University of Houston, Center for Public History
Course Project: Oral History, Course# 6384

In cooperation with the Houston Symphony Archives.

Interviewee: Philip Stanton, Houston Symphony Musician, Instrument: Horn
Interviewer: Kelly M. Ray, graduate student

Interview Date: October, 29, 2004
Interview Time: 10:00 a.m.

Biography

Mr. Philip Stanton has been in the Houston Symphony Orchestra since 1974, playing the horn. He is a native of Hastings, Michigan, having been raised in southwest Michigan on a farm. His first training in music began in the fourth grade playing the cornet. In Junior High School, as a member of the school's band he began playing the horn (also known as the French horn) and decided in the seventh grade he wanted to pursue being a professional musician. Junior High and High School band directors (both horn players) offered guidance and training through the schools' music programs. During High School, Mr. Stanton began studying under Robert Fink, the horn teacher at Western Michigan University. His first orchestral experience was with the Junior Symphony of Kalamazoo, Michigan. He was a student at Michigan State University from 1965 to 1969, and then enlisted with the Navy Band. He attended boot camp at the Great Lakes Naval Station outside of Chicago where he was eventually given the position of conductor. While stationed in Washington D.C. with the Navy Band, he used the opportunity to obtain his Master's Degree from the Catholic University of America and studied under John Wunderlich ofthe National Symphony, then Bob Pierce ofthe Baltimore Symphony. Following Mr. Stanton's discharge from the Navy Band, additional training was received from Forrest Standley, principal horn of the Pittsburgh Symphony. He joined the Houston Symphony in 1974 under the conductor Lawrence Foster. He has toured overseas with the Houston Symphony, with touring engagements in Japan and Europe. During the past thirty years Mr. Stanton has become actively involved in the musicians' contract negotiations with the Houston Symphony Society and is one of the musicians' representatives on the Houston Symphony's Finance Committee.

Interview

The interview focuses on Mr. Stanton's musical education, his work with the Houston Symphony as co-principal horn and his participation in contract negotiations as a representative of the Houston Symphony musicians.

The interview took place at the University of Houston, Agnes Arnold Hall, Department of History, 5th Floor, Seminar Room 520. The interview lasted nearly three hours and two short breaks were taken during that time. In my initial contact with Mr. Stanton by phone two weeks prior, he voiced his concerns about being able to speak candidly about labor negotiations since these are on-going and relations are strained

between the musicians and the Houston Symphony Society, especially since the musicians strike of fifteen months ago. Mr. Stanton was told by the interviewer that he could refuse to answer any question(s) or request portions of the tapes and transcripts to be removed if the comments were of a sensitive nature. This was reiterated before the interview taping began.

Mr. Stanton was very articulate and detailed in his responses, providing vivid accounts of his background and experiences with the Houston Symphony. For the majority of the interview his sense of recall was excellent, with only a handful of memory lapses as to dates, places, and names. Although he cautioned the interviewer that he might not be able to discuss sensitive topics in relation to labor negotiations, Mr. Stanton did not appear to be withholding information and did not request any of the interview content to be removed or restricted.

Mr. Stanton was a very willing and cooperative participant in the oral history project on the Houston Symphony, expressing his willingness for follow-up interview(s).

TECHNICAL NOTE:

During the transcribing of the three interview tapes, it was discovered that two technical problems occurred, therefore, comprising the quality of portions of the audio-tapes. The new Sony Desktop Cassette-recorder (Model TCM-929) used in recording the interview created some squeaking from the recorder's cassette player heads, and the room in which the interview took place had a noticeable rumbling noise from the heating and air conditioning system. The audio-tapes and transcription were reviewed three times on three separate machines, the final machine, a Sony CFD-510 CD Radio Cassette-recorder, providing the best clarity.

Houston Symphony Orchestra
Oral History Project
Center for Public History, University of Houston
Interviewee: Philip Stanton

SUBJECT INDEX

TAPE 1, SIDE A

KR: What is your full legal name?

PS: Philip John Stanton.

KR: When were you born?

PS: January, 1947.

KR: Where were you born?

PS: Hastings, Michigan.

KR: Tell me about your immediate family and what it was like growing up in your family.

PS: Well, it's been a diversified family. My parents divorced when I was quite young when I was six. Up until that time I grew up on the more or less mythical family farm in Michigan. In the long run, I was adopted by my step-father who still has a farm in Michigan. He's nine-one now but he's still pretty much on the farm. Through high school, though we moved around a lot in southwestern Michigan for a good bit of that time. My mother now lives in Tennessee, my father still lives in Michigan.

KR: I was wondering about that connection to Michigan since I saw that you had spent some time there.

PS: Most of my family is still there. I have one brother and he's still there.

KR: Is he older or younger than you?

PS: He's a little younger than I am.

KR: What's the age difference?

PS: Just a year and a half

KR: So you are close in age. Thinking about that early time period in your life, did you have influences in your life that introduced you to music fairly early? How did you get interested in music?

PS: First exposure really to anything, and the only exposure really initially after…I guess I really don't know what the first exposure was. It was something that by the time I got in school in the fourth grade, it was something to do and I wanted to play an instrument. For two or three years after that that was about all it was. We

started to play instruments in the fourth grade, I think. The teachers always had to find something for me to do anyway. One of the easiest things was to ship me out, I think, for instrumental classes.[laughs] I started playing the cornet in the fourth grade and then by the time I got into the seventh grade I knew I wanted to play. It became a goal and I certainly began to listen to a lot of orchestral music. Mostly at that time on the radio.

KR: Did you only play the cornet or horn instruments, or did you switch instruments?

PS: In the area of the country I was in, most people started out on an instrument to learn to read music first. I think they still do that in a lot of schools. We used a little plastic recorder kind of instrument. Then after one half year on that then got to play on a basic instrument either a woodwind or brass instrument. I picked the trumpet which at that time turned out to be a cornet and played that for, I guess, a year and a half Then I changed schools in that time and in the new school they needed French horn players so I said I'll try that. So that was kind of the end of the experiment so I stayed with just a horn after that.

KR: So you stayed with the French horn.

PS: From that point on.

KR: What grade was that?

PS: That would be sometime during the sixth grade. Specifically in the seventh grade that I decided that's what I wanted to do, one of the things I decided I wanted, to play professionally.

KR: Were you in an organized band?

PS: Yeah, that's all we had, the band. We didn't have any orchestra programs at that time.

KR: Who were some of your teachers?

PS: The first Band Director I had that was interested in the horn; actually was a horn major in college himself At that time, he played in the Grand Rapids Symphony. He's the one that encouraged me to switch to the horn. I only worked with him for one year because, of course, then we moved again and I went to a different school where again the band director was a horn player. As a young kid, I had lots of problems that had to be fixed in playing so he wanted me to begin to study privately. But I didn't study with either of the band directors privately. I only stayed in that band for one year, that director taught me some on his own. I moved schools again, and I did stay in all four years of high school in one school and pretty much as soon as I got into high school I started going over and studying with the horn teacher at Western Michigan University on the

weekends. He was working on a doctorate at the time at Indiana and had a teaching assistantship at Western Michigan University.

KR: Who was that teacher?

PS: His name was Robert Fink. The [inaudible] of all things, he ended up being the head ofthe music department at the University of Colorado in Boulder. And he had been as a high school student, an undergraduate student, he had been studying with the hom professor at Michigan State, Doug Campbell. I studied with Mr. Fink, probably most of the time I was in high school. Also when I was in Kalamazoo for the lessons which, of course, is where Western Michigan, I played in the Junior Symphony there: so that was my first orchestra, the Junior Symphony of Kalamazoo.

KR: That must have been exciting.

PS: It certainly was at the time for somebody living on the farm.

KR: How did your family react to that?

PS: Actually the family was pretty supportive, although there was nobody involved with music directly in the family. On my step-dad's side ofthe family there was no musical background. Not much on my natural father's side of the family. But my mother's family, nobody was ever trained but they did have a couple of good singers in the family. And so, unusual for a farm situation, my family at the time was very supportive of, at least, letting me do what I wanted to do and so they would shlep me over there to the rehearsals every Saturday for my lessons.

KR: How long were your lessons?

PS: Usually an hour.

KR: That's neat they were nurturing you along.

PS: I'm not so sure it was so much nurturing along, it just was not objecting and going along with it. They certainly from the beginning went along with it and did what ever they could that was required financially, which at that time wasn't all that much. They weren't pushing it at all for that or unhappy ifl had other interests at this time.

KR: They were letting you try it because it was something fun.

PS: Well, I don't mean to say they were not supportive but they weren't... often in musical families when somebody is supportive it kind of means that I'm really hoping they go into this and they kind of pushy into this and it gets a little bit under ...

KR: Almost like a stage parent?

PS: Yes, a stage parent thing, like the stage parent with the beauty pageants for the kids and they go overboard.

KR: That's wonderful that they were….

PS: Sure, they were very helpful.

KR: Did they even imagine that this could potentially tum into a profession for you?

PS: No.

KR: They didn't think about that?

PS: No, they really don't understand it now.

KR: Really. I guess it's outside oftheir experience.

PS: It was very outside their living experience they would have been exposed to.

KR: They weren't too disappointed that you decided to leave the farm?

PS: The original farm, my natural father, of course we left when the marriage broke up. My step-dad's farm I continued to work in the summers as much as possible until I got in college and then I worked other places in the summer. I did what I could on the farm. I don't know that we ever talked about it.

KR: So they weren't concerned about losing your labor?

PS: No, because by that time the role of family farm thing had declined enough so that you really had to go to a day job in addition, so actually both of my parents had day jobs.

KR: What did they do?

PS: My mother worked in a small mutual insurance company in Hastings eventually ended up retiring as the vice president there. My father was a district representative for a farm equipment manufacturer. Mostly equipment that was in place, not tractors and mobile things particularly, pieces of equipment that were erected in place, silo unloaders, milking parlors, and so that left him a little bit flexible schedule so he could work the farm in the hours that he wasn't on the road working on the company's business.

KR: Tell me about your educational experience in college, who you worked with, like Mr. Campbell.

PS: I really only applied one place. I went to Michigan State University and studied in the music department there.

KR: What year did you start?

PS: I started there in the fall in 1965. Immediately was in the music program and as many schools go, you had everybody more or less started out in music education program and then it was only on the approval of the faculty that you could switch in the applied program because an applied music degree basically is a useless degree. It doesn't qualify you for any job. All it does is allow you to do is to go on to graduate school.

KR: Was there an auditioning process?

PS: It depended upon the school how that was handled. At Michigan State at the time after… I believe my situation came up...I had the first education course I had to take was one that was done in a seminar rather than in a large group. It was all made up of people that were in State's (Michigan State University) honors college. It was supposed to be a little bit more of thought-provoking than the regular basic introduction to education course it was and after starting that course it was pretty obvious that this wasn't going anywhere. [laughs] So I went back to the music department and said, "I need to change my major" and it came down to a series of interviews and discussions with applied faculty members at that particular time. Based then on what their judgment was of what my potential was then it up to them whether I could change my major. So they did. I took one education course and that was the end of that.

KR: So they actually saw that you could make it as a professional musician?

PS: Well, they gave me the standard warning, "you're not going to get a job with an applied degree, you've got to be able to play." But if you really want to do that, you have the material, we'll let you be in that major knowing, you'll have reasonable competence when you get out, so you didn't reflect badly on the school. If you got a job or not was your problem. [laughs]

KR: How did you feel about these warnings? That's kind of daunting.

PS: No, you don't think about that at all. You know there's always the farm. No, at that point, I didn't worry about it at all. The way a kid thinks, "O.k., ifl have to go to graduate school, then I'll just go to graduate school. Then I'll just teach at a University and then I don't have to do those education courses for that. [laughs]

KR: You mentioned starting school in '65, this is during Vietnam, too.

PS: Yep.

KR: Did the war and the draft affect you in any way?

PS: Well, I had to have a student deferment, of course, we still had the draft. I had a student deferment as an undergraduate and I graduated in 1969 and that year was the last year of the draft and it was a lottery system that year.

KR: What was your number?

PS: I was in the middle of the pack, someplace about 180s. I forget exactly where it was.

KR: Pretty good odds.

PS: The odds were...they were getting real close to it each year but they may have been up to the 170s, I don't know. Things were still ramped up pretty far at that point, so you either take your chance of not being called and not being drafted if you wanted to keep on playing, or you go ahead and enlist. At that time, the military service bands were fixed duty positions. Basically to get into one of those you called them up and tried to see if they had any openings, first of all, then whether you could come play for them. It's quite a different procedure than what they use now which is much more like getting a job in an orchestra, they'll advertise in the union's magazine to let everybody know there's a job available and you can send a resume in and go play for them and they pick and choose out of all the people they hear. Pretty much done on an individual basis at the time I did it. I called the Army Band, the Navy Band, the Army Field Band. I didn't call the Marine Band.

KR: Why didn't you call the Marine Band?

PS: The Marine Band, actually, even then I knew wasn't really part of the service. It actually isn't part of the Marines. It's responsible directly to the President, which is why it's called the President's Own. On the surface it looks really good because there's not boot camp then, but you're not actually in the service so you don't have to go through boot camp.

