

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Theater People from Ohio

Personal Experiences

O. H. 357

MRS. THORN PENDLETON

Interviewed

by

Carol Mills

on

October 8, 1981

MRS. THORN PENDLETON

Mrs. Thorn Pendleton was born Frances Manchester on February 1, 1912, in Detroit, Michigan. Her father was an attorney, and Mrs. Pendleton feels that the drama involved in trial law may have been passed on to her, explaining her interest in theater. She was raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Mrs. Pendleton had much exposure to the arts early on, as her family stressed this cultural exposure for their children.

After high school, Mrs. Pendleton attended the University of Michigan, and after receiving her B.A. in 1934, she became involved in professional theater. She met her husband, Thorn, while performing at the Cleveland Playhouse, where she fondly recalls that he was "A stage door Johnny." Her escalating career took her off to New York where she again ran into Mr. Pendleton, and this time, their relationship developed into marriage. She says she has never been sorry for a minute that she forsook the professional theater in New York for marriage to Thorn Pendleton, whose business, Warren Tool Company, brought her to the Warren, Ohio, area to live. Frances and Thorn Pendleton had three children brought into the decade of the forties: Austin, Alec, and Margaret.

Her expertise in theater inspired a young British war bride, Dorothy Gmucs, to call upon Mrs. Pendleton for help in setting up a dramatic society in the late forties. The Pendletons, at the time, lived in Leavittsburg, Ohio, and they offered the use of their large living room to the

fledgling group after they had been ousted from the local "Y".

At this same time, her oldest son, Austin, manifested a deep interest in theater and formed his very own acting company called "The Child Players", who also performed at the Pendleton home. Austin went on to become one of America's foremost directors and a well-known actor. He frequently has returned to Warren, Ohio, to the Trumbull New Theater, which his mother founded, to do special production.

It is safe to say that without the thirty some year support of the Pendleton family, there would probably be no Trumbull New Theater, known locally as T.N.T. It is renowned for its standards of excellence in community theater, and is completely funded and worked in by amateurs. It has always been self-supporting and operated in the black. Mrs. Pendleton initiated the practice among the young beginning group in 1948 of collecting a quarter from each person to be able to become self-sustaining, and this simple tithing has resulted in the unique structure that today graces the strip on Route 422 in Warren, Ohio, just east of Niles Road.

The theater will celebrate 25 years at its present site this March, with an anniversary production directed by Mrs. Pendleton. The 25-year celebration will culminate in a gala evening birthday party held at the theater by invitation only to those who have worked so unstintingly throughout the years to build T.N.T. into the glittering community theater success it has become, a fitting evening of honor well-deserved by the multi-talented Mrs. Pendleton.

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INTERVIEWEE: MRS. THORN PENDLETON

INTERVIEWER: Carol Mills

SUBJECT: Trumbull New Theater, Austin Pendleton

DATE: October 8, 1981

M: This is an interview with Frances Pendleton for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on theater related people and people who have done work in the theater in the area and elsewhere. I'm doing the interview at Warren, Ohio, on October 8, 1981, at 1:15 p.m.

Mrs. Thorn Pendleton is very well-known in the Northern Ohio area at the Trumbull New Theater, T.N.T., in Warren, Ohio. She has been instrumental in its foundation and its continuing success, and she has worked without stinting there for years.

I am speaking with Mrs. Thorn Pendleton in her living room in Warren, Ohio. I'd like you to start by telling about where you were born, your family background, and how you came to first be interested in the theater, and some memories of your youth.

P: My father was a trial lawyer, and if that isn't acting I don't know what is. As a matter of fact, most of the men in his family were trial lawyers. As long as I can remember I have always loved performing. We used to do, as all children did, plays in our living room. We would charge ten pins. My son was smarter than that. When he was a child he gave plays in our basement and charged a dollar. I was horrified at that, and pointed out to him that I didn't feel a child his age could give a dollar's worth of entertainment. He said, "Well, the people we sell the tickets to think we can." As a result of that, his group was forever choosing a night when Thorn and I had something planned to do. They would

spring it on us that they were ready to give this show. We felt we couldn't have people coming to the house and paying a dollar to see a bunch of grade school kids putting a show on in our basement. We would stay home, of course; we would have to with that kind of a crowd coming, anyway. We would entertain then afterwards with a drink, coffee, and something to eat in order to give them their dollar's worth.

They were The Children Players, as they were then called. I remember one show they did that was a terribly, terribly funny takeoff of "Come Back Little Sheba." We had just done it at T.N.T. I hadn't realized how funny the play was until these grade school children took it apart.

They used to do reviews that were very, very funny. About that time there was a cigarette ad, "Winston's taste good like a cigarette should." They did a marvelous skit on cannibals and a lost English explorer in darkest Africa. The smoke signal that ended the skit was supposed to read, and of course, they translated because we obviously couldn't read the smoke signals, "Sir Winston tastes good like an Englishman should." It stopped the show, literally. Nobody could quit laughing. The drinks began sooner that night for the adults. Of course, we had soft drinks for the children.

M: How old were these children?

P: Austin started when he was in the first grade. If you didn't play Austin's way, you didn't play with Austin. All he wanted to do was theater. The group changed during the years, but there was a little core that stuck with it from the very beginning until they all went away to different colleges. Austin went to a five day boarding school in Cleveland because he had to have his week-ends free for this theater. The funny thing about it is that Austin was in about the first high school class that had trouble getting into college. There were so many more children for each spot in college than there were places for them. He had no trouble going to the college of his choice, and it was all because of this theater that had absolutely bound our lives up in knots for years. So it did pay off. They were fascinated by his theater story.

By the time the children were in high school, they were doing very adult things. They did a production of the "Glass Menagerie" that was much more subtle than a lot of the ones I've seen grown-ups do. They did a wonderful production of the last act of "Our Town." They really did some very interesting things. They did them all by themselves; nobody else was allowed to help them.

M: You had said that he piously named the group

The Child Players. I believe that is how you stated it.

P: I'm not sure pious is the word, but he was a little pompous about the whole thing. Maybe that's a better word. He took it very seriously.

Then when we moved to Atlantic Street, they changed it to The Atlantic Players. We had a room in our basement that was going to be just a room in the basement, but he demanded ten foot ceilings and no finishing in it so that they would have the open floor joists to fasten lights to. The ten foot ceilings were for scenery. Now any intelligent parent is going to think twice about sinking a room in a house three feet below the other rooms in the basement because it involves drainage and all kinds of expensive things. We thought he would outgrow his theater bent eventually, but that room remained a theater as long as we lived there. Thorn and I just couldn't believe he had led us down the primrose path to building that ten foot ceiling, but he did.

M: You had started his interests, though, by having the plays done at your home.

P: No, I think that he would have had the interest anyway. What made his grandfather a very fine trial lawyer made him good in the theater. He has had an interesting career because his interest is in the classics and the experimental, rather than in the popular. Most of his best works have been with regional theater where they do that kind of thing. He has never had any interest in the big star syndrome.

M: I just saw his production of "Cherry Orchard," which is in New Jersey at the Whole Theater. I guess you call it regional, although they are very close to New York. That was done in the month of December in 1981.

P: That wasn't my favorite production he has ever done. I much prefer the "Cherry Orchard" he did in New Hampshire. But I also feel that he is marvelous with Chekhov. I just didn't think that that was the greatest production of Chekhov he had ever done.

One thing that I'm very interested in is the production he did of "Candida" with Blythe Danner, Ed Hermann, and Tom Brennan. They did it at Williamstown Summer Festival a couple of years ago, and a man who produces theater for public television and cable made a cable television tape of that, and I think it's super.

M: Austin is on cable television this month in "First Family."

P: Gene Shallot called it one of the ten worst movies of the year. That's the reason Austin does not like movies; the

script he got and the parts he shot of that were really terribly funny.

M: And they cut things so badly,

P: No, but then they slip in things that aren't in the script you read. That happens all the time.

M: You mean slip in rather than eliminate.

P: If you're working on the stage you know what the show is when you're doing it. In the movies, when it gets to the editing room, you don't really know what is going to happen to it. That's the thing he doesn't like about movies. He makes movies and he enjoys the mechanics of the work; it's a very technical work as opposed to the stage. He enjoys that part, but he said so many times you're embarrassed when the show comes out because it isn't in the script.

M: Last month he was also in "Starting Over," which was a success.

P: That was a marvelous movie.

M: I thought that Austin's part was one of the most enhancing things in the film. At the divorced men's clinic, he played Paul who drove the plumber's truck.

P: He really enjoyed making that movie. He loved working with Burt Reynolds. He said he is a very sensitive man and really quite an artist. He was very much impressed with him.

M: Okay, let's go back to before you took the T.N.T. players to its present site on the strip in Warren. How did it begin? But, first I would like to know a little bit about your life, and how you got into the theater from your interest from your father. As you said, you felt that you had this, but it was you who was doing theater when you met your husband, wasn't it?

P: Yes. I was at the Cleveland Playhouse as an apprentice. He was my stage door Johnny. At that time I was very much in love with an actor at the playhouse, and I just used him for sort of a pillow to get reactions from. Then I went to New York and I was cast in several different shows during the depths of the Depression. Then the money would fall through; that happens a lot in theater in the best of times, but during the Depression it was really pretty grim. I remember one show that was really . . . I can't remember the name of it, but if it were done today,

it would be the most innocent thing in the world. Yet in the climate of the 1930's, it was banned in Boston. That meant that it couldn't go on the road for its try-outs so that they couldn't afford to do it.

M: That term banned in Boston is very literal.

P: Yes, it is. Most people today do not realize that during the Depression the American government supported the arts. It wasn't all basic work and building roads. Artists were given opportunities like people in any other line of work. For instance, those murals you see in Post Offices all over the country were done by out of work recognized artists at that time.

At the University, young instructors in all fields were subsidized by the federal government. You had to be working on an advanced degree and you could only get paid for 40 hours of work a week at base pay, minimum pay that is.

I had that dangling before me and so I gave up and went home. I was only at the University one semester when the Battle Creek Michigan Little Theater gave me a call. They needed a director to build up their theater. It had fallen into bad habits. I got the job.

M: You must have been very young at the time.

P: No. I was through college.

M: But you were directing a theater.

P: Yes, but in those days most community theaters paid badly. Even in a wealthy town like Battle Creek, which at that time was the wealthiest town per capita in the country, there was a lot of money there. They didn't support the arts much, so the money was very scarce and they needed a sucker like me. I was so hiped on how magnificent theater was. The first year I pulled them out of debt. I feel very good about that. I went back the second year, and then at the end of the second year I was married.

