

VDC Interview Transcript

Ann Lilly

12.2.16

Total Time: 1:00:29

OSU Dance

Westminster Thurber

340 West Goodale St.

Columbus, OH 43215

Key:

CF: Candace Feck

AL: Ann Lilly

MDB: Megan Davis Bushway

CF: Ann, it's a great pleasure to meet with you. Given your work and personal relationship with Helen Alkire and the Department of Dance, you have a lot of knowledge that is only yours to share. Maybe we could begin with your years in the Physical Education Department before you came to the Department of Dance.

AL: Okay, I started Ohio State in the Fall of 1960. I came to Ohio State to supervise or to advise The Swan Club,¹ which was synchronized swimming — and this was a period of time when there was a battle about whether synchronized swimming was a sport or whether it was an artform, with Esther Williams and so forth. And of course, you know what has happened: now, of course, it's a sport, in the Olympics. I knew Helen before I came to Ohio State; I'd been in the public schools in Columbus, and had students. Helen's housemate, Suzanne Schroeder, was one of the advisors or supervisors of student teaching, so I knew Helen before I came to the university. Then in the Spring of my first year, in '60, Helen was in need of a stage manager for the *first* concert in Mershon Auditorium; she was desperate, she came to me, she said "I think you can do this. I'll help you." And thinking I could do anything, I agreed — and we lived through it. I think there was only one performance; they said we'd never fill the house — I think they ended up having to open the balcony... I'm sure it was probably free. The Athletic Department funded it, and so then I was caught stage-managing for several years after that. I'm not quite sure when I stopped — '70-something!

CF: Would you mind filling in that picture a bit? Talk about what you and Helen were doing in the Physical Education Department. What were the Dance offerings over there at that time?

AL: Well, there was, of course, the major program — which was an *emphasis* in Dance;² it wasn't like you could be in Sports or you could be in Dance. Rather than taking the activity courses —

¹ The Ohio State Synchronized Swimming Team began as the Ohio State Swan Club in 1928. The team put on exhibition water shows until they began to eventually compete in five to six meets per year in the 1960's. The Buckeyes captured their first Midwest Championship in 1969 and have remained a dominant program in collegiate synchronized swimming history.

² In 1947, the Department of Physical Education offered its first professional dance education major curriculum designed for teachers of dance. In 1954, dance became an instructional area within the

basketball, for example — they were taking dance courses that were taught by the dance faculty. And getting a major — Helen was in the process of developing that curriculum, hoping to really have a Dance major.

CF: How large was the dance faculty there, as you recall?

AL: I *think* there were three or four people: Helen, Vickie Blaine came on, there was a Lynne Travirus (sp), I think there were probably three or four people. Now they may have had to teach some Physical Education courses, too — I'm pretty sure they did. They were also teaching the dance in the elective program in Physical Education, so they had pretty full schedules.

CF: How were they viewed by the rest of the faculty there? Was it just one big, happy family — or was there a kind of separation?

AL: Oh, I think they were very well-accepted. People thought they were kind of crazy the way they worked all night, and then complained when they had an 8:00 am class. But they *had* worked all night with rehearsals — because that's when they could get space, you know. But they attended faculty meetings and participated in all the various aspects of university life...

CF: And meanwhile, what was your position at that time?

AL: Well, at first I was doing the Swan Club, and then I moved into Teacher Education and was supervising student teachers. And then Helen made her big offer — Oh, and I was also working on my Masters degree. And my thesis was using Labanotation with Synchronized Swimming. And you, knowing notation, would understand that the problem, of course, was what's the foundation? That was an interesting process.

CF: And you worked with Lucy on that?

AL: Oh yeah, Helen had done some notation and knew some, but not being an expert, she referred me on to Lucy Venable, who came out several times, and I kept sending materials to her. So Lucy actually had to sign off on my thesis; she couldn't have been an advisor because she wasn't faculty at that point; she was with the Dance Notation Bureau in New York.

CF: What awareness did you have during those years of what Helen was trying to do from her position within the Physical Education Department?