KR: You just wear the nice uniforms?

PS: Well, you wear hot uniforms. And the Marine Band, basically anybody in the Marine Band, the whole...at least the first year or two, for most are them the first four years there, they all think it is boot camp. The Marines are very difficult on the first timers, so it had a bad reputation at the time; as far as the way people were treated. I didn't know too much about the other bands but I knew people in them. I was able to audition for the Air Force, the Navy, the (Army) Field Band,

and the Army Band. Got my first plane flight and I flew to Washington for the auditions. I played for the Army Band, I played for the Navy Band, those invited *ml:come* join their bands, basically to enlist in their bands so I talked with the people I knew in each band. The fellow I knew in the Army Band, he must have been having a rough week. He didn't have anything good to say about the Army Band. This was the Army Band that is in the National Cemetery (Fort Myer).

KR: Right there in D.C.

PS: That's one of the Army Bands I would audition for because they're the only ones that have permanent billets.

KR: You didn't want to travel?

PS: No, I didn't want to be reassigned. In those particular jobs they tended to be career jobs, so if you got in those bands you were pretty much assured that unless you requested a transfer you would never be transferred any place else. And you wouldn't have any other responsibilities actually, your responsibilities solely was to the band. That was the job. The fellow I knew in the Navy Band, he was having a great time, so he was really enjoying life there. So I thought, "Well, maybe things would be better with the Navy Band which was actually a better band."

KR: Quality-wise?

PS: Quality-wise. So I agreed to enlist in the Navy Band. So by the end of July 1969 I had to enlist, so I did and went to boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Station outside of Chicago.

KR: How was boot camp?

PS: It was a great time of year to go (Fall). I think it was about fifteen weeks. At the beginning of it wasn't much fun. Right away I was pulled out of the regular grouping of people to go into a special part that had to do with the Band at the boot camp. Also the drum and bugle corps people…not drum and bugle corps but the rifle corps...the basic marching corps…

KR: The guys that do the fancy moves with the rifles?

PS: I don't even think about them so I even forget about what they call them. But yes, the precision marching squads. As soon as they saw that I had a good ear in music they actually pulled me further out, I ended up being the conductor of the boot camp band.

KR: That must have been exciting for you.

PS: Well, nothing about boot camp is exciting. [laughs]

KR: Being a conductor, had you ever done it before?

PS: Oh, yeah. I had done some course work in college and done quite a bit of conducting while I was in Michigan. So it ended up having its advantages because it basically meant that even in boot camp, then, I got out everything that wasn't absolutely required minimally for military training. It also meant that I had to get up, everybody got up at, it seems like we got up at 3:40 in the morning, and then everybody would police the barracks and have the bunks made up and all of that and went to breakfast about four o'clock.

KR: Why so early?

PS: You don't ask the military questions, you know. Then most of the people had to go off for pretty strenuous physical stuff and I had go over and actually audition new recruits to be in the band at five in the morning. Some days there would be new recruits coming in every day. Some days there would be one person, some days it would be seven or eight. It was my job to audition them and decide whether they were going to play in the band or not.

KR: How large was the band?

PS: I would guess that any more, it's purely a guess, that it would be on the order of 70 pieces.

KR: Is it a fixed number?

PS: Not really. It would expand a little bit. I think the band would have seventy pieces or so, most of the time, seventy-five maybe.

KR: That's a good size band.

PS: It would have to be big enough to march. It would be a marching band because its primary function was to supposed to lead with reviews for graduations. It didn't do any concert music. It was strictly a marching band.

KR: So it was just for that ceremony.

PS: Primarily for those ceremonies and then occasionally you'd have some other ceremony that they wanted to use a big band for, they'd haul everybody out there for and it would allow me some time after the auditions. I would have quite a good break so while everybody else was sleep deprived I was actually able to catch a little bit of a nap usually before I had to go back to boot camp.

KR: Was this mid-morning?

PS: No, if there were only two or three people auditioning at five o'clock then by five-thirty or quarter to six then I didn't have anything until seven-thirty after that so you had little things like that, plus I had an office.

KR: An office?

PS: Well, it belonged to the N.C.O. that was supposed to be there but he just chucked everything off onto me while I was there so he wasn't around. Then we would have a lot of rehearsals, during the day there would be a couple of hour and a half rehearsals. Generally the one in the morning would be to play the music of the marches to make sure everybody knew what they had to do and then afternoon was entirely a marching rehearsal. Sometimes playing and often not because you always had new people who had to learn how to march in a military situation, which is quite different than high school marching. It's a different kind of step, somewhat slower, but it had to be a little more precise than if you just brought all these people loosely together and started to march. So the best thing about boot camp was that it was a great way to lose weight.

KR: You were physically fit.

PS: Very much so. Even with running around and trying to keep the marching together. It would give me much exercise.

KR: It sounds like you survived boot camp.

PS: I survived boot camp and actually with marching band being in the fall it was actually a good time to go because, I think, I went into Chicago for parades, the fall parades and the neighborhoods all around Chicago. I probably got off the base and into Chicago a dozen times or so during boot camp. It was often, all through then, that they pretty much give us leaves, which is pretty unusual for us in boot camp, because one of the things they're trying to do, of course, is wean people that have never been away from home so usually there's almost no outside contact allowed during whole of boot camp. At least at that time there wasn't.

KR: It sounds like you took a very good path.

PS: Well, if you had to do it, it certainly wasn't a bad way to do it.

KR: How long were you involved in the Navy Band?

PS: In all of the services, the enlistment was for four years, except for the Army which at the time was three years, and I think that probably still holds true. I ended up spending the full four years in the Navy Band. If I had taken the Army Band job I would have been out in two years, because they had an early out program that happened to hit the folks that enlisted when I did. The Navy didn't

have that at that particular time, so I spent four years there. I left the Navy Band in 1973.

KR: After that?

PS: I didn't have a job yet, so I went back to Michigan State. When I was in the Navy Band, I got a master's degree at the Catholic University of America in Washington. At that time I studied for a while with the first hom of the National Symphony.

KR: What was that experience like?

PS: It was kind of mediocre. The player, his name was John Wunderlich, he was relatively young. He was about forty. His house, which was about halfway to Baltimore off the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, which wasn't any problem, that wasn't the problem at all. But he was raising a family so there were two or three kids around in the house, quite young, running around all of the time. The main problem though was that when I started studying with him was the first year that Antal Dorati began to conduct the National Symphony and he was trying to bring the orchestra up to a much higher level than it had been playing at the time - which wasn't as good as the Baltimore Symphony. Dorati had just come from the Minneapolis Symphony which is now the Minnesota Orchestra and while he was there, the first hom in that orchestra had a lot of trouble. Just playing problems, he was getting older so some problems were showing up and Dorati was increasingly bringing pressure on him and eventually he had a heart attack and died on the job, basically. And so this hom player, John Wunderlich, was very superstitious, and he also knew that his playing was a little bit different than what Dorati wanted stylistically, and was somewhat insecure. He was really worried that Dorati was going to give him a heart attack. That he was going to be the next hom player that Dorati got to, and so he worried about his job.

KR: Under a lot of stress.

PS: Under a good deal of stress and so the lessons weren't particularly productive and I didn't study with him then a very long time, probably less than a year. Because the University didn't have any applied faculty, we studied with anybody that we wanted to as long as they approved so I changed teachers and began studying with Bob Pierce, who was the principal of the Baltimore Symphony. And that was a further drive all the way into Baltimore, but it was much more successful for the time I was working on the master's degree. After I finished the master's degree then I quit studying for awhile and I played for another year in the Navy Band pretty much without studying. Then with one year to go I decided if I wanted to try to get out and play professionally- which after three years in the Navy Band I was not at all sure I wanted to do anymore - I decided I needed to kind of put my playing back in order because in a military band you did some unusual things, playing-wise, things that were not likely to get me a job. Habits, stylistic things,

and technical things, things you began to do out of frustration in your playing. With the military situation all of us that were in the band because we wanted to keep on playing during our service time rather than having to go into the infantry, we were pretty much a bunch of malcontents there. We had a commanding officer who was pretty easy-going, playing-wise, that we could get away with that he wouldn't catch.

KR: Who was your C.O.?

PS: His name was Donald Stauffer. He was a tuba player originally and a quite good one. And a very nice man. He was great for somebody's grandfather, but not really a military officer, and not really a particularly qualified conductor. He had a project he was talked into. A recording of supposedly sixty LPs of previously unrecorded military marches. Most of them were Axis marches, they were Italian and German. The way we would played things in the Navy Band we would come in on Monday morning and we would play the pieces, whether they were these marches or anything else. We would play the ones we would record that week and they would take an initial taping of it. Then we'd spend the whole of the rest of the week rehearsing it, trying to make it sound like the tape had on Monday, then on Friday we would record it. So between Monday and Friday we'd always figured out someway to do something inappropriate into the break strain of these marches. We would either end up with *Anchors Aweigh* in it. Or more often than not we worked in the theme song for the Mickey Mouse Club.

KR: So you were playing games!

PS: We would play it rather prominently and they caught on. Never.

KR: It sounds like you were very entertained.

PS: We found ways. [laughs]

TAPE 1, SIDE **B**

PS: I then studied with Forrest Standley who had been the principal horn of the Pittsburgh Symphony and, of course, taught there at Carnegie. It was just Carnegie Tech. then, but Carnegie Mellon now. He really was a very methodical teacher. Very dogmatic about what he did, but what I was going to him for, that is exactly what I needed. I needed to know the orchestra audition literature better.

KR: What kind of pieces were you practicing?

PS: With him, we did some work that was, what I would call, rudimentary in a way, in the sense of that drummers have to practice their rudiments.

KR: You have to go back to the basics?

PS: It was just filling some holes, technically, that had been left in my prior training. But primarily the work was to really to begin to know all of the solos in the standard hom literature and even that literature which hadn't quite become standard yet. If you go out to play an audition you've got to play better than anyone else and very often it would get down to a situation where somebody who maybe was very familiar with a piece that nobody else knew that would have enough of an edge since they knew that piece and could play it better that to give them the job. So you had to cover a lot ofliterature. And yet be really solid on all of the standard literature. In an audition, to get a job basically a group people are invited to play, and one at a time you go in to play for a committee, you've got usually, not always…

KR: I heard it was behind a screen.

PS: That's since I auditioned.

KR: Really.

PS: You would go out and see your committee at the time, the people that were listening to you. In fact have some interplay back and forth but usually you'd have a list of excerpts, pieces that they would be drawing solos from. Sometimes not, that was much more common then. Nowadays I don't think you run into that at all. Sometimes it would say, 'play a solo from the standard repertoire.' And that's all you'd get.

KR: So they wouldn't tell you specific pieces?

PS: No. Usually the bigger the orchestra was, the smaller the list and then the more minor the orchestra was the more they had to show how much they knew so they had this really long, long list. You'd get to an audition, and at that time the usual practice was to have between thirty and forty people show up for an audition that had been invited. That would be same whether it was for a regional orchestra or what's now called a tier one orchestra, like Philadelphia or Boston. The repertoire ended up being the same, pretty much. Each time you went, you hoped to learn enough to move up the ladder on these things and hopefully get a job. I had taken a few job auditions before I left the Navy Band. The very first one was in Baltimore and it was a great learning experience.

KR: How did it go, your first audition?

PS: It didn't go well.

KR: What happened?

PS: There's so many things there that you're kind of overcome by all of the outside influences and you're trying to learn things. I didn't think particularly that I played badly. I just didn't know enough of the things they were specifically looking for. The first round where everybody plays is usually an elimination, one of those where you have a reasonable chance of being able to play the parts and so I didn't make it through that first round on that. It may be based on technical things, it may based simply on you don't have the kind of sound that they use in that section.

KR: Did they ever give you feedback?

PS: They do nowadays. They didn't then particularly.

KR: So you had no way of knowing how to improve for the next time you go audition.

PS: If you have any... you couldn't learn as much as if you had feedback but you certainly learned a lot. What I would do was I stay around then and listen to those folks that made the next round, see how they played, and they were asked to do something differently, or eliminated, see ifl could figure out why either thing had happened.

KR: Could you figure out why you were eliminated?

PS: This audition happened when I was still studying with the first horn ofBaltimore so I could get feedback from him, so That helped. I happened to know a couple of the other players in that section. One of them eventually became a man that built a couple of horns for me, went into business making instruments. Actually, he's still doing it. I got a lot of help on that one. There were lots of jobs available because most of the jobs didn't pay a living wage other than the great top orchestras. I guess, the top orchestras there's not too much difference. There were twelve or fifteen orchestras that you could make a living from. The rest of them, if you tried to make a living from it, you either gave up after a while, or get a second job. A lot of those orchestras are in places like Buffalo, New York (State), Milwaukee at the time, Denver, Kansas City. Since they didn't pay enough of a wage to keep people there, there was a lot of turnover especially. I think, with the situation with the war in Vietnam, too, there had been a lot ofturnover of young players in the secondary orchestras that had to go into the service and we may have just been coming at the end of a cycle where there were a lot of people retiring too because at that time there were over a period of three years it must have been maybe thirty openings. I think now that you'd probably wouldn't have more than a dozen in that period of time, in a normal period, especially when those orchestras could pay any kind of a living wage.

