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Oral History of

**Philip Morgan**

Professor *Emeritus* of Music

Date: February 27, 2014

Interviewed by Art Ford

Professor *Emeritus* of English and Alumnus, Class of 1959

Transcribed by Kate Miller

Vernon and Doris Bishop Library Support Staff

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**Mr. Philip Morgan, Professor *Emeritus* of Music**—From 1969 when he joined the music staff at The Valley until his retirement in 2003, Morgan guided numerous vocal students to successful careers as performers and teachers. He has also delighted audiences with his recitals here and abroad.

A: Okay, this is Art Ford. Philip Morgan and I are here in the College library. We are going to be talking about his background here at the College. The date is February 27, 2014. Okay, first of all though, tell me where you came from. What is your hometown?

P: My hometown was, I was born in Southeast Kansas. In a little town called Mulberry, Kansas. It was a coal town originally. And I was born in my grandmother's bed in 1939.

A: Okay. Did you live there growing up?

P: Yes, we—my mother and father—we lived in Kansas City for, I think, maybe two or three years. My father worked for a dry cleaning establishment there. Then he went to work, after the beginning of the war—the Second World War—he went to work for a munitions factory in Kansas City. And then he was called—of course—he was drafted into the air force. My mother and I went back to Mulberry, Kansas, to live with my grandmother at her home. My mother worked in a grocery store there in Mulberry, Kansas, during the war. My father was in Cairo, Egypt, at Paine field, which is the commercial field for the airlines today in Cairo, for over three years. So we lived with my grandmother there for three years. So when he came back from the army air force out of Cairo, then we stayed in Mulberry for—he didn't have any type of profession so he took the G.I. Bill and he took—he became—well, butchering skills. He became a butcher. Unbeknownst to me, later on, many many years later, he worked for my wife's aunt and uncle there in Mulberry, Kansas, in the grocery store. He was a butcher. We stayed in Mulberry until probably, I was, probably in the fourth or fifth grade. Then we moved to another little town about five miles away called Arma, A-R-M-A, Arma, Kansas. It was named after a man who was a Civil War officer, his name was Armacost. My grandfather had a home there. Of

course, he had built the home and that is where my father was raised. Of course all the family was gone and he had this large house, and he wanted us to come and live with him. So my grandfather took a couple of the rooms and we had the rest of the house. So I was raised there in Arma, Kansas.

A: Is that where you went to high school?

P: I went to high school at Arma, Kansas, and middle school—or what they used to call junior high school.

A: What was high school like for you back in those days?

P: Well, first of all, let me tell you what middle school was like and since I am in music, my interest in music happened because of a teacher in middle school who was quite a fine piano player. His name was Mr. Ryder. And Mr. Ryder would do these little operettas that sixth, seventh, and eighth graders could do. I remember my first role was a dog. So my mother had to make me a costume and I was encased in this costume and I had to crawl around on the floor and be a talking dog the first year. Now the second year I got a big promotion. I think the second year I became a composer. My name was Kirby and I played the piano and I composed. That is how I got interested in music.

A: Were you playing the piano at that time?

P: Well, there was really no one in my hometown that taught piano. So I didn't have any piano lessons actually until I got to the university—when I was like 18, 19 years old. But Arma High School was a small school. I would say there were about three hundred and some students. A

small music, small band, small choir. But we had music contests in Kansas in those days where you competed—not like they do here in Pennsylvania, where there are choirs and bands, they may have had that—but you competed in solos and trios and quartets and other things. So I would enter these. I played the trumpet—studied trumpet at the local university, which was Pittsburg State University—which was only about 10 miles away. I studied with a marvelous trumpet teacher and so I would enter those contests. I would also enter as a singer. I of course didn't have any lessons at that time, and I started this in elementary school. My mother kept all my judications and all my ones and twos ratings, and As and Bs all through the years doing that. So as I got into school, I realized that probably music would be where I—would be the direction I would be going. There was a man who was teaching at the university and I think he was a pretty good teacher, and he came out to Arma—he wanted to hear me sing. Back in those days, they didn't allow you to study seriously—at least voice teachers didn't—until your voice had made its change. So he heard me sing and he said, “Well, see me in about a year.” So I went back and sang for him a year later at the university and I started lessons with him.

Unfortunately, he had a stroke and I didn't work with him very long. But I continued my trumpet lessons and continued, you know, being involved in music in high school. The school I went to at the time, Pittsburg State University, was a teacher's college initially.

A: You said when this is where you went while you were still in high school, or after?

P: Yes, even when I was in high school I would go to the university for my lessons. Like I say it was a college in those days, it wasn't a university then. Probably about 2,000 students, maybe. But it had an outstanding music department. It drew people from Joplin, Missouri. Missouri didn't have a four-year school. So it drew people from Missouri. So we got a lot of really good

musicians to come to school and that is where I worked on my bachelor's degree. I worked on a bachelor of science—which is music education—and a bachelor of arts—which is more of a performance degree. Bachelor of music.

A: So you graduated with those two degrees?

P: Yes. And then—but I must tell you something about the school—it was an incredible time for this school. This period lasted about, I would say probably eight or 10 years it was at its zenith. A lot of the people I went to school with ended up being professional performers, some of them worldwide. Many of my colleagues became professors in schools of music. There were a lot of teachers and so on and so on. But the quality of the music department was unbelievable because we had people. In fact, one of the piano teachers had studied with the teacher of Franz Liszt. We were given a lot of leeway by the university at the time because the president of the university loved music and he used us a lot in all the organizations that he belonged to in Pittsburg, Kansas, there. So we did a lot of singing, we did a lot of that sort of thing. Even when I was a sophomore, I was already singing professionally. My first professional engagement was at the Tulsa Opera Company when I was 18 years old. Now, I wasn't doing lead roles—I was singing in the chorus, but I was on stage with people like Jussi Boejring who was one of the world famous tenors of the time. The man who died on stage, the famous baritone, Leonard Warren, and Zinka Milanov, and people like that. So we were encouraged to perform and we were given a lot of leeway with our scheduling. But we had really professional teachers who performed themselves. My first teacher, singing-wise, was from Westminster Choir College, and he was mostly a choir man and he was very good at that. I learned the basics of singing and so on and of course I had to start taking piano lessons and I was a horrendous piano player and I

still am. I remember at my piano jury you had to do a jury and I think the piano staff probably crawled under a table while I played my jury, and hid until I was finished —but I passed.

