

The UBC Players' Club: The Early History

Oral History – Transcript (UBC AT 1241)

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Harry Warren
Sydney Risk
Bea Wood
Muriel MacDougall
Dorothy Somerset
J.V. Clyne
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Laurenda Daniells	It is Sunday, December 2nd, 1984. I have with me, at the home of Jack and Betty Clyne, a group of Players' Club alumni who will be talking about the history of the Club from the years 1916 to 1926. The first voice you will hear is that of the late Professor F.G.C. Wood, known to all as Freddie.
Frederic Wood	<p>Early days of the Players' Club. Five weeks after UBC opened on September 30, 1915, the Players' Club was formed. It was first suggested in an upper-year class in English drama and seemed a good form of recreation for some 379 enrolled in that war-time period. 40 comprised the membership and on February 18th the first performance was staged at the Avenue Theatre on the Georgia Viaduct corner of Main Street. Fanny and the Servant Problem, a light comedy by the popular Jerome K. Jerome, with a cast of 23 and with the entire faculty of 27 as guests in the boxes, was warmly received by a full house. The reviews were enthusiastic, though one critic mistook two figures after the players' names as indicative of their age and remarked that the leading man, a member of the senior class, played with a fine dignity and a surprising mellowness for a boy of sixteen years. The next morning, President Westbrook suggested a repeat performance after examinations to be followed by one in Victoria and in New Westminster. In this way the tour was born and the proceeds of all performances donated to the University Red Cross Society and to the recreational activities of the UBC section of the 196th Western University Battalion spending that summer in tents on the Fairview campus before going overseas. In the next four years the club was able to earn over \$6000 for various patriotic purposes. In 1920, the inclusion of Nanaimo, Kamloops and three Okanagan towns increased the number of performances to ten. Two years later the Kootenays were invaded and by 1931, the last year under the founder's direction, the Spring play, Noel Coward's <i>The Young Idea</i>, achieved the record number of twenty-five performances. During this period, the club appeared in some twenty-seven towns and cities, including five on Vancouver Island and others as far east as Revelstoke and Fernie. In many communities, these visits were the only chance many people had to see a production acted by others than members of a local organization. As plays by Barrie, Wilde, Pinero, A.A. Milne and two by Shaw as well as two by eminent Spanish dramatists were among those presented, the Varsity actors were a welcome change. Local organizations such as Kiwanis clubs, chapters of the IODE, women's church auxiliaries and other groups were most helpful as sponsors, sharing in the proceeds of the performances. These contacts resulted in a growing interest in the University and introduced the actors to sections of their province hitherto unfamiliar to them.</p> <p>Very occasionally the play met with objection. In one Kootenay town where the Club was always most cordially received, an editorial appeared in the weekly paper. The play was Shaw's <i>Pygmalion</i> and the long denunciation is summed up in the following excerpt: "such a production might be excusable in a third or a fourth class Bowery theatre, but to have the guttersnipe language of lower London flaunted from the stage in the name of art by a group of University players passeth understanding."</p>
L. Daniells	That was the voice of the late Frederic Wood. The next speaker is our chairman, Professor Harry Warren.
Harry Warren	One of the objectives of the UBC Alumni Association is to ensure that the history of

