, as Paul Harvey so often has expressed, we will attempt to get "the rest of the story!"

These videotaped interviews will hopefully serve as supporting material for various university courses where the various works of these academicians may be discussed. They will be of significant impact in courses where history and theory are being examined, since these individuals contributed extensively to that history and theory.

Each interview is based on a set of structured questions using an interview guide. Of course, the interviewee's responses are spontaneous and they may lead into other questions related to those responses. However, the general format for both this and other interviews that will be conducted in the future will be similar.

It is hoped that audiences who view these interviews will get a broader and richer view of the people and events that have shaped their disciplines. We hope that you learn from what will be said and discussed during these interviews and be able to more fully appreciate and understand the significant contributions made by these luminaries in the field.

Let's begin by introducing our distinguished guest.

STOCK: Dr. Daniel Wren is presently Dean Emeritus, Fred E. Brown Chair Emeritus, and David Ross Boyd Professor at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma. He graduated from the University of Missouri with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial and Personnel Management, obtained a Master of Science in Management, also from the University of Missouri, and received his Ph.D. in Business from the University of Illinois. He assumed his first academic position as Assistant Professor at Florida State University in 1963 and received promotions to Associate and Full Professor during his tenure there. From 1973 until the present time, Dan has held various positions at the University of Oklahoma. Between 1975 and 1977 he was Director of the Division of Management and from 1994 to 1999 Dan was the McCasland Foundation Professor of American Free Enterprise. He has been the Curator of the Harry W. Bass Business History Collection since 1973. From 1989 through 1999, he held the position of David Ross Boyd Professor of Management and in 2000 became David Ross Boyd Professor Emeritus. He was Interim Dean and Fred E. Brown Chair of the Price College of Business between 2005 and 2006.

Dan has been extremely active professionally during his career. He has been heavily involved in the Southern Management Association and the Academy of Management, holding various positions including Vice president and President, National Program Chairman, and many others. He has been involved with several academic journals such as *Business Perspectives*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management History* and *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship* as a member of the Editorial Board and reviewer. Dan has received numerous awards during his career, including membership in Phi Kappa Phi and Beta Gamma Sigma, Fellow of the Academy of Management, Academy of Management Distinguished Educator of the Year, and the Outstanding Educator Award of the Southwest Academy of Management.

He is the author of several books including the *History of Management Thought*, published by John Wiley and now in its fifth edition. Dan has written numerous journal articles on various management topics relating to history and education in the *Academy of Management*

Journal, Journal of Management, Academy of Management Review, Journal of Managerial Issues, Journal of Management History, Management Decision, and many others.

Dan is perhaps most well known for his publications and contributions in the area of management history. In the same way that Dr. Robert Bartels of Ohio State University was known as the premier marketing history academician, Dan is the management history guru! No one is more knowledgeable about the people and forces that shaped and influenced the management discipline than Dan Wren. It is our distinct pleasure to get to know the personal side of this man so that we can more fully appreciate his significant professional contributions.

Alright, what we will be doing is going to a series of questions that will ask for information relative to Dan's background as a Child, as a secondary school student, things related to his parents and growing up, college experience and at the end we will talk about some of the perceptions and issues that he views as being significant in the management discipline both in the past as well as in the future.

Early Childhood

STOCK: Dan to begin let me ask you perhaps the first question that would come to mind, when and where were you born?

WREN: Always as a beginning. 1932, January the 8th in Columbia, Missouri; although I did not live in Columbia and my parents lived south of Columbia, Missouri. My dad had a country store; it was one of those country general stores Jim, we sold everything from spools or thread and hundred pounds sacks of chicken feed so we sold everything and all our clients were farmers and that's the environment I was raised.

STOCK: So you were in the management environment almost from the beginning, was there something in your childhood that shaped your present personality and perspective on life?

WREN: I can't recall of any specific thing, the thing I always recall the most is neither my mother nor my father had ever gone into college and in fact I don't think anyone in my family had ever gone into college and they were always very supportive of me in pursuing college and **made** me ready for college. It just seemed like was a very loving and supporting environment that said we want you to succeed and we want you to do something, we don't want to run the **grocery** store for the rest of your life, it was beyond that.

STOCK: Was there a personality trait that drove you to succeed or alternatively, may be even impeded your success?

WREN: I'm not sure of any personality trait that did that. I think I always wanted to succeed but never at the expense of anyone else. If I succeeded I wanted it to be because I had done it and I took pride in it. But it wasn't something that took away from somebody else's accomplishment. I guess that's the personality trait.

STOCK: If we could interview your parents now, how would they describe you growing up?

WREN: I don't know; that would be interesting to know. All I can remember is one of my early **younger** experiences was, and **my parents** talked about it, it was a great deal. We had a cat and we lived on the highway, highway 63, and there was not a lot of traffic on the highway, but there was traffic and this cat decided to cross the road and I went after it and I wasn't very old and I got a whipping for it. So I learned to be very careful of limits in life; don't push the limits because **something** is going to bounce back on you and I'm sure that will **hurt**. **The** cat was saved.

Grade School/High School

STOCK: Did you attend secondary school or high school in that area?

WREN: We **lived** in the country, and you have to keep in mind this is all agrarian, we had a one room country school. We had all eight grades in there. We had 30/32 students and

one teacher for all 30 of us. So she would go from class to another class and with each of our assignments, we will do our assignments, then she moved on to next class. And that was education for us. It was a one room brick country school and it was not a **log** cabin, I'm not giving you an **Abe Lincoln** story. I'm just saying that was a very different environment and so many of my classmates never went to high school, maybe one that I recall went to college, it was just a different atmosphere about education that existed and so I guess that's maybe why I appreciate my parents encouraging me to do something with myself.

STOCK: What was your favorite subject to study?

WREN: Now that's an easy one, history. I always loved history and in the beginning and still. I think there are a lot of things that we can learn from what has happened. I think that was Churchill who said that "the further we can look back the further we can **look** forward" and I think he is right. If we understand what has happened, we might avoid some of the mistakes that we seem to repeat.

STOCK: So after the one room school house experience, where did you go to high school?

