

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Salem Community Theater

Personal Experience

O.H. 1281

TIM SMITH

Interviewed

by

Arlene Hasson

on

June 17, 1982

TIMOTHY E. SMITH

Tim Smith, the first of the three sons of Daniel E. and Jeanine R. Smith, was born July 7, 1955 in Salem, Ohio. He spent most of his youth in Salem and graduated from Salem High School in 1973. He was very active in school. He took part in student government and sports and was involved with several rock bands in after school hours. Tim travelled abroad while in high school as part of the Rotary Club's Summer Ambassador Program. It was during his senior year that Tim had his first acting experience as part of a newly established theater class at the school.

After graduation Tim worked at several jobs including a gas station attendant and a carpenter. He soon decided to pursue a career in his family's jewelery business, and was trained at the Kansas City School of Watchmaking. He entered the business as Vice-President, but continued a variety of outside activities including involvement in civic groups such as the Jaycees, and the operation of his own recording studio.

His interest in the community and in many aspects of performing led Tim to active involvement in the Salem Community Theater soon after it was established. His first role was the lead in "Softy, the Snowman" in the late 1977. He also had a part in the next production, "Jacques Burell", and was then asked to join the Theater Board of Directors. He soon became president of that group and was active in the acquisition and development

permanent home for the Theater. Tim's promotional expertise and connections in the community helped to provide funds for the theater activities. His experience in building also proved beneficial in remodeling the old movie theater building the group bought. Tim continued to appear in productions and played a vital role in the early success of the Theater.

Tim married Linda Antram in 1979. Linda was also on the Board of the Theater, and has played important roles in several productions. The couple had no children yet, but they are actively engaged in raising and racing sled dogs and promoting a good business atmosphere for the Salem community.

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INTERVIEWEE: TIM SMITH
INTERVIEWER: Arlene Hasson
SUBJECT: Theater experiences, board, promotions,
funding, pledges, and plans for the theater.
DATE: June 17, 1982

H: This is an interview with Tim Smith for the Youngstown State University's Oral History Program on the development of the Salem Community Theater by Arlene Hasson at 340 East State Street, Salem, on June 17, 1982 at 8:15 a.m.

Now I'm going to start out with a few questions about your background. OK, where were you born and raised?

S: I was born in 1955 in good old Salem, Ohio, and raised my entire life in Salem.

H: You attended Salem schools?

S: Salem schools through the twelfth grade, and I graduated in 1973.

H: While you were in high school, were you involved in theater at all? Did you have a theater program yet?

S: We had a theater program commencing with our senior year. Mrs. Milligan taught, it was a one semester class, and and it was very good and very interesting. It was the first time it was ever offered, but it was a result of the new auditorium being added during that renovation period.

H: Were you in any plays then, or did they not have any time to get any started?

S: Yes, they had two plays our Senior year. "Our Town," which occurred in the fall, but I played on the football team, and I couldn't participate in that. And then we did a children's show called "Winnie the Pooh" in which I played Eyor the donkey. It was a resounding success with all the kids as you can well imagine.

H: Was that your first exposure to being on the stage, or had you done other things in other...

S: Well, I played off and on in rock bands, and I've always been a ham to a certain degree, so I have always had exposure really before people, in entertaining aspect, or maybe public speaking, presenting ideas to a class, because I was a class officer, and things of that sort. So, it wasn't really new in that regard, but maybe the structure and organizational method of presenting a play to an audience that payed to come in is a different experience.

H: While you were still in high school, what other... You mentioned you were on the football team, and you played on a rock band, you were a class officer, did you do anything else while you were in high school?

S: Oh, Student Council, Spanish Club, wrestling, and track. I never tried baseball because I wasn't quite fast enough, and a short stocky person has no business on the basketball court, so I kind of left those two alone. I was involved in ARACT, and performed quite a bit with them in the form of all the benefit basketball games that we had. I was a foreign exchange student for Rotary to Sweden, and a lot of different extra-curricular activities, but those were the actual structure builds that I participated in.

H: How long were you in Sweden?

S: I was in Sweden a total of eight weeks, and I was on what they called a Summer Ambassador Program. It was a new program that they had started, and rather than going to school and participating in what the kids did, I went over there to speak to Rotary business and industry meetings and that sort of foreign exchange between the United States and their economic and industrial development, and Sweden's. It was kind of an interesting time because we were right at the height of the Vietnam conflict, and Sweden is sympathetic with Vietnam which made it rather difficult. We had to be briefed by the State Department in Copenhagen before we went to Sweden as to what we should and should not say, and what we should and should not discuss. So, that made it an interesting eight weeks, believe me.

H: And that was sort of... Although it was not a performance, and your not on stage, you still have to sort of

be careful, be on your best behavior, put your best foot forward.

S: And be consistent, because we were being quoted all the time, and we had to be accurate, and we had to be consistent from club to club. There were eight of us from the United States that went over in the program, and all of us, I guess, were recognized as being real good B.S.ers to a certain extent. So, that was not the problem. The problem was that we would I think get furious with some of the things we saw going on in Sweden with regards to North Vietnam. That was an interesting situation, because we were giving Sweden economic development aid, and they were turning around and giving North Vietnam medical and first aid supply aid. It was almost an even dollar exchange.

H: Well, that made it nice. We were helping everybody.

S: Sure, that's right.

H: Now, after you got out of high school, what did you do then?

S: Well, I took a very interesting job pumping gas at a gas station at \$1.25 an hour. And I was...

H: Those were the good days.

S: Those were the good days. That's when gas was .28 cent a gallon too, and that was premium. Working for Howard Pollen, I learned auto mechanics and things of that sort. I also was working for Terry Roofer as a carpenter at the same time. I had been working for Terry for about three years as a carpenter's helper, and then finally a carpenter. I did rock band work in building houses. I didn't do finish work, and cabinetry, and things of that sort. Don Concer, my high school woodshop teacher, kind of got me started in that, and I always liked to work with my hands and work outside. So, I was working two jobs at the same time. By the time 1974 rolled around, my dad had decided that perhaps he would offer me a job here as a full-time jeweler, preparing jewelry and setting stones. He sent me off to school in Kansas City to learn that particular trade.

H: Now, you had worked in the store, in the jewelry store throughout?

S: Yes I had, off and on, mostly as an engraver. I started when I was about ten, I think, emptying wastepaper baskets and sweeping floors for twenty-five cents a day. Real high pay. (laughter) Enough to get by with my bubble gum, but I gradually at about age thirteen

started to do all of the engraving. By the time I was sixteen, I was doing engraving, deliveries, and some small jewelry repair work, soldering charms on and things of that sort, but I never really became involved in a serious sense until 1974.

H: And what is your position now?

S: I'm Vice-President of the company, and I'm the appraiser and gemologist. I also, I guess you could call me the head salesman. Mom and dad are taking more and more time off away from the store, so I've become the manager of the store as well. I am very pleased with it.