	<p>our University is recorded, preserved and communicated for the benefit of alumni, faculty and students. To this end it was decided to put on record a few of the many achievements of those faculty and students who were the pioneers of our university. To begin this task was taken on by a committee named the Fairview Committee, drawn from the classes of 16 to 1926, the '26 class being the first to graduate from Point Grey. One of the many projects undertaken by the Fairview Committee was the reintroduction of the Arts '20 Relay Race which was highly successful both in achieving memories of the past and drawing favourable attention to the University. Incidentally, 7 teams ran in the first race, last one was 180 entrants and 170 teams finished. From the Fairview Committee emerged the Heritage Committee admitted with a much broader mandate and charged with dealing separately with later periods of the University's history. One of the more notable achievements of the University in its early days was the success of the Players' Club under the inspirational guidance of the late Professor F.G.C. Wood. He has told you in his own words how it all began. As you have just heard, it was under the inspiration and guidance of Professor F.G.C. Wood, Freddie behind his back and to his large number of friends, that the Players' Club of the University of British Columbia came into being. Freddie, with the help of a chosen few, chose the plays that were to be shown in Vancouver and in some twenty-five to thirty centres in our province, selected each cast, performed the role of director, producer, and, in effect, acted as business manager. Membership in the Players' Club was by competition. The try-outs were an ordeal. Many tried out but only sixty were chosen to become members of the Players' Club in each year. Not only was the Players' Club self-supporting, but thanks to the masterly managing of Freddie, it was, even in its early years, able to contribute many thousands of dollars to worthy charities. Of the twenty or so survivors of that early era, we have been able to make contact with a dozen, and it is from some of these that you will now be hearing, either in person or in proxy. Now turning over to the stage manager, Sydney Risk.</p>
Sydney Risk	<p>Thank you. We are now going to hear reports on the first eleven Spring Plays, from 1916 to 1926 inclusive. Comments were invited from members of the casts of these plays and we've received comments from several members who were in the plays. The first play was 1916, "Fanny and the Servant Problem", and we received comments from Jessie Todhunter-Foot and Connie Highmore Adams. The second play was "Merely Mary Ann", comments received from Helena Bodie Whitmore and also Connie Highmore; 1918, "Alice Sit-By-The-Fire", again Connie Adams; 1919, "The Importance of Being Earnest", Connie Adams again, and also Doro Adams from whom we did not receive comments but a little later Jack Clyne is going to speak of Doro and 1920, "Greenstockings". Now as none of these ladies can be present today, I am calling upon Bea Wood to read their comments for us.</p>
Bea Wood	<p>The first leading lady was Jessie Todhunter Taintor-Foote. She played Fanny in "Fanny and the Servant Problem", and all she says is: "I wrote in a scene in "Fanny and the Servant Problem" at the request of Frederic Wood and I made a painted poster of the play." Now the second as you have heard, it was Mrs. Cecil Adams, Connie Highmore, who was in four Spring plays. She says: "I was a charter member of the Players' Club and remember attending the first meeting that Freddie Wood called in the Fall of 1915 for any students who might be interested in a dramatic society. I was a member of the cast of four Spring plays and president in my senior year. In that</p>

	capacity I wrote an article for the “Theatre Magazine”, published in New York, which appeared in the December 1918 issue. The title of the article is 'Dramatics at the University of British Columbia'. I wonder if that article is in the archives of the Players' Club history? One of the funniest things I remember was of the dress rehearsal of “Alice Sit-By-The-Fire” when the player acting Steve Rollo, I think his name was James Ellard, who was supposed to say, 'I am utterly puzzled' burst out with 'I am putterly uzzled'. The next leading lady was Helena Bodie, Arts '18, who played Mary Ann in “Merely Mary Ann” in 1917. "I remember the character Mary Ann. She worked for a nice young man who called her Marian. The play was presented in the Empress theatre downtown. We went on tour to Victoria. Freddie was the manager and director. At the end of the play there were bouquets, one in particular from an American admirer who was a year ahead of me at UBC. I walked over the Fairview Bridge with him when he took me out." "Re: Freddie Wood", she says, "we all liked him so much."
Sydney Risk	The next three Spring plays, 1921, 22 and 23. 1921, “Sweet Lavender”, and we have present Muriel Evans MacDougall and Jack Clyne. I will ask them to occupy seats up here please. “Mr. Pim Passes By” in 1922, Betty will you please come forward as well. Neil McCallum and Georgina McKinnon, who are not with us, and Harry Warren and Bea Wood will read their comments for us. The 1923 Spring play was “You Never Can Tell” again with Jack Clyne, Betty Somerset Clyne, Bea Wood and Neil McCallum. Will you please lead off Muriel with your comments.
Muriel MacDougall	“Sweet Lavender”. We had a high good time, went on tour with “Sweet Lavender” and I do remember one happening though I know there were many more--Kirsteen Leveson had the part of Mrs. Gilfillian, I think that's right, and in one performance spent most of act two scurrying around, clutching her stomach. It turned out that her skirt had come undone at the back and she had to hold it up as well as she could, and she did a good job, it just looked a little odd. (laughter)
Dorothy Somerset	Weren't there a lot of other people in that play-weren't there a lot of other people in that cast that you two can talk about. Jack, who were you?
J.V. Clyne	I was Mr. Maw. I was a lawyer, an English solicitor. Art Lord was in it and then of course Lacey Fisher and the chap, the hero, Garrett Livingston, and you were sweet Lavender.
M. MacDougall	Yes, I was.
J.V. Clyne	And I thought you were sweet all the time and I still do. (laughter) We had a lot of fun with that play.
M. MacDougall	Yeah, we did.
S. Risk	Jack, could you carry on? You were also in “Mr. Pim” and you were in “You Can Never Tell”, so as you are here---
J.V. Clyne	You want me to talk about what one? – any of them?
S. Risk	We prefer 1922 with “Mr. Pim”.
J.V. Clyne	“Mr. Pim”. Neil McCallum was in that and then in “You Never Can Tell”. I think it was in “You Never Can Tell” that we arrived in Nelson and, uh, was it “You Never Can Tell” or was it “Mr. Pim”? (“Mr. Pim”, I think) Well, in any event, Wells Coates, Bob Hunter and Neil McCallum and I went out on an advertising basis. We arrived in