WREN: In Columbia, that was the only high school within driving distance, that was the closest one. And we had to pay **to get** there, was no bus, my **dad** had to pay everyday for somebody to take me to school. And since we went eight years in the elementary school, the elementary school was 1 through 8, we did not have **kindergarten**. And it was an adjustment for this country boy to go to **Columbia**. All **these** kids, the cliques that **were** formed, they all knew each other; they had gone to different **elementary** schools in Columbia and I was an outsider and I think it was difficult to adjust to go from one room country school to a high school that had probably 200 or something in my class. I'd never seen that many people all together in one place before.

STOCK: Did you engage in any sports or other activities while you were in high school?

WREN: No, I was too **short** for **basketball**, too small, never big enough for football. Did baseball, **lots** of baseball, played baseball sort of I would not even call us amateurs; I would call us country, you know. It was you lay out four things for bases, you had a pitcher and a

catcher and no one was an **umpire**; you just played ball but it was fun, it was good activity. Running, I like to run. But I was not tall enough for basketball or big enough for football. Baseball is a sport where it does not make any difference what size you are; there is a level playing field even for **shorter** people.

STOCK: Were you involved in way in student government or clubs or organizations of that kind?

WREN: I guess maybe some of the other students, some of my **colleagues**, sort of **felt that** maybe I could move into leadership **responsibilities**, but how they **knew** this I do not know. I was in Student Council and I think I did that, I was editor at the senior paper. There are just a lot of things that I did in high school that were in these group activities, they were elective positions or school plays. I did school plays; those were fun. But it was quite an experience for me. We had something that is very unique, we had a choir, it was not a singing choir, and it was a verse **speaking** choir. It was a lovely experience. It was a class **with this** teacher, I will never forget her, Helen Williams, and we would take trips and I had never been away from Columbia, Missouri until this verse **speaking** choir took us to Kansas City. Wow, that's quite a trip for a young kid you know. And we went down to into Cape **Girardeau** area, southeast Missouri, but it was fun **because** we **were able** to travel and we made presentations before the assemblies and I guess that was sort of my introduction in public appearances speaking and things like that.

STOCK: You mentioned this one teacher is that perhaps the one teacher that may have been the most influential on you in high school or there was someone else?

WREN: **Well**, she was. She was a **rare** lady. But I think my favorite was the history teacher. I still have my history book from high school and it ends with the dropping of the atomic bomb. And if you read that you would think I wonder what's going to happen next, after you read that one. And her name was Mary Anne Moore and she was just a lovely teacher and I loved the subject so she made it interesting enough for me. I know history, dreadfully **tough** for some people, but for me it always lived.

STOCK: What kind of student were you socially and academically?

WREN: I was a good student. Socially not much because I had **no free time** at the end of school, I had to arrange a ride home because we didn't have a bus and I didn't have a car. In the fifties, kids didn't drive to school from the country, you know, so to do anything after school I had to make special arrangements for transportation. But usually the activities I got involved in were in school and within the school framework, so I loved those kinds of things. But socially no, I don't think I dated. **All** I can recall was somebody **finding** a young lady to go to the senior prom with me. I think that was my first date and I am not quite sure how many times I stepped on her toes.

STOCK: While you were in high school did you receive any recognitions for achievement or grades or those kinds of things?

WREN: Yes, I think National Honors Society I guess that was the big one; I do not think we had the National Merits Scholars system then. National Honors Society and you've got for every activity and grades and certain things you got pins and they give kids stars for doing good things. So I have a bunch of those but I just sort of took them in stride. I did things because I love doing them not because someone is going to give me a gold star or anything. If I get involved into something if I love it then I give it my best if you **pat** me on the back **fine**, if you don't that's ok too. The reward is in here (touches his chest).

STOCK: Did you have a teen idol? Sometimes we think of movie stars or politicians or someone. Was there someone that you were be growing up that you looked at and said wow that's the type of person I might want to be, or there is significant in society. Anyone like that you remember?

WREN: No. Stan Musial I guess as the closest. We used to every summer our idea of getting away from the store and Dad getting out he would hire someone to take care of the business for all. We go to St. Louis but we had to wait for a doubleheader you could not drive all the way to St. Louis which is a 120 miles for a single game you had to wait for a doubleheader so every year Dad would look for some game that was going to be doubleheader and he would load me up and he get two or three other people to go and we **drove** to St. Louis and see the **C**ardinals play and that was a highlight of the summer and I

guess maybe that's why I love Stan Musial, Red Schoendienst, and Marty Marion. I just wanted to be a shortstop and that's the position I played but I was no star.

College (undergraduate and graduate)

STOCK: Moving beyond High School into College, how were you able to attend college? Did you put yourself through school, or did you do it through scholarship, or did your parents help you, or some combination of all of those?

WREN: I am not sure really that I would have gone to college if we had not lived so close to Columbia, Missouri. I can only think of one other student who was in my elementary classes who went to college. The kids, they just didn't go to college in those days but I think my parents wanted me to go to college and I thought it was a pretty good idea I do remember I got a scholarship it was to pay my semester, they paid my fees or tuition or something. And Dad took a look at that and he says, what is this? Are they going to pay you to go to school? He says there must be some poor people around, let's turn this down and let's some poor people have it. I thought maybe we were poor and we probably were, by other standards but there were a lot more who were poorer than we were. So he turned down the scholarship. So it was all financed by working in the summer, I worked on the farm of neighbors, helped with the harvest, did things like that and of course my parents they were the bread winners, fed me, housed me, paid my transportation, paid my books so that was it.

STOCK: How did you determine what subjects you will major in college?

WREN: I wanted to be a journalist, I thought I could write, teachers told me I could write, and I thought I want to be a journalist. So I started off in journalism school, you know University of Missouri has an excellent school of journalism and I thought this is it and then I found out what journalists do and how they have to chase people around to get stories and some of the things that they do and I thought no. So what I'm going to do? I don't know. What I'm going to do with my life. Dad says: "Well, he says, you know you've

got around business all of your life why don't you be in the business school". So I went to the business school. But probably I've done all the pre requisites for journalism when I **ended** up in the business school.

STOCK: How did you select management when you were in business school opposed to other majors?