KR: For a tier one orchestra paying a living wage, what is the salary range?

PS: When I ended up down here in 1974, I believe the weekly base salary was $265 a week. There was not as much disparity then between this orchestra and the top orchestras by any means as there is now. They were all pretty much close together. None of the orchestras paid the kind of wage that players in Boston and Chicago are getting now and there wasn't anything like that. It was not a profession for making a lot of money.

KR: For musicians playing in orchestras that were not paid a living wage, what were they offered in wages?

PS: They would have a season and while you were playing you would be paid enough so you could get by. The biggest problem was that the season might be 25 weeks or 30 weeks or 35, so the rest of the time you either went on unemployment or most likely you went out and found another job. Maybe it's a little out of order for this orchestra, but this orchestra went to a 52-week season in Houston in 1972, I believe. When I first came here, I knew a lot of players that had been in the orchestra since it had had maybe a 25 or 30-week season. Several of them, I'm thinking of the second flute player, he worked for a number of years on the sales floor at Foleys in the off-season. Then he finally started his own business as a woodwind, primarily flute, repairman. He got good enough at it, so that he had a fine long term business doing that. He continued that even after the orchestra went full-time. But most people would find some other kind of job. They had to during the off -season. All along, even now, a lot of people in the Houston Symphony Orchestra teach in addition to their regular jobs. I'm on the faculty here at U ofH as an affiliate artist. There's probably a dozen of us that are teaching at the schqof music. Rice University especially since they have the Shepherd Schoo tas several people still there who play in the Symphony that teach there on an adjunct basis.

KR: Maybe they have private students as well?

PS: Many of those people who don't teach in an organized place like the Universities will teach privately. A lot of people out there have given that up. It's just not fun. And now we don't need that quite so much. I think there's less private teaching going on now by Houston Symphony players outside of the Universities than there had been earlier.

KR: Tell me about how you came to be with the Houston Symphony.

PS: They advertised an opening. All orchestra musicians are part of the American Federation of Musicians, which has a monthly publication that lists all of the job availabilities as they come up. The orchestras send in their vacancies and have an ad ask if anybody is interested to send a resume. At that time it was less organized and less consistent than it is now. The way things usually worked was

that you would send a resume, coming right out of a university or being at a University, you would just hope to got invited because obviously if you were there you didn't have a lot of experience. And every orchestra only wants to hire somebody who has experience. It's good for their egos for one thing. As I began to get some auditions under my belt, I taken a few before I went back to Michigan State after I got out of the Navy. I continued to take auditions there. I was consistently getting into the final round so even though I didn't have the experience the fact that I was able to get in the final rounds in Pittsburgh, in Detroit and Baltimore again, pretty much every place I went that in itself was enough to get me invited to the auditions. They had an opening here. The opening was for co-principal hom. It was a new position for them actually.

KR: Why did they create that position?

PS: Two reasons – one was that they had been carrying five horns here. The assistant was very weak. The other was they had a hom player that was in the section, and because of the war, had to go into the service. He ended up in an Air Force Band over in San Antonio and did stay there the whole time. But he came back and said, «Ok, I'm ready to go back to work." Of course, while he was gone his job had been filled and the person who got it was this assistant player, he didn't have anything in his contract if the other guy comes back you'd lose your job. At that point he was tenured. So the situation was they wanted to fire the assistant and he filed a suit with the Symphony saying, "You're only firing me because your other player is coming back." So they decided to carry six horns, and they would carry two principals. And, of course the assistant and the second, third and fourth. That was just beginning to be a practice in the biggest orchestras at that time. Most orchestras were still using five horns.

KR: It sounds like a compromise.

PS: This was part of what they were going to do when they advertised the position. They went ahead and advertised the position. I don't know the timing of this, I don't know when the fellow they were trying to fire filed his suit. It may have been after the position was advertised or not. Then they decided to go ahead with the audition, we'll carry six horns in the section. And, we're still going to fire you because we're going to hire somebody else and we're going to change the position title to a co-principal and then the fellow that came back and would assume his position as assistant. They held a round of auditions. We all got here at nine o'clock in the morning. As I recollect, there were close to thirty of us at this audition.

KR: What year was this?

PS: Boy, this could have been at the end of '73 but it was probably at the very beginning of 1974. I don't remember the exact timing of that one. I don't remember that at all. We had the audition. We got here at nine in the morning

then drew straws, basically, to see what time we were going to play, but everybody at that time got here at the same time of the day. Then we sat around until our time to play.

KR: How much time do you get for an audition?

PS: Depends. If you go in there and play badly enough right away it'll be a very short time, the better you play the more they're going to hear. If it's reasonably competent they'll hear their total list, that usually is a bit of a solo and maybe five excerpts, four to seven excerpts they want to hear. They're trying to cover all of the bases, to give them an idea about your overall playing.

KR: Would you be in there for about a half an hour?

PS: No, no, more likely fifteen minutes, sometimes twenty but not much more than that. Not on the first round. Many folks didn't go more than ten or twelve minutes on the first round. So I don't think I played until three or three-thirty for them in the afternoon for the first time. After a group of people have played they'll usually come out and say thank you all for coming, we'd like numbers so and so, or at that time it was just by name, so there was no attempt to hiding who you were, to stay and the rest of you are excused. So I don't know what time, sometime after I played that group finished that they came out and asked me to stay. Probably because they still weren't done with the preliminary things, I had to come back after supper; so I had supper and came back and didn't actually finish that preliminary round until almost ten o'clock that night. I was still hanging around and then the committee, I guess, talked for about a half an hour and then came back out and said they were too tired to make a decision that night so they were going to…I think I skipped something…I think we started the final round around nine o'clock. I guess that's about right, we started about nine o'clock. Then when we got done about ten-thirty, they talked a long time. They came back and were too tired to make a decision. So they didn't make any decisions that night. So we just all left. Sometime later then they asked one player to come back as a finalist.

KR: How much later was this?

PS: Probably two or three weeks, and he played with the orchestra for a week. They kept the one that was closest because they had to pay for his expenses on that particular trip from Dallas to come down. He wasn't successful in the week he played. They still didn't decide to hire any ofus. They had another private audition, invited some folks to come in. I think they did that twice and they ended up, out of those two more or less private auditions they may have had only four or five or six people out of each. They ended up adding only one other person they were interested in. They weren't too interested in him because of the brightness

of his sound[1] at the time, and so I was invited to come back down and play again. And a lot had transpired, so things were moving fairly along and I guess the original audition must have been in the fall of'73 because I remember being invited to come down around March of'74. Initially the date they had picked I couldn't come because I was committed to play on a recital in Lansing. So then we rescheduled the date, they decided to have two of us there. The one fellow they liked the most from their private auditions, and we played an audition basically against each other. And the first round was about forty-five minutes for each one of the us and they still didn't make up their minds, so we went back and played a second round, and there was disagreement between the conductor and the committee.

KR: Could you tell who they were starting to favor at that point?

PS: No, no. I listened to the other player after my first round because I thought that's all we were going to play but usually if they were going to play again I wouldn't listen, but I did in this case and I played better than he did in the first round. There wasn't any question. He probably played better than I did in the second round because I hadn't expected to go back. I didn't, I pretty much shot the wad on the first time. I was pretty tired. I think he was too, though, so I don't know for sure what happened. But anyway there was no indication...it was at that point then that they really didn't have a job to offer until this lawsuit was settled. They said that the conductor wanted to hire the other player and so the vote was split. If he wasn't available then he would be happy to hire me. So the decision was that they other player would be offered the job when it became available. If he was no longer available then I would be offered the position. Then we didn't hear anything until October, something like that. I knew then that they had called the other player, they had offered the position to the other player, and actually the same week he had been offered another job as first hom of the Berlin Radio Orchestra. I think he thought that in the long run that would look good on his resume and would be an adventure. He had been playing with the Detroit Symphony and resigned there. He was the assistant hom and when the principal left, and he played principal for a summer then he didn't end up getting the principal job there so he left and played actually in a rock band in Detroit. So he thought he would take the Berlin job and I was invited to come down here. I heard from the personnel manager that the conductor didn't really want me here so that was unusual at the time.

KR: How did you feel about that?

PS: Well, I was dumb. I wanted ajob.[laughs] So I came down here in December of 1974 and started working for the orchestra. Actually the first concert I played

[1] Brightness of sound means a horn sounding more trumpet-like. The Houston Symphony horn section at the time had a darker and fuller sound than the other player's sound.

was the New Year's Eve concert when Arthur Fiedler was conducting. That was his last concert that he did here.

KR: How exciting.

PS: I thought so at the time. So that's how I got here. It was not uncommon for auditions to be that convoluted and go on and go on, especially in this orchestra. There was a history of not making decisions at the auditions.

KR: So were you anticipating that?

PS: No, I didn't know about it beforehand. Texas was, and still is, a very foreign part of the country. Musically, especially at that time, anything other than east coast, west coast or Chicago was considered to be really provincial. Even though Houston had had major conductors here, and had made some major recordings before this, this is certainly considered to be way out there.

KR: That first conductor you worked under, wasn't that Lawrence Foster?

PS: Foster was the conductor when I was hired here.

KR: Obviously he didn't want you originally.

PS: With him- I never did really build a relationship with him until after he left. I played co-principal here for three years, without tenure each year, because he didn't want to grant tenure on that. It was probably my own inexperience in playing. It was a learning curve there. But most ofthe time I spent most of the time trying to get through by an attitude where no matter what he did I wasn't going to let him break me. Foster is a very good musician. It's all intellectual music. He's not emotionally involved, I don't think, with the music very much. He's not a good conductor for wind players because he's never played one and his conducting does not prepare you to play. Most conductors know how important breathing is and how they affect that in the way they initially start things. Foster has never really quite gotten that since he only played the piano. He never had to play an instrument where he had to breathe at the same time. A good musician, certainly was a wonderful accompanist, wonderfully able to react to whatever situation arose, which was really great for opera conducting. Because if a singer got off or there was some coordination problem between the orchestra and the stage he was always able to bring it back into place with a minimal ofloss of anything. And he was very good with contemporary things. The other reason he wanted to go with the other co-principal I was told that they were trying to put pressure on the principal they had in order to encourage him to leave as well. Being green and not political at all I wasn't the person for that. Perhaps the other player, who did ended up eventually coming to the orchestra, would have been better than that. The fact that he had more experience and might have been able

to apply the pressure a little better to try to get the current principal of that time to step down.

KR: So there's politics.

PS: Oh, yes, there's always politics.

KR: You've been telling me about the politics within your section. Is that between sections as well, the dynamics within the players of different sections?

PS: There's always a dynamic of the personalities playing in the orchestra. It would be more involved with all of the wind players, the horns would be more with the brass players and the woodwind players, more than they would be with the string players. Because you have to play much closer with them. Most of the time we'd go one to a part and most of the time it's going to be with another wind player you have to really coordinate things and have things work well. That was the management's idea to have dissension in the ranks. For the most part the sections, you're hopeful that you have a section that doesn't have that. (Reference to earlier comment about the management trying to force the other principal out of the orchestra.)

KR: You hope there's harmony, musically and personality-wise.

PS: Sometimes there is, but very often not.

KR: Is it because there's also that edge of competitiveness?

PS: That's a good bit of it. Sure. Sometimes you just have personalities that don't work together.

KR: You just have to live with the personality, as long as you're playing well during a performance, that's important.

PS: Yes, sure.

KR: Well, if there's strife in the background, well, you just have to deal with it.

PS: There have been periods where there have been. But not nearly as bad in sections perhaps here as in, I know, in other orchestras. New York when Bernstein was there, pretty much, I guess, until relatively recently was the orchestra that most of the people didn't like anybody else in the orchestra.

KR: Really? That's amazing! Is that the culture of the orchestra?

PS: It seems to be.

KR: Was it because of Bernstein?

PS: No, maybe it's just how they had to live in Manhattan a lot of the years. I don't know. I have no idea why that is.

KR: Maybe it's a culture thing in New York.

PS: Could be. Even though people would get along on the surface just like every play else, underlying there's a few of the people that you feel good about and people you don't feel good about and there's always the political movers and then there are other people who don't want to have anything to do with politics.

KR: So this is the not the type of situation where you'll be chummy and get together on social occasions?

PS: That's what you hope for and on occasion that happens. There have been period here when we were actually very close in the section. Then there were periods the section when all of it wasn't involved in the other sections. One ofthe reasons actually in the past that orchestras didn't use screens, was because they wanted to find people who were compatible. The idea of using screens initially about because San Francisco had hired a timpanist who was black and who apparently didn't play well enough that the player was denied tenure. Universities went through a lot. I know in the '70s and '80s, too, where somebody failed and they were a minority they were going to sue you because they feel they failed because they were a minority instead of on the basis of their own actions. The attitude was prevalent that there was a potential problem there. Orchestras were trying, with screens, to minimize the hiring liabilities. The musicians were trying to minimize politically motivated hires. Over the last forty years you've gone from a time whett.Would get in by invitation to play for the conductor and were able to get jobs on that basis. Pretty much the way I auditioned for the service bands. I was invited to play. Nobody else played at an audition then. They had an opening, I played well enough that they wanted me and I was offered the position. That was kind of the way it was in orchestras, too. But as you had more and more protections in tenure and more and more organization in the labor contracts people wanted it on both sides. First the Society side, or the management side didn't want to have liability if they hired the wrong person.
And on the players side they wanted to make sure it was really was based on the way people played rather than any extraneous factors. Now people go so far as they remind women to not wear shoes with heels because they can hear the difference between a man and a woman walking on the floor otherwise. You try and really have no influence from anything except from the way the person plays. Often right into the very final round.