	Nelson the night before the play was to go on and found that there were practically no seats sold, which we found rather embarrassing. So the next morning we decided that we would carry a sign around the town advertising the play, which we did, and we carried it in line--I had to go first because they said I was the leading man and we uh, eventually, when we played that night the house was full. That's one of the chief things I remember about "Mr. Pim." But I think you had some story to tell, Betty, about "You Never Can Tell".
D. Somerset	There are many more stories to tell about "Mr. Pim". This is a story that Betty and Jack both choose not to remember but they – Betty told it to me and I could not have invented it. Kirsteen was in the cast. She was your aunt wasn't she?
J.V. Clyne	Yes.
D. Somerset	Your favourite aunt (yes). And Kirsteen and Betty shared a double bed. Freddie used to put the boys, the young men, on one floor and the girls on another floor. Right? He didn't like them mixing.
Betty Clyne	You are wrong. It was Bea Wood and me.
D. Somerset	No, no, no--it's another story--I'm not telling the same story you think of. That's another play, "Mr. Pim Passes By" (laughter) I knew I'd have a family fight. But anyway (laughter) the gentlemen in the party conveyed to you and Kirsteen that it was just ridiculous, this segregation of the sexes. Then they intimated that after the show was over they would call upon Kirsteen and Betty. So this is the picture that Betty described to me. She denies it and Jack denies it, but I couldn't have invented it. Here were the two girls in bed, and a discrete knock on the door, and up came three men, Jack Clyne, Wells Coates and maybe it was Bob Hunter. And Bob Hunter and Wells had coats or dressing gowns, I've forgotten which, but Betty described Jack as coming up with a blanket over him in Indian fashion. The two girls lay flat in bed with their blankets up to their chins, and the men came in. They all tried to be very debonaire, you know, sophisticated. And Betty said, "It was not at all successful." (laughter). The gentlemen felt rather sheepish and persiflage was not possible under the tension of the moment. The visit was quite brief. (laughter) So that I remember. It was told to me. I couldn't have invented it (laughter murmurs) Harry has a letter about "Pim" too.
J.V. Clyne	But I want to point out though that when we were on all those tours we always had a chaperone.
Voice	Mrs. Suttie (laughter) Madame Suttie.
J.V. Clyne	You are quite wrong, Dorothy, about the question of the males being against the segregation. I was all in favour of the segregation (laughter).
S. Risk	Betty, Betty Clyne, you were in....
D. Somerset	Wait a minute, we haven't heard ...
S. Risk	No, it's coming up. But I think that Betty should now have a chance possibly to give her version of these stories we've been hearing. Betty, you were in "Mr. Pim Passes By". You were in "You Never Can Tell" and you were in "The World and His Wife". Now, could we hear your comments please?
B. Clyne	Well "Mr. Pim Passes By" was the first tour I think, that I went on. It was a grand marvellous time for young people. Spring, sun shining, flowers out, the Okanagan lakes, and it was quite a wonderful occasion - and a boat that went down the middle of the lakes, and I had an onion for lunch every day I remember (laughter). It was really great fun and a great pleasure for students. It was a great privilege really to be on these

	tours, and things changed when the car took us on instead of the boat which was such fun. But I don't know what other incident to tell you of. What other incident Jack?
J.V. Clyne	Well, you remember the startling incident in Penticton.
D. Somerset	That's the next play.
J.V. Clyne	What play is Betty talking about?
Voice	"Mr. Pim".
J.V. Clyne	She's talking about "Mr. Pim".
D. Somerset	But the incident you had in mind occurred in the next production (Clyne: oh yes) "You Never Can Tell". (voice: "You Never Can Tell", right) You have a letter to read don't you, Bea?
B. Wood	Yes, yes. Georgina Elson, uh, Georgina Mackinnon Elson, (voices: Pete Mackinnon, that's what we called her) who was in "Mr. Pim". She says, "I had played the wife in the Christmas plays in Eugene O'Neill's one-act play "Ile". It was such a success I think Freddie rewarded me by letting me be in the Spring Play. Although it was 62 years ago I remember my entrance greeting to "Mr. Pim". "I'm Dinah, not Diana, Dinah with a H". The Spring tours from Victoria to Nelson must have helped sell the University. Look at it now. I can't resist adding that our tour was enlivened by a noticeable rivalry for the attention of the leading lady, then Betty Somerset." (laughter)
S. Risk	Bea, you were in "You Never Can Tell", so would you like to read your own comments with regard to that play, please.
B. Wood	Yes, I played Mrs. Clandon, the mother. One of my most vivid memories of tour was in the dining car when Freddie would allot us each one dollar for a meal. Anything extra one had to pay out of one's own pocket. In those days we were all very circumspect and called one another Miss and Mr. However, it was "Freddie" behind his back. Eloise Angell, who had more nerve than the rest of us put together, would call out the length of the dining car: "Uncle Freddie, I can't get a proper meal for a dollar". Whereupon all eyes were turned upon the cruel uncle who was starving his miserable niece. (laughter) Wood
S. Risk	Now Jack has already referred to Neil McCallum who was in "Mr. Pim Passes By" and "You Never Can Tell". Neil McCallum responded to our request with a very interesting letter. As he's not here I shall ask Harry Warren to read that letter to us please.
H. Warren	Well, I think the whole letter is a little long, but there are one or two parts that I think deserve to be quoted. He writes, "I remember the delightful trips on the old C.P.R. sternwheelers on the Okanagan, Arrow and Kootenay Lakes, especially the overnight trip from Kootenay Landing to Nelson. I can remember dear Mrs. Suttie who was so kind and helpful to us all." What he didn't say was that men had a great crush on Mrs. Suttie because she ate like a bird, and any of us who were lucky enough to sit at her table could have part of her meal as well as their own and thereby carry on through the trip. Another thing that I think some of you will be amused, "I remember at a party after the show in Cranbrook Freddie telling the hostess that when we played Creston some of the cast had to be billeted out as the hotel was not fit to stay in. Having lived in that country as a boy, I was able to tell him, much to his chagrin, that the owner of the hotel in Creston was the brother of our Cranbrook hostess (laughter voices: thank you Harry. Isn't there more to that Harry?)

