

JOHNS, GILBERT R., 1931-
Colorado College Assistant Professor of Psychology, 1962-1964
Associate Professor of Psychology, 1964-70
Professor of Psychology, 1970-
Dean of the Summer Session 1965-1981

SIDE ONE - CASSETTE ONE

FINLEY:

This is Tape Recording No. 75 of the Colorado College Archives Oral History Project. The date is January 17, 1995. I am Judy Finley, interviewing Professor of Psychology Gilbert R. Johns, at Tutt Library.

Professor Johns, who received his Ph.D. from the University of Indiana, came to Colorado College in 1962, following a teaching stint at Ohio University. His specialty has been in sensory psychology and perception and the history of science and psychology.

Professor Johns served as the Dean of the Colorado College Summer Session for 15 years, from 1965 to 1981. He was director of the Colorado Opera Festival from 1970 to 1978.

From 1982 to 1992 he was critic at large for the Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph.

In recent years, he has also taught General Studies courses such as Freedom and Authority and Liberal Learning and the Human Imagination.

I'd like to welcome you before you start, Gilbert, to our Oral History Project and thank you for being willing to tell us about your years at CC. Perhaps you'd like to start by talking about your arrival at CC in 1962 and a little bit about how you became a psychologist and how you got here in the first place.

JOHNS:

Okay. I grew up in Oak Park, Illinois, and then went to Kenyon College, which is a very fine liberal arts college. I was only interested in liberal arts colleges and I interviewed with quite a few of them--Carlton, Grinnell,

Colorado College, and I was thinking of Grinnell, and they called in all of the good students, valedictorian and types of my high school and had a little old lady in a funny hat and gloves.

And she said, "Boys and girls, have a wonderful time at Grinnell. We're not little old bookworms."

And since I was a little old bookworm, I decided I was not going to go to Grinnell. Later on, I mentioned this to Jim Stauss, who came here as a provost and vice-president, and he informed me that a few years after that this woman was cashiered. I think we know why, don't we?

FINLEY:

Yes.

JOHNS:

And when the Kenyon representative came by, I was interested in this school with a very strong humanities and literary tradition, the interviewer said, "Well, you've heard about the drunken Dekes, and the drunken Alpha Deltas at Kenyon."

Because Kenyon was famous as a drinking school, very much like Dartmouth.

And he said, "No one will ever force you to take a drink at Kenyon."

And I was there, and no one ever did. But I liked the school very much, and that's why I went there. Then I was a poly sci-philosophy major, but the chairman of the department was generally the only member of the department. I got to know him well and he said, "Well," he said, "you know, you're an Illinois resident. I've given you all I know here, and if you're really serious about this, why don't you go there?"

Because at that point, the University of Illinois had all the past, present and future presidents of the American Psychology Association.

FINLEY:

So you transferred?

JOHNS:

So I transferred there, and actually got my bachelor's degree from there, and it was wonderful, because I could take all advanced level graduate and undergraduate courses.

Then I decided to go on to graduate school, and I went

to Indiana University.

FINLEY:

Directly, out of--

JOHNS:

Undergraduate school, and I was very interested in experimental psychology. I was never a clinician. The two schools that most interested me at that point were Yale, which was a learning school, the University of Iowa, and Indiana. So Indiana gave me a good fellowship, and so on, and so I went there, and got my doctorate from there.

I didn't get a master's, because most schools don't even give masters; if you want a master's, they tell you to leave. Some schools push your master's under your door after you've been there a year.

FINLEY:

But did you know, when you were working on your Ph.D. that you wanted to be a teacher?

JOHNS:

Oh, yes, I thought of teaching and research--very definitely. And I did, I got involved in some research at Illinois. There was a leading man in vision there who had actually built a piece of apparatus that Newton had tried to build, and he wondered if he was going to color vision (?).

And I got interested in some other things. I was in the Shakespeare choruses, and one man was pretty good, he went to Harvard in Shakespeare. But I really liked experimental psychology. I never had any interest in clinical at all.

FINLEY:

Now you must have met your first wife, Marcia, in graduate school. Was she also in the program?

JOHNS:

That's right. She was in the program, and she was a Columbia graduate and she had gone to Indiana for the same reasons, and she was about a year ahead of me.

So what happened was, there were two big names in the department, Kantor, who was the grand old man of the department, who Skinner had actually worked with. He had brought Skinner in there. And then W.K. Estes, Bill Estes, who was the leading person in the country in mathematical learning theory.

Well, it turned out, as part of our assistanceships, we worked for those two people. So when the prelim time came,

the thing about prelims is they tell you, anything is fair game, they can ask you anything about psychology. Well, they don't know everything about psychology--what are they going to ask you? Well, what they do, you know, so you have to pretty well know what the faculty is doing.

Since Marcia and I were working with the two heavy-hitters in the department, we were invited to these evening seminars a couple of times a week to say, "What is J.R. Kantor thinking?" "What is Bill Estes thinking?"

And we had both done personal research for both these people, besides doing some teaching. So, afterward we would go out and have a beer, or if the thing was early, we'd go out and have a dinner together. That's how we got to know each other.

Then we took off, and then what I did was catch up with her. So I took my doctoral examinations earlier than anyone ever had, not because I was a hot-shot, because I wanted to be up with her, so we could leave at the same time. And that's what happened.

FINLEY:

So then you taught at Ohio State University?

JOHNS:

Well, I taught at Ohio University.

FINLEY:

Oh, Ohio University.

JOHNS:

But first, at Indiana I taught a lot.

FINLEY:

Oh, you did? As a TA?

JOHNS:

Well, it started out as a TA, and then it turned out that the, you actually taught a course by yourself in experimental psychology for sophomores.

And the man who was in charge of all those programs was a young assistant professor, now a big name in the field. He was going on sabbatical and the department looked around for someone who could run it.

Well, none of the faculty members wanted to, and since I had a good record of teaching in the course, they put me in charge of it. So I probably had more teaching responsibility

there than I've ever had since, because I don't know, there were 16 or 20 sections of the course, and I taught one or two of them.

But then I planned all the experiments and the handouts, and I'd give everybody a choice of what experiments they could do, what was for the right level, and write little books for the statistics that they'd need for the course.

And you know, it was a tremendously prestige-ful job, and I was so happy to get it. I got paid a little more than undergraduate students. Later on, I realized that I was close to getting an assistant professor's salary, and I was doing assistant professor's work, so. But you know, in those days, no one thought of exploitation.

FINLEY:

No, no.

JOHNS:

And I was so happy to have that kind of prestige, then. So then when I finished my doctorate in experimental psychology, actually in mathematical models--well, I should say one more thing, because the world has changed so much. I am a person that doesn't exist any more in terms of psychology. I like to call myself a general experimental psychologist.

There are three areas, mainly, of experimental psychology, physiological, sensory and learning. So I got my, I was one of the few people who did this. I took my doctoral examinations, my prelims, in sensory. Then I did my thesis in mathematical learning theory, and then I had an outside minor in biology and physiology.

FINLEY:

It wasn't as specialized as it is now.

JOHNS:

No. And that's ideal for a liberal arts college, because you can teach anything.

FINLEY:

Perfect.

JOHNS:

But that's how people were trained then. And there's not that anymore. People are so narrow, they specialize in the left ear, and so on.

So then I went to Ohio University, which was then a full-time job, as an assistant professor, and was there for five years. Marcia went there with me, so we got her some part-time teaching, about as much as she wanted to do.

But it was a strange place, because, I'll give you an example. And I know you wanted to get to Colorado College. They, the university didn't have an animal building, and so I worked very hard, got the graduate students ready, got the building fixed up, threw away the junk, got the place painted, the doors were so small you couldn't get standard cages for animals in there.

So I went to Chicago to a hot-pet galvanized place that built cages and designed cages that would fit in the door, and you could bolt them together. And got it all--it was a beautifully run place then.

And I went to the physical plant and they said, I said, "I need some scouring powder and detergent and Lysol and things like that--light bulbs."

And they said "Those are custodial supplies."

I said, "That's right."

And they said, "Well, you don't have a custodian." They said, "Therefore, you don't get any custodial supplies."

And I was, me and my students were the custodians.

So--things like that would happen all the time. I started an honors school there, and we had some very, very good kids in it. The cutoff was oh, let's see, 95th percentile and some tests, and a 3.75 average to get in.

Well, it was terrific and I was getting psych majors and then they tried to give me a very big course, with, you know, 60 or 100 people in there, or 200. And they said--this is a state school, remember.

They said, "If these students are so smart, they can do very well in a big class." That's why I should put them in there. That kind of thing started to get to me after awhile.

And then what really caused me to leave was that I had a lab, I had grants, I had tenure, and there was a big move in the state to try to get everybody to get a Ph.D. And all the different state schools--Miami, Ohio University, Ohio State, Kent, and all were all competing for the state's money to get a Ph.D., so we were being pushed all the time.

And I wasn't having any of that, because I felt like we had just got our master's program, it was very respectable. We could send our masters students anywhere in the world and get degrees.

So they kept pushing us about this. And I was fighting it all the time--a couple of us were, I wasn't the only one. Finally it was just an expensive spirit--I said, "Why, I don't have to live like this."

In the meantime, I had kept up with Don and Merr Shearn.

FINLEY:

Oh, you knew them?

JOHNS:

Yes. They had gone to Indiana. So my last couple of years were their first couple of years, and we hit it off, and when I used to go back to visit Kantor, my mentor, I would spend time with them. And then, he was always pushing me to come out here.

FINLEY:

Don Shearn?

JOHNS:

Yes.

FINLEY:

He had come a year before you.

JOHNS:

He had come a year before, and he really liked it, and he'd gone to a liberal arts--he had gone to Pomona--and so he was pushing me to do that.

And so a couple of things happened where we were really getting--well, my feeling about the whole thing is that I was the most competent person to teach on the doctoral level, and I didn't want to be in any department where I was the most competent person, because, obviously, I didn't know one or two things well.

You can't fix everything, like if, you know, David is a very smart fellow. If he asked me to teach South American politics, he would not be! On the graduate level!

FINLEY:

Right.

JOHNS:

You know, he'd say, "I won't do that again."

And they were trying to get us to do things like that. So Don asked us at the right time. They had already hired

me to come out here for a summer, just sort of to hang out.

FINLEY:

Oh, okay. So you taught in the summer program?

JOHNS:

Well, in the summer before I actually started.

FINLEY:

I see.

JOHNS:

And then Don and Carl and Doug worked hard--

FINLEY:

You're talking about Doug Freed, Carl Roberts--

JOHNS:

And Don Shearn were in the department. And they got a tenure track position, which was less than I was getting paid, and of course no tenure right away. And so they flew me out, and I talked with everybody here.

Oh, this would be interesting for the archives. I'll never forget the first lunch I had when they brought me out here. They knew that I was interested in lots of things and so the people who were at my lunch group were Ken Burton, Bernard Arnest, Fred Sondermann, Darnell Rucker, plus the psychology--oh, and also, a little later on, Bob Brown, who was this--

FINLEY:

Yes, right.

JOHNS:

The under a cloud zoologist.

FINLEY:

Now who was the dean when you were hired?

JOHNS:

Lew.

FINLEY:

Oh, Lew was the dean, of course.

JOHNS:

Lew was the dean, and so--imagine going out to lunch with a group like that. Well. Who could resist coming here?

And it really was very impressive, and my--Kenneth and I both remember our first contact, because we were driving out in someone's station wagon to, I think Giuseppe's for

lunch, and I sort of thought that everybody that was we were bringing along was going to be somewhere in the sciences and I said, the candidates would always exchange jokes and responses, and I said, "Well, what department are you in?"

I had no idea. And he said, this was, he said, "Theology."

And I said, "Experimental?" And he said, "No, revelational." And that's how we got to be good friends, then.

So that was the whole style. Imagine having all those people. I may have left somebody out--of course, there was Doug, and Don and Carl. So then I had a nice talk with Lew, who was just wonderful.

There wasn't anyone quite like him, because at Ohio University, I remember I was there when Sputnik went up, and believe it or not, the president of the open faculty meeting gave a little talk of how we had to teach better so we could beat the Russians.

And I thought, "What I am doing here?" This was against all the things that I believe in. [laughter]

So it wasn't very hard to persuade me to come. They got me at a little bit above starting salary, and a shortened period for tenure, because I gave up tenure. Then I came here, because I really, having my time at Kenyon, I really knew that I was a liberal arts scholar.

And the main thing about it was, and of course, the dinner, the lunch was set up perfectly, and that is, the ideal thing is, you know, you associate with a bunch of other departments. Because my best friends are in religion, poly sci, history, you know, and really my best friends. They are not in the psychology department, except for maybe Don Shearn.

FINLEY:

Quite a difference from what it would be in a big state university.

JOHNS:

Oh, yes. And at Ohio University, when I left, it was over 12,000. You know, I had a lot of power and things there. For instance, when I left, I didn't realize this, they had 16 graduate students working on their master's, a faculty of 20, and I had 11 of the 16 graduate students who were working for me, or with me.

Well, you know, students know where this little stuff is coming from, because they had a lot of time-servers and so on. But I was glad to get out of there.

FINLEY:

Well, when you came to CC in 1962, wasn't Olin Hall just opening up? And the psychology department was still over in Palmer Hall?

JOHNS:

It was in Palmer, that's where we started.

FINLEY:

Now, tell me a little bit about, compared to what you had known, what the facilities were like in the building where you were then?

JOHNS:

Oh, they were dim in comparison, but I also had a lot of faith in Don, and Carl, because you know, they were died-in-the-wool hard-nosed professional experimental psychologists.

So you know, we saw an opportunity to build things up, and Don already had some ideas. He wanted to get some more money. So--but you know, I knew that it wasn't perfect, but I also knew that we had ways of changing. And I think Carl was quite ingenious with building little animal boxes out of Coors beer cans and things like that.

FINLEY:

And I believe, according to our records, there was some sort of a grant application just about the time you came, maybe during that year, because Benezet was still president, to improve the facilities in the psychology department. Do you recall that?

JOHNS:

Yes. Well, we certainly got it improved, and we already had plans and blueprints, so we got it done. I remember going into, we marched into Benezet's office and said, you know, "We can't go on teaching students this way."

We had researched all of the high-tech, state-of-the-art recent stuff. Psychology was just going in to getting automatic equipment. You know, when I was in graduate school, you always followed the raids by the sheriff's office on pin-ball machines and slot machines, because you could buy them then and cannibalize them for all the relay circuitry, which was very high quality.

But now the stuff was available. We drew up a plan; we went to Benezet, and I said, I remember I said to him, "You know, my God, I came here and you're doing lab experiments with beer cans."

He said, "Coors has really good beer." But he was just pulling my leg.

But he actually, more than Lew Worner, he saw, he was more visionary at that point than Lew was, and so he got the money for us, so we got the lab and then we all worked over spring vacation with the college sculptor, Herman Snyder, who designed a series of 13 experimental booths out of redwood and whatever that board that has holes punched in it is, and cellutex, and he had the designs, and we built it ourselves. And they lasted for years.

FINLEY:

Now is this when you first went up into the attic at Palmer Hall?

JOHNS:

Let's see. No. Those are on what we call now the third floor.

FINLEY:

Right.

JOHNS:

The third floor. So we had all that. We actually had built a plan to have the next floor done, too, but the college, in their wisdom, decided they didn't want to put the money out right then.

So a year, a couple of years later, it cost them, of course, twice as much to do it. Because we worked very carefully with an architect and we knew what we wanted, we wrote plans and so on and so forth.

And the place still worked. And it worked for years, and I think it was finally finished in '65. But then we had other ways of getting money.

For instance, Carl Litt had a grant; Don had a grant, virtually as soon as I came, I started writing a grant, and I had a, oh, I don't know how many thousand dollars it was, a National Science Foundation grant for equipment and so on. So then you could just take the stuff that was for your grant, and use it in the department.

That was ideal for--I always had, I had money for

student assistants and I always had students on my grant. And say, three of the students who worked on my grant were Bill Yost, who's now probably the leading person in hearing in the country; Cathy Weir, who then was Cathy Grant, who was our first Marshall scholarship, and is now department chair, and Lex Towns, who was a very interesting guy, a football player and so on, and then he's now got a doctorate, and now he's teaching neural anatomy in medical school. So.

