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Interview no. 697

R. Milton Leech

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: R. Milton Leech (1921 -)
INTERVIEWER: Sarah E. John
PROJECT: History of the University
DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 14, 1984
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted
TAPE NO.: 697
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 697

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from U.T. Austin in 1948, the first Master of Fine Arts degree in Dramatic Production from U.T. Austin in 1949, and a Ph.D. from the same institution.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biographical data; how he came to Texas Western College; the beginning of the Drama and Speech program (and eventually the Drama and Speech Department), and the first plays produced; persons from Fort Bliss who helped the drama program get started; favorite productions; former students who have gone on professionally in the theatre and in higher education; administrative work, including Executive Director of Mission '73, Assistant to the President (Dr. Ray), the first Vice President at UTEP, and Acting President, student unrest and ethnic concerns, changes and condition in curriculum, facilities and activities; contributions to the Drama Department since 1971; future plans.

Length of interview: 1 hour Length of transcript: 36 pages

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Milton Leech
Professor of Drama and Speech
The University of Texas at El Paso

Address Business: The University of Texas at El Paso
Home: 804 Don Quixote

Born June 23, 1921, in Cameron, Texas

Married Carolyn Hotchkiss, Jacksonville, Texas, 1942

Education The University of Texas at Austin
B.F.A. 1948 in Drama
M.F.A. 1949 in Drama
Ph.D. 1962 in Drama and Education

Military Record U.S. Air Corps 1942-45
Commissioned Second Lieutenant in October, 1942
Discharged in 1945 as a Captain in the U.S. Air Force.

U.S. Air Force, Korean Conflict, 1951-53

Professional Record Lon Morris College, 1948, Instructor
U.T. El Paso, 1949-51, Instructor-Department of English, Speech and Drama
Assistant Professor, 1951
Director of Drama and Speech, 1953-57
Associate Professor, 1958-60
Head of Department of Drama and Speech, 1960
Professor of Drama and Speech, 1962
Assistant to the President, 1963-64
Dean of Administration, 1965-66
Vice President, 1966-68
Acting President, 1968-69
Vice President for Academic Affairs, 1969-71
Professor of Drama and Speech, 1971-present
Director of Theatre, 1972-78

Memberships and Activities (Past and Present) Served as Executive Director of MISSION '73, El Paso citizen's committee which made intensive study of the University and published a ten-year plan for the institution, 1962-63
National Society of Arts and Letters

American Educational Theatre Association
 Children's Theatre Conference
 Texas Educational Theatre Association
 El Paso United Fund
 Hotel Dieu Board of Directors
 Past President of El Paso County Mental Health Association
 Past President of the Texas Association for Mental Health (1969-71)
 Region IV Vice President of the National Association for Mental Health, 1976-78
 Advisory Board of the Salvation Army
 Listed in Who's Who in America
 Who's Who in American Education
 Directory of American Scholars
 Who's Who in American College and University Administration

Writings

Education Through Theatre for Children (with original children's play, Comanche Eagle). Dissertation. Ann Arbor University Microfilms, Inc., 1962.

(Editor, with J. M. Ray), Mission '73 A Ten Year Plan Proposed by Citizens of El Paso for Texas Western College. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1963.

(Editor, with S. D. Myres) Texas Sketchbook, A Sheaf of Prose Poems. Elroy Bode (Author) Introduction by Milton Leech, El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1967.

Articles

"Chiton, Chlamys, Himation" Players Magazine, Vol. 27, No. 1 (October, 1950), 14-15.

"The Ray Presidency, 1960-1968", Nova, Vol. 3, No.4, Summer, 1968.

"Some Hang-ups in Higher Education", Nova, Vol.4, No.3, Spring, 1969.

Artistic Activities of Public Recognition

(Texas Western College and The University of Texas at El Paso)

Production-Direction

The Male Animal (Nugent and Thurber), 1949
The Importance of Being Earnest (Wilde), 1950
All My Sons (Miller), 1950
Robin Hood (de Koven), 1950

Costume Design
Happy Birthday (Loos), 1950

Production-Direction
Our Town (Wilder), 1951
Rain (Colton and Randolph), 1953
As You Like It (Shakespeare), 1953
Green Grow the Lilacs (Riggs), 1953
The Voice of the Turtle (Van Druten), 1954
The Crucible (Miller), 1954
The Telephone (Menotti), 1954
Carousel (Rogers and Hammerstein), 1954
Peter Pan (Barrie), 1954

Costume Design
Macbeth (Shakespeare), 1954

Costume and Scene Design
Medea (Jeffers), 1954

Production-Direction-Design
Death of a Salesman (Miller), 1955
Seventeen (Benson, Gannon, Dent Musical based on Tarkington), 1955

Costume and Scene Design
I Am a Camera (Van Druten), 1955
The Male Animal (Nugent and Thurber), 1955

Production-Direction
Desire Under the Elms (O'Neill), 1956
Dial "M" for Murder (Knott), 1956
Picnic (Inge), 1956
Romeo and Juliet (Shakespeare), 1956

Costume and Scene Design
The Madwoman of Chaillot (Giradoux-Valency), 1956
Darkness at Noon (Kingsley), 1956

Scene Design
Wonderful Town (Fields, Chodorov, Bernstein, Comden and Green), 1956

Production-Direction
The Wizard of Oz (Miller-Baum), 1957
The Lady's Not for Burning (Fry), 1957
The Matchmaker (Wilder), 1958
The Diary of Anne Frank (Goodrich-Hackett), 1959
The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker (O'Brien), 1959

Costume and Scene Design

Cinderella (Chorpenning), 1959
The Boy Friend (Wilson), 1959
The Gentle Grafter (Woodmansee-Harland), 1960
Waiting for Godot (Beckett), 1960
Salt for My Partner (Greene), 1960

Production-Direction

Marco Polo (J. Massey), 1960
Come Back, Little Sheba (Inge), 1960
Look Homeward, Angel (Frings), 1960
Pinocchio (Miller), 1961
Dark at the Top of the Stairs (Inge), 1961

Costume Design

Electra (Sophocles), 1961
She Stoops to Conquer (Goldsmith), 1961

Costume and Scene Design

The Fourposter (de Hartog), 1961
Clerambard (Ayme), 1961

Production-Direction-Design-Playwright

Comanche Eagle (Leech), 1961

Production-Direction

I Never Sang for My Father (Anderson), 1972
Bus Stop (Inge), 1972
Dark of the Moon (Richardson), 1973

Costume Design

Misalliance (Shaw), 1972

Production-Direction

Suddenly Last Summer (Williams), 1974
This Property is Condemned (Williams), 1974

Production-Direction

The Subject was Roses (Gilroy), 1975
Stories of America (Benet), 1976

Costume Design

Family (Wingate), 1973
A Thurber Carnival (Thurber), 1973
Stop the World, I Want to Get Off (Newley), 1975
How the Buzzard Won the West (Wingate), 1974
A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare), 1975

The Real Inspector Hound (Stoppard), 1975
Vigil (Wingate & Fountaine), 1976
Loot (Orton), 1976
A Phoenix Too Frequent (Fry), 1976
Everything in the Garden (Albee), 1976
Time Remembered (Anouilh), 1976
Moon for the Misbegotten (O'Neill), 1976

Production-Direction-Costume Design

Toys in the Attic (Hellman), 1977

Costume Design

Volpone (Johnson), 1977
Two for the See Saw (Gibson), 1977
The Miracle Worker (Gibson), 1977
X'mas in Las Vegas (Richardson), 1977
Ballad of a Sad Cafe (McCullers), 1978
The Man-in-the-Moon (Cullen), 1978
Slow Dance on the Killing (Hanley), 1978
What the Butler Saw (Orton), 1978

Production-Direction-Costume Design

Lu An Hampton Lafferty Oberlander (P. Jones), 1978

Costume Design

Bad Habits (McNally), 1978

Production-Direction

A Man for all Seasons (Bolt), 1978

Costume Design

Playboy of the Western World (Synge), 1979
Ghost of Canterville Hall (adapted by Wilde), 1979
Love of Four Colonels (Ustinov), 1979
Ladies of the Alamo (Zindel), 1979

Production-Direction-Costume Design

God's Favorite (Simon), 1979

Production-Direction-Costume Design

The Oldest Living Graduate (P. Jones), 1979
(with professional actor, Patrick Hines as
guest artist)

Costume Design

The Fifth of July (Wilson), 1980
Timblewitt (Johnson), 1980
Ten Nights in a Bar Room (Pratt), 1980
Butterflies Are Free (Gershe), 1980
Black Comedy (Shaffer), 1980