AL: Helen was determined — as you know, a very determined woman — that she was going to have a real major in Dance, with an emphasis on performance. I mean, I cannot tell you how many times I heard her say “Dance was *made* to be performed!” So, she was attending meetings with Chairs of other disciplines: History of Art, Art, Theatre, Music — and then they reorganized the university in the Fall of '68, and established the College of the Arts: it was Industrial Design, History of Art, Art Education, Art, Music, Theatre and Dance, if I remember correctly. Lee Rigsby³ was the Dean, and

Department of Physical Education headed by Professor Helen P. Alkire, area coordinator, who had joined the staff in 1941 after teaching at Sweet Briar College in Virginia.

³ Dr. Rigsby, a Musicologist, was named the first Dean of the O.S.U. College of the Arts in January of 1968.

very supportive of Dance, and in the Fall of '68 we moved Dance from Pomerene Hall [PE Dept.] to the old laundry building, which is on Milliken Road. I don't know what's there now; it was the police station... Who knows what's there now? We had two studios there — we still had Room 205 in Pomerene, still using 213 in Pomerene, still using 306 in Pomerene — *always* fighting for space!

CF: The life of a dancer.

AL: The life of a dancer, right.

CF: So this was in the '60s, leading up to '68, and I think you already said it was '60/'61 when Helen tabbed you to do the stage-managing.

AL: It was in '61. It was in March of '61 — I remember it well. It was on my birthday!

CF: "Happy Birthday, Ann!"

AL: It was! It was what happened, and it was great fun.

CF: So the stage-managing went on for a period of years!

AL: Yes.

CF: And it was an annual event.

AL: Yes.

VF: Were there other events or just the Mershon concert that you were responsible for?

AL: Hmm...I did one down at the Ohio Theatre, and I think that was probably it — but I really don't remember. When I think back on it, I don't know how I even got myself mixed up in that (she laughs about this admission, remembering)! Oh, and I did the professional resident company, ADIR, that Ruth Currier directed. And I stage-managed those shows, too, in Mershon.

CF: Now this was all in addition to your duties for the Physical Education Department — this was extra work?

AL: Well, it was from '61 to '68 — and then when I went with the Department of Dance, of course, it wasn't. Yes, the Chairman of the Physical Education Department called me in to discuss my future at one point, and said that if I really wanted to have a future in Physical Education, I probably should get my doctorate, and I didn't really *need* to be doing stage managing for the Department of Dance — and that didn't exactly fit into my plan.

CF: Who was the Chair of Physical Education at that point?

AL: At that point, it was Margaret Mordy.

CF: And so Helen made you an offer that you couldn't refuse, at a good time?

AL: She came to me, and you know, it just sounded like a challenge and fun, and I just did it. I missed teaching *terribly*, but I had good times. We had *fun*! We fought and carried on and argued...

CF: Did you come immediately in '68?

AL: '68, yeah. I started in '68.

CF: So when the department became a department, you were with it. You were on board. What was your title?

AL: I was an Assistant Professor. At that point, I was still faculty. I retired as an Associate Professor, but then when I left Dance, I went to the Dean's office and I was an Assistant Dean in the College of the Arts. But what happened then would never happen today — it would be *unthinkable*. It was a different world, folks.

CF: Yes, it was.

AL: A *very* different world. When Margaret Mordy called me in to talk about tenure, I didn't even know what tenure was. You got tenure and moved on, and no big deal. Today, it's painful.

CF: Yes. But I feel like when I arrived at OSU as a grad student, eleven years later, you had a different title. Not your rank, but your department function.

AL: I was the Assistant to the Chair.

CF: Did you come over to dance with that position?

AL: That was just a title we used; I was her assistant.

CF: Talk about that. What did that position entail?

AL: My duties were to do all the things she didn't *like* to do, which was budget, equipment, advising, scheduling — and many of those things today are pretty much done by the computer — and that was really what I did. And worked with Helen; I mean, we bounced things back and forth. I fought the battles to get us moved into Sullivant Hall from the old laundry building.

CF: Talk a bit about those battles.

AL: Well, you would go to the planning division, and they were *insistent* they were going to keep the Sullivant Theatre for classes — we fought and fought and fought and fought. We lost it; I mean, they kept it. Of course. They didn't *understand* what our needs were. Then there was the whole thing about the dance floors — about which I knew nothing, and did a lot of research. We got good floors built, but the surface was never quite right.

So finally they put the right surface on them, and the resilience was alright, I think.