FINLEY:

So you were drawing good students, and the enrollments were expanding.

JOHNS:

Yes. Expanding through the majors, we were getting good--the point is, we were getting lots of students because we taught an enormous course. We had the biggest lab course in the school. We used to fill Olin I, which was about 180. And then we'd break them up into five or six discussions, labs really, in the afternoons. Five, I guess, we'd have to do.

So we would share the lecturing in the big hall, we'd each have our turns. We'd give quite formal lectures, and then in the afternoons, we had a 1:30 to 4:00, 1:00 to 4:00 lab. We'd go over the materials on experiments and so on.

FINLEY:

Well, that's very interesting. Well, now, we've been talking a bit about the physical facilities and the department changes there in the curriculum, can you tell me a little bit about your colleagues outside of the department? I'm sure there are people you got to know very quickly and certainly one of them must have been Fred Sondermann.

JOHNS:

Yes.

FINLEY:

Can you tell me about your first memories with Fred and how you got involved working with him? He was doing the symposiums during that period, and I think I read somewhere that you were in charge of the film part of the symposium?

JOHNS:

Yes, and I was, Fred had been told by everybody, of course, he'd met me, that I was someone who had broad interests, so I became oh, kind of a deputy director of the symposium. So I was always involved in the planning.

In fact, one year, I actually planned the symposium,

because Fred was on sabbatical. And Fred was so democratic that the symposium that Fred wanted the most was one on the city, because he had all these urban interests. And so, but Fred was so damn democratic that he wanted, you know, fair votes and so on. I didn't feel that way.

I know Fred wanted a good run, and so the year that I set it up, and then Fred finally came in to run it, it was very close vote for something else not very interesting came in.

And Gary Knight was a student then, later on became an assistant dean, he was a student then, and I said, and Gary was for the city, he was a political science major, and so I got one of these votes, which was, you know, 40 to 38, and I used the same technique that Benezet had used years before for ROTC, I said, "That's not a mandate."

I said, "Go on out and beat the bushes and come back here. I don't care if you pack the house, but let's get it clear."

So Gary went out, and Gary's a good politico, and he came back, and the City won overwhelmingly. And then of course, Fred couldn't have been happier, because I think that was probably his best symposium, in a way, because that's what he knew.

But we had a wonderful time. You're right; I did all the movies. And then, I would always do a couple of panels.

FINLEY:

What was it like working with Fred? You said he was democratic.

JOHNS:

Democratic in his, in running meetings. He was against elitism and so on, but it was very funny. You know, Fred was always a very, oh, I don't want to say difficult person to talk with, because he would, you know, you could tell him what you wanted, he'd listen very, very carefully.

And then he would turn around to his typewriter and start typing. And it would sound like a Gatling gun during the civil war. He had an old typewriter, and I've never seen speed like that. And he'd be looking at you, and typing, but you knew stuff was over.

And of course, you talk about something with Fred at 4:00 in the afternoon, you'd come in the next morning at 8:30 or quarter of nine, there'd be a memo under your door about it. Because remember in those days, memos were all Sondermann's.

FINLEY:

Right.

JOHNS:

We had a lot of fun together, amusing each other and so on. But he was fun to work with, and then of course, we worked together more, because he preceded me as summer session dean.

FINLEY:

Yes. Well, how did it evolve that you followed him into the summer session?

JOHNS:

Well, "followed" is a very interesting way of putting it. I was pushed, in a way. Well, I'll come back to that in a minute. Are we finished up with the symposium and things like that?

FINLEY:

Well, anything more you want to say about it?

JOHNS:

Oh, I'll tell you one story that involves--I think nobody would mind my telling it. The humor symposium, Lew Worner, the president always had a little welcoming thing on the inside flap, you know, "Welcome to Colorado College. We're doing this, this year, and this is the reason we're doing it."

Lew came to me and said, "I haven't kept up with this, and I know you have. Why don't you ghost it for me?"

So I wrote something, you know, mildly funny, and said it, and Vi, Lew's secretary, put it on his typewriter and so on, before the days of everybody xeroxing everything.

And then, poor Fred! He sent Lew a note, saying it was the best thing he'd ever written! [laugh]

FINLEY:

[laugh]

JOHNS:

And then Lew came and told me that! Lew had that big Yogi Berra laugh going on.

And then it happened that there was some kind of reception on campus; I think it was for new authors or something. And Lew and I met there; Lew gave that little wonderful grin of his. He said, he grabbed me by the arm and said, "Come on over."

And Fred was standing there, and he said, "I hear you

liked what I wrote."

And then Fred bought it, you know, and just gushed all over Lew, how good it was, and he said, "Well, it's interesting, we've been colleagues for how many years, this is the first time you've ever mentioned anything that I've written, and I've written lots, and the fact is that Gil wrote this."

And I thought Fred looked like he'd been hit in the chest with a cannon ball. You know, he actually rocked back on his heels. And then he recovered, and said, "Well, it wasn't so good. It was a little stabby here and there."

You know, he started saying some things like that. But that was so much fun at Fred's expense, but he took it well. And Lew wasn't mad at all. Lew just thought it was very funny. Because Lew recognized what I wrote was a good--Lew wasn't funny in what he wrote, but anyway.

But the summer session, well, anyway, I was very heavily into psychology, experimental psychology, through those early years with the grants, and then with so many things going on. We were attracting the good students, we were giving papers at conventions.

A lot of good students during that time, Dell Rhodes was on my grant at one point. Someone who's a psychiatrist in town, Roz Israel, I think her name is now Roz Hupnik--she is now at Cedar Springs. A lot of good names came through there then, became good psychologists.

Then one day I was having coffee--in those days we had coffee in the WES room. And you know, Lew used to come there, and we'd usually talk about sports and very seldom college business.

FINLEY:

This was while he was president, he had time to come and have coffee with the faculty?

JOHNS:

Oh, almost every day.

FINLEY:

Isn't that something?

JOHNS:

Oh, yeah, he was very easy, and you know, you made a point of not to confront him with some issue, but you'd talk about college issues, or often he brought it up, because he'd

be mad at somebody. "I just didn't like the tone of that," you know, or something. But usually it was sports and politics. But Lew was there, oh, I'd say Lew was there three times a week.

FINLEY:

That sounds amazing.

JOHNS:

Yes. So Lew was sitting there, he said, "Can you stay a few minutes after the session?"

I said, "Sure." I was done teaching, and didn't have a lab until afternoon.

He said, "Would you be horrified if I asked you to be summer session dean?"

I said, "Yes." Because I was still on my grant. Well, what had stimulated that was I had written some NSF proposals for bright high school students, you know, their and you know, kids who are essentially four points and 800 math board scores. And so--

FINLEY:

Gilbert, you were talking about how you became the summer session director.

JOHNS:

Well, I'd go to Grinnell, and then they had a string quartet in residence, the LaSalle quartet.

And I got to know Jim Stauss very well, because he was either dean and maybe acting president or provost there. And the guy who was a good old boy, and invited everybody. So I got to know Stauss and his glasses of Jack Daniels, and he always wanted to talk to me. I never figured out why.

And then I asked him what it cost to bring in the La Salle quartet, and it was a bargain, because they taught some courses.

And then I came to Lew and I said, "Well, why don't we do something like this, because there were summer concerts, and concerts during the year, and then the main thing is, let's send them around the state, as kind of advertisement for the school--free, you know, or whatever." And I told, you know, I'd calculate it down to the penny for Lew.

And so, we never did talk about that string quartet, the next thing Lew asked me was, "Would you be horrified if I asked you to be summer session dean because of all your interest in the arts?"

Well, then, he had, Brossman, remember was vice-president for development there, and Brossman was getting

along with everybody then, and we actually started out in the same building over in Dern House where summer session started.

FINLEY:

Oh, okay.

JOHNS:

It is Dern House there, where--

FINLEY:

Yes, where Southwest Studies is now.

JOHNS:

It was a beautiful building then, and Bross was there, and philosophy was there, and summer session.

FINLEY:

Oh, okay.

JOHNS:

So I got to know him very well then, when people would come out of my office, he'd come and give his usual cynical Brossmanian thing, you know, say, "Watch out for your wallet," and things like that, you know. So we got to know each other.

So he and Brossman worked on me a little bit, and I asked for certain things, and so--but that was Lew's style at that time. If you complained about anything, you know, Lew was such a great administrator in that way. "Okay, smart guy. You're in charge."

That's exactly what he did with Bill Hochman. Because Bill Hochman was just embarrassed for the college about our Greeley-like education program there, so he brought Hochman in weed it out, and do all--

FINLEY:

To be the chair of the education department.

JOHNS:

That's right. And we were there at the same time. And you know, maybe Hochman's time may have been six months before mine. So that's how I started. That was in '65.

FINLEY:

'65?

JOHNS:

So then I, I mean I actually didn't take over the job,

I mean Fred Sondermann directed the '65 summer session. Then I was around, well, I was on my research grant. But then I actually didn't start until the fall of '65, so that means my first summer session was '66.

FINLEY:

Didn't that affect your teaching schedule?

JOHNS:

Yes, it did.

FINLEY:

What happened?

JOHNS:

Well, I had to get my grant down--luckily, Marcia was, I remember getting salary from this, but she got a principal investigator's salary, part-time, and so she helped run the experiments. And I was doing all this stuff at once, and I was teaching then. That was before the Block Plan--it was wild, trying to do that.

And then I kept on doing that. And then when the Block Plan went into effect, which was 1970, then I found I really couldn't teach very much.

So I started at that point teaching two or three blocks a year, several years three. I never went below two. But they were often tough courses, lab courses and senior seminars.

FINLEY:

But before that, you were teaching a full semester, two courses, or three courses?

JOHNS:

Just about. No, three courses.

FINLEY:

While you were director of summer session?

JOHNS:

That's right. I taught history and systems. I taught a course in--that's our senior seminar. I taught my regular course in sensory psychology, hearing interdiction. And then I taught introductory.

So I think what I was relieved of was second introductory and some other course. And I also had independent students, so it was a lot of work.

FINLEY:

And then Marcia was then brought in as a lecturer in the department and so she was working on a sort of an experimental--

JOHNS:

Yes, she taught some courses. She taught a math model course; she was the great math modeler. And in some of her courses she had Cathy Weir, I think, and Bill Yost, and Lex may have been in it, Terry Winograd, a number of really terrific students.

And then shortly after that, she left the department, because when the block plan came in, Glenn Brooks asked her to be, to sort of form a, institutional research program, which is the last time, by the way, we ever had institutional research. I hear from some of my friends in administration that Kathryn wants all kinds of information about things that no one has.

FINLEY:

That's right.

JOHNS:

And everybody is complaining--they're using up their time instead of doing their job, dredging things up that no one has records of.

FINLEY:

So Marcia actually was an official institutional research person?

JOHNS:

Yes. I think she reported to Glenn, or Stauss, but she started doing all this stuff, and it was just a mess, what she found, in looking at anything.

FINLEY:

I can imagine.

JOHNS:

Just going through the dean's office records to find out if people had published--you couldn't even find out. So she worked very, very hard at it.

FINLEY:

It's quite a job.

JOHNS:

And then she was supposed to do--and she had some kind of a baseline for--the block plan was coming in then.

FINLEY:

Right.

JOHNS:

But of course, there was really not much baseline because it started--so she did have her first study was we had kids that had been two years under the non-block plan and two years under the block plan. But then all of that research--well, it stopped because of--who's the guy that Lew Worner wanted to bring in, nice guy--

FINLEY:

Oh, he's the guy who did the study of the block plan?

JOHNS:

Oh, well.

FINLEY:

His name escapes me, but I know who you mean.

JOHNS:

I'll leave a space here--plug it in sometime.

FINLEY:

Yes, I'll plug it in. Okay, well, that's interesting. But you were teaching full-time and running the summer session between the years of '66 and '70?

JOHNS:

I'd say maybe teaching three-quarters time.

FINLEY:

Three-quarters time. Well, now, can you describe before we go into the changes of the block plan and all that, can you describe what you did to the summer session? How did you change it, what condition was it in, what were your goals?

JOHNS:

Well, my goals were, of course, part of my mandate was to bring arts things in much more.

FINLEY:

Now was that Lew's idea, or was that mostly your idea?

JOHNS:

It was my own. Lew sort of gave me carte blanc to do it. And I could put money in the budget for it, but I was still on a break-even budget. So I started in on that.

And then, related to this, at that point, the college

was getting very interested in getting into the ACM. So very early in my summer session tenure, George Drake and I, he was the dean of the college then, and I did some circuit riding around to Carlton, Knox, Grinnell and so on, to those we wanted to cooperate with, to run a summer session on our campus.

At the same time, District 11 got some money for running arts and humanities programs for teachers.

FINLEY:

That was a new program, right?

JOHNS:

A new program. It was being run out of District 11, and two people associated with the college, Don Green and Jean Keeley, we worked very closely together.

And so Hoffman and I developed some teachers' programs then, worked very closely with Tom Doherty, and we worked things out. They were going to do the teachers some good. Subject matter stuff, and then they could get, work toward more advanced degrees.

And then Tom Doherty would give us money, because we'd give to them to help pay their, so it was one of the rare occasions in the whole world where a private college is working with a giant school system.

FINLEY:

Yes, because District 11, Tom Doherty's school district, was the big and only--

JOHNS:

Sure, and then Doherty was very sympathetic to this. And of course, I'd always pick as student directors people who had strong ideas about education. My two best student directors were Doug Fox and Bill Hochman.

Hochman and I more or less invented the arts and humanities institute. He probably had a lot of input for the structure, because he was drawing on some of his experience with the John Hay program. And so that got started.

And then the teachers were telling us, "This is great; we live for this." So then Hochman and I started a Master of Arts in Teaching program where all the people from Greeley and so on, you know, teaching history was not your subject matter in history. So we started a master's program, I'm 18 now (?????).

FINLEY:

Okay. Now let's clarify that. The college was already granting MA's, but it was phasing out the master's degree program.

JOHNS:

It was phasing out entirely, eliminating it, yes. Our only thing was we had a responsibility to people who were signed up.

FINLEY:

Right, so they had to--

JOHNS:

So as quickly as we could, we--locating them in this morass of records and stuff. But Hochman was very good at that.

FINLEY:

Now this MAT program was all at the same time as he was the chair of the education department?

JOHNS:

Yes, and I was dean of summer session.

FINLEY:

So the elimination of the MA program, was that--

JOHNS:

That was before that.

FINLEY:

That was even before. So it didn't necessarily relate to the strictly education department?

JOHNS:

Yes, but he had been waiting on the education department to dismiss it, you know, send them out to get other jobs and so on. So that worked out fine.

But then after that we wanted something. The teachers said, "We're getting all these terrific courses in the summertime, what can we do with them?"

So we put in the MAT program that very deliberately had one foot solidly in liberal arts preparation.

FINLEY:

Yes, so it wasn't just strictly education courses.

JOHNS:

There was no education. There was no education. We had to do something at one point for some certification, but that's the part that's always hated. And it's still going on, and the students still hate it. I won't go into that in any greater lengths, but--it was a subject matter program.

And the way that worked, of course, I learned things in the summer session is you deal with the very best people you can. So the people who taught in the arts and humanities institute were, besides Hochman and Doug Fox, the regulars were Doug Freed, Pete Peterson, Jim Yaffe, Tom Ross, and so at that time, those were all the heavy hitters on the campus.

And they were well-known in the town and people were just lining up to get in. We were running 100 people through arts and humanities at the beginning.

FINLEY:

Now were most of them teachers?

JOHNS:

All of them.

FINLEY:

All of them?

JOHNS:

All of them were teachers.

FINLEY:

Okay, and so still the education end of summer session was your real bread-and-butter, the teachers, in terms in enrollment?

JOHNS:

Oh, not, right after that I started working on undergraduates. The biggest program in the summer was dance. Hanya had been going for years before, and Hanya didn't do much with it, and excuse me, Fred didn't do much with it. Hanya did as she pleased, and then one year when I came, Hanya was going to go somewhere.

Originally first year as dean, and Hanya was going to go off campus for awhile, and I wrote her a letter saying, one of those "I was unpleasantly surprised to find that you are not going to be here then" so on and so forth.