H: That's good, that's good that you have something to move in, and they have someone they can rely on to take over.

S: Go bask in the sun.

H: Now, brothers and sisters?

S: Gregory, who is age twenty-four, is living in New York, graduated from Salem in 1976, and graduated from the Dana School of Music, which is part of the Youngstown State University in 1980 with a Bachelor in Music, Summa Cum Laude I might add, which I was very tickled about. It is the only person in our family that has ever gone to college, first of all, and did very, very well. We were all so very pleased. He is in theory and composition where his major is in music, and is now in New York City and is a professional musician and songwriter.

H: That is great. And he is married too?

S: And he's married too.

H: And your married too?

S: And I'm married too. Three years this coming October.

H: We have interviewed your wife, and it does not seem that it has been that long. You have a younger brother?

S: We have a younger brother, that is going to be fifteen this June. Thad is going to be a Sophomore at Salem High School. He is on the tennis team, and he is interested in the collectables end of the store, table top, and things that my mom does. We are very pleased about that because Thad could then eventually work in her position.

H: That fits well, that is good.

S: We have him in the store. He also does the engraving now, that I used to do.

H: I had heard someone say Thad was engraving in the back and I thought, "Oh, oh, moving up." Well, of course Greg worked here for awhile too. So that is good, and Greg has moved on. Now, Greg was in the theater, too.

S: Yes, he was our musical director for three years, and did a phenomenal job. He was in several of our shows, but mostly acted as a musical director because of his expertise with orchestrations and things of this sort. Greg also wrote the music, which our director at that time, Katherine Berhoff, had written the score to a musical based on a novel of accomplishments, and the name of the show was "The Red Dragon." So, Greg participated in the writing of a major musical, which we presented as the first show, that we opened our new theater with. It was a phenomenal artistic success and a phenomenal financial success, and was a fitting opening to our new theater.

H: Now, when did you first become involved with Community Theater? Do you remember?

S: I seem to recall, 1977 they had their first show called "Godspell" which a short period after that in the fall of 1977 we staged a show called "Softy the Snowman," which I auditioned for having remembered my good fortune in Eyor with "Winnie the Pooh." I decided, "Well, let's take a shot at this," and I got to play Softy. It was a children's show, and I became interested in it. A short period after that we were going to do "Romeo and Juliet," which we were unable to cast. This was going to be a major early spring or late winter show. We were unable to cast it as a result decided to do "Jacques Burell is Alive and Well, and Living in Paris."

H: Now, did you have a position with the theater yet, or were you just in the...

S: No, not as yet. I had auditioned for "Romeo and Juliet," and was cast, and then they asked us to come back audition again for "Jacques Burell," and I was cast as Jacques Burell and performed in that. Shortly after that show closed, I was asked to join the Board of Directors, which at that time we were meeting in rented spaces which is now the Art Bright Realty, the 21st Century Realty office of the American Legion.

H: And that was where "Jacques Burell" was performed?

S: Right. "Jacques Burell" was there. I believe that was the only show we staged there as I recall. We went in together as soon as we could because there was no facility there, there was no lighting. We had to rent, borrow or steal everything we needed. There was no stage, and it was a relatively small house, it only accommodated one-hundred people maximum. It was not suitable for any sort of a large musical, and we had intended that coming summer to do "Jesus Christ Superstar" which is a major musical, and could not be staged in that.

H: Parking would have been difficult, too.

S: It was terrible, and the Red Barn was opening which was even worse. We felt compelled to eat there.

H: That is bad for anybody. That is above and beyond.

S: Well, they are no longer with us.

H: What difficulty did you have with the high school? Why didn't you just use the high school?

S: Well, the high school, as you know, is an oft used place. The high school curriculum of course received first priority in anything occurred there. We would as a rule stage our shows for in two weekends, two performances each weekend, Friday and Saturday. We only had access to this date one week before we opened, and if you had a show that had any degree of set, or had any degree of changing or orchestration, there was simply not enough time to perfect the show the way it should be, technically, before it actually opened for to audience. If a show was particularly well received, and you wanted to extend the run of the show, you were sunk. They would not extend the run, even if they did not have the room booked for the following weekend. We had an occasion one time, and I think this is probably what infuriated me to the point where I started to look for a building of our own. The janitors seemed to have it in for us. I don't know why because we always paid them time and a half to be there while we were in the building, and they never did anything while we were there. They decided one evening before we opened with "Jesus Christ Superstar" that they were going to paint all the steps and the floor off stage. Then they roped it off.

H: How?

S: And said "wet paint" the night we were to open this major musical. Now, I have to tell you, we were sold out. 1000 seats were sold for that night's performance. For forty-six actors and actresses to come and go on

wet painted steps...I took cardboard, and placed it over all the wet paint, and let it stick there. I called the principal who at that time I think was Randy England, and I told him what had occurred. One of the janitors was called on the carpet about that. I don't know whatever happened to him, but that was the sort of response that we got from the people in using the high school. It was a continual problem in making sure that all the doors were locked, and it was never established whose responsibility it was to close up, and clean up, things of this sort. And then we got a bill for it, even if we did it. It was extremely expensive. It \$1,400 for rental for the high school during the run of "Jesus Christ Superstar."

H: And you would just have it the one week before, and the two weekends?

S: Exactly. So, we felt we were being taken advantaged of, and needless to say, if a straight show was performed there, a thousand seats was far to many seats in a town this size for a straight show. It was defeating for the cast. It was defeating for the audience.

H: You feel like you are performing to an empty house even though there might be two-hundred out there.

S: Right.

H: Then you joined the Board after "Jacques Burrell"?

S: Right.

H: Did you have a position at first, or were you just a Board member?

S: I was just a Board member, and I think our Board consisted of seven people at that time.

H: Can you remember who was on the Board besides you at the time?

S: Let's see, Chuck Williams was the Chairman, and Judy Wau. He and Judy Wau in fact were the people who founded Salem Community Theater. Judy was the Vice-chairman. Penny Colisto was on the Board; Aileen Bunkle, Ruth Waters.

H: Carol Casey?

S: I do not think Carol was on just yet.

H: I don't know. Shirley Firestone I know was on later, but I don't know if they were originals.

S: Shirley Firestone, Francis Torty, and Carol, I believe, came in later towards "Superstar," towards the summer. At that time the Board was relatively small, but it was six or seven people. I can't recall anybody else. Dan Colisto was our producer. If it hadn't been for Dan lending the theater \$200 to pay for the rights to do "Jacques Burell," we would not have had a show because we had no money, and no spaces. We owned nothing.

H: Where did your funding come from? Did you have any source besides just what you brought in?

S: Gate sales, and I think we had about twenty or thirty patrons at \$25 each which helped to offset some of the cost. We were paying Kathy as a director on a show by show basis, and we were paying for rented spaces and everything else.