CF: So *you* did that: you fought all those battles to get out of the laundry facility and into Sullivant Hall, to install the floors...

AL: Well, Helen and I *both* fought them. We were there, we were both...she was the visionary and really knew what she wanted, and I was the one to carry things out. I did the grunt work, the hard work — *behind the scenes*. I was always behind the scenes, and that's where I wanted to be — in the background; I never wanted to be anywhere else except in the background.

CF: Well, I'm curious about this, because you said you missed teaching terribly...

AL: I did.

CF: And you had a teaching career going, over in Physical Education...

AL: Right.

CF: So what *was* it? What made you take the leap?

AL: I have *no* idea, other than it just plain sounded like a challenge. It was a *challenge!* And it was the idea of being able to build something together. And thinking, I mean, Helen *needed* me! Because I could do the things that she didn't want to do — not that she *couldn't* have done them — but she didn't want to do them.

CF: You must have had great *belief* in her abilities as a leader.

AL: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely, yes — no question. Yeah. I mean, she was going to have a residency company, and she did; and she was going to have the Dance Notation Bureau Extension, and she did; and she was going to get us in another building, and she did — with better facilities. We went in as a Division; we were first a Division, and she spent hours and hours and hours getting us into the status of a Department. I don't remember anymore, but it had something to do with the number of courses you were teaching, how many faculty you had, how many credit hours you offered.

We were still teaching Dance in the Physical Education program under the Physical Education prefix; one of the biggest battles, and painful battles, was when we went to Physical Education — and at that point, Physical Education was no longer a Men's and Women's Division, but it was a School, I think. And when we requested that the Dance courses be taught under the Dance prefix — because we were not getting any *credit* — and dollars were, and probably *still* are — assigned on the amount of credit hours that you are generating. So we were *losing* all those, and there were a lot of hard feelings. Margaret Mordy was no longer there — Charlie Mann was the Director, as I remember, of Physical Education. And...that was painful.

CF: I can imagine...

AL: A lot of hard feelings.

CF: That's difficult. I was saying to you earlier that one of the things that strikes me, looking at Dance around the state, is this sense of a group of women against the world! I mean, it feels like that to me — maybe I'm romanticizing it a bit. But certainly, women are *still* in the minority in the university; at that time, you had to be a much smaller minority...Did it feel like that? Women against the men in the university?

AL: Well, I never felt that way. It was the fight to get what you *wanted*, which was — I mean, in many places, Dance ended up with Theatre, or other disciplines. Helen was *determined* that we were going to have our own department, and *that* was the battle. Not with men and women. Others may have felt that — I didn't feel it. I mean, I guess I live in my own world — just ignore all that, and let it roll off. (She laughs.)

CF: Well, it certainly seems that you and Helen together were the dynamic duo — really, a strategic team to accomplish all of that, sort of against...against all odds, really. Physical Education wanted to hang on!

AL: Oh, sure. Sure! Absolutely, and then there was always the battle for space. I mean someone once said to me that “all curriculum is determined by space and faculty.”

CF: Basic ingredients!

AL: That's it!

CF: Did you leave the department when Helen left as Chair?

AL: No, I stayed on. She left in '83. I stayed two years with Vickie, and then I moved to the College of the Arts; I was Assistant Dean for advising and record-keeping for all of the tagged degrees, which was interesting. It was very rewarding. We developed the Honors Program...those were good years. And in '88, I decided to retire, so I've been retired a very long time.

CF: So, from '68 to '85, then, you were associated very directly with the Department of Dance — not the Division of Dance — I'm curious about some of the major hurdles — the major achievements and the challenges. Anything that you'd want to comment on, or remember, those victory laps that you and Helen took after hours...

AL: Well, it was always a battle for money — and still is, I'm sure. You know, one of the things I still laugh about is how we always kept a list of equipment and things that we needed — capital improvements — because all of a sudden, here would be a pot of money that you could use only for *that*. So, we were always busy trying to keep that in line. Maybe one of the biggest hurdles was the day the snake got loose from the ...

CF: Zoology?

AL: Zoology was in the basement, and they had a bag of snakes and a snake got out. And Ros⁴ Pierson wouldn't even come to the department. And Helen wasn't very *fond* of snakes — so that was a *bad* day, or however many days it took — they never really did find the snake; somebody said they did, but I'm sure they didn't ever find it. Now, that's a “side battle.”