Production-Direction-Costume Design

How the Other Half Loves (Ayckbourn), 1980

Costume Design
Scapino (Dunlop and Dale), 1980

Production-Direction-Costume Design
The Member of the Wedding (McCullers), 1980
Harry (Chase), 1981

Costume Design
Rhinoceros, (Ionesco), 1981
The Pied Piper of Hamelin, (Bernhardt), 1981
Rimers of Eldrich, (Wilson), 1981

Production-Direction-Costume Design
The Last Meeting of the Knights
of the White Magnolia, (Jones), 1981
You Know I Can't Hear You When the
Water's Running, (Anderson), 1982

Costume Design
The House of Blue Leaves, (Guðre), 1982
Two Maples, (Swartz), 1982
The Crucible, (Miller), 1982
Tango (Mrozek), 1982

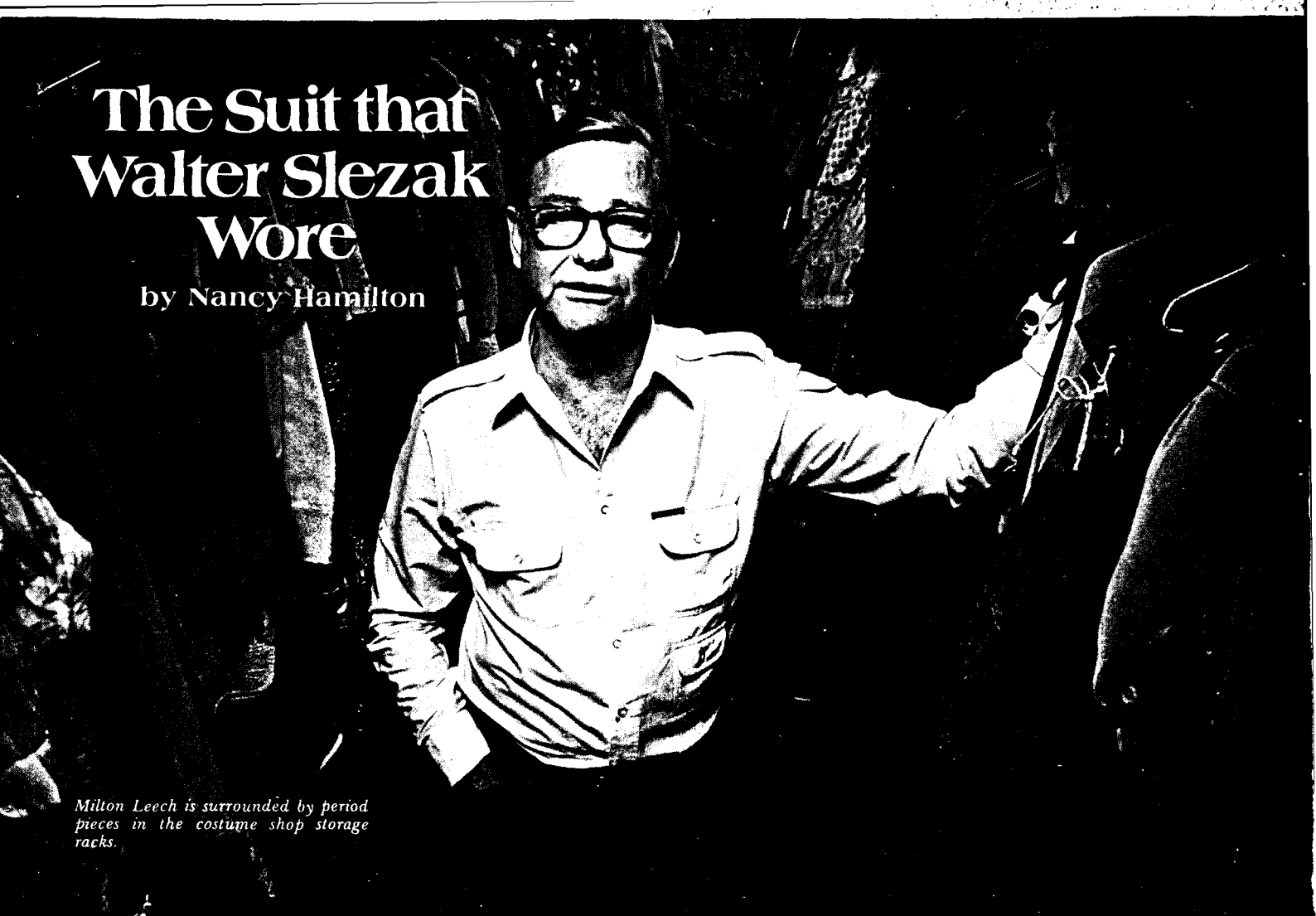
Production-Direction-Costume Design
All the Way Home, (Agee-Mosel), 1982
A life in the theatre (Mamet), 1984
Costume Design
Seduced, (Shepard), 1982
Company, (Sondheim), 1983
The Lion Who Wouldn't, (Wingate), 1983

Production Direction-Costume Design
Beyond Therapy, (Durang), 1983
Sweet Bird of Youth, (Williams), 1983

Costume Design
The Caretaker, (Pinter), 1983
The Gingerbread Lady, (Simon), 1983
The Truth Suspected (Alarcon) 1984
You Never Can Tell (Shaw) 1984
The Magician's Nephew (Harris) 1984

The Suit that Walter Slezak Wore

by Nancy Hamilton



Milton Leech is surrounded by period pieces in the costume shop storage racks.

“Lucy Barton was the one who got me interested in costuming,” says Milton Leech, professor of drama and speech at UT El Paso.

During her many years on the faculty at UT Austin, where Dr. Leech earned bachelor's through doctor's degrees, the late Lucy Barton influenced several generations of theatre folks, and continues to do so through her classic book on historical costumes. A well-worn copy of it occupies a prominent place in Dr. Leech's office in the Fox Fine Arts Center.

“Lucy taught us to try to capture ‘time-spirit’ in the clothing through silhouette, texture, color, and accessories,” he explains. “Then you have to interpret the clothing to fit the individual character's personality. You ask yourself — Is this what that person would have worn? Does it suit the actor as well?”

On his wall are framed sketches of costumes, some with swatches of cloth samples attached. Some are from England, some his own.

“You start with the play,” he says. “In designing the costumes you have to know as much as you can about the

play. You meet with the director and other designers involved — scenery, lights — and hold a point-of-view conference to learn the director's approach to the play. Then the designers try to capture it visually and individually in the costumes and sets. I spend as much time in researching costumes for a production as other professors do in writing papers for journals.”

A member of the UTEP faculty since 1949, Dr. Leech is senior in number of years in his department. The years have done little to change his youthful slim build, though gray is invading his smoothed-down blond hair.

“When I came here I did everything,” he relates. The department was small then and the few faculty members had to perform a multitude of skills related to producing shows as well as teaching. Drama teachers still direct shows, but a professional staff is available to assist them.

From 1961 to 1971 Dr. Leech became an administrator, rising to the position of acting president of the University in 1968-69.

Upon returning to the Drama Department, then located in Magoffin Au-

ditorium, he found a small collection of costumes that people had given or that had been purchased from thrift shops. “We made a storage space for them in the attic, but the roof leaked when it rained. So we pretty much started over when we came to the Fine Arts Building in 1974.”

Now he presides over a domain of several rooms behind and above the University Playhouse stage, an almost secret hideaway that one needs a guide to locate. Here thousands of costumes and accessories are stored, washed, ironed, dry-cleaned, repaired, taken in, taken up, let out, designed, cut and basted, sewn to fit actors, and cataloged so they can be found again.

Dr. Leech has three main sources for costumes:

1) Historical or period costumes usually must be made for a specific play. The costume crew drafts patterns and makes garments, often using materials Dr. Leech has found on sale at low prices and stored to meet future needs.

2) Contemporary costumes (since the 1950s) are primarily assembled from items donated to the University. This

part of the collection includes military uniforms, individual men's suits, clothing found in attics, and whole wardrobes.

3) For some plays individual items are purchased from places like church thrift shops, Goodwill, the Salvation Army, rummage sales and garage sales.

Some of the choicest items are related to University history. For example, there is Alice Barry's coat, the one she wore on her honeymoon trip to South America where her husband, John G. Barry, first president of the College of Mines, had some geology business to transact. It is a full-length, light-weight dark material, impressively embroidered with patterns of beads that give it a subdued elegance. Another former president's wife, Mrs. Joseph M. Ray, gave the collection a stunning cocktail dress featuring a Chinese design on a gold background, with shoes covered in the same material.