TAPE 2, SIDE A

KR: Are they better?

PS: In many respects, but the one area where they might not be better is in having you keep a section, keep people in there that you know work well with a section. Some players develop a reputation where you know it would work well or wouldn't work well in a section. With it all being done behind screens there's less chance that your biases are going to be able to be exercised there, because it depends solely on the playing. Even though people think that they can really tell players apart but you still, even though you may think you know who the person is, if they play well, you can't be sure, you're going to vote to move them on to the next round.

KR: I would assume that any individual musician, some will have an exceptional day and some will be slightly off, maybe they were sick.

PS: Oh, yes, very much so. So before the screens, then you were also able to judge a player's performance that day with what you knew of their experience and the information that was on the resume, whereas now the resume is maybe a ticket to be invited, but that's all it gets you. It's totally based on the playing.

KR: When was that transition to using screens?

PS: Houston wasn't in the forefront ofusing screens. We weren't certainly in the forefront of it.

KR: Was that in the later 1970s or early 1980s?

PS: I really don't think that we started using screens widely until the maybe the mid'80s.

KR: Really?

PS: Oh, yeah, maybe later than that. Even then it would have been only for the first round. It's not been maybe ten years, maybe…that we've used screens for pretty much all of the rounds.

KR: Using that technique, to eliminate biases as much as possible, how diverse is the orchestra?

PS: This orchestra has comparatively more women in it than most. It's, I think, pretty evenly divided actually.

KR: How about ethnically?

PS: I think in this orchestra we have fewer Europeans than we used to have. Of course, when I came in there were people that had come over from Italy, and France and Germany that were still playing in the orchestra, that had come over during the time of the Second World War. Now our foreign players for the most part are from the East. A large number of Oriental players, brought about a little bit by the number of Oriental players were perhaps enrolled here in schools early on. Some of them in Texas, being a right-to-work state, we auditioned some people who weren't actually members of the union at the time and weren't actually able to get green cards until they had won an audition someplace. I had heard there was some of that but I don't know of that at all. We have a good number of Oriental, Asian people here. But as far as it increasing the number of black players that are getting in the orchestras nationwide, I don't think it's made much of any difference than what would have happened otherwise. I guess right now we have one person, and that person would have gotten the job with the screen or without it. I don't think there is actually the discrimination on race there. The difficulty in particular for blacks, Hispanics, is the background, the training, or the lack thereof Most of them didn't have the opportunity or the training, nor did they have the early background that let them develop their ear enough so they could accept that early training. One of the reasons I think there are so many Asians now is that their ears are very, very good, and apparently their language depends on pitch and inflection as well as syllables and actual syntax. So they develop young the ability to make very fine distinctions of pitch, which really helps them in music then. It seems that there's a very much higher percentage of them that have what people consider perfect pitch than most of us. I really think that a lot of it is developed. And, I think that, probably generally, that there are out in the general orchestra population those who grew up in musical families, that they were hearing music, especially played live, would tend to be people who had better pitch memory than those of us who didn't have that opportunity until later on. There are some studies about it and I haven't read any of the details yet but they seem to indicate that kind of a trend.

KR: I just assumed it was one of those character traits that you're born with, you either have it or you don't.

PS: It certainly can be developed. Now some people claim to have perfect pitch that's just at 440 vibrations per second and anything other than that is painful for them, which is kind of too bad because the tuning pitch over the centuries has changed a lot. In fact even now it's not really standardized. By that I mean a hundred years ago A was 435 vibrations per second. Four-forty is being supplanted now as orchestras try to have more and more brilliant sound with a tuning pitch that's higher than 440. We use 442 in the Houston Symphony and quite often play above that. Berlin is up around 445. I don't know anyplace that plays below 440. So rm not convinced that absolute perfect pitch, whether there is a specific sound that it has to be that note it is accurate for anybody. You hear people talk about, 'I know exactly where that is and if it's anything other than that it hurts my ears.'

KR: I also wanted you talk about a typical week as a musician and your teaching at the University. Give me a sense of what your work week is like.

PS: The Symphony is entitled to an average of eight services a weeks from the musicians. Services are usually 2 *Y2* hours, two of them in one day, the second one a little shorter, unless it's a concert. There are a certain number of weeks that we're supposed to have a fixed day off. In this case a certain number of weeks we have to have Tuesdays off per year. In the summers we're supposed to be off on Sundays. Other than that the schedule can be set so it's very variable from one week to the next, and often is. Certainly, for everybody I think concerned that the more regular the schedule is the easier it is to make sure that everything is going to be in its place and works right. So I think there's an attempt on both sides to try to always have the work week be fairly consistent. But if it doesn't work that way, especially it's less that way than it used to be. We used to have weeks that had subscription concerts on them, or Pops concerts on them for the week's work. Then we had situations where we'd go in and play for the Opera[2] and when you were playing for the Opera it was a different schedule from the Symphony but the Symphony schedule was fairly consistent and the Opera schedule was at least somewhat consistent, but it was different from the Symphony schedule. We don't play for the Opera any more and trying to find work to fill in for the weeks we used to play for the Opera, the new work often doesn't fit into the regular Symphony week. The typical week would be…it would really start on a Wednesday or Thursday for a work week. If it were a subscription concert week we would normally have perhaps one rehearsal on Wednesday, but more often have two rehearsals on Thursday, two rehearsals on Friday, a rehearsal Saturday morning and then a concert Saturday evening, a concert Sunday afternoon, a concert Monday night. Then if nothing else was in the way, we would have our Tuesday, a free day off, and then we are supposed to have one other day off a week and that floats around a lot. Often that might be Wednesday but not often enough so that you can count on it at all. If we're doing Pops concerts for the week, we'd usually only have about one or two rehearsals for a Pops Concert series and usually in weeks like that there would be student concerts, maybe more student concerts in there would be. Now a subscription week with four rehearsals, if you had five rehearsals, that we used to have more than we do now, five rehearsals and three concerts would take care of the week. But most often now we'll have just four rehearsals and three concerts so there's another service in there for some other kind of performance. Occasionally it might be a run-out of what we're doing for the week. This week, although it's Pops, works kind ofthat way. We're doing, concerts tonight, tomorrow, and Sunday because they're Pops concerts. We did the same concert last night up at the Woodlands, so that gave us a fourth concert in the week and we had one rehearsal here and one at the Woodlands for those four concerts, so even with four concerts we've only had six services and they were able to put in two sets of students concerts on other days to fill out the services.

[2] Houston Grand Opera.

KR: When you have a rehearsal, how long is a rehearsal?

PS: Rehearsals are usually 2 *Yz* hours, that's the maximum length of service without some sort of financial penalty. Basically if it runs into overtime segments there's a penalty on it. Then there's various ways of getting into overtime situations but the scheduling is hopefully set-up so that we don't get into those for the Symphony's sake because they want to save the money and then the reason that the penalties are there were to try encourage them to not schedule things that were unreasonable. Things have crept into the contract over the years that sometimes don't seem too sensible anymore.

KR: Can you give me an example?

PS: This isn't a very big example at all but it was the only one that came up recently. We have language in the contract that when we're doing a run-out, the Woodlands is considered a run-out since it's away from our main hall- that we have between a rehearsal and a concert, that between an afternoon rehearsal and an evening concert there has to be at least a 2 Y2 hours for a dinner break. The idea originally behind it was there'd be time enough to go home and have supper and then come back if we were playing in Jones Hall, where the clause originated is when we were playing here in town. But it also applies then when you're out on tours or run-outs. Also there's a clause in the contract specific to run-outs that says, in this case specific to the Woodlands, if we're playing a classical concert up there, not a Pops concert up there, but the assumption is going to be made that we're having more than one rehearsal and some of the rehearsals would have been done here in the city. So when we go out there the primary need we were always given for the rehearsal up there was so that we could do sound checks and balances with that venue. The Society agreed to limit those services up there, the rehearsal part of the service to 2 hours, so it wouldn't be necessary to do any more. Now even if the solos could only come in that day that would give us time to do sound checks and play the solo piece so we got into a situation where, I'm sure the Society scheduled 2 lh hour rehearsal up there at the Woodlands and it only left us with 2 hours for a supper break. It really wasn't discovered until the intermission of the rehearsal and they had a situation then there was no way to resolve by changing the schedule, so they ended up being in a penalty situation where they had to pay some overtime. How did that happen? Because you had a change in management so you had a relatively young management in there that hadn't been there in there doing this for too long and also it was a change-over of the orchestra committee people, so that the orchestra committee hadn't caught it either. Most of us don't look at a schedule very far ahead, [laughs] so when you get to the service, some of us say, "you know, this doesn't seem quite right, "then we begin to check and see what the fine print says in the labor agreement and found out there were two contractual problems with that day. So it was a financial penalty for the Society and they just paid overtime for it and said we won't do it again. Each time there's a change in management or the person doing

the scheduling in particular, there's a long learning curve because the restrictions are not all in the same place in the labor agreement and they're not always such that so that you change one parameter you remember the other changes that may be involved still. It's gotten pretty bad that way. It's difficult that way for the management just simply because nobody wants to take the time whenever we finally get to the endpoint of negotiating the contract to now go back and now let's rewrite this thing so that it makes sense and put it in a logical order. So some things are not adjunct when they need to be.

KR: Talk about memorable guest conductors and artists you've had the chance to work with.

PS: Certainly, in a way the most memorable probably for me,... now this is after Stokowski was gone, after Barbirolli was gone and after Previn had his short stay here. And Previn at that time was just an inexperienced conductor so he couldn't have been particularly up to the caliber that he later became as a conductor. So probably for me the most unusual, and really the greatest experience to have was to have Leonard Bernstein come down. He really didn't conduct the orchestra much. He came down here because the Grand Opera premiered his opera *A Quiet Place* and he came down here for the production.

KR: Do you remember what year?

PS: No. The orchestra conductor for the Opera at the time was John DeMain and we were still in Jones Hall. I really don't remember the year. I'm sorry.

KR: No, that's all right.

PS: He came down here, while he wasn't conducting the orchestra, he was sitting at the table behind the conductor with his music out there, working on things. Most of the time he was conducting behind the conductor so we watched him. He was sitting there, quite often his hand would start going so we'd be watching him more anyway. And that was it. It was really fun.

KR: So you were following his instructions.

PS: Kind of He was an extremely energetic person and enthusiastic with what he was doing and one of the things I did see when we got far enough along. We had a television that wasn't nearly as early that a lot of folks and did see a few of the children's programs that he did in New York so that was good to have him here. He did conduct a little bit on one concert in Miller Theater. But he was here for the whole time of that opera production of *A Quiet Place.* We did it in conjunction with *Trouble in Tahiti*...it was a double bill so that was a lot of great strength for me.

KR: Did he provide direct instruction to individual musicians?

PS: No, he would be changing things in his score if they didn't sound quite the way he wanted, and those changes would show up in the parts.

KR: He wouldn't point to you and say…

PS: No, he would do it through the Opera's conductor. He was just there... almost he would start conducting because of force ofhabit since he was right there, your attention kind of split between the conductor and what he was doing. Of course the opera has a lot very romantic music in it, traditional in a way, tonal music, sometimes two or three keys on top of each other. In some ways very accessible music, and the subject matter and the language in the opera then was a bit on the edge for that time. It certainly was an edgy enough time in some other areas. It certainly wasn't out ofline with things that the opera company was doing generally then, as far as works and parts and they way they were staging traditional works. They were much more adventurous then than they are now. So that really was a major conductor. Of course, in this orchestra the person who turned into the major conductor pretty much during his time when he was here was Christoph Eschenbach. For guest conductors, I sometimes have to just stop and take a while to think of the names because I remember everything about the person but the name. There was another conductor I really enjoyed. There were some I thought I was going to enjoy very much that didn't turn out to do particularly much either.

KR: Really? Who?

PS: Alexander Gibson was one I was particularly disappointed in. He was the conductor of the Scottish National Orchestra. Very much a Sibelius specialist, recorded Sibelius symphonies with the Scottish National. Became, at one time, a principal guest conductor here so he was here several times. Over a period of time did all the Sibelius symphonies. The Fourth symphony is the thorniest of the bunch. He came here, he did that with us fairly late here in his association with the orchestra, and he made the assumption that the orchestra knew it, and we had never played it. He was not particularly under control for all of those concerts. He developed a drinking problem as he got older and he was not sober most of the time. We didn't have any idea even after the performances what that symphony was about. He was not able to lead us well through it. I don't think he conducted much at all after that, certainly not here.

KR: That's sad.