Anyway, I finished my degree there.

A: Your focus then was on?

P: My focus was on trumpet and voice.

A: I would have assumed it was voice.

P: No, it was trumpet and voice. The last two years I had a marvelous trumpet teacher. His name was Ronald Model. He taught—he was a veteran of one of the wars—he came back to Tulsa University—he had a lot of G.I.'s to get their degree. He played with the Tulsa symphony and he played in Tulsa University Jazz Band. He would come up once a week from Tulsa to teach and I'd got to the point my senior year that I replaced him at the jazz band a couple of times as lead trumpet player.

A: Do you teach trumpet here at all?

P: No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I gave a trumpet a long time before that! But anyway—

A: Stick with the voice, eh?

P: Yeah. I got to the point where I realized—that senior year—that there were people who could play faster and higher and longer than I could and I had this voice. So in my sophomore year I was singing professionally with the Tulsa Opera Company. In my freshman year—I didn't tell you this, but before I even entered school, I was at the Starlight Theater in Kansas City working with people like Gordon McCray, and Shirley Jones, and—who else?—Jerry Lewis, and

the man that they wrote "Carousel" for—John Raitt. So I had a lot of, you know, professionals. The Kansas City Philharmonic was our orchestra for this season, for example. Then I got involved in my sophomore year, I got involved in a new company in Kansas City called Kansas City Lyric Theater, which is still going today. The man who founded it, in fact, just died in the last couple years. I was doing operetta calls in English. And when I was 18, and I sang my first leading role at the university. I was the lead. I was Marcello in La Boheme at 18 years of age. This was all—all this academic work plus all this music work went on all the time. Well, so, I think when I was twenty, we had finished doing Brigadoon at the University. We do a musical in the spring and an opera in the fall. No, I mean—I am sorry—musical in the fall and opera in the spring. We had a pretty good theater department so we didn't have to worry about costuming and scenic design and that sort of thing. We just did the music with a full orchestra. The man who was the conductor of our orchestra was a student of Pierre Monteux and he probably knew Denise Lanese. I didn't know that at the time, but he was the principle conductor.

A: He was conductor. Maybe it was his father?

P: Well, no—his name was Walter Osechuck. He was Lanese's father-in-law. Denise was the second family of Pierre Monteux.

A: That's right.

P: Anyway, Pierre Monteux had this camp in Maine and Walter O became the principle conductor. So he was my trumpet teacher, he was my conductor, too. So anyway, we did Boheme that year and then we—three of us—were asked to go to Kansas City to a convention and we sang selections from Brigadoon, which we had done in the spring. This man came up to



us and he said, 'My name is Walter Dexter Fee. I teach at the University of Denver'—yeah, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado. He said, 'I'd like to hire the three of you for Central City Opera this summer.' I said, 'What would we be doing?' He said, 'You would be apprentices.' And he said, 'You would be working with people from the Metropolitan Opera, and from City Opera New York. These people come out here to do this because it is like a vacation and they are here for about three months and they do about 18 or 20 performances—two different operas at the time.' But he said, 'It is about 26 miles up in the mountains about 10,000, 11,000 feet.' He says, 'You'll have to learn to breathe again.' We said, 'Well, what is the salary?' And he said, 'Well, we provide you with a living—a place to live—a house to live in, and \$300 dollars a week.'

A: \$300 a week?

P: \$300 a week back in 1960 was pretty good. So we decided to do it. So we flew out there and unbeknownst to us, it was the year that they had all the people who would be the great singers at City Opera and the Met for the next 20 or 30 years. I sang and lived in the same house with Beverly Sills and her daughter. I got to know Ms. Sills, very well. I cooked for Ms. Sills and the cast because I can make pasta sauce and linguini and a nice salad and so on, and they liked that. Every Wednesday she would invite a few people over at the downstairs area and I would be the little mouse in the corner listening. But we had people—we had the man who conducted that summer was the man who was the director of City Opera at the time. He was also conductor for Luciano Pavarotti during the end of Pavarotti's career. So we had—it was an all-star cast of people, you couldn't believe it. Then we had two designers, one who designed the scenery. His name was Robert O'Hearn, and Nathan Merrill was the stage director. These two men did—we

did Lucia de Lammermore, for 18 performances. We did 18 performances of Aida on a little stage with only 600 seats in the auditorium and Nathan Merrill was so skilled—and he became a world famous opera director after this—and Robert O’Hearn was so skilled that they enlarged the same scenic design for the Metropolitan and they used the design for Lucia for many many years, and for Aida many many years at the Met. The other day, I realized that they are still using the Met stage direction as of Nathan Merrill and Robert O’Hearn for Der Rosenkavalier that they did last week—the broadcast. Since we were apprentices, we sang all the small parts, of course—but we had an opera workshop. Then the people—and all these people I talked about—they were our audience. We performed for them. The man who directed us was a man named—his name was Thomas Martin. Ruth and Thomas Martin were two people who translated into English the scores for G Schirmer for their piano vocal scores for all their operas—he was our director. So we did scenes and then they would watch us. But anyway, we hung out with these people and they heard us and we heard them. What a summer that was. That was an incredible, incredible summer.

A: Let’s jump to your post-undergraduate career. Did you go directly to graduate school?

P: No, my wife and I met at Pittsburg State University when she was a junior and I was a senior. Or something like that. We were both juniors, I think. She decided she wanted to—her mother said—she was an elementary teacher—but she wanted to go somewhere away from Kansas, she was from Missouri—from Lamar, Missouri, where Harry Truman was born. That is another story. Anyway, to make a long story short, we sort of dated each other and so on. Our senior year we sort of fell in love and decided that we might be quite right for each other. So I had one more semester left. I had to do the first semester of the fifth year for my degree and she went

on to California to teach. So I went out there in January—we were married out there—and you'll love this—on Groundhog's Day. February the second.

