

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 9, Side 1

November 17, 1995

M.O'R.: This is a continuation of the oral history with Althea Pratt-Broome.

Okay. So the woman leans forward and says, "That's not going to work."

A.P-B.: Yeah. "That's impossible."

And I said, "Well, I have been through all of your courses" - and I didn't say "and some of them were pretty stupid," because some of those courses that they give teachers to help you to become a teacher are the most inane things you can imagine.

For instance, in the social studies one, they took us on a field trip so that we would know how to take a field trip with children. And then they insisted that we all write a thank-you note - not just one, but every individual write a thank-you note, because this is what we would have to have our children do when we were teaching. Okay. So there were a lot of these things.

So all I said to her was, "I have been through all your courses. I know what's expected. And if individualizing doesn't work for me, then I can immediately fall back on everything that you've taught me. So I should have no trouble."

"Well, of course no one is going to hire you to do individualizing. No classroom individualizes."

I said, "Well, perhaps I can find a school that will allow me to do that."

"Well," she said, "they certainly won't."

Well, they passed me. They let me do my practice teaching, and I got my certificate and I got out. So ...

M.O'R.: Now, where did you do your practice teaching?

A.P-B.: In Beaverton district. They wanted me to come back, but they only could accept a certain portion of what I wanted to do, and so I said, "Well, I'll keep looking."

So I kept looking. I went from district to district talking to them about what my ideas were about teaching and what I wanted to do with children. I wanted mixed grades, mixed ages. I didn't want to give grades. I did not want to test. I did not want to use textbooks or workbooks. I didn't want to do any of those things. And I did not want the children sitting in rows in desks. I wanted to get rid of the desks. Have tables, chairs, couches, et cetera.

Well, for most districts that went over like a lead balloon, you know. A lot of them were interested in parts of what I was talking about, and they would love to have me innovate and do some of these things in their school district, but very few of the things.

Well, I got out to the Canby School District. Again it was one of those things. I sat in on one of my classes with Dr. Kramer, and he had invited visitors from different schools. This was just before we were ready to go out and do our practice teaching, and he was running this course to prepare us, and so he had some principals from different school districts. So I was sitting in the back as I usually did, and some of these visitors were sitting in the back. And I took one look at one of them, and I

thought, "Oops, that's one of the people I'm going to be working with."

Well, it turned out she was from the Canby school district. And several things that she said - she was just a wonderful - I mean, you could look at her and you could see what a dear person she was. She was older, but she had the sweetest face, and there was just something about her spirit that came through.

I talked to her a little bit about some of the things that she had been talking about at this class, and at any rate, after I'd talked to a number of the different districts I remembered her, and I thought, "I have to call the Canby school district. And I found out that Paul Ackerman, whom I told you about, who had been a pacifist and the first Methodist minister - first of any minister in Oregon to be jailed for conscientious objection ...

M.O'R.: This was Vietnam War days, I guess?

A.P-B.: This was World War I.

M.O'R.: Oh, even before. I see. We're talking ...

A.P-B.: We're taking way back.

M.O'R.: ... historic commitment to pacifism.

A.P-B.: Yes. And Laurie Pratt had known him and had been in the same camp when they were up at Cascade Locks Camp and had been working on the same trails and things. So he'd already told me things about Paul Ackerman, but I had never met Paul. So I found out here he was, superintendent of the Canby school district. And I thought, "Wow, not only the principal that I had met there at that class, but also Paul Ackerman. No wonder I had this feeling."

So I went out there and sat down there with both of them, told them what I wanted to do. They didn't become horrified. They

didn't tell me impossible, but they said, "This is a very conservative town with a very conservative school board. If you are going to do any of these things here, which we would like to see you do, it's going to have to be very quiet if not impossible with the school district the way it is. But if you're willing to accept that -."

And I said, "Give me one grade. Give me a first grade. And then when I'm in the teacher's room and I hear them complaining about, 'Oh, this child is so dumb, this child can't learn to read, this child ...,' and so forth, then I can say, "Why don't you send them down to my first grade room, and then I'll have them help to teach the first graders because in helping to teach you do a lot learning."

So they agreed with me that this would be okay, and Cecil Trost was the principal of that elementary building. And so she said - when I said no textbooks, she said, "Well, how are they going to know the vocabulary of the textbooks, the readers and everything, to go into second grade?"