PS: That happens occasionally. I very much enjoyed another opera production we did with, John Pritchard, another English conductor. He did the first production I got to play in of *Peter Grimes.* That was done very, very well. He was a great guy to work with. I came here just after most of the really well-known name conductors,

either had passed on, or stopped coming down to this place since it was so far out of the way.

KR: What about the conductors of the Symphony ...Eschenbach and…

PS: After he left, Foster would come back for guest appearances, and he would come back to conduct the Opera. For most of my career here we played for the Opera. He had always been complimentary of me, complimentary about my playing when he came back. So finally we sat down one day and talked about it a little bit. He kind of understood after that where I was coming from on it. Kind of admitted that he really had wanted the other player here and we just went on from there. So, there was really nothing left there really. He didn't really get a very good deal, of course, out of this here either. The Symphony locked the musicians out in 1976, in the summer because we really didn't have any work that paid anything. In contract negotiations they weren't getting what they wanted and the musicians weren't getting what they wanted, we kept on playing but the Society closed the doors, actually. Actually in the middle of some rehearsals we were doing with Raymond Leppard for a barque music concert.

KR: You mean in the middle of a rehearsal?

PS: In the middle of the day between two rehearsals. I think we were at Rice University at the Hammon Hall space. They just said, "we're shutting down until we have a contract." They did go ahead and continue to pay our hospitalization, which was something that was a little unusual. I have forgotten just how long it lasted, now everybody keeps saying 4 Y2 months but I think it was a little shorter than that. It was a substantial period of time. Many people in the orchestra used everything they had up in savings, and sold off a lot of things, a couple of folks lost houses, and several people took up secondary occupations. The second clarinet player became a bartender, the principal trombonist went to work moving furniture for movers, just loading trucks of furniture.

KR: It seems cruel to use your hands in such a way.

PS: Well, that's what happened to everybody, that was when scale was down to around $300 a week, and I think you could rent a house for $250 a month. People didn't have savings and musicians aren't usually wealthy enough to have a lot set aside. So it was a rough time for a lot of folks. Eventually there was a contract signed and we went back to work. But the audience diminished substantially for the Symphony after that. When I came here we did 24 pairs of subscription concerts in addition to the work we did with the opera which was usually five operas that we did, maybe six operas, now that I think on it, five when I first started and we usually did them four to six times. But after the lock-out I don't remember the hall ever being consistently anywhere near as full as it had been before the lock-out. I think it took a terrible toll on the Society in the long term here.

KR: When did it start regaining what it had lost?

PS: Let me finish up about Foster first because he played into this lock-out thing. It went on long enough so that Foster took a stand on it and he sided with the orchestra, with the musicians, on it. He was a young conductor so he didn't know better, either, because that the wrong thing to do and so basically then his contract wasn't renewed after that by the Society and it ran out in the 1978, I think, and he left the orchestra. Basically was blackballed by other orchestras in the United States from getting a permanent job here. So he ended up most of his career was spent as the music director of orchestra in Monaco. He would guest conduct in the United States but has never had a full-time position here, even though he's an American conductor. It's supposedly primarily because of that. So he stayed here after the lockout then about a year and a half or two years. Then the Society went here with guest conductors for about three years because they weren't able to hire anybody. They weren't happy with anybody that was available, I guess. Perhaps to save money, were thinking, "well, we can just do it with guest conductors." The Society here, its fortunes very much depend on who the president of the Board is and who the Board is. The Board is the controlling factor not the management at all. After three years they were pretty much told by anybody that was going to give them a lot of money, like foundations, "you have to have a music director you're not going to be able to succeed without a name there, and the only conductor that was available, the one that they ended up hiring was Sergiu Comissiona who had been quite successful in Baltimore. He was not nearly as successful here. He didn't have the backing of the orchestra here that he perhaps he had in Baltimore. Although in Baltimore he had a reputation of also being a kind of a small person in a lot of ways. He didn't cultivate friendships very well, I don't think. Certainly not here.

KR: There were some personality conflicts?

PS: Yeah, his personality just didn't work well here. During his tenure here he had, I think, his third heart attack, a serious heart attack, on a tour. He collapsed in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, I think it was, outside his hotel room door and was apparently unconscious for about twenty minutes. Did make a recovery, went back to work, I would think fairly soon as I remember, but his mind wasn't functioning very well. Apparently it was a function of some of the medication he was taking and it took him most of two years to get that adjusted so that he could function really quite well. But that whole two years that he was back, basically he couldn't conduct anything that he didn't know before the heart attack. Anything new, he just couldn't do anything with it. So the Society let him go actually and they didn't do it well. He's the only conductor that was a music director here that has never been invited back as a guest conductor. After the time he left, I think, he was beginning to function much like he had before the heart attack. His medication was correct and went on to conduct in Vancouver for a long number of years, and in Helsinki, Finland. He's done now in Vancouver. I

still think he's doing some conducting in Finland. So we went through the guest conductors here for a year or so after he was let go and then Christoph was hired.

TAPE 2, SIDE **B**

PS: Christoph was certainly totally committed to the music, which perhaps hadn't been the case before. He wasn't interested in anything except the music. Comissiona liked to play tricks on personalities that he could deal with or cause a little grief to. He just kind of enjoyed adding little bits of pressure here and there.

KR: Did he do that to you?

PS: Well, he didn't do too much too me. It was real common within the brass players that he knew that if a brass player would chip a note…he would see if he could find a way…he'd try to remember what he had done and see if it was anything that he had done so he could figure it out that he could make him chip that note again he would actually conduct that same way again and see if it would work again, even if it was on a concert.

KR: Sounds like mental games.

PS: Yeah, he was into game playing a lot. Christoph came in, a tremendous musician and already a great conductor but still primarily known as a pianist, and an unusual person, I think. I never felt really comfortable with him in a way because his whole life is the music. He's not a very well-rounded person. He never drives a car, he doesn't do anything. He always has someone cooking at his house for him and his housekeeping for him. He didn't have to do anything but the music that he wanted to play or work. He was good socially in this town. He was able to get out and raise a lot of money, I think, and function well in the society functions he was expected to participate in. Another area where Comissiona, I don't think, had been particularly good. Definitely was pretty good at cultivating friendships with some of the people that the Symphony needed. Extremely unusual for a conductor, he developed a very strong following from almost the entire orchestra. Always a few people who are not. The situation we have now is much more normal, where there are a good number of people who think, "well, the conductor is ok," a good number people that think he's the worst thing that could have happened to us, remembering by now that one-third of the orchestra hasn't worked under any other conductor but Eschenbach. Certainly as time progressed Eschenbach had people who he became very close to and those people generally are ones who tend now not to think so much of the conductor we have who actually tries to be more even in the way he treats everybody in the orchestra, both on-stage and off-stage. Well, he is not nearly as obvious with favorites. I think always, ever since I've been in it, the orchestra's attitude here has always been to play the best they can play under the situation they're in and often the

situation led to less than stellar performances. Christoph very much tried to lessen the number of things that would ruin a performance. We used to rehearse often in a separate rehearsal building. Almost all of the time when Foster was here. Sometimes when Foster was here we weren't even able to rehearse in the same building. It's just the city owns the building and they had control of it and we just really couldn't get in it when we needed to. Plus, of course, rehearsing on stage always cost more money because we pay rent to the city and rather sizable amount of rent and its more to be on stage than in a rehearsal room. So that time we didn't rehearse on stage very much at all. When I first came we rehearsed on stage usually just the dress rehearsal. It got better during Comissiona's time here. A short time, I guess, after Christoph was here, we rehearsed almost everything on the stage. It only made sense to him that that was where we needed to rehearse.

KR: Christoph was the one that took the Symphony on international tours. What was that like?

PS: Before he came here we did national tours, usually stopping in Carnegie Hall then along the Eastern Seaboard. That's pretty much that's all we did. Then when Christoph came we did a couple of those tours and after he had been here three or four years he wanted us to begin to travel out of the country because he knew that part of the reputation of orchestras, most of their reputation, depends on what people away from here think. Everybody else's always's got the best; you can't ever be home grown, unless you come back with the word from those places that what you've got is outstanding. So the first opportunity to do anything with Christoph was, I think, in 1990. I may be off a year there. We were invited to come play at a festival in Singapore. Other than the trip down into Mexico in 1979, that was the first time the orchestra had been out of the country in many, many, many years.

KR: How was the orchestra received in Singapore?

PS: Extremely well. Extremely well. We played a series of concerts. The hall was relatively old that we played in and as I remember it didn't have much for air conditioning, and that wasn't particularly large. Singapore has its own symphony, a full-time orchestra. The orchestra we had at that point was so much better than theirs that we were received extremely well. We stayed about a week and then turned around came back. In the following year we went to Japan and did some touring in Japan but we were primarily the orchestra-in-residence for the Pacific Music Festival, which was a summer institute type of thing that Bernstein started and where he wanted to start it was in China but because of the political situation it didn't happen there. Actually the first year, he died before the first season, of it happened. Michael Tillson Thomas and Christoph then were co-directors of that in its early years. It wasn't the first year of the festival but one of the earlier years of the festival we were invited to be orchestra-in-residence. So we stayed there for about a week in Sapporo and toured a few other places on the

island of Hokkaido and then we played a couple of concerts in Tokyo. We did this for two years. I'm not sure that both years we did all of the same cities. In one of those years we did play in Osaka and we played in Nagasaki, as well, as the concerts in Tokyo and on the island of Hokkaido in several cities there. And if I had to go back, I'd love to go back to Sapporo, but the rest of Japan I'm not too keen on.[laughs]

KR: What was about it that was really…?

PS: It's the only place where there's enough room, for one thing.

KR: It's not so claustrophobic?

PS: Tokyo makes Manhattan seem like a town.

KR: It's huge?

PS: Yes, it's all just buildings and there's almost no green. It's just piled in there. It's huge, absolutely huge. Most of the other places in Japan are very dense in the cities, too. Even in Sapparo which I think is supposed to be about 1.8 million, it seems very open. It's where the Japanese go for vacations. It's the north for them. You have a lot of open spaces. The climate is very temperate. Well, it's not a whole lot different probably than some place like San Francisco, or something like that, maybe warmer in the summer. But Sappora had very nice climate in the summer when we were there and comfortable outside. They were very careful to keep lots of gardens there, being the kind of an area for Japanese tourists primarily. There were a few Westerners there when we were there. The first year we were there, I think they said about 25,000 total for the year. You could get away to the country. After growing up on a farm it's good to get out of the city. So, that was really very enjoyable and you were closer to parts of Japan where food that was more normal than Japanese food that you could find in Tokyo. And it also had things that we were more at ease with. A lot more seafood that was still recognizable instead of being all cut up and occasionally even some beef and pork. But I just thought it was very pleasant up there. And two years we were there.

KR: Then you went on the European tours?

PS: Then we began to get into the European tours. We went through Europe.

KR: Where did you tour?

PS: Primarily Germany since he was from Germany and the booking agent was there. In the first tour they didn't expect of make a lot of money on because we were totally unknown, so the fees weren't very high. The first tour, I almost think perhaps was all of Germany except for Vienna, close enough

KR: Not a shabby place.

PS: No, in fact, that was the highlight of that tour actually. We played in Germany, I'm sure we would have played that first time in Hannover, we played in Frankfort, we played in Nuremburg, we played in Hamburg, and then we played in the Musikverein in Vienna. And a place outside Frankfort- Mainz & Bodrum. The real big concert there was the concert in Vienna. We did the Mahler First Symphony there. I'm trying to think if we did that on the first tour the first time we were there or the second time we were there. We played there on the second tour as well. I think we actually played Mahler 5 the ftrst time we were there and we played it in Musikverein, the place where it would have been premiered with Mahler conducting. During the first time for the orchestra to be there in a historic hall and playing Mahler in the town that knew Mahler. Personally as well as musically everybody was pretty well up for the concert. It was a pretty amazing concert.

KR: How did the audience react?

PS: The response on the whole tour including Vienna was extremely strong and favorable to the orchestra. That whole tour provided a major shot in the arm for reputation of the orchestra pretty much every place except in Houston.

KR: Really? Houstonians didn't react to the accolades.

PS: I'm sure they did to a certain extent. The orchestra felt very strongly on most of these European tours that the management didn't take advantage of the kind of real-time reporting at all and didn't bother to say anything about it and get anything into the papers back here until after we'd returned. It wasn't news anymore then. There was a lot of dissension actually, discussion with the management, "why can't you get this back there", "we'll have somebody translate it later and send it back." We had people in the orchestra that could do it, they had people in management on the tour that could have done it. They could have gotten word back immediately. So the first tour of Europe they did very little that way. By the second tour in Europe, the musicians had set up an interactive webpage, an internet situation with a lot of school kids here to send live reports back to every day. To a certain extent we tried to get some information back that way and get the management to move a little taster, but even then the management didn't do that much. They probably should. Of course the musicians ideas of what's practical don't necessarily have to be the same thing. Both on the Japanese tours and the European tours the orchestra felt that not enough news was made of the publicity we were getting, which remained positive and strong and certainly audiences' reactions were always strong. That's not to say there wasn't a bad review. There was one, on the (next to) last tour we did, in Amsterdam.

