

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Actors/Actresses - Ohio

Personal Experience

O H. 897

PAUL KIMPEL

Interviewed

by

Carol Mills

on

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M: This is an interview with Paul Kimpel for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Theater People from Ohio by Carol Mills, on November 5, 1981

Were you born in this area?

K No, I was born in southern Ohio down in Monroe County

M. Where is Monroe County?

K It is 30 miles below Wheeling on the Ohio side of the Ohio River past Dillies, Bottom, and Fly

K Yes Towns down there have real names I was born in Clarington on the bank of a river in a big house

M What river?

K Ohio My mother and father were both teachers My dad was the principal and superintendent of schools, and my mother was a fourth grade teacher, I believe she taught under him. This was in the late 1920's and early 1930's It was Depression time

M I want you to tell me some of the things that you most remember growing up like that in Ohio

K Probably the thing I remember most has a bearing on what I am doing today We lived right above the wharf along the Ohio River I was a kid of three or four or five years old We left there when I was five Showboats used to tie up at the wharf right below our house along the wharf I have this memory of going across a gangplank with my parents It was evening We went and sat down in the showboat The only thing I can remember about the show was there was a tall, white picket fence with great, oversized sunflowers drooping over the fence In front of the fence were two black-faced comedians dancing That is the only thing I can remember of the showboat experience, but it has stayed with me I suppose somehow or other, that along the line influenced me We left Clarington when I was five years old and moved to Warren, Ohio We were involved in the dairy business.

M You worked at the dairy?

K I worked at the dairy when I was in the sixth grade right through high school

M When did you start being interested in artistic things?

K I think I was in the second grade. The teacher got all winged out about it. I suddenly found out that there was an audience for this kind of thing. So I became interested in drawing anything I could so that I would get praise.

When I was in grade school, we would bring out quarters once a year to school. The teacher would collect them. Then in the afternoon we would walk out through the playground, across the street, through the baseball field behind Hayes Junior High School and go and sit in the auditorium, and we would see a fairy tale by the Clare Treemajor Touring Children's Theater Group.

M Would you spell Clare Tree C-L-A-R-E

K Yes, T-R-E-E-M-A-J-E-R

M That was her name?

K That was her name, yes. They were a group of professional actors, they were adults who toured all over the United States for quite a few years, and they did fairy tales. I remember costumes and scenery and lights. It was a magical experience.

M They do not have anything like that anymore, do they?

K No, they do not tour. They toured through the war years I am sure, but then I think they disbanded.

Also in the second grade I had another experience which led me toward the arts, I think. I was cast in the title role for a school carnival as E. Paminaumds.

M I am not sure who that is.

K I am not sure who E. Paminaumds is either, but evidently it is an old children's story. I am sure if you heard it, you would recognize it. E. Paminaumds' mother keeps sending him to his aunt's house to get butter. He comes back and the butter is all melted, and she says that he should have wrapped it in cool leaves and dipped it in the spring water which would have kept it all the way home, so she sends him to get a kitten. He wraps the kitten in cool leaves and dips it in the spring water and brings it home. Of course, it is dead. She says that he should have put that in a basket. She keeps sending this poor idiot back to his aunt's and he always does the wrong thing with whatever it is that she sent him for.

M That is a sad story

K Yes, it is very sad. It was probably even sadder because the night of play my mother got me in my costume and sent me off all scrubbed and shining to perform. The girl who was playing my mother arrived in a mammie costume with burnt cork all over her face. We played the show that way, and it was a great success. Once again we had applause, so I think that is one of the crucial points why I went into the arts.

M: Do you think that is why everybody does it by some spark along the way that somebody lauded them?

K I think so.

M I did. I know.

K Sure. I think it is very definitely. Probably you needed that extra bit of approval, and so you find it in that sort of situation. By golly, you are going to get more.

M You mainly were in just drawing and art in school then, not in the theater itself?

K Not until high school. Then I became interested in theater. I had drama classes. We did not have classes, we had a drama club, and I was active in that. That was when I decided I was going to be a great actor and a movie star and all sorts of wonderful things.

M The same thing I decided.

K I think a lot of us decided that. Of course, every Saturday it was going down to the Robin's Theater and seeing the least Hollywood offering and knowing damn well that you were going to be there someday.

M Tell us some of those things you have decided.