I had offers after that, although my marriage had been announced and was coming up. People couldn't believe that I was turning them down. I'm really terribly glad I lived then instead of now, because today I would have felt that I had to take the jobs and make the most of it. I would not really have given up the life I had for anything. It wasn't the life I envisioned for myself as a young woman--coming to a mill town. Let's face it, it was somewhat limited at that time because there wasn't any support of the arts.

I give T.N.T. credit for selling the idea of patronship of the arts to the town. We have a marvelous group of patrons, and they're not the wealthy people in town. Some of the well-to-do, of course, are patrons, but so many of our patrons are people who have to scrimp to pay that support. They believe in what we are doing and are loyal whether the show is good, bad, or indifferent. They come and tell us when they think we're not good, but they're constructive about it. They recognize the fact that if you're going to work totally with amateurs you have to keep bringing along new talent; you can't just use the same, old, die-hard people who have become good. This is a learning experience for everybody connected with it. We appreciated that at T.N.T. because when we were good, I don't think anybody could beat us. But when we were bad nobody could beat us at that either.

I feel it's one of the last places in the world where you can fail, and you cannot really learn anything without failing. You learn by going beyond your experience and beyond your talent. If you do that, you're going to fail sometimes.

M: By reaching?

P: By reaching. It's healthy. Of course, the wonderful thing is that you can fail at T.N.T., but it doesn't keep you from having another chance. Of course, there are always a few people who say, "Oh for heavens, that person can't ever direct another show, he was so bad the last time." Yet, nobody listens to people who do that. Some of those people who have failed miserably on a show are the ones who have become our finest directors. It's important to be able to fail.

M: You're doing a new show I have discovered.

P: I'm doing an old show.

M: You're doing "Death of a Salesman" again.

P: We did "Death of a Salesman" some years ago, and this production coincides with our 25th birthday. I was very flattered that they asked me to direct it. They said that they wanted it to be a show that we had done before. I think "Death of a Salesman" is good for this group; they're marvelous at both Tennessee Williams and Miller because the membership understands those people. As a matter of fact, some of the Tennessee Williams' plays they have done that have succeeded tremendously here have been stuff that has just fallen flat on its face with professional casts. We have done "Orpheus Descending" twice and it had failed miserably every time professionals have tried it for Broadway.

M: You're quite right about that. They made a film of it called "The Fugitive Kind." Brando and, I believe, Joann Woodward were in it.

P: I don't remember. It was a smash hit when we did it here. We've done a lot of Miller and all the Miller we've done has gone over very, very well. We start rehearsals as soon as the show goes down.

M: "The Shadow Box"?

P: "The Shadow Box", yes.

M: Ted Kromer, who was directing that, is a case in point of what T.N.T. membership is all about. He came into the group when they were still meeting in our living room. He had had absolutely no theatrical experience or exposure as a matter of fact. He acted in a few shows and he was very good. He never played a terribly big part, but he was very good. I remember one part he did particularly well. Ted Kromer, who is a good Northern European blonde extraction, played a Jewish multimillionaire in "Hotel Universe". He was brilliant. All the hurt was there. It was just so understanding of a way of life that he knew absolutely nothing about. I was very impressed with that. Shortly after that he had a chance to direct a one act, so he got into directing. I've been in a couple of his shows, and I love to be in them. I was in the Thomas Wolfe thing, "Look Homeward Angel". That was as great an experience as any professional ever had in the theater. He cast Dick Boyd, who was still quite young, as the father. He played my husband if you can imagine. I'm old enough to be his mother. That was really the beginning of Dick's splendid acting.

M: Dick just said that the other day to me.

P: Did he?

M: Yes.

P: Ted Kromer is a darn good director, yet he has had a failure or two. I think he learned a lot from his failures.

M: I did a show for him called "Critic's Choice". That's when I first started doing community theater. He put me in a very important role in the play. I found him very pleasant to work for.

P: I like working for him. He really is a splendid director. Of course, Tom Schroth had been to theater because he had been to a college that had a heck of a good theater department. But he never thought of being technically connected with it. Yet, he not only designed a theater we could build ourselves, but he also got his theater in the Architectural Forum, which was the bible magazine of the architectural world at that time. He was still just a young apprentice cub in an architectural office here. He saw the possibilities of this building as a theater, as the nucleus of a theater, and the company gave us the shell of the building. It's not a Quonset, it's a lockrib.

M: That's what they used to call it?

P: No, Quonset is a trade name and we have to call that lockrib.

M: When I went there that's what they told me.

P: Well, it was Inland Steel's lockrib, and the reason they gave it to us was because Tom Schroth taught them how to insulate it. They said it couldn't be insulated.

M: Would you describe how that building appeared?

P: It was strictly just a long, lockrib building, a half circle. The original part of the building is now the inner lobby, the forestage, and the auditorium. That was all there was to it.

M: This was metal?

P: It is metal. Then we've added the lobby, and we've now added the backstage to it. We put that building up for just under \$25,000 twenty-five years ago. The day it was finished it was insurable at \$75,000, and the difference was the work that the kids had put into it. All of the electronic system came from government excess after World War II. They bought all of the stuff through those government catalogs. So much of the stuff was given to us because Tom was so clever at the use of the materials; the insulation was given to us by a man in New York who had bought a theater for his wife. He was so pleased that his insulation was going to show. It was held in place by the expanded metal made over in Niles. The back wall is material made by U.S. Gypsum. They gave it to us because we figured out some accoustical value. It was really amazing. That's the story of the building, and it really is an exciting story because we're probably . . .

The only amateur, by that I mean the only person who ever gets paid out there--when we can find one--is a very inexpensive janitor. Everybody else there is volunteer. We're the only totally volunteer theater in the country that maintains a plant of that stature.

M: You are quite right about that. I know with all these interviews I've been doing, a lot of the people are aware of the fact about T.N.T.

P: We sell it as hard as we can because we think it is something for this area to be very proud of. There are literally thousands of people who have gone through the experience of T.N.T. and gone on to fine careers in other things. They say that the assurance that they developed and the easy comradeship really loosened them up to the point where they could succeed in their work. It's a very valuable thing.

M: Until I went there, I didn't have very much of a social life or anyplace to do anything with my four, young children. It certainly opened up a whole new facet of life for me, and my family. It became an eye-opener as to what I was able to go after in my own mediocre life. I would like you to talk about before it went to the building. You had told me about the people who met in your home where you and your husband let everyone come.

P: My son Austin was in the third grade at Elm Road School and his teacher was Dorothy Gmucs, who was a British war bride. She had just been in this country for a year or two. She was running a drama interest group, as they called it, at the YWCA. There were about sixteen people and none of them had had very much theater experience, including Dorothy. She really had no training, no experience. They were constantly being censored. At that time, we had a general secretary at the Y. She was, as you know, the paid head of it. She was "socially minded" to the point where she was bigoted if you didn't agree immediately with her social philosophies. She would never listen to reason; she wanted the world changed overnight. Of course, they had no budget, so they had to do no-royalty plays. Unless they are classics they are no good no-royalty plays for a very good reason. They're not worth putting on. This was all they could do. They found one that they thought was a little less bad than the others, and it had a colored maid in it. The woman just went through the ceiling. Well, of course, those were standard stock comedy characters and they aren't terribly funny in our eyes today. The minute you

start censoring even something like that, the censoring grows. Dorothy Gmucs asked me at a P.T.A. meeting if I would be willing to help her group because she knew I had been in directing before I was married.

M: About what year was this?

P: This would have been about 1942. I said I would; I would be very happy to. It was a couple of nights later that the phone rang about 7:30; it was the night they met at the Y. She said that her group would like to talk to me and I said, "Well, when do you want to do it?" She said, "We'll be out in fifteen minutes." And they were. They had crust. They wanted me to teach them anything I could. They wanted to use my house for their meetings and also to give their plays, until they could get organized.

M: They asked you for your home?

P: Yes, they didn't ask for it--they assumed I would be willing to do all of this.

M: Where was your house located at the time?

P: It was in Leavittsburg on a big acreage that had been in my husband's family for a long, long time. I was kind of flabbergasted at their crust. I said, "Yes, but I have a few demands to make too." At that time, pirating of plays in this area was appalling. When you pirate a play, a copyrighted play, you might just as well be going up to this playwright and holding a gun to his head and cleaning out his pockets because a playwright lives on the royalties that are paid to him whenever his play is done. I told them that, and said that we had a thing to overcome in this area because they were even pirating in some of the out-lying schools. They would change the title of the play so that nobody would know what they were doing.

M: Besides robbing them of their money, it was dishonorable.

P: It was, it was totally dishonorable. The theater in this area had a terrible reputation with the houses that owned the big plays, like Samuel French and Dramatists Play Service.

M: What theaters might those be?

P: I won't name the theaters. All of them are out of business so it doesn't matter. We were in bad straits merely because we were a theater. I said, "You are going to have the money in the bank to pay for a production before you put it on." They said, "Where are we going

to get it?" I said, "You get it by passing the hat at every single meeting we have." We next decided what the kids could afford to put in the pot at each meeting. They decided they could put in a quarter. It took us a year to raise sixty dollars. During the entire year we worked on three one acts, which used up everybody in the group, so they were all working. We sent invitations and thought that we might get twenty people to come to our play. Instead, we had sixty, and we explained that we weren't ready to charge for tickets yet because we weren't that good. We were still learning, but we would pass the hat and we would like a silent collection. We passed the hat, and lo and behold, we got a little bit better than the sixty dollars back. The first evening of one acts, by the time we paid our royalties and for the other expenses, used up our first sixty dollars, and we started the next day with sixty dollars in the bank again. We continued passing this hat for twenty-five cents a meeting, and then we had a marvelous break because Carolyn Brown and her sister Jan Michael came in to the group. Jan took over handling the money. She was firm, and she really knew how to handle it. Within five years, we had enough money to buy the lot out on Youngstown Road. Granted, we got a break on that because the man who sold it to us was Russell Hetz, a wonderful guy. He had sold that property to some people who weren't paying as they should; they were welshing on their agreement. There was a barn in connection with it, and he felt kind of guilty because he hadn't made the barn available to T.N.T. He realized afterwards that a barn often made a great theater. It does and it doesn't, but we weren't loath to trade on his guilt. He said, "I will give you the back stretch of property just west of the barn for what it cost them." That was \$3500.00. Today, just that piece of property we have is worth about \$125,000.00

M: Would you tell that that piece of property is located on what they call the Warren strip.

P: Well, the Niles strip unfortunately. I'm sick that Niles had gotten to annex that, and yet I take my hat off to Niles; Warren just sat on its hands and Niles grabbed it all up.

M: I did not know that.

P: Oh yes. That is part of Niles. I admire Niles for it. They own that whole strip, and they collect the taxes on it.

M: That's 422, route 422?

P: Yes.

M: It is known also all over America for some of the restaurants and places.