"Sometimes we display some of our special, museum-quality items on manikins during play productions," says Dr. Leech. "Lucy Barton, on a visit here in the fifties, suggested that we work toward a museum collection of costumes. I explored the possibility but it didn't work out."

Another historic collection features the hats of the late Josephine Clardy Fox, benefactress of the University for whom the Fine Arts Building is named. She was well known in El Paso for her penchant for colorful chapeaux, usually purchased in Paris and other fashion centers from the top designers.

"We have some gorgeous things from the twenties and thirties," Dr. Leech continues. One is a garment whose owner called it her "Jean Harlow suit," a one-piece affair similar to today's jump suit but made of lush green velvet with flared legs and a distinctive collar. Another fetching item is a heavy gold satin Ceil Chapman gown encrusted with patterns of beading and sequins.

For some periods, such as Gothic and Renaissance, the collection is in good shape. "For 'A Man for All Seasons' we had a professional costumer in to design and make the costumes," recalls Dr. Leech. "He used the materials we had on hand, that I had picked up for 50 cents a yard from a wholesaler." There also is a fair representation of garments for Greek and Roman plays, turn of the century, and the 1920s, all from past productions.

Then there are ways of adapting existing costumes to fit a different period.

"You can dye or age materials," sug-

gests Dr. Leech. "And you can make period jewelry out of all kinds of things. Elizabethan jewelry, for example, can be made from plumber's chain and bicycle reflectors."

Celastec is a magical product for theatre work, he says. A compound that hardens when dipped in a certain chemical, it can be used to fashion jewelry, armor, rocks and trees. Once it hardens, it can be painted, and it is light weight but very strong.

When it comes to footwear, the costume crew become amateur cobblers. Donated high-button shoes usually don't work, says Dr. Leech, because the people who wore them 100 years ago were much smaller than today's university students.

Last year, when the Colorado Costume Co. of Denver went out of busi-

ness, the costume shop hit a bonanza of sorts. "We had rented special costumes from them for many years," he says. "I had dealt first with the father when he was running the company, then with his son. When they sold out, I was able to use some gift funds to buy at very little cost such things as sword cases, which are hard to come by, a genuine London bobby's suit with helmet, and some costumes from the old M-G-M studio including one with Walter Slezak's name in it."

Kerri Harrison, graduate drama student, works as a teaching assistant in the costume shop, where she has completed a comprehensive cataloging of the more than 5,000 items of clothing and accessories. She has modern dresses stored by type and color, with period garments on a facing rack arranged by centuries.



Students Elizabeth Ingle and James DeAnda (above) lay out fabric to be used in making a costume. At left Alice Bolton and Jack Spradley pin a costume together on a dress form.



Two racks are devoted to men's clothing — suits, vests, sport coats, slacks, formal wear.

Cabinets contain drawers filled with belts, aprons, caps, collars, gloves, muffs, hosiery, pajamas, sashes, shawls, purses, masks, wigs, and other accessories. Donated costume jewelry occupies another section.

While the collection is comprehensive, it is not available for rentals, Dr. Leech says. As property of a state institution, it must be very carefully accounted for.

When a show is ready for production, costumes are fitted to the actors, cleaned and pressed, and hung on a special rack that has rollers. Before each

(Continued on page 17)

Deaths

Thomas J. Gerth (B.S. 1951), January 23, in Clearwater, Florida, his home for the past five years. A 27-year employee in field engineering with the Sperry Gyroscope Company, he had worked in the United States and abroad. Survivors are his wife, Nan Gerth, one son and three daughters. He was a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity.

David Rasco (B.A. 1969), July 28, in Houston, where he was employed as purchasing director for Daco Oil Tool & Supply Inc. He is survived by three children and his parents of El Paso.

Reginald G. Ponsford (1930 etc.), widely known Southwest mining engineer and consultant, July 28, in El Paso. Survivors include his wife, Jean Miffley Ponsford, who for many years was secretary in the UTEP Department of Mass Communication, and two sons.

William J. Rand, Col./USAF, ret., (B.A. 1975), July 29, in El Paso. A decorated veteran of 30 years in the Air Force, he returned to UTEP upon his retirement in 1973 and received a degree in Mass Communication. He served for two years as chairman of the board of KCOS-TV Public Broadcasting Service and was instrumental in its organization. He was also a 1949 graduate of Syracuse University with a degree in physics. He is survived by his wife, Lillian L. Rand, five sons and a daughter, and a sister and brother of El Paso.

Afifi Malooly, widow of Esau Malooly, El Paso businessman, August 15, in El Paso. A plaque honoring the Maloolys, who were donors of the site of the Union Building, was unveiled in the original wing of the Union during the University's 65th anniversary celebration in 1978. She is survived by her sons Albert, George, Edward, Richard and Raymond Malooly, and a daughter, Joanne Lujan, all of El Paso.

"Cactus" **Jack Curtice**, head football coach from 1946-49, of a heart attack, August 19, in Santa Barbara, California. He came to UTEP, then Texas Western College, as athletic director and head football coach from West Texas State, and went on to coach at the University of Utah, Stanford and the University of California at Santa Barbara. President of the American Football

Coaches Association in 1961, he remained on its rules committee for 28 years. His family resides in Santa Barbara.

Hazel Berry More (B.S. 1950), a teacher for 46 years in the El Paso schools, August 23. She is survived by a sister.

Patricia Chew Grigsby (B.S. 1959), retired principal of Travis Elementary School, in El Paso, August 26. Survivors include her husband, E. Neal Grigsby, two sons and three daughters.

James W. Wadley, Sr., (1946 etc.) September 3, in El Paso. A graduate of Southwest School of Trust Banking, Southern Methodist University, he was a retired vice president and trust officer at State National Bank. Survivors are his wife, Shirley Wadley, five daughters and a son.

Raul Gonzalez (B.S. 1979), a teacher at J.M. Hanks High School, September 12, in a motorcycle accident in Juarez. He is survived by his parents, Manuel and Socorro Gonzalez, a daughter, Brenda, two sisters and a brother.

Leo F. Eisert (B.A. 1936; M.A. 1952), retired from 20 years with the El Paso Natural Gas Company and former teacher in the Ysleta School District, September 12. He is survived by his wife, Lenore Eisert.

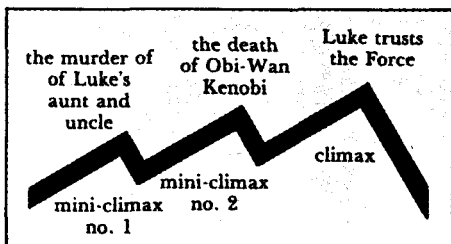
Joe Galatzan, M.D., who was for many years the team physician for UTEP, September 23. Survivors are his wife, Sylvia Galatzan, and three sons.

Anna Ridle Burrows (B.B.A. 1961), October 2. Survivors are her husband, Joseph S. Burrows, a son and daughter.

Salvador Ramirez (B.B.A. 1958), director of the El Paso Association of Retarded Citizens and former director of special projects for Project BRAVO, October 12. Active with the El Paso Boys' Club, he has served as its executive director. He was a national consultant for federal programs including VISTA, Head Start, Migrant Labor and Upward Bound, a spokesman on slum clearance committees and director of local juvenile delinquency study projects. He received his doctorate in sociology at the University of Colorado. Survivors are two daughters, his mother and a brother, all of El Paso.

Movies... (from page 12)

Often there are smaller mini-climaxes along the way. For instance, in "Star Wars," mini-climax No. 1 was the murder of Luke's aunt and uncle by Darth Vader's Imperial troopers. Because of this, Luke decides to become a Jedi warrior. Mini-climax No. 2 was the death of Obi-Wan Kenobi, Luke's mentor; this matures Luke from a boy to a man. The complete "Star Wars" graph would look like this:



An awareness of dramatic structure forces the viewer to focus on what exactly the protagonist wants, what's preventing him from obtaining it, the decision he makes to get it, and the resulting consequences.

Conflict is the heart of drama; identify it and you will have a key that will make the character's actions understandable. A drama's meaning precipitates around its conflict.

I hope these few tips will make you want to dig deeper into movies, that they will make it easier for you to do so and that they will, most of all, add enjoyment to your movie going.

If, however, they do nothing but confuse you, or worse, take the pleasure away from your movie viewing, forget them. Movies can sometimes be art, but they should always be fun. □

Truth... (from page 7)

As it turned out, her biology background gave her insight into her lie detection instrument. It works on the theory that if a person is deliberately lying, that effort will start internal chain reactions. The heart quickens and other signals go off, picked up through a single finger inserted into a tube in the instrument.