H: That is what I was going to ask. Even though you were able to use the high school for you productions, you couldn't store anything there.

S: Exactly. We...Finally, by the time "Superstar" had ended that summer, decided we needed permanent rented spaces of some form. That is when we made an agreement with the school system to rent the gymnasium in McKinley to use for our rehearsals which worked out rather well. It was great from the standpoint of a large cast musical because it gave of all kinds of space, and it was comparable in size to the stage floor at the high school, and it was about the same composition. When the people would dance on it the people would have a fairly good feeling for what they were going to be on at the high school. McKinley was a problem in that, we could not store anything there either. We had to rent another building to store our settings that we were beginning to acquire. We had no where to store costumes that people were donating to us. Consequently, we accepted very few costumes. In fact, everybody was responsible for making their own costume, and if they had more than one costume change, the theater would pay for the second one. It was kind of a "catches catch can" sort of situation. In fact, the attorney on our Board, Larry Cecil, is a real peach of a guy. He used to call the Sundays where we would move the set from wherever we built the set to the high school "grunt Sundays." It was an appropriate name, believe me. For "Fiddler on the Roof," we moved six tons of settings in one day. Erected it, painted it, and then performed on it that night for our first rehearsal at the high school. We would start at about seven o'clock in the morning with forty or fifty people.

H: So, you were still renting the gym in McKinley for rehearsals, you were renting storage space...

S: We were renting a warehouse for the storage of the setting. We were renting a building to build the sets in.

H: And you still did not have costume storage space?

S: No, none, or props.

H: Do you have any idea of the total expense involved in all those rentals?

S: I would say by the time all the dust had settled, the rentals that we paid for a show like "Superstar" or "Fiddler," which at that time were the big musicals that required that sort of an expenditure. I would say we were running very close to two \$2000 each show.

H: Obviously, that takes a large slice out of any money.

S: Does it ever.

H: Now, when you got on the Board, you didn't give up you acting career?

S: No, not at all. In fact, I came on the Board, and it was somewhat of a surprise when called me. I was working at the studio, I used to have a recording studio. I was working at the recording studio, and Chuck Williams called me, and asked if I would want to be on the Board because my forte at that time was promotion with the Jaycees. I was just the following year going to be elected President of the Salem Jaycees, and I guess I was notorious for being a blabbermouth when it came to promotions and things of this sort. So, I was brought in to do that, and I set up an advertising program and advertising campaign to further, I guess differentiate us from the Dinner Theater which had not been defunked at that time, it no longer existed.

H: That group had completely gone out of existence before Community Theater was formed.

S: Exactly. Yes, they ran the director out of town, and then the people who thought theater should continue like Judy Wae, and Chuck Williams formed a nucleus of very good, staunch individuals to begin Salem Community Theater in earnest.

H: And that was at all in no connection with the city or recreation department or anything?

S: Absolutely none. We recieved no funding from anyone except when we came into "Superstar," we asked for a

\$1,500 grant from the Community Foundation, which was our first grant, to fund our advertising campaign for "Jesus Christ Superstar," which then set us on our feet financially.

H: Now, you mentioned the recording studio. I do not know about the place. I know that you had recorded high school concerts, and then sold albums to the individuals who had been there to see it. Did you do anything like that with any of the stage shows?

S: No, because they are a licensed show.

H: And your not allowed to.

S: Your not allowed to. What I would do...I had video taping equipment as well as sound recording equipment. What we did typically like "Superstar," I had my three engineers and all of our equipment brought down from the studio just to run the P.A. system, the sound system for "Jesus Christ Superstar" because it is a rock opera. We had wireless microphones, and there were thirty-two live mikes on stage between the orchestra and the actual actors on stage. We had wireless mikes on some of the principle characters like Jesus Christ and Judas had wireless mikes. A lot of sound effects in "Jesus Christ Superstar," and a lot of reinforcement needed in that big room up there for 1000 seats. That was our first endeavor. What we did was, we recorded the show as it was going an tape as well as sound, and then, I guess, a couple big cast parties we had, we all sat back and watched the show which was nice because I had never seen myself on stage before, nor did a lot of the other people. It was very enlightening to see the intensity of that show because when your that close to it you lose your perspective as to what goes on in the whole picture, what the audience sees which was a lot of fun. We did run into a problem. A lot of people wanted to buy tapes of "Jesus Christ Superstar," and we had to turn them down. We applied for a licensing to do that, but it was just absorbant.

H: That is a shame that there isn't any way to get around it.

S: Not at all.

H: "Jesus Christ Superstar" was a financial success.

S: It was overwhelmingly successful.

H: I realize that your promotional activities accounted for part of it, but what other controversy might have lent to the audience attendance?

S: The interesting thing you have to recall about Salem is that we are a deeply religious community to a certain extent, it depends who you talk to. There are some main-line churches in Salem, and then there are some non-aligned churches in Salem, the Second Street Baptist Church, the First Baptist Church of Lisbon, and several other organizations that count God among their closest friends. They decided it that would be appropriate to picket "Jesus Christ Superstar," as it was defaming and depicted Judas as the hero, which if they would have bothered to see the show, was not it at all. In fact, they past out pamphlets to the cast as we came in several evenings, and we were of course elated with the success of the show, and we really didn't care, but we were all told that we were going to hell. Finally, Rev. John Zimmen...We had a stroke of genius for a promotion. We decided to have a minister and media night before we opened the show, the Thursday night of our final dress rehearsal, and we invited all the clergy and all the media from the entire area to see the show. Well, the non-aligned folks, as you could well imagine, didn't bother to come in to the show.

H: The did not even come?

S: No, they didn't come in. Yet, they from their pulpits on Sunday mornings were giving their folks the total story on the show. There was a confrontation in the lobby between Rev. John Zimmen from the church here in town and some of these people indicating that if they bothered to see the show they would find that they are clear off base. In fact, the clergy, the aligned clergy or the main-line churches in town, went to backforce at the pulpit, and I think were directly responsible for the vast numbers of older people who decided to come see the show.

H: To at least give it a chance.

S: Yes, give it a chance. Had we been able to, we would have extended the run, I would bet, at least two weeks because it was just that successful. We even had tickets available at ticketron outlets all over North Eastern Ohio. We only sold two tickets through Ticketron, but everybody would see that name, and say "Oh God, it must be a big deal".

H: "It must be a major ..."

S: It was a fun summer. It was a very enlightening summer. We rehearsed that show on the thirrd floor of the J.C. Penny's building across the street from the theater.

