

## Ruby Pleasure Oral History

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives  
50 Oak Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Interview conducted January 21, 2016  
Nicolina Logan, Interviewer

## **San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives Oral History Project**

The Conservatory's Oral History Project has the goal of seeking out and collecting memories of historical significance to the Conservatory through recorded interviews with members of the Conservatory's community, which will then be preserved, transcribed, and made available to the public.

Among the narrators will be former administrators, faculty members, trustees, alumni, and family of former Conservatory luminaries. Through this diverse group, we will explore the growth and expansion of the Conservatory, including its departments, organization, finances and curriculum. We will capture personal memories before they are lost, fill in gaps in our understanding of the Conservatory's history, and will uncover how the Conservatory helped to shape San Francisco's musical culture through the past century.

### **Ruby Pleasure Interview**

This interview was conducted at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music on Thursday, April 7, 2016 by Nicolina Logan, as part of a Winter Term project on Oral Histories taught by Conservatory archivist Tessa Updike.

### **Nicolina Logan**

Nicolina Logan is currently pursuing her master's degree in clarinet performance at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music where she studies with Jeff Anderle. She received her bachelor's degree from UCLA, where she studied with Gary Gray and was a recipient of the Gluck Foundation Scholarship.

### **Use and Permissions**

This manuscript is made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved for the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Conservatory's Archivist or Library Director.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to:  
San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives  
50 Oak Street  
San Francisco, CA  
94102

## Ruby Pleasure



*Nicolina Logan interviewing Ruby Pleasure*

Ruby Pleasure earned a B.A. from Fisk University and an M.A. from Stanford University. She studied early music with George Houle and Imogene Horsley, theory with Arthur Crowley and Leonard Ratner and voice with James Van Lowe, Phillip Jones, Marie Gibson, Elizabeth Appling and Hermann le Roux. She serves as choir director and organist for St. Edward's Episcopal Church in Pacifica.

*January 21, 2016*

**LOGAN** My name is Nicolina Logan, and I'm interviewing Ruby Pleasure here in the San Francisco Conservatory's archives. The date is Thursday, January 21st, 2016. So Ruby, could you tell us about where and when you were born, and where you grew up?

**PLEASURE** Do you really want to know when? Well, why not? I was born in March of 1947 in a little country town in Tennessee called Bolivar. It's near Memphis, and the county is on the Mississippi border. Let's see, what else should I tell you about that? The main "industries" (in quotes) at that time were farming and one of the state psychiatric hospitals. There we have it – not much.

**LOGAN** So, your parents and grandparents – what did they do for work, and what were they like?

**PLEASURE** My family in general were all teachers – educators. My grandfather also was a farmer, but he taught. My parents both taught – my mother was actually my very first teacher in elementary school – she was my first-grade teacher for a few months, until she get pregnant with my brother. At that time, women had to stop working when they were pregnant. My grandfather was a principal of a two-room school in the country and my grandmother taught with him, it was a 1-8. My father taught Social Studies, primarily history, and he was one of my teachers too. It was a very small town.

**LOGAN** So you knew a lot of people in the town? You grew up with the same people?

**PLEASURE** Absolutely. I had chemistry and physics from my uncle. I had English from one of my aunts. It was like that.

**LOGAN** Did you grow up in a musical household? Did anyone in your family play an instrument?

**PLEASURE** No, it was, as I said, a very small town. It was a county seat. There were very few outlets for African Americans. I would watch television and there was an old show, a talent show for children. They always had kids dancing, doing ballet (real basic) and tap, and I would look at that and think, "I just want a tutu. I want to dance." But there was nobody in my town who would teach people like me. And so I didn't. So now I have turned into the exception that proves the rule about my people and rhythm ... I have none.

So here's how I got my start: my grandfather, mother and her sisters were all living in the country outside of a little town called Hickory Valley, and they would get to go into town once or twice a month. It was a big deal to go into town. There were travelling salesmen – peddlers and stuff. The story goes that a peddler came by my grandfather's house and he had on his truck a player piano, and my grandfather thought, "Of course, this is just

the thing for my daughters. Someday they will learn to play the piano.” And so he bought it – for not very much obviously. He kept it for years and years and of course nobody ever learned to play because there was nobody to teach them. So he kept it, and when I was born I was the first grandchild. He said, “Mabel, you should take this for your daughter and you make sure she learns how to play the piano.” So I got it. It was a great old piano. The bellows were not there; the mechanism was no longer there, but it had a great hiding place. Whenever I was miffed or scared or just didn’t want to be bothered, I would go and hide in the bellows space. That’s how I came to the piano.

**LOGAN** Do you remember what kind of music you liked listening to? Did you like piano music?

**PLEASURE** Actually, I really hated my piano lessons ... I really, really, really hated my piano lessons at the beginning. My first teacher was my mother’s good friend – she was our neighbor, she lived right next door. I would trudge over because she made the world’s best Baby Ruth cookies. Like chocolate chip cookies, except you’d cut up Baby Ruth bars instead of chocolate chips. So I knew we would always bake chocolate cookies after my lesson. When I got a little bit older, old enough to do real chores, I discovered that if I would leap up from dinner and practice my mother wouldn’t make me do the dishes. If you practiced, you got a little better ... and you know, if you’re a little better, it’s not so bad. My mother’s pretty crazy – like a fox. I thought I was pulling something on her – but not. So those were my first piano lessons.

**LOGAN** Do you remember when you started performing in public? You must have been young when you started playing.

**PLEASURE** My town, church and school were really supportive. There was lots and lots of singing and everybody was expected to participate. Even if people didn’t quite understand what you did, they would say, “Go ahead, do your thing”. I think probably, like lots of people, my first real performing experiences were in church and in school. Let me back up a bit. How did I come to singing? We lived not too far from a local college, Lane College, which was in Jackson, Tennessee, 30 miles away from my home. Both of my parents went to school there. It was kind of the cultural thing that we got to do; it was pretty much the only culture that black folks had then – at least in that area. Classical kinds of things. They would drag us out anytime there was a theater company that would come through and do the college circuit. We would go to see those plays – *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*. I don’t think I ever saw a comedy, everything was always tragic and somebody died. I probably saw those when I was 6 or so. I remember when I was about 6, Marian Anderson came to sing, and my mother took me to see her. I remember sitting in the balcony and this really beautiful, elegant woman just sort of glided out to the stage, stood tall, and it was the most incredible thing that I had heard. I didn’t know that that kind of sound could come from a human being. It was transporting and transfixing. I just looked at that and thought, “Wow. I’d like to do that.” Now, I had no idea what that meant but I just remember that being the moment that I thought, “That’s something that I might really like to do.”

**LOGAN** Wow, that's great. Before you went to college, did you know you wanted to study music?

**PLEASURE** Yeah, I did, I think. There was never a time when I didn't have some sort of music lessons; piano lessons from the time I went to Mrs. Johnson and all the other ladies. There was a music store that had several really fine teachers, it was called Jaco's. They had studios up above the main store. I had lessons there for many, many years; all through junior high and high school. And actually I was reasonably competent. I did a couple of local competitions. I really didn't think about anything else. I didn't really want to teach because I didn't have a lot of models. It was the '50s / '60s. Women were moms and housewives, although all my family were professional people – they all taught. So there was never any question that I would do something like that. It would never occur to me to go and be a lawyer or a doctor – there were no models for that. But I really didn't want to teach and I really didn't know what I wanted to do. And I knew I didn't want to not do something. What I knew was music. My mother was a little dismayed and she said, "But dear, you'll never find a husband." And I thought, "Well, that might not be so bad." But it was across the street from the Meharry medical school and there were a lot of doctors there or med students. To be a professional musician, no, it never occurred to me that was what I'd do.

**LOGAN** How was it that you chose to attend Fisk University in Nashville?

**PLEASURE** It was a matter of options available. I didn't want to go too far away from home, but I wanted to be away from home. At the time, probably the options that I considered would have all been what are now called "historically black colleges." I would have looked at Lane College, which was in Jackson – that was my mother's and father's alma mater. Or Howard or Spellman. Or Fisk. Fisk was probably the more prestigious school. It had a tradition of vocal music that was very compelling. The whole story of the Jubilee Singers and that tradition was really very special and I really wanted to do it. And it was also close to home. Well, about 300 miles from home.