KR: What did the reviewer say?

PS: Well, he had a personal vendetta with Christoph so he didn't say much about the orchestra but it was a review of the conductor and it was very negative. That was on the second (European) tour we did, because the first tour we took, the Concertgebouw Hall, I believe, was closed for reconstruction. They had to rebuild. It was on wooden pilings and it had rotted away underneath. So both of those tours, all of those tours were really highpoints for the orchestra and the orchestra came back each time playing a lot better than they had when they went, because when you're on tour you're together pretty much all of the time, certainly a lot more than we are here and it really does make a great difference in the way you play. You begin to become more cohesive and so it really had a lot ofvalue. Unfortunately it's very expensive and money was always a major concern. It is for every orchestra but certainly here it's always been a concern, perhaps more than most other orchestras, as things have moved through Christoph's tenure. After he left the orchestra, he was involved in one more tour over there. A summer tour which came about because he wanted the orchestra to play when he was directing the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival in Germany and so we did go back and play three concerts for the Schleswig-Holstein and two, I think, in Lucerne, for the Lucerne Festival. There was a concert that was part of another festival, it was smaller festival there. I'm not sure which one of the concerts it was because Schleswig-Holstein covers an area. It's not just in one place. We got to play in some new places there. On the second European tour we actually did play in London which was also a country were you could actually understand everything that was going on [laughs] pretty well, and it was new place for most of us to have played. We did kind of a run-out concert on our way between London and Amsterdam. We played a town in France but we just flew in for the rehearsal and concert and flew out the same day, so we really didn't see much of France. [laughs] Oh, well. We thought there might be a next time but it doesn't look like that now.

KR: That's a very exciting experience.

PS: It was. That was the first time that a lot of people in the orchestra, a lot of the musicians who had primarily only played under Christoph[3], began to realize that he had moved on and the Houston Symphony was not a primary thing for him anymore. Their attitudes did begin to change a little bit after that but until then I think they felt, is there life after Eschenbach? That was the attitude for a lot of folks.

KR: It's hard making that comparison. Organizations go through cycles.

PR: Right. The orchestra felt that Christoph left because the Society wasn't coming up with enough money for him to do the things he wanted to do, which is probably

[3] Referring to the Schlewig-Holstein Festival Tour - the last European tour for the Houston Symphony Orchestra with conductor Christoph Eschenbach.

not too far off the truth. He wanted to do bigger and bigger things, and they weren't able to come up with the money to commit the finances. Now, all of the orchestras, almost all of the orchestras are negatively affected by the stock market downturn in 2002 or whatever the year was primarily, the economy, not only in the endowments for operations, but also in the liabilities for their pension funds. And since 9/11[4] there's been a real change, I think. At first, it was for the good, there were more people that came to concerts, but now it seems to be more and more difficult, all over the country, although it seems to be a little bit worse here, to get people to commit to buy a season of tickets. They just want to buy individual tickets to concerts and programs. We're beginning to reap the results of less and less music education, and in a way, more and more of the political correctness. I mean, after all, the music we play is primarily western music. The cultures that don't have that background, we've been taught to accept their cultures and are trying to be more and more comfortable in their cultures. We haven't been able to sell them on the things we thought were good in our culture, particularly. So I think perhaps our orchestral music may become passe. We'll wait and find out. It may be, that certainly in this town it seems to be right now, on pretty shaky ground.

KR: You've talked a little about it earlier but I'd like to talk about more of your leadership role in negotiating contracts. How did you get involved in that?

PS: I've been on five of the negotiating committees.

KR: How did you get selected?

PS: The orchestra elects the committee to negotiate for each contract season.

KR: What process is involved in the negotiations? How long does it take?

PS: It's varied depending upon the period and the management. Most of the negotiations that I've been on have been fairly difficult negotiations. Of course, each side is trying to get the best for their situation. So the orchestra always is after an increase in salary and benefits, without any onerous increase in workload, or any loosening of restrictions that would make it possible to have a little bit of a personal life. And the Society is always trying to get the most they can for the least money. Money is a hard commodity to come up with enough of usually. So they're trying to get less restriction on working conditions so they feel they have more flexibility all of the time.

KR: A tricky balance.

PS: Yes, everybody is trying to advance their side at the same time realizing you've got to have an agreement in the end that will function and work for both sides.

[4] September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center Towers in New York City, NY. See http://www.septemberllnews.com/ as one source for information.

Over the years, I've developed rather strong ideas about how the Society is run here. I think one of the difficulties we have is that the Board is the one that controls the situation. Not the management they hire.

KR: So the management is under the Society?

PS: Yes, they hire an Executive Director, and it seems to me that to have a consistent outlook their primary function should be to hire an Executive Director that they trust to manage the orchestra. If they find their trust is not well-founded, then they should replace that person. The way the Society works here now, while somewhat different from when I first came here, is that the real power seems to be in the President of the Board who changes every two or three years and is elected by the Society itself and its membership.

KR: There's no continuity.

PS: There's no continuity there. If you look at the arts organizations in the city, the ones that are most successful have been ones that have developed somebody who's a strong leader. When I joined the Symphony they didn't need it so much. They had an extremely strong backer in Ima Hogg, and Albert Hirsch. Probably, Albert Hirsch, I'm not sure of his first name anymore. I know another Hirsh and I might mix the two up. But those two folks got together at the end of the season at that time and they would say, "well, how much was the operating deficit this year" and they would cover it and write checks. There was no endowment at all from the Society and that was how it ran. It can't run that way any more. There aren't donors with that kind of pockets, there aren't donors in this city right ow…. I'm sure there is an exception or two, I can think of one right now that I would think was really an exception, there aren't donors willing to put that much money into it.

KR: There is an endowment.

PS: There is an endowment now. It's about fifty million dollars at the present time. It kicks off a good bit of income, but there's been a price to pay to get the endowment to where it is, too. Anyway, the negotiations: since I was on committees…my first negotiating committees started right after Christoph Eschenbach had been hired and the prior management with David Wax as the Executive Director had been hired. He had come to us from The Minnesota Orchestra. He was new here, the first time I was on a committee. By that time both sides had learned that we needed to have attorneys present for the negotiations. There had been some negotiations without a musicians attorney. There was one, in particular, in the mid-1980s. The musicians in particular had a committee that was all very bright people that could do things pretty well by themselves. It ended up not being quite the case when the dust settled. So the Society has used a labor attorney, and they were using a new attorney at that time. The musicians were using an attorney we hadn't used before at that time; so we

had new attorneys, and new management and I think that more than one of us who were new on the labor negotiating committee. So that was a big learning curve there. Almost as much as starting out on the audition trail that had been a lot of years earlier. The negotiations were difficult primarily, in that particular instance, because David Wax, having come from another orchestra threw out a list of proposals that included all of the things they had in Minnesota, even though their situation was very different than ours. We would look down page after page, asking "why do you want this here?" and the answer was "well, that's what we had in Minnesota." We would say, "well, that's not a very good reason." He also wanted to make a model. As the new executive director, he wanted to show what he could do, trying to get as good a contract for the Society as he could. That was a very interesting thing. Most of the negotiations, about ninety percent of the time you're not doing anything. Either the attorneys are talking alone or you're preparing for meetings. In the meetings themselves, a lot of times, you're in caucus. You need to talk without the other side there. If they want to talk, and most often it seemed to be the case that they needed to talk more than we did because they hadn't thought through some things, usually. Their attorney had very little labor experience at all. He may have been good in contract law, perhaps or something. I'm not sure what his specialty was. They used him three or four more times after that. He eventually learned a little bit of it. At first he was a stumbling block directly. Of course our management didn't like our attorney, which is kind of understandable. We hired an attorney that was experienced in labor law and was very much an old style labor attorney. Intentionally obtuse a lot of the time, sometimes very grandiose. Basically somebody that knew things that we had to know, where we had attorneys in the past, before that, that were not experienced enough and things got through that shouldn't have. So that contract negotiation was interesting for me more as a learning experience than anything else. It went settled reasonably well after a lot of haranguing.

KR: How long of a process was it?

PS: Oh, it varied a lot. This last contract negotiating committee I was on took two years.

KR: Two years! Oh, my goodness!

PS: Yeah. I was on one other one that went on well over a year, but I think in other cases we were all done in a relatively short period of time, I would say in four to six months total. The process usually begins at least three months before the contract expires. I don't remember enough of the specifics about that first one. I don't remember being unusual for the time frame. It would have been '88 or '89, I think, somewhere in that area. Some negotiating years were '94, and '97, there was one in '91, basically. It was all those with David Wax then. Both sides then used the same attorneys for both of those. There was a good amount of carry over on the musicians' side for each of those committees. I think maybe three of

us were on the first four altogether, and one or two people would rotate in and out each time.

KR: So there was continuity?

PS: We all began to know a little bit of what was going on and how we had to deal with each other as well as the other side. Only one of those was not particularly difficult. I think that was simply because in order to get one of these Japanese tours, we had to have the contract signed before the Japanese would contract with the orchestra. They were not going to take any risk that we wouldn't show. That actually helped a lot in the negotiating process. It did away with a lot of B.S. and we got right down to what we had to do and did it. The first negotiation that I was on that was really difficult was in 1997.

KR: Why was it difficult?

PS: Well, each of the contracts when they were negotiated were really, except the one before we went to Japan perhaps, was negotiated in a way that was back-loaded where the Society didn't have to come up with much money initially but promised to do better and would go ahead in the following contract. By the time you got there, the Board in particular had always changed in the leadership; quite often was completely different than what we had before. Although the management had stayed the same, the management really didn't have much authority to negotiate. Often in negotiations when they got fairly close, one of the reasons we would need to caucus would be for the management to contact the Executive Committee of the Board. We couldn't agree on anything without the Board.

TAPE 3, SIDE A

KR: You were talking about the difficult negotiations.

PS: Yes, actually I was kind of thinking about how I never finished one thing just before that that kind of ties in with the negotiations where we were. That is that the more successful organizations having some person that stood out as a leader, in particular with the Opera for the whole time I've been here David Gockley has been the Opera- he's been the leadership of the Opera. At the time I came here, the Ballet was not important at all. It was a very small regional company, not of any stature. And the lockout in 1976 gave both the Ballet and the Opera Boards a huge boost. The Society, even at that time was quite closed and didn't want people on the Board that didn't fit certain criteria. These people took their money and went someplace else. One of the places they went was the Ballet, it was trying to build itself up. From that time until now, its stature has changed immensely. A situation that might have happened anyway, but might not have happened if the Symphony Society had been able to maintain its position of prominence by different actions they took back then. In the negotiations, the

problem still exists and it still exists today, I think, that we don't have a particular person who is the leader of the Symphony and provides that continuity. Certainly, Marzio does for the Museum of Fine Arts. What I was trying to think of primarily were situations like the Orchestra, of which the Orchestra is the most extreme. The situations with performing artists that you have to pay every week, where the museum has its primary assets not costing them more money on a weekly basis for payroll. [laughs] Certainly the Ballet and the Opera don't have as many people on the regular payroll which is why we're the extreme example. But in the Symphony, we've not had anyone since Ima Hogg- any one person that was strongly championing the Symphony and in a position of leadership since I've been here. We've actually had more managements than we have had conductors. Perhaps the strongest Executive Director or General Manager they've had since I've been here was Giedeon Toeplitz. He went to Pittsburgh after that. Somebody who came in and really tried to be a strong manager and found out it just wasn't going to work for him so he left.

KR: That's sad.

PS: The management has been so weak at times that, I mentioned that my first concert here was with Arthur Fiedler conducting on New Year's Eve, which he had traditionally done here. The year after the one I played he didn't conduct here.

KR: What happened?

PS: Well, what happened was that the management forgot to send him a contract.

KR: Oh, no.

PS: With people who should know, I've talked to people who should know, apparently he even sent a letter down saying, "Are you going to send me a contract?" They never did so he didn't come down here, he stayed in Boston. His last years, he conducted in Boston were years that he could have been conducting the New Year's Eve concert here except that our management didn't send him a contract.

KR: He probably felt insulted.

PS: I'm sure he did. [laughs] I'm sure he did and he didn't need to come all the way down here anyway, eh? He probably wanted to get out of the snow in Boston. With the negotiations still relying, for the Society, on the President of the Society, a volunteer who is elected and certainly, hopefully has a great interest in the Houston Symphony that you're going to have a lot of the situation tempered by the personality and the relative optimism or pessimism of that person. It seems to be pretty regular, has been pretty regular, that the Society has seemed to end up with people who were not optimistic during contract negotiation years but then immediately after they were (optimistic Presidents). The negotiations of 1997

were very difficult. There was not a lot of money. The orchestra was asked to take a salary cut which the orchestra has done here at least three different times since I've been here.

KR: Have the salaries gone back up?

PS: Oh yes, eventually it's gone back up and gone beyond where it was before. We've had contracted raises that we've given up over the years, mostly in the mid-80s where there were…

KR: There was an economic problem in Houston anyway?