K I was in the Robins Theater last night. There was a committee that was started to try to find a use for the Robins Theater. They are trying to decide whether it can be restored and put to a useful purpose. There was a cocktail party there last night. The mayor and his committee had invited a group of people, businessmen, and people in the arts to come tour the thing and see if they felt there was any hope for it.

M Did you have any ideas?

K I think it definitely should be restored and do away with Packard Music Hall. Just turn that into a basketball court.

M Where is that in Warren?

K It is right downtown

M On what street?

K On Market Street, on the corner of Market Street and Vine Street It was interesting to see it because I do not think I have ever seen it with the lights turned on inside There are some wonderful things in there It even has a stage house on it I think it has great potential if they had a good idea They have all of the office buildings around it as a block They can get businesses and offices in there and put a parking garage behind it so to service those things during the day it will help to maintain the theater which would be very nice

M Warren seemed to do more magical things per capita based on the population in Youngstown Their restaurants out do Youngstown for a small town

K Of course, when Kennley came in there, that gave all of the restaurants a great shot in the arm. I remember when he came in. I would not have given him a chance in hell of pulling it off, but he certainly did

M Why did he choose Warren?

K Because it was centered in a big cosmopolitan area You could draw from Youngstown, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Akron, and so on He did it It was amazing.

I opened an art gallery in Warren I agree with you that not a lot happened there, but I opened an art gallery because I thought Warren was really getting into the arts I can blame Warren and myself for it not being successful Maybe I did not want to be successful

M: How old were you?

K I was in my 30's

K You did a lot between when you were in your 30's and .

K Oh yes

M You can talk about that, but I want to get when you went to college and you went

away and you designed sets

K I graduated from Harding High School. I went to Ohio University extensively to major in horticulture because I liked to grow flowers. They were having readings for the first major play of the season which was "Little Foxes". Horticulture rapidly faded into the background, and I became a theater manager. I met some people who turned out to be very close friends. We spent two summers in Camden, Maine doing summer stock as a result of the people I met.

M How old about were you at this time?

K 19. That was the era of the summer stock boom. Everybody wanted to have a barn or some enclosure where they could open a summer stock theater. They were everywhere. If you really wanted to do work, you could get into one. Some of them you had to pay tuition to get into or pay your way. I was fortunate, I never had to pay anybody. I always got board and room and lease.

M By helping with the designs?

K Yes.

M You worked your way through.

K Working and painting.

M In other words, you were given compensation for your artistic ability.

K Right. Three of us decided at one point at Ohio University to open our own summer stock theater in Chillicothe, Ohio. We hitchhiked back and forth from Athens to Chillicothe every weekend.

M Who were those other two? Do you still see them?

K I hear from one of them occasionally, every once a year at Christmas time. Tracy Helson and Ester Yaya.

M Ester Yaya?

K Yes.

M That is a real name?

K That is a real name.

M What nationality is that?

K Syrian and Jewish Anyway, we opened a summer stock theater there Artistically, it was a triumph, financially, it was a failure We did not try that again That was after it was a failure. That was after three years at Ohio University Then, of course, I decided that I was ready for New York

M You went to New York?

K Basically, because most of my friends had already graduated, and they went to New York

M About what year was this, I mean roughly?

K 1949 So I went to New York for a year I did all the things you are supposed to do, I made the rounds

M Tell those things What they taught us we were supposed to do

K We were supposed to have pictures made and have a resume You kept a list of all the producer's offices, and you made the rounds once a week. You went to these places You would leave a picture, and they probably threw them out as soon as you left You did this as a regular, routine thing for the first month or two, then you realized that the whole thing was a bunch of

M And you had to eat.

K Right

M You were running out of tokens.

K Right, right. You stopped making the rounds and you drank a lot of coffee I began to realize that I was grossly unprepared for this kind of thing in New York, and that I did not really like New York I was very happy to leave it, but I left because I decided that I needed something more secure

M. You really had that good a judgement at that young of an age

K Yes, right I went back to college I went to the Cleveland Institute of Art and studied painting