P: Yes. It really fascinates me because when we started out, when they got the name T.N.T., the newspapers would not give us an inch. We weren't newsworthy; we were just a bunch of people trying to start a theater and it was regarded as "ho hum somebody else is trying to start a theater." I said, "Well, you've got to have a name that will catch attention." Trumbull Theater was easy, and Stan Killingsworth said, "If we called it Trumbull New Theater, which it is, and which it would remain if we keep trying to grow, we could call it T.N.T." About seven years after we started with the name T.N.T., there was a headline in the Niles paper about an explosion and it said, "T.N.T. Explodes." Somebody called Tom Schroth just frantic because he thought our brand new little building had gone up. It was really interesting the way the name caught on. It was a blow when Niles took in that strip because everybody had always assumed it would be part of Warren and the body of our support is Warren.

M: How did that coup occur?

P: Because the city council sat on its hands, I guess. But anyway, the fact that we're Trumbull New Theater, and had always tried to appeal to the entire county saved our necks. It was a good name in more ways than one. It did get us attention. We finally started getting in the papers because we wrote our own newsletter called The Angels Herald and we started sending it out. Of course, in those days bulk mailing was so much cheaper than it is now. We would mimeograph it on paper that we would gather from anybody who could give us a few sheets. That's how we finally started getting newspaper coverage; we figured "we don't need you". The minute you don't need somebody, they need you very badly. I will say this: Helen Hart Hurlbert was always very supportive once she got the idea in her head that we meant business and that we were going to last no matter what. She was very supportive.

M: Who is she?

P: Helen Hart Hurlbert owned the Warren Tribune. She had inherited it from her mother, who was one of the great newspaper women in the country. Her daughter, Zell, was the first woman to be elected to the Associated Press. She was a very exciting woman for this area. Helen was very, very good to us and now Zell Demming is running her paper and his being very good to us, too. We've been fortunate.

M: In other words, the granddaughter of this woman is now running it?

P: Yes. That is an interesting dynasty, and it's all women. Zell Demming's father died when she was fourteen years old. He owned a grocery store here and she said to her mother . . . In those days you didn't build up an estate. She said to her mother, "One of us has to go to work, so you take care of the house and I'll go to work." She went to the newspaper and got a job. In those days, if you worked on a newspaper you did everything; you sold ads, you wrote stories, you did everything. It was very small, four sheets. As a matter of fact, it remained that, I think, almost up to the time that Helen Hart Hurlbert took it over. But it became a very important four-sheet newspaper. She would buy a little bit of stock when she could get the money together, and the man who owned it at that time thought she was cute and ambitious and attractive. He would humor her by letting her buy it and if you buy one stock at a time long enough, eventually you own a newspaper. That's what happened to her. Somebody should write that woman's life; she is one of the most fascinating women who ever grew up in America. She became a nationally famous newspaper woman right here in . . .

M: She's from this area?

P: Yes, she was born here and at fourteen started to work here. She never had any formal schooling after that, and yet she was one of the best educated women in the country.

M: Would you tell about this area, because you said something before about when you came to this mill area from your other background? I'd like you to sort of elaborate on your background in Michigan.

P: I lived in Ann Arbor and I grew up in Birmingham, Michigan, which was a suburb town. Then we moved to Ann Arbor. I grew up in a professional family, and we were surrounded by music and theater and art. Trips to the art museum and

trips to hear the symphony play and that kind of thing were just part of our everyday life. When I came to Warren, it was the Depression and that was a very depressing thing here. The small, family-owned businesses were being sold off to big industry, and it was very definitely a transient town. There was the labor unrest that developed during the 1930's, during the formation of the big unions and that kind of thing.

M: What was Mr. Pendleton's business?

P: He has always been in the manufacturing business. He was in manufacturing when I married him. Our company is one of the few family-owned factories.

M: Would you like to name the company?

P: It's Warren Tool. They now have about eleven plants in other areas.

There were a few families who had money, but it didn't occur to them to create a climate of culture because they felt, I suppose, that they were the only ones to patronize this atmosphere. They didn't realize that the people who worked in the plants and worked in the stores had as many cultural yearnings as they did. Also, there really wasn't any big money in this town. The upshot of it was that T.N.T. was founded by people who worked in the mills and worked in the stores; it was founded by working people; most community theaters are founded by a wealthy group in a wealthy community who want to have a little fun. T.N.T. has been the jumping-on place for an awful lot of people. It has amounted to their adult education in so many cases. It has really been an amazing thing.

We had one marvelous girl named Ann Patokey. She was the receptionist or secretary at one of the architectural firms here in town. It was a good job and they paid her quite well, but she wanted a college education and wanted that degree. She was going nights to Youngstown and hoarding her money so that she could eventually go off to college. One summer, she wrote to Bowling Green and to Wellesley and said that she wanted to go to summer school and was there a possibility of a scholarship. She got a full scholarship at Wellesley, and she got almost a full scholarship at Bowling Green. Now the obvious choice would have been Wellesley, and of course, from where I sat that was the one that she should have taken. She said, "No, I'm taking Bowling Green because my background is such that I don't understand all of the little niceties

that go into making the Wellesley girl, and I will be uncomfortable. I'm after knowledge, and Bowling Green is a very good school. They have this marvelous summer theater program I can work in and I'm going there." I thought she was as smart as could be. She developed from that first summer where they gave her the scholarship for working in their summer theater, into a regular job with the drama department, and put herself through college and graduated with honors. She married a young man who was going into college administration. He got a very good job in Columbus at Ohio State University. And she raised a couple of children. All of this became possible because of her T.N.T. work; she's a good actress, a marvelous, little actress. She isn't the only one--there have been hundreds of people like that through the years that T.N.T. has been in progress who have gone from T.N.T. to . . . Maybe, it's not even something that is connected with the theater, but their curiosity has been stimulated and their intelligence has been stimulated. I started the Saturday classes out there, which was at first a catchall for kids who didn't do well in school and whose mothers sent them to see if maybe they could do something there. This was their last resort. In every case where those children were bad students, they wanted to come to T.N.T. They talked their mothers into it, but it was the first time that they were intellectually aroused and they went on to become honor students. I think that's what T.N.T. does, because we don't have paid directors; we don't have a paid manager who comes in and takes over everything and we just go do as we are told. To keep that thing going we all have to contribute creatively, and it is intellectually stimulating in a way that most community theaters are not, for that very reason.

M: I recall that when I came myself, and I just want to say this quickly, I had an old, broken down car that cost around \$40.00. I never knew if I would make it every night that I came up here. Now, today, driving to your house I thought, my God, that was only fourteen miles but to me at the time it was like going to the Alps. I would say every night, "I don't know if I'll make it." Many a time my car broke down, and the whole place would pitch in to help. Your family loaned me one of your cars to get me through the production. But they'll let you come with a broken car even.

P: Just so you get there.

M: I think it gives hope. Besides stimulation you get this hope for fulfillment.

P: I'll tell you one thing it did for me, it made me very hard-boiled. I don't suffer fools very easily. I would see these people, as you say, you and your \$40.00 car, who would get to a rehearsal. They would get to a set session when it was a real effort on their part. I just never bothered with the people who didn't show up. The first time a person didn't show up, as far as I was concerned, it meant that they didn't really want it. It's a wonderful experience for that reason; it teaches you not to suffer the people who make excuses. Life is too short to suffer people who make excuses for not getting places.

M: Or also, when they make an excuse and it's a valid excuse, if they'll take steps to rectify it. I think I learned more about discipline. I still am unforgiving of someone who stands me up. I don't care if you can't come; there are all sorts of bizarre things can happen, but please tell me. I learned that at the theater.

P: The ones who had made it, come hell and high water, became such dear friends in a totally different way than the people that you just meet socially or casually. You've been through something together. I think T.N.T. is in a class by itself because it is totally amateur. I mean amateur in the best sense of the word.

When Austin first started going to the Williamstown Summer Theater--he went his first year between prep school and college . . .

M: Where is that located?

P: Williamstown, Massachusetts, which is the northwestern corner of Massachusetts. It's where Williams College is. It is a beautiful New England village. Thorn and I were determined that if he was going to work in summer theater it was going to be a good theater. They do a lot of classics; they don't just do the Broadway runs and let it go at that. They have a very interesting program. We pulled every string we could to get him in to that summer theater. Thorn had gone to Williams College, but there is no connection between the college and the summer theater. They are mostly Yale people, and Austin was going to Yale in the fall. The theater was only a few years old at that time, but when he was up there, if he would get a walk-on, several carloads would drive up to Williamstown to see the play in which one of their boys was making good.

The set designer that summer, well the first few years that Austin was up there, was Will Steven Armstrong, who was a

brilliant designer. He died as quite a young man, very unfortunately, but he had already had a magnificent success, Tony Awards and that kind of thing. We would arrive, this bunch from T.N.T. in Warren, and he would let us--of course, he was glad for the extra hands, but he was getting intelligent hands--help so that we could see how the sets were going together. We were always welcome at the tech rehearsals to sit in the back and watch them with the lights. He had a properly lighted show, with the proper equipment, and yet it was done on a shoestring. They didn't have millions to spend. They had a very large budget, as T.N.T. goes, but as summer theater goes, for the sort of thing they were doing, it wasn't a large budget. They welcomed us because the attitude of these people was so great. That's where we became acquainted with some of the modern French authors. And I remember a production of "A View From The Bridge"; we had done some Arthur Miller before that. But to see these really very fine actors doing "A View From The Bridge" was such a stimulating experience. We saw all of the tech rehearsals and then we saw the performance. We did it later; it still remains one of the finest things we ever did. Carolyn Brown directed it. It suddenly hit us that the thing about Miller was that these were people our people understood. We have done some marvelous productions of Miller since then.

Austin loves it when the T.N.T. kids come to see what he's doing. They have gone all over to see him do "Tartuffe" and that sort of thing.

M: I know when I saw "Little Foxes," and I saw a couple of productions, I felt personally proud of Austin, like he was my cousin.

P: He sort of feels like your cousin if you work at T.N.T.

M: I only talked to him four or five times backstage and stuff. I said, "He's from where I'm from." I wasn't even embarrassed. I don't care if it doesn't sound sophisticated. I was so proud. You get that feeling there.

P: I want to say something about America's first attempt at government subsidized theater, which took place during the Depression years under Roosevelt's regime. In those terrible, terrible times, Eleanor Roosevelt convinced Congress that out of work actors, out of work artists, out of work singers, were just as out of work as automobile workers or out of work steelworkers.

