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Spelts, Elizabeth Oral History Interview

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FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS
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Spelts, Elizabeth (1948-1985)
Conservatory Professor of Voice

February 25, 1999

By Stan R. Beckler and Doris Meyer

Transcribed by Alissa Magorian, University Archives

Subjects: Circumstances of hiring John Elliot, impressions of faculty/administration, Tully Knoles, individual (not classroom instruction), activity since retirement, private instruction, teaching goals, Conservatory organization and departments, Civil Rights movement, Cluster Colleges, Conservatory Deans from Preston Stedman to Carl Nosse, Music Camp, Opera production, Outcasts of Poker Flat, 50th anniversary celebration, contributions of Pacific to Stockton, Football from last Eddie LaBaron game, A Cappella Choir.
STAN: Look at the red light there, yeah.


ELIZ: Ok, Doris, I’m glad that I remembered the exact time that you were coming today. (Laughter).

DORIS: Yes. What about you Stan, is there anything you like to say, just to see how our volume is?

STAN: Well, I think we ought to shut it off…
(Dog barking in background).

(Pause in tape).

DORIS: This is an interview of Elizabeth Spelts. The date is February 25, 1999. And we look forward to a pleasant interview. The interviewers are Stan Beckler and Doris Meyer. And Stan, how about question number one there? Could you start with that?

STAN: Uh, yeah. Elizabeth, the question is: “What circumstances brought you to UOP?”

ELIZ: Well, I heard there was an opening for a professor of Voice at UOP, and I heard good things about UOP, and even though I was presently teaching Voice at the University of Michigan, I thought that I would look into the matter, and I accepted John Elliott’s invitation to meet him in Chicago, Illinois for an interview. And we met, and he hired me on the spot. And I came.

DORIS: And John Elliott, what was his position?

ELIZ: John Elliott was dean of the Conservatory, and I add this for a little bit of humor, when I told people at the University of Michigan, and other people that I was leaving there to come to COP (of course, in those days), they thought I needed my head examined. Because they said, there are only three things COP is famous for, Alonzo Stagg, and Howard Hanson who was the dean at the time, and he left because he received a call to get the Prix de Rome, a wonderful scholarship, and I forget the third reason. But anyway, I came, and stayed and loved it.

DORIS: That year was what year?
ELIZ: 1948.

DORIS: 1948.

STAN: By the way, as I recall you were from Northwestern, right? And I think…

ELIZ: Yes, I had all of my degrees from Northwestern.

STAN: And wasn’t John Elliott also?

ELIZ: And John Elliott…

STAN: Yeah, yeah, right.

ELIZ: …and his wife Alberta, were both graduates in Piano from Northwestern.

STAN: Uh huh, yeah, I thought I remembered that.

ELIZ: So that gave me the green light all the more, because being…

DORIS: Who were some of the other professors at the time, other than Dr. Elliott?

ELIZ: Well, uh, Lucas Underwood, who was head of the Opera. And Henry Welton was a Voice teacher. Ed Shadbolt and Mary Bowling which were both of them giants in the Applied Field as Piano professors…

STAN: Piano, right.

ELIZ: …and of course Russ Bodley was the Choral Director at that time. But frankly I came because I liked John Elliott, and I liked the prospects of working with him and his faculty.

DORIS: Stan, another question there?

STAN: Oh you mean the next question? Or…

DORIS: Sure, go ahead. Just sort of, we can sort of…

STAN: Yeah, yeah, sure, ok. Well, the next question is: “If you had to relocate to come to UOP, what were your first impressions of the city and the people of Stockton?” That’s an interesting question.

DORIS: Yeah.

ELIZ: Well, strangely enough, I liked Stockton. It was kind of a little cow town.
DORIS: Yeah.

ELIZ: Let’s face it, that was fifty years ago. I liked the climate, and I liked the people. Of course, most of the people I knew were at the university, but in those days, the University was sort a little community within itself.

STAN: Yeah.

ELIZ: And we were way out on the north side of Stockton, and I mean we were on the rim of North Stockton, which now is completely surrounded with housing and business and everything else, because that’s when Lincoln Village was developed. But that wasn’t developed until I’d been here about fifteen years.

STAN: And besides, there was a lot of empty space between us and Lincoln Village.