Charges that polygraph results can be skewed by people under drug influence, by pathological liars, by the innocent that have reacted to the stress of the test, or by an old event remembered during questioning, are disregarded by Ms. Gonzalez.

"The instrument is never wrong," she flatly states. "After years I have developed a feeling for when someone is lying. But sometimes I have been fooled.

"I've sat there thinking, yes, this person is really telling me the truth. And then I look at the chart and say, 'Boy, what a good liar!'"

If there is a mistake, it is in the interpretation of what the instrument has charted, Ms. Gonzalez explains. The examiner must decide whether lines show truth, or lies.

She is solemn a moment before she adds, "An exam is only as good as the examiner." □

Patrice Steadmon is a business reporter for the El Paso Times. She is working on her master's degree in business at UTEP.

Suit... (from page 9)

performance, the track is rolled into a freight elevator that descends to the backstage area below. After the show, the actors return their costumes to the rack. Each is checked upstairs by the costume crew for cleaning, sewing, pressing or other work.

The most unusual section is devoted to animal costumes. Dr. Leech says that children's plays generally involve animals of various kinds — some he has on hand are lions, rabbits, an alligator, a buzzard, and a variety of other birds.

While Dr. Leech serves as costumer for almost all the regular season and summer season dramas at UTEP, he also keeps his hand in directing.

He says he finds his work "always interesting. You never know what you'll run into, or what a director may ask you to do. The last children's play we had to have a house that walked in on chicken feet. Now that's what I call a real challenge for costumers!" □

Milton Leech
by Sarah John
June 14, 1984

J: Just to sort of start things off, I usually like to ask for a biographical sketch, as brief or as long as you want to make it, but just sort of where and when you were born and what your schooling was and so forth. And then to get you to El Paso, I'd like to know what brought you here finally. If you would go ahead with that.

L: Don't let me drag it out too long. Well, I was born in a small town in central Texas called Cameron, Texas. It's the county seat of Milam County, about 65 miles from Austin, on June 23, 1921. Actually, I attended grade school out in the small oil field town, and then went back into Cameron for high school, graduated there in 1938. At that time of course Texas just had 11 grades, and I had started early in the little country school and had skipped a grade, so I graduated when I was 15 years old. And my parents thought I was too young to go away to college and so I did what was called a post graduate thing and learned to type in the small high school.

Then I went to a small junior college in east Texas called Lon Morris Junior College, it's a Methodist school. I went there for two years, and while I was there I became... actually I went there to be a ministerial student. And after about, oh, I think maybe less than one semester I decided that really wasn't what I wanted to do. And there was a wonderful woman there named Zula Pearson who got me interested in the theater, and I was very active in all kinds of things

in junior college and then went to the University of Texas in '41 and enrolled in their Drama Department. A few months later Pearl Harbor came along, a friend of mine and I had to go help save the United States. So we went off to the Air Force and I served in the Air Force as a bombardier, flying officer. Well, I got out with the rank of Captain.

And then I was released after the atomic bombs were dropped, I was released in '45, went back to my home. I'd married right before I went to the service, so Carol and I had a young daughter. And we went back to my hometown and I fooled around with various odd jobs there and finally decided I really wanted to go back to school. So I re-enrolled in the Drama [Department].

J: You'd only had about a year, right, at Austin?

L: Less than a year. I went there in September, and Pearl Harbor was in December. And they made a deal with us, of course, that if you enlisted in the service you would get credit for the courses you were taking before finals even came along. So I got one semester's credit without even finishing, and just because I was going to volunteer for the service.

Then, oh, I went back to Austin in '46, guess, and got a BFA degree in Drama, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drama, in '48. Went back to the little junior college where I had gone to school and taught Drama for one semester, and they had just started a brand new MFA program in Drama at Austin.

So I got in on the ground floor of that and then in '49 I got the first Master of Fine Arts Degree in Dramatic Production that the University gave.

And the summer that I received that degree, the then president of this institution...which the name had just been changed to Texas Western College by the Legislature in its previous session, and the new president was a man named Wilson Elkins, who of course was a big Austin athlete, Rhodes scholar, which I'm sure you have on many of your other tapes. But Dr. Elkins came to Austin to interview me. And I had three job offers right out of school--one from Nebraska; one from what was then Texas College for Women at Denton. And I didn't want to do plays with women playing men's roles and I didn't want to go to Nebraska, so almost by default I came to a little school that I knew nothing about whatsoever, with a new name. It had been a mining school. And he brought me out ostensibly to set up a department or a program in drama and speech, as it turned out.

J: So they didn't really have any of that before you came here?

L: No. Myrtle Ball, of course, had started doing some plays in the '30s and she had an organization called The University Players. When I got here it was defunct. There were no courses in theater; there was no theater. And there were some speech courses being taught. Mrs. Ball and Clarice Jones, two ladies, were teaching speech in the English Department. Leland Sonnichsen was the chairman of the English Department. That was the fall of '49.

So, young and blind, I called for a reviving of The University Players, and I was amazed at the number of students who turned up. The school had, I think the records show something like two thousand and something. And this group of students turned up and I announced that we were starting up The University Players and we would do a play. I chose The Male Animal, a play by Eliot Nugent and James Thurber. And we didn't have a theater so the present ballroom was a part of the old Union before all the additions, and so I decided that we would do a play in the round, which I had learned to do at the Drama Department in Austin, where we just turned a room into a theater with the folding chairs on small platforms. So that year we did plays in the Student Union Building. We made our own lights, we just did everything by ourselves. I mean it was a very enthusiastic group of people. I still remember and still hear from and see students from that first year, some of them who long ago left El Paso.

J: That's great. What was the reaction, for example, of Myrtle Ball and Clarice Jones and some of the other professors on campus? Were they supportive of this, did they want this kind of a group on campus?

L: There was no real opposition. Oh, I remember Gene Thomas, who was Dean of Engineering, thought "Well, I just don't know that we ought to be doing this kind of thing over in the ballroom." And he seemed to think it was going to be sort of a problem for Physical Plant to have to help us

carry chairs around, so we did our own. And he didn't know for sure that I ought to be plugging theatrical lights into those circuits over there--that kind of opposition, which was really minimal.

The only other opposition I remember, not opposition really, was from sororities and fraternities. Sororities particularly were very strong on campus, and I remember Dr. Gladys Gregory was the, oh, a long-time sponsor of the Zetas, the Zeta Tau Alpha. They had their little house over here on campus. And Gladys was very upset because I announced rehearsals for every night of the week. And she called me on the phone and said some of her Zetas were going to be in my play and they would not be able to rehearse on Tuesday nights because that was sorority night, and that nothing had ever interfered with sorority meetings on this campus. And I just said, "Well, then I'll have to find some other girls to be in the play." But as it turned out she let them rehearse. (Chuckles)

There was no real opposition. There were people who really were surprised that there was...I think people coming from other places particularly, the old faculty here was really not accustomed to very much on-campus production, but people coming from other places were surprised that there wasn't anything going on. So again, we didn't have big houses sitting around the ballroom, but we would have maybe a hundred people or so on folding chairs, and run a weekend or something. And, yes, there was a combination of more support than lack of it, I should say. But of course we had no money whatsoever.

J: Well, starting with that one, that was the first time you ever did anything, where did you get all of your chairs, all of your props, your clothes, and the whole thing? You're starting from scratch just about, I would imagine.

L: Yeah. Well, we borrowed the platforms from the Coliseum. The Coliseum had...actually they had been over in the rodeo area, and so we had to clean them up. (Chuckles) There was a man who is long gone named Sam Cohen who was delighted. He was running the old Liberty Hall, and he said, "You know, I haven't had anybody in this town who could talk theater lingo with me in so long except the touring companies who would come through." So when I would go to Liberty Hall, Sam and I became very good friends. I could talk about his equipment and lights, and with a brand new MFA in Drama I was eager to find somebody who knew, who wanted to talk about this. But we borrowed the platforms from the rodeo pen at the Coliseum, we got the folding chairs here on campus. I remember we made the light stands out of old weighted tire rims and poles, and, well, put together the way they used to talk about people keeping a Model T running with bailing wire. (Chuckles)

J: Same kind of thing.

L: We did the same kind of thing. And the first costume, I did The Importance of Being Earnest that year, and the students and I made the costumes--you know, turn-of-the-century clothes.

J: Well, obviously the students were very happy.