**LOGAN** Who were your teachers there?

**PLEASURE** My music teachers?

**LOGAN** Everyone – what did you study there?

**PLEASURE** My major was music. I didn't do music ed. It was a small department. That's where I met my husband, actually. My major within that was voice. The way I came to singing lessons (and God knows I was horrible) was one summer I just rebelled and said, "I'm sick of it! I don't want any more piano lessons. Not going to do it." And my mother said, "No, you'll have some music lessons. You have to do it. But you can take the summer off from piano – you can have voice lessons." She was a saint. Either that, or completely deaf. And her name was Carolyn Cansler. I thought, "I can do that." And I had lessons and it was kind of fun. I'm not sure I got much better, but she did no harm. And it was a different way of approaching music. So I got to continue my

singing lessons, but I had to go back to piano. There was no question. This was during my high school years.

When it came time to go to college, I knew that I probably was not going to be a competitive pianist and I really didn't love it. So I thought, "Well, I'll study voice as my major." The music building was in this old, old house and there was a flight of stairs and some rooms around to the left, which were teaching and practice studios. I'm sure the building was haunted. And I'm standing there waiting my turn and I hear this yelling and this guy is throwing things across the room. And this girl is yelling back at him, giving him just as good as he gave. She was one of the fabulous singers there and she storms out. And then I go in and I'm just this country girl; young, and kind of impressionable. And I think, "Oh my gosh, what have I done. I want my mom." And that was my first lesson. He [Mr. van Lowe] was charming; he was lovely. You could either do no wrong or you could do no right. I guess I did learn something from that. And he left at the end of that year, and Phillip Jones, who was just a wonderful, wonderful human being and actually a reasonably good singer and a really good teacher came – and so I spent three years with him there.

**LOGAN**                      What was he like as a teacher?

**PLEASURE**                He was very encouraging. He would give you ways of thinking about making sound. It was not so physical – hands on – or technical. It was more – "Let's think about this. What would happen if ...?" And I found that to be very empowering to have to take some responsibility for making that sound and to use my imagination. It's not that it was completely divorced from things technical, but he just had a very intuitive way of working with all of his students. He didn't just say, "That's good," just for the sake of saying, "That's good," but he never made you feel less than – even if you weren't having a good day. He would say, "Well, that was OK. We'll do it better tomorrow." So I really resonated with him. He was just very generous.

**LOGAN**                      Do you know if he was teaching there a while when you got there?

**PLEASURE**                No, he came my second year.

**LOGAN**                      Was he older?

**PLEASURE**                Yes, he was. He was probably in his late 50s, early 60s. Of course, everybody seemed very old to us. Who ever knew I'd be one of those!

**LOGAN**                      You went to Stanford for your Master's degree. What was that like? How did you come there?

**PLEASURE**                Like lots of people when they get to their senior year they think, "OK, now what?" The choir director, Robert Jones, was doing his doctorate degree at Stanford and we were just talking, and I had been thinking maybe I might do music therapy or something like that. At that time, there weren't many of those programs. One

was in Kansas, and I knew I didn't want to be in Kansas. I don't know why, I just didn't. So he said, "I know this lady, and I think you'd really enjoy working with her and I think she'd be really good for you." So I applied on a lark, and I got in. I was kind of surprised, but I did. My college roommate also was admitted at the same time. She was a business major, and so we packed up her little car and we drove across the country and had our adventure. I will never do that again, but it was great fun! She's still here; she lives in Palo Alto.

**LOGAN** At Stanford you continued to study voice, early music and theory.

**PLEASURE** It was all part of the thing. Voice was the instrument that I had. In my senior year, I did a project of contemporary music and I really liked it. I was fascinated by it. I like puzzles and that kind of stuff, and it felt like a great puzzle. So I said I would study contemporary music, new music. Then I got there and I started to spend time with it and I realized I really didn't love it enough to spend that much time doing it. Although I met some wonderful, wonderful people – interesting people. But I also was drawn to early music because my voice worked in that genre. At the time I was there, it was an odd, wonderful program. There was a huge emphasis on early music, and there was a huge emphasis on contemporary music. This was kind of at the beginning of computer-generated music. My boyfriend at the time was a composer, and the only time the composers could get time in the computer lab – which was way back in the hills – you could only have a few hours between 2:00 am and 5:00 am. So we would all trek out to the computer lab. There were these huge computers, like something from an old science fiction movie, that were probably as big as this room ... and all these reels and whirring, and air conditioning ... it was all kind of cool, but I didn't like the music.

**LOGAN** What was the music like?

**PLEASURE** It was computer-generated ... bleeps ... you know. It was early on. It was kind of an adventure. But then there was really nothing in the middle. The singers had to be closet Mahler fans, and so we would get together and play all this romantic music in hiding because you didn't want to say, "Oh yes, I love this schmaltzy romantic music." That was not cool, because it was the '60s, early '70s.

**LOGAN** So your teachers that you studied early music with were George Houle and Imogene Horsley?

**PLEASURE** She did teach early music, but she wasn't one of the performance teachers – George was primarily the head of that department. Professor Horsley taught this wonderful course in fugue. By the time we were done, it looked like a huge work of art. We had colored pencils, and we'd draw in all the subjects and retrogrades, and you had a different colored pencil for everything. Every time I look at a fugue now I think about her. She was a brilliant lady.

**LOGAN** So George was your private teacher?

**PLEASURE** No, actually my private teacher was Marie Gibson. She was the one that Bob Jones said, “You might want to think about working with her.”

**LOGAN** What was she like?

**PLEASURE** She was an impeccable musician. She had a really exquisite, clear ringing voice, and she had steely blue eyes that you never wanted focused on you. She had way too many mirrors in her studio – way too many. Her studio was in a building that they called the Knoll. It was on this little tiny hill and it has this big, open yard. There were windows looking out over that yard and everywhere. She was an incredibly fine musician. I learned a lot about text, and commitment and professionalism from her. And she didn’t suffer fools; you either were prepared or you weren’t. But she was very kind. She didn’t say, “You’re a stupid little girl from Tennessee, you’re wasting your time.” If you think about the specific things that you learn from somebody, it’s really hard sometimes to just pinpoint that. It was more a way of being that you picked up than this one particular thing. I do remember that it was about preparation. A lot was about spending the time doing the back work before you got to reap the rewards. We did *Dialogue of the Carmelites*, and she was the new prioress. She was a really fine performer. She was always so cool, calm and collected. Except you always knew when she was in trouble technically because her little finger would kind of curl up. And if you didn’t know her, you would never be able to detect it from her performance. It was a beautiful ringing voice. Unfortunately, I lost touch with her and I’m really sorry about that.

**LOGAN** When you studied with her, was she middle-aged, or was she older?

**PLEASURE** She was early middle-age, I would say. Probably in her forties.

**LOGAN** So she was probably in the middle of her career then.

**PLEASURE** Yeah ... although she had pretty much decided to focus her attention on teaching. She had been one of the early Merola folks, and I think there were some family crises, I’m not sure, because she had to leave for family illnesses. And she sang, but not focused on a career in performance.

**LOGAN** So you studied music theory with Arthur Crowley. What was he like?

**PLEASURE** He was the organist at Fisk. He was a tiny little person; I don’t know how his feet reached the pedals, but he was a fabulous organist, and just a brilliant theorist. He didn’t understand why everybody couldn’t just do that! I just remember sitting there one day in one of his classes, having the most awful time following ... we were talking about secondary dominance, I remember that. I was just kind of going, “Huh...?” I would do the exercises, and sometimes I’d get it right, and sometimes ... it was really a crapshoot. And then it just sort of struck me ... why didn’t you just say it

was this and this? That I could understand! But he just thought we all should [snaps finger] be able to understand what he was thinking somehow. We all had to take another instrument, so I took organ lessons with him. Actually, it's come in kind of handy, but at the end of the first semester we had to do a recital, and he scheduled that recital for the evening that everybody else had gone home. We were the only people probably left on campus, and we listened to one another play our organ pieces. I did an arrangement of *Silent Night*, which probably has put me right off *Silent Night* since. But he was a character. A lot of my teachers at Fisk were characters.

**LOGAN** Leonard Ratner ... was he at Fisk also?

**PLEASURE** No, he was at Stanford. What can I say about him? He was really fine. There are certain people when you go to a school, you should just spend some time in their company, and he was one of those.