Some of our fine artists were promoted through that in a healthy way. In the theater, it was a most exciting time because the American theater in the world was the only theater that had absolutely no government support. The first time we had it, I was in college. The excitement around the Mercury Theater, in New York, was stupendous because Orson Welles, a very young boy, a very cocky young man, was directing. He got the money from Congress to put on a production of "Julius Caesar." I never saw that production, but I knew everything they did because there was marvelous coverage of it. We in Ann Arbor, where I was, were so excited. How wonderful, here is the beginning of government subsidy of theater and of work and in these desperate times. The production was put on at an absolutely bottom budget. Instead of wearing togas and being very contemporary with the time of Julius Caesar, the characters were contemporary with today. You remember this is when Hitler was starting in Germany. It had something to say to those times. Mussolini was strong in Italy; it was a statement of modern politics. It was done very economically and very imaginatively. John Houseman and Orson Welles were the heroes in the American theater. They had it made in spades, and those two fools were then given a second chance and instead of doing what had made them so spectacular--using imagination instead of money--they threw away money. They went way over budget and they were cocky about it. They said that the stupid people who are in Congress don't have the artistic taste they do. You don't understand. Anybody who didn't agree with them was a clod. It killed government support of theater; it really did.

M: They had a cavalier attitude.

P: A very cavalier attitude. It was not their fault; it was the fault of these stupid people in Congress who had been foresighted enough to want to help theater. But because in a country that was simply torn apart by that Depression, they couldn't come up with constantly more and more money when there were people starving who had to be fed in soup kitchens. They somehow thought the soup kitchen was a little more important than a costumer who was way over budget for the Mercury Theater. To me, that was such a betrayal. I've read a lot about Orson Welles and John Houseman. They betrayed theater in what they did.

M: I'm so impressed by you saying it because I've admired both of them, and I was young enough at the time that I didn't know. I can imagine the college age person being

so enthusiastic like yourself.

P: We had hope; we were so idealistic about this great opportunity, and it made us sick to see it go down the drain. And another thing, I mean they weren't the only ones, let's face it. I had been to New York several times by then and was trying desperately to crack into the theater. People who I knew who had never had a job in the theater were over at the WPA offices picketing because they weren't paying out of work actors. You do not become an actor until you have acted and acted and acted.

M: I totally agree with that.

P: For them to have the gall to go and strike and make it difficult for a legitimate character actor to work . . . There weren't all that many productions going for a legitimate character actor who had given his life in the service of the theater to collect enough to live on because these young snips . . . There was plenty of work they could have done, sweeping sidewalks and a few things like that in those days. I just think it was a tragic thing. It took how many years before the National Arts Council came along? This is still a very creeping thing. I do believe that this government should support our great art forms, like the Metropolitan Opera, like maybe five top symphonies; they should throw a little in to the pot. There is no way we can sell it at a price to the public so that the opera-loving and music-loving public can afford it or make enough money to pay for it through ticket sales. They talk a lot not when the taxes get reduced of how the wealthy people will no longer give to the charities and to the arts, and that's not true. Long before there ever was an income tax in this country, it was wealthy people who were subsidizing that kind of thing. That's why we have those things and that's why they were able to reach excellence, because outstanding families who had money made this possible. I would love to see a national theater. I think it should probably be in Washington, which more and more is trying to become a center for such things because of visiting dignitaries. They now have a facility for that kind of thing. I think we owe it to ourselves to put a marvelous face forward with a national ballet and a national theater. I think the Metropolitan is the opera they should back, and probably the New York City Opera also because that's a training ground for our opera stars who go on to the Met. I don't want to see that money ever again put in the hands of young upstarts.

M: If you had the choice to pick the people to head this, or to make it grow, who might be a few people you would select or recommend?

P: I would recommend very definitely Nikos Psacarapolous who for twenty-five or twenty-seven years has built up the Williamstown Summer Theater so that it is a haven. So many of their people have gone on to become the bulwark of the professional theater, not the big stars necessarily, but the people who give it the class that just goes on and on. They all come back summers to work for him. They arrange it so that they can be back for at least one show. I think it was the sort of the plays that he does, and it was Psacarapolous who did this. I think that there are a lot of those people. There are so many more than you even dream of because they stuck to their last and did well. The most exciting theater in this country today is consistently done by regional theater. There are the big blockbusters, and they're fine, but the thing that feeds the people and gives it class is done by the regional theaters. I think maybe the very top regional theater people should be told that the first play they go over budget they're through. I think that that should be an obligation of the people who are handing out the money. I have respect for people who give money to the arts. So many times they have given freely and been spat on because all they can do is provide the money.

M: Don't you think that that has been trouble . . . I'm reminded of Teddy Roosevelt's father who did so many things because I study history and I'm aware of some of these. Sometimes there is this absolute attitude of you owe it to us and you just better furnish it, cough up and then just get out of the way.

P: Yehudi Menuhin, who I consider one of the thrilling performers of all time, has made the mistake of writing his autobiography. This man, who as a child was backed by multimillionaires, he was given a magnificent violin as really quite a child. He was a child performer. Something went out of my feeling for him when I read that autobiography because he did not respect the man who provided the money for his training.

There is a wonderful artist, Don Drumm, who is in museums all over the country. His very first things had a museum quality to them. A man in, I believe it's Akron, created a foundry where his metal sculpture could be allowed to come to fruition. Don Drumm is his thing. How many artists have had this patron who had made their work possible, their fame possible, the quality of what they do possible. Menuhin sort of spat upon them as Philistines. If these people aren't creative, they work for a big industry. Those artists are denying themselves a fantastically creative interplay by dismissing a man who can make money as a Philistine. They're not; I've

known a lot of businessmen since I've been married to Thorn and the successes in business, particularly the successes in small business, are fascinating, intellectual, stimulating people. They give and give and give, and that in itself is a very imaginative thing.

- M: I wonder how he got to that point. I had dealings with many men of this type. I was amazed at how people can actually ungratefully take the money out of these people's hands and then call them names and cut them down and say, "He wouldn't know," as they're gleefully spending those dollars. They act like they're having a religious commitment to see how fast they can grow, but they have a great purpose. The purpose of this man is just to give more. I'm very offended by that.
- P: I'm offended by it, too. I have had much to do with the raising of funds for T.N.T. I would say that on the whole the gratitude of T.N.T. for the donations made to them is exceptional. We've never gone after big, big, big money. We've never gone after the foundation money and the grants because there are, particularly with the government grants, concessions you have to make. Ours is, as I said, an amateur group. We're not going to give that up. This is what works for our particular area and it has made us what we are today. As a result, the money that has been given to them by the people of the area has been cherished. They still can make a nickel do the work of a dollar out there.
- M: I learned how to take an old, bent nail from T.N.T. and pound it and use it over and over again--practical things that helped me and my children.
- P: Their budget is small. Of course, it's staggering to me now when you think that for the first two years their budget was sixty dollars. I mean for the two years, not one. It's around \$13,000.00 to \$15,000.00 now. But they work hard for that. They have a marvelous women's committee that goes out and every year raises the money. Most of the people we get it from like to be asked over again. We send out these envelopes so they can automatically send their donations back. Each year there are more people who use that. But most of it is calling the people up and thanking them, seeing to it that they get their thank you note.

One year, when I was chairman of the patron's committee, there was something wrong with the mail. I discovered to my horror in March that several nice sized gifts the people had given had never been thanked. What it amounted to was that they didn't have a receipt for their income tax.

I discovered this in March when they were getting ready to do this. I sat down with a couple of women on the committee and we rewrote everybody we had written to since November 1. We would say, if you have been thanked, this is just a repeat, but we have discovered so many people who didn't receive our thank you that we are writing again. A lot of groups wouldn't have taken that trouble, but T.N.T. felt a commitment to the people who had made their year and their new stage house possible. They had to know how much we loved it.

M: Do you think that some of the people who had to scrounge for this money . . . that this enhances their love so that when they get a wonderful gift of the arts they cherish it more?

P: I think it is because our supporters are so closely identified with the actual work. They know our respect for every penny. We still have in the membership quite a few from those twenty-five cent passes at the hat donation meetings. Most of them know that our budget is made up after we know how much money we are going to have. We don't make up our budget and then say "you patrons must give us this much," We have built up an excellent credit rating. We have only had one year when we went over budget. The members learned the hard way just how uncomfortable that can be.

M: When was this?

P: I don't remember just when it was. That was one promise they made me, that they would never put on a show when they didn't have the money in the bank to pay for it. Well, they had enough assets so that they could borrow from here and there and they got through the year. But they'll never do it again. They build their sets from scratch. They go out and dig up the costumes and dig up the properties and train the actors and get out what publicity they can. That's a full-time job in itself. On top of that, they always had to be aware of where the money was coming from to pay for it. So they can't help but be appreciative that they have more energy to spend on the creative end of using the money. I have been told by some of my more sophisticated friends in other cities, who raise money for big time things, that we are breaking our hearts on dollars. I said, "No way, we are not breaking our heart--we are trying to keep within the limits that the community can afford." That has been the whole story of T.N.T. It has to stay within the limits that the community can afford. It is a positive experience, but for some of them, I'm sure, it has been positively awful.

I have invited some of the board of the Cleveland Symphony, which is one of the greats of the world, down here to hear our symphony. And they were impressed. Last spring a women's committee from the symphony, who are in charge of raising money, had a tour of Tom Schroth's houses in the Youngstown area. We had some people from Cleveland down for that. They were bowled over; they didn't realize that this magnificent architect was this close to home. We have had them down to see T.N.T. productions. There is the most wonderful story about when Austin came here and directed "Glass Menagerie," and I was in it. Austin belonged to an honor society his senior year at Yale, and he was walking down the streets of New York after he went back and bumped into a friend who had belonged to the same honor society he did. They became friends for life. It is always a small group. This boy said, "I've got the most wonderful story to tell you Austin: My brother is a doctor in Cleveland and he and his wife were invited down to spend the weekend with Jim and Molly Rhinehard in Warren. At dinner Jim and Molly said, "Well, we have to hurry because we're going to the opening night of "Glass Menagerie" out at the local theater." This man called his brother and asked him if one of the members of his society lived in Warren, Ohio. He said yes, and he told him that he saw this boy's mother in a production and it was one of the most exciting evenings he ever spent in the theater. "It was a magnificent performance and that woman was marvelous and the whole cast was marvelous," was what he said. Austin said, "Is that all he had to say?" He said, "Well I think that is a lot, don't you?" Austin said, "Well, I directed it."

I've had people down to see things other people have done at the theater which I have been terribly proud of, and they are impressed. We have a lot of people over from Hiram to see the things we do. The teachers from Hiram bring classes over when we're doing a classic. We have nothing to be ashamed of. Our art guild has marvelous shows, and marvelous opportunities for local artists who have gone on to be recognized. Look at Katie Kolkabek; a gallery is taking her work to Paris, New York, and Cleveland.

