

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #474

Subject: Myrna Tuning

Place: Tuning Home, Nampa, Idaho

Date: March 18, 2010

Interviewer: Debby Peckham

DEBBY: This is Debby Peckham and today is March 18, 2010. I'm sitting here today with Myrna Tuning and Ken Peckham at the Tuning home outside of Nampa, Idaho. Both of these individuals were founding members of the Chamber Music Society of Harney County.

KEN: Are we county members? (laughter)

DEBBY: And it is with great pleasure that we get to have a chance to discuss this today.

MYRNA: Do you remember how we got started?

KEN: I'm thinking it was '79.

MYRNA: Was...

KEN: It was in...

MYRNA: It was in '79 because we...

KEN: Fall or spring?

MYRNA: Fall.

KEN: Fall of '79.

MYRNA: Fall of '79. This was an idea I can't take credit for what it became, but I had a violin that had been sitting for twenty-five years, and had approached a couple of music teachers about maybe, as having a, you know, a class, a night class type thing where we could get our instruments out. And those teachers said, well if you were serious, a serious musician you would already be practicing it. So, so... and that was the end of that discussion. So I found out that Sally Herewagon played the cello. So we kind of talked a little bit...

KEN: And she approached me that we needed to get...

MYRNA: Yeah, can we do something?

KEN: So that people like us can play.

MYRNA: That's exactly right, yeah.

KEN: Us older folks.

MYRNA: Yeah. Chuck Roberts was also involved.

KEN: Was he involved in the first?

MYRNA: He was involved.

DEBBY: What about Suzie?

MYRNA: And Suzie was not. She came in later.

KEN: ... she was just a...

MYRNA: Yeah, she didn't... trying to think, there were five of us: Ken, Myrna, Chuck...

Herewagon-- I had all five last night.

DEBBY: Would it have been Sally Hendry?

MYRNA: No. No. No, she couldn't get...

KEN: Pulliam?

MYRNA: Nope.

KEN: No? Who was the other one?

MYRNA: That's what I'm trying to think.

DEBBY: Not Rich Adair?

MYRNA: No.

KEN: No, he played the viola, but...

MYRNA: Yeah, he came in later. And at that time—oh, Bill Martin was the...

KEN: The one was a high school director.

MYRNA: Was a high school director, but he was not involved in the founding.

DEBBY: Well it will come to us.

MYRNA: It will come to us.

DEBBY: Anyway, we had a small group of people that...

KEN: And the purpose was to have an outlet for musicians to perform. That's what it started out to be.

MYRNA: A chance for them to get together and make music.

KEN: That's right.

MYRNA: That was what I wanted. I think that one of the key things that made it successful was that we had separated the business part of it, from the music making part. When we went to rehearsals it was just music. Somebody else was taking care of the business part.

KEN: Right.

MYRNA: I've seen a lot of arts groups get lost in doing business and never get around to doing art.

DEBBY: Right.

KEN: Exactly.

DEBBY: Now, when we started, did we have more than just the orchestra at that point?

MYRNA: We had a double quartet that sang for the first concert. Initially when we first got started, Ethel Johnson and Sally and I had a piano trio that went out to all of the rural schools.

DEBBY: Oh, that's awesome.

MYRNA: We covered every rural school in the county. And just played, kind of building it up, but getting a reason to get started. Then our first concert was May 11th, of 1980.

DEBBY: Mother's Day.

MYRNA: Mother's Day.

KEN: Mother's Day.

MYRNA: Wow.

KEN: That was the tradition.

DEBBY: It was. For a long time.

MYRNA: Yeah, it was for a long time until it just became too difficult for the school people.

DEBBY: Yeah.

MYRNA: Yeah, it worked well and...

KEN: And the first concert, who was on the first concert? The... the double quartet?

MYRNA: We had the double quartet. We had some soloists. People... small ensemble groups and soloists that did some things. We, I don't remember how many numbers we played. People said well they wished that we had played more, that the orchestra had played more. And I just told them that better that they wished that we had played more than wished that we had played less.

DEBBY: That's right. Now who directed the orchestra? Was that Chuck at that time?

MYRNA: No. No, Bill Martin.

DEBBY: Bill did.

MYRNA: Did, initially.

DEBBY: I didn't remember that.

KEN: I didn't remember that either.

DEBBY: Yeah.

MYRNA: I believe so.

DEBBY: ...