CF: That's great. Do you remember what year that was? I think it was before my time, though I sure do remember those Zoology bottles down there...

AL: Right.

⁴ Rosalind “Ros” Pierson was a member of the Department of Dance faculty until her death in 2005.

CF: Okay, that's an interesting side battle...what else? What about the expansion of the faculty? A lot of that must have happened under your watch.

AL: Well, it was about proving the need. You had to prove that you *needed* it. That was the battle. Those were the figures that we had to get, the statistics, and when we'd pull all of this together and be in her office and get hysterical about how we could make these go *this* way or we could make these go *that* way. But what's going to serve us *best*...

CF: It was mainly you and Helen? Was anybody else in that conversation?

AL: Well, not in *that* conversation, but she was in with the Dean *always*, always after the Dean — *and* the Chairs of the other departments in the College. I mean, it was a battle for *everyone*, not just...I mean, Dance came in with *very* low salaries because they had been in Physical Education. And the whole battle of getting salaries up was...

CF: That's ongoing...

AL: Oh, *still* — sure. I'm *sure* it is. Absolutely. I mean some things have not changed at all, I'm sure.

CF: Well, I'm going to ask you to fast-forward for just a second.

AL: Sure.

CF: I'm thinking about the moment when you finally became an autonomous department of your own — under the College of the Arts — and then the moment — you were already gone — when the College of the Arts folded. What did you think when that happened?

AL: I wasn't there when that happened.

CF: No, but you were certainly an observer, and not a disinterested one.

A: Oh, yes. Right, right. Well, very disappointed. Helen and I tried not to talk about it — it was too *painful*. So, I mean, that really was an unbelievable move. It was such a wonderful set-up — or edge. I still don't know an awful lot about it — I chose not to. Actually, Candace, when I'm done, I'm done; I'm one of those people. So...

CF: It's practical.

AL: Right.

CF: Nothing you can do.

AL: Right! Right. Right...

CF: I'm curious what you know about what *drove* Helen. I mean, her mentors...who were they, to your knowledge? Where did she get her ideas? Do you have any thoughts about that, based on your long years of friendship and conversation, and your work together?

AL: Well, Helen always was a dancer, and always wanted to dance. And where that vision came from that she wanted to see a department — part of that may have come from Geneva Watson,⁵ who was teaching dance in Physical Education, and who was a very strong woman and I'm sure she had a strong influence on Helen — and motivated Helen to keep pushing. It's hard to say, Candace. Helen was a very complex person, and she was very forceful — and you were there in the days when she was still...some people had fear, because she could explode! After her stroke, that seemed to have gone away completely. She was a different person in that respect — and I think maybe only that respect. What years were you there? I can't remember.

CF: I started in '79.

AL: '79? Yeah...

CF: And she left in '83.

AL: Yes, right. So...

CF: I personally didn't find her intimidating *ever*, but I know people who were intimidated by her; Bebe Miller acknowledged finding her intimidating when she was a student, many years before...

AL: Right, right. I mean she put it where it was — I mean, there was no [equivocating]...she got right to it. And she was not easy to get in to see. One of the complaints that students often had — and faculty — they couldn't get in to have an appointment with her. And I learned — like *way* back, "Day One" — "Don't use *me* as a way to get to Helen. If you want to talk to Helen, you have to talk to Helen. Don't talk to me. I'm not going to fight the battle for you."

CF: Wise.

AL: But once they got in to see her, she was all theirs.

CF: Are you aware of particular disappointments she had? Things she *wanted* to achieve? Her goals continued to expand...

AL: Oh, Helen was never satisfied. *Never* satisfied. Nothing was perfect. Nothing was — I mean, her choreography was never quite right; she could do the most beautiful Christmas tree in the world, yet it was never quite right.

CF: She was a perfectionist.

AL: Right.

CF: But you don't recall anything specific that she had hoped for that she couldn't achieve...

⁵ The first formal courses in dance to be offered for credit were instructed in 1923 by Geneva Watson who became the first head of dance when it was organized as part of the Women's Division of Physical Education.