I said, "If I guarantee you that they will know the vocabulary - I'll take all of that vocabulary and I'll teach it in my own way. And I'll have the books out there. They can read them, but I'm going to have a whole lot of other books there to read, too."

So they agreed, and I said, "I can't stand workbooks." And they were all printed in the East. They had nothing to do - when they have a mountain, have you ever looked at it?

M.O'R.: No.

A.P-B.: Well, it's not the kind of mountains we have. It looks like a hill. And so when you're working with the children

they look it in this workbook, and they want to put an M under it not an H - I mean, they want to put an H not an M, because it looks like a hill; it doesn't look like a mountain.

So I went through the whole thing with them and I said, "That's why I don't want to use it. They don't make sense. None of it makes sense."

"Well, we're going to give you the fast children because of your record."

And I said, "Well, I do know how to teach children who are not the top."

"Well, we're going to give you the top class." So they did.

M.O'R.: But at this point you didn't have too much of a record, did you?

A.P-B.: They looked at my academic record.

M.O'R.: Oh, because of your academic record, not your teaching record?

A.P-B.: Not my teaching record, my academic one.

And so - I mean, out of 900 students who graduated there were 23 of us that were honor students. So that's what they were looking at, and they didn't believe I was going to be able to work with the slow ones, either.

So they had their first grade sort of sorted out that way so that they were going to give me the top students class. And so they said, "That would fit you better."

I used all of the methods and things that I had designed, and those kids came out of there reading at a fifth grade level, but nobody knew it until they got into second grade, and then everything broke out. Cecil Trost came running down the hall to me when

the next fall started, and she said, "I don't know what you did to those children, and I think it's wonderful what happened to them." But she said, "All of those second grade teachers have converged on me and said, 'What do we do with these kids that this woman taught? They don't want to sit in a circle. They don't want to do any of these things that we do. They don't want to read first grade books. They've read them all. They don't want to read second grade books. They've read them all. We tried third grade books, they've read them all. They said they want to go down to the library. They want to go in and out to the bathroom without asking permission. They don't want to raise their hands.'" Et cetera.

So she said, "What do we do with them? Oh, dear."

I said, "You let them learn. You leave books everywhere, and they'll read them all. It really makes it much easier for you. Those other children don't want to sit in that circle, either. Don't put them in a circle. Let them read."

Well, anyway, that's how it got going.

So then they let me cut a door between the room I was in and the room next door, because that room had become vacant, and by that time the very thing that I had said when the teachers said, "What do we do with this kid who ..." you know. So I had by that time begun to have part-time second, third and fourth graders, and the fifth graders were over in the other building.

So some of these kids were coming in, and the room was - some of them had become permanent by then. It took five years to get rid of the desks, but I was putting them together like tables, and I had a rocking chair in there. When a kid wasn't feeling good I'd rock them. I had the whole back end of the room for drama, and I

had a big science table. We did murals all over the walls. We couldn't paint on the walls yet, but we put paper on them and we had all these murals.

We had the hallway all lined with all these paintings and pictures, and the teachers would say, "Well, you couldn't do it if you didn't have the fast kids."

So I said, "Give me the slow kids." So I took the slow kids, and we had paintings all over the place, and the drama things, the plays that the kids would make up and we would do for the whole school. And again, because kids would do all their own scenery, she came to me one day and she said, "The teachers are saying you're leaving the children up there to paint scenery in the auditorium and you're not with them."

And I said, "Well, they're working, aren't they?"

"Well," she said, "yes, and I know you trust them, but," she said, "the other teachers are very upset about it."

"Well," I said, "I can't be teaching the others back here."

So we finally - we'd take a bunch of our work and we'd do it there while the other kids were painting scenery.

So anyway, then we'd put on these plays, and again they'd say, "Well, you couldn't do it with the slow kids." Well, when I got the slow kids they were doing it, too.

So then I ended up with this big mixed bag. The high school heard about these things; pretty soon they were sending high school kids over there. So we had two rooms, and I bought an electric stove. We did a lot of archeological things out back. We built huts and things that people in ancient times would have had. We were digging gardens in the center courtyard with sticks and

weights and things, and we were making gardens the way they used to in the long-ago time. And then I got a greenhouse and attached it to this other room that we had.