MYRNA: No. Chuck—Chuck I don't think ever directed here.

DEBBY: Yes, he did.

MYRNA: Did he? I didn't remember that. Well, maybe he did.

KEN: ...

MYRNA: Well, maybe he did, initially. I don't know if this will... if I put that information in this or not.

DEBBY: Now, I believe Myrna, that there is a lot of archival things with the Chamber Music Society still.

MYRNA: Right.

DEBBY: So that, did they have like, the original program?

MYRNA: They should have. Now I can't tell you. I can't tell you for...

DEBBY: Okay, so we started out very small, and gradually things really increased.

MYRNA: They did.

DEBBY: Do you remember when the first Messiah was?

KEN: It wasn't so far after that, because we had-- it was after the... went down, which was '81.

DEBBY: That's right.

MYRNA: That's right.

DEBBY: Because Bill and Dobia both sang, as I recall.

KEN: Right.

DEBBY: Right. Was Mark with us at that point?

MYRNA: He-- I think that he probably was singing in the choir and played trumpet. Well... trying to think what year he graduated.

KEN: Graduated from high school?

MYRNA: He—the first Messiah concert that we did, he was a freshman in college. And we, and Bill Martin asked him to do the tenor part. And his instructor when he found out, he says well, you're not ready to do that, but if you're going to do it, you're going to do it right. So they spent the entire semester working on it (laughter).

DEBBY: Oh, is that right?

MYRNA: Working on the Messiah—solos.

DEBBY: Because I know that he came several times.

MYRNA: Yeah.

KEN: Yeah.

DEBBY: And actually directed, as well.

MYRNA: He did direct also. Yeah. That was the scariest thing for me. Because that... Suzie had left just two weeks before our concert.

DEBBY: Oh, my gosh.

MYRNA: And I had only played second violin. I was first chair, second violin. And there was only one violinist, so I had to play first violin. This was Mark's first formal, you know, his first real concert to conduct. And I had the opportunity to completely ruin his first... (laughter).

DEBBY: But you didn't (laughter).

KEN: So that wasn't-- that wasn't the first Messiah then?

MYRNA: That was not the first Messiah, no. He didn't direct the first one.

KEN: No? Who did direct the first one?

DEBBY: I don't know. Maybe it was Bill.

MYRNA: It probably was Bill, as I recall.

KEN: ... playing.

DEBBY: ... was an orchestra... a choral director who...

MYRNA: Now, there was several. Brian... directed several. Was he after Bill Martin?

DEBBY: Yeah.

MYRNA: Okay. Okay, because I was just looking through those programs and saw his name on the ... the Messiah. And we did take the Messiah on the road. Took it to John Day.

KEN: Took it to John Day. And that was when Head was playing viola?

MYRNA: Uh-huh. He sang. He sang for that. I think he also... I don't know for sure whether he played viola in that or not.

DEBBY: I don't know.

KEN: I don't know.

MYRNA: We were very fortunate in that we had a clarinet player that could play viola.

KEN: That's right (laughter)... please come apart.

DEBBY: Yeah, well, you know not having a first violinist has been a problem since you moved away, Myrna... and we, I think we had Carol Mobian for a year.

KEN: Yes.

DEBBY: ... since then. They really missed that.

MYRNA: Well, I wish that I was closer. I'd like to...

KEN: You played with Carol, didn't you?

MYRNA: Oh yeah, we played together for quite a while.

DEBBY: oh, before we actually started recording, Myrna, you were talking about the impact that this had with Randy Graven. Would you talk about that again?

MYRNA: Okay. Well, Randy's mother was a fine musician. And his father worked as a janitor, and Randy really wanted to be a music—go into music. And his father said well you need to do something you can make a living at. So he went to work at the mill instead. And when we were starting Chamber Music I approached him about playing the tuba. He indicated that he wasn't interested. I mentioned it a couple of other times, and then just suggested that he come and see what we were doing. Not bring his instrument. After he saw what we were doing he then came and joined the group. Sometime later he came to me and he said I just decided I would rather be an employed musician, than an unemployed mill worker. And so he went back to school and became a music teacher, and teaches now in Middleton, Idaho. And had for several years.

KEN: Many years.