A: (unintelligible)

P: (Laughing) Yep, yep, so anyway, it goes on and on. Anyway, to make a long story short, we lived out there. I got out there and to substitute teach—you could substitute teach with an undergraduate degree. But you couldn't teach full time in any of the schools in music unless you had a master's. So they let me do that for the first year and so I said to Susan, I said—you know next year I can't do that anymore. I said I am going to have to find out something to do. Well, this was a good thing, too. Anyway, I went to the—we were close to Newport Beach, California—which in those days was a living place for a lot of people who lived in Hollywood and they'd commute to Hollywood from Newport Beach. And so there was a lot of money there. And so I walked the streets of Newport and Santa Ana where we lived—we didn't lived in Santa Ana, we lived in Costa Mesa, which was between Santa Ana and Newport Beach. And I walked the streets and I saw this sign—this place was called South Coast Company. It was a marine hardware store where they made marine hardware and they sold yachts and raced yachts and fixed yachts and all that sort of thing. I wandered into this place and I said to this man, 'I am looking for a job. I am willing to learn how to do anything.' He looked at me and he said, 'You look like Jerry Lewis.' I said, 'Yeah, I get stopped on the street because I look like Jerry Lewis.' I am skinny and tall and had a short buzz cut. He said, 'Oh, we'll give you a chance.' So anyway, I started working there that year. By God, our customers were the who's who of Hollywood people. The first day I was there—or first month I was there somebody was rapping on the window and it was John Wayne. And he said, 'Could you come and help me with my

fishing tackle? Maybe a couple of you fellas?' 'Oh sure, sure, sure, Mr. Wayne.' He had a reconverted minesweeper which we were working on. Putting a new surface on the bottom. He said, 'Come on down to the bar.' So we went down—two or three hours later we came up. But he did this two or three times, we got to know him—I got to know him, I got to know Ray Milland, I got to know Rochester, I got to know Gower Champion and his wife, I got to know—Ray Milland. I've already said. Buddy Ebsen. Buddy Ebsen was a jewel. I loved him. These were our customers. These were our people. So what they did with me is they put me—they'd be wanting to sell something, and they would put me in the riggings of a boat, and they would take me around in the thing and they would have a 'for sale' sign on it—and I would be hanging in the rigging with my dock siders on. Well I did that for the last year and I said, this is it, I want to go back to school. So we went right back to Pittsburg again. Now, why Pittsburg? Because there was a woman there who had just come from Germany, her name was Margareta Theunmann and she was a Fulbright scholar and a very fine singer and a very fine teacher. So I said, this is where I will study for my master's. We did some incredible performances. There was a man named Dr. Larry Siegel who had been a professional actor for many years, in fact he was on Broadway in "Lady in the Dark" when he was performing. But a great director. We did "Cosi fan Tutte" was the last thing I did with him. Full performance with orchestra, costuming, and so on. So when I—I got—after this two and half years, after I'd done all these recitals, and my master's program. My master's program was—I did a thesis on the development of German lieder. Late development of German romantic leader. So I had to—you'll love this—I had to do a lecture recital, I had to do a paper—of course, I did a full recital, I had to do a jury—and on my jury I had an English professor who was very versed in German and German literature. But, anyway, I

said to Susan, I said, 'you know, if there are a number of people by working with Margareta Theunmann—there are two or three people or more in Europe who are now old and if I don't get away to go to Europe, they will be dead before I can study with them.' So we met some people in California who had taught for the overseas dependent schools. Well, we found out they were going to have interviews in Kansas City, Missouri. I went up and interviewed. The man looked at me and asked at the end of the interview and he said, 'You are the kind of man we are interested in.' I said, 'What would I be doing?' He said 'You will be teaching military children.' But he said, 'You can designate what theater you want to be in.' He said, 'Where would you like to go?' And I said 'I'd like to go to France. Or Germany.' So anyway, he said, 'I can't tell you whether you are going to get a job or not, but he said, I am going to give you the highest recommendation I can when I get back to Washington.' So he said, 'Probably, in about April, you'll get a telegram and you have 72 hours to respond if you want to teach. And they will give you the country and they will give you—that's about it. And you'll say yes or no. If you decide to go, then you are on.' Anyway, so time went on and I went to that interview and I was in Montreat, North Carolina—Billy Graham's college. Interviewing for a job. A singing job—teaching. They wanted me—very badly. I got a call from my wife and she said, I've got a telegram. So I flew down there, of course, and all the expenses so I met the president of the college that night—Montreat College—in Montreat, North Carolina. I apologized, I said, 'I have this chance to do this' and he looked at me and he said, 'Forget about the expense,' he said, 'When you come back to the United States,' he said, 'Look us up again.' We waited around for a while and so we finally got our orders and so on and then we spent four years in Europe.

A: In which country?

P: First country, it was France. We landed at de Gaulle. I didn't know two words of French. I probably knew 'oui' and 'non'—yes and no—and that was about it. So anyway, they flew us over on commercial airliners, we flew into Philadelphia, in fact, and we took off from the base there in New Jersey. You know which one I am talking about—I can't think of it. But anyway, we flew commercial and these were all teachers. So we got where we were going and then they drove us to a—downtown in Paris to an American hotel. They were giving out tickets to wherever you were going to go—to take the train where you were going to go. So we were one of the last people. I said, 'Maybe they forgot about us, Susan.' 'Well,' she says, 'I don't think so.' So this man came up to us and he gave us our tickets and he said, 'You are in Verdun.' I said, 'Well I know Verdun from World War I, I know what it was.' He said, 'You are going to be in a military—army and military hospital school.' And," he said, "You will be teaching middle school and high school music.' In those days, the roads were so bad it took four hours to drive to Paris. So we got on a train and we got off there and so on and so forth, and then I started to—we—I went to—I couldn't find the man I wanted to work with, his name was Pierre Bernac. Bernac was a protégé of Poulenc and most of the songs that were written for males were written for him. They concertized the world, these two men. So he had been the teacher of Jesse Norman, and Gerard Souzay, and Elly Ameling and Dalton Baldwin—you name all these people. So I went to a conference—a music conference for the military, you know, music, in Paris. The guy at the high school of Paris said, "Oh, I know Pierre Bernac." I said, "Does he 'parle Anglais?'—does he speak English?" "Oh oui! He speaks perfect King's English. Here is his telephone number, give him a call today and tell him I told you." Okay. I got him on the telephone and he said, 'Can you come over this afternoon?' I said, 'Yes,' I said, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'Oh, I am on the