I'd been begging for them to give me one of the two old schools in the district, so finally they gave me the old green school. We named it the old green school because it was painted green. It was an old four-story school that was built in 1912, and it had the big bell tower on the top and everything. So we took over that, and we had all kinds of things going on there.

We had one room that was all Oregon history with painted murals all the way around depicting Oregon's history. We had one anteroom outside in one of the hallways that was all Oregon forestry. We had big pieces of logs and everything else. Whatever the kids were interested in, and they could learn at any level. If a first grader came in and could learn to read at a fourth grade level, a fifth grade level, whatever, they could go through everything the State required and still do all the reading that they wanted to do.

And then they could go on with all of the things - I had a chart, and it was every year through eight - no, 12 years. I had all of the scheduled material that every one of those grades had to learn because I had a number of high school kids by then. And then they could just flip the chart and they could see, okay, finished all of this. Flip over to second year, finish all that. Flip over to the other.

So Oregon history comes in the fourth year. So all the kids were doing fourth year Oregon history, whether they were first graders or eighth graders. They could all get in on all the pro-

jects that were going on. So if one kid came up with a project, that's how the lumber thing started. Several of the boys - one of the boys' father worked in the lumber business, and so he started out with, "I want to learn all about that." So then the other kids got into it. So then they started this whole big thing.

M.O'R.: And this is in the green school?

A.P-B.: In the green school.

M.O'R.: So you had, I take it, more than just one class of people by that time?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. We spread out all over the basement. They had said we could only have the basement.

M.O'R.: And how many students were you teaching then?

A.P-B.: Oh, I had 65 by then.

M.O'R.: Sixty-five. Okay.

A.P-B.: Well, in the other school we got the second room, as I said, with the door between. Well, finally we outgrew that so they gave us the end of a hallway over on the other side, so then we had those rooms, and we were going back and forth across the hallway. And the State - they do an evaluation of a school district every so many years. Well, Paul and Cecil came to me and they said, "They're going to evaluate our school district. What are we going to do about you?"

And I said, "Well, they're going to have to take us like we are. I'm not going to change a thing."

"Okay."

So they came. And first one man came, and I was on this side of the hallway in what was our reading and social studies, literature and this kind of thing. Over on the other side was history,

math, arts and drama, and cooking. I mean, it was just -. So he came over and sat - I was reading - one of the kids was reading to him because they all read individually. Others were sitting around reading. Some were writing. Some were reading things together. Some were doing research projects.

So he said, "What are they doing over in the other side of the hallway?"

And I said, "Why? Is something wrong?"

He said, "No. But how do you know what's going on over there?"

And I said, "Well, so-and-so's doing this, or these kids are doing that." I went through the whole thing, everything that was going on in those two rooms. I said, "Isn't that what's happening?"

He said, "Yes, but you're not over there, so how do you know?"

I said, "Because I know what the kids are doing." And I said, "After a while I'll go over there, and I know what these kids are doing."

And so he said, "I understand you don't test. Don't you know that it's required that you give achievement tests?"

I said, "I know that." But I said, "It doesn't make any sense." I said, "Just take two of the kids that are in this room right now. Over there that boy just started here this year. He's a fifth grader. He reads at a pre-primer level. He has experienced nothing but failure since he was a first grader. I have watched him in the hallways, out on the playground, since he was a first grader. He's been a failure all the way. He's angry. He wants to throttle kids out there on the playground. I've seen him

get them down and try to kill them. They were going to put him in MacLaren. The counselor came to me and asked me, 'Would you take him?' He would spit at teachers in the hallway. He came in here cussing me out. I said, 'John, that's okay. For right now, I'll let you do that because I represent everything you've been through, and I'm going to say to you, 'I care about you, and one day you're going to care about me. In the meantime, every one of us in here - we had 45 then - and all 45 of us are going to accept you as you are, and we're going to find everything that's beautiful about you, whether you think you are or not, and we're going to make you successful. You're going to learn to read. You're going to learn to do all of these things.'"

So I took him out on the playground, along with all the kids. We did a lot of sports, and we were playing basketball. That kid was superb. I said, "John," I put my arm around him and I said, "You are wonderful." I said, "One of these days I'm going to walk into that high school over there and I'm going to hear your name on that intercom. You're going to be one of the top sports people over there."

He said, "You know damn well I'm never going to go to high school." He said, "I can't read."

