(Transcription of Tape 1 of 1, Side 1)

KB  Today is Wednesday, April 27, 2005. I'm Karen Blair. I'm delighted to be interviewing Professor Jim Hawkins from the Theater department. Would you start out by telling us a little bit about your background before you came to Central?

JH  Well, of course, you can always remember my name as Jim Hawkins, because of Treasure Island and Jim 'Awkins [said in a pirate accent]. As the years went on, I got old enough that people – my students – actually believed that it was a story about me when I was a kid.

KB  Did your parents name you for that story?

JH  No, my first name is Arlen, Arlen James, and I decided that I wanted to be Jim instead. But the Arlen is still [tape recorder turned off]

... although my initial experience in the theater was as a designer, first in ballet and theater, and then in college.

So when I started teaching at West Virginia University, I was hired as a costume designer and set designer; and then, branched out into children's theater, because that was really my primary love.

KB  I see. Where were you born and raised?

JH  I was raised in Minneapolis. Wonderful arts town. Anatál Dorati was there with the symphony orchestra, and following the footsteps of Bernstein and the performances and concerts for children. Still a wonderful town.

Some years later, I was doing an internship at the children's theater company at the Guthrie, and I had a chance to go back – that was 1977 – after 20 years, and the town had virtually turned upside-down. Very different, very big-city now, and I couldn't find anything. But it was a lovely town to be raised in.

KB  And where did you study?

JH  I went to the University of Minnesota. My dad was on the faculty at the time. And then we moved to California, so kind of mid-ships.

I then went to California with the family, and studied at California State University where I got my master's degree. And then went on staff there and was a designer for a couple years before I went into teaching.
KB Which campus is that?

JH Sacramento.

KB So what year did you come here, and why did you come to Central?

JH Well, I had – I started at West Virginia University, and taught there for six years in design and children's theater. And I really preferred the child drama, the children's theater, so I began looking for a school that offered a major in that area.

And at the time, there were about four or five in the country that did; among them was Central Washington – er, at that time, it was Central Washington State College.

And I applied, in part, because Geraldine Sik's sister, Hazel Dunnington, was on the staff. And in spite of not being particularly well known on campus at the time, in areas outside her specialty of literature and poetry for children, she was really quite renowned nationally.

And I thought, This is a wonderful place to be; a place where I could actually devote myself entirely to child drama, and then some design when I wanted to.

So I applied for the job and got it, without an on-site interview. So we just moved across the country with our two little kids and started here in 1970.

KB What was it about children's theater that appealed to you?

JH Well, I think partly, everyone who is a Theater major at some point has to explain why they’re a Theater major. And the responses go all the way from "So you want to be a movie star," to "What in the world would you want to do that for?"

And when I was studying at the University of Minnesota, taking an Introduction to Theater class, I had a chance to hear a lecture by Kenneth Graham, who was their children's theater specialist, and I thought, This is for me.

This is theater, it's design, but it has such a wonderful affirmative edge. And it was a chance to do professionally what I had always loved doing recreationally. And so he was really my inspiration in that regard.
And after that, when I would say, “I’m going into children’s theater,” for some reason, people all said, “Oh, that’ll be good.” It was within their understanding, and I wasn’t accused of wanting to be a movie star after that.

KB Did you participate in drama in high school and college then?

JH Oh, yeah. I mean, that was on the track when I wanted to be an actor. And, in fact, did some roles later on after I decided it was certainly an avocation, if not a dalliance, to be an actor. But yes, I did lots of acting in high school, and then at the university and college.

KB And did you have a chance to see an impressionable theater in –

JH Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Again, Minneapolis is a marvelous arts community. And when I was in fifth grade, all the children in the Minneapolis school system were bused into the university to Scott Hall, their old theater building, to see a play.

And the first play, luckily, that I saw was Peter Pan; which was, of course, the first play written specifically for the child audience.

Well, we got into that theater – and I had been in theaters before, movie theaters, but never in a professional theater – and we all sat down in our rows, and the lights went out, and of course, we all screamed.

And then the curtain opened and there was the setting of the Darling household in London. Well, I just couldn’t believe it. It was like looking into one of those Easter eggs, with all the figures and color. And the movement. And Nana, the nursemaid dog.

And I was totally engrossed. And then, to top it off, shortly before the play began, the windows opened and in the window flew Peter Pan. And I thought, OK, this is where I want to be.

And, of course, each time I direct a play for children, I like to go back to that recollection, to recall what it is that that audience is going through. Because the audience looks alike over the years – they sound the same, they smell the same. But it’s an audience, a collection of little people, or individuals, who are making those same kinds of responses that I enjoyed that time.

So I was sold from the beginning.