So I wrote her a contract that said by God, she was going to be on campus the whole time.

Well, that was the best thing I could have done with Hanya, because she's a German, and I was Der Fuhrer. And she knows who's in charge. And we became very, very close friends and we worked together the whole time.

So at one point, that program in the early days of summer session was so successful that I had to deal with Hanya to keep the number of enrollments at 100, because she couldn't see down the lines any more. And so we kept it at 100.

But we had people from all over the country. I did a little more in promoting it--put an ad in the dance magazines, and so on. And then boosted that program up.

Then in connection with Carlton, Knox and Grinnell, then we started Undergraduate Institutes. So I got some of the best people from the various schools to be kind of advance men and then we ran a whole bunch of undergraduate eight-week summer institutes.

FINLEY:

Now were we already members of ACM at that time?

JOHNS:

No, we were trying to get in at that time. And that's what George and I were doing, and we saw a different style of academic work. We went into Knox and there's a dean there by the name of Herman Muller, and he brought George and me in front of the Committee on Committees, and he said, "These young men want to find out if we want to cooperate with them in the summer program. We do want to cooperate." Can you imagine doing that today? [laugh]

FINLEY:

[laugh] Well, so you got involved with undergraduate institutes; you had the dance program going; you had the arts and humanities. Now you also had--wasn't the Lilly Foundation and the National Security Policy still going?

JOHNS:

Well, now, those were--

FINLEY:

Kind of independent?

JOHNS:

They were independent, and they were using our campus like a hotel. And I tried to institute the policy as we didn't let people in who didn't have some academic, scholarly values in it. So if the Auto Mechanics League wanted to come

meet, we wouldn't do it.

And there was a big fight about this last summer, about something else. And Bill went back to my old principles of this.

But Lilly, and before that it was Danforth. So all I would do is make the welcoming comments, invite them to everything, take the director out to lunch, make sure that their participants got cut-price tickets to all of the arts events and so on.

FINLEY:

And so that was independently budgeted, and basically administered?

JOHNS:

Yes.

FINLEY:

But now, weren't there also, in the summer programs, summer start freshmen as early as 1966 or '67?

JOHNS:

A little later than that; you'd have to look in the archives to find out when it was.

FINLEY:

I think I found a reference for 1967, some summer-start freshmen.

JOHNS:

We started right after that, yes, it was close to that. And the whole idea of that was really very clever. Looking at the attrition we have in January, that why not get more people to be able to come back in January to plug in.

So--I don't know who first thought of it; I think the germ of the idea came from Brossman. And at the beginning, we never worked this out--we used to call them preemies. [laugh]

FINLEY:

[laugh] For the summer session, preemies!

JOHNS:

And then it started out very well, because what happened very quickly was the, our enrollment was so strong that we could use them very well. So it was a success right from the start.

So it helped the regular year in terms of filling in that stuff, and then it helped the summer because we had 60

to 70 students, and again, that hasn't been investigated systematically, but generally when we've done--I know Gary and I did one, John Freisman did another and several have been done--when we compared summer starts with regular non-summer start students at graduation, summer starts have a slight edge in GPA.

And that may be a motivational factor, because if you really want to come here, they're willing to take that summer off, or that fall off. So we never had any trouble with summer starts.

FINLEY:

It was a good program.

JOHNS:

And then we had, we started a lot of programs then, film. Glenn Snyder and I built a terrific photography lab--the first the college had ever had.

FINLEY:

Now was that in--

JOHNS:

That was in--

FINLEY:

It was before Packard Hall, wasn't it?

JOHNS:

No, we--

FINLEY:

Or did you build it when Packard Hall was built?

JOHNS:

We had something before that wasn't very good, but then as soon as Packard Hall was--yeah, we did it before then but we put Ben in charge in modifying the designs of, let's see, who was the architect of that? Oh, Edward Larrabee Barnes. We had him modify those.

And Ben was wonderful, you know, Ben was one of the bricks of summer sessions. Edward Larrabee Barnes and his assistant in there, had the sinks in the lab room with electric sockets right along the sink edge, you know, for the timers and things like that. Almost insuring someone was going to be electrocuted.

FINLEY:

Not too safe, right.

JOHNS:

So we changed all that, Ben designed it, and we built the lab. Ben told us what equipment to buy. Stauss got us more money to do it out of the funds for Packard.

So we had a first-rate photography lab, which was not appreciated by the art department because they don't think--and it's still gone--they don't think photography's very important.

FINLEY:

No, but Ben Schneider brought in some of the top people in the country for those photo courses.

JOHNS:

The top--one year I went, after summer session I went to the Museum of Photography Show, and it was kind of wonderful. Everybody who was there during the summer had something in the show. I'm talking about W. Eugene Smith, and Eliot Elisofan, and Marie Casindas, and Lee Friedlander. Oh, these are all household words in photography. And the greatest historian of photography--

FINLEY:

Not Weinstein.

JOHNS:

No, oh, I see his picture; his wife is, she's at Edward Weston--it'll come to me later on. They were all here. And they weren't just here to make another--they were here for two or three days.

If people wanted to have parties with them--no, no! They were out shooting with the kids. AND it was really something. And the stuff the kids turned out, it was incredible.

FINLEY:

Well, it really was an exciting time for the summer school. I remember it just coming alive; the summer atmosphere was tremendous around here.

Not just for these things you've just talked about, but also for the music and drama and so forth that you brought in as part of the festivals of the arts and so forth.

And I thought maybe you'd talk a little bit about some of those people that you brought in, too, in those early days.

JOHNS:

Well, first of all, in the Institutes, also, if we're going to bring names, usually I'd get someone, let's take the Art and Urban Studies Institute that Bob Loevy and I started. And Loevy was terrific. We had an architect in there, Erdmann Schmucker, for awhile. But visitors, we had John Lindsay twice, and he was a hot commodity, he was a possible presidential candidate. And he was mayor.

FINLEY:

I remember that.

JOHNS:

We had Art Naftalin, the former mayor of Minneapolis. We had Hatch, Gary; we had Lugar, what's he in the government now? Somebody up high.

FINLEY:

Senator.

JOHNS:

Yes, he was at Indianapolis. I've just forgotten all the people we had. And these weren't, you know, come and give a lecture, though. They'd come over in the night and sit on the floor with the students and drink beer and the students would ask them really tough questions about urban stuff.

So--none of this cost us very much money.

FINLEY:

That's the question I wanted to get to; how you administered and financed all these wonderful events.

JOHNS:

Well, you know, what I did was, I didn't pay people above scale. Now, there's someone that Tim liked from Harvard--Harvey Mansfield, and so we hired Mansfield out for two or three summers.

And so what you do--he got the regular scale that a full professor would get here, Doug Mertz or anybody else. But then I could make it up a little bit by helping him out with his housing; paying his plane fare; and you know, most of them did, if they wanted a meal ticket, I'd do that.

And then while they were here, they weren't ignored. They were--there'd be one sort of very good dinner at the Broadmoor or something, and people just wanted to come here. So, because it was personal attention all the time. And that's how I did it.

For the mayors and things, it was exactly the same thing. For Lindsay, all we did was we took good care of him. We paid his way at the Broadmoor--I think he may even have paid that himself. But Charles Court had no opening, but they took him to, ran a special dinner for him at the Penrose Room.

Luckily, Herbert, the old maitre de there, was a big Lindsay fan. I'd arranged the menu with Chef Johnson was there with, you know, Beef Wellington and things like that.

It just happened that Paul Grandwine, another summer session person, was there. We invited him. I said, "Paul, why don't you pick the wine?" So he picked a very expensive , but it was okay. Paul wouldn't take any money from summer session.

And then I remember that Lindsay turned to his speech writer, Tom Morgan, and said, you know, "We don't eat like this at home."

And so that's what did it. I mean, you know, it cost you in those days, \$100, you know, 30 or 40 dollars a person. Nowadays, it would be much more than that. But that's what children remember. And that's why people came, because they had a good time here, everybody paid attention to them, and we had a wonderful time.

And it worked with the musicians too. When I brought all the different groups here, I'd have a whole, somewhere down in the vaults, there's these wonderful contracts that say, "Special Confidential Contracts" for Gilbert Johns.

Because you know, I paid people, but I got the Julliard Quartet here for two concerts every year when I was bringing them here, and they were still playing together in the summer, for a total of \$2,000.

FINLEY:

And they probably got much more elsewhere.

JOHNS:

Oh, God, yes. Well, see, they were in Aspen. And then, the right thing here, for instance, Ric Bradley liked them and so Bobby Mann, the first fiddler, and the only original Julliard player there, his birthday was in the summer. So there would always be a birthday party for Bobby Mann and Rick Souce, and you know how Dorie is, there'd be a cake; there was a violin on it and so on. That's what we did for people.

I love the American Brass Quintet, and they would come here. They'd get in a plane and flew over here, and do all kinds of concerts and things. They liked to play for Hanya. They loved to come here, and they said, "You know, we'd go to Boulder. And no one even knows who we are--30 people show up for a concert."

FINLEY:

So you consider that the real secret of your success, the personal touch?

JOHNS:

Oh, yes, personal contact. I'd go to New York, I'd see these people, and we'd talk about it. And then they also know that they--I mean I got the Julliards' attention by telling them, you know, the agent sends you the repertoire.

I send it back because I don't want the stuff. And then they send me another.

I said, I don't [can't understand] for everybody. And then, I guess, the agent--who was it? It was Hiller, no, what was her name? I spoke with her; it doesn't matter. She finally gets the message.

So she asks the quartet, Bobby Mann to correspond with me.

So I get on the phone and I said, "Look. No one's ever done the late Beethoven Opus 133 together, in Colorado Springs." This is the way Beethoven wrote it, that's a late quartet, with a grosse fugue at the end. I said, "That's the way Beethoven wrote it. It's a killer piece."

He said, "Yeah, we'd love to do that."

It's the first time in Colorado that was ever done.

FINLEY:

So you challenged these people to perform things that were out of the ordinary, and special?

JOHNS:

Yes, and they always did that, because they had an audience. For instance, I didn't know Sergio Wilco, who has now become a very good friend.

I knew his agent, Kaplan, and Kaplan told Sergio who had just turned out the record of the year, of the complete sonatatas and parties unaccompanied by nonsuch with original instruments, with unmodified amatee, a curved bowl. It's tuned lower. It's the A in there is 4/15 hertz; the A that you sing in the chorale is a 4/40 hertz. So this is a whole half-step lower for that A, a different sound.

So anyway, I said, "I'd love to have Sergio here to hear that, but I want, I looked at the timing, maybe we can do it on two evenings, back-to-back."

And Sergio Lucas said, "Are you kidding? It's one thing to do it in the studio [can't understand] but I've never done it that way."

And Kaplan said to him, Mel Kaplan, "Once you get to know this guy, you're going to do what he does, and you're going to be invited back again and again."

And that's exactly what happens. So Sergio and I are close friends, and he played it here, and he loved it, and he loved Packard Hall. He said it was the first time he ever really heard his instrument, because you can hear the different tones, the tartini tones, all the things you see in musicological books. Because Packard is so wonderful for the fiddle.

So--that's how that got started.

FINLEY:

Very interesting, Gilbert. You know, I can see that your own knowledge of music and your own interest in the arts made a big difference. You weren't just an administrator doing a job.

JOHNS:

Oh, no.

FINLEY:

You really brought it alive. And I want to turn this over before we run out on this side, and ask you a little bit about some of the publications that came out in summer school, particularly The Clarion, which ran the whole gamut of your time here and was a wonderful reflection of the atmosphere.

So let me turn this over, and then we'll talk about that.

[Tape No. 2]

FINLEY:

This is tape 2, side 1, of my interview with Gilbert Johns. Gilbert, can you tell me about the Clarion, the summer publication that advertised all these wonderful things that were going on?

JOHNS:

I think we should go back to the opera, too.

FINLEY:

Yes, I want to do that, and I also want to talk about

Hanya. Those are the next subjects.

JOHNS:

The Clarion was involved, we had it, I wanted to have a summer session magazine, and mainly for nonsense and so on, mainly to give the flavor of summer session. And we always tried to do things to make it kind of interesting for regular year, so we put things out, it was sort of catch-as-catch-can, sometimes they were good, and sometimes they weren't good at the beginning.

At one time I had Bob Ormes helping me; at another point I had Ken Burton. But then later on, when the summer start thing became part of the college, no one was paying attention to the summer start.

The Dean of Men and the Dean of Students office couldn't care less, and they were hiring ex-jocks to be summer counselors, and these guys weren't exactly role models for studying.

So I went to Lew, and I said, "Lew, this is not the way to do it."

And he agreed. So I created the job then of assistant dean, and I was very close with Gary Knight, so we put him in. Well, of course, with Gary Knight--

FINLEY:

Gary Knight then edited the Clarion?

JOHNS:

Well, he started it out, yes. But every time, I probably contributed as much as anybody to the Clarion, but it also depended on how funny the other person was.

Like some people were very nice; they weren't funny, like Ellen Goulding--she was one of my assistants, you know. And I'd do a lot of stuff, or give her ideas, and you'd track things down.

So we just had a lot of fun doing it, and we wanted to--I mean, I can't tell you how we did it when we just sat down and did it.

FINLEY:

Well, did you have a particular meeting every week to decide, or did it just kind of--

JOHNS:

No, we had deadlines, so we'd try to do things beforehand. And we'd all be collecting stuff all week, and of course we had this little calendar and knew what was

coming up. We wanted to say something oh, somewhat irreverent and would get people to come to those things.

FINLEY:

Well, now, I once heard a story--this isn't about the Clarion, but it's about similar irreverencies, because the Clarion was very irreverent, that somehow you snuck something into the college catalog, or the summer school catalog, and Bob Brossman got very upset about it. It was a course by Professor Kopfmesser or something.

JOHNS:

Yes, you're very close. In fact, in your archives, you can get it--it's published. It's in the catalog.

We put a course in, in general studies, in brain surgery, and you know, had it taught by Professor Messerkopf, which means, in German, "nice head."

And then I wrote a straight, about it was a kind of a do-it-yourself thing about improving your horizons, that there's nothing in technical education, we put that in.

FINLEY:

This was in the summer catalog?

JOHNS:

The summer catalog.

FINLEY:

And Bob Brossman didn't like it?

JOHNS:

Well, Brossman didn't like it, and I think that Will Wright didn't like it, and Will Wright wanted to hire somebody to take a big stamp and put them all out.

Well, it turns out, it was one of the--we were famous far and wide for that. All of the people who came here had seen that catalog, and it made our name famous in schools, because we had a really good time doing things.

For example, the guy who really loved it was Lou Salter, who used to come here and teach an institute that Ken (or Tim???) and I planned on the conversation of mankind. Well, Lou's a physicist, and he became president of Wabash College.

FINLEY:

Yes.

JOHNS:

He loved it. Everybody loved that thing.

And then at registration which just stupefies everybody, we had tapes and things playing that "Dr. Messerkopf, your materials are at the loading dock," and you know, it was just a gag, but we kept it going up the whole time. But it was a parody on all of these--you have to read it to appreciate it.

FINLEY:

I will do so.

JOHNS:

The catalog has a blue cover; I can't remember what year it was.

FINLEY:

I'll find it.

JOHNS:

But it's in there.

FINLEY:

Well, this kind of humorous stuff made all those summer publications just eagerly gobbled up. People loved reading them, and it's never been the same since. I will say that summer session publications have been pretty dull since you left. [laugh]

JOHNS:

Thank you! [laugh] It was done partly for publicity, and you know, with all the concerts and events, we had SRO for everything.

FINLEY:

You certainly did.

JOHNS:

Yes, and Bill Hockman knows how to get people in. Well, where did you start to tell him something like that?

It was really, some of the stuff going on the last few summers were often secrets. Well, they weren't secrets, and people, I know like you, you know, if David didn't bring one home, you made him go back and get it!

FINLEY:

Right. That's right.

JOHNS:

And everybody read it. AND that's your audience. AND they have friends. AND you know, it didn't lie about anything, and say it's going to be wonderful when it wasn't.

FINLEY:

No, just poked a lot of fun, and nice fun.