M: What amazes me is that we can just really dwell on this now. Here's Austin at the peak right now after having the triumph with "Little Foxes." Now it is a focused national triumph. I'm sure he probably had more meaningful moments, but he's in the limelight. He is from here. People in New York will say things like those people are from that such and such little po dunk place. Most of the people who have contributed so much to the larger cities

are indeed from these kind of little towns. That is what makes it America and makes it that kind of theater to me. I don't know why they don't understand that not everybody is going to be born in a glass house.

P: After all, Pavarotti, who is the great darling of the opera world today, was born in a small town in Italy and his father was the local barber. You should see him--he's gorgeous. We met him once and he was such fun. You would think he was "to the manner." A lot of the top-drawar people in the field of arts are from little villages and not from the cities; they feed the cities.

M: Somehow it makes them more reachable to the public. I know Austin does act overly kind and gracious to anybody that approaches him in New York. I think he learned that here. He didn't just come upon that late in life; he had to grow up with that attitude.

P: He has always been very easy to get along with. He likes people. I think that is why he has had his success. Here is a very interesting bit of information about him. He was graduated from Yale in 1961 and in the most competitive field in the world--theater. He has never been out of work. Now that's pretty good. That's bragging. He has done Broadway; he has done regional theater; he has come home to do theater a couple of times because it was something he wanted to do. When he came home to direct "Glass Menagerie," it was because he wanted to start directing professionally. He said if I can come home and direct you in "Glass Menagerie" . . . I think he had seen the other production, but not more than a scene at once. He said, "I want to know if I can do it." Tom Schroth was in that production, Dick Boyd was in that production, Helena Leslie was. He said, "I've never worked with a better cast any place."

M: And you gave him the chance to fail. Like you said, it is so important you get that chance.

P: He didn't fail; he succeeded gloriously.

M: I'd like Mrs. Pendleton to tell what she would say to newcomers--the classical question of how do I get started in theater, how can I succeed, and what do I do to get in and how will it work. People are really in doubt about this and it's people like Mrs. Pendleton that they should come to if they were lucky. I'd really like her to tell us what she could about that.

P: In the first place, there is no advice for anybody going into the theater except don't unless you mean it, because very few people succeed of the millions who try. It isn't always a question of talent; it's a question more than

in any other profession of being in the right place at the right time. I think that with such healthy community theater today that a person who is blinding, madly in love with theater can satisfy that in a good community theater and still be working at something that will feed a person and a person's family. If I were a young person starting out today . . . I think people have a much better chance than when I was starting out. If I was starting out today, I would first kill to get in to the Williamstown Summer Theater. They have a very fine apprentice group and they are not only the festival theater, which does the big productions, they also have another group that acts on a smaller stage that is very young. Not all of them are totally equity; they're working towards their equity cards. And they go on tours of the New England states as well as doing the productions in Williamstown on weekends. And they now have a cabaret theater, because cabaret is coming back and people who are interested in developing cabaret techniques do it. They go from one restaurant to another through the week in the Williams-town area after the shows at night. They're fun; some of them aren't quite that good, but they're learning. It is a learning process.

If I could afford it I would go to New York and study with one of the top teachers. Now Austin has taught for many years at the H.B. Studios. He didn't this year and he didn't last year because he is so tied up with other commitments, but he expects to get back to that. Most people who are acting or directing or working in the theater today study. You will make contacts if you are studying with a good teacher. They never stop studying.

They have a Manhattan Theater Club in New York, which is an enormous building full of little, tiny rooms. All those little rooms are theaters, showcase theaters. Top actors and actresses are working there, and that's to break them out of the mold so that if they've been doing nothing but Neil Simon they can do a tragedy. And the producers, the casting directors, and the agents all go to the Manhattan Theater Club. There are also those wonderful playwright showcase theaters down along 42nd Street.

M: Like the Harold Klurman and those places?

P: Yes, and the playwright stages.

M: Playwrights horizons.

P: Horizons, yes. There are several churches in New York

that have professionals who come in and do shows as part of their church programs, but they're professionals. They'll work with equity and nonequity, and they get a special dispensation from equity. That's the sort of thing that you really have a chance with which you didn't have when I was young. I think that's the best thing to do, just act. It's no crime now to have had excellent experience with a good community theater that is recognized by people in the theater as being very sound. But the first thing I would do if I were a youngster starting out is head for Williamstown.

- M: If you weren't a youngster, I'm asking you this because of myself, but countless dozens of other people that I dealt with, they're not youngsters. Let's say economically they couldn't go away until that time and they've nurtured their abilities in their own region and then gone to New York.
- P: Well, Dick Boyd did this very thing. He came to us a few years ago. Now Dick Boyd is very successful as an electrical contractor, but he has always wanted the theater. He asked if we could get him in to Williamstown. Well, Austin is now on the board committee and there's an expense to it. It's not phenomenal for what you get. He went and worked a whole summer there and he got some parts on the stage. He said to Emery Battis, that fine character actor who was there that summer, that he was going to give up his work the minute his kids were through school. No, he was going to do it right away and go into the theater and Emery Battis said, "Now wait a minute, while I was raising my children they had a right to expect an education from their parents. I got them through school, and then I went into the professional theater. You do the same thing Dick because you could just fall on your face. You're a good actor; you've got potential, but you have a first obligation to at least get your kids through the first early parts of their education." Dick says to this day that the day his son graduates from college he's going to sell the company and head out for the professional theater.
- M: I did that. I took seventy-two dollars with me and went to New York three years ago. My family thought that I should be put in a lunatic asylum.
- P: You probably should.
- M: . . . all except my one son.
- P: If you could financially swing it you should go to Williamstown.

- M: How do you do that? Not just me, but don't you have to be auditioned? It's so difficult to get an audition. I did it the hard way; I went to every single one that I was right for and stood in line.
- P: Yes, but you also have to learn in the theater and there are ways to find out, somebody who can be a contact for you. Contacts are so important in theater. Now you know a lot of theater people, all right. If you decided that you could swing it financially, and I suppose all your living expenses and everything would be \$800 or \$900. The tuition is, maybe, \$250. Room and board in the dormitory is, maybe, \$350. But there are your incidental expenses.
- M: In an instance like that don't they audition you though to see if you're material for their plant?
- P: If you wanted to go to Williamstown, you know that Austin is on the artistic board.
- M: I do now.
- P: There are a nucleus of them who grew up in Williamstown Theater together: Carrie Nye, Austin, and Frank Langella.
- M: I've met Carrie Nye through her husband. Her husband's friends were friends of mine.
- P: There is a small group and any one of them could make it possible for you to get into that summer theater program. Thorn and I have been very fortunate in the last few years because we've been patrons for years of the theater because we believe in the work they're doing there. They are training young, American artists. It is the same reason we belong to the National Council of the Metropolitan. It runs the auditions, and it's training and giving American artists a chance. Wherever we can do that, Thorn and I do that. After a few years it gives you a little clout. Knowing your work, I could call them up and say, "Look, she's nice, she's in her forties, but she really wants to do this and she will be a good worker." You get stuck with technical work first, but you go to the tryouts and you demand to be seen. You are just sort of there and part of it. You really get to know the company because that company is dedicated to the Williamstown Summer Theater. You sit and have coffee with Blythe Danner, Frank Langella, or Christopher Reeve.
- M: I'm reminded of when I knew about "Little Foxes." I can't tell you how badly I wanted to say, "Well if I could maybe reach Austin Pendleton somehow and say, 'I just did some

things at T.N.T. a long time ago, I know, and I saw "Starting Over" nine times." I'm not buttering you up; it's because I love his acting. I begged for tickets to the theater for my friends. I think that he does offbeat stuff, and I don't mean eccentric. He has got a timing in him. It's not because you're his mother, because I've made people come with me and I've said, "You want to see an actor work, come and see him." I thought, why can't I get the nerve to go and say, "Might you be able to--like a month from now--get me into a seat for standing up." But I haven't the nerve. It was because I knew of him a little that I was afraid to do it. I thought, had I been introduced to him casually by someone in New York I would have had more nerve than I did that way.

P: I'll tell you the mechanics of getting a ticket. When you are connected with something like that, all of that is handled by your agent. He gives you the agent's telephone number; you call the agent and the agent tells you when there is a house seat available. But house seats, unfortunately, are the most expensive seats in the house. They are guaranteed, so you have to pay for them. He would have been happy to have done that for you. So if you know anybody slightly in the theater and they're connected with a show that you're crazy to see, don't be hesitant because they themselves cannot handle it. They would have to spend twenty-four hours a day handling demands for tickets, and that's part of what their agents do, that's part of what their agents get paid for. You should never feel hesitant. You are never going to get ahead in the theater if you feel hesitant about using a contact because that is what the name of the game is, even in community theater.

I run open rehearsals, but I'm not so crazy that I would start out to do a very difficult show without knowing darn well who is going to play one of the vital parts in it at least, possibly two. I will listen to anybody who comes and I will use anybody who has a spark that I can possibly use. I use extras in my shows to use some of these people. You don't get to be a good director--which I think I am--by going into an open tryout wide-eyed and saying, "All try out," you know. You let them try out, but you know darn well that you've got this part and that part sewn up. I don't have more than one or two parties, possibly three. Three would have to be in a large cast though. I literally cast from a reading. It doesn't hurt for me to feel obligated to you because you have stepped in and done something marvelous on a show I've done. I become interested then in helping you get ahead too because you've helped me. This is what the theater is all about. People remember the person who at the last minute when Joe Blow got laryngitis . . . nowadays it's a television series. Somebody else comes on and says, "I have no pride; I'll do it."

They'll use you again if they can; that's true in the professional theater, and it's true in the amateur theater. It has to be true.

You just have to constantly, constantly be there. Of course, it's the same here. It's the same at T.N.T. or at the Youngstown Playhouse. You have to have a contact. It's the only advice I can give to people. Nobody has any business going into the theater unless they are willing to pay their dues. Paying their dues means you work. You work, you do walk-ons; you do walk-ons that don't even have lines to them. You sweep out the dressing rooms. You do anything you can, but that is paying your dues. And when your dues are paid, you continue to pay your dues. There are trade offs that go on constantly in the theater. In television you know about them, where a superstar has a special, like Liza Minelli, and along come all these other stars who do little cameos on her special. They are paying her off for having done little bits on their specials. That's why these darn superspecials with the superstars that are variety shows get to be all the same, because they are all paying each other back. Also, you have stepped in and said, "Okay, on that particular show I don't mind playing the maid or the ditch digger, or whatever. I'd be glad to do it. I'd love the chance to work with you." Then along comes something else and you get that chance.

M: Of course, how you approach someone in a community theater situation is different than . . .