I said, "But the way I teach reading is not the way you've had it, and you're going to learn to read."

The next day I came - well, I asked him all of his heroes in the sports field, and I came with a *Sports Illustrated* magazine, and I said, "It has a story in there about one of your heroes, one of your football heroes. Let's sit down and read it."

And he said, "You know damn well I can't read."

I said, "I told you, the way I do it, you can learn to read."

I said, "You know 'the'?"

"Yes."

"And 'if'?"

"Mm-hmm."

And I named a few others, and I said, "Okay. You read those words every time we come to them. I'll read the rest."

So the third time we came to "football," I said, "What's that word, John?"

"Football."

I said, "So who said you couldn't read?" I said, "Of course you can read." And I said, "We'll finish this thing."

So from then on I'd bring all this material to him, but I'd also say, "Okay, let's read these, too," only I picked out fifth grade level, and I said, "You've got to read at your own level, but we do what I call read-along."

So after a year he was bringing the books and reading them at grade level, and then I said, "Okay, you don't need me anymore. Go read." So he did. First he said, "Oh, no, I can't."

And I said, "Oh, yes, you can. Go do it."

So here's John at the - that first year, and this guy is saying to me, "You do achievement tests."

I said, "Okay. That kid has gone through all this. If he isn't successful here he's going to take this anger, this hate and this violence, and he's going to end up in MacLaren. I'm not going to do that to him. If I have to draw the A for a kid and just let them put the line in between to be successful, I'll do that. I'll do whatever I can to make that kid a success."

So I said, "I'm supposed to give him a fifth grade achievement test? He knows he can't do it. I know he can't do it. And now you know he can't do it, but you're going to insist that I do it? I'm not going to do it."

And I said, "Then there's Scott, over here." Scott has 160 IQ at this point. He's ten years old. He's been bored stiff. His father's on the school board. His father came to me and said, "Will you take this boy?"

I said, "Do you know what I do in here?"

And he said, "I'm on the school board, am I not?"

I said, "I don't think you know what goes on in here, though."

I said, "I'll tell you about it."

He said, "You don't have to tell me." He said, "You just take this boy and do what you do with him."

Well, this boy was studying with me at the time this man came to examine us. He was doing Aristotle, Plato with me. He was doing science with Tycho Brahe and all these people. He was studying college physics with me. And I said, "You want me to give him a fourth grade achievement test," which is like an IQ test. And I said, "You know he'll go right out over the top of it," which he did. His father insisted he have one, because when his father realized that I didn't give them, he came down on me like you wouldn't believe. And so I went through the whole thing with him.

Well, anyway, that day I got a bunch of these people going through. So after it was all over, Paul and Cecil came to me and they said, "Well, do you want to hear what they said?"

I said, "Do I dare? Do I still have a job?"

And they said, "They thought it was the most wonderful thing they'd ever seen. They didn't know how in the world you did it because you had practically no equipment and what you did have you'd bought yourself. They want to give us some money to spend on your program to get you things that you need."

I said, "I can't believe it."

M.O'R.: That's great.

A.P-B.: I thought I would be fired. So that was the alternative school, and we got the old green school.

One day when we were on one of the spring breaks or fall - whatever - most of the time I was down there with the kids because they didn't want to take vacations; they wanted to do things. So I would be down there, and we would be doing art, and we would be doing plays and music and all these fun things. And kids from other schools were in there with us doing it because they found out I was down there during vacation time.

So one of those times I was home for a few days, and the phone rang early in the morning, and this guy said, "I'm a writer for *The Oregonian*, and I want to do an article on your school." A lot of times they were doing articles, so I said, "Well, what did you want to know?"

And he said, "Well, what do you think about the fire in your school?"

I said, "What?"

He said, "You mean they haven't called you and told you your school's on fire?"

M.O'R.: The green school?

A.P-B.: The green school was on fire.

I said, "No." I said, "I'll talk to you later. I'm on my way."

So he said, "I'll see you down there."

The kids were outside crying. He said, "I've never seen kids when their school burned that they're out there crying because their school's burning."

And I just said, "We're going in and get things." The fire was up above. I said, "There isn't any fire down here." The men fighting the fire, they said, "You can't go in there," and I said, "We're going in."

