

Rock Voices: The Oral History Project of Slippery Rock University

Kenneth Harris Interview

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KM: Hello, this is Kevin McLatchy and today is July 28, 2011. I'm interviewing Dr. Kenneth Harris, current mayor of Slippery Rock Borough and professor emeritus of Slippery Rock University. This interview is for the Rock Voices Oral History Project of Slippery Rock University. Dr. Harris, could you please give me some background information, biographical information: full name, date of birth, where you're from originally?

KH: Sure. Well, I'm Ken Harris, as you now know. I was born in London, England on August 11, 1936. We came to America with my family in 1948. I went to school in West Orange, New Jersey. Then, Kinnelon, New Jersey. Then off to college up in Maine and eventually Iowa for graduate school.

KM: What part of England, was it?

KH: London.

KM: Do you have any recollections of your first impressions when you first arrived?

KH: I had a strange first impression of America. I was sick. We came over by boat and it was wintertime. Terrible, terrible crossing; it was very rough. We were on a nice luxury liner, but it was a rough crossing in January of '48. I was sick, so they kept me in my cabin and I wasn't able to get up on deck or even look out the window and see the Statue of Liberty. Every immigrant wants to see the Statue of Liberty; well, I didn't. I was eleven years old: I really wanted to see that statue, but I was too sick. My first memory was driving up the road alongside the Hudson River, Hudson River Drive?--the elevated highway there--and looking across the Hudson River. There were huge ice floes floating down the river. You could almost have walked across the Hudson. It was really nasty weather.

KM: That's unusual.

KH: It really is, even today.

KM: Before you came to Slippery Rock: could you give us a little of that background, right before you came? How you came here?

KH: Well, I answered an ad in the Chronicle of Higher Education and got the job. Those ads work for some people; I'm a testimonial to that. I was teaching theater--theater and everything else: English, speech, whatever they needed--in a one person department at Alderson-Broadus College in Philippi, West Virginia. I was looking for someplace else to go and answered the ad and here I am.

KM: What year was that?

KH: 1981.

KM: What were your impressions of the town and the school: your first impressions?

KH: I'm going to be brutally frank here. I remember going home from the first interview before they said, "We'd like to make you an offer," and I said to my wife, Nancy--this was down in West Virginia--I said, "Nancy, it won't be the worst thing in the world if they don't make me an offer." I really wanted to get away from where I was. A one person department is something that is fine when you're twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight years old, but I was somewhat removed from that age and I really wanted to work with a larger department. And Slippery Rock was it.

But you know the town was not too impressive. The campus was clean and tidy but it was clear that there hadn't been any building done in 18 or 20 years. The place was sort of at a standstill in terms of development. Miller Auditorium where I would work, and did work, left a lot to be desired as a theater. It was, and is, a multi-purpose auditorium that had to serve a whole lot of different needs. It wasn't really built as a theater and so as I say, when I went home after the first round of interviews I said, "Nancy, it won't be the worst thing if they don't make me an offer." Of course, they did make me an offer and I learned to love it here.

KM: How large was the department back in '81?

KH: Well, when I first came we were part of the Speech or Communication Department, really. Theater, there were five people in the Department of Communication who did theater from time to time. Less than a year after I came here we had an amicable divorce. And then President Reinhard decreed that Theater would be a new department. We moved across campus from Eisenberg Classroom [Building] into [Miller Auditorium] and began in the fall of '82--no it was the fall of '81--we began setting up the new department. There were four of us.\*

KM: Did that go relatively smoothly?

KH: Well, there were struggles. For one thing they didn't give us a secretary for the first year or year and a half. We had to do all of the paperwork ourselves. This was in addition to teaching and play production and everything else. It took awhile to get the resources we needed to make things happen. There were, I suspect, some mixed feelings about whether we were ready to be a new department. There were several who were absolutely for it. They were ready to go two years

before I came, maybe more, and others who thought, “We need to get a few more things in place before we cut off all support from another department,” the administrative support we have from Communication. There we were, on our own, and we made the best of it.