WREN: I don't remember. I excelled in accounting, I was good in accounting, and I loved accounting. Finance was not that attractiveive to me; economics was ok. Liked economics, loved marketing. I don't know **but** management just seemed to have more of a people touch to it, more of a human side when you are dealing not with goods or not with money or vague kinds of economic concepts but you are dealing with people and that was just more interesting to me.

STOCK: How do you think your college experience prepared you for your later years as an academic?

WREN: Well I never had to worry about getting a job when I **graduated** **because** the **Air Force** got me. I went through the **Air Force ROTC** program. Won some honors there as a cadet and at that time the draft was in place, Korean War was going on and you either when to the **ROTC** or you got drafted and I did not want to get drafted. So I decided was better to be an officer than an enlisted man. That may sound elitist **but** I don't mean to sound too elitist but it just seem like the officers I knew in the program were more like the kind of people that I wanted to be than some of the enlisted people we had in our **ROTC** program and so I got in the **Air Force ROTC** program. Did well, it was good, we drilled and marched, and every spring we had a parade it was quite an event. I got commissioned; you get commissioned when you get your degree. So I just took the **Air Force through ROTC** instead of getting sent to Korea.

STOCK: So did you spend four years in the **Air Force**; was that the was commitment?

WREN: I could have gone out in three but I was in Germany and I loved Germany. Beautiful country, I learned some of the language, I traveled a lot and I thought if you are in a place like this why do you want to go home a year early, so I signed on for another

year. I had a good assignment in Wiesbaden, Germany which is an absolutely lovely town. I'm in Germany so you can't ask for anything better.

Military Experience

STOCK: When you think back on your military experience, what's your most fond memory of that time, anytime during that military experience those 4 years?

WREN: I had fun those times while I was traveling. I was probably the best military officer in terms of routine military stuff. We had a softball team, we had a basketball team, we had a bowling team; the Air Force really encouraged a lot of athletics and I liked that part. So I used to sort of organize those things for the squadron. So I guess those were high events which had nothing to do with military duties except sports.

STOCK: What do you think you might have learnt from that military experience that benefited you most in life?

WREN: I'm not sure; I guess part of it was a discipline. I did have a couple of encounters with military people who gave me the kinds of people or the kind of person that you don't want to be and I had a couple of good commanders who I thought there were the kind of people that I would want to be. So I think I had some good role models. I remember this one it was a lieutenant colonel at this time I was on temporary duty in Libya and he was just a fantastic officer and I just loved Colonel Fawbush and I thought there is a good way to be on time, get there early, get the worm, don't worry about the fate of the worm, the early bird gets it and works hard and he [Colonel Fawbush] did, he worked hard. So I think it was the people and then we had some people who just were very bad examples. I thought you don't want to be like so and so. But it was quite an experience.

College (undergraduate and graduate)

STOCK: So we've got you now completing your bachelor's degree at Missouri, you've been in the military now for 4 years, why did you choose to pursue an advanced degree and ultimately a PhD degree?

WREN: That's a strange road. My father was a smoker, the diet I think was a heavy on fatty foods, was a wrong kind of diet for a man to have although I don't think we knew then about cholesterol or the things that we know now. I just had gotten home from the Air Force, I had been home maybe three days and my Dad had a heart attack and died. I was admitted to the University of Missouri in the Master's program. And after Dad died I thought I just can't leave the family, I must stay and take care of mom and my baby sister and so I passed up to graduate assistantship and the financial arrangements at the University of Missouri for the Masters degree and then we got the estate settled and things got to settle down in the business while at this time country stores were going the way as you know of super markets and things like this and I started going back to summer school. And about a year and a half later I had my Masters degree at University of Missouri and then I thought, well, you've been in the military, you've been in business, you've got a couple of degrees, now what are you going to do with your life? And I decided I did not want any more school so I went to work for Hallmark Cards in Kansas City and it was a nice experience. I got some business experience as a supervisor there and then I got tired of working at Hallmark and how I got into the PhD program at Illinois is another story. I had two professors at the University of Missouri in the masters program who were extremely influential. Wayne Leeman in economics and Don Shawver, who may be a familiar name to you, in marketing and Shawver wanted me to go to Illinois and Leeman wanted me to go to Wisconsin and they're both good schools. But Shawver said I know people around Illinois, he got his doctorate in Illinois, he says I know people there, I think I can put you in a good word for you so I said ok put in the good word and let's see if they are interested. So I applied at Illinois; did not apply to Wisconsin yet because I was waiting on Don Shawver's good word. When Illinois was interested I took a train to go to Champaign-Urbana on Don Shawver's advice and what impressed me most when I got there was there was a man whose name was Professor Harvey Huegy who was waiting for me at the train station to take me to my hotel. Harvey Huegy as you know was a professor of marketing and Don

Shawver's major professor and I thought, boy, if they care this much about me to meet me at the train station then this is going to be the place for me and it was colder than the dickens. Champaign-Urbana is a very cold place; windy, cold. But the academic climate was excellent. Next day, **Huegy** took me for breakfast and we talked **about** what am I doing, who I am seeing during the day. So I don't know, I just felt that Illinois atmosphere, I don't know **but** there is something, **Jim**, I think we need to create in the doctoral programs for students and that's to make the student feel like they are really wanted and accepted that this is not a trial by fire that they are there to help you learn and grow and I felt that way at Illinois. I felt this was the place where I could go, so I've always been very proud to be a University of Illinois graduate.

STOCK: Where there any experiences while you were in the doctoral programs that stand out in terms of getting you into the areas that you ultimately will research and history areas that you were interested in for so many years?

WREN: They didn't do history. I had 5 fields: standard routine when you took 2 econ **courses** (macro and micro), took 2 courses with **Huegy** in marketing, took 2 in management those with Professor Mandeville who was president of the academy at one time and then you had to choose 2 fields and I was a research assistant to **Joe Litterer**. He was in management and I was a research assistant to him and he says why don't you take some social **psychology**? I had the good fortune to study under **Ivan D. Steiner**, **while** Steiner is not a name everybody is going to remember, but Steiner was doing some very creative work in small group research. And I **had** never had a course that **would** prepare me from what I got into with Steiner, but was a **broadening** experience; it took me out of the business school and put me more **into** the behavioral sciences. The other elective field I had was labor economics and that got me into legal and all sort of personnel issues and I can't think of any single thing except maybe **Joe Litterer** pushing me out of the business school to say there is more in this world to learn than business subjects. And **sending** me over **to** **Ivan D. Steiner** and social **psychology**. I was the only person in the class; they were all PhD students, some of them were **studying for doctorates** in psychology, I was the only business person in there and I really felt handicapped, but I'd overcome handicaps before and I thought I could do it again.

