

Catching YOUR Memories

THE PODCAST

WITH DIANE ATWOOD

David Atwood shares memories from a wonderful trip to France with Julia Child. Episode aired May 19, 2022.

Hey everyone, this is Diane Atwood, and you are listening to the Catching Your Memories podcast. Everybody has stories/memories to share if only someone would ask. That's where I come in. In this episode, David Atwood, who happens to be my husband's brother, shares memories of a trip to France he took in the early 1970s with Julia Child. That's right, *the* Julia Child and her husband Paul, and a film crew from WGBH-Boston's Public Television station, where he worked. The French Chef, Julia's cooking show on GBH had begun airing about a decade before in black and white. She was about to embark on a new French Chef series, in color, and David was the new show's first director. Besides being in color, they planned to drop in segments that were filmed in France, of Julia talking to and cooking with quote real French chefs. Let's hear what David has to say about the trip and about working with Julia Child.

Music



Diane: Hi, David. Thank you for being here on the *Catching Your Memories* podcast and for agreeing to share some fun stories about working with Julia Child.

David: Yeah, you're welcome.

Diane: Well, I'd like to start with a little background about you. Besides being my brother-in-law, who are you and how did you start working at WGBH in the first place?

David: Well, when I graduated from University of Maine in 1965, I worked that summer for my father's station, and then I came to Boston, and I needed a job. I made an alphabetical list of the stations. WBZ was first. They said we'll put you in the mailroom. I was shocked. I drove down the street to WGBH, which was alphabetically next, and also the closest. They were desperate for people, and they said, can you start Wednesday? And I went, yes. So, I started Wednesday at \$80 a week as a

crew member in the fall of 1965. Right place, right time. They were desperate for people without training. I had four years experience in working in television studios.

Diane: So, tell us a little bit about your dad. You said working at your dad's station. Why don't you give us a little bit of background about that? The station was here in Portland.

David: Yeah, WCSH. He was the general manager of the five stations, two TV and three radio. And I came home one summer and my good friends were going to get jobs, and I kind of said around the house, I got to get a job, you know, for the summer. And he said, well, there's a job open at the station. Ooh, okay, I never thought of it. It never actually crossed my mind to work there, and, of course, I got it. It was in the Film Department, processing film. And then it became everything like a small station, you did everything, which I'm sure you know because you spent years and years and years there. And by the end of the summer, that first summer, I didn't want to go back to school. I wanted to keep working I loved it. I just absolutely loved it.

Diane: So, isn't that interesting? You found out that you love doing that kind of work and you had no idea before that?

David: No idea. It never even occurred to me.

Diane: Now when you went to GBH, you were there for how many years from 1965 until 1980, was it?

David: Well, yes. On staff 1965 to 1980, but then starting in 1980, I was a contractor, and they contracted me to come back in to do many, all kinds of work all the way up through 2003 or 4 or something.

Diane: And why did you make that transition, though, from being on staff to being a contractor? Did you just want to start your own business and do other projects as well?

David: No, I left in 1980 and I went to work for a company in Columbus, Ohio, named QUBE, which was the first fully interactive cable company in the world. And I was out there for a year and nine months or whatever. I left my full-time job at WGBH to take this job in Columbus, Ohio.

Diane: And then you came back to the Boston area?

David: I came back to the Boston area and I just started, I did actually freelance at WGBH even when I was out there, I came back. I think I did *Evening at Pops* or some of the series. I just took a leave of absence. But after a year, nine months, or almost two years, I got tired of that out there and decided I want to come home and go back into production, which I did.

Diane: So, it isn't just Julia Child who you worked with. You worked with a lot of names, people we might know if we watch public television. What are some of the shows and people you worked with besides Julia?

David: Well, in those days, we didn't specialize. So, I became a director at WGBH in 1967, I just worked on everything. I worked on talk shows, a lot of talk shows. When *Evening at Pops* came along, I was one of the directors for *Evening at Pops* and *Evening at Symphony* and a whole bunch of stuff.

Diane: Did you also work on shows like *Masterpiece Theater* and *Mystery*?

David: I did introductions to *Masterpiece Theater* and *Mystery*, tons of those with Alastair Cook and Diana Rigg. I mean, that was just kind of like the regular stuff that we did.