ELIZ: Oh yeah, lots of space. I mean, look at the road from Pacific, yeah, from Pacific on out, north, it was just a two way street. Wood, I mean, dirt roads; from the bridge of the Calaveras on, just dirt roads.

DORIS: The Conservatory was one of the first few buildings on the campus. There were other by forty-eight though, there were a number of other buildings, is that not so?

ELIZ: Oh, yes, the administration building was there, and of course, Morris Chapel. Of course, the Tower wasn’t there at the time.

STAN: Oh, no.

ELIZ: And I won’t go into all the jokes about the tower. (They laugh).

DORIS: Who was president in 1948?


DORIS: Bob Burns.

ELIZ: But he had just been made president because Dr. Knoles was still around very actively, and he was the Chancellor.

STAN: Yeah.

ELIZ: And as a matter of fact, I’ll jump the gun here, a little…

DORIS: Yeah, go ahead.

ELIZ: You’ve asked was there any particular person or persons at UOP that impressed me.
DORIS: Right.

ELIZ: Tully Knoles is one of them. I remember him so well, and I’ve always felt sorry that somebody of his stature in every way couldn’t still have been at UOP, because he was a very dignified, wonderful gentleman.

STAN: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

ELIZ: I remember him riding his beautiful horse in the…

STAN: Up on the levee…

ELIZ: …parades they used to have.

STAN: Yeah.

DORIS: So being dignified. What else was so especially important when you think back about him, besides being extremely dignified? How about his control, leadership, anything like that?

ELIZ: He was a mentor. He was a mentor. And he just… well, he just filled, filled the complete seat of somebody that I’ve had high esteem for as the leader of a university. And of course, there were lots of people who criticized Bob Burns in those days, but after all it took a giant to fill the boots, I’m going to say, of Tully Knoles. I’ll never forget his speeches at Baccalaureate. He always gave that and that was held in the Conservatory. They had the, uh, graduation ceremonies, out in what has become Stagg football field. I remember marching from the Administration building clear over to the stadium for Commencement services. But Baccalaureate was always in the Conservatory and Tully Knoles spoke until he passed on. But he was just a superior man.

DORIS: That’s what everybody says. You know, you see that all the time, you hear about that all the time.

STAN: Yeah.

ELIZ: Yes.

DORIS: When you first came, in regard to curriculum, when you first came, was your only or major responsibility related to Voice?

ELIZ: That’s right.

DORIS: That you were hired as a Voice professor?

ELIZ: As an individual teacher of Voice, I mean for individual students.
DORIS: So how did your day, what did your day look like in those days?

ELIZ: Well, in those days, we didn’t have any 18 or 15-hour schedules. I remember teaching at 25 hours a week. And my, my instruction was individual, and it was a half hour lesson, or an hour lesson. Meeting with the student individually. And so, now days they still have the individual, but I understand that in the future they are thinking of maybe doing more class work. And I’m very much against that. I think if you are going to be an individual artist, you need the individual attention of one teacher.

STAN: Yeah, you bet.

ELIZ: And not do it by tape recording, or through class work. Now they still, as a matter of fact going back to University of Michigan, one, one of the reasons I was happy to leave there, was because I did teach what they call class voice lessons, and I didn’t believe in it, because as I stated, I believe in the individual action with teacher and student, and I feel the same way for any solo instrument. You take piano, violin, tuba, what have you.

STAN: Well, I feel the same way about composition, as far as that goes.

ELIZ: Yeah, it’s the one-on-one that is important. And I feel that is one of the very important things that they need to continue doing here, because… Of course, this is hearsay, but I’ve understood that in cutting down costs in the future for classes at the Conservatory, they’re thinking of doing it by computer or in a class form, and I think they will lose, as far as I’m concerned, one of the strongest things that the conservatory has developed at the UOP campus. And that’s the individual instruction in the Conservatory. That is why the Conservatory in some respects needs a much higher budget, and more teachers. Because, when you teach one-on-one, let’s face it, if one teacher, now when I first came here, I taught 20 hours a week, now days, I think, well, I really don’t know what, but I don’t think that they teach more than maybe 12-15 units. Now you take a professor of History or English, their load has always been less than people in the Conservatory, and that’s been an ongoing debate for years.