P: It's a case of just keep on trying. I sometimes think as I look back . . . I've had a lot of chances and I turned them down because I was married and I loved my married life. I loved my family life, and I loved the stimulation of living in a mill town where you really had to work to get this sort of thing. I'm not sorry, but I sometimes look back and think why didn't you just . . . because you got to know the people. Take a chance.

M: Well you got both, don't you think you got both?

P: I don't know.

M: I was a divorced, young mother and I wanted this identity even more when I got my divorce. I felt such a responsibility to four children alone with only me. Like you said about Dick Boyd: You owe them the school, you owe them a place to bring someone to at night, something.

P: Dick Boyd, incidentally, refers to that as Emery Battis

screwing his head on straight.

M: Oh yes?

P: He really does. He's a delight.

M: I worked with Dick in "Look Homeward Angel" and I just adored him.

P: I was in "Look Homeward Angel." I played the mother.

M: I played Eliza too; she is one of my favorite people in the entire world.

P: You did it over in Youngstown?

M: Yes, about five years ago. I love Eliza. I researched her for years.

P: She got a bum deal, a bum wrap.

M: I think so, too. I'm glad to hear you say that.

P: When you think she was married to this delightful, sort of drunken Irishman . . .

M: She had such bad press. I think it's terrible.

P: I feel the mother in "Glass Menagerie" had a bad press too.

M: These are the kinds of roles . . . I'm sure you know, the enchantment to me has been . . . As a child I loved the character roles. I knew when I had long, straight, brown hair and looked like an Indian girl that I wasn't going to be Betty Grable, but I didn't care. Did you envision yourself acting or directing or whatever when you were a child?

P: Oh no, I always wanted to be an actress. The thing I was best at was comedy, a drawing room sort of thing. I did "The Last of Mrs. Cheney" and got great applause for it. The only thing I've done here of that kind at all was "Hay Fever." Paul Kemple was in it; he was marvelous; Tom Schroth was in it. It was quite a cast, and it just sold out night after night. It was fun; it was one of the true smash hits we ever had out there. We got fan mail too. That was the sort of thing I really loved doing. It's much more technical than drama; therefore it's harder to do. Of course, that is one of the drawbacks of this area, and also drawing room comedy has not been popular for the last few years in the professional theater. It is the sort of thing I like, where it turns on a technical trick.

It's the sort of thing I think I did best; I loved it.

M: What do you think of, what they call, method acting?

P: I'm glad you asked about this because the backbone of Valentine Windt's teaching is Stanislavsky, with whom he had studied. He taught us the five principles of acting, which I always list for every new cast I have. They write them down so that I can refer to them.

M: Would you run through those for this purpose?

P: Motivation, concentration, connection, control, and energy. He just roared at these people who had taken this other element out of Stanislavsky's method.

M: Pretending to be a dill pickle and things like that.

P: It isn't what he did at all. That is not Stanislavsky's method. I have read a lot of Stanislavsky; he wanted you to have an emotional memory, a bank on which to draw. But you didn't do it by pretending to be a dill pickle. You didn't do it by going out and running around the block before you walked on stage because you had to be out of breath when you entered. He wanted you to recall what the emotional reaction was to running around the block. Therefore, the exercises that Windt gave us were exercises in memory storage and banking those things so we would have them to give. It was a brilliant, marvelous way to train actors.

M: Sort of emotional computer banks.

P: Yes. That is what Stanislavsky was all about.

M: I run into these people who say, "I am here pretending that I am a pretzel and I can't talk to you right now." I don't mean to generalize, but it has been my limited experience that most of them are not gifted. I find them using this as a substitute for what you call talent.

P: Also, it became a great racket.

M: In a few people it's genuine and it works, but those I could say are five or six of them.

P: No, but it became a terrific racket in the teaching of this.

I have never been, for instance, a Marlo Brando fan. I thought he was marvelous as Kowalsky. I thought he was marvelous in the movie "On the Waterfront". But if one

more time I hear somebody say, "He bastardized his art by going into the movies," . . . There are many great actors in the movies. He bastardized his art by not learning to speak the English language. He totally degraded what acting was all about. He did two good parts, two marvelous parts, but as for the rest of them, you can have them. Do you realize they paid him how many millions to be in the "Godfather."

M: What about "Superman," three million wasn't it, for a few minutes?

P: Yes. Do you want to know something? The man who played his part in "The Godfather II," the young father . . .

M: DeNiro, now there's . . .

P: He was so . . . It was so much in what he did.

M: The street scene down in Little Italy, I've seen it some twenty times. He and Robert Duvall both, they can be termed, and are termed, method actors. But there is what I call "working." They are termed that in New York.

P: They are termed method actors, but method acting got a dirty, dirty name. I remember a marvelous story about George Kaufman when I was in New York as a young woman. One of the method students who was having a hard time accepting direction said, "But Mr. Kaufman, you've never given me a reason for making that cross." He looked at her and said, "Because I'm the director and I told you to." That's really what it is. Then it's up to you to say my character is crossing over there, and I have to motivate it in some way. You have to use your own intelligence. I think that this so-called "method acting" was one of the biggest rackets that was ever perpetrated.

M: Don't you think that a lot of people hide behind it? One young fellow said to me, "What would you suggest I learn?" I said, "I would suggest you learn how to walk from stage left to stage right because you don't walk right. Forget that you are thinking of being a mountain, just walk." Would you feel that way?

P: I feel that speech is important. And of course, that is one of the things that has bothered me. I have had a lot of virus infections lately and my voice is gone. This has always been my instrument. But you have to have a voice; you have to be able to move; you have to be able to intelligently--now this is the thing Sue Baugher was marvelous at. She could take a character that was different from anything Sue was, go home and study it. She is an instinctive

actress. When we did "The Runner Stumbles", she played the housekeeper. At the first read through, when it came time for the housekeeper's speech in which she confessed that she was the murderer--which is really quite a moment--she put her book down and she just sat there and said this. When she got through, the entire company cheered because she did it very simply; there wasn't a lot of folderol, but she can motivate a character instinctively. Each gesture she uses is that character; each inflection is that character. She played a totally uneducated woman who had been taken into the Catholic church. It was the first approval she had ever had. She had cooked for men in lumber camps, and she had been their whore, really. Yet here she was a housekeeper for a priest who treated her like a human being, and she thought she was murdering the nun to protect the priest. When Baugher told his story, it gave you chills. Every night in performance it came out exactly the same way. She is an actress, she really is.

- M: You said before that study is important, but I've often wondered, and I'd really like to know what you think about . . . can't you take some people and just provide them with every form of study, inundate them with training and every opportunity formally that they can have, investors of money, and still that spark isn't there?
- P: Yes. We assume that you start with talent. If you don't have talent . . . you can't make a singer out of a person or a violin player or a virtuoso out of a person with no talent; you can't make an actor out of a person with no talent. Talent is indefinable--there is no way you can define talent. A funny thing happens so many times, and you've probably noticed it, that the mousiest person in the room that you wouldn't look at twice will get up on the stage and a light goes on. Homely, homely people become beautiful on the stage. It's a chemistry I don't try to understand, but I think it's one of the great thrills. Of course, Elizabeth Taylor is good off stage as well as on.
- M: You never stop warming to it either.
- P: You would never look at Maureen Stapleton twice.
- M: I noticed when she came out of "Little Foxes" every day she came out with her white hair, and stomped right through the people and nobody bothered her in any way. I went down four times to watch that removal there because it became like a Roman exit. I said, "This is unbelievable." There was Maureen trampling away. Elizabeth couldn't get in her car, couldn't get in the limousine to go around the corner. Maureen by this time was probably eating.

P: Elizabeth Taylor fascinated me because here was a girl who from the time she was a young child had been treated special. Her family didn't allow the things to happen to her that happened to a lot of the other child stars of her age. They protected her from the advances of some of those producers. But she is a woman who expects that men are going to have brawls in bars over her, that there will be a limousine waiting for her. Yet she is the most generous woman. The girl who plays her daughter in this has been marvelous too. The girl looks like Elizabeth quite a bit, which is why she was chosen. It's her first, but professional job. She has suffered at the hands of the critics who were waiting. Austin has been having a bad time with critics, and the critics were gunning for Elizabeth because they said that she didn't have a right to be on the stage.

M: A right indeed.

P: Yet she is a charming, young girl. Elizabeth has been very interested in her. While they were in New Orleans she had her twenty-fourth birthday, and in the opening night in Los Angeles at the Chasen she was wearing a magnificent antique lace dress with a seed inset of pinks and ivories. It was breathtaking. It was so right for her and I said, "Ann, you had to inherit that dress, where did you find it?" She said, "Well, Elizabeth gave it to me for my twenty-fourth birthday." Elizabeth Taylor had gotten all of her measurements from the costume department, had gone to this antique lace shop that she knew about, and said, "I want a dress for this girl for her twenty-fourth birthday. She should have one of these dresses." She must have spent hundreds and hundreds of dollars on that dress, but she has that. It would mean nothing to her, the expense. It would mean something, of course, but she could do with that. She did this for this girl, and that is something that girl will remember all her life. Elizabeth's reaction was, "Well, people have always been very good to me."

M: I noticed when she came out of the door, the stage door . . . there is always that certain bambi look that you'll see in the performer's face. That horde of people out there, that must be frightening no matter how many times you encounter it. Then the composure took over and someone said when she was going back in to the evening [show], "Break a leg?" She said, "Oh, don't say that to me, because you know my track record." I thought you can see that little, warm touch there; you can feel it.

P: She is kind; she is a very gracious lady. Austin said she is most professional to work with. She had to have a director, who is also a teacher, who could teach her to maintain a performance through the entire evening. Because

movies you make in little one and two minute increments. She knew what her problems were and she studied them; she worked at it. I think she is marvelous.

M: I thought she held the stage beautifully.

P: Yet she never took it when it didn't belong to her, which was the greatest thing you can say for a star, and particularly a star of that magnitude.

M: How did she and Austin get together? How did that come about?

P: Austin was called and asked if he would go to see Elizabeth. The first time he went to see her, you know how Austin goes around looking, he went to her suite at whatever hotel she was at at that time, and all they talked about . . . he thought they were going to talk about the play. She arrived and she was frantic trying to find what to wear to a party she had been asked to that night. Austin said, "We never discussed the play, and the next day they called me up and said she wants you very much."

M: Did her people approach Austin then?

P: The producers approached Austin's agent. I suppose it's partly because he is considered an excellent teacher, and he has an excellent track record as a director in the classics, which is why he directs mostly in regional theaters, because that's where the classics are done. He can afford to do what he wants to do, so that's what he does.

M: The young stage girl, Amy Whitman, who worked with him in "Say Goodnight Gracie," is a friend of mine. I asked her how could I go about studying under him. She said, "I'll just talk to him about it, but right now he is getting to be so busy; he is going to have to stop teaching." That was just when all this was occurring. It was just before I left New York.

