

# Ralph Bertini: Special Award of Merit

By Maria Scandale



TV Studio Director-Producer-Instructor Ralph Bertini, 2013.

Photo credit: Ocean County College.

Ralph Bertini inspired countless students as a teacher of television production courses for Lacey High School and Ocean County College. He was hired by the college in 2005 to oversee design of the college's studio and curriculum because of his knowledge and experience working with the facility for over 17 years. Retiring in June 2022, Bertini soon started working at the college again in a reserve capacity as a studio technician and will also be teaching video courses.

Now a Lanoka Harbor resident, Ralph Bertini was in broadcast television for over 40 years, starting out directing ABC Channel 21 KOLO news in Reno, Nev., and Channel 8 WHP in Harrisburg, Pa. After varied work and travel experiences, his involvement with the county culminated with his employment at Ocean County College.

As an educator, he said, "my attitude is this: be there to serve. The students are first and foremost in my mind. My number one objective, give them the most comprehensive experience, to learn what working in television really is."

A second priority was the community being able to make the college media production a resource, he said. "We made it as much as possible a resource to the community, as well as serving the needs of the college."

Involvement in the countywide community branched out over time. "We had a great relationship with the prosecutor's office - we have done plenty of work for them. We did political debates on campus that were broadcast live." The department helped publicize county events.

**"There has been an ongoing relationship between the county and the college, and the TV facility has been very keen to support the county whenever we can."**

His successor in the Ocean County College position, a former student 20 years ago, has developed a TV show spotlighting nonprofit and service organizations. Bertini considers it his greatest satisfaction that his students keep in touch. Many report success stories following their media path that Bertini helped launch. One student is a director of news in Philadelphia, another is at Sirius XM radio in New York, as just two examples.

Interestingly enough, Bertini had wanted to be a residential architect when he was a teenager. During his second year of college, a trip with good friends led him toward the eventual career that was suited to him. One of those college roommates got into 35-mm photography and challenged, "I want you to buy my camera, because I want to buy a new one."

Bertini fell in love with photography, and the rest of the story developed with training in Buffalo, his hometown. "I became part of a video group producing an on-campus soap opera when I knew nothing about video or television. I made a deal with the professor: you can use my van for the production, but you've got to teach me. That's when I really got the bug."

# Ralph Bertini continued...

Again, it was the fortuitous association with a college friend that advanced Bertini's career. "On a lark, I went with him to San Francisco State University, and found out it had one of the very few broadcast TV curriculums at the time." He joined a creative video club; "we called ourselves The Vidiots."

Bertini was then hired as senior video specialist at Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station. It was a departure from broadcasting, he knew, but it fostered the community service angle that came to prominence in his years with Ocean County College. "The power plant was keen on community service, lending me out to Lacey High School helping the kids when they needed equipment." Lacey was documenting OCC graduation ceremonies since the mid-1990s.

After the plant closed, the plant donated their TV equipment to Lacey High School, a valuable gift which along with a grant helped enable the school to build a new TV studio. Bertini was needed to oversee the design of the new facility. He obtained a teaching certificate and was hired at the high school as well as Ocean County College.

"When I was hired at the high school, at the same time, the college was working with the county to build their own television facility," the teacher recalls. "I said, 'Why not come to Lacey and see what I've done here?'" He applied for the job at the college, and it was offered to him. He was there when the college TV studio was being constructed. "At the time, I had 25

years of broadcast television experience, and I knew how it had to be." The facility opened the next year.



Ralph Bertini and OCC Alumnus Paul Whitehead.  
Photo credit: Ocean County College.

Video production has streamlined dramatically over the time Bertini has been in the business. "I've been involved in production in every format of TV that has ever been invented," he can say. From tape recorders the size of refrigerators to the digital memory cards of today's technology, he was immersed first as a student, then a teacher.

**"I'm very grateful for the opportunity that the college has afforded me and grateful for the opportunity I had to work with the community in Ocean County, and truly appreciative of being recognized for my efforts."**