AL: Not really. I mean, no, I don't really remember... She was terribly disappointed when the Notation Bureau Extension left, but that was way after her time. I mean that *really* — that may have upset her more than the College of the Arts...I'm not sure.

CF: I imagine!

AL: And I think she was disappointed that she could not continue with a professional company⁶ as *part* of the Department of Dance.

CF: Talk about that.

AL: Well, it was too expensive. We were still in the old laundry building. We had two studios there, and to find space for the program, a company, and then to do productions — it was more than...she just couldn't do that. And that was a big disappointment for her, because she really wanted to do that. The other thing, of course, was bringing Visiting Artists in, which she was very successful in doing, and she was able to continue doing that.

CF: You must have worked out all those logistics...

AL: Well (she laughs), I don't know. I mean, I just did *whatever*. I don't know *what* I did!

CF: It's a blur!

AL: I just knew I was there a lot of hours. I can remember that I did all of the budget, and the scheduling of all the students and all the classes and all the accompanists and all the space...

CF: When you speak about the professional company, was it Ruth Currier's company?

AL: No, she brought Ruth Currier in to direct — it was called ADIR, American Dance In Residency. She brought Ruth in as the Director — she came in as faculty. Janet Druen was hired as a graduate associate to be in that company. And I can't remember who else was really involved in it — there were some men whose names have left me completely — I can "see" them, but I can't remember their names...

CF: It's okay. So the vision was — this was not a student company, these were professional dancers that Helen was going to somehow maintain as a separate body related to the department?

AL: Candace, I'm going to really have to think about that — because that was *so* very long ago. That wasYou know, that all went away before we moved to Sullivant [Hall], so that was before '74. And I *think* her idea was to have a professional company, with as many professional dancers as she could, who would also be part of faculty — so that the students had living examples to work with, and have experience with, and be able to hear their experiences, and interact with. It's too bad in many ways that it didn't continue, because I think the idea was very sound. It's just that same old thing of space and money and...

⁶ The professional company, ADIR, American Dance in Residency, endured for only five years: 1969-1974; In 1974, Ruth Currier returned to New York to direct the Limón Company.

CF: Did UDC⁷ exist parallel to ADIR then?

AL: Oh yeah. UDC [University Dance Company] was the student company, and ADIR was the professional. Let's see, I think Jim Payton danced with ADIR...

CF: Maybe Susannah Newman?

AL: Yes, Susannah, and Janet Druen, Ruth [Currier] — I mean she was directing *and* dancing...

CF: So Ruth Currier must have left when ADIR folded.

AL: I think that's right.

CF: So when you did your first stage-managing gig in '61, that was UDC.

AL: Yeah, that was UDC. And I'm not even sure — I think it had changed its name then from Orchesis⁸ to University Dance Company; I'm not real sure, but I think that's probably right.

CF: And just to get this clear: from '68 when the department became an autonomous department until '74, it was operating out of the Milliken laundry facility.

AL: Mm-hmm.

CF: Were there any offices for faculty?

AL: Oh yes, they had offices! In fact, there were *individual* offices for faculty, so that it was a real upset to faculty when we moved to Sullivant and they just had cubicles.

CF: I remember it well!

AL: Right, right. In Milliken, we had two studios, and we shared the building with Soviet Studies, I think. They had a few offices, and I don't remember how many offices we had. And we had a costume room. And then we still had Pomerene, *and* an office over there...

CF: It must have been a great moment when you found out you got Sullivant!

AL: It was a *tremendous* moment. — *But* it didn't solve the problems, because we didn't get any more studios; I mean, that was another of the battles. We wanted — I mean, I'm really not familiar enough with Sullivant now — but we wanted what was then the Music Library, which would have been on the opposite end of the other studios. We wanted that space and couldn't get it, so we really didn't gain any studios. Wait a minute — yes, we did; that's not true! We had the small one — we

⁷ University Dance Company was the student performing group for many years

⁸ Orchesis, a volunteer group of women dance students from the Physical Education Dance Division, was the forerunner to the Department of Dance student performing group, University Dance Company (UDC)

had that small Studio 3, which was primarily a practice studio – we really couldn't do class in it, other than small ones.

CF: But you still had Pomerene.

AL: We still had Pomerene 205, and sometimes we could use Pomerene 213, which used to be the Grand Lounge for Women Students in Pomerene — *beautiful* room!