- H: Where all the music comes from.
- S: Right, where all the music comes from. We had a big banner up there we were rehearsing "Jesus Christ Superstar" so people would know what was going on.
- H: What other promotional activities, did you have any? Were those organized, or was it just accidental that I saw the guys walking around?
- S: Oh no, that was organized, that was organized promotion. The cast...We have been very fortunate, the cast is usually very willing to go along with promotions. We make quite a number of T.V. appearances, in fact, for that show I believe we were on television three times on interviews and talk shows. I guess we were somewhat of an oddity because from a small town usually Community Theater of the degree that we like to present does not emanate. It is usually a haphazard amateur affair, and we, I guess, had the foresight. The original Board had the foresight to hire a professional director and Katherine Berhoff, and have some very credible musicians, like Greg as a musical director, he was paid also. As a phenomenal orchestra they put together. I just...And these were local people putting this all on, and it was nice, they were unpaid professionals basically is what it boiled down to, and that was our theory. They should be amateurs. They should be the same as every professional and musician. In fact, John Kenley came to see one of our shows. He never told anyone about it, but he was seen coming in to see "Superstar."
- H: Do you have...You have been in Salem. I'm not from Salem originally, from the area, but not from Salem. So, I can say it with a little more objectivity. I think there is an awful lot of extra talent. More talent than maybe is normal for a town this size. Do you have any explanation for this?
- S: I would say primarily, as far as the musical talent...I would have to allow most of that to the level of musical training that the folks received at the high school and junior high levels and grade school levels in town. They are started with a little fluteophone in the grade school level, and this is encouragement. They have a very strong Band Parents organization, and there is the jazz band, of course. I think there has been a phenomenal impetus of really fine entertainment sort of orchestras. They are not all playing Tin Soldiers...
- H: More classical things that are enjoyable, but you do not know it.

- S: Right, and they are developing expertise. Maybe they don't realize it or not, but they come in and sit down with a script or a score like " Westside Story," a really difficult score to play, and they play it relatively well, and with few rehearsals. It is amazing, and I have to allow the school system that credit because they have just done a phenomenal job with it. Chuck Jackavich, geez, oh man, some of the folks that he turns out up there, although he is difficult to get along with at times, he has every right to be because he is an absolute professional.
- H: He knows how he wants it done, and it turns out to be the right way.
- S: That is right, and he gives no quarrels, believe me.
- H: Now, back to your " Jesus Christ Superstar." There were Roman soldiers dressed in costumes on the streets. Did you use this technique with anybody else, with any other plays?
- S: Well, we did to a certain degree with " Fiddler on the Roof," however, " Superstar" was such a period show.
- H: It fit so well. It is so distinct when you saw them walking around.
- S: They just didn't look like somebody dressed up funny. "Wow," people would say, "What are those? Those are Roman guards." " Fiddler on the Roof," " Westside Story," and The "King and I" would have been difficult to pull that off with because the period was not removed enough from modern day to make them really stand out in that regard. We tried other promotional items. We did an awful lot of programs prior to the opening of a show with principle characters at Rotary Club functions, Kiwanas, garden clubs; anybody who was willing to have us just to promote the show.
- H: Have you had any difficulty with those kinds of things about the gentleman in the plays getting off work, or the women. I shouldn't say that, women do work.
- S: That is right. It seems to go in cycles. As a rule when we do a luncheon program, everyone has a lunch hour to some degree, and the cycles of the show have been that when we had a show like "Man of La Mancha," all the principals lived out of town, it was impossible. We couldn't do it. The evenings, of course, if they are off, we can sometimes put it together. With "Fiddler" and this show coming up, " My Fair Lady," most of the principles are from the Salem area as with the case of " Jesus Christ Superstar." So, we are going to be able to really promote at the grass roots

level, these particular shows. And I think that seriously hurt us at the box office with "Westside Story," "Man La Manche," and "The King and I," in that we did not have that grass roots promotion capability.

H: If you see a little bit of it at a luncheon or at Rotary Club or whatever, it might make you think, well yes it is worth spending the money. Speaking of money, how much does it cost to see a play now?

S: Our prices range from \$3.50 to \$6.50, and it depends on where you sit in the theater, and what day you go. What we tried to do, and it has not been very successful.

H: I was going to say, Are they still doing that this year?

S: This is the last show of that particular system. With the next season which starts September 1st, we will go to two ticket prices. The adults, I believe, are \$5.50 or \$6.00, and children's tickets are exactly half of that. On our Sunday matinees we extend the Golden Buckeeyers' the student rate if they wish to come on a Sunday matinee. We kind of instituted or tried this idea this year for the reason that we weren't getting enough dollars in through the front door to support what we were doing. So, we had to avail ourselves some additional funds somehow. We felt snob appeal of sitting in the A section, the most expensive seats in the whole theater on prime nights. We could get our big bucks, and then we could still not eliminate or alienate people who could not afford to spend that much money.

H: Right.

S: Our season tickets were \$15, \$20, or \$25. So, for five shows that was pretty reasonable. \$3 for a show if you paid \$15, or \$5 for a show if you paid \$25. Our major competitors or our major peers, Canton Players Guild and the Youngstown Playhouse, are far more expensive than we are even now. We did role back the price a little bit for the coming year at \$20 for a season ticket which we feel is going to be helpful. There is no price differentiation in the auditorium itself, and we are hoping that maybe by not having the sections...We sold very few B and C seats. We sold almost all A seats as season tickets, and it was really strange. I am still sitting here trying to figure it out, but it didn't work, but we had to try it and see if we could work it out.

H: Well, that is the way to learn.

S: That is not a big enough house really to support different seating areas because every seat is a good seat in that house.

H: Well, maybe now.

S: Maybe now. Right.

H: Some of those seats were lousy five years ago.

S: Well yes, that is right. They were terrible.

H: Physically the seats were bad.

S: We did fix all of the seats.

H: Speaking of...Now we have to get back in to finally finding a place of your own. When did...Now, you said after the incident with the paint on the steps, you had seriously considered. What was the first place that was brought to your attention as a possibility?

S: Surprisingly enough, the Old Grand Theater, which is now the Wizard and Warrior's game room. The idea was that the second and third floors provided us with the support space, this was one of the big concerns the support space to have our dance institute, to have our costume and prop storage, set construction, rehearsal rooms as well as class rooms and offices. It is a very deep building. It is 110 feet deep, and 40 feet wide. It enabled us to have an income property. It was a bit of a nostalgic item in Salem's history of theater because The Grand Theater was the only stage in town, ever in the history of Salem that supported live theater. Vaudeville used to stop there on Mondays going from Cleveland to Pittsburgh to play their major circuit. So, the Maulins people and some of the other big industrialists would work it out with the railroad that Monday night was the stop over in Salem, and they would have all of the big names who came down the railroad, which the mainline came through Salem, and they would stop over and see their shows.

H: Well, now the stage was not still there? Isn't still there I should say.

S: Our intention was to rebuild the auditorium which was torn down.

H: It was in that vacant lot then?

S: Right.

H: How big was it compared to the rest of the building? Was it...

S: It was huge.

H: It wasn't as tall as the rest of the building?