L: Very, very happy. In fact, I somewhere, and I think I misplaced

it, I have a picture of that first group of what we then called College Players, and there are about 35 students. And over the years we've had that group even be much smaller than that. But there were about 35 students that year who were very active, backstage and onstage. I don't know, you always find people who want to either work on costumes or some kid who likes to do this. I remember we had an engineering student that came over and did the electrical wiring for the lights, that kind of thing. And it just started out really absolutely from scratch. We didn't have anything. We either borrowed or made.

J: Besides that, were there any particular problems that you can recall from those years that stand out in your mind?

L: You mean problems with the theater?

J: With just getting started. Well, for example, how did you finally convince people to give you some funding for the department? Or maybe I should rephrase the question and say, when the department was finally developed, did you have trouble getting money for things like that?

L: We always have had trouble getting departmental money for productions. As we grew, see, Magoffin was just sort of in the planning stages. And I remember saying to Dr. Elkins, "Oh, this place is much too big, the house," you know, what we call the house, "and the stage is too small." And he said, "Well, look, Milton, we have to have a place for commencement." (Chuckles) Magoffin seated 1600 and that's where we held commencement, because prior to that it had been on Kidd Field.

Well, eventually you see, the first money we got, of course, was from box office. And then before too long after those first years, we made our pitch to the Student Services fee. At that time I think we called it a blanket tax, maybe the same way Austin did. But that Student Service fee that funded the athletics and journalism and choir and orchestra and band, we got a little, little chunk of that. And I can't remember from year to year how it grew, but starting with box office and then with some student services fees. And still our major production money comes from a Student Services fee allocation and box office.

J: Let's see, that was '49 you said when you started?

L: I came in '49, the fall of '49.

J: And then you did go ahead and organize this Drama and Speech Department yourself?

L: Yes. We began to teach, I started adding Drama courses, and with Dr. Elkins' help I got some new Drama faculty in here. My first title I think that amounts to anything other than instructor was Director of Drama and Speech in the English Department. So Dr. Sonnichsen began to let us operate not really too much with his departmental budget and all, but giving us enough to keep the Drama and Speech people--two, three, and then four, and then finally five of us--enough to keep going. We finally organized the department, the department became separate in 1960. So it took that long to really make a department, from '49 to '60.

In the meantime I had been recalled to the Korean War in '50, right after I came here and got started and thought

everything was going fine. I had a reserve commission so I went back in for almost two years, and came back. Before I went, of course, we were into Magoffin.

We opened Magoffin with a production of Thornton Wilder's Our Town, my idea being that we would use some townspeople and have Our Town and the old town and gown idea, and we really did. I used a boy from Fort Bliss for the leading role as George, used a former student for Emily, and I remember Mrs. Lillian Collingwood played one of the mothers. So we had faculty, students, and townpeople in a production called Our Town, so that they could come in and see the field.

J: That was a good idea. I wish they would do more of that.

L: Sort of fun.

J: You'd get more support I think from the community.

Do you recall any incidents or anything in particular that stands out in your mind for the first couple of years you were here on campus? In the early days when you were getting things organized and just starting your productions, is there anything amusing, or something that really stands out in your mind as being very, very important, a turning point maybe in getting everything going?

L: Well, I really haven't thought in terms of A Turning Point. There were many turning points. Of course just getting Magoffin was a big turning point because we then had a stage, not really good--too big an audience and too small a stage as I've already said--but that was a big turning point I think in the level of productions.

At that time, of course, there were no other theater groups. Early, early on there were no theater groups operating in town. They finally began to crop up early in the '50s. But I remember one of the things that gave us a real boost, particularly in our summer programs, which we started early, there was no theater out at Fort Bliss, and there still were a lot of young men out there who were very interested and very good and very talented. And some friends of mine from Austin who had been stationed out here, one fellow that I brought back a number of years ago did several roles for me while he was stationed out at Fort Bliss. He's been a professional actor now for 33 years, and Pat came out and did things. I remember we had people like Harvey Schmidt, who is one of the authors of The Fantastiks, that's now celebrating its 25th year in New York. But we had a lot of good talent out at Fort Bliss that found a place to come to. So I could name, oh, maybe 10 or 12 who went on to really do some things in professional theater. One fellow named John Sypher, who was playing in *Evita* not too long ago in Los Angeles, he was in an early production, television production, of Cinderella. But he played a role, played in *MacBeth* when we did it. We used that talent, and it really supported the program. They were not students of course, but the students were delighted because we had people from good theater departments all over the country who helped us get started.

J: So they gained good experience from that.

And then of course we finally had the Liberal Arts Building built, and Speech and Drama by that time had become a department and we were one of the first departments...in fact, I was the first person to move into an office in the Liberal Arts Building, before the building was really ready (chuckles), before it had had its final inspection or something.

J: Do you have any favorite productions that you can recall in the past how many years that you've been here?

L: Well, everyone asks that. And when you talk about almost 60 major productions, directing almost 60, and costuming over a hundred, yes, I have several favorites along the way, and some of them are some of those very early ones, really. I've had a love affair with a play called Death of a Salesman for a long time, and I did it in Magoffin in 1953 or '54, I think, somewhere in there, the mid-fifties, let's say. And Salesman I guess would be pretty high on the list of some of my favorite productions. Well, all the Arthur Miller plays. I did The Crucible, well, in '50, really, and I did All My Sons that first year over in the ballroom, so those three Miller plays are still favorites of mine. Then in more recent years I guess A Member of the Wedding happened to have the right people to do that particular play. Of course they're favorites for different reasons.

J: I was going to say, there must be.

L: I guess I've been a little bit partial to the contemporary American plays, although I've done Shakespeare, I've done

musical comedies, and I've done a lot of other types of things. One of my favorite comedies is from last summer, a play called Beyond Therapy, that we had a lot of fun with. And I remember one, The Diary of Anne Frank, with a New York actor from El Paso named Murray Abraham. And Murray played the father in Diary of Anne Frank, and he's very good. Almost got him back here last year to do a...he wanted to come home to do a show, and the funds dried up, and you can't ask somebody... Well, actually, while we were planning his coming back he got the lead role in Amadeus, movie, so he was off to Prague and Vienna. (Chuckles)

J: I guess if there's a choice... (Laughs)

L: Yes. But we're still in touch. As a matter of fact over there on the wall I have the program from, again, a wonderful play called The Remarkable Mr. Penneypacker, and Murray played the lead in it, the father. There are twins in that play and I had an awful hard time finding twin boys the right age. And it just turned out that there's a neurologist here in town named Don Rathburn, and he and his wife were interested in theater and they brought the twin boys over. And now of course they're grown and married and gone. But Don wrote me when he saw one of these articles in El Tiempo or something about my retiring. He wrote in and said, "I still remember Mr. Penneypacker and the boys still talk about it." (Laughs) It's hard with that many plays to sort of pick out favorites, I guess, but there are some that stand out.

J: Were there any students that you have had that you feel you

made a big impact on, or they may have made a big impact on you, that you really felt were special in some way?

L: Oh, sure; oh, sure. They didn't all go into theater, but oh, I can remember any number of them. One, a fellow named Hollis Reynolds, we called him Rip, he was in that first play, The Male Animal. Rip even came back and was our technical director for a while after he got out. I helped him get a job in the Drama Department at Austin, helped him get his MFA there. And there was a student named Richard Clark who played Romeo for me, that would be another one of my favorite productions. Richard went on to New York. He and Pat married and had a baby and they stayed in New York for a long time. He's in educational theater now. Others, a girl named Suzanne Payne who had played Anne Frank, that I mentioned earlier, as well as many other roles. She's doing some acting in California, I think in the San Francisco area. The music major named Phil Tanner who sang the lead in Carousel was always a person that I felt like I had some influence on. Well, I guess you have varying degrees of influence on people.

I'm always proud of students who go on to get Ph.D.s, of course. I have a former student who stayed here because he had done some plays with us while he was in Fort Bliss, stationed at Fort Bliss, a fellow named Don Brady. And Don did some things in our Southwest Study Series that he wrote, he's a good writer. He directs now down at Loyola in New Orleans. Don got his Ph.D. A girl named Maxine Manther, who was in some of those early plays, did a Ph.D. in Drama. And the last

time I heard about Maxine, the last time I saw her again, she was on the faculty at Boston University teaching acting. She has an acting textbook that's a recognized one. I have another former student from...I drew a whole bunch of students down from around Monahans, a fellow named Bobby Ackley, went on to get a doctorate's degree. Just recently one of my early, early students, the girl who played Sadie Thompson in Rain, I've kept up with over the years and she's kept up with me. She of course married a serviceman and travelled all over the country with him. And then I helped her get into the Ph.D. program--she said I did, at least, through some letters--at Albuquerque, University of New Mexico. And about a month and a half ago I got a letter from her that she has received her Ph.D., inviting me to the commencement. So I'm giving her my cap and gown.