PS: All over the country, yeah. Then during that time the Orchestra did not receive some raises that had been negotiated and went further in negotiating a new contract and took even more cuts, with a good bit of time for the Society to get back where they had been. Assuming that eventually the economy would come back and the oil business would come back. In fact, it has. In 1997, the expense of the European tour, which was very high, (even though each time we went back we would get higher fees and hopefully a little more sponsorship, there were always situations where the Society lost money, in absolute dollars, for the trips). I'm not sure what all else was involved in that. The Society started out with an offer that was going to have us taking cuts. We weren't willing to do that on the basis of the information they had given us. So we got within, actually within hours, of the orchestra striking in 1997. The only reason the orchestra didn't strike then was out deference to things that the orchestra was doing that Christoph wanted. Eschenbach was the only thing that kept the orchestra from striking. In prior negotiations, there had been situations where we, the negotiating committee, thought the orchestra should strike. Our attorney said, "Look, you shouldn't strike in this particular situation because the power of the strike is in the threat. Once it's done there's nothing left, you've shot the wad." So you don't try to use that and it was certainly his intent of all labor negotiators to try avoid having to take that step. But in 1997, the attorney had come to the decision some time before we were willing to even admit it, he said that, "you need to strike in this particular case." He was firmly convinced that we should and the orchestra, the negotiating committee actually, disagreed with him and we didn't strike but we did get within hours of a strike before that one was settled.

KR: What about this recent strike? What were some of the issues involved?

PS: Certainly the issue was money. The situation was kind of unbelievable for the last negotiation. At first, the Management and the Board were in disarray, still in part from the flood. Allison[5] destroyed the lower level of Jones Hall, it destroyed the Symphony offices and the music library, several instruments and made the office space uninhabitable for a long time. So the Symphony offices were moved

[5] Tropical Storm Allison on June 8-9,2001 caused widespread flooding to metro-Houston. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki!fropical_Storm_Allison as one source for information

and they were given space by Enron. Then, of course, Enron went down the tubes and didn't have the space to give anymore and the company that owned the building agreed to continue to letting the Symphony have space with the proviso that if somebody wanted to rent that space they might have to move somewhere else. I think they ended up moving three times in that same building because the floor space got rented out. Compounded with that, basically, only six months or so, less than a year before the flood, the Board had decided to change managements and hired a new Executive Director who had no experience whatsoever in managing in the arts. Basically, had been a Board member at one time and I think, I'm guessing but my thought is that they hired her with the expectation that she would have a year to learn the ropes before negotiations came up and then she would be able to be prepared to do that and they made the determination that she had other qualities that they needed. Then Allison got in the way of that learning curve very quickly and my own impression is then that she kind oflet the Allison situation take control of everything else. She didn't complete any kind of learning curve before negotiations. In fact, when we came to the first meeting with the Society for this last negotiation, the President of the Board asked that we just take a freeze for the year because the Society really didn't want to negotiate, "we'll negotiate with you if we have to, but we really don't want to right now. How about leaving things the same for another year." And the last contract, the one leading up to this negotiation, had been a concessionary contract where the Society was allowed to reduce the strength of the orchestra in the early years, was allowed certain other things had gotten behind further in the way this orchestra placed in relation to its peers. The strong expectation was that this, and very explicit expectation, that this contract that we were to start negotiating that turned into this contract was to be one leading back to having the orchestra be competitive with other full-time, full-size orchestras. In the contracts, going back to '97 - that one only ended up actually in a settlement for one year. That was a freeze, we didn't get the salary cuts, we didn't gain anything either except a pension increase, and then there was an awful lot of bitterness on both sides. The negotiating committee, we had actually suggested that the Society, perhaps, was in disarray enough then that they need to get outside help. So they agreed to bring down Henry Fogel, the Executive Director of the Chicago Symphony, who was instrumental in setting up a group of committees that had Board members, Staff, and musicians on each committee to deal with various areas. In great part, that was to help promote communication and understanding between the opposite sides, if you will, as well as with the management kind; of in the middle. In those meetings, the groups worked in their individual committees for a good period of time and then there was one committee that took all of the recommendations and tried to converge them and decide what things would work and not work and pass them along. That was hopefully going to provide some sort of blueprint to avoid some of the difficulties in the future because people would know enough about what was going on so there could be a higher degree of cooperation.

KR: Has that worked?

PS: Well, no, it didn't work at all because the Society, basically, before we had what we thought were negotiating sessions that we were told afterwards, "'oh, no, these people that met with us that time were not their negotiating committee and we were just trying to settle the contract without having to go to negotiations" when one of those folks came in, and said,.....and this with meetings with attorneys present for both sides,…one of those people came back and told our attorney, "Well, you know, I hope the musicians get their money's worth out of you, but they probably won't because you don't know how we do things around here." And the whole idea was that we were just trying to get something that wasn't the way we did things around here the last number of years. That kind of set the tone. We ended up starting the negotiations, with the Society in disarray, basically. They weren't ready at first, then we had these preliminary meetings with the Executive Director and the President of the Board, and a couple of other members of the Board, Chairman of the Board and one other member, the Past President of the Board. The contract, we were, that we were just coming out of was one where the foundations had given $7 million to pay off the accrued debt of the Symphony. The Symphony was supposed to be starting out without any debt. We did have unfunded pension liability, pretty sizable but that's all. No cash debt. The Society had the requirement to balance the budget, which is why they got the concessionary contract for the first three years of that contract; it was a four and a half year contract. Their published annual report showed that they had balanced the budget for the first three years, and then the first thing they said when they came to negotiations was, first of all, that was done all with smoke and mirrors, that they hadn't balanced the budget actually, and they had admitted that they had a sizable amount of money that wasn't accounted for in the annual budget, that the foundations had given in addition to the $7 million, that was supposed to be the beginnings of a cash flow fund for them to use so they didn't have to rely on a line of a credit, which has always been the way they had handled short term cash flow operations in the past. That sizable amount of money had actually been spent. It had not been replaced or built up like it was supposed to be in the contract (with the foundations). At one point they're telling us the numbers are not really right and then this same fellow that said, "you don't know how we do things around here" came in and preached at us for a long time, saying the numbers they were telling us about "how bad the situation was were *real* numbers now". Within months after Enron. There was not a lot of trust there right away, which had been the aim of this committee process - which was to develop some trust, so it didn't work. Obviously, it didn't. It just didn't work. And that's been a practice of the Society in the past, too, to have things where they included musicians and then they take a course of action, in fact, before '97 they had done a similar kind of thing when a long range budget report was to be published, the members were all supposed to sign off on it and the musicians, the report was so far from anything they'd worked on with the musicians would not sign off on it. None of them would sign off on it, although the report was still published with their names on it, though they had said they didn't want their names on it because it wasn't what they had talked about exactly. There's another process going on

right now, where they're supposed to be trying to increase communication with the orchestra and the management. Those people who have been here a number of years, the majority of us that have been here any length of time won't have anything to do with it. We still function and do things that we think can to try to help but as to that particular thing, I'm not interested at all. It's a touchy-feeling thing I'm not interested at all in because it doesn't mean a damn thing as far as I'm concerned. The other people that I served with that were on the negotiating committee; I think there's nobody on that negotiating committee that is really participating in that with anything more than minimal interest. One person has gone once or twice just so he can have the chance to blow off steam. Some people in the orchestra are taking it seriously so you never want to say it isn't going to work. I still function on the Board's finance committee, as not a terribly active member.

KR: You get information.

PS: Yeah, I go to the meetings and I contribute what I can, but I try not to influence it, particularly, that's not really my bailiwick, but sometimes I actually have some ideas.

KR: So you're reactive rather than proactive in your involvement?

PS: No, if they're willing to vote, I think, I would pretty much vote on anything. I don't thing there's anything that committee is doing that I'm excluded from at this point. It might be in a negotiating year. Right now there's not. I don't think that kind of thing is a bad thing. I think there's a real difficulty, though, in musicians in orchestras, how involved they should be in the management of the orchestra. It's enough to do to keep our playing up and do our job and we're not experienced or qualified to make a lot of the judgments that have to be made in running the organization.

KR: Are you paid to be on these committees?

PS: No one is.

KR: They're all volunteers.

PS: For Board members, that's part of their responsibility when they were elected to serve on the Board. It used to be that if someone could give $5,000 to the Symphony a year they could be on the Board. They (the Society) have tried and, I think, partly as an outcome of these Fogel set-up committees, that they have tried to readjust that so that there's not a fixed amount it takes to join the Board. It has to depend a little bit on what the person's abilities are financially. They have people on the Board for services they can render in-kind if they don't have a lot of money. I think heads of the Schools of Music of U. of H. and Rice are on the Board for that reason. Those people are on the Board primarily from a financial

point of view and still expected to be active on the Board in some way now. In the past, managements, the ones I have been involved with, I've been off and on the Finance Committee for a dozen years, so with this last management, too, that committee didn't do anything. Most of the committees from past management before '97, they were just make-work things, took time away from the staff They would have meetings here and there and discuss this and that, say "oh, that sounds like a good idea." Nothing would ever happen. Everything was controlled by the Executive Committee of the Board, a small group. The other committee meetings were to make those people who were giving money feel like they felt they had something else to contribute, that they feel somehow, that they were involved, but they really weren't, I don't think. I think they were on the outside.

KR: Let me ask you a two-part last question so we can wrap this up. I'd like your perspective on where the Houston Symphony fits within the national scheme of things in comparison with other orchestras. Also, where do you think the future of the Houston Symphony is going?

PS: I don't think that there's any question that at the end of Eschenbach's tenure the orchestra was on the edge of being as good as any orchestra in the country. It was certainly better than New York. As good as the best orchestra whenever we were on our best days, it was a fine orchestra and it was really on the edge of having to be included in that top echelon of orchestras.

KR: So he really did build a world-class orchestra?

PS: Tremendous orchestra building and a tremendous commitment to the music and what he was doing. No question of that. The change he made in the orchestra is something that doesn't happen very often. The last conductor who was able to do it, perhaps, was Dorati when he made Minneapolis into an orchestra that was worth recording and people bought recordings of them. They were great. He made a similar amount of improvement in the National Symphony. It just doesn't happen very often. During the time I've been here, the Orchestra Board for the Symphony has gone from saying, "we want a good orchestra," to especially during Christoph's time, "we want to have a top orchestra in the country." I've been here when the Board's goal was just to have a full-time orchestra. In some of the negotiations, they would say, "we think we should try to get into the top fifteen." That would be as high as they were going. When Christoph was here first, the attitude of the Board for almost all that time was let's go with it, "we're going to have one of the world's greatest orchestras" and even though they didn't have the money to support it, they liked the benefits of it. When the costs got to be too high, then they weren't able to honor Eschenbach's wishes and demands. He left then. The attitude seems to be, as we started this last negotiation, now we've got the great orchestra now we need to balance the budget. "And how are we going to do it? Oh, we're going to cut the salaries." Once we turned down the one year extension, we were told very bluntly, "Well, every offer you get from now on will be worse." And it was. That's why there was a strike. It got to the

point where the Society, the conditions the Society wanted on the orchestra were such that the orchestra would not, could not work under those situations, and was fully prepared, I think, fully prepared, and more than half expected, more than half of the orchestra expected, that most everybody thought the chances were very high, that the orchestra would go into bankruptcy because the feeling was so strong in the orchestra that the Society was not ready to go on. In the negotiations, they removed the Executive Director from negotiations, once they got started. Their side for negotiations was conducted by Board members, in addition to their attorney and a couple of staff people who were new, of course, since all of the staff had changed, had never been in negotiations. Their negotiations had a new attorney. Generally two Board members or three, in addition to the President of the Society, would show up. They didn't seem to have any feeling that, especially in the first months of negotiation, even though the contract was set to expire, that there was any sense of urgency. We thought we had worked out an extension with them at one point and we were supposed to hear back from them and we didn't hear anything from them for four weeks after that. It was in summer and they were gone on vacation, I guess. Then they came back, "well, you kind of did what we said in the letter. Well, that's not what we really meant, so we can't accept this. And our situation is deteriorating as we speak so we're withdrawing the offer of an extension completely." This is after we felt we had an agreement. So obviously they weren't very organized. Like I said, they removed the Executive Director from the negotiating process and had nobody there negotiating for their side with any experience in negotiating with the Symphony (musicians). One of their Board members who attended, and one that you're speaking with was Walter Sapp, a major attorney himself[laughs], and he was in the long run is the person on the Society side that we understand was able to get the Society to move on so at least there would be some sort of an agreement.

KR: Are these strained relations and strikes pretty common with some symphonies?

PS: The Houston Symphony had never struck.

KR: I knew that was the first time.

PS: We were locked-out for that sizable time in '76. There was also a lock-out, one short one, before that. Apparently both of them were attempts try to shorten the season, I guess, from 52 weeks, because at that time there was no summer income in Houston. Although the way the orchestra got to 52 weeks was by foregoing raises in a contract and adding weeks at the old scale. I think that's the way that happened. At first, there were meetings that were very, very far apart, because the Society didn't have anything ready to do. They didn't know what they were doing. They didn't know how to set-up proposals.

KR: They just weren't prepared?