KM: It was still a state college up until '83. Was that behind some of the thinking of changing the major? Was it a major even back then?

KH: It wasn't even a major. No, we had to create a major whole-hog from nothing. When we were in Communication, we did a lot of teaching of speech. In fact, I taught initially here more speech than I did theater, so breaking away was an opportunity to create a theater department.

KM: Do you remember the transition from the state college to the university in general? How that went about?

KH: Not terribly. I mean, it was festive. There was a big event and a lot of hoopla around it, but I think we were all very busy in our department trying to get a curriculum approved, trying to produce plays and as the custodians at the multi-purpose auditorium where the music department performed, the dance department performed, the visiting artists came and did their performances, we were continuously busy. There wasn't much time to sit back and reflect. I wish now that I'm trying to write some of my own history about Slippery Rock and the university, I'd paid a little closer attention to those transitions. They're really interesting times, but we were busy.

KM: You mentioned the buildings, some of the buildings. Were there any other buildings you worked in?

KH: Eisenberg, I worked in Maltby in Sheehy Theater, a little theater downstairs, which is still in use, but I did at least one maybe two—one play there.

KM: Do you remember your first play?

KH: The first play I ever directed was Equus. Drama. It's an interesting play; it was a good production. Laurie Stepanian gave us a terrific set that revolved and had lots of interesting scenery. It was a dynamic show. I thought to myself when I picked it, I'm going to take a chance on this play because it's got some bold stuff in it. If they're going fire me for the kind of plays I'm choosing, they're going to do it right away. [Laughter] I'll get the picture right away. They didn't fire me. The play went over very well, so I knew things were going to be okay.

KM: Could you talk a little bit more about some of the other productions? Maybe your favorite productions you directed?

KH: Students used to ask me this too. They used to quiz us, getting into the honorary that they were part of. “What's your favorite production?” I had a stock answer for them: I'd say, “The production I'm working on right now is my favorite,” and in a way I meant it because you have to be committed to what you're doing now, the play you're working on now. You have to get

over the one that wasn't so good, the one before that that was brilliant and so on, and imagine what you're going to make of the one you're working on now. But I've always been partial to Talley's Folly that we did in the mid-80s. It was a beautiful, lovely production. Just two characters in it, but we had a gorgeous set, wonderful actors and just a really nice, sensitive, unimprovable production.

I liked Arcadia that we did late in my career and an Our Town that was kind of experimental. Our Town, you know, is written for 30 or so named characters, and the, 10 or 15, 20, whatever it is, extras that were not named. I did it with seven actors, doing everything. They switched roles, they switched genders, and it was very, very dynamic. Wonderful, I thought a wonderful production. We were really very happy with it.

KM: How would you categorize your style?

KH: Eclectic. I like all kinds of theater. I do musicals, did an opera here, we did The Marriage of Figaro, a collaboration with the Music Department. That was a good production, too. I liked poetic plays, Shakespeare. I did Romeo & Juliet. I did silly, fluffy farces. I suppose I'd characterize my style, with maybe the exception of Our Town where I really moved in the opposite direction from what I thought the playwright wanted, as a director who wanted to do plays close to what a playwright would have imagined when he or she wrote the piece. By and large, I was honest to what I could detect of the playwright's intentions, rather than putting Ken Harris into the play with the possible exception of Our Town where I put me into it.

KM: Sounds like you would have to.

KH: Yeah, not as an actor. I wasn't on stage, but as a vision as how to make this play look and feel and sound completely different from the way anybody else had ever imagined it before. It was great fun. I enjoyed doing it immensely.

KM: This is making me think of how you even got involved in theater to begin with.

KH: Oh, that goes way back to my school days in England. A teacher in a play, I guess I must have been nine or ten years old, cast me in a class play. This was in 1946. It was right after the Second World War and schools were starting to do normal things again instead of being careful, attentive to the fact that there was a war going on and we were getting bombed. Had to run to air raid shelters and so on.