STAN: Oh, yeah. Of course, you see, the thing is, they make up for what could appear to be a deficiency, because they can pack so many students into their classes, and say maybe you have 80-100 students in one class, and so it’s financially rewarding for the university.

ELIZ: That’s right. This is why the Conservatory needs a higher budget, and more individual teachers.

STAN: Yeah… (Mumbles).

DORIS: Elizabeth, speaking of individual instruction, since you retired, and what year was that that you retired?

DORIS: So since that time you’ve continued to…

ELIZ: I’ve continued to teach privately in my home. I, I’m very eclectic, though, in my choice of students. However, I’m not saying I have to think they’re going to be an opera star, no.

DORIS: No.

ELIZ: I like to teach, I like to work with people who are communicative, harmonious, and need help.

DORIS: Both men and women, all voice, all kinds of voices?

ELIZ: Ah, well, I’m not a Rock N’ Roll… teacher.

(Laughter).

STAN: You surprise me. (More laughter).

ELIZ: And I have learned that I’m not keen on teaching singers much younger than 14, because, of course, now days, people are so spoiled, because they hear everything on T.V., or radio, and everything is played for the youngsters today on tape.

DORIS: Right.

ELIZ: And they just learn everything by listening to a tape. I want them to learn to listen to their own sound, and not somebody else’s.

STAN: Yeah.

ELIZ: And I specialize in the foundation of correct breathing; because if you don’t breathe correctly, you’re not going to sing or speak correctly. And a lot of it, Doris, goes into Physical Education. (Doris chuckles). I mean, same thing, you’ve got to work on the body as well as the voice.

DORIS: Sure, right. Stan do you have a question? (Chuckles).

STAN: Well, no I just… one little thing, kind of added on to what she was talking about, and I feel very keenly about this. They have to learn how to read…

ELIZ: Oh, yes, well…

STAN: …and count, you know. Basic things like that. Then the theorist is…
ELIZ: Yeah, but everybody, fixes, makes a tape for them, says go home and memorize this...

STAN: Oh, yeah, yeah.

ELIZ: …instead of using their ear.

STAN: Of course, you know that’s been going on for a long time now. Ezio Pinza never learned how to read music.

ELIZ: That’s right. But you know what, we’re talking about 70 years ago.

STAN: Well, yeah that’s true.

ELIZ: And he was, his fame was really through his voice, but he only knew two or three roles because it’d take him so long to learn it.

STAN: Oh yeah, yeah. Sure.

(DORIS chuckles).

ELIZ: But he was a marvelous voice.

STAN: Uh huh, sure. It’s just a shame that he didn’t expand himself more, to…

DORIS: The Conservatory has been divided by sections. You know, I’ve never understood quite the administration of the Conservatory. So there was Vocal, there was Therapy, there’s Composition… tell me a little bit about how that’s set up, and has it been more or less the same administrative structure all these years? How was that handled?

STAN: Yeah, pretty much. Business is about the only new thing I think we’ve had.

ELIZ: Yeah, music management. Well, actually Therapy had only been going I think about five years, when I came; now I came in 1948. And Billy Harbert was the inventor of the Therapy department. And as a matter of fact, she created for UOP and the Conservatory the first major Therapy department in the United States. And this is where, as a matter of fact, all of her students had, well they had to take an applied subject. Now sometimes they, they took Voice, but if they couldn’t sing, then they took Piano, or they’d take Flute. They had to study a solo instrument. And of course, that really fed the Applied Department. It helped them. Because let’s face it, even in those days, everybody couldn’t be a Voice major or a Piano major.

STAN: Yeah.

ELIZ: But in Music Therapy, it was very much related to Music Education.
STAN: And Music Education…

ELIZ: And this is where I say some of that instruction can come from a class work. I mean, taking 6 and 10 people at the same time, instead of individual instruction. I still favor the individual, even if they don’t have a strong talent. But going back to the over all thing, you see, when John Elliott came here, he was a recent graduate from Northwestern University, and he was a magnificent pianist. And so it was through his guidance, I think, that a strong Piano department developed. The Piano was the strongest to begin with as I recollect. Then the Strings came in, because when I came here, Horace Brown and Alix Brown were the violin and the cello teachers, they were a married couple, and there were two other Voice teachers beside myself. Henry Welton, a tenor, and Earl Oliver, baritone, and myself. And then of course, Lucas Underwood had come years before I came also. And he developed what was a beginning of a wonderful Opera department at UOP. And I’m very proud to say that he along with the help of some of the Voice teachers and other people created a very, very strong Opera department at UOP. And it troubles me somewhat that they have not produced the opera in the status that Lucas Underwood arrived at, since his death. They just haven’t… the wheels just haven’t come together.

