



2001

# Kahn, Sy Oral History Interview

Herb Reinelt

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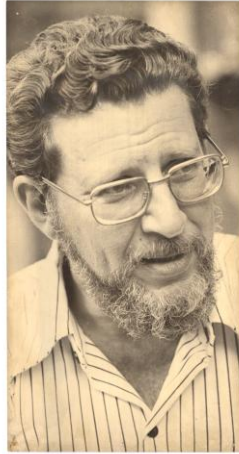
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FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS  
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



**Kahn, Sy (1963-1986)**  
**Raymond College, Director of Theater Arts**

2001  
By Herb Reinelt

Transcribed by Alissa Magorian, University Archives

Subjects: Assessment of early perceptions of Raymond College and the university, perceptions of Robert Burns, drama at Fallon House in Columbia, California, free speech era.

HERB: So what circumstances brought you to UOP?

SY: Well, kind of serendipitous. Um, I was in Washington D.C. attending an MLA meeting. And uh, I was restless with the kind of situations in Florida, which were as corrupt then as they were recently in the election. And the... uh, and anxious to move on after three years. And while I, of course this was in the 60's, and in those days as many people remember, if you were a bona fide professor you could pretty much call the shots about where you wanted to go. If you wanted to make a move, it was relatively easy, unlike later when it became very hard. So I ran into an old friend, from my University of Wisconsin days as a grad student and part-time teacher, and he had gone to Hartford and was teaching there, and he said, "You know, they're looking for a professor at, for this new school called Raymond, out on the coast." And uh, I said, "You mean California?" He says, "Yeah, out in California." I said "Well, it's a little hop from Florida, but uh, Florida, uh, California intrigued me, I had seen it briefly during the war, being shipped out from there. Uh, and vowed someday that I'd come back at least and have another look at it. And I got interested in that, so he said, "Well, here's the number to call," said they're interviewing people. And I called, I was granted an interview, and it was there that I met, I think, it was... Mike. Mike...

HERB: Wagner?

SY: Wagner. I believe it was Mike Wagner that was on the interview team and several others. And... was Martin there? Possibly? I can't remember that, whether he was there or not. Anyway they interviewed me; they seemed interested. I was very interested in the program at Raymond. It sounded like the kind of school that I would fit into very nicely: Liberal Arts, new programs, some adventurous ideas, faculty meetings that involved everybody on the faculty, small school, uh, an adjunct to a larger school, University of the Pacific, and everything about it seemed adventurous and interesting. So I got a call some days later, saying would I come up to California for an interview? And I agreed. I was put up at a dorm on the campus that contained... it was a dorm for all women.

HERB: Right. Covell Hall.

SY: Covell Hall.

HERB: Grace Covell.

SY: That's right. Then I came down on the morning here with the pulchritude of masses, and I would have breakfast every morning with hundreds of young women in that building. (Chuckles). And I was there for several days, and met with all the faculty and talked about my philosophy of education, and about the kinds of things that I like to teach with assurance, and so on, and it all went very well. Dick Martin I think was anxious that I join the faculty after I went through this interview process, and Mike later told me, maybe a year later when I had accepted a position there, that Martin had come to him and said, "Pay more attention, you know, to Sy, I really want him to be part of this faculty." (Laughing). Treat him better! And so on. (Laughs). But I was not treated badly at all, but

that was his perception, I guess, and I was, I got very encouraging solicitude. So when I got the offer I got it simultaneously with another offer that interested me, which was the New York University system. But the idea of going to California seemed more adventurous, and the school certainly did. One of the first of the so-called cluster colleges, which became a model for other such academic endeavors, and we were studied periodically. I was a guest professor several times, to explain how the process worked, and um, and I accepted the position. And when I got to Stockton... (Laughs) I'm still in Stockton, for the first time, I said, "Well, this is not a coastal town, exactly. (Laughs) It looks more like the Midwest to me, where I had spent ten years." I said, "Well it'll be fine for a couple of years and then maybe I'll just move on." And, for the next twenty years I kept saying that every once in a while. But you know, that every time I said it, it seemed to be a trigger, coincidentally of course, that something new would happen at the University. And the thing that I loved about the University was that it was adventurous in its program. It had adventurous administrators. They permitted things to happen. If you had a good idea, and you wanted to pursue it, there was a lot of leeway given so that you could do that. I liked that about the school, and that was, I think, a part of its continuous history, even to this very day, which makes it an outstanding university of its kind. And I was happy to remain there because the University was attractive, and also I began to make very good friends there, many of which I still have. And, it was a supportive place, and it was an adventurous place, and I liked the emphasis on, that it gave on students. And although I did publish during those years, moderately, modestly, because there was little time to do it, almost all the things I published came out of vacation time. Usually spent my Christmas Holidays, you know, rounding out an article. But there was no pressure for that, to do it. I mean, if you did something it was appreciated, but it wasn't expected. And I liked that. I liked being able to work at my own speed, and when I could. And I liked the focus on students, which I think is part of the University's character. It became a home in short; it didn't become a stopgap place where I would move on to something else. (Herb chuckles). I often had the feeling that this was a university on the trembling edge all too often of becoming a really powerful and good university, Not that it wasn't a good university. But it always felt in my mind a little bit short, maybe because the budget was a little bit short...

HERB: Right. (They laugh).

SY: ...over the years. And sometimes *was* short, remember we...I remember at least two total freezes of salary in my time.

HERB: Right.

SY: Which was never caught up on until I think recently it has. And I always had that sense you know, just another, another adventurous step, or another, a little more financial discipline, or something that we could get over that being on the cusp of becoming that kind of university. That was a kind of ongoing annoyance, and disappointment even more so. But otherwise, it was really a very pretty good university, you know, considering its size, its income, its allocations, and so on. So there I was for the next, not two years, but for the next twenty-three years.

HERB: Let me stop and check, and make sure we're picking up your...can you...?

SY: If I get off on a tangent that you don't want to hear more about, just steer me.

HERB: No, no, you're fine. (Chuckles). Yeah, well, one question, was there any particular person or persons at the University who were especially helpful in your initial orientation?

SY: Yeah...

HERB: We're recording now.