JOHNS:

Yes, and we did have good people speaking all the time, so there was just so much going on. Not only the people from the urban studies institute and so on, and photographers.

Like the last speech W. Eugene Smith gave was at Colorado College, before he died. You know, he's the big Life photographer, the Minamoto--he's the one who did the photographs from that.

That's what made him a sick man. The Japanese industrialists had goons pick him up and smash him on the ground like a snake, they took him by the ankles and smashed.

And, but then he'd also done the early stuff, Spanish village, you know, those marvelous, all those pictures are burned into your brain.

FINLEY:

Yes, wonderful.

JOHNS:

He gave a three and a half-hour talk here that nobody left. It was just incredible. I said, "You can't talk three and a half hours."

He just laughed, and he said, "Well, I'm the one who's going to bomb--you won't." And he took a break, and poured him a couple more cups of orange juice.

FINLEY:

And he did it. Well, Gilbert, there's so much to cover here on the summer session.

I want to spend some time maybe before we go into the opera, which I think is important, too, on Hanya Holm, a little bit about Hanya Holm. Particularly, I mean I think we can jump ahead a little, how her whole career here came to an end, and some memories you have of her.

JOHNS:

Sure. Let's do, there are other publications summer turned out.

FINLEY:

Okay.

JOHNS:

Well, for instance, we had a brochure for the Arts and Humanities Institute. I started the Southwest Studies Institute. Then at one point we had eight or nine undergraduate institutes; each had their own well-designed brochure. And then three or four, half a dozen posters, plus a catalog. We didn't have computer stuff then.

FINLEY:

I know you didn't.

JOHNS:

So we were running an enormous publication office there.

FINLEY:

And who was your chief assistant as a woman who was there for so many years, the woman that you worked with in the office?

JOHNS:

Oh, Anne McGowan.

FINLEY:

That's right, Anne McGowan.

JOHNS:

I had two secretaries almost that whole time, Peggy Garrison and Anne McGowan. Then when Peggy came in full time, Anne went over and helped me run dance programs. She was married by that time, and her husband took a dim view of lots of things, about her working that hard.

FINLEY:

Right.

JOHNS:

So, I mean, people say I'm hard to work for, but I had two secretaries the whole time, just loved it because we had a different style. And this just drove the business office nuts, because people worked until the work got done, and then they objected to us taking time off, you couldn't have compensatory time.

And so I said, "Okay. Pay them time and a half."

They said, "Well, that's fine if I paid them time and a half."

So by the time the end of the summer came, they had, you know, a month, I mean they had enough money to pay for a month off, or maybe more than that, and everybody would take off.

One person was usually around to open the mail and so on. And I appointed my summer session was the last day, put a sign on the door, which you will understand, which said, "Fermeture Annuelle." And every French store had one.

FINLEY:

AND everyone went off.

JOHNS:

Everybody went on it. So people really worked very, very hard. AND we were on publications, we'd be there until 7:00 or 8:00 at night.

Everybody in the office had to proofread, so you know, when galleys came in from the printer, you know, somebody's going to go home at 4:30, I said, "The printer's going to deliver at 5:00. You stay until 5:00, get it, work on it at home, come in the next morning and give it to whoever the assistant was, and put it on the master copy."

So that's the way we worked there. Everybody worked very hard, but we had a lot of fun. And people who worked for us, like Lew Worner's daughter Molly worked for us for one summer, and she said she never had more fun in her life than working there. Because we were all nuts!

Now Hanya.

FINLEY:

Hanya Holm, who was here for 43 years basically as the summer dance program and more. Can you, you know, there's a lot written about Hanya, books about her, and we have hundreds of photographs of her. I'd just like some personal anecdotes that you think characterize her feelings about Colorado College and her relationship with people here.

JOHNS:

Oh, well, she was a fixture here; not only with Colorado College, but with the time. She came here in the late thirties, early forties, she already was a big name. She came to this country in her late thirties, I mean her all-American career started when she was brought over by Sol Hurok. So she was a big name before she came here.

Then she worked in that famous group which is now called the Big Four in dance, Martha Graham, Hanya, Doris

Humphries and Charles Whiteman. They were all at Bennington together, and so then she started coming out here, I guess through the stuff she was at the Perry--

FINLEY:

Perry Mansfield.

JOHNS:

Perry Mansfield camp, and then I think Martha Hill, who after that went to Julliard, brought her here to teach dance. And that's how it got started. Then she had all these unbroken summers. Well, she loved working for the college, she had a lot of close friends here.

FINLEY:

What was it like when she arrived? Did she just move right into a routine, or did she have to be given a lot of special treatment and so forth?

JOHNS:

Oh, no, no; she was not a prima donna in that sense at all. Once I got here, and I knew what she wanted, I always went to New York at least once during the fall and maybe with the plan, what programs we were going to do.

But we also worked with things that, a tradition that I didn't start was pouring some of the money back into scholarships, because you know, dancers are poorer than other students.

So Hanya would give me a list of who people who were coming that she knew who had very good backgrounds and we'd help them out a little bit, and of course they could also be the core for any performances.

So there was a lot of logistics in that, and our office handled it. Hanya would give me the name and we'd know how to work, and we'd check off, and so on. And then we'd have alternates, and so that's what the assistant would do, the assistant dean, get on the phone and talk to these dancers.

Gary and I had these wonderful stories that said, "I can't talk with you, because I'm in Sweden." And he called him in New York, I mean, people were a little spacy, even before drugs, I guess.

FINLEY:

[laugh]

JOHNS:

But we got it all settled. And then she'd come.

Naturally, we'd have a place for her to stay, and I'd found what she'd want, whether her grandson were going to stay with her or what, whether Klaus was going to stay with her. So we were very good about it, and I didn't have to work too hard at this, because her best friend here was Evelyn McNary.

FINLEY:

Oh.

JOHNS:

So Evelyn, you know. Evelyn knew--

FINLEY:

What she wanted.

JOHNS:

--what she wanted, and they were old buddies, and so on.

FINLEY:

Did she usually live in a college apartment?

JOHNS:

Almost always, yes. For years--what was that fraternity, sorority that went under--

FINLEY:

Alpha Phi?

JOHNS:

Yes, now it's the Black Student Union or something?

FINLEY:

Yes.

JOHNS:

That's where she lived a lot of the time, which was fine, because she could do some dances in that big space, and she could cook there. So she was just there, and then, she'd be here, oh, almost the first day.

She'd always come a week early, so she could acclimate to the altitude. AND then she'd start working. And we'd get things done, and I'd meet with her almost every day, about what we were going to do.

And the program started to run itself pretty well, and, I mean, just getting enough people and you know, to teach the courses. Every once in a while we'd bring somebody new in. It was a wonderful relationship, because Hanya ran it, but she ran it with, knowing that I would approve or not approve

of it.

So, I mean. So we knew each other long enough she didn't have to.

FINLEY:

Now in her later years in the program was she still doing a lot of the dancing, or was she pretty much sort of stepping back and just instructing?

JOHNS:

She always was instructing, and then she always taught a course called Theory and Technique or something like that. That was not only Theory and Technique, but it was a philosophy of life.

About what dance, you know, I can't dredge these up, but Hanya had--Hanya's speech was a combination of transcendental statements about the dance and German kitchen philosophy. And she segued back and forth without any change at all. Like one of the things she said, "If you've got something to say, say it the best way that you can. Otherwise, shut up."

FINLEY:

[laugh]

JOHNS:

And then one time while we were running something, she was directing something and you know, some of the equipment the college had, the light board, started to burst into flames, call the electricians up, you know, get it because we had to use it for a show.

And Hanya would say, "What is kaput? She is kaput." And then Anne McGowan had that lettered, and put it up over her desk. Isn't that wonderful? [laugh]

FINLEY:

[laugh] Right!

JOHNS:

I love that! It was her own appliances.

FINLEY:

Well, now, her program was still going strong after you left the Dean of the Summer Session job, wasn't it? Or was it beginning to, were there some questions about continuing it, and why?

JOHNS:

There were some questions.

FINLEY:

And why were the questions arising?

JOHNS:

Well, I couldn't tell you what happened. It was a very painful thing in the college situation. She, one of the things I found about Hanya was that she did her best creative work when she had good musicians working with her.

So I learned that with the American Brass Quintet, she would do things where she'd have some of her young male dancers flashing flags, and then she had the ABQ, the American Brass Quintet, the two first trumpets, play fanfares. And it was just, you know, electric, it was wonderful. It wasn't Broadway, but it was great stuff.

So she always had things like that going on. And so then as much as I could, I'd bring in good musicians for her. And that would inspire her to do things. Hanya was one of the few big-name choreographers who could read music, you know. Martha Graham can't read music.

And when I'd go over to Hanya's place, you know, her eyes were giving her trouble, she was wearing kind of Coke-bottle lenses, and she'd had a cataract operation. She was sitting on the floor with one of these little pocket scores that I can barely read.

And she choreographed those works note by note. I mean, you know, it wasn't just an impressionistic thing. In fact, I have the thing that she did for her 40th anniversary, which was done in New York, and it was a big standard part of repertoire, and somebody who was close to 90 years old is really something.

But Sergio Luca, no mean violinist, said whenever he plays the second movement of Ravel's Piano Sonata, which is a blues thing, very bluesy, and wonderful, he said he can't play that any more.

He seems all the C on his choreography, and he played that. So when you have someone like Sergio Luca and Ann Epperson playing that, you know, you can do your best, and she always did that.

I got one of her dancers to, before we got into the big things, do Mahler Kindertoten Lieder, and I had Claudia Gilman do that. And we had danced it while Jeannie Piland, the beautiful mezzo sang the Mahler. It was just exquisite, you know. And now Jeannie is here with the opera, is a big name. She is probably the leading Mozart and Ricard Strauss singer in Europe. And she's an American.

So--we always had things like that, and that really

made Hanya work very well.

Then, what happened? Well, it was news to all of us when it did happen. I want to say Hanya was easy to get along with.

FINLEY:

No.

JOHNS:

She knew what she wanted and so on. And the best person to ever deal with her was Gretchen Phillips, who worked with her. Someone else was working with her, and she said to her, Hanya would try to choreograph people for, when she was directing the operas, and Gretchen would say to her, to this person who was doing it, what was her name, from the town, now she's a big opera director, she said, "Don't give Hanya what she asks for. Give her what she wants."

So you had to be able to translate this. And so when Gretchen got in Hanya's steps and so on, she'd take the opera chorus out in the hall, and then clean it up and simplify and give it something they could do, and bring it back in and show it to Hanya.

Hanya would say, "That's what I wanted." And not what she had given her. So Hanya was not too easy to work with, but you could talk with her about things.

So at the end, I wasn't here. What happened was that, you know, you had to be there all the time and kind of understand what Hanya was doing and sometimes smooth things out. People come to you and complain, and sometimes it was a good complaint, "Can you do something about it?"

And Hanya was no problem at all, but I guess she was just allowed to go on her own steamroller way, and no one ever interceded, and she was being difficult. So one of the darkest days I think in the college is, you know, Gresham fired her.

FINLEY:

Right. Now by then, Pete Peterson was running the summer school. I don't know what he had to do with it. I really don't know why Gresham made this decision except that she was getting older, and maybe difficult.

JOHNS:

She was getting--but the thing was, she was not in a peculiar way and this is, I guess we'll get this on the tape. She was a very peculiar thing, because I was, I was away and I didn't know about it until I came back and was told.

Don Jenkins, who knew her as well as I did, wasn't ever called, and he found out the same way. And that other person she really liked a lot was Ric Bradley, who was always in the chorus in one of her operas, and she thought he was very funny, you know, he is, how Ric is when he gets in one of his goofy moods.

And none of us were called up. So it was just done. Now Hanya knows how to play poker, and if it had been done saying, "Well, Honda, we knew this for a long time. Some of your staff are getting very old, too, Holly , and so on. Why don't we set up this plan? During the year, teach a master class, and then?"

FINLEY:

Something to ease her out a little.

JOHNS:

Yes, Hanya knows how to play poker. And it was just done. And in fact, when Pete went to New York, he said he wanted to talk with her, and he took Julia along, because he didn't want to face her by himself.

FINLEY:

So Pete was essentially caught in the middle, I take it?

JOHNS:

Well, but he could have said, "No."

And I kind of, this is just between us, I can't imagine David doing that. Someone like David with a lot of character, would say to Gresham, "Do your own dirty work on this one. I'm not going to do it."

FINLEY:

But Pete had to go back and break the news?

JOHNS:

And Hanya told me that she was surprised, she thought he was going to be talking about the fall program. And Pete said, "The President does not want to renew your contract any more."

Well, the President didn't make the contracts anyway; the summer session dean does. But that doesn't matter--it meant the same thing. And that was it.

And it was just--I mean, I don't think the college has ever gotten worse publicity in the town. I know Barbara Yalich just couldn't believe this was happening, and she

moves around town more than any of us do, or did then. And she'd get, "Can't you guys do anything right?"

So Honda was bitter about this. But interestingly enough, the person she feels the most bitter about is not Gresham, and she knew it came from Gresham, was Pete. How could he do this?

And she and her German friends, you probably know some of them, Nony Hentges, you know, the general's wife, you know. And who is the mother--the mother's the one with great big dandelion hair, probably David's father's generation. He was General Hentges' mother, Nony is the wife.

Anyway, we'd hear them talk about Pete, and they could say it better in German. They'd call him something like a "Vass hass," it means washrag. It sounds better in German. But it was stupid, it really was stupid.

But I mean the fact that three of us, and other people. Bill Hockman could have, you know, he's a good, great commoner, great compromiser. But it was just--"You're out."

FINLEY:

Sudden.

JOHNS:

After 43 years.

FINLEY:

Right. Well, now, Gilbert, was there any relation in all this to your leaving the summer session? I mean, you left the summer session essentially when President Riley came?

JOHNS:

Yes, that was planned beforehand.

FINLEY:

Yes, it was before all this happened, but was there some basic discontent with the summer session that was boiling?

JOHNS:

Oh, no, not at all. I had been in there 15 years.

FINLEY:

I know; were you wanting to leave by then?

JOHNS:

Oh, yes.

FINLEY:

You were?

JOHNS:

Before then. I tried a couple more times--it's too long. And Lew knows himself, he was too long there; 17 years.

FINLEY:

So it was a good time for you to leave, with the new president coming in?

JOHNS:

Yes, and I would have worked with the new president, but I made sure that the new president knew Hanya and as soon as he came, we went out to dinner with Hanya and I think it was probably his first day was when we did the thing that I directed, with Voketaitis and Mary Farris on the Bartok, "Bluebeard's Castle."

FINLEY:

Oh, yes.

JOHNS:

And we had a dinner there, and it was the Rileys, and Gresham, and Hanya and so on. I had nothing against Gresham at all; I had just done it too long.

FINLEY:

So you were ready to hang it up by then?

JOHNS:

Yes, and the 40th anniversary--talk about what condition Hanya was in--one of the two great drama critics, dance critics here, Walter Terry, was Saturday, most books are either by, not John Simon. John was the New York Times and then there was Walter Terry.

And [can't understand] lots of his stuff; he came out. He gave a talk on Hanya and then we had dinner. He went to her classes, and he said, "Hanya, you show-off."

He said, "You give all your instructions in a releve, and you hold it. The kids can't, 19 and 20 year-old kids can't hold it."

He said, "Hanya said, 'It hurts a lot, but I blew it.'"

FINLEY:

[laugh]

JOHNS:

Can you imagine giving modern kids instruction in releve? She was always working like that; she was in good

shape, and a typical Hanya day was something like this.

That's when we were doing thing together--I remember very clearly when we were doing--she directed some operas for me. She did the Ravel "Les Enfant du Sortilege" we would--oh, a lot of days were sort of like this--she'd teach all morning; we'd go out to lunch--I'd take her out to lunch--always have a drink with her lunch, a Bloody Mary or something.

I finally got around to wine spritzers, I said "You shouldn't drink the hard stuff any more, Hanya."

And then she'd come back. And then I remember, she and one of her assistants, there were some soft shoes in the soft shoe dances in "Les Enfant." AND she and her assistant would work out a soft shoe.

And Nony was soft--you know, whoofing.