DEBBY: Right. And there were several others that... as your son Marcus Wells. Right—right as Mark got into it, he came in playing trumpet and then sang in the ... in the choir. He got very interested in Baroque music, and spent a lot of time with Bill Martin discussing that. And eventually went, to become actually a trumpet major, but ended up with his Master's Degree in choral conducting. And I honestly think that having that... and I honestly think that having that... And I think that it was food for our other kids to know that there was something that their parents had... something important to do. You know, reason to get the instrument out. Something—I don't think that it hurt any of them.

KEN: ... music after high school.

DEBBY: There was music after high school. And they, you know, and people could do it, you know. Dorothy... can't think of her last name right now.

MYRNA: Voegtly?

DEBBY: Voegtly.

KEN: Yes.

DEBBY: Voegtly. Okay. Had not played the violin for fifty years. And were ere working on the Messiah, very diligently in my basement. And we were talking one day, and I think that this was when we were working on a second performance or something. I found out when she took lessons, she only had lessons for three months.

MYRNA: Oh, my goodness.

DEBBY: You don't learn anything in three months. But she worked hard on it, and it became so important to her that, you know, she was on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week as a nurse anesthetist. And her beeper would go off, and I would have to tell her, because she would become so involved in the music that she didn't hear that beeper. And you know, and it had been a major part of her life for years. Her husband commented that that was-- that when she was practicing was the time that she was able to let go of the hospital. And I think that, you know, I think that it was good for all of us, and it was good for all of the community. You know, we had, one of the performances, we had forty-five in the orchestra.

KEN: In the choir, uh-huh.

MYRNA: And we had the bell choir. And we figured that, you know, when the community of seven thousand—I mean a county...

KEN: County of seven thousand.

MYRNA: ... of seven thousand people, that we had seventy of those seven thousand performing. And then we did two performances, and figured that over what, ten percent ... well, we had seven percent of the county, I mean... yeah.

KEN: We had ten percent of the county performing...

MYRNA: We had ten percent performing.

KEN: ... performing.

MYRNA: And another, you know, thirty percent of the county attending performances. And I know

that in all of the conversations that I was in with other arts agencies and so on, if you have five percent of the local area, which is considered within ten miles, attending a performance, it's very successful.

KEN: Now, that's...

DEBBY: ... (laughter)

MYRNA: So, you know, and we had, we had people coming regularly what-- seventy-five miles? Yes. Yeah, they still do...

KEN: All the way from Diamond.

DEBBY: Right.

KEN: Frenchglen.

MYRNA: Now we have mentioned something, and I was wondering if we could tough on a little more in depth about the bell choir. How did that become a part of the Chamber Music Society? Does anyone know?

K; It was...

DEBBY: Because bells were given in honorarium, weren't they? To the Episcopal Church?

MYRNA: Right.

KEN: Yes. And that was Catterson.

MYRNA: Penny.

KEN: Penny.

MYRNA: Penny. Penny Catterson.

KEN: Penny Catterson started that.

MYRNA: Uh-huh.

KEN: Because of the donation. She actually figured out that that was what they wanted. And she says, well, we'll correct it. So, that's how it started.

MYRNA: And she started taking training, and doing it.

KEN: She would leave town and go to training...

MYRNA: Exactly.

KEN: For weeks. Yeah.

DEBBY: Was... and over the years I believe they have expanded that.

MYRNA: Yes, I think Chamber Music helped with that.

KEN: Yeah. More octaves.

MYRNA: Bought another octave bell.

DEBBY: Because I was speaking with Carol about that last week and she indicated that they had to add another table on...

MYRNA: Yeah, well I knew that we helped buy another octave of bells.

DEBBY: That's wonderful. Now do you know where Penny is now?

MYRNA: I do not. The last that I knew I think that she was in Minnesota or somewhere, with a daughter. It's been a long time since I've heard anything about Penny.

DEBBY: One of the special things that Chamber Music Society does is offer scholarships. Would you like to talk about how that program came to be, and what happens...?

KEN: What happens was... we asked for donations at concerts. The first concert, the very first concert we got, people donated tons of cash. We had Wow!—what are we going to do with all this money? (laughter) There was too much to buy just music for the orchestra or the choir and the bell choir when we had it going on. So we all got together and decided well, these kids needed a chance to go to our music camp... give scholarships. The first year we gave... well, the second year I think it was, we must have given one scholarship, made enough money to give one scholarship away.

DEBBY: I'm not sure, we may have given one high school and one junior high scholarship. I don't... again, that information is in here.