H. Warren	Well it's a long letter but I think these are the (voice: oh go ahead and read it) -- well there is a little bit. "A funny thing happened to me on the way to the incinerator. I was about to burn a lot of old stuff, including an old photo album when your letter arrived in the mail. So I salvaged a few snapshots which I thought might be of interest to you unless you already have copies of these in the archives. I have many fond memories of the Spring tours of '22 and '23 but I seem to remember more about "Mr. Pim" tour than about "You Never Can Tell", perhaps because the cast was much smaller, but in any case I think we had more fun." And as a little addition to what has just been said -- "I can remember Freddie standing at the door of the dining car on the train telling each of us as we entered for lunch 'not more than 25c'." Someone has just said a dollar.
J.V. Clyne	Oh a dollar was for dinner.
H. Warren	Yes, 25. "I remember an impromptu concert we put on for the patients at Tranquille on the afternoon of the night we played Kamloops. Jack Clyne and I did a Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean skit which was bloody awful". (laughter) I think that's it.
S. Risk	Now Jack, you have some comments. I think you'd like to refer to Doro Adams. Doro was a distinguished leading lady in the Players' Club. She played in "The Importance of Being Earnest" in 1919 and in "Greenstockings" in 1920. We have not received any comments from her personally, but I think that Jack may bring her to mind for us.
J.V. Clyne	Of course Doro went on to have a very distinguished theatrical career. But, all I think I mentioned was that I was sorry that we didn't hear from her, but I did see her two years ago in Los Angeles at a meeting of the alumni in Los Angeles, the UBC Alumni. We went down there to spread the good word. In those days, I was Chancellor, and we had a very very pleasant party at the house, I think, of the Canadian consul. And Doro was there and was in very good spirits and looking extremely well and I am sorry she is not here this afternoon.
S. Risk	Thank you Jack.
D. Somerset	May I just interpose here for a minute. Talking about Doro and "Sweet Lavender", it makes me think of some of the other women in the cast--Kirsteen, Doro, Marjorie Agnew, you Muriel--was there any other woman? And do you remember Bruce Fraser? (voices: that was in "Sweet Lavender", yes - and Kirby - all these names - but I think particularly of those women, the four women.
S. Risk	Now this brings us to our short intermission. (voices)
D. Somerset	We haven't heard Betty's story and Bea's have we? Betty should start it and Bea finish it.
B. Clyne	Well in Penticton we were tired out. We'd had a long week, performing late at night and so on, and we went to bed and uh (voices: who's "we"?) Bea and I. Bea got on the inside of the bed and I was on the outside of the bed and we went right off to sleep--we were exhausted really--and I woke up and it was such a strange feeling of being wakened and couldn't understand it, and looked down to the end of the bed to the window to see if it was morning, but it wasn't, it was black. So then I thought, that's queer and I looked up at the transom into the face of a young man about this far from the bed, and so I screamed, but not without grabbing Bea you see. So I grabbed her and Bea came to and in a contralto scream she said, "is he coming or going?" (laughter) and a door opened across the way and it was Mr. Patullo. By this time our friend had disappeared and Eloise Angell, who was in the room next door, had come in