And then I'd go upstairs and put my head on my desk, you know. And Hanya would direct the opera all afternoon, and then go home and cook supper for Klaus and maybe the granddaughters, and then come back and work in the evening on the opera again. Or dance.

FINLEY:

She was over ninety.

JOHNS:

Yes. Well, she died at 99.

FINLEY:

That's amazing.

JOHNS:

Yes. AND when--I always tried to take good care of her in New York. We'd go to shows and so on, and she would, you know, in cold weather, the one thing she did was in "My Fair Lady," she used her money for that to buy a mink. She should have had a mink. I remember her rushing through the New York streets, looking for a taxi and so on, and there she is with her mink flying open and I would say, "Hanya, button it up." I was dying, you know, I was all buttoned up.

But Hanya just loved going out with young men and I was a young man as far as she was concerned. And one of the nicest stories is when she--well, Colorado College really had egg on its face--the first summer semester after she was fired from here, she was given, asked to come to Harvard and do master classes.

And then she won the Scripps Award, which is the

largest arts award in the country--\$25,000 and it had been given to Martha Graham, and Paul Taylor and people like that. And so, she had already been fired from here, but [can't understand], they sent me to do Chapel Hills, to be the college representative. But the first time I had seen these people, they thought that this was the worst place on earth for friends and New York people through the arts.

Anyway, I hadn't seen her, so she had to make a presentation at the school there for the evening, and do a little bit of a master class, and he said, "Let's meet in the bar."

Well, we went to the bar at the Hilton--it was one of the Hilton Inns. We were thrown out of the bar, finally, at 1:00. It's nice being thrown out of a bar, they say, "You people are staying too long."

You know, she was drinking, I got her onto wine spritzers, they served them in these great big beer schooners. She was on her third one, and still talking. But she was really something.

FINLEY:

[laugh]

JOHNS:

She just had that energy.

FINLEY:

Tremendous. Well, it was quite a time. I know that she was heavily involved with the opera, too, while she was here. I thought maybe you'd like to describe the beginnings of the Colorado Opera Festival, which I think started in 1970. Yes, and how that got started, because you were one of the founders of this, and I presume Don Jenkins was involved with you?

JOHNS:

Oh, very heavily.

FINLEY:

And just the genesis. We're going to have to turn the tape over, but just talk until it runs out.

JOHNS:

Okay. Well, it started out--you know, Don had been paying attention to what was going on in the summer session. He taught in a couple of courses, and he liked what was going on.

He liked what I was doing, and I've forgotten whether he had done anything specifically in the summer. He liked what I was doing in the theater, because at that time, we had a kind of backward theater department. They were still doing "The Count of Monte Christo."

FINLEY:

Was Bill McMillen here?

JOHNS:

McMillen was here. So, one of the things I did was I dragged McMillen kicking and screaming into the Twentieth Century. And we started, and I made him director. Occasionally, I'd have a very good student director, and then we'd have a summer stock group of actors, whom he thought were the best performers.

And we started doing "Beckett," and "Ionesco" and things that were already known everywhere in the world. They were wonderful, and I must say, to McMillen's credit, he told me he'd resisted things all these years but they were just beautifully written and you couldn't change a single line. In fact he played Krapp's Last Tape himself--he played the old man. He was really quite good at it. So that's how that got started.

Well, Don saw that, and even though he really liked it, and then he came to my office, and he said, and we saw each other a lot then, he said, "Why don't we do an opera workshop?"

And I said, you know, "You're thinking much too small. Why do an opera workshop? Why don't we have an opera festival here because we've got so much talent around here?"

And you know, we worked it out, and then [can't understand] is that we had Hanya, and we had--who had done the world premier of "Baby Doe" in Central City, and--

FINLEY:

Wonderful ways to use the local talent. Proceed in what you were saying.

JOHNS:

Okay. Don came in, and he wanted to do an opera workshop, and I said, "Let's think big, and let's see what we can do."

So we got started with it, and we called up Herb, and he was willing to direct. And he had done some directing, of course we knew he was one of the great singing actors. And

then there were some other people that we knew slightly, that Herb had good contacts with, Bill Beck, and Herb was still quite active in city opera and not quite far away from Central City.

So then for our repertoire we did, Al Seay, the College of Musicologists, had been working on a Eighteenth Century composer named Tomaso Traetta, and he was working on a manuscript.

He said, "Why don't we do Tomas Tomaso Traetta?" He said it was, hadn't been done for 170 years, but when it was done, it was one of the hits of its day, you know, it ran for 25 years. It was very unusual then.

And we looked at it, and said, "All right."

Herb did not want to touch an opera like that. I said, "I know who will do it. Hanya will do it."

So we flew Hanya out and we did a kind of like a song [can't understand] sing, I figured we sat and played on the piano--it may have been Herb himself, he was [can't understand], he played through the opera, you know, sang some of it and so on, and you know, Hanya said, "I do it."

So that was that. And then we started the opera with the score not completely done, I mean the revision. And some of the arias were far too long, and Hanya wanted to cut them, but it struck a common note for her, a familiar note, because it sounded something like Gluck, because she had done Gluck.

And then she had the time of her life doing it. And it was an enormous success. And an opera that hasn't been done for 170 years, like there were very, very long arias, and some you couldn't cut, so the plot involved a woman being captured by a bunch of thugs, you know, and a shipwreck, and they're guarding her.

And so she picks sort of far baritones to do it, and while they were guarding her, they were knitting the whole time. And of course that was a running gag, by the time the end of the opera comes, the knitting thing was all the way across the stage, you know, like a red scarf.

And then, there is a shipwreck in there, and how do you do a shipwreck? Well, Hanya and Klaus worked together very well on this. And of course, Hanya is the singing designer, we worked with the great Bill Anslager here, who was under the thumb of his mother.

It's not a bad thing for an opera company to have, because he's a beautiful son, you know, and she just bossed him around. So he worked, he was the hardest working person in the opera. He was there 8:00 in the morning and go home

at midnight, every day, and the guys who worked for him did the same.

But the way Hanya did the shipwreck scene is she had her dancers go across the stage with bands of transparent, translucent silk. And several of them, and then they would undulate them.

FINLEY:

You mean go up and down?

JOHNS:

Up and down.

FINLEY:

I remember that. It was wonderful.

JOHNS:

And then what she had is the people who were in the ship, and they were all, they weren't all fat, but they were pleasingly [can't understand].

There are few really great singers who are bone thin, look at, you know, Sutherland, and Beverly Sills, and Martino and so on.

So she had then all in Victorian tank suits, with the great big stripes, and then she had boxes and stools of varying heights, so they could be going up and down in the waves. And it was marvelous.

FINLEY:

It was wonderful.

JOHNS:

Yes. So then we were off. And then Herb had a friend that was, Herb was teaching in Austria, there was a very good singer, very powerful tenor, so we decided, let's go crazy and do Verdi's "Aptyalia."

And then the next, the middle opera, Herb had one of his crazy ideas, he did a very interesting Monteverdi opera called "The Combat of Tancred and Clorida."

FINLEY:

Very static.

JOHNS:

Static. The whole point of it is that these two people meet, and they both have their beavers down--you know, they're wearing helmets--and then at the end it turns out that they're lovers.

And there's a narrator, and Herb had the whole thing

made into a motorcycle thing so he brought motorcycles in on the stage. And as a matter of fact, it is very differently a chamber closet opera. I've seen it done straight and I've seen it done--and it should never be staged. But it was kind of interesting.

FINLEY:

Yes.

JOHNS:

And then the other half of the bill was one of the most successful things we ever did was a version of Stravinsky's "l'Histoire du Soldat." And then Herb did that and at that point we had this great tango dancer, Gretchen Phillips, and the whole thing just worked out beautifully. It was very funny. So it was, you know. That was the first season.

FINLEY:

And it was all on the Armstrong stage.

JOHNS:

Yes.

FINLEY:

And it was on the Armstrong stage for what, eight years?

JOHNS:

As long as I was there, yes.

FINLEY:

Until the Pikes Peak Center opened, basically.

JOHNS:

Yes, because after Armstrong--I had left by then--and then they went over to Palmer.

FINLEY:

Briefly.

JOHNS:

But Palmer didn't really open, excuse me, Pikes Peak didn't open until--

FINLEY:

'81.

JOHNS:

'82.

FINLEY:

'82.

JOHNS:

Yes, '82. So they had it for four or five years there. But I was only in there for the first eight years.

FINLEY:

Well, now, how did you manage to put on three operas a summer, on the Armstrong stage? It's just amazing to me that that could be done. AND financially, it couldn't possibly have cost what they cost now. Because they could do three-- now they can't do three.

JOHNS:

Well, you know, again we have the same thing of, we paid everybody AGMA salaries--American Guild of Musical Artists. And usually, with the young singers, we had a lot of young singers--they were the minimums. People like Arnold Voketaitis, and so on, we paid a middle salary.

Well, first of all, it's a small world in opera, and everybody wants to come out and work. There's not much summer opera. There's a lot more now, and they're working.

Second of all, we had a very good reputation of having a lot of fun, and enough rehearsal so you didn't feel embarrassed out on the stage. And singers would tell other singers, like Gary Glaze. And then some of the people Herb knew, like Bill Beck.

And then Don and I would go to New York every year and audition. And often we'd go to City Opera and get some of the people up and coming.

I heard Jean Piland sing with, a small part but a good part, with Beverly Sills and I said to Don, "Let's get backstage." She hardly had her makeup off before we had hired her.

And Elizabeth Hines, who's now a very big name. We gave her first roles here. Let's see, who else? There are a number of people.

What we'd tell their agents was, "Look. We're doing "Pasquale," we're getting the best cast in the United States for "Pasquale," these people have been at Central City for years, and it's funny and it's good. They can learn something."

So the way we do this--not always--is that Don and I would play good cop and bad cop. And Don is always the good cop--he's so sweet, you know, malleable.

So some hatchet-face woman, I can't remember what her name is right now, who for Elizabeth Hines wanted a top salary. Well, the girl was [can't understand] at City Opera. And you know, I'd say, [can't understand] .

You know, and then Don could call back as good cop and say, "Well, we could work something out. It really is a good cast, and we're just paying everybody" offer her what I did. So we had it all worked out pretty well.

FINLEY:

And your staging costs weren't too high, because you didn't have to pay for any rental of the hall.

JOHNS:

That was very good, and we had good people, like, you know, one of our regulars was a man who now makes a living doing this kind of thing with John Redmond, and he did a lot of great things for us. We used to call it at the early point the Colorado Springs Smoke Festival, because whenever we didn't have enough scenery and stuff, we'd just use chemical smoke.

FINLEY:

[laugh]

JOHNS:

And Herb was still using it at Pikes Peak Center, when he didn't need it, but I know, I see John Redmond all the time, and when we had Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane, Birnam Wood was about six people, with branches, and so on, and a lot of fog.

FINLEY:

A lot of fog! [laugh]

JOHNS:

But we didn't skimp on singers, but the whole great thing about it was and some people on the Opera Board now are nostalgic about that, is the operas we did, we considered Mozart standard repertoire. And so we did all of the Mozart operas; we did "Flute," "Don Giovanni," "Cosi," and "Marriage."

And then we did Revel opera; we did Bert Britten's "Turn of the Screw," we did . . .

FINLEY:

You did "A Love for Three Oranges."

JOHNS:

"Love for Three Oranges."

FINLEY:

"Mahagonny."

JOHNS:

"Mahagonny." "Xerxes" Handel. What else?

FINLEY:

Well, the lists are available.

JOHNS:

Yes, but the whole idea was to get, you know, off the, not off the wall stuff, but to get really good opera which should be heard, and some repertoire things that aren't heard enough.

FINLEY:

Well, now, you said that you got these people for minimum salaries, and you didn't have to pay for rental of the hall and so forth, but did it actually break even, or were you subsidized by the college?

JOHNS:

Well, here's the way it works. That's a touchy subject even now, because the business office never, even today I hear people complain about the business office in the same way. I get my whole budget, and I figured it all out, we kept our own books.

And then I'd have the final thing, and very often we'd make some money. I have some money in the budget for it. That was my summer arts budget, because I cut down [can't understand] but I still had some of it, but not as much as I did when I had the Julliard coming all the time.

But we'd break even and make five to \$35,000. And then when Stauss--one of the things that happened, I should mention it very clearly, is Jim Stauss was very solidly behind it, and one year when we actually had \$35,000 left over, he called it, David even knows this term, "stabilization reserve." Which means you haven't spent all your money, but you're going to put it into the next year.

FINLEY:

Oh, so it was forwarded for the next summer's--

JOHNS:

See, Stauss had the advantage of knowing far more about economics than anybody in the administration.

FINLEY:

Stabilization reserve, well, that's nice. So you never

actually were in the hole twice?

JOHNS:

Well, in the end we may have lost five or ten thousand dollars. People--there are all kind of figures I've heard how much it was losing. We never did lose it. And in terms of what we did it was great.

And again, for what it's worth--maybe it's not worth that much--we got more publicity for the college at that time than it had gotten. For example, when we did "Boris Godunov"--the original version.

FINLEY:

1976.

JOHNS:

Yes. We did the original version of Mussorgsky, not the kind of elaborate Rimsky Korskov version we're all used to.

FINLEY:

Well, it's wonderful that it's been able to continue, although I think it limps along with great financial problems compared to those days when everything was--

JOHNS:

Well, it was easier, too, because Brossman really did stand in our way a lot. But we didn't have the same kind of board. And the thing that was lucky for me was that I really knew opera repertoire, partly because growing up I used to usher at operas and so on. And Don was a fine musician.

But the only operas he really knew were ones he had been a chorus master for at Julliard. So I had to kind of educate Don on opera repertoire, and so on. That sounds arrogant, but he needs to know these things, and so I'd give him a bunch of things and he'd listen to them and so on. So we had a good time doing that.

This talk about what level it was on, the first thing Don and I ever did every year was to, when opera season was going to get started, is we'd go over to Armstrong and we'd move pianos. Not on the stage, but since all of our performers want a practice room, you know, to practice and so on, we'd make sure we'd have enough rooms for them and we'd move pianos around. Remember the music department was in Armstrong then.

FINLEY:

That's right, it was before the Packard hall was built.

JOHNS:

That's right. And so we'd always sort of laugh about this, what does the general director and the artistic director do for the season? You move pianos. You know, we'd get the elevator, and move them up and down, and have a list of the rooms, and give everybody a nice practice room. But that was the level of it; everybody worked very hard.

FINLEY:

[laugh] Well, the summer session, in retrospect, to me seems to have been your greatest contribution to Colorado College. All the things you did for the summer session. But I don't know if you feel that way?

JOHNS:

Oh, sure.

FINLEY:

You do? I mean, that's been your biggest reward, I would say, on this campus, and your biggest contribution. It's too bad it couldn't have continued two years longer.

JOHNS:

Well, 15 years. Well, the thing I feel worst about is Hanya. Because I never dreamed they were going to sack her, and if I knew that. Of course, I really would have extended her artistic life a couple of more years, because I knew how to push the right buttons. I picked the music for a lot of the things she was doing, and I knew what kind of music she liked. She was trained in music, she listened to it, and I would know what she was going to do.

I knew her stuff so well, and so I, you know, after she did that Ravel, and she never did another original piece. No, she did one thing after that, but that was also with me, when we had the Bartok celebration. That we couldn't use original music, but we did the Bartok's Cantata Profana, and there we brought a whole company in as well as good dancers, we put it on [can't understand] .

And Julliard wants to do it. They're trying to get money to do it. So.

But it's not going to be done now, because it was a big--what was it--21-minute piece. It was magnificent. I may be wrong with it, we could look it up and see how long the piece is, but Hanya was just great with it. It appealed to her--it was a middle European piece. The whole idea in Bartok is crossing the bridge. And these animals actually cross the bridge, and oh, you know, very deep Kraut symbolism, you know.

FINLEY:

Yes. Unfortunately, I was not here that summer, and missed it.

JOHNS:

Yes, but that was a great summer.

FINLEY:

How did it feel after your summer session days to come back as an ordinary professor? I know after one has been an administrator, and certainly I have some experience with David's experience, you have a sort of a different perspective on things.

JOHNS:

Well, you have a different perspective. Probably different from David's.