Avenue de la Motte-Picquet.’ He said, ‘I am near.’ So I got there, and it was this rickety old elevator—I got to the fifth floor. He was waiting for me, and I met him. I sang for him and he looked at me and he said, ‘Why do you want to be with me?’ I said, ‘Because you are the best in the world.’ He said, ‘Thank you.’ (Laughing) I said, ‘That is why I want to be with you.’ So I studied two and half years with him. So every weekend that I was teaching, on Friday afternoon—the job was easy because you taught only about four hours a day—and on Friday afternoons all these students who were at these dormitories, in the hospital there, they all went back to wherever they were in France. So we got in the car about three o’clock and drove straight into Paris. Of course, we would stay all night and then the next morning we’d take off somewhere where we hadn’t been and we did this for about two—two and a half years—during the school year. I’d be his last lesson in the afternoon. So finally, de Gaulle wanted to get out of NATO, so he asked the military to leave France. So I—Bernac said to me, he said, “What are you going to do? You won’t have any students for about six months or more.” I said, “That’s true—I am going to still get paid and I will still be living where I live in Verdun—in a nice apartment—and of course, I have all the military privileges.” I had the rank of a major, I had housing allowance, I had all PX’s, I had everything all over Europe. Anything I wanted. Just like an officer. So he said, “What would you think about going out on tour with a French pianist, and a narrator, and doing American art songs and American pop songs—like George Gershwin—etcetera—in recitals around France.” I said, “That sounds great.” So he arranged it and I did that. So one day, I got a call. They asked me where I want to go, I said I wanted to go to Germany. So this man said, “We have a position at Rhine Main Air Force Base.” I said, “Where is that?” “Oh about nine miles from Frankfurt.” I said, “That sounds good. What is it?” “It is

middle school general music.” I said, “Okay.” So I took it—and then, of course, I wanted to coach German Lieder. I found—I didn’t know anybody—I didn’t go to the Hochschule for music, the University. I went to the America house—do you know what the America houses were in Germany? They disseminated American culture after the war so the Germans could get to know us and there was one of these places in every major city. So I met the director—she spoke better English than I spoke German. So we spoke a little bit and then I said, “You know I am really looking for someone to work on my German lieder.” “Oh,” she said, “you must work with Otto Braun.” I never heard of him. She said, “He plays for everyone. (unintelligible) of everyone who comes to Frankfurt on Rhine—he teaches at the Hochschule.” I said, “Yeah, but my Deutch is...” She said, “Don’t worry, he speaks five languages.” So I said, “I don’t know him.” She said, “Doesn’t make any difference.” She said, “I will get him on the telephone.” She called him. He said, “You are American.” I said, “Yes,” I said, “your English is very good.” He said, “I understand your German is not very good.” I said, “Well, I will learn.” (Laughing). So anyway, he said, “You have a car?” I said, “Yes.” So he told me where he lived and he said, come over and sing for me. So I went over and I had no music with me. And he lived on the fifth floor of an apartment building—it was a nice apartment building. And I rang the bell and down the stairs came bounding this man with hair this long—snow white—so much energy! Then he introduced himself—Otto Braun. Well come to find out, this was a great, great opportunity for me because he knew everyone in the music business. He was close friends with Einstein, the man who lived in Africa and who was the great humanitarian—same age level.

A: Albert Schweitzer.



P: Albert Schweitzer, he was a friend of Albert Schweitzer. He played for everyone. So anyway, I got there and he said, "What would you like to sing?" I named a couple of pieces for him by Schubert. He said, "What key do you want to do them in?" No music, he sat down at the piano. He said, "When would you like to start coaching?" I said, "How about today?" He said, "Good, we will work today." I said, "How many languages do you speak?" "Well," he said, "I speak a little Spanish, English, French, and Italian." I said, "You do okay." So anyway, he had played—he had quite a career early on. His boss at the Hochschule was Paul Hindemith. He knew everybody. So anybody who would come to town—he'd say, do you want to go here at the concert, I know them, we'll go talk to them. So after the first year, he said, "We are going to do a concert. We are going to make a concert together." I said, "Where are we going to make a concert together?" He said, "Well, we will do some French songs, and we'll do some American songs," and he says, "but we got to do some lieder." He said, "We will go into the Dunlop Reifen Halle. I said Dunlop makes tires!" He said, "They also have a concert hall here in Frankfurt." So we did our first concert together. So I studied with him and he was a jewel. Anytime there was a concert with somebody he knew, no matter what, I usually ended up with Otto Braun. He loved my wife. He was that old hand kissing type of German, you know? But he had played for a man named Henrich Schlusnus who was the great baritone before Fisher-Dieskau and he had sung all over the world. So I got to meet his widow—even got an autographed biography of her husband that she had done. But anyway, he knew after the last year—my daughter was born in Wiesbaden at the Air Force hospital—and I said, "Dear, it is time for us to think about college and university and come back home." So he said to me, before that, earlier in that year—he said, that last fall I was there, he said, "This year we are doing"—he said, "I want you to do four

songs by Schubert to Goethe text.” Well you know where Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born and raised—Frankfurt Rhine. So he said, “We have got to work on these until we get to performance level.” And he said, “On this date, you in tails, and your wife in a gown, I’ll be here at this time to pick you up, with a Mercedes limousine, we are going to perform.” He didn’t tell me where. So the last week I worked with him—oh I didn’t tell you what I paid him for lessons. In those days it was very expensive for Germans on the economy to buy coffee. It was \$10 dollars a pound for them then. So my fee for my lessons with him—which were an hour, hour and a half long—was two pounds of coffee and a bottle of Remy Martin Cognac vsop, which cost me \$3.25.