Something else that kind of got left off here ... I did lots and lots of choral music. I sang in undergraduate school with the university choir that Bob Jones directed, which was a large performing ensemble which sang every Sunday morning for chapel. We did just a huge, wide variety of different kinds of music, and we always did what we called the *Jubilee Song* in the course of every service. It was one of the Negro spirituals that had been arranged by John Work, who had been on the faculty and had done lots of research into that music. There are a couple of books, I think we have them in our library, that are collections of Negro spirituals, so we did lots of those. And I sang with the Jubilee Singers, which specialized in performing spirituals and traveled and did fundraising. The original group had gotten together and done a fundraising tour, and had literally saved the University. The big deal when you got to be a senior was you could live in Jubilee Hall, which is this old gothic building, it's really cool. But that was built with funds raised by members of the original Jubilee Singers. So obviously, when I got to Stanford I was looking to do large ensemble work, so I joined the University Choir there. Harold Schmidt was the director, and he was another one of those people that – you couldn't go to Stanford and do music and not spend time with him. He was really a character, but a really fabulous conductor. Mr. Schmidt had worked for a while at Fisk before he went to Stanford, so there was that kind of connection there.

**LOGAN** Elizabeth Appling?

**PLEASURE** Elizabeth was my friend, we were grad students together and really good friends. She founded the Girl's Chorus, and she had organized the Prep Department Choir [at the Conservatory]. So when she lit off to do the Girl's Chorus, there was an opening there – it left the Prep Chorus leaderless, so I took that on.

I guess you're asking about her as my teacher. Again, obviously a really, really, really fine musician, with a great ear. I think that some of the best teachers are people who've had to struggle with issues, and work their way through technical and musical, or whatever kinds of things. Although she was a fine singer, you knew she had had to work her way through a lot of things, vocally. Subsequently she was able to help other people

do that same thing, and she was very articulate. It was the first time I'd worked with somebody who was my peer, and it was really very interesting. I don't want it to sound like she couldn't sing, because she could. It was just a different kind of dynamic to it. I think often people for whom this just comes so easily have no way of having empathy and really articulating what a problem might be.

**LOGAN** Wow, so that must have been really interesting – studying with your friend. Hermann le Roux?

**PLEASURE** Oh, Hermann.... Hermann was the chair of the [Conservatory] Voice Department. You know, every now and then you need to go in for a tune up, and you need a pair of objective ears. That's what Elizabeth was, and that's what Hermann was – objective ears. I would have a lesson here and there with him – his studio was across the hall from my office. We were friends, we sang together a lot. There was a group called the Cantata Singers when I first began working here, and he sang with that and so did I. So we knew one another's voices and how they worked pretty well. That was fun.

**LOGAN** So your program at Stanford was two years? And then after that you graduated, and then what happened?

**PLEASURE** And then – oh my God, I was an adult! I spent some time (a couple of years) grandfather-sitting. One of my good friends married, and she and her husband decided they would tramp around Europe for a year or so in an old VW bus, but her grandfather (who looked like Colonel Sanders) – she had been living with him. They had this wonderful old house in Burlingame. He was perfectly healthy and everything, but they didn't want him living alone. He had lots of space, and I didn't ... so I grandfather-sat. I was his companion. So I did that, and that gave me lots of time to continue to have lessons and to do singing. It was fine. I had a job for a while ... the government was minting a new coin with Susan B. Anthony on a silver dollar. Rather than just putting them out into circulation, they were going to sell them (your tax dollars at work). So they hired lots and lots of college students who had just left school and had no real jobs and no real skills. We were at Fort Mason and we spent several months making up phony orders – practice for doing it when they really put them into circulation. Then they put them into circulation, and nobody bought them. And so we all lost our jobs ... it was a really cool job. We got to work out on the Bay at Fort Mason ... but that was one of the things I did. You know, you piece together stuff.

**LOGAN** Were you performing very much after college?

**PLEASURE** Some. I really do not passionately love individual performance. I just don't. I love making music with other people – I love ensemble work. So that's primarily what I did. I did a lot of ensemble singing ... I taught piano a little bit, I had church jobs and things like that, which I loved. But I didn't pursue single-mindedly a solo career, because it didn't bring me joy. I guess that's not a great thing to say at a performing school, is it?

**LOGAN** That's perfectly OK!

**PLEASURE** I think it's important to know what you do well, and what you don't love. I think that with age you get to understand why you didn't do some things more aggressively, and I think that's wonderful.

**LOGAN** So you joined the staff of the Conservatory in 1973.

**PLEASURE** Yes.

**LOGAN** How was it that you first heard of the Conservatory?

**PLEASURE** Well, when I was a student at Stanford we all knew about it. We were kind of snobbish, I have to say. The dean of the Conservatory at the time was Jon Bailey, and he directed the Cantata Singers. I knew him from some classes at Stanford – he was a student there also. Periodically we would come up and act as ringers for some performances at the Conservatory. We just sort of thought, “Those poor Conservatory students ... isn't it sad that they're not the fine musicians that we are?” It is really true, it was a pretentiousness that we had. So anyway, I knew about it because when you're living in the area you hear about other things, and there was cross-pollenization. I heard about this opening from him, actually. He knew Colleen [Katzowitz]. Colleen told me that Jon said, “If she says she'll do a thing, she will.” So they hired me, and here I am!

**LOGAN** Could you tell us what your first impression of the Conservatory was like when you joined? What was the building like?

**PLEASURE** Oh, it was this funky old building down on 19th Avenue which had been an orphanage. Have you ever seen it?

**LOGAN** I've seen some pictures, but that's it.

**PLEASURE** It was a wonderful, wonderful, weird old place. On the Ortega Street entrance there is an arch going into the main door, and there are all these little faces ... I always thought they were cherubs, but then I discovered that they were orphans. It had been a home for unwed mothers. I could stand up on the third floor, where I gave lessons, and look out the window and see the school where my husband taught – I could see the music wing from there. So that was always kind of comforting – kind of special. It was in that Spanish mission style (fake Spanish mission style) and it was kind of crumbly and seedy. A lot of the tiles didn't quite match. There was no real performing space – my husband was asking me last night where they did performances, and I said, “Oh, it was room 51.” He said, “Room 51? What was that?” Actually, it was just this big old space where I guess the lobby to the new performance hall was ... soon on they tore that down and started to build Hellman Hall, which is a wonderful performance space. I miss it a lot. The windows were a little creaky and cantankerous ... it was just an old

building, but there was lots of character, and it felt kind of cozy in a crumbling, seedy way. But I really loved it, I really did. I miss it.

The whole Sunset district is a giant ant hill, and we were in the center of it. There were ants, ants, ants! Everywhere! The floor would look like it was moving. There were jokes about us having the ants as our school mascot. In one of our internal publications, Erika Johnson was our student assistant, and illustrated a page with ants marching along the edges. Charles wanted to poison them, but we didn't want the spray in the building. Elly Armer found this chalk that the ants wouldn't cross, so we used that to block entrances wherever possible.

**LOGAN** It was by the beach, right?

**PLEASURE** Not too far from the beach. It was on 19th, and the beach is down on 47th or something like that, so it was a hike. Going down was easy ... coming back was not so easy. The Symbionese Liberation Army and Patty Hearst, who was kidnapped and held, and then joined them ... they robbed a bank, etc. etc. ... the bank that they robbed [Hibernia Bank] was just a few blocks down from the Conservatory on Noriega. Those were interesting times! Apparently one of the people involved in the thing had had some connection with the Conservatory as a student. I'm not sure if it was a Prep student, or what ... I'd better check that. But it was an interesting neighborhood.

**LOGAN** So when you joined you worked in the student services office?

**PLEASURE** I did.

**LOGAN** What was your job like there?

**PLEASURE** Oh God, we did everything! The student services office at that time was the admissions office, the financial office, the Veteran's affairs office, the international student office, the registrar ... and whatever else nobody else would do. We didn't teach most of the classes, but it was kind of the catch-all. It literally was where, if you needed something done, you came to us. Gradually (and it took a long time) bit by bit parts of those responsibilities were peeled off to make other divisions, but it was kind of a catch-all. And what did I do? Well, I was Colleen's assistant ... pretty much everything. I didn't have to make financial aid decisions – we all wore lots of hats. I did a lot of dealing with the actual students, and listened to them. I did registration a lot. I kept track of the classes that students were registered for. I did transcripts, jury comments, jury schedules ... a lot of stuff. At the time we didn't have that many students. I remember there being a year where I kept thinking, "Why is it taking me so long to do this?!" And I realized that we had about fifty more students. Since everything was very individualized and hands-on, and we didn't have computers, it was very labor intensive and so it just took longer. I can't remember the number of students we had when we started; probably not more than 100. It was small.

**LOGAN** You were involved with the Pre-college and the Prep course. How did you start doing that?

**PLEASURE** My friend Elizabeth who founded the Girls Chorus recommended me. I had been working with the Children's Choir at my church for several years; I was reasonably competent and enjoyed it.

**LOGAN** What was the age range of the chorus?

**PLEASURE** The youngest was probably about 7 or 8. There were two groups: one that was a little older – upper junior high/high school.