Career

STOCK: When you finished your degree at Illinois, how did you go about securing your first job in academia? What kinds of things were you looking for in that first position?

WREN: I think we should title this good things I just happened to fall into. I've interviewed two or three schools, Penn State and some other schools and I applied to Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. I thought that I should send out vitas to places and the Director, the Head of the department in Florida State, lost my vita. Fortunately, I had a class with an individual who has gotten his Masters degree at Florida State and now he was studying for his PhD before he wanted to go back to Florida State. So the department chair Bob **Froemke** at Florida State, called this student who was in my class Dan **Voich** and he says do you know anybody there who is looking for a job? He **[Froemke]** says somebody has sent me an application but I've lost it, I can't find it, I can't find the resume and **Voich** was in class with me and he said maybe **it** is this guy and he talked to me and I said yes. I sent it three months ago but I hadn't heard anything, so I thought they are not interested. He said give this guy a call and I went down for an interview and loved Tallahassee and was hired. I had a lot of good luck in life.

STOCK: In that first position were you able to do anything in the history area as yet?

WREN: **OK**, Management History was basically an **unplowed** field. We had a program, I wrote one book, wrote a couple of articles, and then the department chair, the forgetful one, Bob **Froemke** was still the department chair. The joke in class was that he would prepare his lecture while he was erasing the chalkboard from the previous lecture. We did not have PowerPoint then, but Bob was sort of absent minded. But anyway, he came one day and said, we have a bunch of engineers down at Cape Canaveral and he said **these** people are managing huge projects **and** the big space program was just getting warmed up at the **Cape** we have not yet put anybody into space, the Russians put up Sputnik. I think we've orbited a couple of satellites, but not much. But it was a huge project going on down

there and he said some of this people wanted to know about management; now how would you teach a non-business major about management? And I thought, well, you have to understand the concepts, where these concepts were developed, where this idea came from, why they developed, why some had lived on, and some had died. I said I guess maybe history and he said: OK do what you can do, and make up a course like that and so I did and that became the book that's headed for the sixth edition pretty soon.

STOCK: While you stayed in Florida State for a period of time and were promoted there to full professor, what was it that caused you to move to the University of Oklahoma?

WREN: The management and business history collection. We have here at the University of Oklahoma a fantastic collection in business and economic history and Harry Bass who came to school here, never graduated, but gave us the money back about 1955 to start a collection in business and economic history. Ron Shuman was the first curator; I was the second curator. Ron had a heart attack and just really couldn't carry on with his academic duties and they were casting about for somebody to come and take Ron's place. Of course they were using my book. Ron had used my book and so they said why don't you come to Oklahoma? So I came here for an interview and enjoyed the place; enjoyed the collection. Norman, Oklahoma is quite different from Tallahassee, Florida both in terms of weather and in terms of scenery. Tallahassee is very scenic, a lot of flowers, with big old Oak trees with Spanish moss. In Oklahoma we just don't have a lot of scenic spots at Oklahoma but with this collection and I saw the books that we have at the collection, we have fantastic books, we have Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, we have Adam Smith's original 1776 "Wealth of Nations", we have a book, not a very big book, just a small book written about 1430 published probably on a Gutenberg press and I'm going to give you a test at this point OK, the title of the book is "On the contracts of merchants" what do you think the book is about? In 1430 what would we be writing about?

STOCK: An economics person writing about transportation and distribution.

WREN: Not yet, it was written by a monk and he was concerned with the rise in trade that was happening all around him and he just knew that if you were in business the Bible was not favorable to trade. For years we've lived with the idea of what is the "just price" for

selling something? Should we charge interest on loans? Usury was forbidden. And what this monk, whose name was Johannes Nider, writing in 1430, what he wanted to know was if you were a business person, how can you go to heaven and not to hell. And I thought that was a fascinating question, it was a fascinating book, it was the first book on business ethics written almost 600 years ago, and I thought wow! And if I can come to a place and have the opportunity to collect materials that are this interesting, this enduring, this important to our discipline, this is the place I want to be.

STOCK: When you look at your career, what do you consider to be your most significant accomplishment as a professional academician? We read a number of things but in your view, what do you think has been the most significant contribution that you've made?

WREN: See, we are talking over 30 years here, this is a hard question, it is not the books, it is not the articles, it is not the honors (the David Ross Boyd Professorship), the chairs and all that stuff. But you go to places, and I've done this many times and it happens. People walk up and introduce themselves to me or they would send me an e-mail and they are students from 20/25 years ago or 10 years ago or 5 years ago; maybe not 5 years ago, but anyway and they still remember me and it makes you feel good. You know that after all those years, one day I was at a restaurant here in Norman and this guy came up and taps me on the shoulder and he is very well known because at the time he was a Dallas Cowboy assistant football coach, and he said Dr. Wren how are things going? And I looked up and here is Gary Gibbs who was at one time the coach of University of Oklahoma football team and I thought wow; Gary I'm fine, how are you what are you doing these days? That was a dumb question to ask; what are you doing these days; he isn't coaching the football team, but he was a student of mine and I don't know, but it was just a good feeling that this guy in his position remembered me. That, you know, we who are in teaching, you touch their lives and there are so many people and is fun.

STOCK: Related question, as you look back as those long number of years, what would you view as your "legacy" to the profession?

WREN: Probably, the way that would be seen on the outside would be that history book, the history of management thought book, which has been not financially a successful book

because it was just **in management** history courses offered, but it is a large frog in a very small pond, it is **THE** book. If you going to teach history that's the book you use. So people I think from the outside are going to say: oh yeah, that's the guy who wrote the "The History of Management Thought". I think within the college, I think **it** is going to be the history that **I** wrote **for** the College of Business here at The Price College from the very beginning, I think they will remember that more than they will the history book. I guess my students are probably the greatest legacy. There are some of them that have **done** quite well, both **doctoral** students and **undergraduates**, and it is just a good feeling.