M I did not know you studied

- K: Well, the life of a painter is no more secure than a life of an actor. It seemed highly logical to me to become a painter if I could not be an actor. So I went to Cleveland Institute of Art, and I took five years of painting.
- M: Five years?
- K: Yes. So I had three years of college at Ohio University and five years of painting at the Cleveland Institute of Art. Cleveland Institute of Art accepted one hour of credit from Ohio University because it is professional school and that was not.
- M: How did you get yourself through there? More scholarships?
- K: I had a good family who was very helpful.
- M: Tell me about that place.
- K: Cleveland Institute of Art was very frightening to me. I was the oldest student in the freshman class because I had been away for four years. Most of them were coming out of Cleveland schools where they were majoring in art for four years before they got there. I had to work like a damn fool to keep up. I caught up.
- M: What is the curriculum at an art school that just concentrates on that? I never thought about what you would do? Did you just study formulas?
- K: You had life drawing classes twice a week all day long. As a freshman, you had color and comp classes, basics in drawing, history of art, water coloring, you started out in water coloring.
- M: You had like a brother Theo who helped send the canvas money, right?
- K: Right. I went there for four years. First I went for four years. Then I was going to turn 26 which meant that Uncle Sam could not draft me anymore, but then he drafted me. I became a Korean War Veteran at that point. I came back, and I had to take a fifth year at the art school to get my degree in painting. Then as soon as I graduated from there I went back to Warren, and I got a job in an advertising office doing layouts.
- M: What made you choose to go back to Warren right at that time? You were a true cosmopolitan person.
- K: Yes. I do not like big cities, I guess, when you come right down to it. I prefer grass and trees. I do not feel comfortable in a large city. When I was in my last year at art school, I got involved in a theater company. I was painting at home.

three days a week, and two days a week I would go up to the art school and take my paintings up there and have them critiqued and so on. I was home all the time, and I got involved in the theater group in Warren called Trumbull New Theater.

M That was how you met Mrs. Pendleton?

K Yes

M She was running that group?

K Yes

M Were they still renting in Mrs. Pendleton's living room?

K No. At that time they had gone to the place above the cheese factory, the delicatessen down on Main Street.

M I do not remember her telling me about that.

K It was an Italian delicatessen. They had cheese and sausage and all sorts of things. They had the loft up above where they could seat about 40 or 50 people. I do not remember how many because by the time I joined the group the fire marshal closed them.

M What year was this?

K That was 1956.

M Would you please tell how you met those ladies and the influence, you feel, they may have had on the area at the time,

K Well, there had been a theater group there before Joe's Kerner's Players in the 1920's and 1930's. During the war there was nothing really there. The YWCA, (Young Women's Christian Association) started a group, and they asked Dorothy because she was English, I guess, to direct it. They had outgrown the YWCA, and they needed a place to do their shows there, and eventually it got too big for their house. Then they found this loft building on Main Street in Warren which was above this cheese and sausage place. They did a number of shows there, it was a nice little theater. By the time I had joined them in 1956, the fire marshal had closed it because it did not have adequate equipped exits.

M Did they always call themselves the Trumbull New Theater?

K Yes, as far as I know they did. At that time when I joined they were doing the shows in Turner Junior High School.

M Which was what year?

K That was 1956 or 1957.

M. When I met you there in the early 1960's which was several years later, you were doing literally everything at the theater, acting, directing, painting sets, designing sets, making and designing costumes, baby-sitting people's children, cooking for people, bringing snacks in, transporting things, taking scenery. I was totally in awe of you. Did you do that right from when you first went there?

K It started pretty quick, yes. It started basically that I did two sets at Turner Junior High School. They had already purchased the land down on Youngstown Road to build their own building. Then we went ahead and built the building. There is a wonderful article in "Theater World" by Tom Shroth about that whole episode. We presold the first season which was to open in September or October. The show was cast. The opening show was to be "Seven Year Itch". Francis was directing, and the cast was in rehearsal while the rest of us were out there building the theater. We had a lot of rain, so the theater was never completed before March. But we had sold a complete season of shows. All this time, something like from June until the next March, "Seven Year Itch" was rehearsing waiting for our theater to be ready to open.

M. When did it open?

K In March of the following year.

M Which was?

K That would have been 1957, I think. We worked out there all winter in the snow and without heat, light, and so on. We were running extension cords from the neighbor's houses so that we could build. We finally opened the theater.

M The neighbors were very supportive?

K Yes. So then we played a full season of four shows from March through August. Then we started the next season at the end of September, I think.

M: There were a lot of people who had come out of that area who have had really outstanding ability. I remember I went there because I always wanted to do it, and it changed my whole way of living. It gave me something that I had to do. I think that is what those kind of places do for you.

K: They definitely do.

M: What do you feel about that?