**LOGAN** You also taught in Adult Extension. How did you start doing that and what was that like?

**PLEASURE** Lots of people just wanted to figure out how to sing better. It was to help them sing better. It wasn't supposed to be – “Let's go make professional musicians of you”. I had one guy, a new father, who said, “I just want to sing a lullaby to my child without him crying.” To give them confidence so that they could do that. People were in choirs, and they wanted to get a little bit better. Or they had been singing along to records. It was for fun. Those were low stakes, I didn't have to be responsible for anyone's career, and I loved that.

**LOGAN** So you were teaching voice lessons and musicianship at the same time. That's a whole lot.

**PLEASURE** Well, it was just one musicianship class. I tried to remember what it was like when I was in Mr. Crowley's class. He just knew everything. We knew a little, but we couldn't read his mind, and so I tried to make it more transparent for them. Also, I wanted people to know that it was possible; it wasn't some grand mystery. I had a score reading class at Stanford that met at eight o'clock in the morning (I'm not a morning person). Art Barnes taught it. I bless him daily, I really do. I thought I knew how to sight-read. I thought I knew how to read a score. And I got to college and I realized I was a really good memorizer. I could look at something and follow along. I could hear it and see it, and I thought I was reading it. But no, I just memorized it quickly, and that was kind of a shock that I had to actually do a little more than that. At 7:30 every morning before Art Barnes's class I was sick to my stomach, literally. I was so scared and it was really intense. It's what I use more than almost anything else in my music studies and voice studies – I go back and I think, “If I can get through Art Barnes's class, I can do this!” I didn't want people to be sick in their stomach before they came to my class. I was reasonably competent at it. I didn't love it. There's still this sort of ... ‘ugh’. And it's so funny because my husband really loves this kind of stuff.

**LOGAN** He's a musician?

**PLEASURE** He's a musician. He taught band for forty years. So he doesn't understand why I don't lap it up. That was just a little detour for me.

**LOGAN** So you had your voice studio. Who did you teach voice to here?

**PLEASURE** I started teaching in the Collegiate Division – a voice class. Essentially it was called this elegant name – ‘Remedial Voice Class’. In some cases, it really was. You all did this musicianship exam and you had to sight-sing something. I literally had all the students that barely could squeak out a sound in that class. A lot of them were guitarists. It was to get them competent and comfortable enough so they could pass their sight-singing. It was interesting, though. Guitarists resonate to a different kind of vibration because the guitar they hold right near their heart. So they feel vibrations in a different way than some other instrumentalists or singers. Some of them really did have difficulty hearing and reproducing. They heard it – if you asked them to do something with a guitar they could do it – but if you asked them to do it to a piano, it was much more difficult for them. That was an interesting oddity. I did that for many years; I didn't have a collegiate studio for a long time. I was really hesitant to do that. It was just fear. I didn't want to feel responsible for that much of someone else's development because it is such an intimate and a huge part of their lives. I realized I was probably pretty good at it – it just took a long time to make that step that said, “You're good at this and you should do it.” I had no idea that it would bring me so much joy; that I would feel that this was what I was supposed to be doing with my music and all of that time that I had spent doing other things. That essentially – “OK, can she take stuff and put it here from there, and snip it together?” I know this is going all over the world ... but I think that what I really do, and what my real role is – what my heart role is – is to be an enabler. It's the reason why I don't particularly care to be front and center doing the thing myself. I think my job – what I'm supposed to be doing with my life – is to help other people find a way to do that for themselves, however that is. Whether it's to be a star or whether it's to be in the background helping someone else. I think that's what I'm really supposed to be doing. I think that that's a big part of the reason why I love liturgical music; that it's a form of enabling people to open to whatever they have. It took me a long time to sort of semi-articulate that. Sometimes I am articulate. I realize that wasn't very but it is really what I feel very deeply about.

**LOGAN** How would you describe your teaching style?

**PLEASURE** I guess you could ask any one of my students and you'd get a different answer. My job is to be their objective ear and to give objective feedback for what things are good and what things are not so good. To be trustworthy and to tell the truth about what I hear. And to do it in a way that is positive and affirming. My teaching style is certainly not ‘technical’ technical, although there is always that. I would say that it is probably more holistic in that I try to engage my students' bodies, minds, and imagination. I want them to be really engaged in what they're doing right now – what worked, what didn't work – how you can make that work more perfectly and consistently. I hope it is encouraging. I ask lots of questions. I ask my students to tell me what they're taking away after each lesson that was useful or not useful. I really want

people to be engaged in that process and to know that I have part of the truth about singing, but I don't have all of the truth – none of us do. I encourage them to take that part that is helpful to them right now and to maybe put the other on the shelf and at some point maybe it'll make sense ... but maybe it won't.

**LOGAN** Do you think your teaching style has changed over the years?

**PLEASURE** Oh, yes. I thought, this is where I wanted to go, and this is how I was going to get there. I have learned that there are many twists and turns to getting here and there. And the longer you do this the more tools you get in your tool bag. And it really changes, depending on the level of the student. When I was working with the extension classes, it was a whole different story than when I am now working with my students who really want to see this as a possible career for themselves. I am much more interested in having the students sound like themselves than anyone else; to find the way to do that.

**LOGAN** You've been here a while to see all the changes in all the areas you have worked. How have the Prep and Adult Extension divisions changed since you've been here?

**PLEASURE** When I started, the Prep Department was a lot like a community music thing. People brought their kids to music lessons ... that was pretty much it. Then they started to add some musicianship classes for them, ear-training, and some performing ensembles. I have to confess, especially once we moved here, I feel really distanced from it. I understand that there are lots of interesting changes but I don't feel competent to tell you how it has changed.

**LOGAN** How has student services changed? The Conservatory's first website was launched in 1997. It must be different with all the technology changing.

**PLEASURE** Let's talk about registration first. When I started working here, I kept a notebook with pages of all the students who were enrolled in every class; a list (and actually it worked really well) with the teachers' names and the course names. So I could go back through those if I needed to. We had cards that students would fill out with their personal information and schedule on it. So there were a lot of redundancies. But the high tech thing the year that I came was we had punch cards. Whoa! We would put in an order to place called Mrs. Key punch (I always assumed it was Mrs. Key punch) and we had those little computer cards. We never used any of the little holes in it, like you would if you were paying bills. But it had the course name, the instructor, the course number, and a space for the student's name and number. Each student had three cards for every class that they took. It was weird. They would fill them out; they kept a copy, we kept a copy, and a copy went to the teacher. If a student needed to drop a class, the student had to get the card from the teacher, get their advisor to sign it, and bring it back to us. It did work – it did. And you'd take all of those little cards for each class and make up the rosters and the transcripts. That was high tech then.

Then we started to use actual computers and that changed things a lot. Our scheduling thing was a great big paper grid, and we would put the course names, instructors, times and dates and we would just move them around on that grid until we got it so there were no conflicts. And that worked remarkably well. Tim Bach would come in and say, “Where is so and so today?” and, “What’s going on in room so and so?” And you looked at the grid and you could see right away. I find things a lot more convoluted now; very hard for me to find the information that I need quickly. That’s some change. Going to the computer-based student records has been really different. Thank God I don’t have to deal with it now. I loved my cards. I really loved the roster book. Until the day I took off my registrar’s hat, and even now, sometimes there are still questions about students who say they had a class or didn’t have a class or did so and so – the simple thing to do was to go to that roster book and to be able to cross-reference it. It’s not my problem now.

**LOGAN** After forty years of being at the Conservatory, how have you noticed how student life has changed – how people dress, and any kind of trends that you’ve noticed in the student body?

**PLEASURE** When I first started, it was kind of ‘anything goes’. People were very expressive in their personalities and in their dress. At one point (and I’ve been trying to think of who they were) there was a group of guys ... they called themselves the Pineapple Guys and once a week they would wear skirts. We did bellbottoms, long dresses. It was just a little microcosm of San Francisco. Big hair, small hair, no hair, big hair again.