	to take charge of things. There was a cigarette butt on the floor so she picked that up as significant, and then she went out into the hall, and next door to us was a little corridor with a bathroom and the other thing. There was no light on anywhere but the door was locked, and so this was of grave concern. By this time, the night watchman came around and we told him all this, and he went up and got the landlady who was running the hotel, somewhat under the influence of liquor.
J. V. Clyne	The landlady was under the influence.
B. Clyne	Of liquor... so she came down and heard our story and, which we told, the fact that the man had on a khaki coat and a checked cap. We were very indignant about the whole thing, and she went next door and found the chappie in the toilet or the bathroom and she brought him in and he stood in the doorway, well he looked just a young man and, well, we never did really find out anything about that. But meanwhile Mr. Pattullo who was in the room across the hall...
J.V. Clyne	This is Duff Pattullo, the premier?
B. Clyne	Yes, the premier.
B. Wood	Yes, there was a liberal convention on.
B. Clyne	Oh, that's it and he opened his door just a little to hear all this, you see, well the next day word went round that hotel that if you had a checked coat and a khaki cap - don't wear it! (laughter)
S. Risk	Bea, you were in this cast, have you anything to add to this story?
B. Wood	Well all I can say is they got after me at the end because all I did was leap out of bed and say "My God, where is he?" (laughter)
D. Somerset	Somerset I would like to ask, did you two ladies feel that the gentlemen in your party were really concerned for you? Did they - were they gallant? Next day did they try to follow it up and protect your honour or ...
B. Clyne	We were not on the same floor because Freddie didn't think it was wise to put the women on the same floor. No, we didn't feel they were sufficiently concerned and to this day -- Jack what did you do? Anything about it?
J.V. Clyne	We went round and looked for somebody with a checked cap and we couldn't find one. And of course, Freddie was quite right in putting the men and women on different floors because the men had to be protected. (laughter)
D. Somerset	I want to ask a question here and I'm going to put Sydney on the spot. Pentiction, the Incola Hotel, fascinates me because so many things have happened there--the near rape of you two--(laughter) and the other story you were telling. Now Sydney, (when he was director of the Players' Club, he went on tour, I don't know with which play) you were the director of the club and in charge of it, and you were up at the Incola Hotel and some of your cast, men cast, went swimming in the buff. Do you remember that story?
S. Risk	Yes. (voices: Are you going to tell it? That belongs to another generation doesn't it? I know it does but) that was much later Dorothy, the Spring play, "Alibi", of 1933 and it's quite true. Certain members, I won't mention their names, did go in the buff in the lake and certain other members of the cast thought it a good idea to just take their clothes which were left on the beach--which they did, and there was consternation, some screaming and yelling going on, and the upshot of it all was the three gentlemen in the lake had to come out and they braved it, in the nude. They dashed through the lobby of the Incola to the amazement of the desk clerk and other guests who were

	there, and up to their rooms. I had to put up with a rather severe lecture from the assistant manager the next day about the behaviour of certain members of the cast. That's that story.
D. Somerset	It's the Penticton link that fascinates me.
B. Clyne	I wonder if that's all the stories? There is the story of Bea up in Fernie. We weren't too fond of Fernie. The bedspreads weren't clean but the sheets were, but in any case, we were having lunch and Bea was trying to get some ketchup out of this bottle, and somebody asked for something, and the landlady said "oh, well we're out of that," and Bea said "you will never be out of too much ketchup". They were mad and didn't ever want us to come back there.
D. Somerset	Didn't they complain to Freddie?
B. Wood	(Voice: Yes) Oh yes, the proprietor of the restaurant said that he would not go to the Players' Club again, he would not see another performance. (voice: So that was that) And the next day I got a lecture from Mr. Clyne and Mr. McCallum for my bad behaviour. (mutters, laughter)
J.V. Clyne	That's right.
S. Risk	Now if we have no further comments in these particular plays we'll take a short break if you would like to stretch your legs ... (Later) Now we come to the last three Spring plays on our program for this afternoon. 1924, "The World and His Wife"; 1925, "You and I", 1926, "Pygmalion". Now, we've received a number of comments on these plays. I would like to ask Kenneth, would you come forward please, take your seat up here, and Avis, also and Mildred (murmurs). Now in "The World and His Wife"--Kenneth Caple and Avis Pumphrey and Betty Somerset--you should be up here too dearest. Another chair required. (voices: this way Betty. It's a moving situation). Kenneth, you were also in "The World and His Wife" and "You and I" and you have some comments of your own to make. I'd like you to lead off with them please.
Kenneth Caple	Well, the Spring plays at the University were something rather special ... Of course, I was an agricultural student and we were over on Broadway which was four or five blocks from the University and the students of the University were considered outsiders, and when we got into the play it was sort of surprising--why would they bring an agricultural student into something cultural. I tried out, I was in the Spring play, at least the Christmas play of 1921, "The Maker of Dreams", in which I was a Pierrot and then when I tried again for a Spring play in 1924, Freddie who was a most distinguished and gentle fellow who told you the facts of life, but he did it gently, and he said, "we'll take you on as an understudy because you might be useful, you never know". So I travelled all over the province with the Spring tour in 1924. The only thing that I did in the way of a cultural contribution was I was a voice off-stage. The other times I carried the ladies' baggage, was charming to the young ladies, at least I think, that was my biased opinion, and moved scenery, got up first in the morning to make sure that things were done, went to bed last at night still making sure that everything was under control. And Freddie, distinguished gentlemen that he was, didn't ever praise me but he gently patted me on the back and said: "keep going Caple, keep going" (laughter) So then in 1925 I got a part in the play which was to me very exciting because I was the young lover, and some of my friends in agriculture said