KB When you got here, did you get to know Hazel Dunnington and her sister Geraldine as well?
JH  Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Hazel and I, of course, worked together. And she had formed really the bones of the program here in child drama.

And then I also got to know, with conferences, Geraldine, and Agnes Haaga and Aurora Valentinnetti, who really formed the child drama program at the University of Washington – which is world famous. Less so now that they've retired, and they have been variously replaced.

KB  And Geraldine Sikks died two months ago.

JH  She did, she did. And, of course, that was sad because she had been a distinguished alumna of our university, and was brought on campus to speak at graduation really not too many years ago. Lovely lady who was married to a Latvian prince. So they had great stories to tell.

KB  So what was the state of things when you got here in 1970?

JH  Well, I interviewed on the phone and talked with the chairman – the departments of Speech and Drama were together at the time – and when I asked questions about this or that, Dr. Erickson, who was the chair of that combined department at the time, said, "Well, I'm not sure but I'll find out."

And the year previous to that, there had been an across-the-board 12 percent increase for faculty. And I thought, These are good signs. This is great.

Also, my family was still in California, and I had lots of friends in Seattle. And I loved the Northwest. So it was not difficulty, jumping at the opportunity to join the faculty here.

KB  What facilities did the Theater department have?

JH  We were all over the place. We had offices in Edison, and a theater in Barge; and the theater in McConnell, and the shops in different buildings. So it was certainly a movable feast. And classrooms in different buildings.

And there was always planning to get us together in one facility, but it took some time for that to happen.

KB  Were you able to specialize, or would you have to teach all kinds of things?

JH  No, even considering that I was the new man on campus, I was able to concentrate focus entirely on child drama courses. In fact, at the time I was
hired, they were pleased that I had experience in design, but they really weren’t interested in a designer at the time. So that was great.

So from the beginning, I taught storytelling, and children’s literature, and methods courses on drama in the classroom, and puppetry. And then, directed one play every year.

KB Did you have anything to do the college elementary school?

JH Yes, well, I did. Our classes – most of the methods courses – would have segments of their work at the lab school. Took our students over and supervise them doing some on-hands work with children.

And that was successful. But I was frankly more interested in getting them off campus into the local schools, so we did a lot of that.

And also, we did a lot of outreach into the senior community – nursing homes and retirement homes – because the style of children’s drama is really quite charming, and interesting to older people.

Of course, when I would take my classes out to do a puppet show at the retirement homes, I would be sure to introduce them by saying, “I know this is going to be beneath your interests, but many of you are retired teachers, and it might be interesting for you to see what teachers in training now are doing with the arts for children.”

And, of course, they loved it. And it’s also so good for students, because some of our audiences were in wheelchairs, some they would roll in beds, some had tubes coming out here and there. And it was a very good lesson on just the humanity of children’s theater being really family theater, for all ages.

So while we did some work at the lab school, we were always involved out in the community. And that was the case the last year I taught also. Every class I taught had some experience in working in front of an audience.

KB Now, you went to the other public schools as well?

JH Uh-huh. It wasn’t long before my former students were teaching, and so it wasn’t difficult to make a phone call and come out and see them.

We had one experience at Thorp, where Jean Butkovitz [sp?] was a former student of mine and she taught out there. And they always loved having us
come out to that community. And one winter, we went out there during winter quarter to do a series of short plays. And it was snowing.

And we got there, and I met the principal and asked what age our audience was. And he said, "Oh, it's the whole school from K through 12."

And I said, "This is really a piece that's designed for eight-, nine-, ten-year olds.

"Oh, no, they all want to see it."

So I mentioned that to our actors, and of course, they were apprehensive at the best. And we went into the multipurpose room, and there they all were. In the front row were the little ones, kindergartners. In the back row were the seniors, kind of hanging on each other and chewing this and saying that.

Well, we got into the play of Red Riding Hood, and there were some other short plays. And they were absolutely entranced.

Well, because of the snow, one of the actors had gotten lost and hadn't made it. But when she arrived, I said, "We still have to have a curtain call for all the people who worked hard. And this girl couldn't be here on time and she played Red Riding Hood."

And they said, "Well, do it again!"

When I said, "Oh, you don't want to -- "

"Yeah, do it again!"

So we did the whole show all over again with the girl who couldn't make it. And the high school kids sat there still engrossed with the play. So I was again convinced that theater grabs everybody and wraps them up.

KB How satisfying.

JH Yeah, it really was.

KB Are there some productions that are especially close to your heart?

JH There are so many, Karen. I have a list somewhere. But after 32 years of doing at least one show every year; and then my summers, I've always done work in the field, either in summer theater or - I don't think I could really - I know I couldn't write them down.
I think the ones that are sometimes the most vivid memories, and the most deeply satisfying, are the ones that are improvised by students in the classroom who don't think they're actors. Sometimes those are the ones that are most compelling.