Diane: Where does the *French Chef* fit in there?

David: Well, Julia recorded shows starting in black and white, starting in, I think, 1963 up through 1966, when she stopped for four years or almost four years, I think, to write another book. I worked one show

when the show was in black and white. I was still a cameraman in '66, and they asked me to run camera, the close-up camera guy was ill or couldn't make it. And it was a very exclusive crew. Nobody broke the barrier working on that crew.

Anyway, so I went and I ran close-up camera and I was a good cameraman, and the close-up camera is the one that got up really high and looked down on the food. And they said break for the dining room, which is to my left, and I had to get over there in time to get her coming through the door when she brings the meal into the dining room. So, I grabbed the camera, the huge, heavy camera, and I start trucking to my left, but I didn't see Paul, her husband, who was right behind me, taking pictures, as he always took pictures. And I kind of cleaned him out. I didn't knock him down, but I sent him flying across the studio and I thought, well, I'll never work on this show again. That's the end of that.

But when 1970 rolled around, they called me in and they said, we have a new series, *French Chef* now in color. We need a director and it's you. Oh, really? Me? Yes.

Diane: I want to go back to that incident for a second because I watched the HBO Max series *Julia* that's airing right now.

David: And that incident is in that series.

Diane: Yeah. So that's a true story?

David: I was interviewed by them, and I'm sure I told them that story, and I'm sure that's how it got in. They didn't portray it as dramatic as I remember it being, but they're interviewing people who had worked on the show in that time period, which I guess is going to be a continuation. I think that the first few shows are just the time period of the black and white shows, which is '63 to '66. But I think they're going to get to 1970 in the new *French Chef* series. I just, I don't think either actor's portrayal of Julia and Paul are especially as good as in the movie *Julie and Julia*.

Diane: The one where the young woman is cooking all of Julia's recipes? I think Meryl Streep played Julia in that one?

David: To the T. Meryl Streep nailed her. Absolutely nailed her accent, mannerisms. She was incredible. And Stanley Tucci nailed Paul.

Diane: Let's talk a little bit about the real Julia, the Julia that you knew and the Paul that you knew, her husband. What was she like in person?



Julia and Paul Child

David: Well, Julia absolutely loved what she did. And of course, you see that in the shows. And the best way to get to know the real Julia, as one of the writers in the Boston Globe, said, is watch the shows. They're still on with the real Julia. I thought she was delightful. I mean, she was totally dedicated to her task, focused on that. I think she was very easy to work with, in that way. And she had lots of helpers helping her prepare and clean up and do all this stuff, and we got to know all of them.

And one of the things that people may not realize is when after she drops a chicken on the floor, then picks it up and cleans it off and keeps going, but we did those shows in 1970 and beyond for quite a while, we did those shows live on tape. That is, we did not stop recording from the opening credit to the closing credits. It was a live show. It wasn't live to the audience, but it was live to the videotape machine. And only like a major power failure or something would get us to stop recording. So, she knew that, and she just learned to recover and keep going.

Diane: So, that explains why when she makes some kind of a mistake, a faux pas, it happens and she recovers in whatever way she can.

David: Yeah. And I think a lot of people would get upset, and just her nature was she just made a joke of it and found these ways to just recover and say something fun or amusing, and we just kept going.

Diane: Now I watched the segments on this new one, the *Julia* series. And it shows in those beginning shows that some of her helpers were actually crouched down behind the set. Is that accurate? They would hand her things?

David: Yeah, I guess so. I think that was back on the black and white series, and there's a famous picture of it, but I don't remember that happening on the series that I worked on in 1970, 1971. We did have a big, beautiful set that was built to her scale. She was my height, six foot two. I don't remember people crouching behind the counter and handing things to her. I just remember it was rehearsed all the way through or blocked all the way through, and she was by herself on the set as I remember it. But I don't deny the picture, and that was probably, could have been part of some joke or maybe, I think the one with a bunch of people all crouched around her is just a funny picture.

Diane: What was her husband Paul like?

David: Paul was a little distant, demanding, except when, because we had this seven-week trip to France, which I'm sure you're going to ask

me about, to shoot film, and my memory is when we got to southern France, where they had a house close to the coast, I just remember Paul being like a different person. He was much more fun and energetic, and let's do this or let's do, and showing us around, and that's my memory. He was like a different person. You know, he spoke the language as she did, but I think he enjoyed sending us places, having experiences while we were there in between shooting times.