I got cast as a Chinaman. I had a lot more red hair than I have now, and I played a Chinaman in this really interesting Chinese style production. Well, there was a competition in London County Council Schools and by golly, our play --I forget even what it was called--our play went to the city-wide championship final round. It was an age group competition so we weren't competing against older or younger kids. We got to perform this Chinese play-- in English, of course--we got to perform this play in the Covent Garden Theater, one of the most prestigious, important

theaters at the time in London. Here I'm nine or ten years old, I'm on stage in this fabulous facility, and I still remember vividly what it was like, and that would have been in 1946. I got the bug. It's the classic romantic story: you get in a play and you recognize this is something you want to stay with.

KM: Was there someone who was instrumental in making you choose acting, or did you just seem to have the inclination on your own?

KH: I suppose the teacher of that class, I don't remember his name, was just singling out people for assignment to be in this play. We did it first for the school, and then later, entered in the competition.

KM: Then you were off to America, of course. Then, to college. Were you involved in theater in college?

KH: I went off to college as a chemistry major. I had a wonderful chemistry class in high school and thought I want to be a chem major. Modern chemistry in 1954, when I went off to college, had changed radically from the kind of chemistry that had been taught in my high school. It was very mathematical and theoretical. While I could do the math, I was painfully slow at it and I think, after my freshman year, I recognized that competitively I was going to be perpetually behind if I stayed with chemistry. This is, by the way, before they had hand-held calculators. I had to do all the math on a slide rule. That was a horrific instrument of torture. [Laughter]

Anyway, I'd been in a play or been to see a play at the college theater and liked it. It was *Stalag 17*, prisoner of war comedy-drama. I thought, "Gosh, they did a wonderful job on it. I'd like to get involved." When it became clear that chem lab was not going to be the place where I'd spend a career, casting about for things to do on campus. I tried out for a play.

KM: That was Bates College?

KH: That was Bates College in Maine.

KM: Then it was off to graduate school.

KH: I went to University of Iowa for graduate school. Terrific program in theater. It prepared you very well for the first job I had. They were training multiply-skilled generalists. They've changed their model now. They're not doing that anymore, but at the time I went there, it was in the late 50s--'58, '59--they were training generalists.

That worked well for my very first job because I had to do everything at Alderson-Broadus. Lights, sounds, costumes, make-up--I had to learn a lot about make-up--as well as directing the plays, and of course, teaching all about them. Iowa gave me just enough work in speech, particularly in speech science, anatomy, physiology of speech, but I felt very comfortable in a speech classroom too. It was exactly what AB College needed.

Then, when I came up here, that multiple training kept me versatile enough so that I could fit in, not exactly every place that was needed, but if somebody else in the department couldn't or wouldn't do something, Ken Harris got to do it.

KM: We covered your first impressions of the University. Is there anything else you want to say regarding the Theater Department? Reminiscences about it? Some of your best and worst teaching moments?

KH: Oh, I can remember some worst play production moments. I designed a set--three sets actually--for a production of Dracula. Laurie Stepanian, who was a far better designer than me, was directing it, and I drew the task of doing the scenery. It was a very elaborate production. Besides having to change three sets on stage--it wasn't really built for doing that very well--Laurie wanted a lot of special effects.

I remember she wanted a bat flying through, not across the stage, but across the auditorium from the back wall of the auditorium. She wanted it to fly over the head of the audience and we tried rigging that to make something work and it was clear that it wasn't going to work. We did get a bat, not a real one of course, a theater bat to fly across the stage from left to right. I remember--I forget whether it was opening night or which night it was--the performance, we did four performances in those days--one of the actors strode to a door, went to walk out and the door came off in his hands. The audience thought that was very, very funny and I was in the back of the auditorium slumping down into my chair. "What have I done?" I felt so sorry for Laurie but you know, the damage was done.

KM: That was at Miller Auditorium?

KH: That was at Miller, yeah.