CF: Still beautiful.

AL: Yeah. That's right.

CF: It must have given you tremendous personal satisfaction to see the renovation of Sullivant Hall in 2014.

AL: Absolutely. I mean, what's happened there is just a *dream* that Helen got to enjoy. *Absolutely*.

CF: So, losses and gains along the way...

AL: Right.

CF: I mean, the loss of the professional company, the folding of the College of the Arts, the loss of the Notation Bureau Extension — but the gains of the new building, the extraordinary expansion of the department: students, degree programs, faculty...

AL: Right. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

CF: What other hallmarks can you identify?

AL: Well, you know, it was such a different time, back then. I mean, we were using ditto machines and mimeograph machines, and fighting over who could get to those pieces of equipment. I mean, you know, today it's such a completely different world. We were using big, heavy video machines, you know. Another good tale I could tell you is the morning I got called by Vera Maletic; she was doing something in the studio, and she was going to video it, and she couldn't get the machine to work, and I was at home and I thought, "Who's in the building that I can get a hold of?" I think it maybe was Rosalind [Pierson]; I don't know who it was. And I said, "Can you go in and check on Vera?" And she went in, and Vera didn't have it plugged in. That was sort of the story of my life!

CF: When did Ros come?

AL: You know, I just gave to Dave Covey a whole thing that Ros had written about people who had influenced her life. Have you ever seen it? I forget what the title of it was; I gave it to Dave, like two weeks ago. And I don't know whether I found it in Helen's stuff, or whether it was in my stuff when I was collecting everything to move. I have a feeling it came from Helen's. There's way too much stuff!

CF: Right. The OSU Department of Dance could use a permanent archivist just to deal with all of it.

AL: Right, right. Anyway, in there somewhere she said something about when she came to OSU. I don't remember.

CF: She was there when I arrived in '79.

AL: Alright.

CF: Angelika Gerbes? Do you remember the year of that hire?

AL: No. Don't remember. And Shirley Wynne⁹...

CF: Were you still around when Vickie Blaine received the Center of Excellence designation?

AL: Mm-hmm.

CF: That was a big moment! Do you remember anything about that?

AL: You know, I may have retired before that happened. I mean, I remember the *thrill* of it all!

CF: Anything you'd like to say that I haven't asked you — either about Helen and her vision, great moments, great challenges overcome, how you feel about the department today?

AL: Well, I think the department today is terrific. I mean, the interdisciplinary things that they're doing, international initiatives that they're able to take on. They are things that Helen would have loved to have done! But she set the groundwork for it. Helen and I were such good friends, and we spent so much time together doing other things...one holiday, we built a barn! You know, it's hard for me to sort out the details.

CF: One big piece of cloth, right?

AL: Right, right. We built an outdoor shower, and then we would argue, and then we would get laughing, and then Suzie would say, "I don't know what it is that you two think is so funny!"

CF: Perhaps you could characterize a few more of Helen's joys and pleasures *outside* of the Department of Dance. I mean, barn-building!

AL: She liked mowing her grass, riding that mower around her acreage. And she always planted a garden; she had a big garden. And she got it planted, but it didn't get weeded too well and the produce didn't get collected too well — but she got the planting done. She loved to farm! She was a farmer at heart.

CF: I'm curious about Helen's decision to stay in Orient¹⁰ when the department was up here in Columbus. Did she ever talk about that? At times, with all the midnight oil you were burning, she must have wished she had a place in town.

⁹ Dr. Shirley Spackman Wynne (1928 – 2013).

¹⁰ Helen lived in Orient, OH, about thirty miles south of Columbus.

AL: No, she chose to stay down there – when her mother died, she lived on Como Avenue. And they always had the land, and I’m not clear whether they built the house before her mother died, or afterwards — but it was very close. And she decided to move out there, and she would drive that, and there was no freeway at that time — it was down Route 62. And when they built the freeway, it was a sad day because they cut her land in two, not to mention the noise. Of course, we had fun riding bicycles on the freeway while it was under construction. And then Suzie won a pony and a cart at the garden show, and then some friends and I gave Helen a donkey — or a jackass — for her birthday one year. So she had both: Mr. Flowers, the pony, and then Barney the donkey. As I say, she was a farmer! She always had a mint julep on her birthday, the 30th of May. And Derby Day was another julep day. She loved parties!