Diane: From what I've read about their history is that it was Paul who introduced Julia to fine food and fine wine.

David: I guess.

Diane: She didn't even really know how to cook well. And that they lived in France for a while, and she took the cooking lessons at Le Cordon Bleu, and she took the private lessons. So, she learned how to cook, that's for sure. And obviously, she also knew how to teach because that's what her show was all about, really, teaching people how to cook, teaching Americans how to cook French food.

David: Yeah, but it was also designing her recipes to make it easy for people to cook. It wasn't this horribly difficult thing. I think her recipes were just designed to be accessible to people, more accessible than people really thought. I mean, an omelet's an omelet, what do you need? Eggs, butter, stir and throw it in a pan.

Diane: But the idea of cooking a French omelet is a little bit intimidating. So she took away that intimidation.

David: That's right. Until she showed you how easy it was in that first interview.

Diane: Was that interview true to form?

David: I don't know. I wasn't there. I wasn't there at that time. I hadn't even started working.



David Atwood

Diane: Well, let's get to France. What exactly was your role in this trip to France with Julia?

David: Well, my official role was director, but the way we did these, we had the best cameraman that WGBH had, Peter Hoving, he was amazing. And it was obvious from the get-go that you can't direct something which is basically ad lib.



Peter Hoving filming Julia at a market



L-R Ruth Lockwood, Daniel Berger, Nancy Troland, Will Morton, Julia Child, Peter Hoving in Cannes (David's feet in the foreground!)

There was a very small crew. Ruth, the producer, and Ruth's husband, who wasn't part of the crew, and Peter and myself and Nancy, a production assistant, and Will, the sound guy, and Will's wife came over for a while, and then this guy, Daniel, who is our age, who became our guide.

But there was nobody [to act as road manager, so] I ended up renting cars, booking hotel rooms, finding places to have dinner, I mean, taking care of all of this stuff, seeing equipment get moved. So I became the road manager, although when we were shooting, I would always give the go cue, which allez-y, and they would go together, so that became my role, and it needed to be done, and I did it and Peter did the directing brilliantly.



Camera gear, etc.

Diane: So, the whole goal of this trip, which was about seven weeks, was for you to visit various areas of France. Julia would be interviewing French chefs, real French chefs, as you said, quote, yes, in their restaurants, in their kitchens. These segments would be edited and they would be put into those live segments that got shot back in the studio.



David: Yeah, yeah. And Julia was like her own producer, too. She did all the research, she found all these chefs, she went and talked with them and interviewed them, and then figured out what dish, and then she wrote all of this in letters to send them back to Ruth, the producer. And we were getting closer to the time when we were supposed to leave for France, and we didn't have any plan. There was no plan. Then Ruth said, well, I booked a couple of flights to Paris and there was no plan beyond that.

So, I was terrified because I'd never been to Europe, I'd never shot, done a film shoot, I was terrified. So, I finally said to Ruth, can I see Julia's letters? She said, oh, yeah, here, and she handed me the letters. So, I read the letters, and from the letters, I made up from scratch a schedule for the whole shoot, the whole time, starting with going a week early, surveying in Paris, going up to Rouen, surveying up there, and amazingly, we never left that schedule except at the very end when Peter got hurt, basically by so much shoulder camera work that he had pulled muscles. So maybe we skipped, you know, one day at the very end. Other

than that, we stayed on that schedule that I made up from scratch from her letters.

Diane: Obviously, they picked the right person to be the director.

David: Well, no, because I was terrified. You know, what are we going to do?

Diane: Your experience was in the studio, which is a totally different environment than being out in the field. Explain the difference, for people who don't know.

David: Well, in the studio, you're in the studio in a control room, and it's multi-camera and you're cutting the cameras, taking one, take two, three, whatever, as the things unfold in front of you. Some of it is ad lib, some of it is well-rehearsed. It's just a very different experience than being in a single camera, single film camera shoot out on location someplace.

Diane: So when you're out on location, she's used to ad libbing and she would have done ad libbing out there, even though in both instances she had an idea of what she wanted to say. But there's a lot of kind of conversational style?