The thing that I miss the most, frankly, is having a great office staff, because they just did everything, you know. When we were in high gear, I could keep three people going as far as dictation and so on. We'd get all our stuff out. So I think the trust and delegation was very good.

But I had a better time at being a dean, even though there were a lot of things I didn't like--the business office, mostly. It was different that what say, David or Ric or George had. George used to walk down to my office and said, you know, "You have more freedom than anybody else in the college."

Because you know, today when you want to put a new course in, you go through the department, then you go through the division, then you go through the committee on instruction, then you go through the whole faculty.

In summer session, I'd talk with people, go out to lunch with Doug Fox and get his ideas, have one meeting or so with some of the old hands, have a summer session committee meeting that was hand-picked but they were also--they weren't pushovers. They were people like Bernard Arnest and so on.

FINLEY:

So you were quite autonomous, is what you're saying?

JOHNS:

Sure. And then we'd, you know, if we'd get something, you know, so there was not a big risk in putting a course or program in, and if it didn't work, we'd say, "Well, back to the drawing board, we won't do it again next year."

But the one thing I wouldn't do, and this was in my original agreement with Lew, I would not do any courses on spec. In other words, I think it's a very unethical way to run a summer session, and I think 90% are run this way.

Courses are put in the catalog, and then the administration sees that they develop. Once we decided at a summer session meeting, the person is guaranteed the contract--I'd usually get it out in the next week, anyway. If nobody signs up, you know.

FINLEY:

You still pay the--

JOHNS:

We still pay them. And so you're very careful of what you do, but you have a lot of freedom. In fact, I can say now, as part of this, I don't have to go myself now, is the, I want to get back to some of the arts things.

I realize that the block plan really comes partly from the summer session, because we were doing the block plan with all the graduate institutes.

I wasn't at the meeting where the block plan was voted on, but I've heard that Dick Beidleman got up and gave an impassioned speech about intensive study for a shorter period of time, and how the kids learn a lot more and how it really is good and so on. And that's supposed to be, you know, you know how Beidleman speaks with his kind of evangelical dog-and-pony show that he always does.

FINLEY:

That turned the tide in favor of--

JOHNS:

Well, it certainly got people to say it really worked.

FINLEY:

And he had had the experience, certainly, in the summer session.

JOHNS:

One of the first institutes was the--

FINLEY:

Pikes Peak Plains and Mountains?

JOHNS:

Yes, that's right. It was one of the first ones, and it was very popular, and so. There were a lot of other root systems, but he actually got up, I heard, I was away then. Got up in the faculty meeting, and that's one of the things that turned the tide. Beidelman's speaking in this forceful way he has of speaking, you know.

FINLEY:

Right. Let's stop for now, Gilbert, and continue this conversation another day.

We're continuing on January 18th, our conversation of yesterday. Gilbert Johns and I were talking about the opera, summer opera festival, and how the summer session really influenced in some ways the formation of the block plan.

You said that before we go on, Gilbert, you'd like to talk a little more about the Colorado Opera Festival.

JOHNS:

Yes, very clearly the baby of Don Jenkins and me. We really started it, all the way through. He was the conductor and sort of the artistic director--I'll explain that in a minute. And I was always the general manager.

And then, what we worked very closely for instance, we took a lot of trips to audition, usually to New York, and we'd hear some operas, we'd have some friends there who'd bring us other people to hear.

And then we'd always take at least one trip a year and audition people. We found out right away that this was a very popular festival to come to, because not only people needed work, but the thing was good, and we did interesting operas.

So we'd actually have to keep our whereabouts a secret, because there were a lot of people--see, every agent has a number of singers in their stable who aren't very good, but they're collecting their fees, so they give you an audition of these two guys from out of town and they say, "Well, they're doing their job."

And we didn't want to hear those people. But then, without fail, even though my office was scheduled not to tell anybody where we were, it's a small world, and we were tracked down all the time. So we'd have to do more auditions than we wanted to.

But they were extremely interesting to do, and then Don and I--we'd have these wild days. We didn't start too early in the morning, singers don't like to get up. But we'd audition from say 10:00 to 11:30 or 12:30, someone would take us out to lunch, who was trying to get one of his people in.

Do some stuff in the afternoon, have a little bit of dinner and then go to an opera at night. Then stagger in through the bar at the hotel we were staying at, and then we

both took separate notes. Then we'd make one master set of notes on what we'd heard.

And then we developed, oh, I've forgotten a lot of things, but little shorthand, we'd have to listen a lot. The one I remember the most is we both used this BUV.

FINLEY:

What did that mean?

JOHNS:

Big Ugly Voice! [laugh]

FINLEY:

[laugh]

JOHNS:

And then we had something for standard opera gestures, you know, and things like that.

FINLEY:

Did you usually agree on the choices?

JOHNS:

Almost 100 percent; almost 100 percent. So there was never any problem with that at all.

FINLEY:

And did you usually get the people you wanted?

JOHNS:

Very often, yes, people wanted to come, and they had also been primed. So we never had much problem with that. So that worked out very well.

You know, we didn't go after Placido Domingo, people like that, but we went after people who were regularly singing, most often the opera people because we could usually afford the City Opera people. We had a few Met people there. It worked out beautifully for us all the time. So that was nice.

And the other people who need to get a credit for what we did, the next person, would be Herb Beattie, because he was involved virtually every year. He hadn't moved to Colorado Springs yet, but either as a director or as a performer, and sometimes as both, and he had very good ideas.

And sometimes, my job very often was to be the honest broker, let's say, between Herb, who's kind of an interesting madman, and Don, who's kind of quiet and conservative and so it was really fun all the way through.

There were really nasty covenants, but Herb always

liked to have horses on stage, and now at the Pikes Peak Center he's finally got them on. But I did more than that, but I was very heavily involved in everything else.

The style of the production. Like for instance, we did "Don Pasquale" and Herb came out and we said, the godfather was in everybody's mind, and so we decided to play Don Pasquale, the man himself, as an aging, sort of nice old man who worked in his garden.

Picking up in the final scene in Godfather I with Brando dying on the tomato plants in the garden. So we had a garden there, and Herb was wearing--he played Don Pasquale himself, while directing it, and he wore a gardening smock and a floppy straw hat.

And then he was, when the tenor, who's a great friend of the college, Gary Glaze, was singing his aria, Herb was upstage with a flip gun, spraying. And of course, that's totally out of period; there are not flip guns at this period.

After a fairly late rehearsal, Gary Glaze was the sweetest guy to me, not a temperamental guy at all, came to me and said, "The flip gun goes or I go." [laugh]

FINLEY:

[laugh] He thought Herb was upstaging him!

JOHNS:

He was upstaging him killing bugs! But those were the kind of problems we had all the time.

But the third person, the fourth person in there would be Hanya who was more experimental than anybody else, and wanted to do things, and that drove a lot of people nuts, because the way Hanya works is improvisationally.

She knows the music very well, and she says, you know, "Show me what you've got. I'm going to take this out, and try this."

And opera singers like to be told just what to do. So there were some conflicts there. They weren't used to dealing with someone whose style was choreographic. But she had done operas, so there was no problem with that.

So she did, in fact the second year, and that's why I went into opera, one of my favorite operas is the Ravel "Le Enfant du Sortilege" and I played it one time for my older son, Alexander, he was quite small, and sort of did a little

translation of it.

It was a Colette story, and about the little boy who's bad and the animals save him and so on. And he burst into tears, he was just a real tragedy for little kids.

And God! We've got to do that opera. And I love Ravel's music. So we got Hanya to do it, and it was just wonderful.

And once I did that, I kept on, kept interest on in the opera.

FINLEY:

That was "The Child and the Sorcerer."

JOHNS:

"The Child and the Sorcerer," is right. The consolation is difficult, sort [can't understand] and the magic, you know. The Colette title is "L'enfant du Sortilege."

FINLEY:

I wanted to interrupt long enough to ask you in all this work, when did you start your rehearsals and when did the principals appear on the scene? What was your timeframe?

JOHNS:

Generally, we did three operas a summer. And a couple of times we had double bills, which is a lot more work. In terms of planning and so on and so forth, we'd have, well, this would all be done essentially in the fall, we knew what we were going to do, and we had 90 percent, 95 percent of our singers cast.

And then, generally, they were arriving about three weeks before performance. So this is fairly a long rehearsal for opera, but we worked very hard at it, and then one of the people who helped us out as in a rehearsal director, she was chorus master for part of the time was Martha Booth. So when Don couldn't be there, she would conduct rehearsals. Rehearsal is just done on a piano.

So we had about three weeks. But then when you get into the second one, and you know, there's overlaps, so usually we'd have two operas in rehearsal at the same time, whose schedules got quite complex, because the chorus was almost entirely drawn from the Colorado Springs Chorale, and these were people who had day jobs, and so it was a juggling thing.

And we found very quickly that we couldn't have a lot of the artistic people make out the schedule, because they

tend to be kind of vague about times and so on. So we had to have a real martinet put out the schedule, and we had to stick to it.

So there were scheduling problems and so on, but not great.

FINLEY:

One other question. Did you have in those early days a board of any sort, a support board, and when did that board come into being?

JOHNS:

After the opera left the college. Now, we always had a board in terms of, we were very informal, but one of the things that was so successful is that we didn't have to answer to a board. We had to answer to the college financially, but you know, we did what we damn pleased, we decided to do operas that we wanted to do.

We didn't get some really obscure thing, but so. But there were people, you know, we'd pay attention to. Like a very generous supporter was Janet LeCompte, but she would never think of interfering.

The only person in town who ever tried to interfere was Merrill Fanoni, whose house, interestingly enough, the Graces live in now, and he was a really, felt very Italian and he would not give us money because we did Mozart.

FINLEY:

Oh--he wanted Italian operas?

JOHNS:

Italian operas, and he hated Mozart. So, you know, he finally did give us some money, but that's--but we did not have a board in the usual sense. We'd have people who--

FINLEY:

This is side one of tape three, of the Colorado College Archives Oral History interview. I'm Judy Finley continuing my talk with Gilbert Johns on January 18th.

You were talking, Gilbert, about the Colorado Opera Festival and I was asking you about the involvement of people in the community. Did you try to raise funds in the community?

JOHNS:

Oh, yes, we did, all the time, and we got some money, and we got quite a bit. The problem was we had to work very closely with the Development Office, because we couldn't ask people for \$5,000 when they were about to give the college \$100,000 for something else, so we had to keep it kind of low profile in that, and really clear everything with the

development office, which--how can I put it? Wasn't crazy about the opera! That was Bob Brossman.

FINLEY:

He was still there, toward the end.

JOHNS:

But things worked out very well. For instance, one of the people that had a, a Colorado College alum who's quite active, who had an interest in the opera, is a wonderful Boston Italian, Don Menzelli, and he was the first president of the President's Council.

He had a couple of kids who went to CC. Well, he was very interested in us, and he'd help Sarah Caldwell in Boston, and he was quite a wealthy contractor, and he'd bring his friends to the Met when it was in Boston, so he liked us.

And Brossman said, "Oh, go ahead." And ask money from him.

Well, he came out here with his father, who was, who I'm afraid looked like Don Corleone, you know, and they both liked opera. We took them out to dinner, and it just happened that the Broadmoor did a great job for it.

We took them to the opera, took them to the party afterwards, and I told--there were two beautiful women who were playing, one was playing the three women's parts in Hoffman, we did that, and the other one was playing Nicolaus.

Nicolaus was Jeanne Piland, and they both came and sort of pouchy, diaphanous gowns for the party, and they worked on those old Italians and we got a fortune from those guys.

The biggest gift we'd ever had. And you know, for all the right reasons, I mean they just, charmed, getting the two stars kind of patting your arm and so one was not the wrong thing to do at that point! [laugh]

FINLEY:

[laugh]

JOHNS:

So--we played it as much as we could. We always thought that we were held back, but that was the only problem with that.

And then the person I mentioned who was helping with the opera is a person who really believed in it and thought it was a good thing we were doing and so on, was Jim Stauss.

So he was, he'd kind of run interference for us on things,

and thought it was an important thing to do and so on.

FINLEY:

I sometimes have the impression that he and Bob Brossman were at odds with each other--

JOHNS:

That's putting it mildly!

FINLEY:

To put it mildly. Can you enlighten me a little bit on their relationship? You probably saw quite a bit of their interaction through your work with them.

JOHNS:

Well, you know, Stauss was not a pushover, and he knew more about college finances, his doctorate was in economics, so he was brought in--in fact, I was involved in getting him to come here because I had known him at Grinnell, as I mentioned before.

FINLEY:

He was brought in exactly why? Was there some . . . ?

JOHNS:

No. Yes. I guess Brossman was [can't understand] so he was brought in to brought in to kind of run the college on a day-to-day basis. In other words, he was really a provost. And I think that was the happiest time in administration in the college, because what that allowed to do, just generally, what that allowed Ric Bradley to do was to be strictly the faculty's dean.

FINLEY:

Right.

JOHNS:

And Ric, just like David, is not adversarial at all, and so this was a year or two when Stauss was still alive and healthy, everything really ran very smoothly. Now Stauss was a person who knew how to say "No" without irritating anybody.

For an example, and he was just so smart. I'd go to science division meetings on research, and my friend Werner Heim would ask one of his famous nine-part questions, that Werner Heim likes to do. And Stauss without any notes, would answer each part in order, devastatingly. But he was generally just on top of things in that way.

FINLEY:

Did he somehow step into Brossman's terrain?

JOHNS:

Well, I think Brossman, who had been the [can't understand] for Worner, you know, I think didn't like that and he felt jealous, so he brought Brossman back in, and that's when the conflict really started.

FINLEY:

Oh, I see.

JOHNS:

And so there was just--I don't know. If we'd have to give it depth psychology, but there was certainly some jealousy on Brossman's part about this, and he had a little zero on time before Stauss did.

And I won't say that Brossman was a "Yes man" but Jim Stauss certainly wasn't. AND when he'd tell Lew he was wrong, he couldn't do it that way, you know, that, you know, Lew hadn't been told that before.

FINLEY:

Did Lew always get along with Stauss?

JOHNS:

Toward the end, no. But I--but I'm giving it kind of a Doctor of Evil thing--I think he was poisoned a little bit by Brossman.

But at the beginning, he was just delighted to have someone who was so competent, who could take care of all of these things very, very well. And there was the problem of, you know, you have to do as an administrator is tell faculty and administrators "No."

There was no one better at that than Stauss was. He was just terrific. And Stauss had a different way of doing business, and that was a glass in hand.

We might have parties, summer session I'd always have a bottle of Jack Daniels on the bar, but I'm not going to feed our faculty college Jack Daniels all the time, so out of the alumna magazine I had a picture of Stauss, and I hung it on a little chain on there, and when people come up and ask for it, I'd point at Stauss' picture.

And then the way the [can't understand] was done there is we'd talk about things, we hadn't been able to see Stauss all week, and then at the party, glass in hand, I'd say, "Look, I'm going to need this; and we'll do this; and so on."

And he'd say, "Oh, yes." Then Monday morning, he'd

come in and say, "What did we agree on Saturday?"

You know, I think kind of testing me, he knew as well as I did, even though we were all feeling very warm and friendly with all that nice drink, but he knew right away what to do. That's the way you did business with him. That was really a wonderful way to run the college.

The first time I really saw him in action was when George Drake and I were going around trying to talk people into joining the ACM. There was one meeting in Chicago, and I was there, and Stauss was there, and a couple of other deans from various schools. I think it was in Minneapolis.

We weren't on the table, and I had a martini, someone had a Bloody Mary, Stauss had a double bourbon and so on and so forth. And George Drake had a tomato juice. And Stauss said to him, he liked George very much, and George [can't understand] and he said, "God damn it, George, how can you do the college's business without bourbon?" [laugh]

FINLEY:

[laugh]

JOHNS:

And that was Stauss. And I think on that level, he also, Stauss got along very well with Lew, because Lew liked to do business that way, too.

FINLEY:

Well, unfortunately, Jim Stauss got very ill and died when he was really in his prime. I don't know what year that was--I'll have to look that up.

JOHNS:

I don't remember either. But then, even before he died, he just didn't have the heart to fight like he did before. But he was marvelous.