So we went in. We were hauling stuff out of there as fast as we could get it out of there. And they were pouring water on the place. We were just soaked. And we did this all day. And when it got dark - well, it must have been Christmas vacation because it got dark early - I was still down there. Kids had gone home. I was still down in there hauling stuff out, and by that time the fire was down and getting into part of the second floor. And - well, it would be actually the first floor because it was above the basement but the stairs went up to it. So it was above me, and I was still bringing things out.

And the firemen said, "Look, if we can't drag you out of there, the least you could do is wear a hard hat."

I said, "I don't have time."

So at 8 o'clock I heard this voice coming from the stairwell, and it said, "Are you down there?"

And I said, "Yes, I'm down here."

And he said, "I'm so-and-so from the school board, and we're having a school board meeting to decide what we're going to do with you, and you have to be there."

I said, "Like this I'm to come to a board meeting?" I came up the stairs. My hair was soaking wet. My clothes were absolutely filthy. I was covered with soot and dirt.

[end of side one]

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 9, Side 2

November 17, 1995

A.P-B.: ... and argued until midnight, discussed, rather, because they wanted to - the other school down in Barlow, they wanted to give me the whole school. Well, in the meantime for a year or two I had helped to start a daycare center for low-income whites and migrant Mexican people, and I said, "I can't take that away from them."

And they said, "The building belongs to the school district. We only let them use it, but if we have a need it's ours and we can tell them to go someplace else."

I said, "I can't do that. Give me the gym. I'll take that from them, but not the rest of the school." It was a big gym that had been added to his old 1800's school in probably the 1920's or 30's.

And they said, "It's impossible for you to do what you're doing in that gym."

I said, "I'll partition off. I'll build lofts. I'll put the stage in there." Because we had the bus barn for our theater back of the green school, and we had built our stage in there, and we gave our theater performances; the whole town came to them.

And so they said, "You can't possibly do everything you're doing down there."

I said, "Just let me build."

Finally by about midnight they just said, "For heaven's sake, go ahead, do it."

Because I said, "I'll buy my own materials. I'll do all of that. The kids and I, we built our stage. We'll build there."

So finally they let us do it, but they said, "We'll send a carpenter down to help you out."

So we had a reading loft, and we had a science room, and we had - and we had a little room under the reading room where we could have the films and things and a study room, a quiet place. And then we had a kitchen, and we had art and ceramics and my potter's wheel and the kiln and everything. So we did it all. We had a math loft. And we took our stage down in the bus barn, and we moved it all down there and we built it right in the middle of the whole thing. We painted pictures on all the walls. We had a ball. We loved that thing.

M.O'R.: So it was a new challenge for you and the students?

A.P-B.: Yes, it was. But we did it, and we had a wonderful time there.

M.O'R.: Is that, then, where the alternative school remained?

A.P-B.: Yes. That's where it remained for the rest of the time. So altogether it was 17 years.

M.O'R.: You mentioned that kids even from the high school would come, and I'm just wondering how was it decided, you know, which students could be members of your alternative class?

A.P-B.: Sometimes it was because they were extremely bright and extremely bored and very nonconformist in their ways, and others because they were having a hard time with academics, they needed individual attention. It was mostly that kind of thing, kids who were too much or too little, and some in between who just didn't fit.

M.O'R.: Was there a limitation on the number of students that you could actually take?

A.P-B.: Well, they finally had to do that to me. When it got up to 65 the school board said, "Enough is enough."

M.O'R.: "That's all you can do."

A.P-B.: Yeah. They let me have - there were five teachers in the district who wanted to teach with me. One of the in-services they had had me do a program on alternative education. I was doing it at a lot of other districts, Washington, Oregon and California alternative education. So finally - you're never honored in your own district, you know - and so finally they had me do a workshop for them. Five of the teachers wanted to come in with me. They allowed one man to come in with me, and we had a wonderful time.

M.O'R.: What was his name?

A.P-B.: Myron Moore. And Myron was just the dearest thing, and he had his daughter in the school there with us. They allowed him to do that. We had a lot of fun, anyway, together. He still calls every once in a while and talks about it.

He went on to do something like it in the school district after he had been with me three or four years, and then they allowed him to do something like it in one of the other schools, and then I got another young fellow, and then one of the students who had done her practice teaching with me and a number of students from Mt. Angel and Portland State and University of Oregon had done their student teaching with me, practice teaching. And for a while I taught at Mt. Angel before they closed, before I started teaching at Portland State. And I did summer session out there one summer before I went to USC.