David: In all instances, she had found these chefs and picked a recipe, gone and met with them, spent time with them, basically like a producer. And when I watched some of these episodes later, I was amazed. I didn't appreciate it at the time about the number of roles that she played.

First, as a producer who had lined up this person and said what the recipe was going to be and figured it all out ahead of time. She was a host. She was being a host. She was a translator. She translated everything as we went. She translated all the French into English as we went. She just fitted right in naturally, somehow. And then she also helped cook. She was all doing all these things at once. Totally amazing.



Diane: Did you get to eat the food that they cooked?

David: Not a lot.

Diane: But some.

David: Some, yeah, but rather than stop and get something to eat there on that recipe, we needed to get cleaned up, packed up, loaded back up in our wagon, and get ready for the next day.



David and Daniel eating at a restaurant in Rouen

One of my joys of the whole trip was our entertainment was dinner. Every night we went out as a group to dinner, and we would spend two hours or more having wine, having one course after the other, having conversations. I had never experienced that in my family in my life. And I came away from it going, wow, this is great.

Diane: And are you talking about just the crew, or did Paul and Julia at least tell you where you ought to go and eat?

David: No. So, we did have dinner with Paul and Julia occasionally. We had a wonderful dinner in Paris when we were out on the survey. This is a story from the trip, a great story from the trip. So, we went to the restaurant La Tour d'Argent, which was, I think, a five-star restaurant. We were on the survey, so, it was me and maybe Peter Hoving, the cameraman. The other crew hadn't arrived yet, and Daniel, our incredible guide. I'd never been to a five-star restaurant in my life and, of course, it was fabulous. And Daniel was kind of sitting kitty-corner from

me, and he leans over and he says, we have to leave pretty soon. I said, oh, why do we have to leave pretty soon? Why, he said, there's a concert at midnight that we're taking you to. Me and my girlfriend, who was actually his wife, but nobody knew it. So we excused ourselves. We went down. She met us there in this tiny sports car. We crammed into the sports car, drove like, either she or he drove like a mad person through the streets of Paris. Ended up at this concert venue, went in, and it was a Tom Paxton concert, American folk singer. And I was like, wow.

And so for the whole first half, I'm just sitting there appreciating so much the lyrics and the subtleties in his lyrics, and these folk songs, much more than I had appreciated before. And I liked that music and played some of it. We came to intermission, and I said to Daniel, I'd really like to go say hi to him backstage. And Daniel said, oh, that's easy. Just go over there to that door, to the stage, when they open the doors just start talking American.

And so I went up and knocked. Somebody opened the door. I said hi, I'm David Atwood, and the door immediately opens and they let me in because they think that I'm with Tom Paxton, of course. I went back and had a lovely little conversation with him, said hello, and came out and enjoyed the rest of the concert.

Diane: That's a great story. And I have to make sure that we add that you are a musician.

David: Well, kind of, yeah.

Diane: And that's the kind of music you played back then?

David: Yes, yes, that is the kind of music.

Diane: The other thing that struck me is that you said that you were still all there in the restaurant, eating at midnight. That's how the meals, went on and on and on?

David: Wonderful. Multiple courses, more wine, more courses, more wine. I loved it.

Diane: And conversation?

David: Yup.

Diane: So, did you bring that habit back home with you then? Did the way you ate your meals change at least some of the time?

David: Yes, at least some of the time, yes, very definitely.

Diane: And your appreciation for food, did that change in any way? For the taste of food?



The crew grabbing lunch on their way to Marseille

David: Yes.

Diane: Do you have any examples of anything that you might have learned about appreciating food? Did you get introduced to foods that

you had never tried before or maybe something you thought you didn't like?

David: I had a severe dislike of fish growing up because my aunt said when I was living with her while my dad was in the war, she would say, watch out for the bones, watch out for the bones. So, I disliked all fish except swordfish, which I was told doesn't have bones in it.

So, we went to this one restaurant, Prunier, in Paris, where we were going to film a whole segment on frog's legs, and they invited us upstairs to a private dining room, and they fed us this incredible meal. I think it was in the afternoon. Unbelievable. Course after course, more wine, more wine. And then finally the main dish came, and it was turbot, which is a fish, in a champagne sauce. And I think I was so drunk at that point on the wine that I got over my fear of fish, and I ate it, and I went, wow, this is delicious. This is unbelievable. And from that point on, I started eating fish.