STOCK: Do you have any regrets regarding your career anything, cause you have been a **administrator**, a faculty member, you have done a lot of things, as you look back are there things that you wish you should have done or could have done but did not?

WREN: I've had offers to go other places but family is here. Sometimes I look at **these** other places and I think well maybe I should have striven to go to one of those other places, one of those other schools. But I don't know, I guess I just like Norman, I like the atmosphere, I like the schools, I like **what** my kids are doing or **what** my kids did now that they are growing and **grown**. I've just never been more **attracted** to some other school than I have to the University of Oklahoma which for some people sounds, like we are the outbackers somewhere. But I've always thought this was home, it just feels like home to me.

STOCK: Did you think you achieved all of what you wanted to achieve in your career? If not, what else would you liked to have done?

WREN: Probably, my wife died not too long after we came here; she had brain cancer and she died very young she was only 39 and I raised those three kids and I don't regret the time I spent with them, raising them, but I guess if you look at what it could have been otherwise, I might have had more time to do other work, other publications, but I don't think I would trade those articles for my kids.

STOCK: In your career as an academic, did you have a mentor in your early years? And if so who was that? And how did they influence you?

WREN: Well, it would have to be a pool of people it could not be a single person. **Huegy** always **taught**, he was a good class room teacher, I enjoyed that and my management teacher **[Mandeville]** was a good example. The economics teacher, Dwight Flanders, I thought was just a marvelous, marvelous gentleman, the kind of a person that **you would want to be in his class**. I just can't think of anyone else who really, except for a friend, **Jim Worthy**. Jim was a Northwestern graduate and was vice president for Sears before he was taken into Roosevelt's Cabinet to be an "Undersecretary of Commerce" as I recall his title. After he finished that he went into academics. And I always thought he was probably the finest gentleman that I knew, a scholar and gentleman in the field. But there **have** been a lot of people I just **cannot** specifically say they did this for me or they did that, I've never had anyone that I rode their coattails. As they moved up, I moved up; that just happens.

STOCK: To what extent have you conducted your professional life by a personal code of conduct or belief system?

WREN: Equity, you have to treat them all alike, you have to listen. A friend of mine, **Keith** Davis at Arizona State, said there was a reason we have two **ears** and only one mouth; that was God's intention to tell us we should spend twice as much time listening as we did talking and I've always used that as a model. Another one I think that has served me well was, and I don't remember where I got it, and that's in terms of how you motivate people and it goes something like: To motivate people you can do everything in the world for them but there is a door there and there is a key in that door and if you do not succeed it is because that door is locked from the inside and the person doesn't want to be motivated no matter how hard you try, no matter how much you understand, how much you give, how much you offer, if they don't want it, the door is locked, so you've got to knock on the door and give people a chance to open the door so you can do something with them; but I think those are been sort of Confucius terms that I've used for trying to deal with people and the kind of person I wanted to be. I wanted to be treated the same way, **given** the opportunity, treated **equitably**. That's a tough question.

STOCK: Now as you look back at your career, what was the ideal job?

WREN: I have it, this is the ideal job. We've got it, you and I and our colleagues, we have the ideal jobs. Where else in the world can you get paid for learning, for researching, for teaching, for coming to contact with great people, for travel, meeting other people, other climates. I've been a visiting professor in Erasmus University, Rotterdam School of Business, Kansai University in Japan, Osaka. I know you've traveled quite widely. It's just a marvelous way to open up the world and to see the world. This is it and they paid us for doing this, which is absolutely our best kept secret, I think.

Family

STOCK: So you mentioned when you came you have family to raise, your three children
Where there sexes/ages now?

WREN: Yes, Jonathan has now his PhD in Biochemistry, he does what we call data mining is bio informatics. He's up at the medical research foundation in the city, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, and I'm kind of proud of that, the fact he has a PhD. Then the daughter, the middle child, Laura, she's defied all middle child definitions. She is a very successful entrepreneur at Oklahoma City; she has a Pilate's studio, which is not a work out for building muscles, it is more of a body balance and body conditioning and more of a fitness kind of developing your body. Lynda, my baby, she's had a hard time, she has rheumatoid arthritis so she's really struggled through life just hoping that someday someone will come up with the cure you know; make her arms and her joints go back to normal.

STOCK: What was your major or main goal as a parent as you were raising your children yourself?

WREN: Would it be out of place to say survival? When you are trying to hold a full time job and raise three children you just say day by day. There is a song on Fiddler on the Roof that I love is "Sunrise Sunset," you know, and I don't remember the children growing

older than did I, you know and it just happens but you just have to **hang** on and hope and pray that good things happen for you.

STOCK: In what way do you think you have influenced your children the most?

WREN: I think for Jonathan, my oldest, was buying him one of the earliest Apple **2e** computers. I don't remember **the year**, but it was a computer shop here in Norman and they bring up **these** personal computers and he was not doing well on school and his teachers could not motivate him. I couldn't get him on athletics, he didn't care about Boy Scouts, nothing **could** turn that boy on. Nothing, he cared for nothing. He got that computer and his life changed and he's done quite well with that. Laura, the middle child, about three nights a week you know, **I** took her to dance ballet, she was **doing** ballet and modern **dance** and did all that so that was a chore. I was a bus driver taking the kids to ball games and soccer games and ballet lessons, things like that. I think my greatest achievement as a parent was being able to drive; **to** keep a valid driver's license.

STOCK: How do you think your children would describe you as a parent?

WREN: Laura, I think will describe me as a sort of **fall**back position in case if she gets into financial trouble with her business. Entrepreneurs have a very shaky time, as you know, in business and this is strictly a sort of a personal help, hygiene kind of **business** and so you gain clients and you lose clients, and that can be scary when your landlord keeps raising the rent but she is a very loving child and **has** a marvelous grandson that she's given me so I'm pleased with that.

STOCK: Now as you look back now at your parents, and how they raised you and their influence now you being a parent and have raised three children, which you view yourself as being similar to your parents or much different?