KEN: And then, people throughout the year sometimes... that's a good deal. And so we had a lot of memorial scholarships given. Have the money given to the memorial... was enough that we could pull the interest off that to give scholarships... endowed scholarships.

MYRNA: That's great. That's wonderful.

KEN: And there is several, there is one at six months.

MYRNA: Are there? Well that, you know, six is a lot.

DEBBY: It is a lot.

KEN: Is a lot.

MYRNA: You know, I think the idea behind it was that the kids didn't have the opportunity for private instruction. And this was the chance for them to really, to really got out and spend time, and I think that it has had a good influence.

KEN: For a lot of them it was a jump start.

MYRNA: Uh-huh.

KEN: Oh, I can do this.

MYRNA: Right. Right.

DEBBY: And then the example of this years' winners—I know that one of the little girls, she was in Crane. There is no music program there at all at the moment, and hasn't been. And so she, there is only... private instructions, but she gets to go to a music camp and play with a group. And she absolutely loves it. And that will be her second year doing that. And Meghan Fitzpatrick was a recipient this year and she is going to a Chamber Music camp in Victoria—or Vancouver, I believe.

MYRNA: Well, it not only benefits kids, but it was helping the school music programs.

KEN: Right.

DEBBY: Yeah, I think that...

MYRNA: And it was helping our group. Because a lot of these kids then-- we were able to ask them to join our group.

KEN: Come and play.

MYRNA: Yeah. Because initially, you know, we started with adults, and high school students by invitation.

KEN: Uh-huh. Right.

MYRNA: And since then, we've I know that when I left we had some junior high students-- were good enough to play.

KEN: Very well accomplished... I stole Casey's line.

MYRNA: Yeah. And so, you know, those kinds of effects on individuals in the community, you know, and at the same time it's an outlet for people in the community going to the concerts, being involved as patrons, or a board members. You know, because these are jobs that non-musicians can do.

DEBBY: Right.

MYRNA: It's, I think it is just, you know, it's just really important to have that available in the community. I can remember at one of the piano trio things that we did at Crane, and afterwards a little girl came up to me and she said, "I've never heard music like that. I love it." (laughter) You know, and we didn't charge, don't charge for our concerts. Therefore everyone can come and bring their kids and have exposure whether they have money or are as poor as door mice. It doesn't matter. Music is for everybody. And Chamber Music has been able to keep it that way.

DEBBY: Now I'm aware that the Chamber Music Society was really involved in bringing outside musicians in for concerts. Am I correct in remembering that they were a sponsor of bringing the Oregon Symphony to Burns?

MYRNA: Yes. Yes, and – but before that, we brought in ...come on.... Melody's friend... and I have it... in there...

DEBBY: That played...

MYRNA: That played viola. Peggy....

DEBBY: Peggy Swatsworth. There we go.

MYRNA: Peggy Swatsworth. And her quartet playing—came and played.

DEBBY: Yes.

MYRNA: Came and played. That was one of the first music.... We also sponsored the Air Force Band. We sponsored some of the choral things. Prior to... you know I know that for instance we helped with bringing in the George Fox college choir when Mark was in it. Prior to our starting this

there had been a community, the community music program where, you know, they bring in set groups of people, but this had died out pretty much.

KEN: Do you know when that was?

MYRNA: Well this would have...

KEN: Was it early '70s then?

MYRNA: Yeah. We came to Burns in '67 and it was going.

KEN: Okay.

MYRNA: And...

KEN: I was talking to Lois White the other day and she had won a prize about bringing in the most, or selling the most tickets for a performance or something. And the prize was dinner for two at the Arrowhead hotel.

MYRNA: (laughter)

DEBBY: That was a while ago. Okay.

KEN: That's... That no longer exists, so...

MYRNA: Exactly. Exactly. No, I remember when that burned. I remember when that burned down. I saw the first puffs of smoke. We were up on the hillside and looked down the street and it started. But, yeah... yeah, that was... and we went to a few performances.

DEBBY: And I believe also that the Oregon Symphony came to Burns and... Is that correct?

MYRNA: Yes.

DEBBY: That was a huge undertaking.

MYRNA: It was. It was.

DEBBY: ...

MYRNA: Uh-huh, huge. It is huge, it is huge. But at least you've got a stage.

DEBBY: Yes.

MYRNA: And that was a project. And it has been used by others than just, I mean, I think that it has been used... at least before we moved it was in use quite a bit. You know, it might be just small

portions, and that's one of the nice things about it, it that you can use it, you can have any configuration that you want.