S: It was taller. It was a big roof. It had vertical fly space which means that the scenic elements, you can raise them up out of sight. In fact, the fly tower, I believe, was 60 or 65 feet of the back of the building. You could fly two scenes on one pipe, and it had a huge orchestra bed, and a beautiful Vaudeville stage that was 25 or 35 feet deep and 40 or 50 feet across, and it accomodated...The balcony rink, which is the problem we have in our theater, the balcony angle is such that everyone sitting in the balcony had a full view of the stage. Which is something we don't enjoy now at the stadium. It would have been a phenomenal place, but evidently at the time it was constructed it was constructed of wood and brick, and the wood had long since rotted that was supporting the ceiling. I guess the Moose folks that owned the building at that time decided the best thing to would be to tear it down, which is unfortunate. What we did, is made application to the foundation, if we bought the building from Grant Canadian for \$45,000, which included the lot as well, we needed \$200,000 from the foundation to construct a concrete block shell and stage. Then we would later add seating and things of that sort, basically do it in stages. They weren't real tickled about that idea. They didn't get very excited because number one it was on the other end of town. They kept asking us what about the stage theater, and we said, "Well, Mightier is in there, and Mightier is a pain in the butt", and the building really was not designed to accommodate live theater, and didn't have the depth of the auditorium to allow the proper viewing from the balcony areas. There were certain considerations about it. He had an extended lease with Mrs. Rakestraw, So, we just kind of poo-pooed that idea. There was another building that was available down by English Street, which is now a manufacturing building, it used to be behind a motor garage.

H: Okay.

S: That George Peraldo owned. We decided that that might make a neat place because we had adequate parking, it was a huge building inside, it was all clear span, so we did not have any pillars to contend with. It was relatively inexpensive for the condition of the building. It was \$90,000. It offered us all kinds of floor space for our classes and offices, and it was all first floor, which was even better when we had to carry anything around. They did not like that idea either. So, this was the second proposal that I had written to

the foundation, we had done all of the preliminary architectural designs as to how we would do it. So, we finally hit on the idea that...We found out Mightier was backing her lease. Mrs. Rakestraw was elderly, and looking for a possible sale of the building. Through some real financial finagling, and very favorable interest rates, we were able to secure an agreement with her to sell the State Theater Building, and everything that it included for \$75,000 at \$15,000 a year and 8% interest. Which at the time banks were quoting 12 to 12 1/2%. That was a very desirable thing. Faced with that situation, what we did is we made a deal with the foundation, if we can buy the building for \$75,000, will you renovate it for us? I wrote a proposal that asked for \$150,000 in \$25,000 installments, and we would renovate the building in stages. At the time we were contemplating buying the building, but it was still tentative. They would not even let us into the building to look at it. I had to pay admission and sit through Snow White four times to draw a floor plan of the inside of the building.

H: In those wonderfully comfortable seats.

S: In those wonderful...I was walking around with a flashlight and a tape measure taking all of my measurements to see where steel was falling above the false ceiling up there, and walking the girders and finding out what we had to work with. No one had been on the second and third floor in the front portion of the building for twenty years. It had not been inhabited. The last inhabitant who had it was Loop Realty and Mr. Rakestraw, Mrs. Rakestraw's late husband, his offices, and those were the last inhabitants. So, I walked up there, and I thought, "Oh my God, this is a horrible mess." There were five or six hundred broken down theater seats stacked in there in places. You couldn't even get through some of the rooms, but we did measure it out, and did figure out what we could do with it. We decided we were going to go ahead, and present twelve pages of blueprints.

H: Now, for instance, you mentioned these blueprints, and the blueprints with the hunt garage. Who paid for all this kind of architectural work and all of that, or was that voluntary?

S: I did volunteer my time.

H: You did it yourself.

S: And the engineering work.

H: That is amazing that you were able to do that.

S: I have always been an amateur architect. I always liked to draw things, and I always liked to figure out how you could make something better by moving a wall. We had originally hired an architect when we started at the State Theater building, but it didn't work out favorably, so it was a mutual agreement on both sides to discontinue our involvement. Basically, what it boiled down to was that we had to get so much out of so little money in so much area that we had to do it ourselves to the degree that we did a lot of the demolition work ourselves. We repaired all of the seats ourselves, and redid them all. My father-in-law reupholstered all of the seats. We did all the painting, and things of that sort. Then finally, the Rotary Club was very kind to us and redid our lobby for us, and our Theater Guild redid our concessionary for us. It has been really a combined effort of a lot of different people to get that thing squared away.

H: What exactly is done in the theater now? In the theater building.

S: When we walked in the building two years ago this past May; there was no stage, there was no orchestra pit, all of the seats were busted, there had been no one on the second and third floors as I had said for a long time. What we did first of all, we redid the second floor spaces to house our institute, our dance institute, our classes, and our rehearsal, and office space. At the time that we bought the building, Mightier's lease was not up, he was still in the building, and finally we got him out the day that we took the building over. When we started we wanted to get those particular areas done first because first of all, we could do it for the first \$25,000 installment. We felt that it would start to generate funds for us in the form of the dance institute, and also eliminated one of our rental spaces by moving our rehearsals, and costume storage and things like that up to that area. So, we felt that was probably the wisest thing to do at that time. Then gradually, we started to repair seats as we were running the movies at that time. With that in mind, the foundation was so tickled with what had transpired, and how much activity took place in that second floor space. We went back to them and said--It was a little bit of fanangling on our part, but we said...They hated the look of the ice cream parlor. They did not like the red and white candy stripes at all, nor did they like the front that Mightier had put on the theater building.

H: No, I did not like that, but I liked the red and white candy stripes.

S: Yes, that is right. It was the typical gay 90's, but

that seemed to be a problem with them, so we said we would make them a deal. We will redo the front of the building, fix the ice cream parlor building, and really gussy it up, if we can also at the same time, have the money to finish the stage in the auditorium so we could present our live shows. We showed them the balance sheets for the shows. We showed them what it would cost us in rentals from different places, despite the biggest fear...What the school system did for us was charging us so much because they could not imagine how we could pay so much for these rented spaces. We began construction in the second floor in June, and finished that about September 1st, the new heating and cleaning plant and everything, and our classes began the next day in that space. Then we developed the design, the redesign, of the theater itself, and created a new stage, dug an orchestra pit, where there was no orchestra pit before, within four walls. We had to bring to bring the machinery in in parts, and reassemble it in inside the building and then dig the hole. We finally ended up getting a little muler, which is a little guy that fit through the back doors. They shoveled out that whole area for that orchestra pit, then we put a beautiful stage in. Then Nick Herhoff and myself hung all the steel pipe and grid systems to support our lighting and curtains. We actually installed all of our theater equipment ourselves. I did all of the electrical wiring and all the lighting wiring, and refurbishing of the instruments. The additional monies that the foundation gave us in the second phase of reconstruction enabled the stage, enabled the new seats, the front upgrading of the building, enable the acquisition of the basic equipment that we needed to present live theater there, and also the steel and peripheral rigging that we needed to support those theater elements, the curtains, the lighting, ectera.