And I think also, the ones I enjoyed the most were the ones where there was a certain amount of stretching involved on the part of the audience to see a non-traditional approach to a familiar story, or where they had to think a bit, were the ones that were most satisfying.

KB Are there any concepts or techniques that resonate especially well that are particularly accessible to the students, or their audiences?

JH The best theater that I found that was accessible to my students, and where they really enjoyed them the most, are those stories that don't rely upon technical effect.

And there's a style of working with children and in children's literature where you don't have to have props or scenery. And, in fact, the actors themselves portray the scenic elements and some of the props. It's called "story theater."

And those are always very satisfying, because they're focused on the actor rather than on a fireplace unit or a crown; those that come from improvisation.

And they're also the ones that are the most available to children, because it embodies the concept of play. And after they play a story, then to perform it is a natural sequence.

KB I would imagine, with our current level of technology, that kind of thing might be going out of style.

JH No, it isn't. In fact, it's quite astounding that our audience that is so jaded by the magnificence of MTV and video games and so forth is quite intrigued when an actor comes on stage and pretends to be a tree. Or a spinning wheel.

It grabs their attention because they can't look anywhere else besides the stage. And so sometimes, the most jaded audience is the one that accepts the simplest the best — although it does require some passion on the part of the player.

KB How do you keep the audience in their seats? I would imagine the impulse to stand up and join is —
JH  Sometimes they do, yes. Sometimes they do. Yeah, I think that’s true. I think that whole sense of participation is at the roots of drama. And, in fact, that’s why it’s in my view the best form of the arts. Because the symphony keeps right on playing, the dance keeps going, it doesn’t need you at all. But the theater doesn’t happen unless you’re there to watch.

KB  Well, it gets expensive to mount a production. Did you have the resources? How did props and scenery and all of that come together?

JH  Yes, I was very proud of our department, because quite quickly, I flew in the face of, at the time, a national impression that children’s theater is for those who can’t do grown-up theater – for those who can’t write it, who can’t design it, who can’t act in it, there’s always plays for children.

And, of course, that was at the time still prevalent in the thinking of some people. And, of course, I would have none of it. Theater is theater, and while the audience may have specific needs and opportunities, it still needs to be the best you can do.

And so our department has never looked at our children’s program as being secondary or a weak sister. We’ve had as much money, as many hours, the top talent available on all of our shows.

And there have been times when I have been called more than cranky in order to achieve that. But it’s been well worth it. Well worth it.

KB  What is the size of a typical production?

JH  Well, the variance with children’s theater is affected a bit by their attention span. And so they tend to be about an hour long. And also, they’re about an hour long because the schools these school buses, and these classroom schedules that they have to adhere to.

And so it’s not that children’s theater has to be loud, and people running around a lot. It’s not that we need to fear that the audience can’t take a quiet moment. But children, most of all, like a variety.

They want a whisper, and then a chase scene, and then some red and then some nothing. And they love that variation of stimulus. And that’s easy to achieve.

But when you see a play where the actors are shouting at the audience, it’s usually out of fear, and the audience shouts back.
KB  So you don’t need a cast of thousands.

JH  No, you don’t. You just need the complete devotion of every actor you have.

I’ve done shows, you know, with 40 actors in it, but the ones that have two or three in them are absolutely as successful as the big ones.

KB  No, you’re quite renowned on campus for your work with puppetry. I wonder if you would talk a little bit about the evolution of that, and the collection that you built, and so on.

JH  Well, puppetry was one of my interests as a child. And I think I decided to specialize in it a bit when I realized that all the interests that I had in playwriting and directing and acting and design could be incorporated into one doable scope.

And also because of the historical influence of Education on this campus, I had lots of teachers in my classroom. And very quickly, they realized the application of puppetry as a stimulus for learning. And it was available to them. So I’ve never offered a course in puppetry that hasn’t been full.

I think I like it because I’m intrigued by that separation between the puppet and the puppeteer; that very quickly, I discovered that you could talk to a child with a puppet and through a puppet, and the child would quickly forget that you were there. They might even talk to the puppet about you. And with the exception of the tiniest, youngest child, they accept the premise, because they interact and make their toys characters already.

And it seemed to me that was a very powerful technique; that there were ramifications for not only education, but for therapy, and for exploring all kinds of ideas that you had double actors.

And, of course, then we began doing touring shows with puppets all over the state. And that was a great advantage, because you didn’t have to feed them and you didn’t have to get a hotel room for them.

And the minute you said “puppet,” there was an interest and an understanding by almost everyone.

The problem with puppetry is that much of it is designed and appreciated by adults. And when you say a “puppet show,” suddenly there are children who
really ought to be in a different entertainment venue, who are too young to understand puppetry.