	<p>"Hell, Caple, you don't know anything about love, why did they choose you?" But anyway it was a delightful experience and when we traveled all over the province and played in, I don't remember now, 25 or 26 towns, Freddie made us feel very much that we were representing the University of British Columbia and while he never said this, he made us feel that, "you know, many of these people don't know what the University is, so you have to portray to them the possibilities of a University." So on-stage and off-stage, we did our duty, we thought we did our duty. It was a great experience and great fun and we played the play, went after the play to a reception where people in the community were very gracious to us, gave us tea and three cookies and a sandwich, and then we went home and got to bed, and then got up early in the morning, made sure everybody was packed up tight, ran like the devil to whatever the transportation was, went on to the next town, got there, unloaded the stuff, went to the theatre, set up the scenery, looked things over, I think we had a bath, and then we behaved ourselves. Usually, they entertained us and gave us a tea and three cookies, and then we went back, had supper and Freddie made us be at the theatre at 6:30 to be ready, polished, and distinguished--to do a polished and distinguished act--and so it was a marvelous experience, a great team, great fun. We went around the province and to me it was the first time I had been in many of these communities. We didn't bathe nude, as somebody mentioned earlier, but we did bathe. But altogether, as a student of agriculture, mainly horticulture, it was an amazing experience to meet all these cultural people and for a farmer I got a new insight on the other side of Canadian life.</p>
S. Risk	<p>Thank you Kenneth. Now Avis, you were in these three plays, "The World and His Wife", "You and I" and "Pygmalion". Now you surely have something you want to say about all that.</p>
Avis Pumphrey	<p>Well, I was only - I was going to say - I was only partially in "The World and His Wife". I was only for part of the tour because I had a very exciting part of a maid and I think all I said was "Dinner is served" or something like that. My important experience was that I was the Props. I had to check to see that everything that was needed on the stage was on the stage. The main thing that I can remember about "The World and His Wife" was going to Britannia Mines. We went by boat and then we got into the ore buckets and were taken at a most precarious angle right up the mountain to the mines. This was very exciting and the men were allowed to go into the mine to see it but it was unlucky to allow women so we weren't allowed in and we felt I still feel badly about that.</p>
Mildred Caple	<p>When we came down and were waiting on the dock at Britannia Mines the men of the cast played a very sporting and stimulating game--Kick the Can.</p>
A. Pumphrey	<p>Right. Right. It showed how cultural they were. (laughter). Yes, yes, that's all I can remember about The World and His Wife. I can remember a lot more about You and I. I was low comedy, once more a maid but very low comedy, at that time. Wasn't Peter Price, who was the ... wasn't he the leading man?</p>
A. Pumphrey	<p>(Voices: Peter Price was in You and I was he not? - Yes). Yes, he was the man of the house who was the artist, wasn't he? (voices: that's right, yes) and he wanted a cheap model so he took the maid, which was me (voice: Etta) Etta, thank you, I forgot my name, and I was dressed up in a bright red dress, and Peter was to paint me and then somebody, and I think it was you Harry, was a visitor coming to the house who fell for this gorgeous maid thinking she was a visitor too ... and you said "would I be free..."</p>