A: At the PX

P: At the PX ...State store. Whatever they call that thing. That was what I paid him for the two years. So anyway we got there—we got in the car—a man opened the door—the butler, you know. He opened the door, we got in the car, we had a nice visit. We wound into Frankfurt—blah, blah, blah. We stopped in front of this house. I said, “Susan, I have been here before.” Well, you know, after the bombing there was hardly any of Frankfurt left. But the Germans were smart enough to take samples of everything. They rebuilt Goethe’s house to exactly the same way it was. I walked in—it was Goethe’s birthday. Every burger-meister in town was there—we had dinner by candlelight. Otto Braun and I were the entertainment. That was my gift. The last thing he said, he said, “I want you to get a good job.” He said, “I have a recording engineer in Frankfurt—let’s make a recording together.” That is what I sent around to all the schools. And I came back here and one day I was signed up with the Baltimore Placement Agency—looking for a college job. Well I tried in Germany, but they weren’t willing to fly me

from Frankfurt to New York or wherever it was here—even if I pay one way, so I came back to the USA and Kansas and stayed with my folks. About the middle of the summer I got this notification that there was a job at Lebanon Valley College. I said, “Where in the hell is that?” So I telephoned, and Bob Smith—who was the chair at the time—said, “We have your paperwork and we have your recording and we are interested in you.” And he said, “If the dean is out of town, but if the president”—was Dr. Sample at the time, Fred Sample—“will fly you out.” In the afternoon, he called me and I was on a plane in two days. I flew out here, got here after quite a while—many times being out in the air, and came into the old air force base at Middletown. He met me and I sang for Pierce Getz, and Bob Smith, and Dr. Sample. I went over to his office and they—we talked and they offered me a contract and I flew back in a couple of days. I stayed with Bob Smith and his wife. She was a jewel, too. I love the Smiths.

A: Let me jump in there and ask you—what was your impression of the College when you first arrived?

P: Well, I knew that the school had a—I was looking at the impression that the school had in the music world. I had talked to some people that I knew around here, there, and everywhere. I knew some people who were performers who had been out at Lebanon Valley College. In fact, the man who played principle cello with the St. Louis Symphony went to school with George Curfman here. So I knew that —well, when I saw the building, I thought to myself, oh boy.

A: That was the old Engle Hall?

P: The old Engle Hall.

A: What year was that by the way?

P: 1969.

A: Okay.

P: 1969. I walked in and I'd been up all that time, and I rehearsed with Bob Lau. Bob and I did a, kind of a mini recital. Bob played for me. Pierce was there—like I said—and there were three or four people. Ron Burrichter had been hired the year before and Ron was off, I think singing. At the Chautauqua Opera. So I didn't get to meet him. My mother came out for my first recital—well she saw the rickety old building and the hall and so on. She said to me, after I finished the recital, she said, "You made a mistake coming here." I said, "Mother, but Dr. Sample, the president, he has promised us a music building." I said, "I think I'll stick around until we get that." But let me tell you what kept me here. When I got here, the people that I had to work with were Tom Strohman—they were students. I had Tom Strohman, I had Dr. Price. I had people of that caliber all throughout this program. I said these people are way beyond where undergraduate students should be for where they are right now. That impressed me a great deal. I didn't know anything about teaching singing. I'd never taught singing—only at graduate school I taught a little bit of singing, you know working on my master's degree I did a little bit of teaching. But not much. I'd sung! I'd traveled and sung and sung professionally and done that. So I had to learn. So they put me up on the third floor right next to Doc [James] Thurmond's office. But my piano and my studio was right above the organ pipes. Well, when they turned the little red light on downstairs, my piano would walk around on the floor. But I was very impressed with the intensity of the program, with my colleagues—I don't think you'd have any better teacher of clarinet than Frank Stachow. Ever. Doc was a first class conductor of band and

orchestra. I finally met Ron—and Ron was a good singer and then Ron and I could do a lot of singing together.

A: And Tom Lanese was there?

P: Tom was here. I met Denise, of course. I met Tom. Let's see—oh piano teachers! Bill was teaching still—Bill Fairlamb was teaching. I am trying to think—the Jamanis' were here when I first came. They were here together and they only stayed about a year or two because they were out playing and the College didn't care much for that—they didn't want them to give them a release to concertize so they finally left, but they were here also at the time. I think I had some very good beginning students who I was learning on. So I decided, well, I better do some more work. So I met vocal coach Wayne Conner through Ron—he studied with him at Peabody Conservatory. Then I started working with Wayne and Wayne lived in Philly. So I'd go up about every couple of weeks—travel down to Philadelphia and have a coaching session with Wayne. Wayne was very good in languages and styles and opera lore and history of singers—he had a program on National Public Radio called 'Singer's World'. He knew every singer from the past. He mentioned somebody to me and he'd say, Henrich Renkemper. I said, "Who in the hell is Henrich Renkemper?" And he said, "Don't worry, as soon as your lesson is finished I called the record store, they have got a record ready for you. You go over and buy it—then go home and listen to it." That is the way I learned about Old Singers. So anyway, I continued my work here and my students got better and better and I decided, well, I will work on my doctorate. I decided I'd start at the University of Maryland. Well, I got down to the University of Maryland. I went there two summers. The voice teacher that I had—I sang better than he did and I don't think I knew more than he did but I sang better than he did and I just didn't think I was learning