And that’s really a parental problem, it’s not so much a theater problem. So we often would do shows for adults, either in the classroom or by invitation. But usually when we’re doing puppet shows on tour, it’s for a wide range of ages.

KB Did you make puppets yourself?

JH Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. I remember overhearing one of my students one time talking with a friend of hers and she said, “I hear he has puppets all over his house.”

KB Well, who are some of the puppet masters that you learned from?

JH Well, I worked with a woman in California who had trained as an actor with a company in London that went defunct. She was an old-world puppeteer. Carved marionettes, and carved the heads, and taught us those techniques.

That company that she had been with went belly-up and they paid the actors with puppets. And so she had a few in her collection that were just astounding.

And then in later years, when I was at the Eugene O’Neill Center, I had a chance to work with James Rose, who is a man who is the son of the creators of Howdy Doody.

So I’ve had a chance to go do workshops with lots of wonderful puppeteers – Bill Baird, and Bert Hellstrom [sp?], and Jim Henson and Heather Henson. All of whom were at the same center when I was at the Eugene O’Neill Center.

KB Where is the Eugene O’Neill Center?

JH It’s in Connecticut. And it’s built on the family farm of O’Neill’s family, and the barn was converted to a marionette theater. And every year, they audition and take applications for about 35 puppeteers to do advanced training there for two weeks. And so I had a chance to go there and work with them.

And Jane Henson and Heather Henson were on the staff. And Jim Henson had passed away by that time. And then Jim Rose and a lot of people from the profession were there teaching classes. And we did shows, and the
evening of our performances was on PBS as a special of puppetry from the Center.

KB Oh, I’d like to see that.

JH Yeah, it was great fun. Very experimental. Very much off-the-wall. But really stunning theater.

KB Has children’s theater evolved in the decades that you have participated? Is there a European tradition that underpins it?

JH I think it has evolved. I think it’s – in some ways, it’s gone backwards, in the sense that the need for children to have entertainment and arts involvement has increased steadily over the last several decade, to the extent that there isn’t that therapeutic need for children to see quality theater, which was really the instigation of it in the [1930s and [1940s.

Children were entertained, if not raised, as miniature adults. And then people began to realize that no, there was a sense of the world of a child, which was alien to adults, who either didn’t remember, or weren’t able to cross the line of understanding what children needed.

But that time went on; and I think it stumbled for a bit in the middle, until we found that arts for children had accelerated into a very commercially oriented, slick kind of a performance, where fairy tales and technical eye candy was more typical than was story.

And then, I think, people realized that, and said, “We need to go back to the roots – to the roots of play, and the roots of the world of the child – and write plays that speak to that, and don’t look down at the audience, and don’t fear the audience.”

And so that really is the groundswell that’s happening now in youth drama. That, and also the fact that many more national companies are appealing to family audiences.

My fear was always that – well, not fear, but frustration – was that parents would drop the children off at the theater and say, “When is it over?” And then drive away.

And I wanted them all there, so they could participate in the event together, and that we would be more than babysitters. Well, it didn’t take long till that was the case.
CWU LIVING HISTORY PROJECT  
Jim Hawkins  
ROUGH DRAFT

When we produced our children’s theater plays here originally, the audiences were 70 percent adult. The campus, student campus patrons, would outnumber the children who came to see the play. And I was delighted.

So yeah, there certainly is change – in the theater at large, and in children’s drama in particular.

KB  Could you talk about some of your students? What became of them? Have they used your learning?

JH  They are … they are the finest teachers in the world, many of them. Some of them have gone on to do professional theater as performance. And more are now at theaters, and have theater teachers or professors, or have their own theater companies.

But in terms of performers, there aren’t recognizable names that I could draw on. Although I am in contact with many of them.

One of my students in the classroom today is the niece of a student that I had here in 1970, and he’s a professional actor. And she just mentioned that the other day.

I got a Christmas card from one of my students in 1970, and his son is bald. And I thought, Goodness sakes, time marches on in more ways than one. [chuckles]

And I hear from them often; and have lots of students who were their students. So there certainly is a ripple effect.

My regret is that – it’s no surprise – and that is the theater is so transitory; that many of the people whom I worked with, and the events that we shared in the theater and on stage, are vague memories.

And it’s not that you don’t have videotapes and photographs of those events. But they’re shadows of what the living theater is all about. So there’s some regret to that, but it’s built into the form. [Tape recorder turned off]

KB  What year did you retire from teaching?

JH  2002. I was able to retire early. Ordinarily I would have retired two years ago, but four years ago, the numbers were – or how many years that is – three? – the numbers were so I could retire. And I was ready – not to retire from my work, but to move on to other things.
KB  So, you are returning to teach a special class this spring and summer.