KM: I came across something in The Rocket that occasionally it seemed a play would have to be cancelled because it might be playing on Broadway.

KH: We had at least one show there and I really wanted to do it. It was the Blood Knot by Athol Fugard, a South African play. Terrific play. I admire Fugard immensely and I really liked that play. We switched to something else and made that work. The play was unavailable because it was to be revived, I think off-Broadway rather than on Broadway, but revived in New York anyway. The royalty or leasing companies that give you license, permission for which you pay to do the play lawfully, withdrew the permission at the last minute. We had to find something else.

That's occasionally a problem in the non-professional theater because the professional rights trump what they like to call the amateur rights. I never used to think of myself as an amateur but it was certainly non-professional. The professional rights, in general, trump the amateur rights. So it still happens now and then.

KM: Maybe we can talk a little bit about the highlights, some of the best of your teaching or theater.

KH: Well, I like both. The challenge in play production is you're there every night for five or six weeks. In play production, you're exhausted for about a week or so afterwards. It's keeping up with class work: so sometimes you're running on fumes, on memory of how you did this the last time. It's one of the vulnerabilities of teaching in a discipline like theater where a once a week rehearsal, or a twice a week rehearsal is not possible or practical. You have to work every day. It's to get the memory traces set so that the lines for the actors and the queues for technicians and so forth work perfectly when the audience is there. It's very demanding, play production.

Now and then you would go into a classroom--because you didn't stop teaching a class just because you had play rehearsals going on--and find that the students were a page or a chapter ahead of you. You had to kind of work that out as best you can. Fortunately, in a four person theater department, it was always somebody else; when you weren't doing a play, somebody else was doing it, so you would get a break between your plays to be better prepared. That, of course, was a big help. You had to fight against the temptation to use last year's material or work with notes that you'd made five or eight years ago. You'd overcome that maybe eighty percent of the time, but now and then, out of necessity, when you were up until 11, 12, 1 a.m. the previous night and you had an 8 a.m. or 9 a.m. class. It would be a struggle the next day sometimes.

KM: The quality of the students in your theater department: how did you find the talent?

KH: The best of them were terrific, are terrific. There are some really, very fine, talented students here, ones who come here intending to do theater or performance work and others who discover they have an ability. Perhaps they never thought of until they find themselves in a play.

Generally, if you only cast those people you could look very, very good, but for the development of a program and in order to choose an interesting mix of plays, you have to take chances now and then on people whose work you don't know. It's not like Broadway where everyone there is already highly skilled and professionally accredited and so on. You ask people to step up and take a role and they do it. If it doesn't always work out perfectly, you have to live with the results. That happened now and then. Perhaps I'd rather not mention names of plays or people, but now and then you'd find yourself wishing you'd made a different casting decision. The secret of success in college and university theatre is casting. Picking the play, a play that can be done well by the age of students that you've got, and then motivating and casting the right people to do it as well as possible.

KM: Maybe we go to the University in general here. When you were here, can you think about some of the leaders, the presidents, the deans, when you first came to campus? Some of the old timers, the movers and the shakers.

KH: Well, I remember vividly my immediate predecessor Milt Carless. Milt was head of the program while it was still part of the Communication Department. Milt stayed with Communication the year after we were created as a separate department but that was, I think, his last or next to last year of teaching. I remember how much he was looking forward to retiring. Unfortunately, he didn't. He got sick and died about a year after he'd retired. I remember learning a lot from him about how the university-- it was a college then --how the college worked. He was helpful on introducing me to the habits and foibles of people who I didn't know but I had to work with.

The president of the college then was Herb Reinhard and Herb had some interesting dynamics with regard to theater. Herb liked to invite special guests--trustees typically but people of influence--to the final dress rehearsal of the big musical. We were doing a musical almost every year when I first came here, or Milt had been doing a musical. The first musical I was here for was *Fiddler on the Roof* and I got a call from Herb about how he wanted this final dress rehearsal to go. I went back to Milt to check with him about who this guy Herb Reinhard was and what he expected. Milt said, "Well, you'll need to be careful about President Reinhard. He will ask you (and he did) to interrupt the dress rehearsal."