WREN: It had to be different, we lived in a pretty controlled environment, I went to school. I came home from school. And we lived in the country, our **nearest** neighbor was about half a mile away. And this environment it's very difficult because the kids went to school here in Norman they went to good schools. But there are a lot of influences outside the home that you just can't control; you can say it but when they are on the school bus

they are gone. So I think it's harder to raise children nowadays and you don't have a license to start, there is no instruction manual you know, nobody can write a code for how you do kids. It's very different now, I think, than it was. I was a depression baby, born in 1932 and I know that shaped my parent's thinking about savings and working and being independent and I tried to pass it onto my kids and I think I've succeeded in that I think they'll be that way when I'm gone.

STOCK: Now when we talked about you family, we didn't really mention or discussed very much siblings, brother, sisters and so forth? Just a quick overview of them and are any of them in the same profession as you?

WREN: No, I have a sister, one sister and she went to community college and didn't like school and decided to get married instead and she is divorced now and lives in Springfield, Missouri. We keep up Dad's tradition of every summer, we go to St. Louis, I go up there pick her up we go to St. Louis go see the Cardinals play. Cardinals are the team, you know, I don't know about these Mets that you've talked about but the Cardinals are the team.

STOCK: You mentioned when you came here, that your wife was with you and passed very quickly after you moved here how did you and your wife first meet where you in graduate school, where you teaching, how was that?

WREN: I was studying for the Doctorate at Illinois and not dating and I didn't know her. My roommate, who I still correspond after all these years, was in engineering school and he had a date and he said why don't you get a date and go with us and I said I don't know anybody, so he had his girlfriend call the dorm and ask at the dorm does anybody not have a date this weekend and everybody except Karen had a date, so that was it. I saw her and I thought "mmm" this is the most beautiful woman I've ever seen.

General Historical Questions

STOCK: Now shifting away from family issues for a moment, other than the present time, if you could go back in time to any historical era when would you have like to have lived in?

WREN: Florence, Italy **15th** or century **14th** century; some point in there, during the Renaissance, to me that's the most fascinating period of history. We came out of a period of very closed economic systems, domination by the church or by the monarchy, not much learning going on, the art was poor, the music was primitive, now all of a sudden Italy's Renaissance begins and people start translating old texts and finding authors and stories and start making statues and beautiful paintings. It was an age of learning, it was an age of Renaissance **which literally** means reborn and it was and I think that was probably the most fascinating **period** in history, **of any** historical era that I recall.

STOCK: If you could meet any historical icon, of the past or present, who would it be and why?

WREN: He passed away not too long ago, you've heard of Alfred Chandler. Alfred and I were friends **and** I guess I **met** him, probably in the early seventies **when** I was at Harvard doing some research and I read his first book, "Strategy and Structure" and arranged to meet him **and Roethlisberger** and some of the other people there who were very well known. I was an unknown and he was just the most kindly gentleman, **but the** messiest desk I think I've ever seen, but the sharpest mind. He is the business historian **of** this century.

STOCK: If you personally could be anyone in history, who would you be?

WREN: Can I be Alfred Chandler, that's a hard one. Maybe Henri Fayol. Fayol was a Frenchman born in the mid nineteenth century who died early twentieth century and who wrote basically what I think is the best book written in management. It is only about that thick (small), "**General and Industrial Management**", but this guy was a practicing executive, trained as a **mining** engineer, but he was so good at handling people that they forgot his **technical** skills and made him a manager. And I've translated a number of his things, written a lot about him obviously, and I don't know it just seems like to be able **for Fayol** to come up with that seminal thought that would last so long and it would be so important.

General Information and Perspectives

STOCK: More of a general nature now about yourself in your profession, is there any little known fact or really intriguing event that other people probably would not know about you?

WREN: I hope not, not that I can think of.

STOCK: If you look at the accomplishments you've had, if you have mention one thing of all of those professional accomplishments what are you most proud of?

WREN: I've said students earlier, the students I've **taught** I think that's **it**. But I guess if I had to say one thing and were going to put it within that category as I think you are thinking publications would have to be that history of **management** thought book because nobody else had ever done that. Claude George had written a paper back and he stops in **the 1950s**. He has a little bit in it, about the arsenal of Venice and he writes a whole paragraph on Fayol, a whole paragraph on Frederick **Taylor** or some of the other people. Stops roughly in terms of 1950 in terms of his writing, and then Claude, and he taught that course at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and basically he thought that's where history ended because as you get closer to the present, and I think this is a valid point, as you get closer to the present, it becomes more and more difficult to get that historical lens so you can see. I mean you can have a zoom lens for a camera you know but I think for history you look further and further back it's harder to do. So I think when I wrote "The History of Management Thought," I think that was the beginning of who I became professionally in terms of what my **colleagues** saw.

STOCK: Do you think that would be then how they will remember you?

WREN: I think so, I think so, and I think that's could be fortunate or unfortunate. I'm not sure I see this happening to Chandler. Chandler died just about 6 months ago, this past summer of 2007 as I recall and people have already **started** coming up with criticism of his work and he is dead they wouldn't have done this while he was alive. I have a feeling

after I'm gone that there's going to be all sorts of analysis and re-analysis of what I've said and I would not be able to answer unless I go to heaven and get a heavenly **bolt** to throw something at them.

STOCK: Now that you are an Emeritus professor although you are still a curator of the Bass collection, what do you do in your spare time?

WREN: Read, when I get a chance. Kids stuff, some church activities. **Sunday** school, church class president, on 2 or 3 committees at the church; that takes all my time.

Weekend with the kids if possible, love to read, still love to read. I usually try to have at least one heavy duty book something that's kind of "thoughty" that you really have to think about and then I like to read something you don't have to think about and you can forget it and nobody cares afterwards. But recently one of my interests has turned to reading as much as I can about colonial history and I just got back from Philadelphia where I went to **Independence Hall** and saw the liberty bell, all of those things that you do in Philly and the colonial period, this thirteen, not even thirteen states, we were just loosely connected communities who decided to confront the greatest military army and navy in the world, Great Britain and we did it and we **stood** up to them and said we are not going to take it anymore and we declared our independence and we formed the **Constitution**. It's over 200 years old and it's only been amended like 26 or 27 times that's pretty good document that last that long. So I become fascinated with colonial history, I've **been** reading a lot of Jefferson, Adams and Washington and it's just fascinating for me to see how this country developed economically but mostly politically. The foresight of these individuals with respect to the protectionism and some of the freedoms that we cherish the most and I look at the world and I listen to the news and I say how poor those people are they don't have our kind of government, you know. I know that we cannot make them have our kind of government, but that they don't have **any** freedoms, freedom of religion, or speech or things like that.