DEBBY: Exactly. Yeah, it is really a neat thing.

MYRNA: ... good idea, and I'm glad that we had the space to put it together.

DEBBY: Oh, I'm glad that you did too, Myrna. And other things the Chamber Music Society has done is provide instruments. Specifically, I believe three instruments. There is a string base and isn't there a viola or violin or something that they have purchased for a student?

KEN: And a cello.

DEBBY: And a cello.

MYRNA: Uh-huh.

DEBBY: Yeah. And a keyboard I think, they bought a keyboard.

KEN: Yes.

MYRNA: Well, and as I recall, didn't we buy some bells or something for the—ut use. The orchestra used it, but also for the band to use? I was trying to think if, whether they were the big ones or whether they...

KEN: Oh, the chimes?

MYRNA: Yeah.

KEN: No, that's from Dick Jenkins' mother. His family donated those.

MYRNA: Okay. Okay, I know that it came along there somehow. You know, but still, you know, even part of that may be trivia influence of what he was doing in Chamber dancing.

KEN: Yeah.

DEBBY: And I also remember the Chamber music, individual members helped buy student instruments for their own

MYRNA: Uh-huh.

DEBBY: I was thinking g of Robert Ausmus and his trombone.

KEN: Did they buy it? They did, didn't they?

MYRNA: Uh-huh.

K: They donated some money so he could get a trombone that was playable.

DEBBY: And we are still in touch with Robert.

MYRNA: Oh, good.

DEBBY: It's amazing how this little Chamber family keeps going.

MYRNA: Well, it is because we had something doing that you were a part of. Just like for Mark and I-- one of the neat things was when we went down there, we went down there as-- not as mother and some but as musicians on equal footing. His was more equal than mine, because he is a much better musician than I. But yeah, that is what we were doing was—you know, it was a chance for us to be musicians together.

DEBBY: Yeah.

MYRNA: And gave us something very special that we still have. We have long...

KEN: A connection there.

MYRNA: Yeah.

DEBBY: Just last night I received an e-mail from Karen at the Western History Room and she had run across this world history from Mary Pengelly. And I think you will remember the Steens Mountain Symphony that was supposed to...

MYRNA: Right.

DEBBY: That did not ever happen, did it?

MYRNA: No, it did not ever happen.

DEBBY: Do you remember who it was that was supposed to be composing that music?

MYRNA: I do not.

DEBBY: Was she a resident of Harney County?

MYRNA: No. No. No, I believe that she lived in California.

DEBBY: Oh, my gosh.

MYRNA: And, you know, and I—well, I think that she was an acquaintance of Mary.

DEBBY: I see. I see.

MYRNA: ...of Mary's

DEBBY: I see.

MYRNA: And you know, I don't—we just presses and pressed, and it just didn't ever happen.

KEN: It never happened?

DEBBY: Yeah.

MYRNA: We tried.

DEBBY: She said in here that the Chamber Music Society went along with her very loyally to do two major programs for the centennial. Now was this the Burns Centennial?

MYRNA: Yeah. Well, Burns and Harney County. Harney County centennial, I believe.

DEBBY: I—there is just a lot of...and all of a sudden I remembered distinctly. And ... was very upset about it.

MYRNA: Oh, yeah.

DEBBY: he...

MYRNA: Exactly. Yeah. Well, and she just—you know—when this person is just... is so, appears so very interested in ... and then just nothing ever came about. You know, we never did receive even a single page of music.

DEBBY: I didn't think we had. No... to ask you about that.

MYRNA: Yeah. No, no....

DEBBY: Yeah, It was an acquaintance of Mary's and Mary was very, very disappointed.

KEN: We all were.

DEBBY: Yeah. Okay.

KEN: We all were hoping to do that.

DEBBY: Yeah, that's right.

MYRNA: You know, one of the neatest things was for some of us from the Chamber Music to be able to play with the quartet.

DEBBY: Yes, that's right Myrna.

MYRNA: That's one of the highlights for me.

DEBBY: That was an amazing time. We were out at Dick Jenkins' ranch ...

MYRNA: That's right.

DEBBY: And did a performance out there.

KEN: About the ... quintet.

MYRNA: Uh-huh, yeah. And worked for months and months and months.

DEBBY: We did, practiced and practiced.