STAN: Yeah.

ELIZ: And in the last couple, well, they haven’t, well, the Opera department at UOP is not today what it was when Lucas Underwood was here.

STAN: And you know, another loss too, is concerns the organ, I mean since Charles retired, well actually before then, you know, how many organ students did he have? I mean it dried up. The only time the organ is used is for Commencement. Which is ridiculous, with a wonderful instrument like that.

ELIZ: That’s right. Well, the only defense there I can say, there just haven’t been the numbers of organ people. Because there again they use so much, many churches use a tape recorder for their music…

STAN: Or piano.

ELIZ: Or just… ah…

STAN: Or an electronic.

ELIZ: …or a piano.

STAN: Well, like Central Methodist. They got this great big four manual Rogers electronic organ. And I wrote that letter to the paper, you know, complaining about that choral pipe organ that had to be crated up and sent off to Florida. Blah…
ELIZ: Well, one of the things that Dr. Nosse has done, he finally arranged to have a new organ built and bought in London, for the chapel. Now that has been installed I think… how long have we had that? About ten years?

STAN: I don’t think it’s quite that long. But it’s, it’s… in that neighborhood.

ELIZ: I know Dr. Nosse went to London and chose it, and somebody donated it from among the alumni people for Morris Chapel.

STAN: But you know I preferred the old, you know, it was the three manual organ. Even though there was a lot of things wrong, because it was so old. It was falling apart, but still, it was a wonderful organ.

ELIZ: You had to practically put band-aids on it to keep it working.

STAN: Yeah, right! (Laughter). Charles was up there taping the…

ELIZ: Well, they wouldn’t allow anybody to play it except Charles and you and one other person.

STAN: Yes.

ELIZ: But I’ve kind of detoured here, so… you want to get back on track.

STAN: I’m sorry about that.

DORIS: Right, right. Just to complete that conversation we just had, there was: the Opera sort of division; there were the Applied Musical programs like strings, piano, voice, etc.; there was Therapy; there was Music Education; there was Composition…

STAN: Yeah, well, Theory and Composition.

DORIS: Theory and Composition.

STAN: Yeah, they ran together.

DORIS: And then the new thing that you are aware of is the Entertainment Business angle, something to do with that.

ELIZ: Oh, well, that’s not a new entertainment, that’s a new course…

DORIS: No. A new course…

ELIZ: A new course, but it goes with… uh…

STAN: Music Management I guess is the general title.
DORIS: Music Management. Probably…

ELIZ: Well, it’s a course that a student can major in. And that course, Music Entertainment, teaches people how to go out and be managers for performers.

DORIS: Probably, it’s probably a combined major with the Business…

ELIZ: Well, yeah, that’s right.

DORIS: Yeah, with the Eberhardt School of Business.

ELIZ: I even heard talk on what they might do in going together with the Business department, in doing that…

DORIS: Right, right.

ELIZ: But in a sense, it’s sort of in conjunction with Music Therapy.

DORIS: Yes.

ELIZ: Music Therapy and Music Management are both… I think they’re sort of related in a sense to Music Education.

STAN: Yes.

ELIZ: Music Management is to teach people how to go out and be managers of performers. And Music Therapists are to help people who are in need of mental and physical help.

DORIS: Right. Through the medium of the music.

ELIZ: That’s right. Through the medium of music. Yes.

DORIS: Let’s see. Let’s move on here. We’re doing pretty well, I think…

STAN: Oh yeah. I think so.

ELIZ: Yeah.

DORIS: Yeah. On some of the controversial issues they have some questions here. Let’s jump over to the second page. How about going back to the 60’s. We always talk about the 60’s with the Civil Rights, the Women’s Movement, the so-called Hippie bit, and all of that. Do you have any recollections of anything during that time, or was it a time that you just felt that it was just sort of moving through, with no big effect of either the
Women’s movement, the Civil Rights? Nothing catches your memory about that, or does it?