Diane: Good for you. Good for you. You also have a frog leg story, don't you?

David: Well, the frog's leg story comes from the same restaurant. So we did come back. We shot the segment down in the kitchen, which was down in the cellar below grade with this huge black iron stove with this guy shoveling coal into it, and then chefs working both sides of it. So, we shot the segment. But then Peter was really concerned because the camera was so hot, it was near the stove, and he could barely touch it. And he said you know what? We've got to go back and reshoot this. He said I can't guarantee this film is going to be processed, you know, make it through processing with that kind of heat. So we went back the next day, I think, and we reshot the whole segment, and he adjusted the camera so he wasn't quite as close to the stove. And the sad thing was that maybe because of the reshoot or something like that, we got the workprint, which is the print you used to edit the film with, and we edited that, and when we sent it to the lab to have it conformed, which

means taking the original film and cutting it to the way the workprint is cut to, they had lost the original. There was no original, and we lost the whole piece. You couldn't air workprint. It was all dirty, and so that's the frog's legs, which is not a great story, but ...

Diane: So, that segment never aired at all? Did she just make do with something else for frog's legs or?

David: Yeah. I don't know what happened. She might have done a frog's legs show, but of course, we didn't have any film to put in it.

Diane: So you went to Paris. What are all the places you went to?

David: We went to Paris. We surveyed in Paris. We drove up to Rouen, we surveyed up there, and that was for pressed duck or something. We came back to Paris. We did some more survey. We flew to Nice. We met the crew in Nice. We shot segments in Nice. Cannes. We drove to Marseille. We shot in Marseille. There's a great story from that.

Diane: What?



David: When we were in Marseille, Marseille, the port city, and the film segment was going to be shot in the old port where the fishing boats come in, and on that occasion, we had dinner with Paul and Julia. It was one of the rare occasions. We went for bouillabaisse, which is the famous fish recipe.

And then afterward, somebody said, maybe Daniel, he said, let's drive up to the mountain. There was this mountain, and he said, there's a lookout up there where you can just walk out on this lookout and look down at the city. There was a monastery up above on the hill. We drove up. We were the only ones, only car in the parking lot. We got out. We walked out on this boardwalk and looked down at the city, had a cigarette, whatever. It was beautiful. It was magical.

Walked back, got in the car, that was me and Peter and Nancy, Daniel, and then Nancy, our PA said, oh, my pocketbook's gone. We went what? She said I left my pocketbook here in the wagon. I said, what? Really? She said, yeah, and it had all of our per diem money in it. We went, oh,

my God because we weren't taking, we were holding back on per diem because, and we were getting \$35 a day, which was more than we even needed, but in French paper, that's a lot of paper for all six or whatever, so, her bag was stuffed.

So, we went down to the Marseille Police Station. Marseille, by reputation, was a pretty rough city. And we went to the police station, Peter and Nancy and I, and then Daniel took off to go talk to the cops, whatever. Daniel's gone like an hour or more. Everything Daniel did he always succeeded at doing, but it usually took a lot of conversation to get there.

So, he comes back to us and he says, they have the pocketbook. And we went what? They have the pocketbook and they have the money. And we said, well, give us it and we'll get out of here. And they said, no, they want you to press charges now. And Nancy was like, can we just have the pocketbook and we'll leave?

So, I think we must have asked, how do they have the pocketbook? This is like, impossible, right? They said, well, the cops drove by a park, a small park, and they saw this guy and he was acting strange, and he was like stuffing stuff into his shoes or socks or whatever. They found out that what he was stuffing in was money. He was trying, all this paper he was trying to hide it. So, they got him, they got the pocketbook, they got all the money, and they came down to, brought him down to the police station. It was amazing.

Diane: Did you end up pressing charges or did she?

David: No, after much more negotiation, we ended up leaving. I think we even gave the guy a ride home.

Diane: You gave the thief a ride home?

David: I think we did. What are we, just were innocent Americans. Just give us back the money and we'll go on our way.

Diane: Oh, my gosh. I'm surprised you didn't give them a little tip.

David: I know, I know.