MYRNA: And because Debby was playing the clarinet we never did hear the viola part until they came (laughter). And I felt kind of bad as I think about it now. I felt kind of bad because Merla was involved in every one of those practices. She worked so hard on that. And of course, she wasn't able to perform with us because we had a first violinist then.

DEBBY: That's right.

MYRNA: Merla was playing the first violin part for us.

KEN: That's right.

DEBBY: Oh, my gosh, that's right.

MYRNA: You know I have since felt really bad that she didn't somehow get some major acknowledgement for her part in that.

DEBBY: Yeah, it was certainly fun. I think that the rehearsing and, actually the things that they... Tuning Studio was really a branch off in a lot of ways.

MYRNA: Oh, yes. It was...

DEBBY: Chamber music. I mean we were playing chamber music.

MYRNA: Exactly, yeah. That's exactly right. I was delighted to have that little room where, you know, if I had a student or something I closed the doors. And if we were just playing music I opened them. You know, we had an art gallery full of music.

DEBBY: Yeah, it was wonderful.

MYRNA: And like...

KEN: We...

MYRNA: Yeah. For our grand opening, members, the Chamber Music Society came in and performed all day long. So... and you know, it put people in touch, other people in the community in touch with musicians who could do things for them. You know—and it improved things so much. I was reading a little bit of my article there last night, and remembering that... oh, come on... I'm ... a moment. The printer...

KEN: Dick...

MYRNA: Deming. Dick Deming. I knew it started with a "D" and that's where I was (laughter). But anyway, he, you know, commented that after, after just two or three practices he was playing better than he had when he played the French horn, you know, eighteen years before.

KEN: In high school?

MYRNA: Yeah, but you know, it improved, playing in a group like that stretches you much more than if you were in private lessons, going one step at a time.

DEBBY: That's right.

MYRNA: It, you know, it pushed us further than we could go. And it was a good thing.

DEBBY: I agree. Well, and so Chamber Music has been ... this is their thirtieth year anniversary, Myrna?

MYRNA: This is their thirtieth year.

DEBBY: Wow, that's amazing.

MYRNA: I'm just... so pleased to see it is still going. Because it's a...

DEBBY: Well, it speaks well for the founding ideas, it really does.

MYRNA: Well, I think that the main thing was the music. I think that also the fact that we tried to make our concerts events.

DEBBY: Uh-huh.

MYRNA: You know, we had a reception afterward. We knew that, you know, that if we looked

professional that we could play more professionally. And so dressing appropriately for it instead of everybody up there, you know, in their Sunday dresses or whatever. You know, I think that all of those were a part of it. I participated in a Messiah concert in Ontario, and I was really appalled.

DEBBY: Really?

MYRNA: People were not dressed appropriately for doing a concert. And for instance all of the coats, and all of the music cases, instrument cases and everything, were just stacked around the bleachers.

DEBBY: Oh, my goodness.

MYRNA: I mean it was just, you know.

KEN: Oh, we would not have allowed that.

MYRNA: I know that. I know that, and I think that it was important, the appearance of being professional as well as trying to sound that way. And I think that it also helped prepare our kids for going on and doing something in larger venues, also.

KEN: Because they knew exactly what it was like to be in a professional room.

MYRNA: Exactly.

KEN: Or professionally...

MYRNA: Yeah, well you know, we just—we made every effort to do it right for us as musicians and to do it right for the audience.

DEBBY: When you think about the amount of people that have come through, oh my goodness, you know...musicians.

MYRNA: That's right. That's right.

DEBBY: And if I'm not mistaken... the music teachers at Burns, with the exception of this... have participated in our music.

KEN: Well, I think Chris is playing professionally now.

DEBBY: That's right. He is playing now.

MYRNA: Oh, good. Good. Are you conducting now?

KEN: No, not this year.

MYRNA: Not this year? Well, I knew that you had said that you weren't comfortable with it this year.

DEBBY: Well, we agreed to step back and give him the ... to become his own teacher.

MYRNA: Right, right.

DEBBY: And it involves... you know, we felt that was the fair thing for him.

MYRNA: Well, it...

DEBBY: Actually he was going to direct it, so we felt very comfortable with our decision.

MYRNA: Right, oh yeah. Yeah. Well I...

KEN: Though that was too much for him to start...

MYRNA: Well, right, yeah. And perhaps he will feel comfortable doing it, and perhaps he will feel more comfortable performing and, you know, letting somebody else do the conducting. Just like with you and Bill Martin. It was, you know...