ELIZ: Well, first of all, I consider myself a very strong woman. I’m all for women’s rights. But I think it’s been pushed into the ground. I still think that there are things that men do better than women, or that maybe a woman does better than a man.

DORIS: Uh huh.

ELIZ: I’m not a strong women’s libber. I may surprise you, because I’m very outspoken, but I believe in the truth. So, I say, on controversial issues, I prefer the earlier days, because I think we got along just fine.

DORIS: (Laughing). The feminine playing a feminine role, and playing it in a gentle way.

ELIZ: That’s right. Gentle but strong.

DORIS: Yes.

ELIZ: But not militant.

DORIS: Right. Stan, we kind of jump around here, is there a question in this section here, even anything you recall the time about the Free-Speech Movement, or the Hippie Movement. Do you recall any questions or things that you…?

STAN: Or do I personally… oh yeah, well…

DORIS: Yeah, or well, tying it in with Elizabeth’s conversation.

STAN: Yeah, you know the funny thing is that it seemed as though the rest of the world was getting involved in all of this stuff, you know, the bra burning, and all the…

DORIS: Yeah.

STAN: And of course the Civil Rights movement. That was certainly important of course, but it didn’t seem to affect us all that much. I think the thing that I remember the most, was when Kennedy was assassinated. I remember I came out of the Form class, and the campus was so quiet, with people just standing around. I said, “What happened?” and somebody told me that they heard that the President was shot. And that made a terrible impact, but that’s about the only thing that I can remember from the sixties that made much of an effect on the campus. Would you agree with that?

ELIZ: I don’t think that the University used to be as involved with the changing of Politics, or the changing of the guard in Washington D.C., or even the governor of California. We were really an eclectic department, I think here at UOP…
STAN: It was an island by itself, with everything else going on around.

ELIZ: Yeah, and I remember answering one of your questions here, when it said… (Pause in tape). Uh, oh, from your initial introduction to UOP to the present day, what do I think? I think there’s a vast difference today than when I retired even in 1985.

DORIS: In what way?

ELIZ: There again, I think certain people have dominated when they shouldn’t. I think they should let the store be kept by the people who know what they’re doing.

STAN: Yeah…that…

DORIS: Go ahead.

STAN: Yeah, you know the cluster college idea, I thought that was an excellent idea, and I was sorry to see it die, and or get killed.

ELIZ: Yeah, and you see that sprung up when I was first here with Bob Burns when they build Raymond College.

STAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah right.

ELIZ: There were some significantly good things about that.

STAN: You bet.

ELIZ: But to go back to the music part, I really think that the best music teaching can be done one on one, I’ve already elaborated on that.

DORIS: Right.

ELIZ: But in a sense that’s what the cluster college was all about.

STAN: Yes.

ELIZ: Now I’m not saying that we should go back to having the cluster college, but I would, I would… Now I know this sounds old fashioned, but I like the way UOP used to be, and I think they were more significant and greater leaders because they didn’t try to do everything.

STAN: Uh, yeah, yeah. That’s a good point.

ELIZ: Why not be individual?
DORIS: When during some of the other interviews that I’ve done, people have spoken about the reason that there was less conflict during that time on this campus is because President Bob Burns seemed to have an openness to ideas that came in. Either the cluster idea, the whole thing about accepting change, about accepting ideas from other ethnic groups, his openness others felt reduced the amount of conflict on campus. Does that hit anything to you? Or maybe the conservatory was oblivious to what was going on?

ELIZ: Well, we had to fight for an existence…

DORIS: Speak to that.

ELIZ: I said fight.

DORIS: Speak to that.

ELIZ: But I think a lot of that comes from strong leadership as a dean. And I have said here, that the three deans that I personally feel really were great leaders, were first of all John Elliott, even though he had a lot of flack from people who didn’t think he tended to business enough. Ira Lehn was there for such a short time, but he kept things going, and kept the bridge open until Dr. Nosse came along. And I personally am a strong supporter of Carl Nosse. I think he’s done tremendous things for the entire University by making a stronger Music Department. And not just building buildings, which he is responsible for, I think pretty much so, but I think he has been a strong leader, and, and uh, sometimes not under the easiest of conditions, financially. Now he’s brought a lot of money into the University.