**LOGAN** Are there more international students now than before?

**PLEASURE** Oh God yes! We had very few international students when I began working here. And until recently, the last five years, it was still reasonably small. Right now we have about 135 international students. There would be maybe five or six, or ten. It used to be that you could sort of tell what was going on with the economy of a particular country by looking at where the international students came from. There was a time when we had a lot of Japanese students and then that just dropped off. Then there were lots of Korean students. That has leveled off a bit. There were no Chinese students. There were a few from Taiwan, one or two. Hardly anybody from anywhere else, actually. I don’t remember if there were any Mexican students. I remember when we had the first student from China. His name was Herbert Chang. Everyone was very excited. Herbert came, and he had a homemade violin because it was right after the cultural revolution. His father had been a student at Stanford and when the cultural revolution began, being an honorable man he thought he should go back to China, and he did. Then he was stuck there. Herbert was one of the first people who was not a scientist who was allowed to leave China, and he came to the Conservatory. It was lovely. He was a very nice man. Then we had a few more – Wei He. I can’t remember the other names but there were about four or five. They set up a thing at first for them to do specifically language based and cultural things. Then nothing much happened.

Then all of a sudden it's like the floodgates have opened. I remember one time I had one student whose last name began with a 'Z'. Now there is a whole page of 'Zs'. We had students from the Philippines ... I don't think we've had a student from the Philippines for quite some time – who was here on a student visa. We had a few students from Israel. Golda Meir's grandson was here. Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos' daughter was here. One of the most traumatic things that happened was we had a student whose father worked with the Shah's regime in Iran at the time that that government fell. People would come looking for her, insisting that we tell them where she was. That was a little scary. What has changed mostly with international students is what happened after 9/11 and all the new regulations. There is a new system of tracking students called SEVIS and it has lots and lots and lots of regulations. It's not as intuitive and it's very hard to get a real person when there is a problem. Everything has got to be black and white, there are very few shades of gray. That's very different. And, because we have such a huge international student contingent, we have to really make sure we follow the regulations and keep everybody in status because that would have a huge financial impact.

**LOGAN** I have a list of people who have been associated with and worked for the school. If you could share any memories of these people ... Milton Salkind?

**PLEASURE** This was really Milton Salkind's dream. So much of who we were stemmed from his dream and his vision of what we could be; what a music school would be. And he took us from being a really, really provincial, nice little music school in these two little old ladies' house, to being something that was a little more intentional and had a wider scope. He had very interesting ideas and innovations. One was the chamber music program; the fact that he thought that chamber music was so important – making music together in small groups was really important to him. He and his wife Peggy had been a piano duo for years and years and years, even after they divorced, so he understood the dynamics of that. And he gathered people who were really fine at that to make not just a department – it started with a festival. It was called Chamber Music West and people came and performed; the students and established artists all performed together. That was a really important thing. He seemed able to see through people's quirks (because he was quirky himself) to see possibilities in teachers and students.

Community service was one of the things that was started during his time here; the idea being we weren't just supposed to be here making music for ourselves. We had a responsibility to take it to people who couldn't get to music easily. And I think that was really an important thing. One of the things they did (and this goes back to student life I suppose, there was no organized student life so much) – but when the gas crisis happened and people were lining up according to their license plate numbers or however they did it – there was a gas station across the street from us. There would be lines and lines of people waiting to get gasoline. Our students would go over there and play for them. It felt civilized ... it made it a little less awful. When the Olympics were nearby, and the Olympic torch was being run down 19th Avenue some of our students went out and played the Olympic theme. That was kind of fun. Also, the Sing It Yourself *Messiah* was one of the big things that happened during his time. I think he was was quirky ... we all

have our things. This was one of his real loves. You may have questioned the way he got to things, but you knew this was his heart.

**LOGAN** And Richard Howe?

**PLEASURE** He was a dean for a while, for many years actually. His wife was a travel agent, a really good travel agent! She used to make all my travel arrangements for a long time. Things had not been all that well organized academically. We started on our way to being more organized. He was a nice man. Milton threw some great parties, by the way.

**LOGAN** Colleen Katzowitz was your first boss at the Conservatory. What was she like?

**PLEASURE** Colleen actually was the school, if you want to know the truth. She knew more about this place and how it had been run, how it was running, and how it should be run than anybody in the world, I think. She was a great multi-tasker. She was great with scheduling and regulations. Her desk was even messier than mine and she always knew where everything was. I just had nothing but absolute respect and awe for her. We would bump heads a lot, but we had a great working relationship; she was really good with details and I was really good with people. We worked it that way. She was a great foodie; she always had a great restaurant recommendation. I still have a recipe that I look at periodically and think, "I really want to make that, and it would really kill me." It's for a chocolate cake that's got way more butter, cream, chocolate, sour cream and calories than the law should allow. I read it, and I read her notes. She always knew all the new food trends. She traveled. She was witty, funny and smart. People really respected her opinion about things. People spent lots and lots of time bringing things to her about how things should be run and decisions to be made. I really, really miss her.

**LOGAN** May Kurka.

**PLEASURE** May was a lovely lady, just very elegant. She planted a tree outside her office in memory of her mother. It was a jacaranda tree and it had the most beautiful purple blossoms on it. She was very elegant but not in an overblown way; just in a quiet, gentle way.

**LOGAN** John McCarthy, the former director of pre-college and adult extension?

**PLEASURE** I saw John a couple of days ago. I hadn't seen him very much. I think he had been a student here. I liked John a lot; I could go and talk to him about what was going on with my Extension students. He was very welcoming and had a wry sense of humor I liked. I didn't work with him a lot, not terribly closely, but we do go back a long time.

Julie Karres. Oh my God, my Julie. Julie was really one of the hearts of the Conservatory. She was the receptionist. When I first started there, they had a switchboard with wires. You'd plug it in, take it out, plug it in, then take it out. Her office was right off the entrance and they called it the 'Julie's Yard'. They put a little sign up that said 'Julie's Yard'. She had everything. If you needed the most obscure thing, she looked in her purse and pulled it out. I can't really say this ... she would get really annoyed about stuff. You'd walk in and she'd say, "I'm so mad I could – bricks!" It was very graphic – you knew she was annoyed! The students loved her and they trusted her. The faculty loved her and trusted her. It was like a safe place to be. All the best gossip was in there.

**LOGAN** Charles Coones, who worked in facilities ... do you remember him?

**PLEASURE** Charles ... another part of the real soul of the place. It made me very sad when he left. When we moved here, things changed. When we were at 19th Avenue, Charles was always the person you called when you needed anything. He would mutter under his breath, but it happened. If you needed a set up, it was there. If you needed someone to fix something, he was there. Charles was really smart and he gave everything he had to this place. Everything. He was a very quiet, private person. He was very quirky too. He knew the students. Every now and then he would come up to me and he'd say – he had a way of standing and tilting his head and then he'd say, "Do you remember so and so?" And then he'd stand there and wait, and you'd kind of dredge out a little bit and he'd sort of pull it from you. And he'd say, "Well, I saw so and so and I heard..." And it would seem really random but it wasn't. He rode his bike a lot. I don't know, but still feel very bad that he was here and then he wasn't.

**LOGAN** How long was he here for?

**PLEASURE** Charles started in February of 1973, and I started in April. So we were kind of there together. He left ... I guess it's been a year and a half ago. Tessa could tell you. I didn't see him as much. There's something about this building that's a real barrier for me so you don't run into people as much as I used to. I don't like that, I really don't. So I didn't see much of him after we moved here. I don't how his duties changed. I really miss him. Something happened ... something was going on in my studio and I thought, "I should call Charles" and then I thought – I can't. And that made me sad.

**LOGAN** Patricia Reardon, the bookstore manager?

**PLEASURE** I cannot believe we don't have a bookstore.

**LOGAN** I was just going to say – we had a bookstore?

**PLEASURE** I cannot believe we don't have a bookstore. It just boggles my mind. Of course, it was a rat's nest, but you could find all kinds of treasures in there! She would crawl over the boxes. We got a lot of donations from estates. We need a bookstore. It makes me sad that there are no bookstores, period!

**LOGAN** I know. I've been to that one recently, I don't remember the name. Down on Market, a few blocks from here, a cute little place.

**PLEASURE** You can order music online, you can. But there is nothing like touching it, looking at it. You'd find all sorts of things that you never really think about.

**LOGAN** Definitely. Maybe someday we'll have another one.

**PLEASURE** Yeah, pipedreams, pipedreams.

Marcia [Ehrlich] – she's my buddy.

**LOGAN** Is she the wife of Don?

**PLEASURE** Yes. She was always really calm in what was probably a pretty crazy place. She just handled it. I love her. I don't have a lot to say except she's my bud. She used to organize the master classes. And when we used to do the Sing It Yourself *Messiah* there was a class called it "Learn it with Lou" because Lou Magor was the first conductor and he had a cult following. People would come and spend a month learning the *Messiah*.