In fact, another thing that's not very well known, it's not a part of my bailiwick, but Stauss is really the person responsible for the Packard Hall, in a way. I don't mean getting the money, but Lew wanted to have Carlisle Guy be the architect for it.

Well, let's put it this way, a lot of Carlisle Guy's buildings were not a success here, you know, putting in the El Pomar and having the--oh, you probably heard this from your father, having, because he was the one who told me a lot of this stuff, Juan Reid, having sprinklers in the steam room, and having lights coming down, with a cage over them, in the handball court.

Well, I know Juan had told him, had told Carlisle Guy, you know, how handball and squash is played, but he didn't pay any attention to him.

But anyway, so what happened was that Stauss was, well, we were going to have Carlisle Guy, the money was there from Packard. So it was going to be Carlisle Guy, the decision had been made, and Jim Trissel was chair of the art department, and he called up Stauss or Lew and resigned as chairman. He said, "I can't stand this, you know."

And then Stauss was put in charge of getting it, and then the decision we made was to not use a Colorado architect, because that would hurt the feelings of Carlisle Guy.

FINLEY:

Yes.

JOHNS:

So that's when we had the national search. And I must say, Stauss was just right on top of it the whole time, went around, brought the right people in, got the [can't understand] .

And then we got a very, very good person, in terms of Edward Larrabee Barnes. And I was on the committee, so I followed this quite carefully. I voted for Barnes simply because, you know, the main thing of his I had seen was the museum in Minneapolis.

FINLEY:

Oh, the art museum?

JOHNS:

What's the name of it? The famous one?

FINLEY:

Yes, I know which one you mean.

JOHNS:

It's a beautiful museum, and it just worked for art, and [can't understand] . That was entirely Jim Stauss' riding herd on that and getting stuff done and so on. So that was the kind of thing he was really good at. And that was without making anybody, except possibly Brossman, mad about it. He was really good at that kind of thing.

FINLEY:

Well, very interesting. We really don't have much information on Jim Stauss, and his influence on the college,

and it was considerable, so I appreciate your insight,
Gilbert.

JOHNS:

The other person who could tell you about this, of course, is Ric.

FINLEY:

Yes.

JOHNS:

Yes, because I said, that was an ideal time, and I think if David had had a Stauss there, David would have not been so miserable in some of the times, having to deal with all of these things that come up at once. Ric just for a couple of years, didn't have to deal with them at all.

FINLEY:

Right. Of course, Ric worked under a different style of president, too.

JOHNS:

That's right! [laugh]

FINLEY:

I'd like to jump forward now to the period of the 1980's.

JOHNS:

Let me just say one more thing about the opera, the way we ended, I ended it in kind of a nice way. We did, Don and I had wanted to do a Handel opera, and so what we were going to do has a very simple plot and we thought it was going to work.

So we hit upon doing "Xerxes" and "Xerxes" is a comic opera, even though the song "Largo" everybody knows, handles "Largo" is actually Xerxes singing that to a tree. It is not holy, at all.

And then we cast it and decided how to do it, and then we got a note from the Central Opera saying, "Do you realize that this is the United States premier of this?"

And we didn't know this, and we got into all kinds of people writing us about it, and there had been student productions at the University of Chicago, in fact, one directed by Thornton Wilder.

But this was, in fact, the U.S. premier, so we got--we worked very hard on it, and did a lot of cutting.

Then, I said the college got some publicity on this because Harold Schoenberg, who was the New York Times critic

then, that which there was no whicher at that time, he wanted to come out and hear it.

So we said "Fine."

And he told Anne McGowan that he wanted to have dinner with me, and I said, as general director of the opera, I should not have dinner with the chief critic of the world.

And so he came. And he knows his way around. And he came to the opera, [can't understand] was sitting there, and he said, "Gee, I'd like to have a score to follow in this."

So Anne gave him my score, which had all of the cuts and so on in there, because we cut a lot--you have to do it. We cut all of the da capos, and things like that. And so.

And of course, Schoenberg is a purist, and so he sat there across from me, with his little penlight on, hardly looking at the stage, and following it.

And I said, "Oh, my God, what have I got us into?"

Well, it turned out, he gave us a rave review. Then the next Sunday on the music page, we had the front page of the music section, we had the whole page, about the opera festival, what we were trying to do, and about me and so on, and about the singers. And it was really, I think probably the best publicity we ever had in the Times.

FINLEY:

I'll have to look it up.

JOHNS:

Yes, it's really an interesting story.

FINLEY:

That's great.

JOHNS:

So that was fun. Now--

FINLEY:

Just for the record, that was 1978?

JOHNS:

That was my last year as head of the opera.

FINLEY:

Okay.

JOHNS:

And, you know, it got good reviews from everywhere, but getting it from Harold Schoenberg, both the review, and the

whole Sunday section.

FINLEY:

Okay, well, thank you very much. Let's jump ahead then to the 1980's, which were quite a change for you, because you left the summer session, went back into the classroom, and really changed your focus.

Tell me when you returned to teaching, how it seemed to you, and what courses you wanted to teach, and what courses you didn't want to teach, and how your career continued to evolve.

JOHNS:

Well, Lew, who was very thoughtful about things like this, gave me, you can call it a Sabbatical, but I got a six-month administrative leave to gear up.

So I found a nice place in the Cotswolds and I went there with my two sons, and what I did there was, I wasn't very far from Oxford, so I got in. And one of the things I wanted to do was to develop an [can't understand] I had had for some time in the history of science.

So I worked there, and there's a very fine historian of science at Oxford called A.C. Crombie, Alistair Crombie, medievalist, and so he had a kind of a graduate faculty seminar there. I got myself into that.

So I'd go there once or twice a week, and then I'd work in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and I was doing some stuff on acoustics, particularly hall acoustics, architectural acoustics.

Then when I, so--I had a lot of time to prepare. One of the things I couldn't really do is to go back into psychology, because I had already been replaced, and I was fairly rusty. There were a few things I could teach, but not like I could before.

So then I talked with various people and Jim Yaffe and so on. So I came back, and I taught a history of science course, and I sort of started the history of science program.

FINLEY:

Was this under the general studies program?

JOHNS:

Yes, with, and it was, I worked with Carol Neel then when I got back. I went into Freedom and Authority, which I had been associated with from time to time, but became during that period the person who always taught Freedom and Authority, and I would organize the alumnae parents' weekend

Freedom and Authority discussion.

Then Ric Bradley and I taught a course in the physics department in acoustics. Then Max and I started a course that Max wanted to get this done. He had started, George Drake had actually started it, it was called Liberal Learning and the Human Imagination, which was a dreadful title, as opposed to the chimpanzee imagination.

But it had become a bad course after George left, and it was just involved with having various faculty members come in and talk and that was not much to do for graduating seniors. So Max did a lot of work, and we totally redid the course. And then I taught that until I went on this semi-retirement.

And we'd have a wonderful time, because we'd have 40 of the best seniors in our class, and we met over in Stewart House. We'd have coffee, rolls and the New York Times every morning, half an hour before class. We got the kids in the habit of reading the Times every day, and we had a lot of fun doing that.

FINLEY:

And you were always co-teaching with Max?

JOHNS:

Always Max. We had a very good time together. I always liked to teach with people who aren't in the same areas I am. Because Max, remember, has his degree in church history. So we agree on a lot of basics, but we have kind of different information.

Over the years, then, I taught other courses like this. I did some team teaching, and I really enjoyed it, tried to pick people who were fun. Like I taught a number of years with Doug Fox, doing a course in Literature in the Film. That was the course, probably, I enjoyed the most.

FINLEY:

And you taught a course in Hitchcock, didn't you?

JOHNS:

Well, the Hitchcock was going to be a one-shot deal. I wanted to do it the first year; I was very interested in this. It was before the big Hitchcock revival, too. I taught it, and I thought it was quite successful. I said something to some members of the class about well, you know, it was fun to do. And they said, "Is it going to be offered next year?"

I said, "I hadn't planned to."

He said, "One of our friends wants to take it." And so it was you know, I had a tiger by the tail, and you can't let go. And so I taught that right until the end--I'm teaching it now.

FINLEY:

For several years, now?

JOHNS:

Oh, every year. I'm still teaching it. I can change it a little bit, but there are only so many Hitchcock films that are really worth working on. And Hitchcock imitators. But it's a course that really, it's always filled, and has a waiting list of ten or 15, always--sometimes more than that. And it's still going.

And I might say, you were asking me a question earlier, would I, the most influence I said I had. The Hitchcock course was in there, but it's just a number of people at the last homecoming, I always go to homecoming, would see me across the dance floor and come up.

And the only class they ever had with me was Hitchcock and they'd say, econ majors, people who were now teaching econ, and so on, and they'd say, "That was the best course I ever had at CC."

So it had a certain influence on people, because you can teach music and theology and everything else--they're all in the Hitchcock films! So that was extremely successful, and you know, it's still going on.

Then I taught the History of Science, once with Ric Bradley, and once or twice with Carol Neel. So that was, those were, I certainly didn't miss administration, because what got to me in administration was not planning the things, but the kind of daily fights with the business office. Where they won't give you the records, and they--oh! It was awful. Other parts were nice, but I decided 15 years was enough.

But then, I found all these things, and the people I taught with, I was very fond of and very close to, Max and Carol and Doug Fox and Rick. You couldn't find four better people.

FINLEY:

Great college. And the advantage of the block plan is you can do these of topical general studies courses that work out very well with the cross-fertilization of different departments.

JOHNS:

Yes, and then I would still teach, I went back to the psychology department then, too, and I taught what was in our senior seminar, History in Systems, which I taught before, and that's kind of my specialty, too. And then I would teach one block of the introductory, which was simply the Psychobiology course.

FINLEY:

Everybody had to do an introductory course.

JOHNS:

Yes, and so that's what I was doing. And I never, during this period when I was teaching full-time, ever repeated a course in the same year. And that's really fun to do. And I don't like doubling up, I guess gives you--it's easier to do, but it's boring for the students.

FINLEY:

Exactly. Well, you also started, or maybe continued or revived the tradition of the trivia bowl.

JOHNS:

Well, that's a good question, what happened. Actually, in the summer you were talking about the Clarion, I hit upon the idea of having a trivia bowl in the summer as kind of an intellectual slumming. Because the summer gets quite intense, it moves so fast, very much like the block plan did.

So I hit on this idea, and got teams made up, we had these wonderful teams of maybe the NSF kids were here in the summer; arts and humanities people; faculty team; teams from different courses. And we just ran it on one afternoon, one evening, whatever it was. And it was very, very successful, and then, so that went on and then I had a lot of publicity for this and for the college. No one had been doing anything like this. And I referred to it as intellectual slumming and so on, and people just loved it.

The newspapers, both papers at the time we had entered their own teams. They were beaten, incidentally, by--my son Christopher formed his own team with some of his high school buddies. They were sort of juniors in high school, and they called themselves "Teen Age Lobotomy." And they beat both the Gazette Telegraph and the Sun. We've still got some publicity from that.

FINLEY:

Oh, I'm sure.

JOHNS:

The papers were not very happy--and we beat them on sports, too.

FINLEY:

Now, did you think up most of the questions for the trivia bowl?

JOHNS:

I thought up a lot of them; my assistant, whoever it would be, would do them; and then we had one, there were books that we could get them from; and I knew the person who, I had run in the trivia bowl and knew it.

Very early in the game, a group of guys came in who were a little older and they were just terrific. And they just beat our best team, and we couldn't figure out who they were, and they would anticipate the questions and then the veins would stand out on their face, and then they would answer it. And they were terrific.

Well, it turned out, they were, at one point ABC had Wild World of Sports had a trivia bowl, a national trivia bowl, and this was the winning team, from Boulder.

FINLEY:

Ohhhh.

JOHNS:

And the head of it was Ted Hunt, who had been out here on KCME in the morning. And I called them aside and I said, "Ted, you're retired."

You know, the kids getting mad, even though they're watching pros, you know, it's like having you know, a pro baseball team, the Braves, come and play CC. Nobody thinks it's fun to watch, even if you see the greatest athletes.

Anyway, so he continued, he'd read the questions himself.

Then when I did the Hitchcock course, I was at a summer session then, I said, "Why don't we have a Hitchcock trivia bowl?"

So every day the kids would, every movie they saw, they had to write three questions, and we'd collect them and so on, and then the last day of the course, or the day before the last day of the course, we'd have a Hitchcock trivia bowl, which would give them points on their finals and so on, as well as winners would win a T-shirt, and things like that.

So that got great interest in the course. And then people would pay a lot of attention to--

FINLEY:

To the details.

JOHNS:

Hitchcock's films are all details.

FINLEY:

Yes, indeed. Well, now, I was looking back at some of the records, and it said in 1986 was the fifth annual Trivia Bowl. Did it continue onward after the mid-eighties, the Trivia Bowl?

JOHNS:

No, this was the Hitchcock Trivia Bowl.

FINLEY:

Yes, but did it continue?

JOHNS:

Oh, sure, yes.

FINLEY:

Til when?

JOHNS:

Until I stopped teaching it.

FINLEY:

Oh, okay. So every year.

JOHNS:

Every year we did it; every year in class. But it wasn't open to the public at all. I've stopped it this last year or so, and I'm doing just within the class.

Now I'm doing it--it's a lot of trouble to get all this together, and TV would love to come cover us, because that would be a wonderful teaser for the 5:30 news, so the college got a lot of publicity out of this, and I'd give them one of the smart kids to interview. It was really kind of fun, but we don't do that now.

I have a thing in the class--I have a spelling bee, we call it the "Killer Bee" for Hitchcock, so it was not public any more.

FINLEY:

Right.

JOHNS:

But that was just very recently I stopped doing that.

FINLEY:

Great fun. Well, Gilbert, you also became the renowned and sometimes feared critic for music in Colorado Springs for the Gazette Telegraph and that went on for some ten years.

JOHNS:

Exactly ten years.

FINLEY:

Can you describe some of the stories that you recall most about being music critic.

JOHNS:

I was actually called critic-at-large and I did mostly music, theater and dance. I'd occasionally do movies in the early days and then I did some restaurants. I do a lot of travel stuff, one or two a year.

What happened was they built the Pikes Peak Center, and that was completed in 1980, 1982, excuse me. The papers called me up, and they knew I had a connection with the arts and so on, and they said, "How would you like to, you know, do some music reviewing?"

And I said, "Well, we'll try it. Let's see if we like each other." I had done a few little things in the Springs magazine, then the Gazette called and wanted me to do it, so I said, "Let's try it." And that's how it really got started.

And then, you know, it was successful, because no one had ever written anything critical about anything in the paper--nothing. You know, everything was "Isn't it wonderful?" and so on and so forth. So to have someone who said what a lot of people knew anyway was interesting, because the first things I wrote where I actually went after--they were so bad.

I went after this thing called Music Theater of the Rockies. It was just these terrible productions, and I had, they did "The Sound of Music," and which, you know, in the trade is called The Sound of Mucous, sometimes. Or in Hollywood, The Sound of Money.

FINLEY:

[laugh] Yes.

JOHNS:

And they had--what's her name? I've lost her--

FINLEY:

Not Julie Andrews?

JOHNS:

No, it wasn't Julie. No, they had someone who had originally played Kate in Hanya's original production of "Kiss Me Kate." Well, that's 1948. This was 1982 or '83 and a little simple arithmetic you can figure out how old she was, playing the 17-year-old Maria von Trapp.

And I, you know, the rest of the production wasn't very good, and the guy who was playing the Baron von Trapp was-- how can I put it? Did not project a male image at all. And it was just absolutely wrong instead of being this strong German martinet that he's supposed to be.

And then I [can't understand] I actually gave this woman, was it Anne Jeffreys? It doesn't matter. I gave her, you know, a good--

(side two)

--They didn't send letters to the Entertainment Editor or the Editor. They sent it to Roy Smith, the publisher.

FINLEY:

Oh, dear.

JOHNS:

Personal letters, and they said, "You know, if you have this acerbic critic, who's all, who would ever want to come to--" it was always "our little town." These were realtors, and so on.

Well, to Roy Smith's credit, he just laughed and he'd hand me the letters and so on. So my whole period of ten years there, I was never interfered with by the paper. I could write what I damn pleased, and I know I was cut down in space sometimes, but that's the way everybody is. And so there was never a single suggestion of "Oh, can't you be nice?" I did exactly what I pleased.