DL But we had...

MYRNA: That's great. That's great.

DEBBY: ...

MYRNA: Well that's yeah—I just you know, it's important—one of the things that... if you live in a city or a larger area like this one, it is not very far to go to a performance. And the chances are that you will be a spectator, and be a part of the audience.

DEBBY: Uh-huh.

MYRNA: With chamber music, in the small community, the limited number of people were all able to be participants.

KEN: This is true.

MYRNA: And we probably would not have been if we had been in a larger area. And, you know, to me that is an important thing because, you know, it's easy to go to a concert. It's a lot more work, but it's a lot more personal, what, personal edification, to be a participant.

DEBBY: That's right.

MYRNA: And, you know, like I said since moving here, the thing I miss the most is the small

ensemble groups.

DEBBY: I'll bet... and we brought our instruments.

MYRNA: Oh, did you? (laughter)

KEN: Yes.

DEBBY: We can play before we leave.

MYRNA: Okay. (laughter) Well, I just, you know, I was very fortunate in that I had a husband who was supportive enough that he fixed practice rooms for us.

DEBBY: Yeah, a wonderful thing.

MYRNA: And was supportive of what we were doing. Because, you know, it did take a lot of hard work. It was not—it was not something that you just go and throw it together.

KEN: Throw it together and pick it up—no.

MYRNA: Yeah. Yeah.

KEN: You have to work at it.

MYRNA: You have to work at it. And you know, dress rehearsals and how many chairs and stands have you hauled, Ken?

KEN: I'll let you know on the way back (laughter)

MYRNA: Yeah, but you know, it's...

KEN: Yeah, a lot is involved.

DEBBY: ... involved...

KEN: Yeah, a lot involved.

MYRNA: Very much.

KEN: Logistics.

MYRNA: And for those kids who were involved in that though, that was a good thing. Because they knew about the logistics of it. It wasn't something that they just walked in and some crew had done it, like you have in a bigger city.

KEN: The roadies.

MYRNA: Nope. You know, the professional orchestra, they walk in and sit down in the chairs and they are already there.

KEN: Yeah.

MYRNA: And then it's...

KEN: Will we see something, behind the scenes stuff?

MYRNA: Right, right. And so—but I don't want to forget to thank the patrons that's it's... for many years. And the board members who have worked so diligently.

DEBBY: Yes.

MYRNA: Because, you know, that's what kept us together. That's what made it possible for us to make music. Without them, we couldn't have existed.

KEN: You always had a big crowd of patrons.

MYRNA: Yeah.

KEN: And every concert was packed.

MYRNA: Yeah. And, you know, and that was the reason for being in it. Also was saying this is important to us, we're going to take our Sunday afternoon and do this thing.

KEN: Yeah.

MYRNA: I think it's good too, that we had the space, the Nazarene Church was going to loan us that building and have pews moved, and the whole bit so that we could have a place to perform.

DEBBY: That's right.

MYRNA: an auditorium would be wonderful, but you know, that wasn't to be

KEN: Wasn't in the offing at the time.

MYRNA: But we at least had a place that we could play, you know. There at Ontario it was two classrooms that had a folding curtain between them. And we were in one classroom and the audience was in the other.

DEBBY: Really?

MYRNA: Really.

DEBBY: I... by now.

MYRNA: Well, you know, you would have thought that there would have been an auditorium in all of Ontario where you could have...

KEN: Isn't this the big TV season?

MYRNA: Well, this was at TVCC, but perhaps before they got their symphony going and stuff... Suzie and Dick Deming and I went over to Ontario for rehearsals and stuff, and played in it.

DEBBY: What year?

KEN: What year was that?

MYRNA: Oh my, I don't remember for sure. Obviously it was before Suzie left. I can't tell you for sure. But, you know, it did not impress me, what we were doing was much better, all the way around. Performance and presentation...

DEBBY: Well, is there anything else either of you want to say? And we... leave a stone uncovered here about Chamber Music Society. I know originally it was a Harney County Chamber Music Society and they have ... changed their name.

MYRNA: Right, yeah.

DEBBY: Now it is the Chamber Music Society of Harney County.