M.O'R.: This was teaching alternative education?

A.P-B.: And also some workshops on giftedness and creativity.

M.O'R.: So you were teaching teachers, mostly, in these workshops, then?

A.P-B.: Yes. Or students. At Mt. Angel it was students, college students. At Portland State, when I started teaching there it was a graduate class in giftedness, creativity and human potential.

M.O'R.: And how long did you teach at Portland State?

A.P-B.: About eight or nine years, something like that.

M.O'R.: Was this night school, then?

A.P-B.: Yes. Because I had the alternative school in the day. And then I did the workshops and seminars out here on the weekends.

M.O'R.: And every summer down to USC?

A.P-B.: And then every summer down there. I'd finish teaching the last - because the summer course was actually the arts, arts in the child's life was the summer course. And of course by the time I was through with the alternative school. It had finished the whole term, you know, nine months. And so then I crammed the summer course at Portland State into two weeks, and it was a concentrated course that went all day, not night, but all day.

And then I would finish on a Friday afternoon, I'd have the van loaded. I took some of my staff from up here, and the rest of my staff down there. So I'd have my staff waiting for me by the time I got home. I'd change my clothes, and they would have had all their stuff packed in there by then, and we'd head for California. We'd be down there by Saturday afternoon. We'd start

getting the center ready, and on Sunday at 1:00 I'd start registering students.

M.O'R.: Sounds like a pretty busy time.

A.P-B.: It was wild. And then I'd leave there on a Friday afternoon after the last performance, the matinee on Friday, and head up here, and I'd be teaching an in-service up here by Monday. It was a crazy schedule. That's why I finally started collapsing out on the highway.

M.O'R.: Right. You said you were driving home one night, and what happened?

A.P-B.: The highway started tipping up, and all the signs started sliding across, and I thought it was an earthquake, only it wasn't. The highway was doing its usual trip and I was doing something else. Inside my head was the earthquake. I was having a vascular spasm of the brain. All I did was hang onto the wheel until it was over, and then I could get the rest of the way home. Fortunately I never hit anybody, and they didn't hit me.

M.O'R.: So you were able to drive the rest of the way home, then, you mean?

A.P-B.: Finally, yeah. But I had no idea where I was on that highway for quite a while. I just held onto the wheel and prayed that I was in the middle lane where I thought I was. When I came out of it, I wasn't in the middle lane, by the way.

M.O'R.: Where were you?

A.P-B.: I was in the far lane.

M.O'R.: Okay. But in a lane at least?

A.P-B.: Yeah, I was in a lane at least. I hadn't hit anything and nobody had hit me.

M.O'R.: What did you do after that? Did you call your doctor when you got home?

A.P-B.: Yeah. I went in, and he examined me and told me what had happened. And then he said, "The next thing is a stroke. Take your pick."

And so then I didn't quit anything yet. And then as I said I was doing some kind of a lecture or something up at Lewis & Clark College, and I got up there and collapsed, just totally out of it. But I did make it all the way up there in the car. I knew it was happening to me while I was driving. Then I got there and I just passed out.

So they got me down to the hospital, and then they had me on oxygen for six hours and running all kinds of tests. The same thing had happened. So then it was a matter of, "Okay, where do I start quitting?" So Portland State went first, and then after that I told them in the school district that I'd be leaving the end of that year.

M.O'R.: This is the Canby school?

A.P-B.: Canby alternative school. And then at the end of the summer, that was the last summer at USC.

M.O'R.: And what year was ...

A.P-B.: 1981. But I did quite at Portland State the year before. I think it was the year before. I thought that would do it, but that didn't do it.

M.O'R.: But it wasn't enough?

A.P-B.: No, it wasn't enough. It was after that that I folded up up there at Lewis & Clark. So obviously I hadn't quite made it.

Jack was saying, "Look, don't die now."

M.O'R.: That's right. You'd just gotten married the year before, I guess?

A.P-B.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: Well, maybe just as final footnote so we'll have this complete story down. You've sort of told me about both ends of the USC thing, but you mentioned that you were down there first as a student and then they asked you to come back as an instructor the very next year at quite a young age, and then you said later on you became the director of that program?

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: Do you want to tell me a little bit about how that happened?