K: I think that is very definitely, I look around at the people at the Youngstown Playhouse and wonder why they are here. I had one big argument with my father. He was very big in Masonic and Shrine and so on. I was not interested in being a Mason. When I finally took a stand and said that I would not be a Mason, we had one of our biggest family quarrels. I told him that he had his ceremony, the pomp, and everything in the Masons that satisfied him. I have the theater, it is the same thing, it satisfied me. I think that is what the American people are missing. That is why there are so many clubs and so on, they have to have some kind of pomp. We get it through the theater.

M: England gets it through her king and queen.

K: Yes.

M: You do miss having that something to look up to like a fairy tale.

K: Right. At that time when you came to TNT (Trumbull New Theater) I was doing all of those things. Before that when we were building the theater, it had started to interfere with my job; so I quit my job.

M: What was your job?

K: I was working for Sherman's Advertising Agency.

M: It got in the way?

K: Absolutely, so I quit. I taught painting classes to keep the car running and keep me in cigarettes and coffee. Then, of course, there were a lot of friends. It was all like a big family at TNT, so there was always someplace one could eat if one had no place else or the means to do it.

M: I miss that family thing. When I went to New York, I thought I would find

that in a different way, in little groups They are not like that in New York

K That was one of the reasons when I left New York why I decided not to go into professional theater. First of all, I did not want to be a union person I did not want to have to pay dues to a group and have somebody else telling me how I could work Of course, in New York in my field, I would have to join a number of different unions to do the things that I do

M What are those unions? Just name a few

K Costuming, scenic painting, scenic building, scenic designing They are all separate unions Charles Meszinger had a whole pile of union cards because he could not touch anything on his set if it did not belong to that union

M And lighting designer

K And lighting and all that sort of thing.

M He was mainly lighting and scenery, right?

K. Yes I decided what would really suit me most would be a designer in a community theater which would pay me a living wage and allow me to have a home and be settled I won

M. You got your way

K. I won. Now I have no place to go

M. You have made that decision early I did not realize that

K. Yes I have been to Europe and to the eastern United States, but I decided that it did not matter where you were because the problems were all the same, so I might as well be someplace where I like it I basically like it more.

M I find out that I like it in this area a lot more than I realized when I moved to New York I never felt permanent there

K No. I never felt that at all I just wrote it off If somebody I would happen to write something or I should paint well enough that my work can go there, fine I really did not care about living there I think the whole artistic climate is changing in the country so that people do not have to be in New

York to be successful.

M. The emphasis is regional more now from what I hear and run into.

K. Right, right. It is happening all over the country. Some think that we are ahead of the movement. Then I got this bright idea that I was going to open an art gallery since I was teaching painting classes for somebody else. I wondered why I did not open my own place and get all of the money from classes.

M. That was a bright idea.

K. Yes. So I opened an art gallery down on Washington Street in Warren. People came and looked and asked what it was. They did not understand. Fortunately, I had a lot of students who paid the rent, the mortgage on the building. It kept me in gasoline and tuna fish. I could still devote the evenings to TNT. I reached a point with the gallery, finally, where I either had to enlarge it so that I could have larger shows more often or close. So I decided to ask them about the job at the Youngstown Playhouse that was open. I happened to be doing a show here at the time.

M. They called you in?

K. I came over for a show. I was doing "Zoo Story". They were between designers at the time. The job was open, and so I applied.

M. You were acting in "Zoo Story"?

K. Right. So I got the job there, and I have been there for 17 years.

M. Of course, it should be mentioned here probably that like in my own home which I certainly do not have great art hanging except prints. My son said that we only have one genuine piece of art in our living room and that is the picture Paul Kimpel gave me of his that he painted in 16 minutes for a play once. It is two people sitting at a cafe. You blobbed it together, you did do it in about less than 15 minutes. My son said that was the only piece of art we have. Your style is unique.

K. I am glad I went this way because I met my wife here. I found her here.

M. Paul Kimpel is going to tell a little bit about how he met his wife at the Youngstown Playhouse.

K Katy had been teaching, and she was putting herself through school at the same time She finally graduated, and she was teaching She found that she had evenings free, and she locked herself up in her apartment enjoying her freedom not having to be anyplace in the evenings Tom Lyden who was active in the Playhouse for the technical end here was a friend of Katy's He told her that she had to get out of her apartment He told her to go over to TNT or to the Youngstown Playhouse and work lights on a show She finally agreed I happened to be in the show "Romeo and Juliet", and she was working lights We became friends, and she started coming in and helping with scenery occasionally and so on She finally said that she was not going to come in anymore because it was tying up all of her evenings and she wanted her free time I did not see her all summer In the fall I called her to see if she was going to come over and help She said that she was not going to and that she wanted her evenings free She dropped in a few times They were having a Ruby Ball, a 40th anniversary ball I called and asked her to go to the ball with me That was different going to a dance then coming over in grubbies and painting

M. And making costumes, yes?

K. Yes. No, she had not been making costumes

M Oh, she did not?