STAN: Yes.

ELIZ: For the Conservatory.

END TAPE 1, Side A

BEGIN TAPE 1, Side B

STAN: Well, you got me on the spot. Now, well, uh, the, the… well, you know, it’s interesting that you should bring up Stedman, I haven’t thought of Stedman either. Of course, we were always kind of buddies in a way. Of course, there was a lot of hassle that I had on account of student evaluations. I really went down the tubes with some of those students; they just hated my guts. (Laughs). No the whole thing was that despite the fact that he really put me through hell, I felt he did some really good things. And uh…

ELIZ: Well, he brought in some really good faculty people.

STAN: Well, sure, sure. That was the main thing that I was thinking about.

ELIZ: As a matter of fact, Ira Lehn was brought in under his administration.
STAN: Right. And Warren.

ELIZ: And Warren Von Brankhurst.

STAN: And Larry McQuerrey.

ELIZ: Yeah, and all three of them…

STAN: And Wolfgang.

ELIZ: And Wolfgang, all four of them were excellent…

STAN: Oh yeah. You bet.

ELIZ: Excellent people. And all of them are missed right now.

STAN: Yeah, yeah.

ELIZ: Personally, well, the, I probably shouldn’t say this, but I will since I started to. Uh, I think, I think some of the past professors at the Conservatory are missed. I don’t think they ever have been adequately replaced.

STAN: Yeah, I agree

ELIZ: Because, uh, they have a good piano department now, but when I think back on Ed Shadbolt and Mary Bowling…

STAN: Hmm hmm.

ELIZ: Wonderful people.

STAN: Yeah, yeah.

ELIZ: Horace Brown was excellent, Alix… But, uh, and there have been good and not so good Applied teachers. I would like to say now that I was very proud of one thing that I think I helped the overall University with and that’s the Language department.

DORIS: How’s that?

ELIZ: When I was there, because I was always asking for more language to be taught. And I think they teach Italian now. Well, Italian is definitely the main and first language a singer should have. Of course, they always had a good German and French department. But that’s something that I urged for more of when I was there.

STAN: Yeah.
DORIS: The Modern Language, you know… I’m glad you brought that up because that interrelationship between vocal presentations and language seems imperative.

STAN: Well, yeah sure.

DORIS: Yeah, that’s uh…. I’m glad you brought that up.

ELIZ: As a matter of fact, I was sort of instrumental in the hiring of the last German teacher they hired. I forget his name. And then, who were the French people, the man and wife?

STAN: Oh yeah, uh, uh…

DORIS: Janine and Bob Kreiter.

ELIZ: They’re excellent.

DORIS: Yes.

ELIZ: Well, I worked with them a lot. I mean in fostering the fact that we needed more language taught, and making language a requirement for Voice Majors.

DORIS: Elizabeth, not to change the subject, but slightly, all these years I’ve learned a lot but still do not understand about music camp, programs during the summer. Did you have anything to do with that?

ELIZ: Oh! They had the most wonderful music camp when I first came here…

DORIS: Yeah, tell me a little bit about that.

ELIZ: …and John Elliott was very strong on that. And a man by the name of Lawson, and his wife, ran the music camp, they had it for six weeks, and we even did a major opera during that music camp. Sometimes they would bring in outside guests, man from Chicago, remember when Jon, was your friend who used to be at Lincoln?

STAN: Jon Pearce?

ELIZ: John Pearce, yeah. Oh, what magnificent tenor voice. That was the first year I was here. Well, maybe it wasn’t the first year. But anyway, yes, they did opera in the music camp in the summer. And when Lucas Underwood was here, we did a major opera every year. A major opera. And one of the highlights of, I want to say this in reference to my good friend here Dan, one of the highlights that I can remember in memory is when the UOP opera department produced his The Outcasts of Polker Flat.

(Stan chuckles).
ELIZ: And two of my students had leads in it.

STAN: Yeah, right. And you remember it was John Elliott who suggested that theme in the first place. We had this, that staff meeting, right around January first or so, the first staff meeting of the year, and he had said, “Look, we gotta get Dan going on this opera competition.” See he was the President of Pi Kappa Lambda, at that time. Pi Kappa Lambda is the people who awarded the prize, and funded the parts, and all that kind of stuff. And so it was, oh that was fantastic.