SY: Ok, generally speaking everybody was helpful, and the University really is a place like that, where help is forthcoming to a student or to a faculty member if it is needed. I wasn't in any need of that, because I felt very comfortable pretty much from the beginning, but there were a couple of people that were significant, I think, in that way. I think Mike Wagner became sort of the liaison for faculty additions and integrate them into this, this small but very active faculty that Raymond was in those days. I may be getting used to, although it didn't take much for me get used to, I liked the philosophy to begin with, of total faculty meetings where all disciplines were represented on equal... interfaced, to use a contemporary term, with each other, and develop programs, or change the program or tweak it, or fiddle with it to make it better. These faculty meetings became events for themselves, as time went on. It wasn't... an hour became two hours, two hours became four hours, and pretty soon, on some issues it became all day, and a carry over to the next day, if you can believe that that happened on separate occasions. The issues might seem miniscule in retrospect; I remember one that went on for two or three days, on a young lady who became pregnant, and whether it was proper that she continue in school, or whether she should not continue in the school, and a compromise, I think, was reached in that given she was senior she should be given enough work to do outside of school on her own, independently, and checking back with her advisors from time to time, so that she could graduate. (Laughter). That seems almost antique, doesn't it? Antediluvian... today. But as I remember, one occasion, probably the longest faculty meeting that I ever been involved in, I'm pretty sure it went on for at least two days, two eight hour days. But, that was an unusual circumstance, but you know it was an indication of things to come, of the increasing independence of students, their insistence on having a life that was not local parents for the students, that they had their own mature adult lives to deal with, and things began to change, as especially as you approach the later 60's and even in the early 70's, when there was a kind of revolution going on all over the country at universities. Pacific was not on the cutting edge of these, to be sure, it was more on the Conservative side, but Raymond being a kind of spearheaded organization, or at least conceiving itself as one, and indeed it encouraged to be one. It was perhaps a little easier, a little more accommodating, than other factors were at that time.

HERB: I think probably so.

SY: Yeah, obviously there was a good deal of practicing conservatives on the campus at that time, but they were mostly on the, at least as we saw it, and I think they saw it too, it was a kind of we and they situation, and that was, that was an attitude that Dick Martin encouraged. He wanted the sense of unity and a sense of difference in this cluster college operation, which was the first of several others to follow different names, and different points of interest. So, little by little, the students became more aggressive and more demanding and more independent. But it go to a point, after I was there for... let's see, I guess it was, yes about five years, that I began to get uncomfortable with it, because it seemed to me that under Kolker you remember when he came in and replaced Dick Martin?

HERB: Yeah.

SY: Also a close friend of Mike Wagner, a very nice man, a very humane man, but not a man of... whose gift was academic organization.

HERB: I think Mike felt that that was the biggest mistake he ever made, (inaudible) when he put Kolker.

SY: I think... I believe that you're right about that, but personally very likable. In fact, it reached a point where the faculty was rumbling enough about Kolker that they wanted to have a no confidence vote, and merge him out, but nobody wanted to do it. So I pressed forward, and said, "Well, let's have a firm vote on this, and act according to particular that's what is in our best interest, and not sit here and complain and do nothing. And I remember that I very clearly took the lead on that, because I was getting exasperated, I liked Kolker, I agreed with some of what was being said, I didn't think it was so dire at that point that he should be urged to move, and be told that was our feeling. So finally that all came, and did not pass. Not by much, but it didn't pass. I thought, ok, that lays it to rest at least for the time being. That we didn't vote to do it, let peace reign until we get another one that comes in. (They chuckle). Well, this is getting into the politics of Raymond, and there's much to be said about that. I was involved in that again, not in a way that I enjoyed, but you know it's just that somebody's got to do it. Eventually Kolker did move on, uh, and uh, the assistant to Dick, who was the founding administrator of the cluster colleges, and he had an assistant whose name was...

HERB: Was that Ed Peck

SY: Ed Peck, right. And Ed was very straight-laced.

HERB: Yeah, yeah.

SY: Socially, politically very straight-laced, and when the students got out of line, he was the first to raise an alarm, or generate a discipline to deal with it. And, the, by that time students were not very responsive to disciplinary teachers. (Laughter) But what was happening, and what was so stressful to me, and I'll get back to it in a moment, was that

the students were taking over so much of the curriculum, that the school had reached the ridiculous point of issuing a pamphlet as to the offerings, the course offerings and the entire thing was blank.

HERB: Yeah, really.

SY: It was almost like a joke.

HERB: Yeah.

SY: Just numbers were listed; there was no course description, no name of courses, and so on. Why? Because each student now made up his own curriculum. And I thought, academically this is not... this is not a good idea.

HERB: Did you really like the pretty much prescribed curriculum that you had to begin with?

SY: I think it should have been modified. That it was prescribed curriculum in a school that now offered a B.A. in three years, three longer than usual years, that it should have some faculty in... some faculty control of the curriculum. And that we should be teaching what we knew to teach, not what the students decided what we ought to know to teach. And I got, I felt like it could get troublesome. I found that the students operating under that point of view were more were difficult to reach, more difficult to teach. That there was a kind of automatic rebelliousness that was at work and that we were kind of swimming in rough waters, and not knowing where we were swimming to. And I needed more structure, personally, to operate continently. So that is when, fortuitously, the gods must have been listening or something, fortuitously the opportunity to become Director of the University Theatres at that time, opened up. And most people never did know, at the University that I actually had part of my doctoral studies was in Theatre. It was consonant in those days, also had a minor, you had to spend a year in a minor. And my choice of minor was theatre. So I had some good training in theatre, right before I got to Raymond. And you remember I developed a Raymond theatrical program.

HERB: Oh, I remember (Moratzhad?), for example.

SY: Moratzhad...

HERB: It was fabulous.

SY: ...was an outstanding production, given the circumstances with which it was produced, I still count it as among of, as one of my ten best productions, even though I've directed two, three hundred plays now.

HERB: Yes.

SY: And uh, and I think it was stunning play.

HERB: Yes.

SY: And it was right after that, coincidentally, I don't know, that De Marcus Brown, who was then Director of Theatres, decided to resign. Some years before anybody expected him to. I think he was 67 at that time, everybody thought he'd go to 75 or something...

HERB: Do you think there might have been some threat because of what you were doing at Raymond that he was responding to?