K No, she was just working on lights, and she was painting scenery and helping around We went to the Ruby Ball, and that was in the first of November On the December 23 we eloped to Winchester, Virginia

M I remember that very vividly That was 1965?

K Right We came back on December 26th to work on the set to finish the set of the show that was going to open in a week Katy was drafted to do costumes on the next show From then on she was teaching all day at the Youngstown grade school I would pick her up at school and bring her in, and we would work until midnight on costumes Our marriage survived that first year somehow or another

M Where did you live the first year?

K We lived in Warren in the house where my art gallery was We then found our present house a year later in Gustavus, Ohio I directed a playhouse there for the big Fourth of July Homecoming celebration which is the big event of the year I said that I would direct it as long as I could have open readings I heard grumblings that "they" always get the parts. I did not

know who "they" were, so I had open readings. I casted whoever I wanted to. I went home and told Katy that I had all kinds of people who had never been in shows before and that I really had the community involved. After each rehearsal I would go home and say such and such was related to so and so. Before I finished the whole cast was related to each other. I was still the outsider. That was the way it was. They lived on big family farms that have just been retained in the families, and they have been intermarrying through the few communities that surrounded it. But everybody, basically, is related. But we live 34 miles north of the Youngstown Playhouse which is very nice.

M: I think you should talk about some of the hours and the different things that you run into without mentioning names, unless you want to, relate some of what we call crazy theater experiences. You really are in the position to know all the fables.

K: I think since Youngstown is considered a steel town that the Youngstown Playhouse and the Butler Institute of American Art are basically inaccurate to what people think of Youngstown. When I was a kid, we used to prepare for two months before we would take a trip from Warren to Youngstown because it was a big city. It really is not a big city, it is a small town. There are three cultural institutions here, and the Youngstown Playhouse is a fantastic theater. It is unreal.

M: I would like you to talk a great deal about that night now because it is well known as is Warren's TNT on both coasts and regionally across the country. I found that to my great delight when I went to Maine and places like that when you mentioned the Youngstown Playhouse and Warren TNT, they are well thought of.

K: Katy has run into people when she is doing art lectures. They are people from out of the area here. They had said that they are familiar with the Youngstown Playhouse and so forth. It amazes me that I have the job here that I do.

M: Tell about the structure itself and how it suits you so well. You do, have about as much autonomy as an artist can have and still work on a paving scale.

K: Right.

M: I mean, you did not have it always, but you inched towards it.

K: It has gone from a community theater to a manned semi-professional staff really when you get right down to it. On the technical staff we have basically four people, sometimes we have less but never have more. It is a very heavy schedule for a community theater.

M: Tell about that.

K: We do eight major shows a year that the Playhouse does. At the same time on the same stage the children's theater does four shows. Currently we are doing two shows for high school students, they are plays for high school students. That adds up quickly. Of course, then there are many other activities that happen in the Playhouse. Everything has to revolve around our major season which is the reason we are here. There are all these other things that are happening. There are directing classes going on. The educational end of it, I think, has a long way to go yet, but it has provided a lot of running experience for a lot of people in the area.

M: Without those two theaters I would not have had any outside life at all raising my children. That was all that I had to offer. Mostly all of the people who I know are from here.

K: Both my kids are quite at home with the theater. They are not easily impressed by many things. They are quite good critics.

M: Yes, they are. That happens with kids who grow up around the theater.

K: Yes. They are very astute critics. I think mine probably will be as they get older. I like that, I do not object to that at all.

M: The earlier the better.

K: Right. We produce a lot of mediocrity here. Every community theater does, every theater does.

M: Public likes it in some degree, the mass.

K: Right. There are plays we would love to do, but this is a midwest community. It is still a church community really when you come right down to it, and they do not like to believe that somebody who is an escaped murderer is going to say something other than "garsh". It is not a realistic point of view. Nevertheless, it is prevalent.