A.P-B.: Well, the first two years another person was directing, and then they asked me to be the director. And I said, well, I was up here in Oregon during the rest of the year. And a young man had started that summer, Jim Maynard, an awfully nice person and very capable, very talented. And Jim and I had done a lot of things together during that summer, and so I said, "Well, why don't I ask Jim if he would do it and I would do it with him, but let's give him the title since he's down here and he can come to meetings during the year that you would need, where I might not always be able to come down here." And of course then later I did go down there every so often during the year. But I said, "I really think this would work out."

And so when I talked to Jim about it he said, "Oh, my word." He said, "This is only the first summer I've been here."

And so I said, "Look, I'll work with you. We'll do it together, but you be the director and I'll just work with you, okay?"

So he finally agreed to do it. So for a few years that was the way we did it, and we got through four years during this time, by the way. I guess the first year Jim was doing it, and maybe the second year that he was doing it, we worked together and we had beautiful years.

Then in the meantime when I had been there - see, Max Krohn was still alive that first year that I was teaching down there, and then he died. And they got someone else - nobody could take Max Krohn's place. I mean, he was an incredible person. And then USC had a new head of the performing arts department down there at the main campus, and they got Paul Jans from Chicago, who was supposed to be excellent. And he was, except he was alcoholic. Most of the time he could deal with it, but he had a violent temper, and he had very definite ways in which he thought things should go. And we had been used to quite a bit of leeway with Max. We did our own hiring.

Well, Paul Jans came on board, and we had him for four years, and it was a very rough time. He expected you to be there, available, at all times. He also did all the hiring, except in one place I said, "Paul, you will not do the hiring on that one." This was with the three- and four- and five- and six-year-olds. I said, "They need special care, and they need particular kinds of people."

Well, he finally agreed and let me do that, but he did all the rest of the hiring. And I said, "You know, it's difficult to do that, to work with people that someone else has hired for you."

Well, anyway. So he put another fellow who had been teaching with us, Tom. So Tom and Jim and I were directing. Then at the end of that summer he fired them because, as I said, he expected us to all be there at all times. Well, I was. I had my little house trailer right there on campus, and Jim had a cabin in the village, and he and Tom were always partying, and they weren't there.

And this one night there was this big emergency. Some fellow had gotten into one of the residence halls for the junior high-high school kids and had raped one of them. And this big emergency. I mean, Paul was just fit to be tied. And he gathered everybody who was a head of any of the departments and pulled them together in the middle of the night. He came down there to the trailer banging on my door, and he said, "Where are Jim and Tom?"

I said, "I don't know, Paul."

"Why aren't they here?"

"I don't know."

He sent people scouting. He said, "Where do you think they might be?"

And I said, "Well, Jim has a cabin up in Fern Valley." And I said, "They may be there."

So he sent scouts out. They were having a party, all right. He dragged them both down there. Well, they lasted through the end of the summer, but neither one of them came back. And so then I was it. And that's the way it was from then on.

Paul didn't last long, either, because he let one person after another, he shipped them down the hill, in all departments. There were only four of us out of all of those teaching people at that

end of his four years who were still there. The rest of them were gone, and he had replaced them with his people.

M.O'R.: So you became the sole director from that point on?

A.P-B.: Yeah. The next person who came after him didn't want any children's center at all. He said, "I don't know a thing about children. I don't like them. So there isn't going to be one."

M.O'R.: So you were directing a children's program, then?

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: I see. So it was similar to ...

A.P-B.: So as far as I knew I didn't have a job for the next summer, because they brought this fellow in. And then the assistant director, Bill Lohman, he finally convinced this fellow - I can't even remember his name because he was only there one summer. He finally convinced him the children's center was absolutely indispensable, that we were the ones who were making all the money for the campus, which was quite true. We were the ones holding it together for two years there. Because USC had finally said, "We are not going to pick up all of the debts." Because they were having to pick up as much as \$90,000 in order to keep the summer arts program going, and so they laid down the law, and they said, "Either you make it, or you're through."

And so then between what Paul was letting me do - because he let me start a residence program, because they didn't have one for children's center, and so from age 8 through 12 they could be residents, which was a big input. And then Paul got some grants to bring in kids from the - well, I've forgotten what they call the section in Chicago, but it was the slums, and from the Watts district in LA, because he said, "You know how to handle kids like

this, so we can get this government grant, and it will bring in money."