STOCK: You mentioned several activities in reading and so forth, you mentioned being involved with your church and so on, what place does religion have in your life?

WREN: This will probably go with me to my grave, I'm sure. I still have a lot of doubts, you know. My faith is just not as strong. I see some of my colleagues in church; I mean they believe in the Virgin birth, I struggle with the Virgin birth. They believe in original sin, I struggle with original sin. They put the Bible as being as the world being created, what three thousand or four thousand or something years ago, because they can trace all begats that they do. I struggle, I think with my faith; I don't have a deep faith. I think I have a belief in God. Was Jesus the son of God? I struggle with that one. I think he was probably a great person, I think he was probably a very influential teacher, he changed people's lives, he changed the world but did all this happen as the Bible said? Did the star shine in the east, the wise men on their camels, these are some of the parts that I struggle with I guess. I cannot take the Bible literally, the Bible and the story of Jesus for me has to be more like a metaphor. This is kind of the way you should live your lives, these are good rules, these are good ways to behave, these are good things to do for other people. So His teachings I think are very good, but some of the mysticism that we build around that bothers me. I've never forgotten, this summer, let me keep going just for a minute. This summer I went to visiting Stonehenge and these people, this is on the Salisbury Plain, takes a train and a bus and get out there, these people were worshipping, and doing astronomy and all sorts of spectacular things. Gosh, five/six thousand years ago and one of the things that really mystified me and made me think there is something out there I don't know what it is, there is a place that you walk along and the tour guide was taking us around the Stonehenge there is a place that you can walk through and she will let you have a little copper thing, it's a wire of some sort, like copper, like a sort of a fork sort of thing, and you walk over this one particular spot and you cannot hold that wire firmly, it would dip. That blew my mind and I saw a couple of people try that and I thought, "Ah, there are stoolies," these are all part of the experiment you know. I mean she's hired these people to come out here and fool us tourists. I said so let me have it, I just barely held it just to keep it from falling and darned if you didn't walk across this area, not a large area, and that thing dipped I couldn't hold it back. Now how do you explain that, see what I mean there are just some things I cannot understand and so this is what faith is about.

STOCK: Would you look all of these and sort of retrospect now what do you think are the main lessons you've learned over your life time?

WREN: Things, things I would want my children to **carry on**? I've learned that for some people life is very short. And you have to cherish each day, what you've got, cause it's all you've got. And this is not hedonistic in the sense **to** go out, eat, drink and be **merry**, **it** is not that kind of thing. **It is** just, you never know what's going to happen and each day is a gift.

STOCK: If you are thinking about your doctoral students, at the moment, you mention the importance of students in your career, what advice would you give to recently graduated PhD's in management or general any business degree?

WREN: You don't start at the top, you **would** best be thinking about how **to** prepare yourself to do a lot of things, teach. I don't think we give our students enough teaching experience, I think we want them to be researchers and publish in the best journals. I don't think those people make the best professors. I think the best people are people who would love to teach, who would love that contact with the students. **There** are articles that we write, they vanish, they perish, nobody reads them any more you know. But those students; they live on.

STOCK: Now, when you think back again over your career which is 40 years time span, in what way has the marketplace, the discipline changed? Do you think those changes have been for the good? Or have they been for the worst?

WREN: The marketplace has really changed dramatically. Business schools are just **exploding** with students today. I think you and I talked about you having 6,000 students in Business at the University of South Florida. We had 4,000 and then we started enrollment control programs to trim that number. We don't have enough faculty to teach all of these students well. And I don't think this was the case earlier, I think then there were more opportunities for you to have smaller classes to get closer to your students. I don't think the pressure to publish was as great and so I think those are **two** big changes. Right now, we are running out of professors, we are not training enough PhD's to serve the students for the future. And this I think **we** will have a very difficult road ahead for us, when we

cannot educate people cause education I think is the key, education is the key to who we are, to what we do, to what we learn, to how our country will develop in the future. We've got to have educated citizens; we can't feed them pablum or oat meal and call this you know good for your life. So it has changed dramatically, I believe.

STOCK: Now some very specific questions related to your interest in management history and development, tell us more specifically what you do as a curator of the Bass Collection, general philosophy, acquisitions, you mentioned translations and other kinds of things?

WREN: Ok, how much more time do you have for this but anyway, it's a good job. This is why I came here. What we are trying to find are materials that the library wouldn't regularly buy; rare books but we would buy some books that that the library wouldn't buy and students would come and use them. For example, the main library is not interested in buying books about containerization for transport of goods you know. That was a revolution in the distribution chain if you will. So I buy those books; I like to buy a rare book, that's one of the fun jobs; I just don't have the money. The price of books has just gone outrageous, plus our exchange rate of the dollar has really hurt me. I used to be able to count on like, you know, maybe buying a real good book for a 1,000 € cause it only cost so much US. Oh gracious, it costs me 1,400 € to buy the same book today. The exchange rates hurt us, but I do like to go through old catalogues and look and deal with dealers. You go through dealers, there are a bunch of antiquarian dealers that I work with. And these people are always buying from estates, library close outs. It's interesting that some libraries will actually say let's get rid of this old book you know, this is probably 1890, you know let's make space for something new, original. So it winds up on the market and I take a chance to maybe buy it. For example, Alfred Marshall's book, early economist, a classic. So I think the fun is there. I'm not a librarian. What I am is a resource person who answers questions like where do you find this, where do you find that, what books should we buy, and it is kind of fun. And if I had more money it would be more fun. But we never have enough.

STOCK: I assume of course your book is in the collection?