PS: Apparently. Perhaps they were finding out that their financial situation was worse than they thought. I don't know, why, all of a sudden, "our situation is deteriorating" and continued to deteriorate rather strongly throughout the whole negotiating process after the contract expired at the end of September. They didn't agree to start meeting with us until sometime, I think our first meeting may have been in February. These meetings turned out not to be negotiating meetings, technically, on their terms. But to have both attorneys present and have the Executive Director and Board members present and what we thought was going to be their negotiating committee. The situation just went from bad to worse. The offers started then, when we started having some meetings, each one was worse than the one before. They actually had their attorney say, "we'll cut $1.15 million from the orchestra budget." That was it. That from beginning to end was their position and that is how it ended up. In fact, they actually ended up with more savings than, I think, than the $1.15 million that they were trying to get to. The first proposal they came in, once they backed out of the extension was for us to take seven weeks of unpaid vacation.

KR: It sounded like a lay-off

PS: Yeah, "you mean have a lay-off where you go from a 52-week season," in fact you get 7 weeks less there, back down to 45- or 46-week season or whatever the number of weeks they were proposing. "Well, no, we just think you could take the vacation weeks as unpaid weeks." And I said, "No, it doesn't work that way." This was supposed to be a contract that was building up (the orchestra).

TAPE 3, SIDE B

[Master Tape 3 is a 90 minute tape. Tape copies were recorded on 60 minute tapes for preservation purposes. This text is a continuation of the above conversation without a break.]

PS: In fact, one of the reasons we wouldn't accept their freeze, initially, was simply that we had to come back with something to show that they were serious about beginning to restore the position of the orchestra after the last contract, which had been this long one which was definitely concessionary especially in its first year. So the Board made a proposal to leave scale the same but increase seniority pay which is lower in this orchestra than...it's as low or lower as any in the country. There's only one other orchestra that is low as we are on seniority pay. Basically, we get a dollar a year in five year increments. That's it. With the kind of work we do, you don't advance, you're pretty much...you've got a job... and there's a job opening for a job, you may be the best player in a section or not but you take whatever is open and that's likely where you're going to stay so it's an unusual kind of job. When you come in you're very likely at the highest earning point that you're ever going to be. You're going stay there but you're never going to necessarily advance further. Maybe you're going to have to find a good way to

argue with the Society then that you're due, should get some sort of a merit raise because from that point you've been doing that job. Conversely we said, "we can't take a reduction in salary because we shouldn't have to work for less than we've already been getting paid, especially since we had moved down. When I came here we were ranking in salaries, I think we were twelfth, and there was very little differentiation between us and orchestras in the top ten or top eight. Now we're at the bottom of the barrel as far as full-time orchestras and we've been gradually and gradually moving that way over the years.

KR: Do you see this trend ever changing?

PS: I think that the momentum that Christoph built up and the quality of the orchestra is sliding. The players here still want to play the best they can given the situation but the budget constraints, when they lead to staff conductors that aren't very competent…we don't have that situation right now but we've had some recently. We had one…those concerts can't be better than what that person can let us play. We have situations where in order to save money, rehearsal situations are skimped on. Unfortunately one of the things that Ed Wulfe was real hot on, putting video on everything, is not turning out to be popular with the people I know that are the real staunch concert-goers of the classical series. For all these good ideas, he's got a lot of them, a lot of push that's helping the orchestra right now, he's not a musician and he's a little bit too much into gimmicks. It kind of lowers, for some folks that want to go to a concert

KR: In the traditional sense?

PS: It's lowering the quality level. In some places it's a great idea. For the Pop Series, it's great. For some things in some classical concerts it actually can be helpful. I don't think that's a big problem, one way or another but it's something that's there. It costs money because there are some things they hadn't figured on when they got the system in.

KR: From the musicians standpoint does it diminish from the quality of the concert or from the audiences' experience?

PS: The only complaints I've heard are from audience members, while the people in the orchestra are ignoring it so we don't see what's going on.

KR: So you're just playing.

PS: Yes, we don't see any reflection on the back side of it. Except for the unfortunate circumstance when a cameraman is talking out loud, when there's dead silence in the hall, which happened on a subscription concert, the technical problems they've had of starting things at the right speed or right volume when they're playing. I've heard a lot of complaints about them doing advertising already on these things not only for the Symphony for sometimes for the sponsors. Those

things are not helpful, to the experience that people who like to go to concerts come for, they're not socially high enough on the ladder, or whatever. I think we lost a lot of players because of the strike. A few of them have come back. In some cases the players that we're going to replace them with eventually will be better players. Then again we're letting the orchestra go at a reduced strength for a little while, we're taking unpaid weeks, although they're not necessarily vacation weeks. The musicians can petition for a week, and it's one that they can get something for taking the week off. They can get off for some services. They're getting something for that. It's a long ways from taking seven weeks of unpaid vacation, and from a wage cut. But the Society is, I think - all last year from the experience I had on the finance committee; it was in a very tight cash position. They're o.k. now just because they just got a rather sizable, one time contribution for operations. It's supposed to be anonymous but it isn't... Mike Stude contributed one million dollars for operations expenses. It seems to be the feeling that'll get them through this year. Next year, however, is a different matter. We're supposed to gain two of our furloughed weeks back and are scheduled for a pay raise, and the Society needs to have a balanced budget.

KR: So right now it's just year to year?

PS: Oh, it's very much year-to-year and the Society, either side, had the right to open negotiations, reopen the contract for this year. Also have the right next year. I find it discouraging that some Board members and staff members are already talking about it because of the base projection ofthe deficit in the budget next year at this point, which is very preliminary; already talking about trying to re-negotiate starting next year, reopen the contract next year. Which will, I think, would be a terrible thing for the orchestra and will prove to the orchestra that the Society is not going be able to function and support the kind of orchestra that for ten years or better with Christoph here that they said they wanted to have. Nobody feels really stable with the Society at this point. I have a lot of respect for Ed Wulfe, especially. He's somebody that's used to success. He's not used to losing. He's not used to having to back off of something. I'm just worried that they won't find a way to have permanently somebody who actually is in charge of the organization who has both his ideas of success and even though he's perhaps not musically, tremendously literate and involved, he seems to have a real feeling that the orchestra is very important to the city as a whole. You need somebody there that has those abilities and feels that the music is really necessary who can be there long term as a leader. Like Marzio has been. Like Ben Stevensen was for the Ballet. Somebody strong enough to stand up to the Board and say, "you know, this is what we need to do" and get them to be able to agree to with it if they're going to run things. More importantly, like somebody asked at a meeting when Ed Wulfe was there, "What do we do if the next president doesn't have your optimism and your attitude." His answer was a little too glib, I'm afraid, his answer was, "Well, I won't feel I've succeeded unless I've found somebody that's going to do better than I do for the next president." That's an awfully iffy situation over a period of time. That really, in my mind, that really long term has

been and will continue to be the problem with the way the Symphony is here. It's not an uncommon problem with many orchestras. But the strongest orchestras are those that either still have or that had a leader that lasted a long time that had that kind of strength to keep it going forward and slogging it out when times were tough. Until the orchestra, perhaps like Boston, became so established and had so much money that they're almost immune to the outside situation. The Pops is a big money maker for them. Their endowment is huge. They're in a city where tradition and habits are well-ingrained that include serious music, orchestral music. This town doesn't have any of that. People come to Houston, or came to Houston, to make money.

KR: It's a young city, too.

PS: Young city, it's very diverse, the managements and the Board members keep changing all of the time in the Symphony. Christoph's, part of his building power was that he was, for a while, was that kind of leadership quality that we needed. The success was enough that he was able to keep the majority of the Board for a good bit of the time moving in a positive direction. The conductor we have now is not willing to take an all or nothing position. He's much more aware of how the Society treated Larry Foster. During the labor negotiations we actually got more support than Christoph than we did from Graf. Graf is a lot more well rounded person. He's a very competent musician. It's a different kind of music, maybe, than Christoph did, but he's not quite in the rarefied atmosphere Eschenbach is now, where he can just say what he wants because he's got so many other places that they're just going to jump on him. Grafis having good experiences, is getting good reviews in a lot of great places but he seems more timid in a certain way. I think he wants to work more cooperatively but it comes across in negotiations as timidity. Obviously he can't side with the musicians but the musicians felt he could have made, at least made, some statement that Houston needs, and deserves higher artistic standards, and not flush away what had been built up. There's a lot of negativism in the orchestra because of having the orchestra getting where they felt that they had to go on strike. Not that they went on strike, but they really felt there was no other choice.

KR: It's a shame.

PS: I think the Society is still not sure that it's going to survive, because for this far out, for the Board this early in the game for the following season - not this season but for next season - for Board members and staff members to be, even in committee meetings, even talking about the possibility of cutting back on the number of concerts next year or reducing subscriptions, or reopening the contract next year to reduce losses in the orchestra. It's not a very good attitude. It's not the kind of attitude of somebody who's going to win. When we started these negotiations which led to this contract, we asked the Society, if you can't raise enough money, have you thought about trying to increase the endowment, "yeah." Have you thought about hiring someone who's an expert in raising endowment

money and having a new endowment drive, "No, we haven't thought about that at all." They came right out, "we have no plans for an endowment drive." We said, "Well, given the situation, wouldn't that be a good idea." "That might not be a bad idea at all." They began to think about it, and interviewed some people and they finally did start an endowment drive, a campaign; and they did hire somebody outside as an adviser but they ended up hiring somebody right here in Houston. But perhaps that's the best choice and perhaps not; but that's the way we do things here. It's an in-house kind of thing. So time will tell on that particular thing. Another thing that was a very major difficulty in the last negotiation was that there was a European tour scheduled for the first part of the contract year, which was going to have a $1.15 million loss. The orchestra said basically, "We're not going to finance a European tour by taking that loss." That's not our primary goal. In fact, the Society never backed off from that tour so it always was an elephant on the table right between us, and we finally, in order to agree on anything, when we had this minute all weekend deal with Ed Wulfe and (Albert) Zimmerman (a retired judged). We had to have them agree that we would have the right to veto that tour because of the terms of the contract we were agreeing to were onerous on our side. They weren't at that point still not actually ….just coming to the realization that they weren't going to be able to do that tour, and they had to do that tour because they owed that to the conductor. In three of the negotiating committees I was on, two with the prior attorney and one with the attorney they used this time, their attorneys made it perfectly clear, and absolutely blunt, the Houston Symphony Society doesn't owe the musicians anything.

PS: I used to blow up at that when thefirst said it but I got that a little more under control this last time.

[Master Tape 3, Side B. There was a break in the conversation.]

PS: The musicians, once they join an orchestra they're going to have a relatively limited number of years when they're young where they may change orchestras and try to move ahead, move up, which was certainly the case when Comissiona was here. Almost all of the string players left for other orchestras.. But more than likely they're going to stay, committing our careers to that orchestra. The ideals that the Society espouses - which at the same time they said they wanted to cut the orchestra back and have us take our unpaid weeks of vacation, or cut the salary back $150-$200 a week - at the same time they sent out to the Board members a mission statement that, they said they were dedicated to providing a world class orchestra to the city of Houston, having it be a representative around the world of the city of Houston. And this is still taken as a bunch of B.S. by the orchestra because of the actions of the Society haven't matched up it at all. That statement was one of the final outcomes of the task-force committees from Henry Fogel's process here, after the '97 negotiations and through the time of the '98 negotiations. Fortunately I wasn't on that committee. You couldn't just start on another one just after you have been on one for a year and a half.) That kind of

set-up the situation now. The difficulty for the Board is that they have almost nobody that has a perspective that's more than a few years.

KR: That's the continuity we were talking about earlier.

PS: Continuity on the Board is just is really elusive so the people you're talking to Ulyesse (LeGrange) and Walter Sapp are two of the longer term Board members there.

KR: And that's the exception and not the rule.

PS: That's the exception and not the rule and I can remember when Ulyesse (LeGrange) came on the Board. I'm not sure when Walter Sapp did.

KR: I don't know. Tiffany is interviewing him.

PS: A lot of the folks on the Board, David Wax as Executive Director was here long enough so that he began to accumulate people on the Board that shared his general philosophies. All along, from the beginning, the negotiating committees I served on where he was involved, his attitude was the city of Houston won't support a world-class orchestra, so you have that attitude showing up often, and very strongly, in negotiating years.

KR: It's almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

PS: Right, oh yeah. I think that it kind of became that. I think that a real attempt was made to change that attitude, kind of grudgingly, when Rodney Margolis was elected President of the Board. He wouldn't allow negative statements to come out of the management or out of the Board for the time he was President of the Board. But he moved out of that position in a contract year and they put a person in there that didn't have that attitude, and I think he personally took a great hit with the fall of Enron and, I think, that shattered his idealism about a lot of things perhaps. Certainly it seemed to about the Symphony. He backed way off and totally backed off the orchestra going ahead, at least for the short term, the foreseeable future. I think the future of the orchestra is a this point very shaky, very much a question mark.

KR: It will be interesting to see what happens in the next few years.

PS: I think, artistically, if people are still here- and the subscription concerts we've had this year have been right up there in quality, with really high quality concerts, and it'll stay that way for a while- but if things back up any more, then even some of those people that are pretty well committed here are going to think about leaving. This orchestra age-wise has a lot of us right close to where we could be retiring, a good third of us. A few people that are staying on because they're