CF: She gave great parties!

AL: Yes, she did.

CF: Having had your own experience of Labanotation in your graduate work with Lucy, then observing Helen bring Lucy onto the faculty, do you remember the importance of that program to the department, especially in terms of communicating with other disciplines about the nature of dance?

AL: It was extremely important! I mean, Helen had so much foresight — that move was such a terrific one. Helen recognized the importance of Notation. And she had taken the courses in New York, and was teaching some Notation. And she did a reconstruction — I’ve forgotten what it was, and she had somebody come to check it – it may have been Ruth Currier — and it turned out Helen had everything backwards!

CF: Oops!

AL: (Laughing) Oops! I mean, reconstructions — I miss those. At the most recent concert, for example, while I enjoyed the concert, I missed the reconstruction; I missed seeing one of the old pieces. I still remember the *Brandenburg* and the *Passacaglia* and *Shakers*.¹¹

CF: I feel the same way.

AL: Of course, those are the ones that I stage-managed, so I knew them well! And then there was Vickie’s *I-71*,¹² which I remember very well.

CF: I remember it also.

AL: And Helen did a wonderful piece once called [The] *Round*,¹³ where she had round circles on the floor, and she had dancers coming down on ropes and Sharon Kinney and Renée Kimball were in it. That group of students were — they were something else. I mean, they were such fun: they would

¹¹ All pieces by Doris Humphrey: The *4th Brandenburg Concerto* (1959, completed posthumously with Ruth Currier in 1959), The *Passacaglia in C Minor* (1938) and *Shakers* (1931).

¹² Vickie Blaine choreographed this work in 1971

¹³ Alkire choreographed *The Round* in the 1961/62 academic year.

have parties and we'd all get invited, and they would say "Now, our colors are black and blue." (She laughs.)

CF: Perfect. What are your recollections about the launching of the MA program? That must have been a significant development.

AL: Oh, sure. That was another big cause for many late nights for Helen, sitting and writing — writing courses, and so on. What was the date of that, Candace?

CF: It was 1968. So the year that you became a separate department, you also added a graduate degree.

AL: That was part of her vision.

CF: I suspect that the addition of the MA was part of her strategy for getting the building...

AL: I was still teaching in Physical Education; I had to be taking care of my duties over there — in spite of what Margaret Mordy said to me (laughing). I think it might have been part of a strategy for becoming a department rather than part of her larger vision, now that you talk about that. I don't know what the criteria was, but that may have been part of the criteria, that you had to have a Masters program in order to be a Department rather than a Division.

CF: Because wasn't Diane McIntyre one of your first grad students?

AL: I believe she was, but I don't remember. I remember her *well* as a student, but ...yes.

CF: Tell me what you remember then about adding the "F" — the MFA, because *that* you were very much involved in...

AL: That was just another battle of writing courses and being able to find faculty to teach them, you know? And being able to convince the "higher-ups" that this was important: They'd say, "Why do you *need* an MFA? You've got an MA." And we'd answer, "Well, they don't need to be taking quite so many Liberal Arts courses, and they need to have a little more time in their Major, and if they're going to perform, they need to have time to perform!"

CF: And it probably bought you another faculty position, or two...

AL: Oh, absolutely. Sure.

CF: So, these incremental decisions that ended up becoming permanent, as it were, infrastructure to the department, allowed you to do more things.

AL: Right.

CF: And to get more space and more money!

AL: There you go!

CF: Right? I've *got* it!

AL: You've *got* it!

CF: I'm sure you miss Helen terribly; you were such good friends, and you built a department together. And a barn!

AL: And a barn — and an outside shower! And laid a lot of brick, and a lot of stones. And went on lots of camping trips.

CF: Did you go along on those trips when Helen drove students to Connecticut College?

AL: No, I didn't go along. Suzie and I once drove up and met them for a concert, and then we came back. She was very *fortunate* to have Suzie. Because Helen also was a dog-lover, and she had a dog or two dogs, and a cat or three cats. I mean, she was an animal lover — and then, of course, she had a donkey and a pony for a while. But Suzie really kept the home running.

CF: Helen couldn't!

AL: Right. She wasn't there! And Suzie continued to supervise student teachers.