SY: I'm more than suspicious about it. I think there was; and the kind of gossip I got back, uh, I think that the operation at Raymond as it grew from reader's theatre, to full production, to complicated productions, and so on. And they drew well, they drew from outside the Raymond community, they drew from the local community as well as the college community. I think that had to be a threat to his own operation, which was on the downslide, anyway. I mean, I went to a lot of the De Marcus Brown plays in the end, and the audience literally outnumbered the people on the stage.

HERB: Well, I can remember in Maratzhad, for example, you filled that auditorium...

SY: I meant the opposite. Yes. I meant the opposite of that, that there were more on stage than there were in the audience. (Laughter).

HERB: Yeah, right.

SY: Yeah, that's right, it grew and, I had a good response to the productions that I made. Um, and um, so people urged me to compete for what was an open search for Director of Theatres. And I had been teaching then, I had been teaching literature for twenty years or more, and I felt that I had fielded all the questions that undergraduates could bring to me about the literature that we studied without repeating myself, and that I was getting a little stale. Also it was a time when students wanted to be involved more in what they did, and since I knew something about drama, I was in the (prime?). I was producing a couple of plays a year at Raymond, and I thought, you know, that it would be a good change for me, it's literature related, it always was for me. Drama, I always had an interest in it, I had done directing, both in the University and in my graduate school studies, won a couple prizes in that category, wrote a couple of plays that were accepted for production, and I was quick enough to perhaps undertake it. And also the local community had many samples of my work, by that time. So a search was initiated; they brought in people. I remember they brought in a professor from NYU, while the search was going on, and he saw Maratzhad while he was there, and he said, "Why are you searching for a director, you've got one here who is very good!" (Laughter). Uh, so to make that somewhat long story shorter, I eventually was appointed to it, which led to some interesting conversations with the then President Robert Burns. And one Saturday morning he called me, said the top of the, what we used to call the Oedipus complex, the tower that we have... (Laughter).



HERB: Yeah, the tower, the Burn's tower.

SY: Yes, on a quiet Saturday morning to have this conversation about taking this position, for which he was enthusiastic that I do, and I made one very serious demand upon him, as I do in any new position that I take, whether it's literature or whether it's in theatre. And it's a very serious one for me, and I said no censorship. No censorship. You guys censor my plays, you're going to tell that I can't do that play, uh, then it's not a job I would be comfortable with. He said, "Oh," he said, "That would never happen." He said that I, that, "You will have my support."

HERB: Did he follow through?

SY: Absolutely.

HERB: He, he struck me... academic freedom was one of his primary commitments.

SY: Yes, it was great strength for him and for the faculty too. And he never, he went to almost every production, which I cannot say about all the succeeding Presidents, (Laughter) that we had. Uh, but yes, he and Grace, his wife, as I recall made every production they humanly could. Including the productions at Fallon House. And there were occasions when I did a play that was highly controversial, such as *Boys in the Band* for example, and others of that kind from time to time. And I didn't do it to Epete' le Bourgeois, you know, I did it because I felt these plays were on the cutting edge, it's what our students should know what's happening in the world, with issues that were needed examination, and dramatization for the sake of understanding. And that was part of the function of the University Theatre. It wasn't there to be a distant echo to Hollywood or a distant echo to Broadway. So many drama productions that drama theater, theatre drama in universities become, in order to stay alive, or to turn the turnstile, or pocket, or whatever the motives are, it's not those motives that interested me. Occasionally, he would say to me... this is the only remotely censoring word that I ever got, and it was always said with somewhat of a little chagrin, it seemed to me. He said, "You know, I didn't like that last play very much," you know, (laughing) or something like that. And that was about the most severe criticism I ever got from him, and it was very rare, like maybe once every three years or something I'd hear that.

HERB: Yeah.

SY: But, uh, he was entirely supportive, and when I did get, he'd get occasional letters, inevitably, or things appeared in the newspaper, that could be read in that way, and so on he never backed off from his position.

HERB: The same, the feeling that he did the same thing with Larry Meredith in the chapel, that Larry would get criticism, and he would defend him, you know, to the end.

SY: Yes, yes. I think, Burns in retrospect was a much shrewder man, and much more knowing, and high-principled than we gave him credit for. I think, he liked, he liked to

play at it, I think essentially, and his modus operandi was to be the kind of bumpkin from the hills who had his education at Pacific, and up through the ranks and finally to the presidency, and so on; that he was a good administrator, but he wasn't terribly clever or insightful, and so on. Not so. I think there may have been a touch of that on certain subjects, but generally speaking that was not really who he was. And I think it's approved that he was a much shrewder, much more insightful, much more strategic, in the best sense of the word, for the University, kind of man, and that the personae projected was not the real man underneath it. And the real man underneath it was a very interesting one.

HERB: Somebody told me the other day, Sy, that he was only 61 when he died.

SY: All right that leads me to another reminiscent story. He was a great fancier of antique clocks.

HERB: Ah, yes.

SY: And his office was, you know, it was a wilderness of tick-tocking. I know, because he had all these clocks up on the wall, and I guess even more at home, and he collected them. So when he was making this, what was surely if not spoken, understood, his probably his last sojourn in the world, around the world trip. He was quite ill by that time, you know he had bone cancer, I think. And he came to Vienna, and he invited me and my wife at that time, to go to the opera with him. And we did, and we sat in a box and it was very grand, and Vienna opera is very grand to begin with. and we stayed in one of the best hotels in downtown Vienna, and we visited a few times, and then he said this to me, and it came as a surprise, he said, "How would you like to go down to Pasadena, and take over the Pasadena playhouse? And I'd like you to go down and to start a Master's program in drama there." And I said, "Are you serious?" He said, "Absolutely, he said it's in negotiation right now, we've opened negotiation for it. And would you accept, would you move down there and run that operation?" And I didn't have to think very long about it, you know Pasadena playhouse has national reputation. I thought, well, this is another interesting move, to a new theatrical environment, and so on. And building a program that offered a Master's degree, that was appealing. So I said, "yeah. I'd be interested in that." He said, "Good," and after a few days in Vienna... Oh! And I also arranged for him to visit a warehouse that specializes in buying antique clocks. And uh, he bought a Passel, that got shipped home. And while we were on this tour I bought three myself, which I still have, and one is hanging right there, I don't know if you notice the antique clock in the, just in the entry way to the kitchen. Uh, that was one of the clocks I got. I bought three, but I think he bought like 16, or something like that.