that much from him. I didn't like the program mainly because it was more oriented towards— towards people who were going to get music history degrees. It was a lot of paper writing and classroom writing and less performing. So my friend Dr. Hubert Bird, who is a composer, said, "Come up to the University of Colorado in Boulder." He said, "You have got a sabbatical coming up and I know you are going to take the year if they are going to let you have it." So I said, "Okay." I said, "Who is out there?" "Well," he said, "there is a great pedagogue out here. His name is Dr. Berton Coffin." He said, "I didn't always like him as a teacher, but he knows everybody in the world. They have a fabulous library and vocal holdings." I said, "okay." So I made an arrangement and I flew out and I auditioned for them—at Boulder. They were—yeah, okay, fine. So everything was agreed to, but nothing ever written down. They accepted me as a doctoral student. I went out there that year, spent that year out there, took classes. I sang a couple operas with them, I did my first doctoral recital—in fact I remember doing it with a string quartet—I did the same vocal composition I did here with a professional string quartet, I did the Samuel Barber's Dover Beach with them. Then I sang in the Daughter of the Regiment by Donizetti—I had the leading baritone role on that with orchestra. I did doctoral classes. Well everything was hunky dory. So I thought, well, I did a lot of my classroom work that year so I came back here and got back into things, and I had noticed that when I was out there I did notice that my voice didn't do well with this teacher. He was a great pedagogue but what he was doing didn't work with me. So I said to my wife, "I have got to find somebody who really knows how to teach singing." So I discovered there was a man named Oren Brown who taught at Julliard. I knew Oren through the National Association of Teachers of Singing. So I saw him at a convention and I said, "Oren, I know you have a three week seminar up at Amherst at the

college. I would love to come up if I can get a faculty grant. But I have one request to make.” I said, “I’d love to have at least two lessons a week from you. I will pay you for those lessons because I am in such bad vocal shape.” He said, “Phil, I can’t tell you what my schedule will be like, but,” he said, “I will write you in a few weeks and I will check and we’ll see what happens.” So he wrote me and I went there. When I got into those lessons. I realized this man could really teach. He was teaching at Julliard at the time and he was an authority in helping people who were having trouble with their voices—that’s what his expertise was. He was a voice therapist as well as a teacher. He was one of the pioneers in this field. But anyway, to make a long story short, I met Tom Houser, Dr. Tom Houser—finally—at the seminar. He was one of the principle teachers. The last week I was in Amherst, I said to Tom, “Where do you live? I know you do a lot of teaching, you do most of the teaching here—Warren doesn’t do all the teaching. I live in New Holland. I said, I think that is close to me. Would you even think about taking me as a student?” He said, “I’d love to have you as a student.” He said, yeah. Well he was teaching in New York at the time, and living at his house in New Holland. Every weekend he would teach in New York City. Well, that is where he built his reputation. So the first year I worked with him I had a lesson every week—for three years. That is how bad I was. So finally we cut down to once every other week. I stayed with Tom Houser for thirty-five years. I went to every one of his workshops—one-week workshops at Marywood University. He was an incredible teacher and an incredible person. He knew everybody. This is the man who really taught me to sing and taught me to teach. After I started with him, my students went (whistles and motions up). You know, I get Jeff Riehl who teaches at University of Richmond—he is the chief choral conductor there. I met Bob Schalkoff. You remember Bob Schalkoff? Bob, you know, he said he’s at

Yamaguchi University in Japan—still there. He is now an administrator. He flies all over the world recruiting students for them. I haven't seen him for a couple years because they won't let him come home and finish his doctorate. Poor guy. But I've got students who are all over the place. Then I spent 14 years working at Hersheypark as vocal coach, of course, with the performers. Working with Allan Albert—who wasn't the one, you know, from the singing group out of New York, but he really knew what he was doing. I worked with him for about 14 years and we had some good shows with together. He left, he died. I stayed on another couple of years and then I said, "It's time to say goodbye to the past."

A: You looked right at me.

P: The quick story was that the dean here was Bill McGill at the time. He wanted to offer me—a summer school course. I said, "Yes, Bill," I said, "but," I said, "Bill, I don't think I could afford to do it." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "What are you going to pay me for that summer school course?" Oh, I think it was about \$1,200, something like that. I looked at him, I said, "Bill, I am at Hersheypark three days a week—at the end of my week I get a hundred dollars an hour every hour I am in the Park. I am sorry, I can't do that." He said, "Well, I can see." (Laughing) But, you know, I bought cars and I paid for weddings and did a lot of other things. Allan came into the Park and he asked me—I asked him, I said, "Allan, how much a fee should I charge Hershey Entertainment?" He said, "Phil, you are the vocal music coach. You make the same as I make. You make a hundred bucks an hour—that is what I make."

A: Let's talk about the department itself then.

P: Okay.



A: Over the years, has it changed? Is it different now than it was back then?

P: The department is—does a really good job at working with—and getting the students what they need to have, especially in the classroom, I think. We don't get a lot of students here who are going to come to Lebanon Valley to become performers. Occasionally, we get someone, you know. But generally speaking that doesn't happen. What is different is that the faculty is not performance oriented in the vocal area like they used to be. They don't have as much time as we had in the beginning. When I first started here in 1969, there was Ron and I. So Ron and I would do—make sure that we would do either individual recitals, and sometimes we'd do it together. Then we had Virginia Englebright join us and there were three of us. We would do an afternoon of opera. This is not possible because they have cut the amount of teachers you have really now. We had three full time teachers going. Now we have Dr. Wojdylak—Mike—who is really, he is really supposedly to be part-time but he is really doing full time work. And Rebecca [Lister], who is a wonderful teacher—she is the one I recommended for the job—and I am glad I did, she is terrific. Vicki [Rose] of course. Now, Vicki of course then had her health problems because Vicki used to do a lot of singing with me, but no more. As time passed from 1969 on, well we got into the middle '70s and we pushed forward and they added more—the State Department of Education made music ed. more hours to general education and the students' loads became heavier. There was less emphasis—there was less time for faculty to perform, number one—especially as a group. We used to have faculty recitals together. There isn't time for that now in their schedules. That is basically what has changed. Of course, we were young, too. So you know, Tom Lanese—Tom would say, “Would you and Ron do the Pearl Fisher's Duet by Bizet in the orchestra concert.?” “Yeah, sure.” Well, when Ron—Ron had a good top for the

voice here and we did that until I was tired of singing it. But we do it here with the orchestra, then we'd do it someplace else. In fact, the first gig that Ron and I ever had was with—do remember a man named Carl Moyer who was at Millersville? He wanted to do Verdi Requiem for his students to have the experience. So Ron and I were hired—that was my first semester here. We were hired to do solos to the Verdi Requiem. But these students had a chance to study the Requiem. We did it at Millersville and we did it at Kutztown University. It was fantastic. So there were a lot of stuff going on that—and I noticed, too, over the years, at least—I noticed that the purpose of students changed. We had a period of about 10 years that I thought about leaving LVC. Mainly because the students were not the caliber they had been before. We couldn't recruit students. We couldn't recruit them because they couldn't afford to come to school here.