JH  Yes, I'm teaching a class, just because I enjoy it. And I think I've taught a puppetry course every year since I started teaching as a graduate student in 1965 — er, actually, it's been since 1964. But the notes are different. The jokes are new. [laughter]

KB  I wonder if you'd talk a little bit about your colleagues since 1970. You've worked with a great variety of people. Who did you learn from? Who did you engage with?

JH  Well, one of the things that's such an advantage in the Theater department, and in the Drama, is that by the nature of what we do, we have to work together. It's like building a building; you just can't have a carpet until the roof is on.

And everybody has a specialty. And the specialty is, by the nature of the beast, combined through collaboration at some point, and people come and look at it.

And when we had our — years ago, I was on the accreditation team for the university; and the first time when we had lost accreditation, the committee wisely hired the observers, the adjudicators, to come back and give us some information.

And they said essentially the problem with any institution of higher learning is that it's so compartmentalized, not only horizontally, but within every department. And that not only do colleagues not talk to each other, but they plow forward like eggs in a basket.

And that the theater world, where we may shout at each other, and have deep disagreements, we are trained — and, in fact, I think are experts — at finding joint collective solutions. Because the audience is coming.

And the point that this adjudicator made was that every field that can, should have a public component, where people come to the store. They come to the store and buy the milk or the cheese. They come to the tax preparation area. They have someplace where those who are learning actually participate in the application of their learning to the outside world. And they indicated that in the case of drama, that happens universally.

So that was in place in our department. And certainly there were people that I worked with over 32 years that I might not have sought out as a social
companion. But there was no one that I didn't respect. There was no one who didn't inspire.

And, of course, coming to mind, Dr. Betty Evans was my office mate for several years. And she’s sadly missed. And a wonderful, boisterous teacher.

One day, I was sitting in my office, and I overheard two students outside talking about her class. She specialized in Theater History and Introduction to Theater and Playwriting.

One of the students said to the other one, “Are you taking Intro from Dr. Evans?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, what do you think?”

“It's really hard. Be sure to take it.”

And I thought, How rare to hear those two things put together. And so I realized that her standards were high, and her abuse, her loving abuse of her students, was volatile. And they, like ducklings, would just follow her around.

She had much, much to teach. And, of course, she was a wonderful colleague. She really lived life to the fullest.

And then, of course, Hazel Dunnington, who was my colleague in field, was a wonderful person and really a zealous teacher. And she realized – and she was one of the first people that I learned it from – she realized that the academy goes far beyond the campus. And once you're comfortable in your field, you have an obligation to go beyond your campus.

And I'm nonplussed sometimes when I realize how many young or new faculty never quite leave their classrooms or their offices to answer the obligation of learning beyond our institution. And it's too bad.

On one level, they should do it because they would advance faster. And for another, they would realize how quickly what they have to say is relative, is germane, to what they ought to be teaching.

KB What are the strengths of the resources in your department? Are there particular pockets that you see as being unusually distinguished?
JH    Well, it has varied over the years. The easiest improvement, or excellence, to be found in the theater anywhere is the amount of sophisticated equipment that you have. And that's always a bit of a challenge, because by the time something is created, it's already out of date.

But our department does have really fine facilities, all the way harking back to the time when Dr. Smith, Dr. Milo Smith, really designed our current building, and instigated its installation.

But I think the level of achievement of our department had a real shot in the arm when Dr. [Wes] Van Tassel joined our department, and made a concerted, passionate effort to involve students in long-range planning.

They were more than clients, and became part of the planning. And I think that gave them both ownership in our program, and also a sense of belonging to not only the work they did on stage, but the learning, the teaching part.

And then we've had a lot of influence from hiring people who have experience in the professional theater, and have chosen to go into the academic world – not as second-best, but because they got to a point where they had things that they wanted to share and they did so. And continue to do so.

KB    I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the administration. You've seen four presidents, and a couple of interims, too. What about the evolution of the campus in general, and the leadership? Have you thoughts about that?

JH    Well, I think it has reflected the currency of the needs our campus had to fulfill. Sometimes responding to the needs of the culture and the needs of the art; sometimes responding, regrettably, to a mandate of outside.

And whether that mandate was interpreted by our faculty or our on-campus administration, or sent to us in some missive from the Legislature, I think it's been a bumpy road.

It's my sense of it that if we could expand the lesson we learned of giving our students ownership over the arts – to make our funders members, advocates and owners of the arts – including the art of learning – we'd have an easier time.

But there has always been, and maybe there always will be, a sense of a certain adversarial stance between the world of the pocket and the world of the teacher, of the artist.
You know, we love our work. And I think people realize that we love our work – people who don’t necessarily love their work – and there’s a certain amount of resentment to that. But like loving parents, we just have to show them that there’s another path to follow.