HERB: Really? (Laughing).

SY: Oh, yeah, absolutely. And Grace said to me, in her very demure, quiet way, and she said, "You know, let him do what he wants, because he doesn't have a lot of time to do it, and whatever gives him pleasure." So I think that probably shows the seriousness of his illness, but I don't think it was something has been even within the confines of the

**UOP ARCHIVES FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS  
KAHN (SY), ENGLISH, 196-, DIRECTOR OF THEATRES, 198-  
2001  
TAPE 1**

family. So uh, in fact, Bonnie, his adopted daughter once told me when she was acting in the Fallon House Theatre, and she said that, "Illness was not a subject that was ever discussed." She named one or two other subjects that weren't too good. And so, it was the same topic that everybody knew, but everybody ignored, including Robert himself. And then so I accepted this, but it wasn't only a few weeks later that he was hospitalized, and he never did leave that hospital. We got into a discussion about a book called *The Murderers Among Us*, written by Simon Wiesenthal who lives in Vienna, and who I'd gotten to know. One of the people that I really wanted to meet and I did, eventually met him, and we became friends. And still are, remotely. And uh, I told him about this book that Wiesenthal had written and he got interested, and I understand that he was reading that book in the hospital when he died.

HERB: Is that right?

SY: Yeah.

HERB: Well, Wiesenthal was head of the Wiesenthal Institute that was looking at all of the things that took place in the Holocaust.

SY: Exactly.

HERB: Yeah.

SY: Actually, actually the Institute was built as a tribute...

HERB: As a tribute to him...

SY: ...to everything that Wiesenthal had done in his life, you know, cracking down on the Nazis.

HERB: I'm worried about this tape, you think it's still going?

SY: I don't even...

**END OF TAPE 1**

**BEGIN TAPE 2**

HERB: Here is how... did the... what were the major controversial issues in your tenure?

SY: One that I think occupied the whole university in answer to that question was the movement to create a vote of no confidence when McCaffrey was president. And I think what stimulated that, if my memory is correct, was his appointment of his then Head of Education department or school to the Academic Vice Presidency. Who was that?

HERB: Jarvis.

SY: Jarvis. Yes. And um, and the faculty I think was up in arms about that, because there was no process, it was simply an appointment that was the will of the President. And there was movement then on the campus to uh, offer a faculty vote of no confidence because of that decision. And indeed that was carried out, and indeed it passed. And the President was aware that he had done something that the faculty at large did not approve of. That didn't necessarily dictate a resignation on his part, but it certainly must have given him pause. And I did not know John at this time, but I encountered him while this was going on, and after that vote had been taken, and I voted on that side by the way, uh, that was balanced as I remember and I hadn't... I'd done it before, as I recall, so it wasn't an attempt to compensate for my negative vote. I guess the president for that action, or no confidence vote, and I wrote him a note after he acquired the Delta Property, and much of the faculty thought that was a very bad move economically, and so on, and were not for it. I thought it was excellent for the future. I did what I rarely, rarely ever do, I wrote him a note saying I thought it was a splendid move, it was a particularly good move for the expansion of Drama, but I wasn't thinking just of Drama, I was thinking of the whole University, and I thought it was a shrewd move gotten at a good price, and that the future would prove how beneficial that was. Well, he, he was joyous when he got that. The next time he saw me he said, he said, "You are one of the few people I heard positively from about that move, and I appreciate it." I said, "Well, you know, it's the way I felt about it, and I wanted to let you know about it." On the other hand, I felt that he was wrong in what he did, with the appointment of Jarvis. And one day I ran into Jarvis, and I said, "You know," I said, "I think I need to tell you something." I said, "I know that the faculty is not happy about your appointment, but you must understand that it is not because of you, yourself, as an administrator. It's because of the process that, by which it was done. And the faculty, its, its primary spokesman is the Academic Vice President. And it wants some voice in the appointment of that very crucial job. And so, it was the process that was the basis for the vote, and not anything that had to do with you personally." But you know I made a faster friend because of that than I even had in my mind would be a consequence because Jarvis became very, very supportive of the Fallon House. He was impressed with the way the town movement made the kind of relationships the theatre had with the town, which were friendly, they were not combative, they were not critical, the kind of greetings I got walking down the street. He liked all of that. That's... and he reported that back to the President, which was nice for me, nice for the operation. But I assure you that this was not done in any kind of political way. You know, I was not out to score political points, or, or soften groundings. I was sharing with people how I truly felt about their positions, and also to assure them that they were not under personal attack, in the case of Jarvis. I don't think he ever forgot that.

And uh, when I got one of my four Fulbright's, I forget which one of them was going off on, he found some money that he had that he could dispense as he wished, as administrators do and he undertook to pay for certain expenses of (unintelligible) which he was requested of, and I think that was a kind of recognition of the fact...

HERB: By the way, we should say something about the Fallon House.

SY: Indeed.

HERB: In taking over, and you know, the problems that you faced up there and so forth. So why don't you do that?

SY: Ok, well, at first encounter I thought good lord, I got this thing going down in my lap, because De Marcus Brown kept control of the Fallon two years after he resigned by agreement. And that was good, because it gave me a two-year breather, where I could just pay attention to what I needed to do at the University without worrying about a Fallon program. But I knew it was lurking there in the near future, um, and I got to like the House productions increasingly as I went through the process. At first I was a little bit suspicious and disdainful, because I thought this is a candy box theatre, it's a rotten theatre physically, it's full problems, uh, and I know that I'm not going to be able to do the plays I like to do here, it's going to be more of a summer operation, I was listening to people who say you know, I don't like to think in the summertime, they like to be entertained, you've got to do entertaining things. And I really wasn't interested in doing that. But the operation got to be very interesting to me, and so once I got committed to it, I decided, well, I'm going to make the best of the operation of it I can out of the circumstances. Uh, every once in a while, I would try a play that was not in the usual area of no-thinking entertainment theatre. And I was happy to encourage Darrel to direct some of these plays which he liked. And not have to go through doing to musicals which most... 98 percent of musicals to me are a waste of time. Audiences love them, American audiences love them, they're in the American brain and so on, in one of our few original contributions, and nobody does them better than Americans, I don't think, very often if at all. But it's such a mindless presentation, I mean there isn't a plot worth looking at, I mean they are worse than an opera plot, and uh, so I tried to avoid doing them as much as I could, but I could not avoid it totally, so I learned how to do it. But I never learned it well. (Herb laughs). I never wanted, I never wanted to see another production of *Paint Your Wagon*, (Sy coughs) which we did I think three or four times, Darrel directed, I think I directed, yeah I directed once, and we filled the house every time.