**LOGAN** That sounds fun.

**PLEASURE** It was actually.

**LOGAN** Bonnie Hampton. Cello and chamber music.

**PLEASURE** A fabulous, fabulous cellist and very lovely lady. She and Nate Schwartz were a couple.

Irene [Sharp] ... another cellist. Her studio was across the hall from mine. She had three daughters and I know that two of them graduated from the Conservatory.

**LOGAN** Wow, that's nice. Has there been much of that? Children coming here?

**PLEASURE** Yeah, some. Paul Hersh's sons were students here. I can't remember others. Scott Cmiel ... his son was a composer. I can't remember if he was in the Collegiate Division.

**LOGAN** Can you remember if a student went here and then their children went here?

**PLEASURE** Not yet! Not to my knowledge. Milton's and Peggy's daughter went here, Karen.

**LOGAN** Yaada Weber.

**PLEASURE** She's been here longer than I have. She's a legend. I never really worked with her; I just knew she was an institution. She taught flute forever and ever.

**LOGAN** Nathan Schwartz?

**PLEASURE** Like I said, he was Bonnie's husband and they were like salt and pepper – a matched set. Very nice. Lots of these are just fleeting images.

And Alan [Balter], I don't remember that much about him except he left us to go to Atlanta to conduct. And I think he was very ill for a while and then got better.

**LOGAN** Laurette Goldberg, harpsichord.

**PLEASURE** Oh my God, Laurette was like a little tornado. She'd waltz into our office and start talking in the middle of a sentence. You'd say something ... "Yes" ... and she'd pour a little longer. Then you'd say, "What did I just say yes to?" Our Early Music Program owes its life to her.

**LOGAN** Wyatt Insko?

**PLEASURE** He taught organ. I did a couple of recitals with him. Once, he booked me to do a wedding with him and he told me the name of the place and gave me vague directions. So I went to where I thought he told me and I sat there and thought, "Where is Wyatt?" It turns out that I somehow I had the wrong church. He said it was a Filipino wedding, so it would take forever. So I went and there indeed there was a Filipino wedding getting ready to happen at that church – but it was a church a couple of blocks away where I was supposed to be. Yeah – 'both of you write it down' is what I learned. But he was fun to work with. As I said, I did a couple of recitals with him, stuff like that.

Oh, Mack [McCray]. Mack is witty and irreverent, and inappropriate, and wonderful. And he writes so well. Once upon a time, when people would retire, he would put together this musical thing for them, and put together bits and pieces of musicals and operatic things and piano pieces. He'd put words to them, and he'd perform them. It was a different time, and it was really fun. You'd always look forward to seeing what he was going to come up with. He also was a big foodie, so he and Colleen would get together and talk restaurants. He and John Adams were great friends. Like I said, he wrote just beautifully, and my aunt, who was the head of the English Department at Mississippi Valley State would always ask (because I would send her copies of whatever he wrote – sometimes it would be a letter that was very witty, sometimes a little essay or something) – it's her great sorrow now that he's not writing anything that she can read. Oh, and he had an elephant in his studio. I don't know where he got that damn elephant.

**LOGAN** A stuffed elephant?

**PLEASURE** It was a stuffed elephant – it was big enough to sit on, actually! It was all decorated like an Indian ceremonial parade elephant. I don't know if one of his students got it for him, or what, but it would just sit there in his studio.

Meikui – I remember her being a student, and then I remember Mack and Meikui getting married. I remember I sent my husband to buy towels for their wedding present, and he comes back, and they're lovely, elegant towels ... but they're black! Who gives somebody black towels for a wedding present? What kind of statement is that?

Davis Law ... from about a million years ago! He was a violinist, and his sister Mary worked in the Prep Department for a little while as the office assistant. She made a Kahlúa brownie to die for; it kind of rivaled Colleen's chocolate sin cake.

**LOGAN** Peggy Salkind?

**PLEASURE** Like I said, she and Milton had been married. They were divorced, but they were still great friends and would perform together. She had a class that was a precursor to the Practical Aspects class. She never really quite outgrew being a hippy, but I loved that she always was looking for something good in everybody. Always. When Milton was ill, she took such good care of him even though they were not together. It was really very lovely to see.

**LOGAN** Conrad Susa?

**PLEASURE** Conrad ... if you looked in a dictionary under 'curmudgeon' his picture would be there. Again, he's one of those people ... I always told all my advisees to be sure that they at least took one class with him. There are people that you just need to have been in their presence. He knew so much about so many things, and he had such a sharp wit and wry and cutting sense of humor. It was always sad to me to see him begin to deteriorate physically, because it was so frustrating to him to not be able to do everything. He redid the garden outside our office on 19th Avenue at the old Conservatory, and it was just beautiful. He supervised, and planted a lot of plants. I can't remember what it was he did that annoyed me so ... he probably made me change the schedule three times for him when I was making up the class schedule ... and he arrived one day with this silk orchid. It's in my studio – this beautiful green thing. He said, "I know you won't kill this." It's just beautiful, and it was very thoughtful of him to bring it. It was his way of saying, "Sorry I pissed you off."

**LOGAN** Don Ehrlich?

**PLEASURE** I like him a lot. He's very laid-back, he's kind of unflappable, and he plays beautifully.

**LOGAN** Isadore Tinkleman?

**PLEASURE** They had to reconfigure entrances and exits at the Conservatory. There was the ‘Tinkleman door’ – he was in a wheelchair, so they had to build this ramp. He lived right across from the school, so all he had to do was wheel himself across the street and up the ramp, and his studio was the first door that you entered. Kind of curmudgeonly also, but his students loved him.

**LOGAN** Margaret Rowell?

**PLEASURE** Her son was a mountain climber and photographer. He climbed Mount Everest, and all of that. She was just full of adventure. The first lady of cello around here ... and I never heard her say a bad thing about anybody. Her jury comments were always so generous. Not always saying, “This was perfect,” when it obviously wasn’t, but always with helpful and encouraging things. There’s a bust of her in the library.

Dan [Lenoir] Hosack ... I don’t know why we always called her Dan. She was the chair of the Voice Department when I started working. She started the class that we call now Vocal Performance Lab, but she called it Music at Dusk because it started at four o’clock. She had curly brown hair, and her husband was kind of our unofficial handyman; he could fix anything. She was very cool.

Don Stenberg was a really fine teacher. I didn’t have a lot of dealings with him, but I know his students really loved him. He did lots of contemporary American music – lots of it.

Hermann [le Roux] was from South Africa. There’s a story – I don’t know how true it is – that when he came to San Francisco he was in a taxi and said he wanted to get to the Conservatory ... they dropped him off at the Conservatory of Flowers! I loved Hermann, he was just full of joy and life. He did good things with his students. Some things I didn’t agree with the way he taught them, but that’s OK. He has Parkinson’s now, so he had to stop teaching, which is sad because he was so full of life.

One of the really cool things was that I saw a lot of our students become staff members, and launch themselves into bigger and better things. Erika Johnson was a student, and we hired her as a student assistant, then she became the registrar. Jim Gandre came to the Conservatory as a graduate voice student, and while he was here we hired him in our office to be our student assistance. From there he became our admissions officer. He did a fabulous job of promoting the school. After he left, he had several other administrative appointments, including at Roosevelt University. Now he is president of the Manhattan School of Music. He loved the dumplings that they had at the Peking restaurant by the Conservatory, so whenever he stopped by we’d make a trip over there. David Moebs had been a clarinet grad student, and he became our admissions officer. When he came for his audition, he split his pants! He came in in a panic, and I had a needle and thread, and we sewed up his pants for his audition. I have just a tiny bit of thread on that spool. So I hope no one splits their pants this week! I’m really proud of all of them.

**LOGAN**

Joan Gallegos?

**PLEASURE**

Joan just died recently. Joan was a human computer, she was a person who could look at schedules and everything, and she would always find the mistake. She was always in our office saying, “Do you know you did so-and-so?” She taught musicianship, and oh my God was she good! We would run the schedule by her before we printed, and say, “OK Joan – what’s wrong?” She could remember what the graduation requirements were from whenever... Some people have that kind of mind. I used to, but I don’t anymore!

Beulah’s [Forbes] my heart. She was such a character. She was a little short African American lady, and she had a sister who was an actress. The two of them looked like the Bobbsey Twins – you couldn’t tell them apart. She was a fabulous jazz pianist – so good! We used to have what they called Faculty Follies, and Beulah would always play, and she’d just sort of toddle up to the piano and have her handkerchief in her hand. She’d put it down on the piano, and then she’d just do these incredible riffs! Then she’d get up, pick up her handkerchief, and just kind of toddle off, like – “Top that!” She and Julie Karres were partners in crime. They spent a lot of time together. Beulah was I think the first African American graduate we had here at the Conservatory. She taught musicianship, and specifically solfege. People were terrified of that solfege class, but she was good – she was really good.