J: Oh, how wonderful.

L: Well, I don't want to be buried in it (laughter). And there's no point in leaving it in the closet, I don't need it anymore.

J: Oh, that's great. I understand that you really had a very full season or what have you. And I don't know too much about it but, can you give me sort of a feel for how many plays you would do a year or a semester?

L: Sure. Well, that first year, as I said, when we had no theater or anything, I did four of what we call major productions--two in the fall and two in the spring. And then that first year I did a production out in front of the old library building. I did what we called "mellerdramer." And again, one of my

favorite students who's a lawyer here in town now, [is] a fellow named Jim Brennan. In fact, he's been on our faculty teaching Business Law. His wife is on the faculty, has been the last couple of years. But Jim played the hero in that melodrama, There's Gold in Them Thar Hills. And I did it out in front of the library. And I remember we didn't even have any flats or anything like this so we had to make our own, and I remember that one night they blew down.

And you asked about early stories. Dr. Thormadsgaard came the same year I did as head of the Music Department-- they were much better established than we were--and he wanted to do an opera. And of course we didn't have a place to do an opera so we rented Liberty Hall. And he announced that we would do The _____ Robinhood. He had worked on it out at San Jose, I think. He had some of his students who had followed him here who already knew some of the roles. And we didn't have any scenery. Sam Cohen from Liberty Hall let me have some old flats from a defunct little theater that had been thrown back and we recanvassed them. Wilks Harrison from the jewelry department, Art Department over in Cotton where they were pretty well established, I was officed over there, Wilks and I became friends. And he helped me, we went up under the Kidd Field stands and built an open fire and melted glue over an open fire and mixed paint, and he helped me paint the flats that we took down to Liberty Hall. (Chuckles) They didn't win a prize, but...(Laughs)

J: Oh, but that is amazing.

L: But, well, you know, I guess I had been taught. That was the wonderful thing about the BFA and MFA at Austin--you had to learn everything. You didn't just learn how to direct, you learned how to paint, how to build, how to sew, how to design, how to make. They didn't really tell me how to get along with nothing but, I found that out.

Well, we finally, we went from those four productions a year and that one summer finally then to an unreal summer season of five plays.

J: How did you do that? That's an awful lot of plays.

L: Well, a lot of volunteer people came in. I had other people. I brought in friends of mine from undergraduate days who directed, and I'd find just enough money to pay them maybe just to get here and sometimes they'd stay with us at our house, do costumes. Well, you know, you just do. And then finally the program obviously had to settle down into something, so we finally began to do four plays in the summer and four more [during the long session]. And then we added the children's play, which is still going from 1955. I did Peter Pan in Magoffin.

J: Did you have somebody flying around?

L: I did. I did. We couldn't afford a big flying machine of course, so I went to Tony Lama and we designed, they and I designed a leather harness. And I guess I was crazy, because I knew that piano wire was supposed to be a trusted wire, and we hung that little girl on piano wire. And we couldn't do all the fancy things that Mary Martin and Sandy Duncan do,

but we flew her on and around. And of course I rode it first. And I was always scared to death something might happen. I've learned since that piano wire really isn't that safe, that it kinks. (Laughs) But we did fly, and we flew Wendy and we flew Wendy's little boy out--not all around, but we did some.

We did finally begin. You see, right after we got the department, I went into administrative work.

J: I was going to ask you about that. This was around 1960 then or so, or just after 1960?

L: Yeah. We formed the department in '60, and then I believe in '61... Yeah. I was the first head of the department in 1960, and then 1961 the then president Joseph Ray... I was the head of the department, and I don't know, somebody, I think maybe a friend of mine named Clyde Kelsey, told him [about me]. The president was looking for somebody to become what he called the executive director of a citizen' study of the institution. The study was to take place in '62; we finished in '63. And you may or may not have seen a little book called Mission '73.

The idea came from the fact that when the University of Texas at Austin celebrated its, I think, 75th anniversary, we received a very, very short, it was a big goal study projecting the goals for the University. We didn't have the big system then, just the few schools that were attached to Austin, so to speak. We had a little short paragraph in it, and I remember Dr. Ray was very unhappy with the fact that he felt like they had not really paid much attention to where we were

supposed to go. And he and an administrative officer in Austin named L. D. Haskew, who finally became a Vice-Chancellor, conceived the idea of a citizen's study group that would put... I hate the word input, but we have to use it here, but would become involved in where they thought this school might be in 10 years.

So 36 citizens were picked--reverse of 63 sort of accidentally. Dr. Judson Williams, who had been on the faculty and then became mayor, was the chairman of the group. And we picked, with his help of course, 36 citizens from across the whole spectrum of the community, and even one from Juarez. But we had people like Maxine Steele, who had been the Dean of Women, who was a community leader; _____ Kitchen; we had the general, General _____ from Fort Bliss; and we had people that represented the various professional and business interests in town.

Dr. Ray asked me to come over and talk with him about being the executive director half-time. Well, I had a brand new department, and (chuckles) I had to leave my...I didn't have to, I liked the work and I liked the idea of being involved in the whole school rather than just something that I had gotten underway. I felt like, well, if I've gotten the department started I can leave it. So it turned out that what was supposed to be half-time in the department and half-time on Mission '73 was really almost full-time Mission '73 with the department people pretty much running themselves.

So I worked in that, well, for a year at supposedly half-time, but really meeting with those people, providing them with information. We didn't have anything like the Office of Institutional Studies that I could go to for all that information, so I had to generate it, with a lot of faculty help and staff help.

J: And what kind of things were you looking at in particular-- for example, enrollment?

L: Everything. We were looking at programs, funding, what kinds of degrees we ought to confer; in terms of programs, where we might strengthen the programs we had, where we might add new programs.

Well, it was really from, it was out of that group that we got the name change. One of their first recommendations was to change the name. Although it'd been talked about, there had been no enthusiasm for it at all. But that group recommended changing Texas Western College to The University of Texas at El Paso. And we finally of course got Regent support and central administration support for that. That was one of the big recommendations.

PAUSE

J: We're going again, so please continue.

L: Well, when we finished that Mission '73 and published the little book, of course we were so lucky to have Carl Hertzog to make a beautiful little book. And then some other books were put together with that, some I think Dr. Ray had written on becoming a university. You may have seen a little three-

volume set that is one of those little packages that Carl does so beautifully.

So at the end of that Dr. Ray asked me if I would come into the President's office full-time as assistant to the president. Dr. Small had been assistant, had that title, and Dr. Small moved over to the Dean of Liberal Arts Office and I moved into the president's complex, small though it was at the time. And then I worked with him as Assistant to the President. They changed my title in '65 to... This is sort of an interesting story. Dr. Ray I thought really, we talked about it, he wanted me to have the title of Vice President. And the Vice Chancellor Haskew that I mentioned earlier said, "Well, I don't know that you all really need a vice president, and he's just not that experienced," although I'd been here quite awhile. So they gave me a title called Dean of Administration. And I would go to these national meetings, ACE and other places around the country, and people would look at my name card and they would say...by that time of course UTEP was on the map for the National Basketball championship, but they would say, "Dean of Administration. What is that?" (Laughter) And it was a little hard to try to explain. I was really doing the Assistant to the President's job and a lot of what would have been vice president, executive vice president or academic vice president, whatever you want to call it, with the title of Dean of Administration. So after one year of that, I only had that title one year, then they changed my

title to Vice President. And again another of my...sounds a little egotistical, but another first, I was the first person at the institution to carry the title Vice President. There had been other assistants to the President--Mike Brumbelow had worked in the president's office after he quite coaching, Ray Small had been called as Assistant to the President. But I was just called Vice President with no designation.

Then I kept that title until when Dr. Ray then stepped down from the presidency in '68. The Chancellor then was Harry Ransom and Harry asked me if I would be Acting President. And I had always said I would not want that title because we had had a number of acting presidents who sat in the chair between presidents, and I felt like it was an impossible cap, or hat to wear. But with a little arm twisting he convinced me that it really was going to be the best thing, he said, for the institution because I had been in the office enough to know the running of the university.

J: It would provide some kind of continuity.