HERB: Charlie's Angels or... (Laughs).

SY: Yes, yeah.

HERB: You know the ilk.

SY: Yeah, but every once in a while I sneaked one in. Early on I tried doing, I did do *Tea and Sympathy*, and students loved it because it was more of a challenge for them, and so

forth. Uh, and it was pretty good production as they go, and I got an onslaught of letters, because it dealt with the suspicion of homosexuality. Not actual homosexuality...

HERB: Right.

SY: ...but just the suspicion of it. Then uh, and the teacher at the end, whose marriage is breaking up, and she initiates this young boy into hetero... heterodoxy sex. Well, I tell you just the touching of the subject, remember this was about 65, probably, 65, 66, angry letters and so on, came through. I answered every slew of them, tried to answer them reasonably so. Uh, and then every once in a while I would sneak in a little (antiwar?), I did it at the University, I also did it at the Fallon House. And that surprisingly went better than I expected, and people responded well to that, by and large, antiwar drama in the middle of Vietnam of course. But to offer too many of those plays was deadly to some. But that operation was so demanding every summer, exhausting, and then at the end of the summer, a little bit of a break a weekend or a week, and I was back into the academic year. And over the years, that was really burning me out.

HERB: There was no break.

SY: Yeah. None what so ever. And you can imagine that when you got a resident company and resident faculty for a whole summer, in that heat up there, in a theatre that didn't have any air conditioning, bad seats for the audience and so on. (Laughs). And the restrooms were, were two hundred yards down the road for the audience and for the players too, and that it was a really difficult operation. And it was, when I was up there, it was 24 hours a day. Uh, accidents on stage, dance routines in which women would throw their knees out and become incapacitated, falls, and asthmatic attacks, and rashes, and colds, and just... (Herb laughs) it just went on like that. So the operation didn't stop for the production, just the whole operation was totally involved. But it got to be a kind of interesting challenge, I got it to the point where we sold half the season's capacity ahead of time. Uh, we had twelve thousand seats to sell, in the summer, and when we opened the door, 6,000 were already sold. That's the point where it got, we reached seasons where we had over the capacity for standing room only; we were playing to a hundred and forty or something like that. Financially it was a bonanza for the University, they never lost a penny while I was doing it. I was the executive director. Many a summer when I brought down a check for 25 or 30,000 dollars, it was greeted like manna from heaven. People in the administration said, "Oh my god, this will get us through the summer." Uh, and it was a real lifesaver for the University, and I was happy to be able to do that. Um, the um, I think the students learned a lot, they were totally involved in the situation up there, they learned everything they could about theatre. They learned about building sets, about sewing costumes, about running lights, about doing some of the other crew jobs around any production, and had total exposure to the theatre. And that experience won a lot of jobs for people later on down the road, that they were multi-capable. So I would say by and large it was a positive operation, though it was a terrible pain at times. But eventually the State recognized and the certainly city recognized what an advantage it was to them. All the stores started staying open until after the performances, to keep up with the performance business, the town was very happy with

us. I paid bills within 24 hours. No bill went longer than 24 hours unpaid. There was enough money generated that I could do that. I hired the best people I could for the summer, good cooks, good... you know I had to think about all these things...

HERB: Oh yeah, you're right.

SY: And Darrel would always say, "It's not necessary to work that hard. You don't have to do that. You know, the people will come." I said, "I don't think they will, we're up in the boondocks there, and they have to know we're there. We're not going to get those kind of reservations well, just by saying come, we'll do it and they'll come. I don't think so." And there was always this thing... and I got to be very critical, criticized that I was spending a lot of time on that, not paying enough attention to the local problems in Stockton. I don't think that was true, I mean it was another way of picking away. Uh, and I knew as time went on, that Darrel was in love with the Fallon operation, he loved the operation. And I kept advancing him, giving him more and more responsibility for it. So, he was sure that if he ran it, he could run it with less stress and strain, and it would be successful while he had his chance. Theatre lost 30,000 dollars in the two years that he ran it. That's when the University began to take a harder look at it, and said, "We can't support that. It's not even pulling its own weight, we're putting money into it and we're losing it." And so, and then they called me in, and it was two years after I retired, and said would I...and Whitaker was not happy about having to do it, but Jarvis put the pressure on him.

HERB: Is that right?

SY: That's right. And he called me in, and I knew what he was calling me in for, it couldn't be for anything else. And we kind of did a little dance around it, I was not going to kiss his ass, I just wasn't. I wanted to be asked, at least. And so, he was very upset, because I don't think he wanted to do that. He wasn't, he's not the kind of man to do that easily, to ask anybody, he's used to telling them what to do. And so finally he said with some exasperation, he says, "Am I going to have to get down on my knees Sy?" And I said, "No, Roy, you don't have to get down on your knees. You just have to ask what you want to ask." So finally, after about half an hour of this thing going around, he finally asked me you know, could I come back and run Fallon House. And I said too late. I said, "I've accepted a position of teaching at the University of Wales in the spring, and I wouldn't be back in time to get it under way, and I'm not on the faculty any longer, I can't do the preparatory things that I could do before, which are not any longer being done, and that's it's why it's not working. And Darrel was not attracting summer students at all, he was dredging in the high schools for them, and they, and the productions I understand were so poor, and so amateurish, that the Stockton paper would not review them."

HERB: Is that right?