A: What were those years, approximately?

P: I would say—we got the new building in '73, I'd say those were the years. Probably the '80s, the early '80s. We had a difficult time recruiting students. The price of coming to school here was just...

A: Exponentially.

P: Thank you. (Laughing). So they couldn't afford to come and they weren't as talented. We were getting people that I wouldn't accept. I'd say these—and a lot of it has to be done because of the de-emphasis of the arts in the public schools. As soon as John Synodinos becomes LVC president, and all the stuff starts popping out of his head, and we finally get this idea of this

scholarship thing—then we go this way again (motions up). So this is the way the department has gone again and they have some good performers over there now.

A: That was about the time Mark Mecham came in too, wasn't it?

P: Yes, and Mark came. Mark is a very good administrator. Mark really knows how to get things going for the department. He has been doing that for years. He was—one thing I will tell you about Lebanon Valley is I never ever, ever, ever, ever had anyone tell me how to teach. That was one of Doc's things—Doc Thurmond's thing was academic freedom. He was always speaking about that. I first got here—I had Deans come in and watch me teach, I remember the—I had our former president, before the one we have now.

A: You mean before or after Synodinos?

P: No.

A: Pollick?

P: No. No, no. The one who was the interim—just recently.

A: The president?

P: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Who was the dean.

A: Oh, yeah, Dr. [Steve] MacDonald.

P: Yeah. So I got a call from Dean MacDonald one day. He said, "I'd like to come in and observe a singing lesson with you." I said, "Good." So I had a really incredible soprano and she now is married to a conductor and she sings and she teaches—I see her once in a while. I think her

husband has the orchestra at Hershey High School, I don't know where he is. But he also has—he has the junior orchestra for the Harrisburg Symphony. In fact, he is the assistant conductor at the Harrisburg Symphony. Anyway, make a long story short, I said, “Come on over.” So she was preparing a senior recital. So he came in for her lesson and I warmed up her voice a little bit and I had a pianist come in a play for it. He looked at me at the end of that lesson and—they'd gone away—said, “You are not teaching undergraduate work, you're teaching graduate work.” I said, “That's right.” I said, “This woman is ready to do senior graduate work in graduate school.” I said, “This is what I teach every student. No matter if they have the least amount of talent, they still get the best of whatever I can do for them.” I said, “When I get somebody like this, then you go all out and you make sure that they are singing with someone on their recital, they are doing a special program.” He said, “Her German was so good.” I said, “Yes.” “Where did she learn her German?” “Her French was so good, where did she learn her French? Her Italian was good, where did she learn that?” “I don't know, it wasn't from me.” (Laughing.) I don't know, but I think Bill came one time, too. Bill McGill came to one of my 100 classes, and he said to me afterwards, he said, “How does anybody teach this course without living in Europe?” I said, “I don't know.” I said, “You heard—you heard stories about Beethoven that you never heard today.” I said, “I've been to those places, I've been to where he did his final testament, you know. The Heiligenstadt Testament, where he didn't want to live anymore because he was losing his hearing.” I said, “I have been to his home, I have been to all these places.” I said, “When I talk about Schubert, I've been there. When I talk about Mozart, I've been there. I've been walking around in those same cobblestones that he walked on.” I said, “That is what makes it different.” I said, “I don't know anyone who teaches music history, or

teaches Music 100—which is General History, can teach this. Because we teach basically European music and American music.” So, I’ve had parents talk to me and they said, “My Chris put away his rock music—he now plays classical repertoire.” I said, “Well that is too bad.”

(Laughing.) Okay, what else did you want to ask me, Art?

A: When did you retire? What year?

P: I think I retired 2003. I’d been here 34 years, and you know—you know inside when it is time to leave. I knew about two years before. I had a sabbatical and—the last sabbatical was wonderful, I just took a semester, where I worked with Ruth Drucker, who is an authority in French Art Song. We put together a CD of about 30 or more songs. Art songs in French that the undergraduates could do. So I brought that back, I shared it with the dean, I gave him a copy. He said, “That is incredible.” I said, “Well, yeah,” and I said, “when I have a student who is doing French songs—they are beginning. I said, I’d choose some of these songs that are out of here. They might be Poulenc or Faure or Debussy. Just songs for students that are on the undergraduate level. I said, those words were spoken by Ruth Drucker and her French is beautiful. That’s the way we were. I saw her every other week at her home in Towson—she taught at that time at Peabody and she used to teach at the University of Maryland. She taught at Towson University. Anyway, I’d learn about three or four songs, and then what she would do at the end of the lesson, is she would read the text on the tape for me. Then at the end of the whole thing, I—I knew that I had a really talented group of seniors that year to do recitals. It was time to say farewell. I know the people who came—the juniors and seniors were not very happy with me. But I came back again. Because Rebecca was pregnant with her second child so I filled in for her for six weeks after she was hired. (Laughing)

A: Now when was that after retirement?

P: Let's see—well, the last year, I told the faculty and I told Mark, I don't want anything to do with hiring my replacement. When you get to the final candidates, I will hear everybody and I give you my opinion. They had over—probably over 200 applicants. Very few men. Very few men. Not very many men in this business anymore. Anyway, so I—I heard the finalists and Vicki Rose was among the finalists and so was Rebecca, and there were two others—there were four of them. I listened to them all sing, I watched them teach—they were teaching my students. So we used the same two students as guinea pigs so I could get an idea how they taught. At the end of it all, I said, "I think Rebecca is the person for you. She not only sings well, she expresses herself well. In the teaching she recognizes the problems and she goes to the core of—the beginnings of how to remedy them. I was very impressed with her. That is the woman they hired.

A: Let me broaden this out a little bit as we sort of move towards the end.