ELIZ: And I think it would be wonderful if sometime within the near future if the Conservatory would honor Dan as the wonderful Emeritus professor to repeat and do this opera, as a Conservatory production. Why not?

DORIS: Well, I heard that the music for that, because the symphony did the Outcasts, didn’t they? The music of it, you were recognized not too long ago, because you shared the tape with me…

STAN: Well, yeah, but no, that was the piece I wrote for the Stockton symphony, that was….

ELIZ: But this was a full opera.

DORIS: Yeah.

ELIZ: And you know it was written from the story of The Outcasts of Polker Flat…

DORIS: Sure.

STAN: Yeah. Brett Hart was the original author. He and Mark Twain were great buddies you know.

DORIS: Yes. Because you were telling…

ELIZ: I would like to interject this, not for my own publicity, but I would like to say that I was very flattered and humbled when Dr. Nosse and some faculty friends arranged to have a 50th anniversary recognition for me, which was done October 27, this past year. And what a thrill it was to have former students come back and perform in my honor. And one was, now he goes by Anastocias Vrenios, but at the time when Dan and I, and when they did the Polker Flat, Anastocias was just known as Ernie Vrenios…

STAN: Yeah… (Chuckles).

ELIZ: And he sang the tenor lead. And he was married to Elizabeth Kirkpatrick and she was a soprano in the production. So both Ernie and Betty came and sang at this wonderful tribute that Dr. Nosse put together for me. I won’t go into all the rest of it,
except Frank Wiens played and Ira Lehn played, and I tell you, it’s hard to beat the beautiful tone quality that both of those men produced in their playing of the cello and the piano.

DORIS: And your statement about your appreciation of the time and the effort that went into that comes across loud and clear. You are obviously were moved by it, and I think that’s just great. Well deserved and probably overdue.

ELIZ: Well, I’ll remember it to my dying day, and if you’ll forgive me for saying this, I felt personally hurt that I didn’t have one note verbally or by letter from the present administration of the University.

STAN: Oh, for crying out loud.

ELIZ: Or attendance. It’s all right, because I didn’t ask for any of it to be done, I was just absolutely thrilled, and flattered, but I didn’t really think about it that day. But afterwards I thought, “My goodness, I’m surprised I didn’t hear from the President…” Anyway, I will forever be grateful to Dr. Nosse and for my former faculty colleagues and all of my former and present students who came.

DORIS: That’s great.

ELIZ: Because it was, well, as I said, I went to heaven sooner than I thought.

(Laughter).

STAN: Oh, that’s great.

DORIS: Well, gee…

ELIZ: But I am a friend of the University. I always have been; I shall always be grateful for the opportunity John Elliott and Bob Burns gave me in coming, because after all Bob Burns had to give his ok, I remember getting his letter of acceptance, and all of these things. And anything that I say in a negative way, I’m just hurt and disappointed that I think that University without realizing it, are not hanging on to some of the historical things that the Conservatory started and should have continued. And I just hope they get a dean, a new dean, who’s half as good as Carl Nosse is in my estimation. Carl Nosse is a wonderful musician, he is a marvelous businessman, and he’s a great friend.

(Dog barks).

STAN: Good grief.

DORIS: Here we go.
STAN: Uh, yeah, probably one last question that something I don’t think we got into yet, and that’s the under the heading of the community. Well, actually there are two parts to it. One is: “Community activities that you’ve been involved in yourself.” And then the other is: “What contribution the University has made to the community of Stockton?”

ELIZ: Well, I think UOP more in the past than they do at the moment, now all right, I’ll speak about the Conservatory. I think in the past, the Conservatory did a Herculean job in helping musical and artistic events take place. I remember when we used to have what we called community concert.

STAN: Oh, yeah.

ELIZ: They were held in the auditorium. I remember when they used to do the Messiah, once a year.

STAN: Yeah.

ELIZ: And they filled the place, twice in one day. So I would say that I think that UOP had made great contributions in the cultural development. And I, I’m going to give the sports people a little…

DORIS: A little plug? (Chuckles).

ELIZ: And a good sports program.

STAN: Yeah, well you remember Eddie LeBaron. He was one of my classmates.