SY: That's, that's what happened. And there was contention in the group, you know you gotta a lot of emotions flying around in a tight space in that summer operation, and it

takes somebody who can be politic enough to keep it all together. And Darrel was not the person to do that, because he hates confrontation and tension, and so forth. Uh, but he can't do it. He quickly found that out as chairman, and I knew he couldn't. Uh, Sandy apparently didn't seem to (mumbled words) put any effort into the organization. Well, he's too discombobulating. He couldn't do it then, he can't do it now. He's just not that person. Uh, so, he's pretty good as a trainer of actors, but he's not good as an administrator of a department, nor is Darrel. So they couldn't do those things, and they failed, as I knew it would fail. What annoys me now, it is all glossed over. And when Fallon is talked about now, it's like somehow it failed while I was still there, not after I left. It never failed while I was there. I paid off all the De Marcus Brown's debts within a year. He owed the cooks, he owed the gardener, he had run up a personal telephone bill, he took the best, as I told you earlier, the best costumes, the best objects out of the theatre, and I just wiped that all away. And then we made money, and each year we made more money. And I was bringing down a nice fat little check at the end of the summer, somewhere between 20 and 35, 000 every year, and it was gratefully received.

HERB: Yep. Well, I know that it began to fail when Darrel took over, and that it was clear of you.

SY: You know, another thing about it Herb, you can shut the door if you like on this aspect of the operation, was that the exposure, the visibility of the University through Fallon House was a tremendous aspect. Students carried back to other schools because the company wasn't drawn exclusively from Pacific. As a matter of fact, eventually less from Pacific and more from outside, which was great because it spread the word about the operation, and it spread the word about Pacific, and indeed students came to Pacific as a result of their Fallon experiences. So even if it lost some money, in the long run it would make money by bringing in tuition paying students into the University. So that wasn't a thing that was altogether visible, but it was a thing that happened, that it generated income, it generated interest in, and all of those thousands of people that travel through Columbia in the summertime, there was that sign out there, University of Pacific. It was a great exposure. You couldn't buy that publicity anymore.

HERB: And we don't have it now.

SY: And we don't have now.

HERB: Yeah. It was a tragedy to lose it.

SY: Yeah.

HERB: Were there any particularly memorable students that come through in the program or through the university as you look back?

SY: There was very, very good performance that come through in some remarkable students that came through. One singer that we had that came from University of Wyoming as a result of Fred Gursky being here, remember Fred was on the Conservatory



faculty here, and he said, "Enough of this," and he went off to Wyoming where he became chairman. He's semi-retired now, and we're good friends at this stage, we send letters periodically. And he brought a singer in who was absolutely stunning, a baritone, and he did Oklahoma. And when that voice, again off stage, "Oh what a beautiful morning," it just paralyzed the audience. I saved him for last at the tryouts, that I mean students were accepted into the program but not as to what they would play, and we had several days of tryouts for which plays they would be in, (Karen what rose?). And I had heard him sing, so I knew that he would be intimidated, so I brought him on last. And all of them sang and some could sing very well, some could sing passably, some needed to learn, and uh, suddenly then here comes this singer with a truly operatic voice, just a wonderful, wonderful clarity, pacing, beautiful mellow sound. And just, it just made everybody wide-eyed. Now he could have gone very far, but you know he didn't care. It was one of these situations he had this gift, this marvelous gift, but he was lazy, and he just he had no sense in how to pursue a career, and eventually he said, "No, I don't want to do that," and he ended up painting houses. (Loud noise heard, as if recorder is being

messed with). He's like a (ring?) you brought in. Fantastic. No, he had all the good singing.

HERB: What happened to some of the people there?

SY: A variety of things. Apparently, you know Fallon had a huge impact on the students who participated. When there was this recent reunion, a couple of years ago, where the Drama department of past students...

HERB: Yes, yes, exactly.

SY: ...and I could not attend because I was involved with something up here. And uh, and apparently from the report I got about it from Peter Lynch, was that the one thing that the students remembered above all was the Fallon House experiences. Uh, and that was gratifying to hear. You know, that they felt positively about that. And they really worked very hard.

HERB: Well, but they were a company, you know, for ah, for...

SY: They were a company.

HERB: ...for what? Two months, three months of the summer time.

SY: Three months. Yeah.

HERB: And living together, you know, probably sleeping together.

SY: Yeah, on occasions. Yes, I turned a blind eye toward that, I didn't encourage it, but... (Laughter). I didn't pursue it either.

HERB: Yeah, right.

SY: I did stop with drugs though, my god, I took the season in my own hands. The uh, it was clear to me that there was some drug taking going on, from the way the students were acting, and rehearsal and so on. So, I said, "This is not going to, this is not going to cut it." And so what I did was I called the company together, and I said, "First of all, drugs are illegal, and second of all, as representatives of the University, this is very bad if this gets into the community, and the drugs circulating and so on. And third of all I personally am against it, because I don't think when you are on drugs that you are going to give your best performance, you'll only have the illusion that you've given a good performance. So what I am doing is, as you will find out, I just put a padlock on the door," this is before we got into the season, and we're getting ready for rehearsal. And I said, "This theatre is closed. Officially, right now." I said, "Unless you have a meeting among yourselves, without me, and you decide when this season is going on, if this season is going on, it's going to be drug free. You will turn in all drugs in to me, I will put them in the safe and return them to you at the end of the season. But there will be no drugs during the summer. You make up your mind, what you want to do." And I said, "Don't think I'm not serious, I am serious. This is the end of the Fallon House season, depending on what you decide to do." (Herb laughs). Well, I guess it... I guess it startled a lot of people.

HERB: I was going to say, did you have room in the safe? (Laughter).

SY: Well, off they went for a meeting for a couple of hours. They appointed, I can't remember her first name... Pat, a woman, to be representative. They gave her all the drugs they were holding, mostly marijuana, including two little crumpled cigarettes that I saw turned in. (Herb laughs). It was the first I learned about that. Uh, and uh, and they delivered them to me, and they said, "No more drugs." And indeed there were no more for the rest of the season. That's the way... and I would have closed it down, because I think that sooner or later it would have been a disaster. One of the memorable moments of Fallon. Oh, you know the theatre was a sieve in terms of its cracks, the weather got inside, and so on, and there were bats upstairs. And fortunately there was never an untoward incident that the bats gave, they never flew into women's hair, which was a fear, and they never hurt anybody. And nobody ever got bitten or attacked, or anything, but they stopped many a scene. And the actors got used to it, and they just simply froze, 'til the bat went away in the loft somewhere (coughs). But of course, the audience liked it.

HERB: (Chuckles). Well I can remember being there, and watching them go across at the back of the stage.

SY: Yes, they would do that. Sometimes they would come into the audience

HERB: Right.