Diane: Well, you had lots of adventures. You saw lots of kitchens. You mentioned one of those kitchens being down in the basement. Were all the kitchens different?

David: Everything was different. Every kitchen was different, yeah.

Diane: Were there any meals or any kitchens that really stand out for you that were part of the show?

David: Well, that kitchen at Prunier where we did the frog's legs. That's the one that stands out. And the thing that I left out was all white walls, but the walls were covered with these little slogans in French, like a stitch in time saves nine, right? All over the place. They were covered with these slogans, and I'd never seen anything like that in my life.

Diane: Did you learn how to speak French?

David: I took French in both high school and in college, I think two years each, and my French got a lot better fast when I was there. I mean, I couldn't discuss politics, but I could rent cars, line up hotel rooms, take care of stuff in the process of getting us around town and to where we needed to go. I could get by.

Diane: And I'm curious, how were you treated? Like sometimes when Americans show up in European cities, they're not always welcome or that was the case. Did that ever happen to you?

David: If you spoke French, and when I went back to Paris years later, this wasn't true. But at that time, if you spoke English, you weren't respected. They didn't want to deal with you. If you spoke French, even a little bit or even if you tried, they appreciated that greatly and responded. I mean, they'd even switch into English to help you out if you needed it, as I remember. But if you were trying to speak the language, which I was doing, then you earned their respect.

Diane: So all in all, it was a pretty favorable kind of a trip.

David: Oh, it was wonderful. It was magical. We had this one more little story. Our guide Daniel came to us. We had a weekend free, I think it was a weekend, and he says we're going to go to Le Mans, the race at Le Mans this weekend. And some of us probably didn't even know what the race at Le Mans was, but it's an incredibly famous auto race.

So, okay, and it turned out to be me and Nancy and Daniel, and he says, I want you to put some equipment, go get some film cases, you know, equipment cases and put them in the back of the wagon. I did that, and we take off and we drive all the way up, and then we drive to this like out of a movie, this house with walls surrounding, and he said turn in here.

We turn into this courtyard. He goes over and knocks on the door. It turns out this is family. This woman opens the door and she's got a nightgown and a hat and lets us in, and we stay there that night. We had breakfast the next morning and we head for Le Mans, the race.

So, we don't have any tickets or anything like that. So, everywhere we get stopped. And Daniel points to the equipment. We're American journalists, we're going to shoot film and they let us in, let us by. And then the next circle he talks us through, and the next one he talks us through. When we finally arrive in the parking lot and Nancy and I go, this is never going to work. Daniel leaves, comes back in an hour, and he's got press passes for us. And the press passes allowed us not to be in the stands, but actually right down front, right by the race.

And there's pictures of this, too. And I bring a film camera and I filmed some of it. And Nancy's trying to take still photographs. She's kind of shooting across the track, but by the time she presses the shutter, the car is like 5 miles down the road. I mean, these are going like 180 miles an hour or something like that. We have a wonderful time. And we drive back and we've been to the race at Le Mans.



David shooting film at Le Mans

Diane: So, it wasn't just all about food this trip.

David: No.

Diane: But the trip ended and you had to come back home, back to reality?

David: Well, Peter had injured himself with a camera, lugging this film camera around. There's a great picture with Julia with the camera on her shoulder because she asked Peter one time, she says, is that heavy? And he hands it to her and she puts it up on her shoulder. It's a marvelous picture.



So, Peter, we took him to a French hospital, which looked like something out of World War II, and Peter went... he was actually Dutch and his parents were in Holland, and so he went there and he got treatment. He was eligible for healthcare there and he got treated and then Nancy and I drove up, got him, brought him back, flew to Paris, and flew home.

Diane: Because of the injury, there was no more filming, but you were at the end anyway?

David: We were at the end anyway, we were basically done. There was one shoot back in Paris that we were going to do, which we ended up not doing

Diane: All those segments that were taped, the interviews, and then we called it Broll. Like, you have pictures just of people working in the kitchens or the fishermen out to sea, all of that raw film you brought back to the studio. And then what did you do with all of that?

David: Well, we had machines for editing film at that time.

Diane: These days you just do it on your computer. How did you do it back then?