L: Well, that's what they thought. So for that '68-'69, a whole calendar year, I had that title, Acting President, while we interviewed people for the presidency. (Chuckles) But I had told them that I realized of course we couldn't do a lot of big steps forward, but I did not want to just sit in the chair, that we had to have something going. And I remember Dr. Ransom later was very complimentary about the fact that we had done, he thought, some of the best

recruiting in the system that year. And we did well before the Legislative Appropriations Committee, things were beginning to look good. So I always look back on that, even though it was an interim thing, I felt like that... Of course it was a time when we had a lot of trouble too, you know.

J: Those were the years of student unrest.

L: Well, my stint in the administration went from '62 to '71, nine years when I suppose..the most difficult years to be an administrator in the history of American Education-- because we had a combination of Vietnam; the drug scene; our first, first, first, just little hints, we didn't have big ones, but our first hints of black problems. I remember, for instance, the year I was sitting in the chair with the Acting President's title, our black athletes refused to run track because BYU at that time was not integrated, and they did not stand for the Star Spangled Banner. And I had a call from Richard White who was in Congress saying, "What are you doing with those people down there?" And I didn't do anything. I didn't feel like I ought to.

One rather memorable time to me, I think, when some black students came and said that did I know that there was no law to prevent discrimination in housing in El Paso. And I said, "No, but you have not been discriminated against." "Oh, by all means. We cannot get in apartments in Sunset Heights. We can't get in places by campus." And so a lawyer friend of mine, Malcolm McGregor here in town, Malcolm

came out, we met with the black students. And Judson was Mayor, and knowing the situation he said, "By all means let's get a housing law that does not discriminate." So we did, and very easily, with no problem. El Paso never had a big problem, but there were those little problems. And then of course eventually we got the so-called Chicano problem because that's what they wanted to call them, and they were toward the late sixties. I think we could all have predicted it because of the success of the civil rights movement with the blacks in the earlier sixties had certainly led the way for our Hispanic or Mexican American or Chicano, whatever, I never know exactly which group wants to be called which. But they had some, you know, legitimate concerns. But those kinds of problems did not make the sixties any easier as an administrator.

J: Besides this one particular incident about the housing with the black students, do you recall any other specific incidents during this period that stand out in your mind at all from those years?

L: You mean in terms of discrimination?

J: Well, not necessarily, but just that would exemplify the mood on campus by either people like anti-war protestors or civil rights advocates.

L: Yeah. Well, sure. Oh, goodness, I'll never, I'll never forget the Trexler march. Do you have that rather well-recorded?

J: I don't think so.

L: I can't give you the date on it, but I remember an awful lot.

We had a young professor in History, and this is long before Vietnam became unpopular in the whole country--early, early, early. Trexler organized a march downtown; it was to go from campus to downtown, I believe. Dr. Ray's wife at the time had a cabin in Cloudcroft, and we had gone up with them for the weekend. And, oh, there was much, much, much tension about that march, because at that time it was considered anti-American to be anti-Vietnam. And this young History professor--you see, history proved to be right--organized a march, and oh, there were many, many people in this town who were horrified that we would allow it or allow that kind of freedom to speak, a professor to be anti-American, as they called it. So that was a very, very difficult time.

J: This was the business community?

L: Well, some from the business, some maybe even from the university; but certainly those who consider themselves real patriotic Americans did not think we should be protesting Vietnam. We didn't have the violence, of course. I remember one time after Dr. Smiley came, and Dr. Smiley came in '69 after I finished that year as Acting President, I remember one year that the young Americans for Freedom, the YAF, you remember them as being...? They were the group that cropped up to oppose the hippies and the anti...they were, they were the Pro-America group. They were the backlash. And I remember one time they called on us in the President's office, and they were pretty ugly, "Why we were allowing this and this and this?"

J: Were these local people, local students?

L: Oh, these were students, yes, yes; they were students. But we had threatened sit-ins from the students who formed the organization now known as MEChA. We did not report it as such because it was against the Regents' rules for us to even be talking with them. But there were some promises made at that meeting that later caused some problems.

But the closest thing I guess we ever had to a real incident on this campus was the night we won the basketball championship. Dr. Ray was in College Park, and I was the next officer in line on campus, and the police called me at home and said, "We're on our way to get you." And I said, "For what?" And they said, "Come to the campus." (Chuckles) So I did. They were celebrating is all they were doing, and they did very little harm. Some fires were lighted that did no real damage. A lot of paint was thrown around, I think. But there was a celebration going on right out on the triangle, that the police wanted a college official here. And I came and, you know, I didn't get on the bullhorn or anything like that, but I got out and talked to some students. And they were very innocent about it, were just celebrating.

But those years seem, they seem so remote now to students who don't really think in terms that students did in the '60s.

J: It's a very different mood, isn't it?

L: Very, very different.

J: Do you feel that those are some of the incidents that really stand out mostly from your administration days?

L: Well, no.

J: Are there other things that you might want to talk about, let's say, maybe what you feel are your most important contributions during those years?

L: Well, it's always hard to say.

J: For example, you mentioned recruiting.

L: Some faculty recruiting which we did, mostly which I was very, very proud of I think. I think we began to get in those 10 years...and I certainly don't take responsibility for this, I think Dr. Ray deserves, I believe Joe Ray deserves much, much, much more credit than he's been given for this institution making a turn-around from a small regional college to something that we could call a university. Now there are a lot of people who wouldn't really look upon us as "a university," it was fashionable to change titles to "university" in those days. But there are many things about this school now that I believe Joe, and the people in the administration with him, the deans, I was involved in a lot of those things, I had a lot to do with I.

I like to think that I was involved in two, particularly two academic things, and I certainly don't want the credit for them. But I was involved in the first, I think the first, reorganization of the Bachelor of Arts degree plan that happened on this campus. I used to tell the story that when I came here in '49 we had a B.A. degree plan and there was absolutely no variation from the B.A. degree. The dean at that time read that catalog the way a fundamentalist reads the Bible, and there was no way you could get around anything. He pounded the

desk at me many times when I would go and ask him for some reasonable things. I used to tell the story that in the years between '49 when I came and those years in the sixties when I wanted to see the B.A. revised, that there had been two changes in the degree plan in almost 20 years. Well, not quite twenty. But I'd seen two changes in the plan in 15 years. One was to put in a course called Health Education, which most of my students called Teethbrushing 3101. (Chuckles) That was the first change I saw in the plan. And the second change I saw in the degree plan was to take it out. (Laughter)

So finally with the help of the deans and other people, department heads on campus, we began to talk about changing the B.A. degree plan into what we have now, really which I understand is undergoing another change. But since sometime in the sixties, and I couldn't give you an exact year, we did finally develop those blocks where students can draw from, they are not bound by those specific courses. But students really had almost no choice. They had a few electives, but there weren't too many.

J: Was there a sort of a consensus from the Liberal Arts faculty that this did need change?

L: Yes, absolutely. Yeah. By that time we had brought in so many people from other schools who had seen it, I think they realized that we were behind, really.

And then I was directly involved in the first provisional admission program, and I'm proud of that. I have always had a great interest in the library, and while our addition to the

library was certainly not all that we wanted it to be in terms of size, I'm also proud, I like the architecture. I'm one of the few people who [like it]. I think that the architect, _____, that I got to know very well from central administration--well, who was hired by central administration in the firm that did it. The Grabers firm actually did the library, but _____ was the...he was from one of the Middle Eastern countries. I guess _____ was Arabian, Saudi, a Saudi Arabian, but _____ was a very brilliant architect. He went on to teach at Yale. But his idea was that these buildings around the campus were just becoming copies of copies of copies of copies of copies of Old Main. And it was really true. If you look at the architecture, Old Main was the first one, and everything else was just a version. And his words were, "We need to find another design solution that still keeps Bhutanese or Tibetan architecture." And a lot of people don't realized it, but there are many features in that front of what is now the old library, [that] were built onto the front of the old library, the then library, which housed administration, registrar, library, everything in that building when I came. And there are a lot of features of Bhutanese architecture in that library building. You'll never get Dale Walker to agree to that. (Laughs) He hates the building.

But I was involved in helping us get an addition to the library. Well, of course not the only person. Dr. Ray was the one that was President. But I think helping also to get funds for such things as the Lyceum Series, which I received a little

recognition for and did not expect at all at the convocation, but helping get funds for the press. Actually diverting meager funds is what it amounted to. The Cotton fund, as far as I was concerned, when I finally got into it, had many other academic uses, or should have had academic uses, such as the Press, the library, the Lyceum.

J: Up until then what were the funds from the Cotton Memorial used for?