She hated grading – hated, hated, hated grading – because she never wanted to fail anybody. The deadline would come, and you knew there were not going to be grades from Beulah – you didn’t even expect it. We would play this game ... the December grades would be due, and Beulah would come in with her coconut pineapple cake. She didn’t call it a bribe, but we came to expect our cake. Then she’d go off and take another few days. I have a feeling that she probably just stood at the top of the stairs and threw all her class cards down, and wherever the students’ names fell on the steps is the grade they got. I just loved Beulah ... if she thought it, she said it. There was a graduation one year where Marilyn Horne came to be the speaker. Marilyn Horne is many things, including very verbose. So she was speaking and speaking and speaking, and she started out her speech when she was six, and about half an hour into it she was only thirteen or fourteen. So Beulah just kind of [makes an exasperated sigh] in the front row! Sometimes graduations would be kind of interesting. Beulah going [exasperated sigh] and Conrad snoring! Anyway, she was a real character.

**LOGAN**

Dorothy Stenmeitz – she taught German?

**PLEASURE**

She taught German, yes. They have the teacher of the year awards, and she was the first recipient of that. A really fine teacher, a really lovely lady. She had cancer, but she taught through most of it. I still have this lovely scarf – she one summer went on safari in Africa and she brought me back this really cool scarf with lions on it. Every now and then I wear it, and I remember her. And she had lessons from me for a little bit.

For Faculty Follies, Beulah would play her little thing, and Dorothy would sometimes come out in her Viking helmet with a breastplate and a spear, and do the “Ho-jo-to-ho!” People used to wear themselves much more lightly, and we didn’t take ourselves quite so seriously then as we have to now. It was great fun.

**LOGAN**                      Sonja Neblett?

**PLEASURE**                She just retired a couple of years ago. She taught conducting and musicianship. Great parties – she would always throw an ‘end of the summer’ party and all the musicianship teachers would go.

Wilenne [Gunn] brought in the black boxes (which I understand are no longer black) that the opera workshop used to use. They would stick these boxes, or cubes, to make different decorations and scenery. She was a really good director – really innovative. Very creative and clever.

**LOGAN**                      Alden Jenks.

**PLEASURE**                We used to share an office. There were three spaces – an entryway, a space to left, and Colleen’s office over on the other side. Alden and John Adams shared that space, and they built a synthesizer. Every third day they would blow the power at the Conservatory.

**LOGAN**                      So you were here when John Adams was on faculty? There must have been a lot of new music going on.

**PLEASURE**                A lot of new music. That’s always been one of the good things about the Conservatory – that was always encouraged and nurtured.

**LOGAN**                      Was there ever any kind of jazz program? There’s no saxophone here – was there?

**PLEASURE**                No, which was always kind of odd. Beulah was it. No ... I take that back ... what was his name? John Handy did an improve class for maybe two semesters.

**LOGAN**                      Tim Bach. He was dean?

**PLEASURE**                He was interim dean for a while in-between Dick Howe and Colin Murdoch; maybe a year and a half. He has seen the Conservatory inside and out, from all sorts of perspectives. He’s a really fine coach, and was very good at organizing. He poured so much of his energy into making this a really good place. And I really trust him, he works especially well with our international students. He’s very patient, and very laid-back. Also, I have to say, I went to school with Tim. So we go way back. He was a cellist then.

**LOGAN** David Tanenbaum, guitar.

**PLEASURE** I remember David as a student, actually.

**LOGAN** How long has he been on faculty?

**PLEASURE** Oh, nearly forever. He joined not long after he graduated. Many of our graduates are on faculty, you may have noticed.

**LOGAN** Kris Getz?

**PLEASURE** Oh, I love Kris! Once upon a time, our trustees were much more hands on, in the physical way. Kris built a garden in her husband's memory in one of the spaces at the Conservatory. There was a little wing that came out and left a U-space. It was a lovely little garden with a couple of benches, a nice little shade tree, and flowers. She didn't hire a gardener to do it, she came and she would pull the leaves and tend that garden yourself. You'd be sitting there, and she would just be doing it, because she loved it and she loved the place. Every year she used to make these wonderful little currant cakes – a spicy tea cake kind of thing, and she would bring them around, and they would tie them with little red yarn, and she would give them to all the staff. Every year, she would bring them around on the last day before vacation, and every year that was our Christmas morning snack while we were opening up presents. It was very sweet of her. That kind of stuff does happen ... it's a different time, and people are hands-on in a different kind of way. But I loved it. I felt connected to the people who were funding us in a very visceral kind of way – especially with that garden. I miss having green spaces.

**LOGAN** It's very different here, right in the city. There aren't trees outside the window.

**PLEASURE** I had the most glorious plum tree, which right now would be a riot of color. I miss that.

**LOGAN** I'll ask you about Colin Murdoch.

**PLEASURE** Colin was the dean for about five years or so. He really moved things in a much more organized way. A lot of things that needed attending to, he helped us attend to. And then he was president, and I think his big dream was to bring the Conservatory to its current location. That really was for many, many years his focus. To get us all on board, first of all, for making this move – how to fund it – to support it with staff and faculty and students. We grew a lot while he was here.

**LOGAN** I know you talked a little about the Community Service Program, and Chamber Music West, and Sing It Yourself *Messiah*.

**PLEASURE** That Sing It Yourself *Messiah* – that was Christmas. That was how many, many people in the Bay Area – Christmas began with that. It was very popular. The first year, they were so terrified that nobody would come. “What if we have a party and nobody comes?” But it was really successful, and people loved it. After that, they would announce the tickets were going to go on sale, and it was like a rock concert; the tickets would sell out the same day. I had friends who would, months beforehand, say, “Can you order me a ticket?” It was a great party. The first one was in the Opera House, then they moved it to Davies, and they would do two nights. It was a great project for the singers (I’m about able to hear *Rejoice Greatly* without gagging) – for a couple of months everybody would be revving up and practicing to audition to sing. It was a big deal to sing that one aria on the stage at Davies or at the Opera House with the Symphony. The audience was just so enthusiastic, and they loved it. It was wonderful. As I said, it was for me the beginning of Christmas. I do work in a liturgical setting, and a lot of what I do I have to do it – this is the thing that my husband and I did together for fun. You’d dash through all this stuff in a day, and the whole business of getting here, and then the tenor would sing those first three notes and it would be OK.

Little by little, we were not the only *Messiah* in town, and we certainly were not the cheapest *Messiah* in town. And so attendance fell off, because it was such a novelty. Everybody came ... and then they started to think, “Do I really want to go into the city? I can sing it at my church ...” or, “They’re doing it down the street, and do I really want to pay that much?” And so, it was a lot of work, and it got to be not as lucrative. I was really sad to see it go ... not so much to not hear *Rejoice Greatly* everywhere I went. But it was the one thing that was uniquely ours, and nothing has taken the place of that. It would be lovely to have something like that again ... not necessarily the *Messiah*, but something that people know and like, that’s a little bit of a challenge. We had actually learned all the choruses at the end, and there were those of us at the Learn it With Lou and those things, where people would go and sort of learn the choruses. It didn’t matter, because there was a whole opera house full of people singing along. It’s good for your sight-reading, and it’s fun. I loved it.

**LOGAN** Chamber Music West. So that was a chamber music series in the summer with faculty and students playing together?

**PLEASURE** And they would bring other artists from around the country, or around the world.

**LOGAN** Music Marathons. Those were all day events?

**PLEASURE** All day events. They would chose a theme, or a composer, and people would do something by that composer. They would be large works, or small things, and people dropped in and out. They could stay all day if they could stand that much, or you could just come in for a few minutes and enjoy it. It was kind of fun.

**LOGAN** Do have any memories of former students that you want to share?

**PLEASURE** I was just thinking about it, and I can't think of names so much. There are a lot of people that come back – faces I remember, names I'm not so good with now. There was a time when I knew way too much about everybody. Because of the nature of the building, I would see everybody, and because of the way we did record keeping it was easy to remember and to know people. There are all the obvious people that we remember all the time – Jeff Kahane and Robin Sutherland, and Elza van der Heever. But there are lots of other folks. Shelley Philips, who was an oboe student, who married Barry Philips who was a guitarist, but really is a composer – they just do really wonderful stuff with early music. She does harp stuff, she's started a school down in Santa Cruz and they have recordings of Appalachian music that Barry arranged, and this thing called the Fairy Ring of early music. You run across them occasionally.