ELIZ: Well, honey, I went to the last game he that played at UOP.

STAN: Well, I went…

ELIZ: And I’m going to even better you yet. You didn’t know I was such a sports fan. I have a… I don’t have it, but I gave it to my nephew, I have a football, a real football autographed with every player on the last Eddie LeBaron team, and Amos Alonzo Stagg’s name on it.

STAN: I’ll be darned. For crying out loud.

DORIS: Is that right?

ELIZ: I went personally and got it from them, to give to my nephew. Now, look that football, I don’t know what’s like today, because it’s fifty years old…

DORIS: Right.

ELIZ: Because it was the first year I was here.
STAN: That’s a real treasure.

ELIZ: And so…

STAN: Well, you know it’s funny, I was never really a great football fan, but I was in the stands at the time when, they were playing San Jose, as I remember, and Eddie LeBaron, he was so clever, you know, he faked a lateral to the guy on the wrong side of him.

ELIZ: Yeah.

STAN: The guy on the wrong side of him got tackled, so the kid just came down, but Eddie still had the ball, you know, he had made it look like he gave the ball to this guy, you know, so you noticed he out-foxed himself. I remember that so vividly.

(Chuckles).

ELIZ: You know I have been very negligent in not saying more about the choral program. I think that the choral leadership at UOP has, now this is where I’m going to say I didn’t always agree with Russell Bodley, and I know he didn’t always agree with me, but I think that he had the best a capella choir…

STAN: Oh yeah.

ELIZ: In his reign, and my reign at UOP that they ever had.

STAN: You said it.

ELIZ: I think that the young man who is the leader now is very qualified, a fine man, Dr. Cetto. But the a capella choir tone quality that I remember when I first came here was excellent.

STAN: Yeah, course, you know, one thing that has happened, in these years, is the whole idea of a a capella choir is kind of vanished. You know, there are very few a capella choirs anymore.

ELIZ: Well, that’s it. But I think that the music world has lost something.

STAN: Oh yeah I agree. But for one thing, in order to maintain, in order to hold your own, in an a capella choir, you have to have tremendous ears, and ability to blend with others, you know.

ELIZ: Oh, of course, but that’s why it’s so good.

STAN: Yeah, right.
ELIZ: You know singing isn’t just making opening your mouth and belting something out.

STAN: Oh yeah. You bet.

ELIZ: I always say and still do, you have to hear it and allow it to happen.

STAN: Yeah, yeah.

ELIZ: If you try to make it, that’s when you’re going to get a false sound. Same thing when you play tennis. The thing about tennis is, that when you don’t make your mark on the first serve, you get a second time. You don’t in music.

(Laughter).

STAN: That’s right, that’s right.

ELIZ: You have to get it right on the first release. So I say this every day: you cannot make the voice do something. You have to allow it to happen. Because those two little vocal chords are stubborn as hell…

STAN: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

ELIZ: …just like we are, if you’re worth your salt.

STAN: And you know, here’s an interesting thing that is kind of related, Remington (I can’t remember his first name), but he was trombone teacher at Eastman. And it was very interesting: one of his students was telling me that the Professor at Eastman would come in for his lessons, he would tell his student, “Now I want you to sing this part.” A trombone player, sing this part. If you can’t sing it, you can’t play it.

ELIZ: Yeah, that’s right.

STAN: So that was interesting.

ELIZ: You’ve got to hear it, and then do it. Don’t try to make it.

STAN: Yeah, yeah.

ELIZ: Allow it.

DORIS: Well, Elizabeth, and Stan…

STAN: Yeah, you better shut me up here.
DORIS: Anyway, it’s been a pleasure for me as one of the interviewers to sit here and hear you two talk about the kinds of things that have been a part of your entire life, while you’ve been at the University, and your whole being.

ELIZ: Yeah.

DORIS: And it’s a pleasure. And thank-you so much, Elizabeth.

ELIZ: Well, it’s been my pleasure too, and privilege. Because I spent a lot of years here, and Dan and I worked together a long time, and I remember you Doris, in the Sports Department.

DORIS: (Laughs). Thank-you Elizabeth. Thank-you Stan.

STAN: Well, thank-you. I’m glad we got it right this time.

DORIS: (Laughing). We got it…