H: Now, with the State Theater building, what sources of income do you have besides...What do you get money from?

S: There are basically five divisions to the theater. First of all, the live stage, which we also call the adult theater, there is children's theater; which is performed by children for children. There is the institute of lively arts, which are classes of instruction in everything from stage movement to application of theater, to jazz, ballet and tap. You can get as structured in ballet and as regimented and disciplined as you care to, or you can go into what we call skinny school, which is dancercise or jazzercise classes open to all ages, they are classes for all ages, in fact, we just started another class in stage management; which is a class that is building the repertoire of people

for us to run our stage during live shows. We are starting to develop very good crew heads for our live stage. The other division is our cinema division which shows commercial cinema offerings we are called a sub-run or second-run house, we get movies after the big dollar first-run houses in Youngstown and so forth. Our final area is the ice cream parlor which is rental property, and also the rental of the building.

H: So you do have a little bit of monthly income, when you don't have a major production; you have the lively arts institute, you have the ice cream parlor's rent, you have the movie theater going for you. Is the movie theater making a profit?

S: No.

H: This is...We can criticize Bob, and I certainly have a lot of faults in Bob Mightier, but it is amazing that he is able to operate it at all.

S: That is true. The one thing we did find out, the way he was able to operate it. He did not report how many people came through.

H: Well, you knew he would find something.

S: That is right. We walked the straight and narrow as far as that is concerned. We report exactly how many people come through the door, and that is how you pay per movie. You pay so many percentage points of your attendance. In our case we pay 35% of every dollar that comes in for the use of the movie, and the first-run house is as high as 90%. \$.90 cents out of every dollar that you pay at a \$3 or \$4 house goes to the movie company for the rental of that movie.

H: Boy that sure changed.

S: Oh, man. I can not imagine trying to make ends meet on that, but they do have first crack of that audience, too. The cinema runs in cycles, it has been bailing itself out in the last four or five months, but going into fiscal 1982, we were carrying about a \$4,000 or \$5,000 thousand loss.

H: When you came in, what expenses were there for the cinema? Was there anything that needed to be done, or could you continue to operate?

S: We started right away. In fact, we were even repairing seats while we were moving movies in the screen. The biggest thing I think when we first opened the building, we spent three weeks before we actually opened the cinema just cleaning up. We sent out four 4 yard.

dumpsters full of pizza boxes, beer bottles, you name it, it was in there. Broken seats that were beyond repair. Things that were just stacked up, stagnating, and it was just terrible. We didn't feel that we could operate a business like that.

H: Yes, you had to get it cleaned up.

S: That is right. We reopened with all fixed up seats. Now, the seats had not been redone, but we at least fixed the seats that were there. The cinema equipment, because of the quality men who were running the cinema equipment itself, the projector and sound equipment, it was magnificent, you could eat off of it. Mightier wasn't allowed in those rooms, and they locked it, and they didn't give him the key. That wasn't the problem at all. We had two super guys running the projector, as far as I am concerned, they're grossly underpaid, but they are really neat guys, and they take care of the equipment as if it was their own. We have been very fortunate.

H: To operate the cinema now you pay the projectionists?

S: Yes, we pay the projectionists what they call a mean scale, and they are paid by screen hour. We also pay a part-time lady who takes tickets and sells concessions, and we have a single manager. He is paid hourly as well. We have probably nine or ten paid employees in different parts of the theater; we have an institute manager whose paid a percentage of what the classes bring in, our teaches are on a contract basis where there is a fifty/fifty split with their classes. We have a paid executive director who is a salaried individual who runs our live stage, and runs the theater operation itself and is the the last word before the board as far as the operation of the building. We have a paid musical director. We do pay our children's theater director. There are quite a number of folks floating around here that get pay checks from us.

H: So, it does all add up to taking out pretty much of your...Now, how then are you able to make your yearly payment?

S: Well, the yearly payment on the building is made as a result of pledges that we solicate from individuals in the Salem area; industry, and private individuals in businesses. We had a system set up where by our mortgage ran five years. We would then set up pledges to run five years, and there were all different levels of involvement; \$5 contributions, and the highest contribution we recieved was \$10.000.

H: Now, that \$10,000 was spread over five years, or

\$10,000 a year for five years?

S: That is \$2000 a year for five years.

H: Okay.

S: We developed different areas of involvement, called them different things, and titled them different nice-ties that went along with that contribution of theirs. Of course, it is all tax deductible because we are one of Uncle Sugar's finest, absolutely tax exempt. The people, of course, use it as a tax deductible contribution I am sure, but at the same time, they're all interested in seeing the theater prosper in Salem.

H: Do you have enough pledges to meet your payment?

S: No, we don't.

H: All right. You sounded so confident there. I was hoping it was all taken care of.

S: I was pretty pleased because we have in pledges, I believe, \$9,000 or \$10,000 a year of that \$15,000.

H: Which is more than half.

S: Which is not bad.

H: I know.

S: That is not bad. The thing that has probably given us such a difficult time in the last two years is making up the balance of the \$5,000 or \$6,000 and the interest.

H: Interest. Yes, even at 8% it mounts up.

S: Yes, that is right because this year our payment is \$17,600. So, we will need to raise an additional \$7,600 when it comes down to the wire, and we have to make our payment. Last year what we did is we raised the additional money out of our general fund. In other words, the season ticket monies that we generated that should have funded the productions this year, went into making the building payment. We had quite a short-fall this year with our live stage productions because of lack of monies brought forward from the season ticket sales. Of course, the people would use those tickets to come see the shows. It was basically a no profit situation. We had no problem this year in renewing our non-profit status I can assure you.

H: Well, is there any attempt, and have you thought about maybe some other fund raising activities besides the...

S: Well, we brought in Jack Valentine, our new executive director, as the result of Kathy's resignation, and we, of course had to replace our artistic director. Jack's forte is theater business, and season ticket development. This year our goal is to sell 2,000 season tickets at \$20 a pop which is \$40,000. I hasten to remind myself that last year we sold just a little over 200. So, what we are looking at is a potential this year for a base to work from. I would say that is probably the single largest...We toyed with the idea of a lot with unrelated income raisers, and I think what we really decided was that we present theater, and that is our strong point, so why don't we elaborate on that as opposed to bake sales and stuff like that. Although our theater guild likes to do things like that, selling T-shirts and of that sort to help us along.

H: Do you get any income from the theater guild?

S: We do. They have been phenomenal. That is an outstanding group. They had a Madrigal Feast last year that was just absolutely magnificent. It sold out the first two days that the tickets were on sale. They generated \$3,000 in one night. This year they are going to run it two nights, I have never had such a good time in my whole life. I do not know if you have ever had smoked turkey before, but that was a real treat. This was set...Medieval costumes, medieval place utensils, and things of that sort. It was just really neat. Medieval entertainment...