L: Well, mostly, I'm not sure about all of them, but a lot of them were going to art scholarships. You have to get into the wills to know. He really wrote the will almost as though Irish housemaids needed help for taking home economics courses, which was so totally impractical. Of course, oh, they used the fund, I believe, a lot of it to build Cotton Memorial. But I just thought there were other uses for that fund, particularly in the academics.

J: Certainly the Press.

L: Certainly the Press.

J: Because that's been one of our...

L: Strengths.

J: While you were in administration, then, you didn't have any connection with any of the drama performances at that time, or did you?

L: None whatsoever. The only thing I did while I was in administration was attend the plays when I could, although they couldn't understand why I didn't get to all of them. Many times I was out of town or working on budgets. But no, I did not direct

anything for those almost 10 years, didn't costume anything.

J: How'd you feel about that?

L: Well, you know it was funny, I was so busy I didn't have time.

I realized later that in some ways the department was really at a disadvantage, I think. And I've told them this after I came back into the department. I think I leaned over backward not to show any kind of favoritism. And as a result I think their budgets may have suffered. When I got back I think I was sort of appalled that their M & O funds were so much less than some other departments. But I was involved, of course, in, not the initial recruiting, but in interviewing the people that we brought in. Everyone deferred to me to some degree, when you know the kind of people you are looking for for this department. But I did not take any kind of active part, and of course I realized when I got back to the department I was 10 years behind in my field, really. So, in some ways, while it was awfully rewarding to be involved in some major decisions, I've a few regrets about where we could have been.

Well, I did help, to some degree, not a lot, in planning this building [Fox Fine Arts]. This building was put into the planning stages while I was, was Acting President. It's certainly not my building by any sense of the word, but the idea to build a fine arts complex, I think, was one that I got onto early. Both Music and Drama were in terrible shape in Magoffin--no classrooms, and they were stepping on each other's toes all the time, fighting for that stage. Ballet

had come along, opera had come along, we were trying to step up a program, they were stepping on a program. We were just constantly after each other. Art had completely outgrown Cotton Memorial. The only thing left that was really useable to any degree were the galleries, and I believe they were converting them. So I knew we'd never get three buildings, and because of the way government funding was being handled at that time, we came out much better with a fine arts complex, which we call a building, even though Music is the other side of the ramp and Art is _____.

J: And it's worked out very well.

L: Yes. I'm very, very pleased with it, and I think the Art and Music people are pleased with it. But we always find...have you ever built a house and felt it was right? But the concept still works, and that is that we put fine arts near Magoffin so we could tie onto it, and we put it near the parking lot so that the public could park except on high school football nights when we have a problem. (Chuckles) But by putting the building here, that big ramp comes in from the public parking lot, and all of a sudden you're right in the middle of the Playhouse to your left, the Recital Hall to your right, and the galleries up one floor, and right there. So those three public facilities were intended to be the core of the building. And then of course if you're going to Magoffin, it's no problem just to go around.

So this this really became, early in...and even in Mission '73 we talked about setting aside certain areas of the land that we then had. And we really had a lot of land acquisition going

on during those years that I was in the administration. Dr. Ray and a couple of citizens in town are basically responsible, I think, for being farsighted enough to say, "We need to get some of this space around here tied down." And other administrations have done it too. But it was pretty much decided that Engineering and Sciences would be in a certain area, and that Liberal Arts would be centered around there. But that was before, I guess, we didn't dream that Psychology would be big enough to occupy the old Science Building, we called it. See, when I came we had a Department of Psychology and Philosophy. And I said to myself, "What in the world are those two doing together?" And somebody said, "They both start with a P in the alphabet." (Laughs) We had the Department of Math and Physics, believe it or not. We had a Department of Engineering, period. You see we had a History Department, but Sociology was taught in it. Anthropology, if there was any at all, I couldn't _____. You see an awful lot of things in that many, 35 years.

- J: That is amazing. Well, is there anything else that you would like to add? I'm sure I could go on for another two hours.
- L: Yeah, well, with this length of time and a talkative person you can. But the only thing we haven't mentioned at all, I guess, have been the years since '71 back in the department.
- J: Maybe you can talk a little bit about what you feel are the most important things that you've done these past few years.
- L: Well, not that I've done, really. I feel my contributions to the department since I came back have been in the area of teaching. Directing and developing an introductory Theater course,

which is now a very popular course with Liberal Arts students who are complying with the six hours of fine arts degree requirement. When I came back into the department that fall in '71, they scheduled one Introduction to Theater section, and I was to teach it, and I had 11 people. And this past semester we taught three sections, all over 25, and we're even teaching two sections this summer. So I feel like that's one of the contributions I made, and I'm not the one saying this, the rest of the department has given me credit for, to some degree, developing that course and other people teaching it with me; not with me, but teaching it at some time.

Then the contributions that I made I guess have been in productions and in costuming. You see, I've been costuming up to eight productions a year, plus designing and making. And I've been directing.

J: Do you take vitamins? You must, because you're so calm and cool and collected, and I can't believe all of this stuff that you do. (Laughs)

L: Well, I have high blood pressure. (Laughs)

J: Oh, then that's all right. Then it fits, okay.

L: And I take pills for that. And then I have consistently directed one major production during the either fall or spring, and one in the summer. This summer I'm doing one on top of my regular full load, which we normally don't do when we have summer theater, but simply because I wanted to leave with a particular play that I had in mind. It's a two-person play, and I had one graduate student and one recent graduate who is going to be a graduate student, two boys, men, who I felt like could do it, do it right.

So I'm now teaching three hours and 20 minutes during the middle of the day and coming back to rehearsal at night. And we're even doing this with just a very small skeleton crew of students, just about four students are helping do this show, and no faculty involvement in this one. But also I consistently taught Directing courses to both, I taught all the Directing in the department since I've been back. That's a junior course, a senior course, and graduate courses in Directing, so the directing program has pretty much been left to my discretion in the 11 or 12 years I've been back, plus teaching the Costume class, and then designing and making the costumes for the productions.

I haven't had time to do a lot of other things. Well, I know right after I came back to the department, a faculty member asked me if I would be interested in being president of AAUP and I said, "You know, I've been doing all that kind of thing. Let me get back to the theater and finish up what I'm going to do over there where I started." I certainly didn't want to be head of the department because I'd been there. And I guess people have criticized me a little for not doing a lot of faculty committee work, but I really wanted to spend it here, you know, I didn't feel like my contributions belonged [there]. I gave 10 years to the institution.

J: I was going to say, you were in administration.

L: I gave 10 years, they gave me 10 years. But you know, I wanted a change, and I did feel that it was at some sacrifice to my major interest, although I had any number of opportunities to

move on in administration to other institutions. But I like it here, and I really felt like I belonged here.

J: Do you think that after, well, let's say next year, that you'll be doing anything with the community at all? Are you planning that?

L: I don't have any plans to at the moment, no. I want to do some things that I haven't had time to do. You know when you're doing evening rehearsals you miss out on a lot of reading. We're going to do some traveling. I hesitate to even mention, I mentioned to the reporter from the Times when she was doing that El Tiempo story, I just threw in, she says, "What are you going to do?" And I said, "I'm going to read things that I haven't been able to read for years, and I'm going to putter around in my flower beds." And so, you know, I got a headline, "Hangs up shears for garden gloves." Well, that's such a tiny part of what I'm going to be doing. (Chuckles) But I do cook, I cook and I work in my flower beds, and I may even have a vegetable garden, although I think I like Skaggs and Safeway as a vegetable garden. But right now I really don't have any plans for theater. I think really, Sarah, I think I'm right in saying I'm stopping before I reach what I call the burnout stage. I'm not burned out now, but I could be. I'm not old and decrepit, but I'm... I came here young enough that I have been able to spend my whole academic career in one institution, and except for the Air Force Reservists' recall and the year that I did my residency for my Ph.D. at Austin, I've been here.

J: Well, that's great.

L: And I'll never be able to break ties with the college. They're going to give me an office up in Graham Hall.

J: Oh, good. Well, then we'll still get to see you around.

L: I'll be around. And I can't stay out of the light (?).

J: Well, I sure do thank you for talking to me today. I'm going to be around, so if there's anything you think you would like to add to this interview anytime, or if I come up with questions I hope you'll...

L: If you come up with some other questions, by all means. I don't think there's anything I need to add to it, and I probably have spoken more trivia today than anything else and I do tend to ramble, because you gave me an opportunity to ramble so I did.

J: I really appreciate it. Thank you very much.

L: Oh, sure. Well, I hope you get something out of it .