I remember Elza coming here and thinking, "Is there anything you can't do?" She was a fine artist. There was a mural that she did on the walls of the attic in the old school – I'm sure they painted it over, but it was beautiful. She was a great baker; she made the wedding cake for one of my former students. She was really upset because the florist didn't have the right color roses that she had asked for, but it was a delicious cake, and it was beautiful! All that, and she could sing too! She was a very nice person.

There are lots of lots of wonderful people who have been here. My students – I just am incredibly grateful for the time that they allowed me to walk with them on this part of their musical journey. Often, you just remember the people who make your life difficult. But I have stretched in my world view a lot in my time here, and I'm a much different person than I was when I started working here. I'm much more ... things don't shock me anymore. I'm much more willing to let people be who they are without being judgmental about it, and I'm much more willing to explore different cultural traditions. I think that's really good, because I grew up in a place where there were two parallel tracks, and never the two met. They would sometimes come close, but never intersect. Now I have the opportunity to get to know people from all over the world, and you know – they're OK too! They're pretty wonderful, mostly. In my studio I have people who may not make big splashes, but who have grown into wonderful musicians and wonderful people, and who are finding a way to make music in their lives and in the lives of others in ways that they might not have expected. Kind of like me, I hadn't expected to do this with my life. It never occurred to me that this would be how I spent the last forty years. It's kind of daunting to think of that – I don't feel like I'm that old, but I really am. But as I said, it was wonderful to get to know, even on the periphery, Golda Meir's grandson. I kind of always hoped she would show up, but she didn't. And some of the other people who've had notable parents or grandparents, or aunts or uncles from all around the world.

**LOGAN** How would you say that the Conservatory is different today from when you joined? How is it similar too?

**PLEASURE** Growth is a good thing, change is a good thing, but growth can have some really negative things that come with it, and change has some really negative things that come with it. I am really, really delighted to see an increase in our visibility. I'm delighted to see an increase in the achievement level of our students, and the

opportunities for our students. In some sense, the diversity of our students – there is a huge way to go with that. I am really concerned about how much it costs to be a student; and how our students manage to live in this city, and what they're going to do when they leave here. I am really pleased and excited to hear about a lot of the new programs that are in the works. I am concerned that they come at the expense of other good things. I think that a lot of our color and character has changed, and not always for the better. And part of this has to do with the structure of the building; where we don't see one another, or interact with one another in the same way, so there is no sense of commonality. I see the people that I see, who are primarily my students or international students. I don't see the pianists on a regular basis, or the wind players. I see the brass players who have their lockers right across the hall from me, but in general there's such of a sense of isolation and that makes me sad. Not just because I'm nosy and I'm Mabel's daughter and want to know everything, but I think when you don't regularly interact with one another, something is lost. I think that when some of our history is not valued or honored, something is lost. I think some of the wisdom is lost. I really don't believe that I am change-adverse, I really am excited about some new directions – I really am. It's kind of too bad I'm not going to be here in the next hundred years to see where things go. I want us to keep our soul, and for me the soul of this place has always been about really valuing and caring for one another, in the process of being as excellent as we can possibly can – helping one another to be excellent, and to say, "Your excellence enhances mine, it does not diminish who I am." If you win, we all win. I know this business that we're in is very competitive. I know that probably more than anybody else here in this place, because I look like I look. But it does not have to be mean, or have people feel less than, and that I really worry about. I probably should not have said that, but it is true, and it is how I feel about a lot of stuff here. We're generally headed in a really good direction, I just don't want us to lose sight of the good things and the good people who have helped us start that.

The other thing that I want to say is that I am concerned with the diversity of our faculty and staff. I think it's important for students and families to have people who they feel they can relate to from a common cultural background – who they think they can come and talk to if they need to. I don't want to be that only person. So I think that's a real concern.

**LOGAN** Do you feel that the Conservatory's move here to 50 Oak Street in 2006 changed the school, and how people interact with each other?

**PLEASURE** Absolutely. It really did. I could stand outside my office at the old school and see everybody. If I needed to get information from somebody, I didn't have to go up six flights of stairs to get it, I could just stand there and eventually the person I needed would walk past, and I could get it. The security that we have downstairs is good, but I don't know them because they change so often. There was a guy whose name was Randy. Randy knew everybody ... and I assume the people downstairs now know them all too – but the kids all knew him, and they trusted him. It's hard to trust somebody if they're not going to be there next week, or next month. I think the vertical nature of this building has made it harder – and I have to confess, I don't go out of my way a whole lot

to change it, but we don't have meeting spaces. There were lots of little nooks and crannies in the old space. There were places outside where people could gather. There were restaurants nearby that were cheap enough for us to afford, and that's harder now to achieve ... but I'm old and crotchety.

**LOGAN** How do you think that having the Conservatory in the Civic Center, right next to the Symphony and the Ballet and the Opera has affected student interest in the school and the area? It seems a very different kind of a tradeoff.

**PLEASURE** It is a tradeoff. I don't love being down here. I'm sorry, when they said public transit was going to be great ... it's not. Fortunately my husband is retired and he drives me in every morning, but not everybody has that luxury. I think it's wonderful that in ten minutes you can walk to the Symphony, or to the Opera House, and that students have the opportunities to attend dress rehearsals at the Opera. And some of our students get to go have coachings there; I think that's wonderful, that's a great thing. In a way, what we do is kind of conspicuous consumption, and I feel a little bad about that sometimes when I see our neighbors, and I wish that there was some way to share what we do with them more intentionally.

**LOGAN** Throughout your education and your professional career, have you come across any gender or racial bias that you could comment on in the music field?

**PLEASURE** Yes, and yes. I think as a singer, being female is not so much a problem. That's not the issue; it's the issue of expectations and assumptions. "Because you look like this, you couldn't possibly be thought of in this particular kind of way," or "This is a kind of thing that you should be doing because..." It's not always said, but it's just there. One of my prior colleagues was somewhat bitter and looking for slights; I try not to do that. I try not to play that card. I know it's there, I know that often people will just make an assumption, because I'm – first of all, old – secondly, female – and thirdly, black. Primarily for students who are singers it's casting. "Can he be the romantic lead against this blonde, blue-eyed lady?" Or – "How is it going to look? How is it going to play in Jackson, Mississippi?" But for other instrumentalists, there is no role model. How often do you look at a symphony orchestra and see that a third of the players are African American, or Latino, or whatever? Our children have not seen this, and they don't aspire to that because they don't know it's possible.

It starts early – it starts with there not being an opportunity or a place early on for children to experience this. It's an expensive proposition, it's kind of an elitist thing. It's an economic issue for a lot of communities of color. So when it comes to whether we're going to pay the light bill, or pay for music lessons, what are we going to do? We're going to pay the light bill. In the dark ages, when I was a child, everybody sang. Everybody, all the time. It was just a given that there was going to be music at your school. It was a given that there was going to be reasonably good music at your church – music that you heard, and it was going to be a normal part of your life. Now it's really pretty extraordinary, not just for children of color but for children in general, it's not valued. My husband taught for forty years, he was a band teacher. For years, every March

15th we got a pink slip saying that he would probably be fired because of funding. He didn't get those after a while, but they started snipping away at programming. So what had once been a really vital arts program, was just decimated, and it's really hard to get that back. That's one of the issues, also. It's not always intentional, it just is a consequence.

**LOGAN** I have one more question here for you, and that is, what advice would you give to music students today?

**PLEASURE** The advice that I would give them is to really know what brings you joy. Find that, and follow it. The way that you follow it may not be the path that other people have chosen, and that's OK. You don't always have to follow a specific career path in order to be successful, there are many, many, many ways of being successful and of making a difference. I would also say that you need to be sure to cultivate being a real person, and to take off your blinders. You have to have something that informs your music making, and that something involves knowing other people, interacting with other cultures, staying healthy, reading, knowing art, dancing – doing all the things that make us human. It's not just about pressing buttons or singing notes, it's about sharing that most wonderful and vulnerable part of who we are, and what makes us human, and what makes us connected to one another. And that doing this is the most incredible gift that you could possibly give yourself, or someone else – to be part of that. And to know it's about you. It's not about how you feel, it's not about how you make somebody else feel, it's about the whole experience of being human and making the space around you better. What we do is a holy thing, it really is. There's something so incredibly wonderful about that shared space that we have. In this tiny, finite amount of time that we have to make it, that that's a responsibility that you should take seriously, but you should never take yourself seriously. And remember to exhale.

**LOGAN** I want to thank you so much for coming in and talking to me. I've had a wonderful time meeting you, and thank you so much for sharing your stories.

**PLEASURE** It was my pleasure.