Now Milt understood, and I did, that that's not what you want to do. Working professional, mature adult performers could handle that kind of thing very easily, but we're working with 18, 19 year olds, some of whom have never been on the stage before. Dr. Reinhard wanted the rehearsal interrupted so that the director, I forget if it was Tim Walters or . . . I think Tim Walters directed *Fiddler on the Roof* rather than Milt Carless. Milton was there but I think Tim, maybe they co-directed. Anyway Dr. Reinhard wanted the rehearsal interrupted so that the trustees could see what the director did: giving instructions, changes, try it this way, try it that way. Well we worked out exactly how they were going to do. It was no longer an issue of trying; it was making it run smoothly and coherently. We had to kind of wire around Dr. Reinhard's fondness for interrupting rehearsals.

What we did, knowing it was coming, was stage a moment where something would go wrong. The actors, the technicians, and the stage managers all knew exactly where we were going to interrupt the show and we interrupted it right on schedule. We were nothing if not obedient. [Laughter] We interrupted it on schedule; it was very scripted. I don't know whether Dr. Reinhard ever realized that, but it was carefully planned so that we could maintain, as much as we could, a coherent confidence of a cast that needed to know we could get through this long, complex musical without any interruptions.

KM: Now after Reinhard left, how was the administration in terms of dealing with the theater department?

KH: We got along fine with Dr. Aebersold, but you always sensed with Bob that while he was cordial, helpful, clear, articulate, friendly--I never had any difficulties with him--that the theater



vocabulary, I'm talking about theater administrative, not artistic, but administrative vocabulary was something that wasn't always there. We needed to explain things. Whereas when Warren Smith came as the next full-time successor president, I remember to this day, Warren wanted a tour through Miller Auditorium. I didn't know much about him then, but I met him on schedule and we walked through the auditorium. He took a couple of looks around and he asked me questions about the performance space. The proscenium arch, he mentioned. I remember that vividly. I recognized at that moment that here was a guy who--he was an organic chemist--but he knew about performance spaces. He recognized some of the complications of Miller Auditorium right away and I said to myself and wound up saying to the rest of the department faculty, "Here's a guy who understands the complications we face in dealing with this unique building. I think we'll find him a friend of theater," and indeed, we did.

Bob Smith, too. Bob Smith is a former communication faculty member. He has his graduate degrees in communication and he came from a university where theater and communication were all part of the same department. As soon as I saw his resume I knew that Bob Smith was someone who understood the issues we had to deal with administratively. Teaching loads, performance situations, the legalities and economics of play production on a university campus. Sure enough, Bob knew that stuff down cold.

KM: During your time here, was there anything that happened in worldwide events that affected the campus? Storms? Anything that you can remember that was a little unusual?

KH: We had lights go out one night at a play. We had to call off the play. There was an emergency lighting system in the auditorium, and still is, but it doesn't permit you to continue with the performance. There's not enough power to light the stage, just get everybody out safely. And we had to hustle everybody out. "Sorry, folks, we'll do this play tomorrow night." It wasn't one of my plays. I don't remember what it was, but we had to move everybody out while the emergency generator was still running.

KM: I guess there wasn't a lot of political activity with students.

KH: That had pretty much passed. I remember political activity where I used to teach. I remember on the day of the Kent State shootings for example. That was as close as we got to turmoil on our campus--tiny little campus down in West Virginia. By 1981, I think people have begun to characterize things as the silent generation or something. It was--I don't want to say politically incompetent or disconnected but relatively passive.

KM: People were just taking a rest. Do you want to discuss any other memorable events you can think of? Memories . . . besides the big things?

KH: On the campus? Well, I remember because it was a tragic event, the sudden onset of illness and death of our colleague Orley Holtan. This was in 1994. Orley had been here much longer than I had. He was an internationally known expert on Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright.