M: You still have your discriminating tests, but you have managed to keep

both ends. Yet you have made your peace of doing shows that the artistic challenges were not up to your ability. What you do with sets is amazing. I should mention here that nearly all of Paul Kimpel's sets are applauded. That does not happen often when one goes to the theater, the sets do not get applause when no one is on the stage.

K: I am there at nights, but I do not start it.

M: I know how you do not, I have watched you. I feel badly that the community does not understand at large. They are not theater oriented and do not understand how much this offers to people that have low income. It gives you something to do at night, you have friends, you have a family situation. You feel that you belong to something like you told your father.

K: Right. You belong to something and at the same time you are creating something. It is the satisfaction of doing something beyond yourself. That is the biggest thing a place like this has to offer. It is amazing if you look at the list of people who go through the Youngstown Playhouse who participate in the shows. The one year they counted that there were 370 some individuals who had participated in actual productions through the year, well, that is a lot of people doing a creative thing. Some of them were repeats, and some of them we would never see again.

M: You created costumes for a lot of shows until it just became too much of a burden for all the other things that were heaped upon you to do. You had to designate authority to other people, and you have collected an amazing amount of costumes. Would you tell a little bit about that?

K: I call it Youngstown's last attic. We tried to get the word out not to throw away anyone's grandmother's old dress patterns that we could use or a feather. We had a lot of people who cleaned their attics and brought stuff to us.

M: Can you tell from your days in New York that compared to some of the places they do shows in Manhattan where I was amazed to discover this at a late age that this is an absolute Versailles?

K: Oh, it is a place, it really is.

M: Including the costumes facilities and the lighting facilities.

K: At the old Mecca Opera House they had no stage area or anything.

Everything had to be put into the alleys between them. There were a lot of good theaters in New York that were the same way. Some of them have no orchestra pits. It is really an amazing plant. People who are professionals have come into the place, and they were just aghast at the size.

M Tell some about the architectural designs and facilities.

K It seats 600 or 700, something like that since we have added the balcony in. It is a Romanian stage with 24 feet of offstage area on each side which is a fantastic offstage area. It has a 50 foot grid with 28 lines. It has an electronic light board with a control booth in the back of the house and an intercom system between all the technical areas which are incidental. Once the show is mounted and run by volunteers entirely from stage manager through audio technicians and crew people. Everybody is local volunteers which is wonderful as are the actors local volunteers. We have a huge workshop area and an adequately large costume shop.

M At last.

K Yes, at last, but they are never large enough. We are bursting out already again. Then we have small arena theater underneath the stage with an orchestra pit. It is a wonderful house, it really is.

M Dressing rooms?

K We have dressing rooms, yes.

M When I got to New York and did a play and found out there were no dressing rooms. I realized how spoiled I had been here.

K Yes, yes. Everybody who works here who goes someplace else and comes back and says that they are spoiled. They really do because this is just such a fantastic plant. Of course, like anything else, once you get a fantastic plant, you have certain responsibilities of maintaining that plant, which means money. Then you are forced into doing certain things that you might not do otherwise which is two or three Neil Simon type comedies which pay the bills.

M You were my mentor in the theater in the area. I learned good theater discipline problems from you more than anybody else. Therefore, I was not able to adjust to the lack of it in Manhattan. There was a total lack of it.

K That surprised me when John Kennely came into Warren I got a job working with him I had worked class B equity summer stock companies which are professionals they are limited to six at that time per class B company There was a leading man, a leading woman, a character man, a character woman, juvenile, and a couple others That was what you were required to have The rest of us were all nonequity, nonunion people. I was not able to really look at that closely When Kennely came in, this was big time, big money, big people Stars were coming in.

M Name a few of those stars so we will know for posterity

K Jeannette McDonald, Burt Wheeler Just everybody who was available

M What did you find out?

K I found out that the ones who were really laid back were very laid back, nice people The majority of the people who came in were highly undisciplined, out for themselves, with a me first attitude I have to say the technical people usually are very, very professional

M They are much more advanced than the performers I will say and the directors in many cases

K Right, right I was amazed because I was used to TNT at that point I had been with them for about six or seven years, and we have tried to develop a really professional theater attitude I had designed 26 sets by about that time Kennely came in for TNT, directed in a number of shows, and acted in about half that many My friends in New York were working at Macy's, they still had not done anything in anything. I thought everything was going terrifically I was appalled at the professionals coming in at how nonprofessionals are the professional and the professionals are the nonprofessionals I have not come quite to an understanding of that I think the realism still remains with the nonprofessional, that is what it is

M Do you think for sure that is all?