David: You put in this big machine which had these round plates where you spooled the film onto, and then you cut it and hung it up. You cut out sections, hung them on these racks, and then you put it together piece by piece, taped it together, and then that was the piece.

Diane: Literally taped together with a piece of tape?

David: Right. That was the workprint. The workprint's a copy of the original print, which you can work with and get it dirty in the process of splicing and unsplicing. But when the workprint is done and it's approved, that's what's sent off to the lab, and then they pull the corresponding pieces of film from the original and they splice it together, not with tape, but with glue, I think, yeah, with glue, and that's your piece.

Diane: And then back in the studio, were you involved in the in-studio taping of the shows that went with all of this?

David: Yeah, I directed those. That was pretty standard stuff, except for rolling in the film, which we did live, as I remember. But that was the standard cooking process, you know, that had been developed over the years with Julia and other chefs.

Diane: So she had already interviewed a chef and maybe cooked with a chef, but in-studio, did she cook all over again? Did she do her usual schtick with the recipe and then this was just added to it?

David: She did all of introducing the recipe and doing the preparation, and maybe then for a certain part of the recipe, she said, let's go to France and we'd go to France and she's there with the chef, and they cook that part of the recipe, and then we come back to the studio.

Diane: This whole experience, I think, changed your life in some ways.

David: Yeah, really, it did.

Diane: Talking about it, do you have France in your head now, you want to go back and visit?

David: Well, I've been back several times since then on just vacation trips a couple of times, I think. And what was different was they wanted you to speak English so they could learn.

Diane: And what about your relationship with Julia? You started this trip and you really didn't know her.

David: My relationship was fine. It was professional but pleasant. And, I mean, I think she was a delight to work with. You absorbed her energy. She had so much enthusiasm and energy for what she was doing, and it just, it was catching.

There's a segment, I think, in the new *Julia* series, it said something about Julia complained about the kitchen, and I shook my head and I said, in my memory, I never remember Julia complaining about anything. She didn't complain. She just made do.

I think, one point in the new kitchen, 1970, which was built for her, built to her scale, she said that the ovens, which were off to her right, were too low, you know, and could they be brought up higher? And we just had the set people come in, take them out, move them up because she wanted it to be easier for her to reach in and she wanted, it would be easier for the audience to see things going in and out, and she was right. And it was probably not a big deal, but that's not, to me was never complaining, that was just making a suggestion of what she thought would make a better shot.

But I thought she was just a delight. I only worked with her for what, a couple of years, and many years later she was in doing a fundraising thing. She was cooking with some famous Boston chef and they were doing it on one of these fundraising drives. And I was out in the scene dock, which is the area outside the studio where you kept scenic things.

And I walked around the corner and there she was and she threw her arms wide and she said, David, and she came over and gave me a huge hug and I haven't seen her in years and years and years. It was wonderful.

Diane: Well, that's a perfect way to end our interview.

David: Well, it was a great experience. I was very lucky. I was in the right place at the right time. Suddenly I was the director for the new series in color and I was on my way to France for seven weeks, and wow.



David Atwood and Julia Child in the studio/Source: WGBH

Diane: Trip of a lifetime.

David: Yeah.

Diane: Well, thank you for sharing some of your stories and your adventure with us. And I think that maybe when the family gets together this summer, you're going to have to whip up some French cuisine and break open some bottles of good wine for us.

David: I'm probably not the chef to do that. Somebody else is a better chef than I am. I could whip up a really good slide show.

Diane: Okay. Sounds good.

David: Thank you, Diane. Have a great day.

Diane: Okay. Thank you so much.

David: My pleasure.

Diane Atwood: That brings us to the end of this episode of the Catching Your Memories podcast. Many thanks to David Atwood for sharing memories of his trip to France with Julia Child. If you'd like to read a transcript of this episode and see some pictures from the trip, go to CatchingYourMemories.com/podcast. Be sure to come back in two weeks for another episode of Catching Your Memories.

I'm always looking for people to interview for the podcast, if you'd like to be considered, send me an email diane@dianeatwood.com.

And if you have stories or memories you would rather not share in a podcast but would like to preserve for your family, I also record personal interviews. You can learn more about that, including pricing, at CatchingYourMemories.com.

This podcast was created, produced, recorded, and edited by me ...
Diane Atwood. Catching Your Memories — The interview of a lifetime.