SY: And after we finally did get rid of them, you know with certain renovations and what not, people would come, and say, are there any bats? You know they wanted to see them, and they were disappointed because there were no bats. And occasionally one or two would appear at just the right moment, it was almost like they were part of the play, especially when we were doing mysteries, like, what was the name of that play, *Haunted Hill*, or the *House on Haunted Hill*, one of those popular plays, and at a very propitious moment here come the bats come through, it was almost as if they flew in right on cue. (They chuckle). But I think the funniest incident, the thing is it'd get so hot, some people fainted in the summer sometimes, we used to keep some smelling salts and stuff it got so damn hot. We had these swamp coolers, but they just made the humidity thicker. And one time during a production we had opened the side doors back stage to try to create a little cross-ventilation, one of those hot summer nights, you know, the temperature was probably a hundred and two in the theatre. And all of a sudden here comes a raccoon from one of the open doors, walking across the stage, right in the middle of a scene, with six little Raccoons behind him, in file.

HERB: Really?

SY: Walked across the stage. They came in, came in one door, out in the stage building, stuff was along the right side of the theater as you're facing it, and he walked across the stage and out the other door. It was hilarious! And as you can imagine it just absolutely stopped the show, you know. (Laughter).

HERB: Oh, yeah! You never knew what was going to happen!

SY: Never knew. That was almost as good one as, I can't remember, what was her name, Harper, can't remember her first name. Very attractive girl. And we were doing uh, oh that musical that takes place aboard ship, what the hell is it? It's a very popular musical.

HERB: Yeah, I know what you mean.

SY: Ok, she had a solo, called a torch solo. She was about 18-19 years old. Uh, very maturely developed. And a little bit scatter brained. And she came onto the stage, dressed in this nice tight-fitting gown. And she forgot to put her brazier on. And she's going through the gyrations of this torchy song, and one of her breasts flops out. (Laughter). She hardly even knows it, tucking it all back in. And it happened that there was a father of one of the students who was in the audience, maybe forty-ish or something, he was very much amused by this, and very attracted to her, so after the performance he got into a conversation with her, because actors, most of them do, come out and talk to the audience, that was optional. Some liked to do it, others didn't, I didn't push it. If they did, fine, if they didn't, swell. Uh, and she came out and he approached and, eventually he married her.

HERB: Is that a fact?

SY: Yeah, and he had his own daughter up there too as well, and she was about the same age as his daughter. He was about 20 years older, rather attractive man, and they married, and the last I heard they were very happy. (They chuckle). I don't know if the exposed breast did it or not. (Laughter). It certainly created an interest.

HERB: Yes.

SY: But oh, I've got a lot of Fallon stories to tell. And there were a lot of things that went on that I turned a blind eye to, not that I was permissive about it, I was tolerant.

HERB: Yeah.

SY: But yeah, it turned out to be an interesting operation and I kind of, I kind of looked forward to it, though after about, let's see how many years did I do it? 19, I did it almost 15 years. That's a long time for a big operation.

HERB: Long time.

## **END OF TAPE 2**

## **BEGIN TAPE 3**

HERB: Well one other question is that we been talking about Burns and he was really memorable and were there any other memorable people at the University that particularly stimulated...

SY: Well memorable maybe in a sense that they did interesting things... in their programming, they were excellent teachers, and I became good friends with those people. For example, Cliff Hand was a very close friend of mine up until the time when he became Academic Vice President and he was interim President for a year I think when the President was away. Those jobs as they elevated him, as you know, in the administration sort of interfered with our friendship. I think Cliff... it was not his role to do that, because it maybe compromised his objectivity.

(Much of this tape is inaudible, only bits and pieces can be heard). (I skipped to parts where I could hear parts of the interview).

SY: And I have no resentment for (Russ?) which is there (inaudible) it's like I never existed. And it was real sad. Uh, and it isn't an occasion of relevance, (feigned relevance?) (inaudible). (Chuckles heard).

HERB: Do you have any revelations about the sixties (inaudible)?

SY: Yeah, yeah, I do. (later?) Not that there were more people who (but people who slightly paused for it?) No, but I think that (George Thompson?) in the early 50's was very frivolous (inaudible) and disdain (inaudible).

(Skip)

SY: So I remember that. I thought the campus was (inaudible). We never got back to where I was (inaudible) and series (inaudible) a working set (inaudible) nice (inaudible) pay a lot more attention. Well that was beginning to fade. And it seems to me about the time that I came to campus in the 60's, (inaudible) but other than the thing (inaudible) I think it was (inaudible). Did you experience any of these things? I can't remember (inaudible).

HERB: Do you remember something along the lines of (Amos Alonzo's?) sunny days (inaudible) he cancelled all the classes (inaudible)?

SY: I do remember, but I will not (inaudible).

HERB: Then I remember the free speech movement, there was a (colloquium?) at the (Phillipa?) stands, and there was some students located by (inaudible)?

SY: That's right.

HERB: (inaudible). (Sloan?) It was 69-70, I think we had invaded Cambodia and actually there was something, a demonstration about it (inaudible).

SY: (Teejits?)

HERB: (Teejits,?) right.

SY: There was a demonstration that was, that was quashed by Burns (inaudible), and that's part of the sadness that you're describing, there was movement of the students for (free sculptures?) (inaudible) and they marched on the tower, a kind of let's see, a kind of march on the Bastille, I suppose it was. And in order to use more scholarships for (inaudible) and uh, so they got a fair number of students together, and to participate in this (inaudible) and I think this was one of the most radical things that happened on campus, during the revolutionary (inaudible) So they marched on campus, and on Burns, and (inaudible) but they were too late, because he had already paid a (waitress?) to (inaudible) And this deflated like a punctured balloon.

HERB: Oh! So that was the initiation that CIP and community involved?

SY: Exactly. Yes, exactly. So something like that did happen on campus, but you know Pacific was not in the main stream.

HERB: No.

SY: The (burning?) in Columbia, the (burning?) in (inaudible) things were happening. When I was grappling as a poet, there were all kinds of things, the community burning

school books. Public education (inaudible) operations (inaudible) I taught on (inaudible) That night there were fires all over the campus. Buildings up for burning (inaudible) and

the poetry reading you know looked like a massive political meeting. So I read my most radical poems. (Laughter).

HERB: And it fit right in.