WREN: Oh, yes. Plus, as the ego speaks, plus the Japanese translation, plus the Chinese translation. I got one that is translated into Spanish. One of the things that really amazed me when I got my last royalty statement is not a lot of big bucks we are talking about here. But the last time I got my royalty statement, I had sold 1,000 electronic books and that staggered me because who would have thought that book that I've written has now been digitized and put up on somebody's web and someone goes and buys it and 1,000 copies have been sold electronically. I have one student in the doctoral seminar I'm doing right now who has the book electronically and he brings his laptop to class and he sits there and he is reading the book while we are talking about the subject. Flipping pages, scrolling down the screen or up the screen, you know to find out what's going on. Book publishing has changed quite dramatically with electronic publication, journals have changed. Many professors in the business discipline would not have to go out of their office to get access to almost any business journal that you want. You can sit in your office, go to a database and there it is. So electronics have just changed the way we do research. You don't go flipping through card files any more. But one thing they forget Jim, is they forget that there was something written before that database started and they often forget that there are people who lived even before that database started putting their publications in it. And that's always kind of frightening. If I cannot get it electronically, how do I find it on the shelf?

STOCK: So our next question sort of relates to that in terms of what do you believe is the future of "management history?" Both from a teaching perspective as well as a research perspective, are the prospects good or not so good?

WREN: I think they are good, and the reason being that we can do many more things and part is electronic. Maybe we can get some ideas from Google, or this phrase from Google, or Yahoo or Excite or some of these databases. But you can get on there and they can give a marvelous dump of stuff that you going to look for, but you couldn't do before, you just couldn't do it. I was cruising, looking for something the other day and I found an archive I did not know existed, an archive of a person who was a General Motors executive and I didn't know they were there. They are in Georgetown University; they have this guy's papers, his family's correspondence, his business correspondence, drafts of the books that he wrote, and they are all there. I didn't know that. And I get that through Google and I

thank Google. Those kids were geniuses, they come out with that, I don't **know** where is going to go in the future. But I think there is more out there to be found **than** we've plowed, there are a lot of fields out there that have not turned over the dirt yet.

STOCK: Again sort of a retrospective historical perspective, who do you believe have been the 5 most influential management academicians y/or practitioners in the last 100 years? And why?

WREN: If you are going to read 5 people that would be the key people to know in management history, let's start there. That's the way I would define the most influential, I think Frederick Taylor, in scientific management, my hero Henry Fayol, who really exposes from the view point and from experience what executives do, then there was a very delightful lady by the name of Mary Parker **Follett**. She was born in the late 1800s and died **in the** 1930s and **was** very creative about how groups work and how to get groups to work better together, which is basically about team work that we teach. **OK**, Chester Barnard, was another executive who didn't intend to write for the academic audience but he **winds** up in the academic audience, he **writes** one of the key lessons we all have to keep in mind is what he calls "limited choices". Now one of his followers, Herbert Simon, comes **along** later and turns this into "bound**ed** rationality" which is the idea that the decision maker in any given point in time cannot have all the information that they need to make a decision so we have to choose from the best of what we've got to go with. Now I **am** sure you **are** going to look back and say if I knew then what I know now, I'm sure we all said that. And Barnard he points out that's not the way life is; we are limited in the choices that we have and in what we can know.

STOCK: It's interesting of those that you have mentioned thus far, it is seems true in my discipline in Marketing as well, that the subset of frustration I contributions often come from the people who have the business experience in combination with the academic perspective.

WREN: That is so true, that is so true, some of the think of teaching some younger students is the fact that they do not know anything about how a marketplace works, or how business works, or how to get along **with** people, or how to get people to do something.

Bagging groceries is not good managerial training. I'm still trying to think of the 5th person. It would probably be Chandler I guess it would be my 5th.

STOCK: What do you think is the most significant management issue facing academics today?

WREN: Academics, not practitioners. Well, that's facing academics; I think one thing that we need to do a better job of is checking our sources. We have a lot of people who **publish** stuff and they give this big long list of references. They may have never read those references. They got those references from somebody else and I think we need to get back as far as we can to the original documentation of things, when things happened, why things happened, what this person was like at the time they were doing it. And stay away from citing someone because they are a big name on the field, you know. They cite Jim Stock because his has written a lot on distribution so they cite you, they may have never read you but they cite you. I think that's the biggest problem in academics face. The second largest academics **issue** is they themselves, the teachers, have no business experience, no managerial experience. They've never been on the firing line, what some people call the sharp end of the business, they've never been there, so they give you text book, they give you theories and some of those theories are **not** any good, you know. **They are** just not there. And they are just giving you a bunch of theory. I think we need to have more practical people and fewer theoretical people.

STOCK: Same question from the perspective of the practitioners. What do you think is the most significant management issue facing practitioners today?

WREN: The **first** response that normally comes to mind is how to behave, ethical behavior, that's the first thing and it is a critical thing. On the other hand, maybe you've heard this before but Harry Truman when President said: "I would like to have a one **armed** economist, I want a one armed economists because all the economists that are coming say: on the one hand and on the other hand" and he says I don't want that. **I feel there is a** minority of apples in the **business** barrel that **are** the Enron's or WorldCom's and Delphi, **for examples**, and those are not typical businesses, but that's what the press focuses on, that's what the books keep writing about, that's what the media stresses. But I think most of our businesses do act ethically, I think most of them do, but not all of them

and it only takes just a few to make problems for business people. Second, I think practitioners should be cautious in buying in on some of these management theories. But I think there are some ideas that we do generate that they need to have translated for them so they can use them. Because I think some of them are more useful, some ideas are useful that we generate, not all of them but some of them, there's things they can learn that they do not listen to because they sound too academic, too theoretical and they rather read Harvard Business Review. I don't blame them, it is easier than reading the Academy of Management Journal which is dense and footnoted and statistical and drives you crazy. Harvard Business Review tells you a nice story, so I don't blame them for doing that.

Closing Comments

STOCK: I want to thank Dan Wren for taking time today to speak with us and give us more of the personal side of who he is and some of the ins and outs behind what he'd written and what's influenced his life. I will hope that the audience as they read the works of Dan Wren and others that we will be interviewing in this series that they will get a richer experience as they read those materials and understand this and the motivations and the why's and the where for's behind those. Thank you for your attention and interest in our discussions and wish you the best in terms of your both practice as well as theoretical applications in the area in management. Thank you much.

WREN: And thank you.