The administration has been, in my view – and I’ve had a chance to be involved in four administrations over the years – had different mandates. And I think each of them have carried them out very well.

Some of the mandates, I think, were questionable. Some of what they were asked to do didn’t necessarily support innovative learning, and instead, focused on developing programs with measurable skills, because that was the mandate of the culture.

And I think there were times when we lost the value of learning for learning’s sake, and areas of philosophy and academic curiosity became second-best to those things that would turn into work or into jobs.

And I’ve also been really pleased with the patience, if not the passion, of organizations on the campus, like the senate, who plow forward, determined to be the last guy standing. And I think success is earned that way.

KB  Did the Theater department experience any particular bumps during the cutbacks of the [19]70s and, again, the early [19]80s?

JH  Well, in the sense that we had smaller budgets. But Shakespeare when he said, “All I need is two boards and a passion,” taught us that there other ways to do it. We wouldn’t necessarily volunteer to go the cheap route to do our work, but there were ways that we could work around it, if we had to.

In some areas, where you had to have this machine or that machine in order to properly teach the class, they were hit in a harder way than we were.

Certainly the hiring freeze – applied to various degrees at various times – did impede our growth. And not only that we wanted to hire full-time faculty, but the infusion of visiting artists, for example, for years was non-existent.

And that really, relying upon your internal resources works for a while; but at some point, you either have to send those folks away to get new stuff, or bring in some new stuff in other ways. So that did hurt.

KB  What about town-gown relationship, the context of Ellensburg and the university? Have you seen that as a companionable or a stressful relationship?
JH Well, I've seen that in various institutions that I've been at. And my sense of the town-gown interaction in this town is better than most. I think that the relationship of faculty and faculty partners who are active in the community affairs, and politics, and governance, and organizations has been very healthy.

And too few young faculty go into the community as community members, and participate in that. But when they do, the results are wonderful.

On a personal level, I haven't noticed any town and gown separation, because I'm involved in the community so much with my work with the students. And that's given me a chance to meet lots of folks who saw shows, and heard discussions, and really realized that there was a service component to the university that could serve them.

Again I think there is a certain arrogance that academics, particularly as a form of compensation perhaps to having such low salaries, they like to have. They get a certain attitude, I'm an academic person and therefore, I'll stay here on campus with my library and in my ivory tower.

And they're just fooling themselves. Because the more outreach that we get, the more involvement, things get better. And things are happier.

And it didn't take long before I said, "I'm a community resident. I want my voice to be heard on issues that relate to being a citizen, not just somebody on the other side of 8th Avenue."

KB Well, we haven't talked about the Laughing Horse Summer Theater. It ran 18 years, didn't it? When did it start?

JH Eighteen years. I don't remember what year it was. I know that I – the first year, it was called the Lake Chelan Summer Theater. And we did a series of plays at a theater in Lake Chelan, thinking that would be a wonderful place to start.

And it was initially founded by Richard Lineweaver [sp?] on campus, who was the chairman of the Theater department at the time, and James McGiffin [sp?], who was the publisher of the newspaper. And there were several others.

And I had the opportunity to work, both the first year and the last year – kind of like bookends – to do a play in that season. And I loved directing community theater.
The actors were all from the outside. They might have been students in professional programs at other universities, but we generally didn’t cast our own students. And they were always paid – not huge amounts, but they were paid. And the shows were really wonderful.

KB After the first year, was it always held on the campus?

JH No, then after the first year, then we moved on campus and began producing in [Three-Penny?] Playhouse. And when Dr. Garrity [sp?] arrived, that was when we were able to get a wonderful partnership. Dr. Brooks was involved also.

But it was when the administration said, “Yes, this fills a service need for us. We’ll join you, and support it with facilities and some very helpful public relations, publicity.”

KB I see. So how many productions were done each summer?

JH We did four in repertory. And so the actors would arrive, and the first day they got here, they would all audition. And then the four directors would go off in a room somewhere and cast all four plays.

And that evening, we had a party. And they would post the season of plays, and the parts they would play in all four shows.

So it was an eventful day. And we tried to balance it so that everybody, over the course of the season, would have at least one good role, and have a chance to work with four different directors. So they were working on four plays simultaneously, which is the way repertory is meant to work.

And if you got a season ticket, then you were able to see favorite actors in different roles and different styles.

KB And how long did they have to prepare, before the season began?

JH About a month. And then we would open one play – we would open one play a week. And so while you were running one play at night, the second play would be in tech rehearsals, the third would be blocking and the fourth would be doing read-throughs. And so they lived here. And it was a merry, crazy summer.

KB And what audience showed up?
Primarily an adult audience, and some campus and grad students. And then later, I was on the board of Laughing Horse for several years, and also other boards in the arts.