Orley knew Norwegian; he spoke and read it. He was immersed in that. I remember vividly to this day, it was in 1994, in January. The semester had just started and Orley walked into his office and he walked into the door. Literally [into] the door frame. The department secretary at the time said, "Ken, you'd better come over. Something's wrong with Orley." He turned out to have a brain tumor, and [eight] months later he was gone. That kind of vivid memory stays with you, but there are happier memories too of course.

I remember a really weird memory and strange. It did turn out to have a happy ending for us in the theater. We had a terribly old patch panel or interconnect system at Miller Auditorium. It'd been there probably since the building was opened in the early 1960s. It was a cross-connect panel. We were having difficulty mechanically with it. Because it was electrical and the electricity was right behind a face of a Bakelite kind of material, we didn't want to play around with cleaning the sliders, mechanical sliders. It was not safe without an electrician coming and turning it off. The university electricians came over, turned the system off, which we were not able to do at that time, and they removed the front cover to do the cleaning of the sliders. These were copper sliders and a contact brush moved up and down the slider to make the connection between dimmer 25 and circuit 83, so that you could plug different circuits into different dimmers.

When the electricians, bless their heart--I mean that rather seriously--they finished the job, I'm not sure whether they did this out of generosity or ignorance, but they sprayed WD-40 to keep the sliders clean and sliding. There's a lot of corrosion and dust and crud. (Can I use that word? Well, I used it.) Just general crud lining these mechanical sliders that moved the electricity from the dimmers to the lights. Well, when they reenergized the system, this lubricant was still on the sliders. I was standing there when it spontaneously burst into flame. This whole thing just kind of exploded in front of us. Fortunately, the fire was all contained to this patch panel, but the patch panel was wrecked.

It was impossible to use it and Bob Aebersold, bless his heart, we had a show opening--I forget what it was, a musical, Charlie Brown? I don't remember--but we had a show opening in a week. I called the maintenance people first, "What do we do?" He said: talk to the president. I called Bob Aebersold. Bob said come on up, explain the situation. I think we took somebody from Maintenance along to affirm that it really was terrible news. The building was unusable. The lighting system was unusable.

Bob, without blinking an eyelash, came up with some money to rent us some new equipment. It was portable rental equipment. We had it in the next day. It took some arm twisting: the standard procurement and rental processes to make that happen, but it was an emergency. Bob, I suspect, picked up the phone and said, "Theater needs this stuff and they need it right away. Make it happen." And it did. As a consequence of that, when the rental equipment went back--I think we had it for 5 or 6 months--we were well along for planning for a comprehensive replacement. We got a terrific, fine new system as a result of that fire.

KM: I thought I might more onto after retirement. I know you have a commitment to Slippery Rock Borough, you're the mayor, and how that came about.

KH: Well, I didn't really run in the [usual] sense. It was the night--I still remember it rather clearly--it was the night before the closing of petitions. They were due in the next day. I didn't know this at the time, but there's a knock on the door. My wife and I [were] watching TV at home. A knock on the door or the doorbell rang and it was Royce Lorentz. He's a member of council to this day and Royce said, "Ken, would you consider running for mayor, petitioning for mayor? Nobody wants to be mayor and we're afraid if that continues that a write-in vote of as few as ten votes will name the next mayor."

I mean no disparagement of college students, but it's not hard to imagine a group of college guys or gals thinking, "You know, I could be the next mayor of Slippery Rock." The mayor has charge of the police . . . at least on paper. In theory, the mayor is in charge of the police. I thought it over a little bit; I talked with Nancy. I said eventually to Royce, "Okay, I'll do it."

Well, I was unopposed. Nobody else wanted to do this. Getting the petition I needed 15 signatures. Royce and I think the late Jim Green helped me, pointed me in the direction of some people who would sign the petitions. We got the petitions in the next day before the 4:00 deadline, and my name was on the ballot. My first two--I'm in my third term now--the first two terms I was unopposed. The third term we actually really did have to campaign. I won the election, a contested election. I'm in the second year of my third term. I enjoy it immensely.