When I saw "The Office Murders" I thought Austin's range was remarkable in that he could do all sorts of challenging roles. That's why I think "The Office Murders" offered him such an opportunity to show the versatility he has. I thought it was very well-received among the local actors and directors. I know all the critics weren't in favor of it, but the trade was, I guess, that's what you should worry about. He certainly has proved himself in all areas. But let's get back to T.N.T..

P: It was founded following the war, but times were tough. This twenty-five cent I told you they gave, the sort of people that founded this group . . . twenty-five cents

was an evening out for them. It represented sacrifice to them. They worked; it was stimulating education to them rather than just a plaything and an excuse for party. It never has really been an excuse for parties. T.N.T. doesn't do half the partying that most theaters do. They have their parties and they're very nice, but they don't do a play as an excuse for having a party. They have a party after the play is on.

M: There's the point. I've found some places that the other holds true.

P: Yes. But the thing is that their early support was from people who would put a dollar in the hat, and it was a generous gift from the people who did it. It was not the sort of thing where somebody would come in and say, "Oh, sixty dollars, is that all you need. Here dear." The support has always been small, a lot of small support instead of a few people giving big support, until we started our building programs for the stage house. Then we really got some very nice gifts from industry around here. The thing that makes T.N.T. really unusual is that it has never gone in to becoming the plaything of the people involved with it. It's a working theater and the fact that it can be that and still be totally amateur is really remarkable. Most community theaters have a life, ninety percent of them, a life of maybe twenty years; well T.N.T. is thirty-five years old now.

M: I've had quite a bit of reason recently of course to research into this very area. I've done work at the Youngstown Playhouse and the places have grown in such opposite directions. I think T.N.T. has remained more artistically alert.

P: There's a definite reason for this. When Tom designed the theater, he designed a theater that amateurs could afford to run. That in itself was sheer genius. The Youngstown Playhouse, which has done some tremendous work in its day and still does, made the mistake that so many community theaters do: They had money poured in the building and they built themselves a white elephant that amateurs could not afford to run. It has to be going constantly. They have a rather large paid staff and they have to keep that theater open night after night after night with audiences coming in, to just pay the bills. Therefore, it hasn't lost its amateur standing, but it is a semiprofessional . . .

M: I don't think it knows what it is.

P: I think they do, and I've heard members of it horrified at what they've done to themselves. I remember them when they were in that funny, little building on Market Street that I'm sure was a firetrap. Just the need to keep plays going . . .

and of course you're asking amateurs who are in those long run plays to give up a whole section of a year of their lives because there's a rehearsal period, and then there are the long runs. Then they are also working a full day, too.

M: I did many of them, I know.

P: With T.N.T. there was a very conscious effort to keep that building within the capabilities of the group in order to pay the overhead. They've done a tremendous job, even with the backstage they've done a tremendous job. This group, for thirty-five years, has been serving this whole area. The same people who are putting on the shows and teaching and doing all the things that have to be done to keep a show going are the ones who have to go out and raise the money too. They developed the patron's list in Warren, Ohio, and they've earned your respect. The response has been very, very good. We've been very pleased at places that we've never been able to get support from before and have now really quite a shot in our arm. I think it almost bespeaks of the fact that T.N.T. is coming of age in the eyes of the important people in the community.

M: This has taken a quarter of a century.

P: More than a quarter of a century. They do respect what T.N.T. offers and what T.N.T. does.

M: You were saying, along those lines, that because it has been able to retain its amateur status and has not become mired in paying professional salaries to such a large staff it can have more artistic . . .

P: No, no, I'm not saying that. I'm saying that the very fact that it is important to have a show night after night after night going, bringing in audiences with money at the box office to pay the overhead of a theater such as the Youngstown Playhouse, they can't waste the time on the sort of things that it takes to create a show from scratch or to create a show that is nothing except something that the group wants to do passionately. We would like to do more new playwrights efforts. We haven't had much luck in getting those, but we would willingly, if we could get our hands on a new show that had merit to it . . . and we now know what shows have merit too, but we can do enough . . . I remember the first Tennessee Williams play we wanted to do. There was horror that nobody will come to it. The majority prevailed, however, for it was a show we wanted to do. We thought it was a great show and we wanted to do it and so we did it. My heavens, people beat down the doors to come to that. Dorothy Gmucs was the determined person behind it; we all gained courage from her.

M: Which show was that?

P: It was "A Streetcar Named Desire." In a small town, in midwestern United States, the play's language and theme . . . and yet it was seen for what it was, a modern Greek drama. We've never felt restricted . . . Of course, there are always a few who want box office, box office, box office. But there is always a core out there that says, "That isn't what we're all about. Now back up boys; we're going to do something that we want to do." There is no reason for our theater unless our members are doing shows they want to do.

M: I think you said something about that the last time. I'm reminded of that now also. They call this the midwest; I still haven't figured out how this is the midwest.

P: I don't know how it got called the midwest either, but it is.

M: Especially in the great, twelve-mile isle of Manhattan; it is called the midwest by everybody. I think they think there are four states out here and then California comes. In this pseudo-midwest that we're referred to there are not just people who have one-dimensional minds. In fact, a great core of our theater talent in America has come from the regional areas.

P: I think it's fascinating how much of at least the current talent in this country has come from . . . well, look at Henry Fonda for heaven's sake.

M: Nebraska has popped out a few like Johnny Carson and Dick Cavett. But the savant intelligence of a group that everybody says well we want this . . . yet when I tell native New Yorkers, as a person from this area, I've now become defensive because they cut down, as I said, the midwest.

P: Well, you don't have to be defensive in the least. All you have to do is just . . .

M: I also became aggressive.

P: No, you just have to shake your head and say, "You poor dears." They don't know why you're pitying them and it shuts them up effectively.

M: I think because you can get a chance to do all these things, and I know you don't get them in off Broadway in New York the way you do in regional theaters. You don't get the opportunities to fail, nor do you get the opportunities to put on a good production as much.

- P: It's tragic what has happened to off Broadway, when it started you did have a chance to fail. But now an off Broadway production costs what a Broadway production cost when off Broadway started. To me, one of the terribly exciting things happening in New York is that row on 42nd Street where they have the Playwrights Horizon, and these funny, little, grubby theaters. But there, people are allowed to fail again. The Manhattan Theater Club started out as a place where you could fail. Well, after a few successes, it went on to Broadway and turned its head. I'm sick about it, because it was a place where an actor, for instance, could go and change his whole image. He had been typecast and he would go to Manhattan Theater Club with an interested director and an interested cast and say, "Let us do this." And they would be given one of the rooms and allowed to do this. Critics and casting directors and producers would go to the Manhattan Theater Club and they could break out of a mold. Now, they've just become success happy. I'm glad they're a success, but I'm desperately sorry that they gave their reason for being.
- M: Mrs. Pendleton is referring to an upper east side, rather like a rabbit-warren group of rooms in a very nice building. It is indeed true that now they're much more cautious like in their productions. Having tryouts and things does not have the same openness that it did have. Even in the last five years I've noticed it has changed a lot.
- P: It isn't much older than that.
- M: It isn't?
- P: Oh no, it's really not a very old thing. The young girl, Lynn Meadows, who has really done a brilliant job, let's face it, was a little girl in New Haven when Austin was going to Yale. She was always hanging around the drama productions. I used to see her as a little girl there. I never dreamed what she would become, because she was shy, but she has become this terribly important person in the modern theater. I feel that she should have developed the Manhattan Theater Club for such things as "Mass Appeal." Yet, I feel that she should also leave room for these opportunities that the professionals so desperately need. Typecasting is the worst thing that can happen to an actor.
- M: It poses strictures for them that are terribly wounding in a lot of cases.
- P: But what's going on there along 42nd Street and way over on the west side . . . For instance, have you seen the Falsetto thing, the "Waltz of the Falsetto"?

M: I have not seen it.

P: It's enchanting.

M: Was that done at the Chelsea?

P: It is done at the Chelsea, I think. The man who composed the music is a very recent graduate of Williams College. He was able to get this production on, and it has the hilarity of an amateur production. Yet it has the polish of professional, and attention has been paid to it. It has been one of the big hits. Unfortunately, they've grown so that the place where they are playing, which is dedicated to the development of talent, is tossing them out because they're developed so they'll be closing soon. It really is a wonderful opportunity that this young man freshly out of college had.

M: What's his name?

P: I don't remember what his name is. I should know because my husband went to Williams, and he is now working on raising the money for that extension of the Williams College Theater. They're having a big doing on the 19th of January at Sardi's, and following it you will have a chance to go to one of three shows in New York that are connected with Williams' graduates. This is one of them and this is the one that everyone wants tickets to, which is kind of interesting.

M: That Chelsea Theater is the one that introduced "Vanities," which had such success all over America. It has just toured all over. Two years ago they did "Strider." It is a wonderfully done story that Tolstoy did about a horse.

P: They did a marvelous job of that at the Play House in Cleveland too.

M: I saw it, yes. All these things, what we're trying to get down to here is that you can have theater . . . it cannot be placed geographically in a box anymore than you can, in my mind, determine what kind of a person it is going to grow on. It's always a surprising thing and always new in a way as well as tradition-filled. I wanted her to tell because she is an authority in this area and all over by people that know about her. She said herself that she grew up in a more culturally rich climate than this area has to offer.

P: That was immediately obvious in this area, having raised my children in this area. My sisters have raised their children in Connecticut. One sister raised her children in Caracas and in Mexico City, in an international atmosphere and two other sisters raised their children in Ann Arbor.

Yet because we have had to reach for it, I feel as though my own children really have more of what you want your children to have in that area. My sisters feel that way too. They do because it was readily available for them and so they didn't take that much advantage of it. This whole area is remarkable, because since T.N.T. has started they developed the Art Guild, the Trumbull Art Guild, which has marvelous showings of visiting artists. They've developed the Chamber Orchestra. They started our trying to do a full symphony, and we couldn't afford a full symphony in this town. So they had the guts to pull it down to a chamber orchestra and it's a splendid orchestra. These things people fight so to keep alive and to keep good, they have much more significance. It's really when you get down to it, a much more culturally oriented place than a place where it is just there out of habit.

M: Taken for granted.

P: Yes, where it's taken for granted.

The nice thing about our three children is that they are in such terribly different fields. Our other son is working with his father in the hardware industry. Our daughter is a cartographer and she and her husband have quite a fabulous company of their own. Each one totally supports the other two. They each find the other two's work fascinating. Outsiders are always saying, "Isn't Austin's life exciting." Well, Austin doesn't think his life is any more exciting than the other two, and neither of the other two think that Austin's life is any more exciting than theirs. It's nice, and it gives a healthy balance to have each child in the field in which he wants to be. Our kids are lucky in that. They're doing exactly what they want to do, and they've created exactly the position for themselves that they want.