And we discovered that in Ellensburg — it may be a little bit bigger number now — there’s about a thousand people who see everything. They go to every concert and every play. And it’s really tough to get above that thousand mark.

But they’re dependable. They’ll all come. So our goal was always eleven hundred, maybe twelve hundred, by selecting different kinds of shows.

And did you make money?

We did. We had grants. But the gate — we were always in the black. And, in fact, after the 18 years, when Laughing Horse disbanded, there was money in the pot. And that was when the Laughing Horse Arts Foundation was formed, to use that nucleus of seed money.

And I’m on that board now, and our current charge is to encourage arts in the community in whatever way we can. And so it was from that nucleus that Jazz in the Valley, Valley Musical Theater, the Cowboy Gathering — several projects — have been given seed money, and support — tax support and [inaudible] support — from the Foundation, to encourage the development of those events.

And, of course, Jazz in the Valley now has

(Transcription of Tape 1 of 1, Side 2)

... the scope of Laughing Horse Foundation — er, Laughing Horse Summer Theater.

Why did it close after — when did it close?

I don’t remember the year. It was 18 years after it started.

There’s lots of opinions about why it closed. I think in the successful years, we relied upon a great deal of volunteer work from community members. And [on] lots of angels, who donated generously.

And also, because of that, we were able to do plays that had lots of people in them. And then, as we pulled [tape recording stopped and does not begin again for several minutes into Side 2]
JH ... away from that volunteer base, we needed to pay more in salaries, to bring in actors and directors. And to compensate for that, we had to do shows that had smaller casts, not as flamboyant costumes or scenery.

And in my view, the audience didn’t make that transition with us. And that’s just my perspective on it. It may be not the true one, it’s just what I think brought it about. There were no doubt many causes.

I think probably also that its time had come; that it had bloomed and flowered, and it was time for a new idea.

And many of the people who were founders on the original board of Laughing Horse continue on today on the Jazz in the Valley board. So that energy is still in place, but it’s a different product.

KB So you don’t think that it’s in the cards that a revival will occur?

JH I would certainly be there to help and see the show if it did. But I think arts in our community now are being served in a very different way, but in a very healthy way.

The Valley Musical Theater, the level of excellent dance in our town, a lot of small groups doing theater. And, of course, the Jazz in the Valley, and the Cowboy Gathering, and the Brown Bag musical events at the Hale Home Center [sp?]. There’s lots going on. In a dinky town.

KB Did you participate in the graduate program in the summertime?

JH I did.

KB Can you tell me a little bit about that?

JH Wesley and I really instigated the idea of a Chautauqua or a residency program for high school drama teachers, who could get a master’s degree by being on campus for a short, intense amount of time.

Conceivably, in the course of three or four summers, they could accomplish their graduate curriculum. And then, their project in directing a play could be accomplished in their own school.

So that was very appealing to a lot of people. And now, it’s a very healthy program. And we have students from other states who are involved in taking the coursework – which is rigorous – and then, applying that to producing a
play with their own students in their own location. And, of course, one of our faculty has to go there and see it.

And, of course, it's always also supported by an extensive research document, which talks about the research, the preparation and the looking back at the experience – the evaluative component that accompanies the project.

KB How long are those students on our campus in the summer?

JH Well, it varies. We have a month when there are various courses involved. They can be here till seven in the morning till eleven at night.

And the courses are intensive. And across the board, from playwriting, design, theory, history, research – all the areas are covered in a very intense seminar situation.

KB How many summers has that program gone on?

JH I believe that it's probably in its seventh or eighth year. I could be wrong on that.

KB OK. Has the Theater department participated at all in the branch campus centers in other parts of our state?

JH I taught off campus several years, teaching courses that are in our curriculum. And there were programs more at the time for advanced degrees in Education, and many of them had electives in the area of child drama.

And I would teach courses off campus in Normandy Park and in South Seattle, in Bremerton and Spokane. So I did several of those kinds of courses. But as I recall, I don't believe any of the courses in the Theater major itself have been offered off campus.

KB When you taught in Bremerton, did you drive over once a week?

JH I would usually do a weekend, four or five weekends. And that was offered through the campus Office of Continuing Education. And they would determine the hours, the contact hours required, and the evaluation.

And I love it. I think those courses of returning students, or of people who are in the field, are very interesting. And bring a whole different texture and climate to the classroom than do the average college student.
KB Well, if you came here 35 years ago, I guess you’re in a position to evaluate what Central should be proudest of.

JH Well, I think the idea of its diversity of student age, its intergenerational student population, is something that is unique to our campus. And I think people who want to return to campus for advanced work, or refresher courses, should be encouraged to know that they will fit in; that they add, in my view, a lot of experience and zest to the learning environment.