K I hope I said that the truly talented people are quite laid back

M That is right

K And they are secure like Patricia Morrison came in to do "Kiss Me Kate" She is a very talented woman and very professional and very nice.

- M I think the start of being professional is nice when the director and the actors come at the same time. I discovered in New York that they very frequently do not do that. They just sort of teeter in when they feel like it. From my training here I went into shock over this.
- K I think New York somehow attracts a lot of debutantes who think they are going to be famous with the name and the whole thing whereas those of us who have decided to stay here know we are not going to be famous, but we are going to be special. It would be nice if we could have both. If I had my definite choice, I will stay here and continue to try to do something creative and have a place to work to do my thing.
- M Of course, you can do your thing year round now. A person who just performs. It is rather difficult. You cannot always be in a play. In a community theater you can involve yourself in other brother activities.
- K Yes, true. We do have people who are constantly in a play it seems. It is not just here, it is at other community theaters. Some of them are really on a circuit.
- M That is true, yes. I know several of those and they are quite good. In this kind of situation I think we tend to find one person who is so good that they go through all of the roles that year that they are up for them.
- K Yes. Somehow or another we keep renewing.
- M Yes.
- K Out of the community there keeps coming somebody. It is amazing. It is not just here, it is all the community theaters. They keep renewing somehow, they find somebody in the community who suddenly says that they have to do something else, then they find out that it is really an exciting thing to be applauded. It is a creative outlet that people have to have. We are here and provide it. It is wonderful that it is a renewing thing that keeps going on and on.
- M I do not know too many people who have jobs that they love doing, and I think you love doing your job.
- K Very much.
- M That alone is a satisfaction. You like the work that you do. You do what you like to do.

K Right, that is very satisfying, yes. It is more than I ever hoped, really. I feel very fortunate. I could always take the attitude of one of our managers here at the Playhouse. They and some executive director talking about one of the local television personalities who had been in a number of shows and was being transferred to Chicago. They were commiserating about the fact that he had been here for long enough to get to be trained and to become good. With that our friend turned to our executive director who had been here for several years. He said, "You know, they get good and then they leave us." She said, "Well, maybe someday you will get good and you will leave us too." Everyone once in a while things can get good enough to leave yet. Maybe someday we will get good and leave.

M Is there any unusual, standout thing that you would like to tell that has happened through the years that has occurred here since you have been here or at Warren? A typical theater story from the community?

K I cannot think of any.

M There are so many.

K Yes, there are so many incidents, yes. The excitement of a young lady who has suddenly put on a bra to go on stage as a sexpot and realizing that she had a front that she never had before in the costume shop. That is a revelation of that. The people who push scenery around all these years and then suddenly they have to go on stage because somebody needs a walk on. Suddenly you realize that person is no longer pushing scenery, but they are out there dying for the roles to get the applause.

M. I think one thing I miss here that used to be here more at Youngstown and I definitely found in Warren. TNT was like a fairy place when I first went there and met you because these people went out afterwards and had coffee or tea or sat around and talked and really had friendships.

K Yes. It was a small group.

M That is right. When I came here, they still did some of that. Now that is not done so much anymore. I miss that.

K Yes. I miss it too. We are now beholden to our plant and our product. Hopefully, the product can keep up with the plant. That is responsibility. Most people who built this place went through that with the Market Street Theater and the Herniken Street Playhouse. Then they built this place.

which was bigger and better equipped, then suddenly it had to operate, it had to operate because it had to be paid for, and it had to be heated That is what happen to a group, it matures and becomes old and responsible

M But I do not find that the younger people here do that so much though either. Is that because they have had it handed to them more or less?

K Sure

M They did not have to struggle

K They do not feel that it belongs to them I still feel as though TNT belongs to me although I have not been there for 17 years

M When I go by there, I get such a tinge.

K I have been in three or four times. I do not really want to go back because I know I will miss it

M Then you are planning on staying in Gustsvas probably the rest of your time here?

K Yes, we made that choice We decided that we were there for life

M I think we are just about down to the end here now Is there anything you want to say to round it out, why you can say it? Anything for posterity?

K I cannot think of anything for posterity I hope there is posterity

M All right Thank you

End of Interview