CF: So Suzie was employed by the Columbus Public School system?

AL: No, Suzie was on faculty at Ohio State, in the Physical Education Department. But her responsibility was supervising the student teachers in Physical Education, so she drove all over the city, and hauled the video equipment around. You know, those were the days when they were first using video...

CF: I don't know if this is a productive line of inquiry, but just one last question. What do you remember of getting dance licensure in the state for teachers? Was that more Vickie's accomplishment?

AL: Getting that accreditation? Oh, that was, again, Helen struggling and writing and then I'm sure Vickie updated it a number of times, but also the whole quest for the Council of Dance Administrators,¹⁴ pulling all of that together — I mean, speaking of strong women!

CF: Right. Helen was a founding member of CODA.

AL: Yes, yes, right. And again, I mean, she spent *hours*. I mean, we probably shouldn't have thrown it all away, but there were stacks of handwritten papers that she wrote in longhand — on a yellow pad.

CF: There *wasn't* anything else!

AL: There *wasn't* anything else!

¹⁴ CODA, the Council of Dance Administrators, was founded by Helen and a small group of other administrators of Dance programs in Higher Education

CF: You did all those schedules that way!

AL: Yes, right. Right, right.

CF: Thank you, Ann. You are such an important source of knowledge — really, one of the remaining keepers of it.

AL: Yes, that's the *unfortunate* part...

CF: I know it.

AL: And how much I've *forgotten*!

CF: You've remembered a lot.

AL: They were good years!

CF: And *productive* years!

AL: We'd have *fun*! We'd *fuss*! We yelled, we screamed! But we got along. I mean, you know, we didn't all agree — but we *shouldn't*. That's what made it work, was people's ideas. And being able to compromise and incorporate and take advantage of all that wealth of knowledge that was chasing around out there, you know.

CF: I can just imagine what those lists were like. Because that is exactly how it is — a call for applications comes up, and you have to be ready to jump in! No time to sit around thinking about what you might need. If you're not ready, you can't write the application on time. You figured that out immediately!

AL: Right, exactly. We always — I mean, if we got something marked off, we went looking to be sure that our list was the way we wanted it. You know, we didn't *have* equipment — we were fighting to get a new record player! Or maybe we had two video machines, or cameras, or a new ditto machine or a mimeograph in place of one. Overhead projectors — I mean, we were living in the "Dark Ages"!

We did have a lot of good visiting artists. The first one was Jack Moore, and he did that piece with all those bedsprings. I don't remember what it was, but we had to find all those bedsprings, and it was in Mershon. My neighbors across the street in German Village gave him a room while he was here. I mean, you know — those were great times!

CF: It was kind of a cottage industry!

AL: Yeah, I mean, life was simple! You worked hard, but you got results.

CF: Last question: 1968, the year that you joined the department and the year that the department became independent was also a year of tremendous political tumult — on campus and off. Do you have any recollections of how that played out for all of you?

AL: Well, I can tell you the famous story about Helen. When all the riots were going on, she was over in the President's office — I guess it was in the Administration Building — I'm not sure which building anymore that was in at the time. But they came in and said "You better get out of this building now, or you're not going to be *able* to get out." And she had to leave through the men's restroom window, to get out of the building. Oh, that was a terrible time! Ruth Currier was here then; we were trying to do all of that business with ADIR. They were at Jimmy Rawlins' studio, and it was awful. It was terrible.

CF: You've survived a lot.

AL: But that story about Helen escaping through the Men's Room (she is laughing, remembering) — she *loved* to tell that story!

CF: Good thing she was a dancer!

AL: (Chuckling): Left the building through the window of the men's bathroom!

CF: What building was it?

AL: I think it may have been Bricker, maybe...? (We spend some time, calculating the building possibilities here...)

CF: It wasn't up high, was it? She didn't slide down on a sheet or anything?

AL: No, I think she was only on the first floor.

CF: Helen Alkire invents scarf-dancing!

AL: We always laughed and said it was too bad it didn't get on TV: "Chair of Department of Dance Exits through the Men's Restroom!"

CF: Was the poor president stuck inside?

AL: I'm not sure he got out. But Helen did!
Anyway, that was just a *terrible* time...

CF: Thank you, Ann. We've learned so much!