I think our campus is a beautiful campus. And I think the faculty, increasingly over the recent years, has been acknowledged by the administration, to the extent that they have – I think they feel prestige. I think they understand that they’re valued.

Challenges, of course, are challenges to the universal academic environment of addressing that sense of separation from society, of inclusion. The fact that it’s a life to be satisfied in, but not to be rich.

There are many years when I was delighted to – but in a way needed to – get another job; and delighted to be a waiter for summers and weekends for probably 15 years.

KB Where?

JH Here in town. Only on the weekends, and only on those days that I wasn’t teaching. But, of course, you can – the faculty code permits, if not encourages, people to reach out and do other jobs.

And that’s personally how I got acquainted with people in town on a very different level. When you’re waiting on tables, particularly if it’s a good restaurant – and I never worked in places that were just anything but good restaurants – that there’s a wonderful unique rapport between a diner and a good waiter.

And I remember one time having waited on the president and the board of trustees for dinner – it was Dr. Garrity – and he, after one of their board meetings, said, “Let’s all go have dinner at this restaurant.”

And it was my table. And so I approached their table, and took their drink orders, and greeted them, and brought the menus. And [I was] about to take their dinner orders when Dr. Garrity said, “By the way, have you met Professor Hawkins?”
And they looked up the aisle and down the aisle looking for Professor Hawkins and he said, "No, no. The waiter. The waiter!" "Oh-h-h."

And all those years – 11, 12, 13 years that I waited on tables – I never even got a look that was from anyone – administrators, faculty, students – that this was inappropriate. I believed in the dignity of work, and I exhibited that. I was a professional.

And so that gave me wonderful inroads into families and friends of many years. Plus, the pride of being able to earn the dollar on my legs rather than with my notebook.

I think probably my waiting years are behind me. But I might be a maitre d’ sometime.

KB  What restaurants do you recommend?

JH   Oh, I wouldn’t do that. [laughter] I wouldn’t do that.

KB  Well, have I failed to ask any questions that need to be asked? Is there additional information that you’d like to include?

JH   I can’t think of anything, Karen. The only thing that I would like to stress, one of the reasons that provided continuity for me over those 32 years of active teaching was the fact that I was really involved in the University Senate.

And I’m chagrined when I hear faculty, new or old, say that it’s not worth their time. And some departments, in fact, it was my observation, would send their newest, youngest faculty as though it was kind of an internship, rather than their most experienced or motivated faculty.

And in my mind, it’s the only venue where the academy comes together for discussion of a relevant nature. And there’s such good work to be done there.

I think there were probably only four or five years, not counting my sabbaticals, when I wasn’t on the Senate. And I thoroughly enjoyed it. There were hours that were boring, and there was various participation with the senior administration with the Senate; and some ears were big and some ears were small; but it always moved us forward.

KB  What are some of the accomplishments that it achieved?
JH  Well, of course, the University Senate primarily serves the needs of faculty, and the needs of faculty as they interact with students.

And so, policies that dealt with ethical issues between faculty and students, with welfare issues and issues related to the harmony of the workplace, are all very appropriate for the Senate to deal with as a representative body. And there were a lot of things that happened that I was quite proud of.

KB  Do you have any forecast for the inauguration of a union on campus next quarter?

JH  I don't know. There was a flurry of interest in the union in the [19]80s, when I think people were responding to the pressure of what they felt was inappropriate incursion into faculty rights. And I think there was a real energy to find a bargaining representative.

KB  Are you talking about the RIFFs in [19]81, when some tenured professors were fired?

JH  I think that was certainly part of it. And then, the long spate of inadequate salary [tape skips] ... that as your class gets larger, so does your curriculum get smaller. And some decisions that were essentially the purview of the faculty were being offered as *quid pro quo* for favors received in welfare issues. And I think at that point, realized that, I think, that it wasn't worth the trade-off.

I don't think – I don't know. I think the influence of the union will be based on the pulse of the university and its relevancy.

KB  I have one last question. I wonder if the building, the Tower Theater – a year ago renamed for Milo Smith – did that have an impact on the program?

JH  It has an impact on the program in the sense that it honors a faculty member in the past. And you probably are aware that there is very a clear delineation on campus of which facilities are named after faculty, and which are named after donors, and which are named after former administrations.

And the precedent that we were working very hard, over several years, to have the Tower Theater named after Milo Smith, was based on the Sarah Spurlock [sp?] Gallery; that there was another location on campus devoted to public – at least in part – public viewing that was named after a faculty person who hadn’t been an administrator as such.
And so, using that, we were so pleased to be able to honor Milo that way. And I think it means a lot to him.

KB Well, thank you very much. I've learned so much.

JH My pleasure.

KB It was just a delight.

JH Well, good. Thank you, Karen. Thank you, Chris. [Tape runs blank to the end of Side 2]