And so this is how they were running their campus. But none of my staff knew how to do that, and I had to help them to deal with these kids. You mix all of these kids from these wealthy homes, from Hollywood and LA and Europe and New York and everywhere that these kids were coming from, and you mix them in with kids out of the slums. I tell you, I was up till 3:00 in the morning walking those residence programs, spending time inside those cabins with those kids. I was down in the children's center at 6 o'clock in the morning.

I was going on just will power and picking up my staff off the ground because he was running us not six weeks like Max had. First it was seven weeks, then it was eight weeks, and the last two years it was ten weeks. And if you've ever tried going night and day for ten solid weeks. I mean, the program itself is extremely intensive, but try that for a while. That's probably the thing that eventually ...

M.O'R.: Did you in, eh? Is that program still going?

A.P-B.: Yes, but it's no longer under USC. They finally - I think it was two years after I left that they would no longer - because the children's center was no longer making the money to hold the thing together, and it was down the tube, and they refused to hold it together anymore.

So Bill Lohman came back - he had gone down the hill with Paul Jans eventually, and then he came back, and then he left again to start his own in Arizona, and then he came back again as the director of the campus.

So when USC refused to run it any longer, then Bill and some of the others who'd been there for years took it over. They now have a very small summer program and a very small children's program, and it's nothing like the one that I had. They have a year-round school there now where they bring people from all over Europe, and it's a very small exclusive school. And then mostly it's those people who are there in the summer. Do you know how much they pay a week?

M.O'R.: How much?

A.P-B.: For the residence program for the children, \$700 a week, or 750, and for the day program 550. That's what it was a few years ago. I don't know what it is now.

M.O'R.: But it was significantly less when you were there?

A.P-B.: Significantly less. And I had up to 105 children, and they now have maybe 25. But they make it because of their year-round school.

M.O'R.: And I suppose there isn't a great deal of emphasis on bringing in disadvantaged kids?

A.P-B.: No, they don't.

M.O'R.: Maybe as just sort of a final question about the actual experience of teaching down there, was it any different from what you were doing up here, or did you more or less apply the same exact methods in both places?

A.P-B.: Pretty much the same, except down there it was not academics, it was the arts, and as I said, I added all of these other arts things that I was doing in my alternative school with kids, doing the big theater productions. You see, I was doing that - some of it before Paul left, but then I did a lot more of it

afterwards because I had a lot more freedom and I could hire the kind of staff I wanted, and I could bring them with me, this kind of thing.

So I started bringing people I was working with up here and people who knew exactly what I wanted, and bringing them down there with me, very talented people. So that was when I really started expanding a great deal more. That was when I was able to build the kind of stage I wanted, because Alan let me do it. Paul would never have let me do it.

M.O'R.: Did you have more resources down there? Sounds like maybe you did.

A.P-B.: No, I was bringing a lot of my own. No, we didn't have the funding.

M.O'R.: Oh, you didn't have funding down there, either?

A.P-B.: No. No. Not for what I wanted to do. I even brought a lot of my supplies with me because they only gave me a certain budget, a budget for staff and a budget for supplies. And if I wanted extra staff people on the budget, they gave me. Of if I wanted somebody who needed more money than they could pay, then I would pay them, and I would hire somebody to come and do some of the things that I wanted done.

Like a couple of years we did Gilbert & Sullivan, and there was this fellow down at the University of California at Riverside who was excellent and did wonderful things with it, so I hired him and he wouldn't come for the amount of money that USC was paying, and so then I paid him some more. Then one of the music people, somebody I wanted to come in just for - oh, I was doing Benjamin Britten's *Noah's Flood*, and there was a wonderful chamber group on

campus, and they all came and did it for me for nothing. But there was - I can't remember what part it was I wanted this particular person, so anyway, I hired him myself.

M.O'R.: That must have been kind of expensive?

A.P-B.: It was, and I was raising three children on my own. But my children knew the kinds of things we did. So they didn't object.

M.O'R.: Well, we've been talking for quite a while here, and I think I'm just about out of tape again.

Obviously I'm as much to blame as anyone for this history going on forever, but you're such a fascinating subject. Actually, we're right at the end of the tape, so I think I'll save any other questions for next time.

[end of tape]