H. Warren	I'm sorry, I was a business man. I didn't make up to Etta.
A. Pumphrey	Didn't you? Who did, who did? I can't remember - somebody did. Anyway whoever it was, I beg your pardon Harry--whoever it was said to me, going back in my memory, "are you free at all to come out tonight?" And with great firmness I said, "Thursday afternoon". And then there was a--I wish I had the script of the play--then there was a part where I was practicing saying golf in a very proper manner "Goff Goff", etc. in preparation to going out with this new boyfriend. (muttering) But I do remember, getting back to this question of meals on the train, I insist that we had to have a partner, I don't remember how much money we were allowed but I do recall that we had to have a partner and have the embarrassing business of saying to the steward "we will have one order of this and two plates" (laughter) and then if your partner was a man he thought that he ought to have the larger half. I do remember that very well, I also remember a ridiculous thing that happened on the train with the You and I tour. It was a rather dull piece of country and we were getting rather tired of talking to each other and we were dirty and we were--you know, it was a long way to the next place we stopped. I was reading a magazine and there was an article on palmistry. So I thought, oh I think I'll read this very carefully memorize the whole thing and then I sat on it in case anybody should find it and I said very innocently, "By the way, did I ever tell you that I know about palmistry". Everybody sat up with delight. No, they hadn't heard that. So I read their palms, and of course by this time I knew each of them very very well and I had a wonderful time. I told them all their faults and all their fine points and I got a reputation that sometimes comes back and hits me now, and I honestly admit I don't know anything whatever about palmistry, but it helped to pass the time.
S. Risk	Now, Avis, you were also in "Pygmalion". Have you any recollections of that?
A. Pumphrey	Well, I went from the ridiculous to the sublime in "Pygmalion" because I was no longer a maid. I was Clara Eynsford-Hill and very very proper. And I recall a famous or infamous newspaper editorial about one production of "Pygmalion", in which the main character? (voice: Liza) After Liza came out with one of her, you know, "not bloody likely's" (voice: not bloody likely) not bloody likely, well I think it was after she had become refained you know (voice: rain in Spain) yes, she had become refained and she had been shown off to society, then Clara Eynsford-Hill, this splendid character that I was said, "Oh I think the new small talk is so frightfully funny, don't you think it is, not bloody likely". It was great fun. And then they wanted to cut it out because somebody, it must have been that editor, thought that it was not quite nice. And we all said we would retire from the cast immediately if they cut it out. I think I have run out of things that I remember. Oh I do remember one thing though. I am sure you do Kennie too. The parties after the shows, they were in a church hall or a school room or something. They had chairs all around the outside, and we sat there and everybody stared at us and were too shy to speak to us, and we were too shy to speak to them as a rule as we ate those three cookies and drank a cup of tea or coffee. (laughter) It's dreadful the way they always had the chairs around the (voice: deadly, isn't it) Deadly.
S. Risk	Now, Betty, you and Mildred were in "The World and His Wife", have you any further recollections you want to speak of?
B. Clyne	Well, I do remember staying in the hotel in ... (voices: Cranbrook, no Grand Forks)

	Grand Forks and word got about--well Freddie was informed after we left that they regretted to tell him that a pillow was missing and two of his students must have taken it. Mildred and I were rooming together and it was from that room the pillow was missing. And it turned out that the pillow was under the middle of the mattress because we couldn't stand the mattress which caved in. (laughter)
M. Caple	We rolled together. We were on the train. We'd gone from Grand Forks in the morning down to Christina Lake - do you remember for a picnic lunch - somebody by the name of Kirby (voice: Kirby) was entertaining us at Christina Lake and then we boarded the train, you know, somewhere out of Grand Forks, and we weren't on the train very long when Freddie got the telegram. And came down looking like thunder and saying what had Betty and I done taking a pillow. (B. Clyne: I didn't realize it was a telegram) He got a telegram? Yes.
K. Caple	I think there's a story that I should tell. In 1925 we were playing somewhere, I forget, in the southern part of British Columbia, maybe Cranbrook or somewhere and I happened to be in a scene where I was in the back stage talking to a girl while the main actors were in the front of the stage and they were carrying on, and we had to wait till our cue came till we came forward, when another actor came in from the back and joined our group and told us something. And it so excited us that when my cue came I didn't respond. Now we had played the play twenty-five times but I stood at the back and didn't move and then Freddie, who always used to stand at the side of the stage with the cues, said "step up Caple" and so I stepped up and went on with the play. And then he said afterwards "listen Caple, you've played this play twenty-five times now why did you mess that up?" Well I said "sir I don't think I can tell you" and he said "well, I'd like to know" and I said "I'm sorry". But what happened is this, the girl who came in, she had been given some mail that was held up at the hotel and she opened it backstage. She got the news that Freddie was engaged to Bea Wood (much laughter) and she came in to the three of us in the back corner chatting, and said, "do you know what, that old man is marrying that beautiful girl, Bea Wood." (laughter) whereupon I forgot my lines. (voices: Bea Johnson, quite right too).
A. Pumphrey	Dorothy was talking earlier about the Incola Hotel and I can remember something that happened there which had happened to do with You and I. I think we were playing two nights there, and to my horror, I got laryngitis in the first performance and I could barely speak in a whisper.
M. Caple	Is that the play where you had one line?
A. Pumphrey	Oh no, no, that was the one where I was low comedy and an artist's model and stuff. So this time a nice doctor came out of the audience afterwards and took me down to the kitchen of the Incola Hotel and got a steamer going and steamed my throat, bless his sweet heart, and then finally got me into bed and the next day I was saved. (laughter) and got me in bed ... oh that does sound bad. It was very proper I assure you (voice: So as the morals of the young will not be interfered with I think those lines should be eliminated. I think so too)
A. Pumphrey	Let's leave them in.
S. Risk	Also in You and I was Bice Caple and our old friend Bea, you will comment, please.
B. Wood	Bice Clegg Caple Arts 28 was she (voices: Arts 27) played the mother of Kenneth in "You and I", by Philip Barry. We all know of Bice's present illness and regret she can't be here that to speak for herself and give us some of her inimitable remarks. She was