SY: Right. They were, they were rebelling also against these, these (men's?) (inaudible) they were sympathetic to them, they were apparently sympathetic to the students grievances and emotions at the time. Uh, and that was part of the (inaudible) for the demonstration. So I wrote a poem about (inaudible) that built a reference to (inaudible). It was very funny and ironic that they loved the poem, and so things like that happening all across the land (inaudible) but I think that Pacific was relatively quiet, and I think that's why they were seen as good years at Pacific, because they could (do stuff where their parents could see?) They were safe.

HERB: Students to that university were(n't) going to corrupt the young. (Laughter). You said much, Sy, about this shift from Burns here to McCaffrey (inaudible). Did you feel a difference in terms of those frustrations (inaudible)?

SY: Well, the first, yes, the first thing that happened, the year Burns virtually on his death bed, and his (inaudible) idea of playhouse, in uh (inaudible).

HERB: Pasadena.

SY: Pasadena, thank-you. Uh, and that was in the works actually. Well, right after he died, that operation, that negotiation that was going on stopped. It just cut off (inaudible) And the new administration had no interest in (inaudible) concern of where it might go, expand, I don't think it was McCaffrey's plan to do (inaudible) So I think he's not (inaudible) so that signified (inaudible) but any changes? McCaffrey seemed to be like a (potter?), like a (inaudible) very, very political president (inaudible) Uh, and of course, that's the (inaudible) the university (inaudible) an administrator would speak, the president has a lot of power, has a lot of power over the faculty too, but (his nature is to exercise?) so that the people that he gathered around were very much compatible to him (inaudible) more than perhaps (inaudible) I am not a very political person, so (lack in demonstration?), so (inaudible) less effective than (inaudible) than even maybe be (inaudible) (so I've been a participant?). So we're not into an area where I feel like I'm most competent.

HERB: But Academic Vice Presidency you saw a lot of?

SY: I probably have some good ideas about that, I thought Bevon was good. My conversations with Bevon were always interesting. As a matter of fact, he tried to

convince me that I should teach this (technical vocation?)... there's too much that needs attention, because we're looking at... The very fact that he considered them... and I think he came from a new school, called (inaudible)...

HERB: Florida University...

SY: Not the new school in New York? But the Florida... (inaudible).

HERB: There's a new program in the Florida University...

SY: Yeah, there's a new program, yes, and a very liberal one. And he came from that background, so when he came to Pacific, he carried some of those ideas into it. And apparently, I remember at one point he said, well, you know, that's what the Drama chair did in the school I was on, after he did a production, he was so tired, and so on, but and he said, understandably, which is something the administration never understood about.

HERB: They don't. Yeah. They don't know about these 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock hours.

SY: That's right. And teaching a full load, and coming back after dinner and putting another four or five hours in on rehearsals.

HERB: Right.

SY: And, but he had known about that, and was sympathetic to the Arts from his last school. I remember, he said, "You should do well. You should take a break after each production. And uh, shut some of the teaching off to more of the teaching faculty, and give yourself (inaudible)." It really was very good advice, but I never followed it, not even once. But Bevon was very sympathetic, and I liked him because he was sympathetic. Might not agree with everybody, but certainly you can do (inaudible) what you heard is what you got.

HERB: Yeah. I wasn't around the year that he really (had problems?) with the graduate program, (inaudible).

SY: I'm not sure that I was either.

HERB: I think it was either 68 or 69, or 69/70, because I think it was 70, 71 (inaudible) course by the time I got back he was...

SY: Yes, that's very likely, because in 70/71 I was in Vienna for a year, and 66/67 I was in Poland. So I probably missed that. Otherwise I would have had a better memory, but I remember though that (inaudible) there was contentions, something (graduate school?). I think maybe he wanted to contract it, but it wasn't... the school could not support that many graduate programs in the (inaudible) it scattered throughout the curriculum.

HERB: I really (don't know what the implications are?) Well, I don't know, we seem to have pretty well have covered the ground of seeing these questions. We talked about, well, (not many things that get into what you thought were special at UOP?)

SY: I think the University for all I get from the Bulletin that I hear, would have been for the faculty in some ways a much more supportive place. There all kinds of grants now, there is all kind of money for grants, salaries have doubled from what we got paid in our time, there's more attention seems to me in faculty activity in fact publishing, I suspect there's a little more pressure for them to, I would not like the pressure, but I would like the direction if you were more, like let the faculty do that when they can, and keep the teaching at this school at the foremost. And it's one of the things that helped me (inaudible) the fact that that did develop, and seem to be pervasive in the faculty, the fact that it is very student-concerned. That there are all kinds of advantages, and well, I suppose, that every advantage is always alongside (a cost?). And something else is paying for the advantage. And if there's that kind of pressure, then we get into (like those universities that only publish literature?) (inaudible). Uh, I think that apparently the level of students, I think we touched upon this before, has risen.

HERB: Yes.

SY: Better scores, better performance that is. (inaudible). (That's inevitable?) There's a greater diversity in classes, you know. Uh, I'd hope, though I don't know this for a fact, there, that there is a horrible (fall?) between the administration, the board, and the faculty. This greater (inaudible, change?) and it can change. You would say that that's happening?

HERB: Yeah, I think, the relationship of the board to the (rest?) is probably the best its ever been.

SY: Ok.

HERB: That took place uh, number one (lobby?) department. And I think he was a (mode of office?) (inaudible).

SY: I see.

HERB: And, and then Don DeRosa came in, and DeRosa and the, from the very beginning, first summer he came in (inaudible). And began to connect a (warm? When used? Inaudible). I think uh, and then, interestingly enough, you cannot give more credit than any one (single person?) Do you remember it was a question when we hired McCaffrey on a (inaudible)... the difference with (inaudible). And yet at the time he was...(inaudible).

SY: Yes, yes. I remember that.



HERB: Intensely loyal to the University, great political (sales?cells?), (inaudible)... are these changes.

SY: And uh, the fundraising that's (inaudible).

HERB: Much better, yeah. Recent 13 million dollar grant for (formation? inaudible).

SY: yeah.

HERB: Largest one...(inaudible).

SY: yeah, (I remember reading about that a couple weeks ago?) Yeah, good.

HERB: Well, Sy, I thank you! (Laughs).

SY: I thank you for you and your colleagues for wanting my input on these things. I'm very happy to do it. (chuckling).

**END OF TAPE 3**