H: We tried to go there.

S: I know. It was great. That is probably the best advertisement that you can have for something, to have it sell out immediately.

H: I think that it was a really good thing with the first year, and then just having the one night. Now, I think it is great that they are going to two nights because there was certainly enough to fill it up.

S: See, as a result of the money that they raised from that, they redid our consessionary. They also sell T-shirts, they sell Salem Community Theater buttons, they act as our ushers, they act as our consessionars during live stage. They are very supportive of the theater, and they also make...They are probably the single largest input as to what we present the following season in the way of shows because we feel they are a fairly good pulse of the community because they are a very diverse group. They have been very supportive especially in the last two years.

H: I guess we sort of skipped over this because I knew.

After you joined the board then, how long was it before you became president?

S: About four months.

H: You have been president ever since? Lucky you.

S: President ever since. It was just shortly after "Superstar" closed. Chuck was going to go back to school at night, he was the founding father, but he felt that he maybe didn't have the enthusiasm or perhaps the clout in the community to get the building aquisition.

H: He does work out of the community.

S: Yes, he does. He is the Vice-principal I believe in Southern Local schools.

H: I think it is Southern, yes.

S: He is also a woodshop teacher. Chuck felt since I was downtown all day, and that I knew a lot of people. I guess I was a little crazy at the time, I don't know, but I said we could do it. If you really want to do it, we could do it, but they kind of just turned the ball over to me. It was scary because...You know, 23 years old and all of this money and building, and leases, and contracts, and I acted as general contractor of our renovation to save of the 30% that a general contractor normally gets. I had plumbers calling me, electricians calling me, union men that I threw off the job one time because they were screwing up our schedule, and things of that sort.

H: Right.

S: We told them that if they wanted to work there was a job there for them. We didn't what they were affiliated with, we just wanted a good day's work. So, they went to it, and they did a super job for us.

H: Since then, you have served as president. Your wife has been on the board.

S: Right.

H: She was the treasurer.

S: For three years.

H: The family has been...You have also been involved, both of you, in performing in the theater. Do you have time for anything else?

S: Yes. Surprisingly enough, we have a very nice home which we like to work on. We work on our yard, and do a lot of landscaping and things of that sort. I run a professional dog sled team, and I, of course, work for my father full-time. I enjoy my involvement here, and I am on the board of directors of several state organizations. Linda is involved in the bank, library, and different organizations of that sort. I have kind of fallen away from the Jaycees. I have put my six years in there as president, vice-president, and all of that other good stuff that goes along with that. Although I enjoyed that involvement, I had to decide what things I had time for. They were going along just fine, so I felt they could do a pretty good job by themselves without me especially during when the theater was in its formula stages with the new building. We like to do all kinds of crazy things. It keeps me out of trouble.

H: How often...With your dog racing, how often do you...You obviously have to travel to do that.

S: Right.

H: We do not do it around here, do we?

S: Well, we do in Northern Ohio. There are races up in the snowbelt. Basically what happens...It works out rather well because I like to do major musicals, and my wife likes to do straight shows. So, what we do in the summer right now...

H: That is was I was going to ask you next. What is your role in "My Fair Lady"?

S: Alford Fae Doolittle.

H: Good.

S: I have always wanted to do that part. It is a really neat show. During the summer when it is this warm, we don't run very often. If we do it is maybe once or twice a week and if we have Monday off or Sunday. I usually do it while Linda is still asleep, so it does not take any time away from us as a rule. Then going into the fall, Linda usually likes to audition for the straight shows which we always open our seasons with a straight show in the form of both a comedy or drama. That seems to be her enjoyable part of the theater. So, it works out well because while she is at rehearsal, I am out training the dog sled team. Then when Christmas season hits at the store here, I have a handler who helps me with the dog sled team, and he runs the team during the day while I am working. By the time racing season hits which is the first of the

year, Linda is no longer involved in a show per se, I am no longer involved in a show per se, and we go through every season and on April 1st the whole thing starts over again.

H: Yes, you have got it worked out pretty well.

S: It works out really neat, yes.

H: Your involvement in the theater over your four years or so involvement, what has been your biggest success? What do you think you have...Personally or for the theater? What are you most proud of?

S: It has to be two-fold. I would have to say as far as the theater is concerned, I would have to say that the greatest enjoyable success has been the level and the degree of confidence of the board of trustees that now exist in the Salem Community Theater. Their concern, their expertise, their availability and their willingness to take the chance, and believe in what I am telling them and what somebody else is telling them. They really have the theater in their best interests. I think the fact that they are willing to go with it and not compromise, I think that is part of the biggest success because it has enabled the building, it has enabled the professionalism. I have to say that because it was three years ago, and people are still talking about that show. The last time I walked on stage, in "Westside Story", and I was playing this little bit part because I really did not want to be in the show that year. I did not particularly care for "Westside Story" as a show, and I was not a Jet or one of the other guys. I was a short, stinky fellow, who didn't fit any of those parts. I walked off stage and, people thought...I thought to myself, "Smith, you haven't danced, you have not opened your stupid mouth." I think because of the way the cast was at that time, and the way that the show was, and the way the audience perceived it, and the way they accepted it, and the people who cried at the end, and the people who will never forget it, that has to be my single favorite success as an individual.

H: Now, I don't like the show, but I like their production of it. I enjoyed it immensely, but I do not like the basic show. I do not know why.

S: It is sad.

H: Maybe that is it. I do not like sad things.

S: It really is sad.

H: I really enjoyed their presentation. I thought it was

very good. Have you had any disappointments?

S: Yes, oh yes. I think the two biggest disappointments that stick out in my mind was the show Promises, Promises. It could have been a phenomenal show, and it had a phenomenal cast, and it had a phenomenal orchestra. It was just that we had trouble with our board of trustees. The board of trustees were meddling with directors affairs. The director was meddling in the board of trustees affairs. Ticket prices changed three times during the course of the show. Blocking changed the night the show opened. You were in the cast, Arlene, you remember.

H: The stage broke down.

S: The stage broke down. We paid a hot shot from the Ohio State University School of Theater \$600 to build us a set that would be magnificent. He sure did. The sucker broke and darn near killed the whole orchestra. I would have to say because "Promises, Promises" is the sort of show that a city like Salem would just absolutely endear themselves to, it had the potential of being another "Fiddler" and another "Superstar," and we billed it as such. I think that was the biggest single disappointment, what people had said to me after the show.

H: Yes.

S: The potential was there, and I think that is the thing that bothered me the most.

H: It was a good play. The music is good. The stars were good. The singers were good.

S: All of the cast was good.

H: Whatever.

S: I think from the theater standpoint that had to be my single greatest disappointment. From the organizational standpoint and in the whole course of the five years, I would have to say my greatest disappointment was the recreation of the Dinner Theater.