KM: How long's a term?

KH: Four years. Did you know that the first mayor of Slippery Rock was a college faculty member? His name was Bill Storer, called "Pop." He was a coach and phys. ed. teacher: Pop Storer. I just learned this recently, looking back, trying to recreate the list of mayors. Mayors are relatively new inventions; they were burgesses until 1959 or so. I think the first election for a mayor was in 1960 or '61. Storer, who had been a football coach very successfully, and popular guy, ran and was elected mayor. I'm by no means the first college-related, faculty person to run to be a mayor of Slippery Rock.

KM: How do you see the future for the campus and the borough?

KH: Well, I'm optimistic in general about things. There are always challenges. There's never enough money to do what you know needs to be done.

KM: For the borough?

KH: For both. There are challenges facing the university now from the budget perspective. I know they're trying to build a new theater here or at least remodel Miller Auditorium. Finding the dollars for that in these days will be a great, great challenge.

Similarly, we are challenged in the borough. We run the borough on a budget of about a million dollars a year and change. The tax base is pretty steady, but that means with inflation it gets harder to meet the rising cost of things with a fairly steady stream of income. There are challenges to getting things done.

KM: I know that you were involved with development.

KH: Right, yes, Slippery Rock Development. That was the project that took the overhead wires and clutter off of Main Street and put new sidewalks and signs and new trees and gussied up the place. If Slippery Rock had looked like it [does] today in 1981, actually it was the fall of 1980, when I came up for my interview, I would never have had to go back to my wife and say, "You know, it wouldn't be such a bad thing if I don't get this job." Slippery Rock really was kind of dumpy and messy and tired, very tired. More than just fatigue; it looked almost terminally tired.

KM: That was my impression when I first came too, and I agree with you totally. Terrific job.

KH: Much of the planning had been done before I got to be mayor, but I was there to see the contracts signed and be part of the group that oversaw that. They worked very hard and still are; that group is still meeting.

KM: The University is involved with that, too, right?

KH: Yes. I will tell you that both Warren Smith, who's no longer on the committee, and Bob Smith, who is, have been fabulous aids to making that happen. John Bonando has been extremely helpful and the university generally. The project wouldn't have happened without the University, that's crystal clear. Kind of heroic work, and money. There's University money, or rather Foundation money in the project and lots of in-kind contributions: secretarial time and printing and telephoning and mailing. It's the things you don't think of that help make the project go: meeting places and time and lobbying. Both of the Dr. Smiths [were] tireless in making that downtown redevelopment happen.

KM: The new hotel and everything.

KH: Yeah, yeah, instrumental there, too. Of course, you know, we're facing not merely the prospect, the reality that there will be a new president here in a year. We in the Borough, I know, are hoping the new president will have a friendly and positive, supportive outlook on the relationship between the Borough and the University because we're, like it or not, we're stuck here together. We've got to work out ways to get along and to thrive, to prosper because if we don't, we'll both hurt.

KM: Well, working in the Archives, I know the story of how the Normal School was founded and how involved the community was. If that tradition lingers on . . . .

KH: Some of the people, their names are preserved on some of the buildings. I'm glad Patterson Hall is still here because it was a Patterson who was instrumental, one of the key members of the committee that basically petitioned the legislature back in the late 1880s I guess, to create a normal school here. The citizens wanted it because they wanted good teaching in their local schools. This was the way you got it. It worked for them. So the College, subsequently the University, is created, literally created and funded initially--payment for the first buildings subscribed to by contributions and bonds that are underwritten by investors in the Borough. The community created the college. It's amazing. It's a good story and a true one.

KM: Maybe that's a good point to close off this interview.

KH: Kevin, it was great talking with you.

KM: Thank you so much.

KH: Thank you very much.

\*The other founding faculty of the Theatre Department were Laurie Stepanian, Raymond V. Wallace and Orley I. Holtan (see page 2).