FINLEY:

Now, you must have had to write under pretty tight deadlines, see a performance and have your piece in shortly after the performance.

JOHNS:

That--I didn't know I could do that, and that was fun.

FINLEY:

You liked it?

JOHNS:

I loved it, because, in fact, I've used some of that in my courses, that I think in today's world, you have to be able to, you know, you don't have three and a half weeks to write a report for your boss for the next morning.

So what I would do was I took this whole thing, the concert would be out at say, 10:00. I always had them seat me in the mezzanine, in the front, on the aisle. So as the last sounds were dying out--I'd stay right to the end--I would rush over to the paper and now, when you do that, you have to be writing in your head.

Then I'd go in and I'd log in on the Volt Computerizer, I'd log in and start my story, which I'd already had in my head. Then about 15 or 20 minutes later, one of the desk editors would come in, and I would transmit to him or her what I had written so far. So they are terminal night [can't understand] and you're working.

And then, headlines are written from the first two or three paragraphs. So once we're going in a certain direction, we ain't going to change. On these, you can't put a paragraph as you do now in computers.

So then, if you're running out of time, I wouldn't even edit and correct spellings; I would just go over and sit at the editor's terminal, and the desk editor, and the two of us would correct it, and then we'd go down and put it on the page. So we had to be off the floor--that means transmitted down to the composing room by about a quarter to ten, so I had--

FINLEY:

Quarter to ten?

JOHNS:

Quarter to eleven, excuse me. So I had a total of about half an hour or 35 minutes to write. And you find you can do it, and you know, and I love it. You know, you get to be a little bit wired, and I'd go home, and still be wired, and not be able to go to sleep. But I loved doing it. That's what newspapers are all about.

FINLEY:

Indeed.

JOHNS:

The main people who didn't like what I wrote were very happy to see a review of a concert they heard on Friday night, on Saturday morning at breakfast, you know, and they

could disagree, or say, "Oh, I wish I had been there," or something like that. So--the paper is not doing that any more.

FINLEY:

No. Well, like your summer school program, it seems to me your career as a critic evokes a very great interest.

JOHNS:

Yes.

FINLEY:

And people always read those reviews because they were spicy and sometimes irreverent but very incisive, and I think it was a great period, although a lot of people, Gilbert, feared what you might say about them, and as you were saying, this was probably the first time anyone had ever been critical in the Gazette.

Which brings me to what I thought was a very humorous time--you may not have thought so--but it was the time people could critique the critic. That was in 1988, when you became a factor and played the lead in "The Man Who Came to Dinner," and I recall the review of that was not terribly positive. I was wondering what you remember about all that?

JOHNS:

The whole idea was mine, first of all, to do "The Man Who Came to Dinner." I did it as a fundraiser for--and the three people who contributed were the Fine Arts Center, of course, the Pioneer Museum, and Star Bar Players.

Well, we raised, as I remember, 14 or 15 thousand dollars clear in that one week-end of performance, and we paid our bills and so on. While the actors didn't get paid, other people did, so it was really, I hate to say this, it's the most successful theater event the town has ever had, in terms of local making money.

FINLEY:

That's because of the great interest in the actors.

JOHNS:

Well, there was great interest in everything. And of course the paper publicized, and I thought of this contest, "Critique the Critic."

FINLEY:

Oh, you did?

JOHNS:

Oh, yes, that was mine. And people said, well, actually they didn't want to write in because they'd hurt my feelings. I said, "What do you think I'm doing this for?" And first prize for winning the contest was dinner at Remington's.

FINLEY:

With the critic?

JOHNS:

No, second prize was dinner at Remington's with the critic! [laugh] And people loved that, and then Lew Tilley, who was associated with the college, had done the posters, and so it attracted a lot of attention.

FINLEY:

It did, indeed.

JOHNS:

Had a lot of fun. And of course, to make myself not look so miserable, I surrounded myself with all the best actors in town--almost everybody who was in there had an Equity card, or a SAG card, the Screen Actors Guild. Like, well, Herb Beattie, who played the Noel Coward part, people who were good singers. We had a terrific, terrific cast.

FINLEY:

How was it to work with Pam Riley? She had a major role in that.

JOHNS:

Oh, she was--I wanted her to do it in there, and so we had a wonderful time. And she was quite good; she's quite a good actress, and with her personality, she was always in conflict with the director and the director's wife, and so on. That's a whole tape in and of itself.

But she was fun. I was the one who brought her into it; and she was very grateful for doing that. And so she played the part which in the film was done by Bette Davis, so you can see how Pam Riley would fit that very well.

FINLEY:

Had you ever done any acting before?

JOHNS:

Not since college, and not very much. And I didn't realize how much this involved, because I think the French script, Samuel French script is 70-some pages, and I think I'm on stage for 68.

And what I found was, I was terribly afraid of going up in my lines, and then I'm not trying to do that. And it turned out that sitting on the stage all the time, I became the unofficial prompter. People who had a lot of stage experience were, you know, [can't understand] their lines, and since I was always there, I fed them to them. So I don't think it was a great performance on my part, but it was a lot of fun.

And the, to say one more thing about the contest. We didn't get any very interesting reviews. The paper wrote one, but the people in the town didn't write very good ones.

In fact, Tom Mullen, who was the editor of the paper at that time, was very behind this. He read them all, and he said, "Gilbert, your job as critic is safe in this town." [laugh]

FINLEY:
[laugh]

JOHNS:
But it stimulated a lot of interest, but not the kind of "Get me."

FINLEY:
Yes. Well, why did your job as a critic come to an end in 1992?

JOHNS:
Well, I had done it again, ten years is a good thing. And then I was thinking of you know, if I'm going to retire, maybe I ought to work a little bit more, and they didn't want me more than this.

And then the editor said, the publisher said--there was a new editor in by that time--that only two or three percent are interested in the arts anyway. So we just had a kind of parting of the way.

But I thought ten years was enough of doing this.

FINLEY:
Didn't you get quite ill about that time?

JOHNS:
Then right after that, I got ill right around that time, too. Because those were in a way, separate issues. But it made me think about what I wanted to do, because I was quite ill then.

So I didn't do anything for a year or more, and then KCME, John Stevens said, "How would you like to do a critic's show on the radio?"

I said "Sure." And I [can't understand] and I've been doing that since, oh, maybe nine or ten months now.

FINLEY:

Now when are you on?

JOHNS:

I'm on on Saturdays, right before the Met. Ordinarily it's about a quarter to 12:00. Then it's done live, and then it's taped, and it's rebroadcast Sunday. And that's already had a lot of people talking about it. That's kind of fun to do.

FINLEY:

I'm sure it is. Well, you also got your picture on the front of the Colorado Spring Magazine, I believe, as a gourmet chef featured. I know that you enjoy cooking, and enjoy good food, besides good art and good music. Can you tell me a little more about your favorite hobbies?

JOHNS:

Oh, well, I, you know, obviously I read, I'm something of a skier, and indifferent tennis player, slightly worse than David, and but then, I've always liked to cook. At one time, people have always said, "Well, why don't you operate a restaurant; we'll fund you for this."

Well, the last thing in the world I want to do--I don't want to work that hard. So it's just something that I like to do, and I keep up with it, and right now various restaurants in town ask me things, but I'm not an official consultant, but that's just kind of a hobby, and one of my children became a very good cook. The other one can, but it's not his thing. That certainly is a hobby.

FINLEY:

Yes. Well, and you've also, I know, done lots of traveling, and go to London frequently, to the theater. Are you still doing that as much as you did?

JOHNS:

I don't go to London as much. I go to France a lot more. One thing, part of my career that I didn't mention is that I spent a year in France. Well, I spent a year in Switzerland in 1969-70, when I went to school there.

Then in 1976, I had a sabbatical coming, and I taught in Paris at the Ecole Polytechnique, which may be the best school in Europe, and that was a lot of fun. That was the best students I have ever had. They didn't--you know, they were very dull and boring and you know, but were they good.

And I was teaching a seminar that met for four hours once a week.

FINLEY:

Did you teach in French or English?

JOHNS:

Well, I was supposed to teach in English, because one of the things they're supposed to know, this is where, you know, Giscard went to school, it's one of the old-boy networks there. That and Ecole Normale Superieure are the two big schools.

Well, as it turned out, they didn't know enough English for me to talk. So I taught English, French, [can't understand] and when I wrote anything--I thought I taught about half in French, but then on the board, whenever I'd write anything, I write in both French and English.

And then, while I was there, they offered me a job at [can't understand] Hautes Etudes Commerciales, the Harvard Business School there. And I taught a course in American Culture there, which was the same kind of thing.

Well, one of the interesting things about that was that I was there during the Jimmy Carter election, and they had me talk--no, it was Ecole Polytechnique, well, maybe it was there, it doesn't matter. They had me give a talk to the whole school on the election.

And they were very interested, also, in the movie, "All the President's Men" had come out. And so, in one of my courses, I actually had the people go see the film and write papers and so on. And no one could believe, you know, the thing was so important, and that reporters would have an access to the president.

And so I had a wonderful time pumping for American culture that I wrote our first amendment on the board in both French and English, probably a bad one-the-spot translation. And then giving them the date, which I can't recall exactly what it is, it's December 15th, 1791.

FINLEY:

The Bill of Rights.

JOHNS:

Yes, the Bill of Rights. And they were just dazzled. And I told them how it was interpreted, that the Congress will make no laws means essentially no laws. You know, it's been an absolute interpretation for years. So that was great fun to do.

I started to say about the French students in Ecole

Polytechnique. You know, there's a 99 percentile cutoff every year just to stay in that track. And the way I started out in my seminar was I'd have some very elaborate question with about a 15-part answer, designed so they'd get lots of it wrong, and I'd show--those bastards got it right! The first I discovered that, you can't do that, because they were so smart.

But then I'd go out for coffee with them, at a little espresso bar there, and I'd try to talk about other things--music that was going on in Paris, or films, and--nada. They didn't know anything about it.

FINLEY:

They're very focused on their subject, right.

JOHNS:

Yes, yes.

FINLEY:

Well, you certainly in your conversation with me on this tape have reflected the value of being a generalist and not a narrow specialist. I think throughout your career that's been your emphasis.

We really only have about 10 minutes left here. I'd like you to get a little more reflective, perhaps, Gilbert, in general about what teaching at Colorado College has meant to you over the years personally, and any advice you might have to some mythical college president a hundred years from now about Colorado College and what it's been like during your tenure, how you think that should be changed or kept the same.

That's a big thing to think about, but just tell me what your reactions are to that question.

JOHNS:

Oh, well, in general, I'll tell you what I think should be kept the same, because one of the things that Max Taylor and I taught in our course, Liberal Learning and the Human Imagination. By the way, I changed the title to Is There Life After CC?

And we used to do a countdown, you know, 20 days until you're out in the jungle, and so on. But one of the things we read is Cardinal Newman's Idea of a University, very wonderful, eloquent expression of what a liberal arts college should be. And we'd ask the kids, then, who read this now--these are all graduating seniors--take your own education and use Newman's thesis as a template, and put your own education

up against it and see how it would work.

That was kind of interesting, and there were some complaints and so on, but when you hear very bright people talk about it, you're doing the right thing and various faculty members that they had had, who were not following that, were very roundly criticized. Their classes where males were told they weren't allowed to speak, and because of they were the radical [can't understand] .

The incredible things that Max and I would find out and we'd, you know, try not to go and complain to the dean of the college or the prefect about it, but for the most part, the kids accepted this.

I just talked with Tim Fuller the other day, and he went somewhere, the American Philosophical Association, so where he gave a talk on education based on Karl Jaspers, and you know, he talked about this kind of liberal education is, has a kind of transcendence to it. I believe that, although no one would ever consider me transcendental in my thinking, but I certainly know just what Tim means about this, and he and I agree.

So I think that the liberal arts education and the kind of things we do are very important and so people are doing them, and I don't like some of the things that are going on in there, but you know, there are a few of us who kind of want to hold the line and do things in the old way.

I was delighted that Tim Fuller was made dean of the college, because he had these views, and he's just tough enough to stick by them. While I don't think his views are any different than, say, Glenn Brooks or David Finley's and so on, but he's just tough enough and I might even say mean enough to [laugh] try to get this through without too much, you know, personal collapse. So I think that's really very good.

I think the, in my own life, I've seen this happen with my own children, who are both liberal educated, and my son Alexander is a perfect liberal arts person. He started out as math and math and physics at the University of Chicago, and then he had the broad education. He came to England with me, he had a lot of time off, and when he came back he became a major in political philosophy, and he did his thesis on Rawles, the Harvard social justice philosopher.

Well, then he decided he wanted to go into business. So he wrote Morgan-Stanley, went through all the interviews and made the cut down to ten, they invited him to New York, and then they asked him the question, "You've never had any business training, you haven't even had economics or

accounting, why do you want to go into business, how can you deal with all this?"

Morgan-Stanley, the great investment bankers. And he very ingenuously said, "Well, I've got a liberal arts education. I can handle all of this." You know, problem-solving, the usual stuff. I had never prepped him on this.

He didn't get the job; they only took two out of that 2,000 that they interviewed.

But he went to Chicago and got an MBA and now has a management consultant business, but he's working on some of the companies he's working for are on the cutting edge of biotechnology. People in one firm in San Diego is growing skin, culturing skin. Another company is, what are they doing there? They're developing an artificial molecule to bombard viruses with, to try to kill viruses.

Well, anyway, he has to read the technical stuff as well as advising them about their marketing. And so you know, that's, my own kid is a good example of what this is all about.

So, I think that's tremendously important here, and I was glad to, you know, devote 30 years of my life to doing that. And in the summer time, I'm proud of the arts stuff, and I'm also proud of all the institutes and things that we started.

That was really--most of them, I was the initiator, but then I wasn't, the only thing I knew to do was get the experts like Bob Loevy in politics and urban planning; and you would get Dick Beidleman; and you'd get Tim Fuller, who had a wonderful liberal arts course called The Conversation of Mankind, and so we really turned out a lot of good stuff there. So.

FINLEY:

So how does it feel to be heading into retirement, when you look back on all this?

JOHNS:

Oh, fine, because you know, the whole point of this is your, I mean, it's nice to impart this knowledge to other people, but you're also doing it for yourself, and I tell people that, you know, a liberal arts education, in spite of what I told you, is not going to make you a better person in one sense. If you're an SOB at the beginning, you'll be an SOB when you graduate, but a very educated one, with a whole variety of things to do.

I tell my students all the time that, you know, the more you know about anything, the more fun it is. Whether it's sports, or food or sex or being with people who know what the sonata form is like, and [can't understand] as it washes over them are, you know, are much better off.

I said, you know, if you know what's going on in baseball--I always love to ask the class, I always ask some woman in the class, tell me what the infield fly rule is, as an example of this. And you know. And it's great when a woman can do it, it's quite a technical rule.

FINLEY:

Yes.

JOHNS:

And so that's fun to do. They get the idea that the reason you're getting this education is, you know, not particularly to get a good job, although it wouldn't hurt, but I've always believed that a liberal arts education, that the official college policy is not to train you for the first job you're going to get. And that's what I've enjoyed doing.

FINLEY:

Well, certainly to know more and to have more fun perhaps has been the hallmark of your life and I hope it'll be the hallmark of your retirement, Gilbert.

JOHNS:

Well, thank you, and so, it's in some ways hard to retire, in some ways not, because there are so many things you want to do.

In fact, my three close friends, who were all exactly the same age, and that's Glenn Brooks and Don Shearn and me--we were all, took the SSS at the same time, and we see each other all the time and have coffee and so on, and we wonder, "How did we ever get anything done when we were teaching full-time?" Because there's hardly any time to do anything now.

So you don't sit around staring at the walls and say, "Gee, what'll I do?" It's just "Which of these 15 books I went up to the Tattered Cover to buy?" I wonder how I'm going to read now. So it's just great fun to do that.

FINLEY:

Great. Well, I think on that note, it's time to close this interview, and I must say it's been extremely enjoyable for me, and I hope so for you, Gilbert.

JOHNS:
Well, thank you.