P: How are we doing?

A: I'm doing okay.

P: You are doing okay?

A: Yeah, I am doing okay. See, you spent a lot of time here teaching. Thirty some—

P: Thirty-four years. Yeah.

A: As you look back over that time at Lebanon Valley—what would you say Lebanon Valley means to you?

P: Lebanon Valley—especially when it comes to the faculty, the colleagues I had here—especially in the very beginning, I thought the highest integrity of faculty members that I ever worked with were probably in the first 20 years here—about 20 years. They were a different breed—they were a different cut. We were cut from a different mold than our younger faculty members are. These people had great integrity and honesty and they were demanding—in a friendly way. But they were demanding of the students, they expected them to produce. I think the academic standing of the College and the way students love to try to push off the grade thing, I always told students that my grading was probably harder than other teacher’s grading—especially in the studio. At the nine weeks, I would always tell them where they stood and why. I said, you can make an A in singing if you do what I ask you to do, you don’t have to have a great voice, but you’re achieving. Integrity, integrity. Since John Synodinos, and the idea of putting us on the national front, I think this school has just gone leaps and bounds. When I walked in here and I saw those black macadam paths, I thought to myself, uhhhhh. When he went out and borrowed that half a million dollars to make this look nice and they put the concrete sidewalks in. I said, “I think we got somebody who knows how to sell something.” You have to sell. We went through a period of —oh at least one particular dean—that was horrible, and we had presidents that were not as effective as other presidents. I think presidents that were here, some of them did the best they could. I think we just had—with John Synodinos, we just had a man whose mind never stopped working. It worked 24 hours a day. He could drive you crazy because he had a hell of a temper. I liked him because he told it like it was. I don’t remember—were you on the committee when we said goodbye to him? I was the guy that came up with the idea. Someone said, “How do we honor the Synodinoses?” I said, “You honor

this way, we are going to have a meal over here in this tent, and you honor him this way—every building that he had anything to do with improving or building, you light every light in that building and then afterwards everybody goes around to those buildings and visits these places.” That was my idea. I said, “That is what is important.” I’ve had great colleagues. I’ve had some that got a little peevish sometimes, but generally honest, give you their opinion—if they didn’t like something you did they told you—even the chairman of the department would, which was fine. I really think that this school has something that is special for the students that they’ll never get in a state school—unless they go to Pittsburg State University when I was there. Where the professors actually care for the students. I never had a student ever say one cuss word or—ever yell at me at all. In the 34 years. I’d tell them—sometimes I had in class—the man I lost to—the man who is in a wheelchair, who got a couple degrees from me—gave a senior recital and so on. He used to be in my classes. Cliff Kaylor was his name. So they complained about the work in my class. I said, “If Cliff can do it, you can do it. Shut up.” And that’s all I had to say. (Laughing.) They shut up.

A: The other side of this then—we can end with this.

P: Yeah

A: Again, the years that you were here and all the students you worked with—how do you want to be remembered by your students?

P: I’m remembered by my students more than I am remembered by the college administration or even the music faculty I worked with. They know me for giving them something that maybe no one else could give them. That was the confidence to be as good as they could possibly be in



whatever they were pursuing. And never to pass up an opportunity when the door opens—to go through the door to see what’s on the other side. Don’t be afraid to better yourself. If you have an opportunity to—for example I had one young woman. She was a senior that year, and she said to me, “Mr. Morgan, I do not want to teach.” I said, “Michelle, what do you want to do?” She said, “I want to be an airline stewardess.” I said, “Michelle that is what you should do then.” I said, “You are a very fine woman, you’re a very nice looking lady, you know how to speak well.” She became an airline stewardess. She flew all over the world. She did everything that you did. She died of breast cancer in her forties. But she did what she wanted to do. I remember having Tony Leach who was one of my first black students. He was wonderful. Wonderful. He could play anything. He took singing lessons with me. Played for all my students! I used to say to him, “Tony, use your blackness, my friend. Use it to your advantage. This is your time.” Well, you see what he does now—he is at Penn State. He is a professor of music education there. He has that black choir that is probably one of the top black choirs in the country. But everyone who came out, I’d say, “You gotta be the best you can be and you’ve got to remember one thing—you can never stop learning. Till you take the last breathe of your life. And if you remember that, you’ll be the most productive teacher, administrator, sales person, business person, you can ever be.” They said to me—even people now—they say, “You buy all the latest books on singing.” I buy the books here for the library because these people up here don’t have a chance to do this. But the interest is still there. I said, “You gotta develop the lifelong love of learning—even if you are learning in the classroom.” And, you’ve got to remember if you are working with students—give each one of them your best. Even if they don’t have any talent at all. Give them what they can understand. When they walk out of your

studio, or your classroom, they are going to be a great productive member of American society. That is what you remember. You don't remember what you learned about singing and most have learned "blah, blah, blah". Some of them would come back to me and study with me after they got their degree. They'd say, "You didn't do that before." I said, "No, I've learned something since you left." I said, "You are learning every moment." And this is why I learned from Tom Houser. But I've always had that. I think you can develop it. There are people like yourself—you're a lifelong learner. You read every damn thing you can put your hands on if you can read it. You know, I read—I subscribed for a long time to—oh, what is the rock and roll magazine? Rolling Stone. Because I like their editorials. They got people—they got (unintelligible) who writes a lot of their stuff. You don't get this kind of stuff in the—you know, I listen to stuff on NPR and a bunch of sources, but you don't get the kind of opinions you get out of those people. But I think that is what you have to give the students. When you give them that, they love you forever. I remember that the year I retired we had a dinner and I had people flying in from California and every place else—Florida—to come up and have dinner with me. I didn't have a big reputation like Pierce Getz and like—or even Frank Stachow. But the most important thing for me is what my students thought about me and still think about me. They can't wait to see me, and they'll come up to me and they'll say, "You don't look any older." And I say, "Is there something wrong with your eyesight? Have you been to an optometrist lately?" (Laughing.)

A: That is a nice note to end on, I think. I really appreciate—

P: Art is the perfect man for this job.

A: Thank you. Thanks.