MYRNA: There was another Chamber Music Society of Portland that was concerned that using that name might somehow reflect on them (laughter)

DEBBY: Oh, my. Well, I don't believe, if I'm not mistaken, there in Portland TV station came out and actually videotaped one of the

MYRNA: They did. They did. He came, he was coming... and I'm trying to remember who it was that was playing in it, the orchestra—I don't remember whether it was Bob Dean or somebody else anyway, that was in the orchestra that was going to take them out to show them this wedding.

DEBBY: I see.

MYRNA: And the devastation, the area that had been flooded and stuff. And he just told them to meet him there, that he had to do this first. And they had stuck their head in and saw what was going on,

and brought their cameras in and videotaped, and actually used that as they—they had come to do a thing on how terrible things were in Harney County.

DEBBY: Right.

MYRNA: The mill had closed down by then, the ranchers were flooded out, and you know it was really devastation. And they came and saw and recorded the performance of the Messiah and used that actually as the key to their thing. In spite of all of these things happening here, this is what the community is doing.

KEN: Yeah. I remember that special.

MYRNA: Yeah. Yeah, that was good. I would like to get ahold of that.

KEN: Yeah, I would like to have that.

DEBBY: Did we videotape... your performance?

MYRNA: Not that I'm aware of.

KEN: ...KGW, Channel 8, wasn't it?

MYRNA: Probably. I don't remember if it was Channel 8 or Channel 12. Well, I really don't remember. But, you know, they used that to show that we were down but not out.

DEBBY: Yeah.

MYRNA: And at the end, very end of their program they did the Hallelujah...

DEBBY: Oh, my goodness.

KEN: It was amazing.

MYRNA: Well, you know, when Frank went to arts, different arts meetings, he did a lot of work with the state and stuff. And in some of the meetings they would start talking about there being no culture on the east side of the mountains.

DEBBY: ...

MYRNA: Yeah. All of it was on the west side. Portland and Eugene. And Frank says, well okay, how many orchestras, how many string programs have you got in your schools? Well those have all been cut. You know, he says, well we happen to have it in all of the one room school houses in Harney County.

DEBBY: Uh-huh.

MYRNA: We have an orchestra that uses this percentage of people in the county, you know (laughter). And we are not playing hillbilly music (laughter)

DEBBY: Oh, goodness.

MYRNA: So, you know, I think that it was, you know, great all the way around. And I think it really surprised people when they found out that we were doing that. In a little place that is so far from everywhere.

KEN: Culture is alive and well on the east side of the Cascades.

MYRNA: That's – that's exactly right. But they, you know... He had a hard time convincing all those artsy people on the other side of the mountain that there was any. Just because it's different doesn't make it not there.

Debbly: Exactly. Exactly. So, any closing thoughts?

KEN: ... that we've covered about everything.

MYRNA: I think we have covered most everything. One thing that we did find, and we—there were many times when we felt like when such and such a person left, we weren't going to be able to hold it together.

KEN: Right.

MYRNA: No, right? We really did. And we found that no one was indispensable.

DEBBY: That's true. That's exactly true.

KEN: There is always someone there that can take the place.

MYRNA: Right. Right, you know. Whether it was somebody that came into the community, whether it was somebody in the orchestra that was able to step up, it still continued. We didn't have anybody that was the reason that we had an orchestra.

KEN: Right.

DEBBY: That's exactly right. And I think one of the most special things too, that we allow people...

MYRNA: Exactly.

DEBBY: And the people that played very well kind of gathered the others along, and before you knew it, they were playing as well as they could.

MYRNA: Right. Right, and you know, some of us spent time, and I know that you did, you know, saying okay, you know, here is this bunch of 16th notes, play this note, then play this note, then play this note...

DEBBY: Right (laughter)

MYRNA: You know.

DEBBY: ...

MYRNA: Because, you know, just like Donna Harris had never played an instrument before.

DEBBY: Right.

MYRNA: I mean, she had never read music. And she came to me and said, you know, I have always wanted to play the violin, and I heard that when you retired you were supposed to do what you had always wanted to do. And so she started taking lessons, and she took lessons for what, about a year, and then started playing in the orchestra. And was able to play the Messiah with us and the other songs, you know. It was god that we could take people wherever they were and bring them along.

DEBBY: Uh-huh.

KEN: That's a good thing.

DEBBY: That's a good thing, yeah.

MYRNA: I think the whole thing was a good thing. We had a good idea, Ken.

KEN: ... idea. It was important.

DEBBY: Yeah. Well, thank you both very much.

KEN: You're welcome.

End of recording