M: I can see that while he goes for challenges he is also so happy at what he is doing.

As I spoke to you before, we talked about the John Wilkes Booth saga and the parents who your son and I are interested in. We said there are a small group of lunatics who talk about Junius Brutus Booth all the time. He said, "If you find one of these other nuts out there and realize that there is more than one lunatic . . ." It's so nice because he isn't narrow. Theater does that to you. I don't know how you can stay narrow and do good theater; you have to grow.

P: That was one of the marvelous experiences of working with Elizabeth Taylor. Elizabeth Taylor is a person who can't walk down the street without the heavens shining and God

knows what all. Whatever she does makes headlines. For instance, the day "Little Foxes" opened in New York, her agent's town house burned to the ground in one of the most spectacular fires ever, just off Park Avenue. She needed that kind of publicity like a hole in the head because her run was almost all sold out. She is such a charming, warm, loving person, and very intelligent in her craft. She knows her craft, and when she wanted to appear on Broadway in her first stage performance, she went after a director who could teach her stage technique. I think one reason people in the theater remain so broad in that while you are working on a play, that company is your family, the grips, the prop people, the light people, the actors. They are all a family. The day that show closes, the family disperses and immediately you have another entirely new family. So you're constantly exposed, in a very familial situation, with all kinds of people. You have to be able to roll with it, or you just aren't going to last.

- M: That very idea there might be a good subject for a written piece on that. I've been trying to reason out why theater people do this, because they form these tightly knit, closely aligned, small-termed families, and continue to do them. You have to in order to make a show work. If people aren't close and don't work together the shows don't work.
- P: When Elizabeth Taylor was appearing in "Little Foxes," on the road before she got to New York, and New York to some extent, newspaper people were forever trying to get somebody in the cast to say, "Tell us what it is really like. This woman, this spoiled brat," . . . which she is not. They discovered the members of the cast would have laid down and died for her. It kind of shook the media up. She would have done the same for any of them.
- M: Since we last talked in October, Miss Taylor has recently separated from her husband, and that sort of thing has 900 conjectures. Nobody really knows. I'm sure she doesn't feel she has to explain to anybody.
- P: This separation, I think, hurts; I think they all have. But do you realize that woman can't exchange harsh words with her husband even within the walls of her own home, or he can't exchange harsh words with her without . . . it's immediately making headlines all over the world. And what chance does a marriage have to last in an atmosphere like that? The media does that to her.
- M: It's a dreadful thing that they do. I know that I heard in New York that she is going to London with the "Foxes" right? Or did she go already?

P: They go back. They're having a hiatus, and they go back into rehearsal for the London production at the end of January.

M: You mean in Los Angeles?

P: No, in New York. They go to London towards the middle of February, and they open around the sixth or seventh of March.

M: Will Sada Thompson remain in the company?

P: The British equity is just stinko about American actors. The production is Elizabeth Taylor, and they want her. They said that's all they would take. She had to have an English cast. She said, "I come with my American company or I don't come." Therefore, they couldn't take Maureen Stapleton because she is definitely afraid of flying. They explored every way of getting that woman to London by boat in the middle of winter and it can't be done.

M: I know a very dear friend of mine is a very dear friend of hers, and that's right. There are a hundred anecdotes about that.

P: She had to leave the show in time for Sada Thompson to take over, and actually play it for a good healthy time in the States so that she would be a qualified member of the American cast. Any equity that won't allow a great actress like Sada Thompson to appear on their stage . . . and yet you know what we do, we let whole companies of British players come over here.

M: Nicholas Nicholby.

P: It isn't only Nicholas Nicholby; there are countless ones and they can any time they want to. I think the only way that British are going to listen to reason is if the American equity retaliates. I think it's about time they did. We have some great American actors that should be allowed on any English speaking stage in the world.

M: They literally don't want them there; they'll allow the lead, but they won't allow the secondary players.

P: In this case, by golly, one thing that they really stuck their heels in about was that they would not take the American understudies. This, really, was unforgivable because they had people of the caliber of Carol Titel as standbys. The entire company is the American company, and it's a great company.

M: Of course, I suppose if she hadn't been adamant about it . . .

P: I take my hat off to her. When they opened in New Orleans she got to the restaurant full of the leading socialites of New Orleans for the opening night party, and the understudies and the crew were in back dining room, and she noticed the omission right away. She said, "Where are the understudies and the crew?" They said, "Well, they are in another dining room, Miss Taylor." She said, "Well then you set my table up in there please. You don't understand; we're a family." The understudies and the crew were moved immediately into this swanky main dining room. She is a marvelous person.

M: She is a contemporary of mine. She is a year older than me and I always watched her, from Jane Eyre on.

P: I watched her from Jane Eyre on and she is a wonderful, warm, loving, dear, dear person. She works at her craft. I don't think her private life is anything to judge her by because we don't know what goes on with a woman of such romantic stature in the eyes of so many millions and millions of people. The least little thing she does becomes twisted out of shape. That must be hard to live with, and she does it with such good grace.

M: I'm glad she's able to. I know, on my scale of life, when I got a divorce I was vilified by my neighbors. Imagine a lady with four, little children. My neighbors thought I was too young to get a divorce at twenty-three. I thought so too, but I had to. Imagine if every eye in the world were focused upon you. I was asked questions I couldn't believe. So if someone of that caliber of recognition . . .

P: Well, she compensates for it by finding life one heck of a joke. That's one of her great charms. I think Thorn and I were terribly lucky to meet her as often as we did because you got to see this gracious, gracious person, and she is so much more beautiful than she is in the movies.

M: I've stood a half an inch away from her outside of "Foxes" and I kept saying, "Now I must stare at her eyes, I must stare at her eyes. I've been wanting to stare at her eyes since I was a little girl." I was so overwhelmed I forgot to stare at her eyes. How do you stare at someone's eyes without them seeing you? I was trying to be covert.

P: She is such a presence; she really is. We took quite a big party of hardware people to see the thing in Los Angeles, and following the show she sent word out that if our party--we had the front two rows--would stay after all the rest of the audience had left that she and Maureen would come out and talk to us.

She and Maureen came out the minute the auditorium was cleared. We had a wonderful time, and she joked with them all and hoped that they wouldn't learn any bad business habits from the play they had just seen. She made it all personal. Well, there were around fifty of us, and believe me, she had fifty people who by the end of that twenty minutes, and so did Maureen, who would just really . . .

M: Was this this winter in Los Angeles?

P: That was in October in Los Angeles. She is like that; she is very unselfish. You know darn well she had been shooting television shows all day.

M: That's right. She was doing that guest appearance on a soap opera.

P: So then a short time for dinner and an exhausting role at night. Yet she gave this time freely to this group of people because she knew it would delight them, and it did. I think she is a remarkable woman. I don't want to hear about her separation.

M: I only mentioned that in the fact that it has . . . I'm reminded since we talked that this has occurred. I'm applied by the way people do that. I've seen people that I know very hurt personally by people continuing to pay attention to every detail of their private life.

P: She is the epitome of how theater makes you able to cope. I have heard, and I think maybe it's true, that the reason so many movie stars become totally disoriented when the light goes out on the dressing room door is because they are disassociated from their audience. This is a girl, who in the first place grew up in a family that was used to traveling and . . .

M: Her father was an art dealer, wasn't he?

P: Yes. So the wealth and the adulation weren't exactly new to her. But she came in to the theater to experience this marvelous thing of the audience and she never divorced herself from the world because she was a star. Her image of what a star was was to be just what she was. It's what the theater can do; it really is. She is such a marvelous, vital example of the glamour and the excitement that is shared.

M: That the others get to feel. That is rare to have developed to that extent I think. There are some people I've met in theater that do have an excitement about them, but shine it upon themselves a lot.

P: She shares hers so beautifully.

M: All of it, their bunch, when they're admiring themselves. There is someone that has every reason to certainly admire herself. I only ran into her by watching her, by following her career. I could see this wonderful person in the two or three times I stood outside the theater and watched . . .

P: Were you one of the gang at the . . .

M: I certainly was standing there. I stood there four times. I saw the show once and I just had to go back. It also fascinated me because I like to record things, and I was fascinated with my statistical mind and my get-it-down-on-record mind to watch the awe on the people's faces and the way they acted . . .

P: You know that went on before and after every performance. It never wore off.

M: Every day it was going on. This is her coming out of the Martin Beck Theater on 45th Street and these people did not act like they do at other gatherings of this sort. They're doing it to Hepburn now in a different way. Unfortunately, I saw Miss Hepburn crawl under the dashboard of the car a few weeks ago and I thought isn't that dreadful. I think it's terrible that people do that to people of that sort that have a gift. Anyway, Miss Taylor would not crawl under her dashboard. She comes out the door and she has got her smile on and it's not phoney, but she is totally in control and the people just move back and the sidewalk is just sort of a little path. You can see the imaginary red carpet there and all the onlookers are in awe and they do lay around her limousine. Then she graciously rests them off of the door of her own car without offending anybody and then she waves continuously and smiles. One day I saw her do this while she was having a conversation with Lillian Helman, who wrote the play. I thought, my she is a master at this. It was a wonderful spectacle to watch, the people's faces. Off she drove to have lunch and come back. It goes on daily.

Well, Mrs. Pendleton, do you have anything else you want to say?

P: No, no, no.

M: Anything about your early life that you can remember?

P: No.

M: Why did you love it when you were little?

P: Why does anybody love it?

M: I don't know.

P: If I knew that I could make millions writing a book about it.

M: I have a terminal illness.

P: I still love it, and I like to see the same show over and over and over again. The mechanics of how it is put together fascinates me. I saw "Mass Appeal" when we were in New York the last time. Do you realize that those two men inhabit that stage for a full length play, brilliantly directed by Geraldine Fitzgerald, who is another movie star who has . . . she is wonderful. It was one of the most exciting things I ever saw in the theater. I can hardly wait to go back.

M: I saw "The Dresser" with Tom Courtney when I was there.

P: We saw that too.

M: I loved that. I love him.

P: I've had great arguments about that. I think they're virtuoso performances, but I would love to see that play done by an American company because the difference between an American company and an English company is that the English do virtuoso performances and the Americans form a unit. It's the old Stanislavsky thing of connection. I would love to see that play without them all standing off doing their own parts; I'd love to see them acting as one.

M: You're right about that isolation being particularly British.

P: That bothered me in that play. And I like Courtney. My heavens, when we were living in London one winter he was doing that trilogy of the Norman conquests. We went to see all three of those things. We must have seen each one of them a dozen times. We were just obsessed with it, and every guest we had we would take to see the Norman conquests.

END OF INTERVIEW