H: Because of what?

S: Because the city of Salem, the people in Salem had just...Now, we spent a little over \$25 or \$30,000 in advertising promotion, trying to tell people that we are not the Dinner Theater. Yet, the city seems to feel that they should support through recreational funds, the Dinner Theater. They only get twenty or thirty people at their shows, but we still get calls at

our Theater to make reservations for their theater. Our contentions have always been that if it was another strong Community Theater in Salem it is an advantage because then that breeds competition, and competition breeds good business. When you have an operation which is strictly recreational oriented, and that is the reason for it that we have been told numerous times, it is for people who only want to rehearse once a week or twice a week, and really do not want to put on any shows. It is difficult to the average individual who is buying a theater ticket to understand why the difference.

H: If I went to their show before, and it was lousy then why would I pay this money to come and see you guys.

S: Exactly. We work too hard and too long, and our whole existence was a result of the fact that they went out of business. The city is certainly large enough to support as many theaters as you care to present because if you present something that everybody wants to see, they are going to come and see it.

H: Right.

S: When you present theater at that level, and yet bill it as they do with the phenomenalism or whatever you want to call it--I do not know what to call it--Dramatization or dramatizing or things of that sort. It is difficult. They have a lot of good people down there, and I think if directed properly and implemented properly they would work well in many of our shows. We need the warm bodies too. There are only so many people in Salem, in the Salem area, who are willing to go on stage. So, why split the two down the middle. Why can't we happily exist with one large community theater that the community does support, and eliminate...

H: When did that one come back into operation?

S: About a year and a half ago.

H: I knew it had not been long because I have not heard much about it at all really.

S: It is amazing to me to consider the park system with as little funding as it has left can still see fit to underwrite the cost of that. I just...It amazes me.

H: With all of the other things that need to be done in the city budget crunch what it is...

S: And they charge more than we do.

H: What? You get dinner?

S: Yes. I understand you get dinner, but if you have ever eaten at Rotary on Tuesday...

H: No. I am not invited to Rotary.

S: You were as a new teacher when you came to Salem.

H: That is true. We did. We got a free apple.

S: It is no better.

H: It has not improved at all.

S: Twelve years?

H: Fourteen.

S: Fourteen. It is still no better.

H: When we were going over the sources of income you listed the kinds of classes presented by the theater inside the art institute, and I wanted to get back to that, simply because it relates so well. You had mentioned, we talked about the fact that we do have a high quality of musicians available.

S: Yes, that is right.

H: Either through the school system, or through the...Whether it is music club, or whatever reason you do have that. That is something that you do not offer, but you do offer instruction in dance, and you do offer instruction in stage management. Those kinds of things were things that maybe you felt you needed to build up?

S: Exactly. We did not have the depth, and admission first of all, lighting technicians, stage technicians, the operation of the actual show, the people that you do not see. We did not have the depth in dance that we needed. The Salem Performing Arts Center down the street here from us is primarily involved in baton, tumbling, and those sorts of lively art forms. We felt we needed the ballerinas, we needed people who could dance in a chorus and dance well. Although we have had very good choreographers for our shows in the past, it is a strain for somebody like myself who is not used to doing a Russian kick and, oh, God, I wish I would have had a year or two of dance. It would have been easier, at least I could have received it easier. What I guess we are trying to do is bring up a new crop of folks to staff our coming shows with better dance, and better voice ability, better ability to move on stage, more fluidity I guess, and maybe a little bit more confi-

dence in themselves to be able to do something of that sort. We have had a number of youngsters audition for live stage who became involved strictly through the dance. It has availed us a lot more people.

H: Then children's theater relates to the...

S: Exactly. They are doing a bang up job. They had their first show which was called The Easter Geese right at Easter time. It was a phenomenal success, it sold out. In fact, they presented it a second time, the kids were just remarkable. I could not believe it, the unison singing, the unison speaking, and they do it all very, very well. Rick Shell should be commended for that effort. Judy Groves, our institute coordinator, helped him get all of these folks together. I know it is a result directly of our institute, and a lot of those younger folks up there that were saying, "Hey, I would like to be on stage, too." Between that and the recitals, that has been a big help.

H: That is what my last question is going to be then. What do you see for the future in the Community Theater?

S: Absolute growth. It has to simply because I set a goal. A three phase goal for myself, and I am going to live up to it; The first one was to create a situation whereby we are recognized as professionals, among our peers, our larger theater organization peers which we are, there is no question about that now. We are counted as among one of the ten best communities out of 400 community theaters in Ohio, and I think that is fantastic in five years, I allow all of that to the board of trustees and their level of professionalism that they have set down. My second goal was the creation of our own permanent home which we have now. My third goal is an audience base that we can be fiscally solvent, to the degree that we can present theater, and not concern ourselves continually about money and where it is going to come from. That we have not achieved yet, and that is the big growth item this season with the season campaign, and bringing in the specialist to run it, oversee it, and organize it. I would say those three things are going to create what the future is of Salem Community Theater. We have broadened our base. We have no where to go in all the different areas without...Our attendances continue to rise in the classes, Children's theater, Theater Guild, Children's Theater Guild, the cinema is on its way back. The sky's the limit. I think ultimately what I would like to see us do is buy the Murphy's building across the street from us, and put in a parking deck. In a concert effort with the city of Salem perhaps in the acquisition stage and the merchants downtown because we

not only need the parking downtown for business, but we also need that proximity parking, and it could be a profitable business. Murphy's is not going to be there forever as a store. It is an exceptionally old building, and it has solely two offices upstairs and the Murphy's company. It would not hurt to...

H: You mean literally a parking deck, or do mean tearing down the building and having a parking lot?

S: Parking deck.

H: With multiple level parking?

S: With three decks. Which would be neat because number one the security being right on State Street it is not isolated somewhere where it could be a crime problem. Of course, the proximity of the theater is wonderful. It would give us some avenues of income with regards to a season ticket holder to have a parking pass.

H: Yes.

S: The turnover of cars...It would not present a problem as far as the downtown area because it would be available for the business during the day, and it is available to us at night. The on street parking is adequate in certain cases, yet entirely it is entirely inadequate when you have a sold out house.

H: Do you find that a problem with the municipal parking lot so close?

S: Yes, because...

H: People still do not like to walk even a block and a half at night?

S: It is strange. Yes, at night, especially older people. I do not really blame them because we do have several bars in downtown Salem that are still problems. Ultimately, through attrition they are going to leave, but the problem is with us in the downtown area, I am thinking this in terms of a business man as well. It would be nice to have that sort of parking available in the downtown area, and I am sure it would help us to keep a main stay like J.C. Penny's across the street.

H: Yes.

S: I have to think about that too because with those big major market companies like that, it helps out. We all have to work together.

H: Well, that sounds real good. Thank you very much for

your time.

S: Thank you, Arlene.

END OF INTERVIEW