	one of the bright lights in “You and I” and added greatly to the success of the play.
K. Caple	There is a story that I think is amusing. In the play, “You and I”, I was a young troubador in tights, very smart looking tights, showed my legs off to best advantage, and I had a ruffle round my neck and a harp and I was going to go out to a party and sing, so I went to kiss my mother goodnight. Bice was my mother in the play, this is when I first met Bice, and I went to kiss her goodnight and we used to have a little peck on the cheek and run you see, and I pecked her on the cheek and she said "kiss me again". I was a little startled, surprised, so I kissed her again and she said "you fool, kiss me again" I said "what's wrong" she said "you got that damn banjo in my earring, kiss me again" (laughter). I kept kissing her while she disengaged the banjo from her earring and her hairnet and then she said "bugger off". (laughter)
D. Somerset	Sydney, before you go to “Pygmalion”, there is one story for which we should go back to “The World and His Wife”. Betty your story in the Vancouver production...
B. Clyne	Oh yes, well that was quite fascinating. We were shouting away because it was a great experience for us to try and talk in that theatre after having talked at the University theatre and what's her-name, Alfreda Berkeley was playing opposite me and the two of us were having a scene in centre stage and her responses were very slow in coming back and I couldn't understand. I would give her the cue again and so on, and finally I realized that she was not well and sort of pushed her up against the arm of the chesterfield so that she would have something to lean against and went on, and suddenly a voice, from above, a beautiful voice, came down and it was Rann Kennedy (A voice: Matthison) Oh yes, Rann Kennedy and Edith Wynne Matthison. Their box was practically over the stage and he spoke down and he said "Sit down my dear, sit down", and he was so calm and nice that I managed to get her round to the chesterfield where she could sit. Meanwhile that damn Freddie didn't pull down the curtain because he couldn't find the stagehand. I thought she was going to faint right there and so did the audience. However she sat down, recovered and managed to finish the scene.
D. Somerset	If I may speak to that because I was in the audience: here was my sister facing front stage a woman who was fainting--her knees were just buckling -- she was leaning forward and Betty cruelly would put her hand against her chest and shove her upright (laughter) and I thought "God, Betty", then she'd sag again and Betty would shove her up. Then finally because Rann, Rann Kennedy was the honorary president of the Players' Club, he saved the day. That gorgeous voice and his white head when you looked up there. (voices: what did you want Betty to do with her?) I don't know what I thought but Betty just looked awful. (laughter) Oh Mildred, you have another story, yes, about when the stagehands can't be found.
M. Caple	Oh, well, you see, Avis and I shared the very, very demanding part of maid. I mean if you only have one or two lines it's very important, you make it or lose it you see in just one or two lines. So anyway along with my bachelor's degree that year I became an expert rummy player because there was a rummy game going--seemed to me you were probably on stage full-time Betty, but there were quite a few in that cast who didn't spend all their time on-stage, but I was the key figure in the rummy game, and I kept it going. So I--anyway I learned that--and Kenneth, I think I was music off-stage too because I know I had to start a record always and once we didn't get it going--maybe we shared that--and then there were two minor rebellions on that tour. The first one

	<p>occurred in Kamloops. We got there and found again, as somebody else did in Nelson I think, there were no seats sold--very very upsetting, and Freddie very smartly went out and either borrowed or rented a truck, an open truck, and insisted that all the males in the cast get on the truck and drive around town with a banner, and I know there were grumblings-they thought that as professional actors or something it was beneath their dignity. And then there was a one-woman rebellion. Somewhere along the line, I don't know, it must have been the shirt that he wore on-stage, but one of the actors, Pete Palmer, his stage shirt needed laundering and he handed it to Betty to do and Betty said she didn't want to wash any man's shirt who had a seventeen size neck. (laughter, voices: he was your husband on stage wasn't he...yes I think he was) Jack only wears a fifteen and a half).</p>
S. Risk	<p>Yes, well, now for "Pygmalion". We had comments from several members of that cast, Isobel Barton Morrison and Grace Hope Stevenson, neither of whom are present, but we'll ask Bea to read their comments to us.</p>
B. Wood	<p>This is what Isobel Barton Morrison of Arts '26 has to say (voice: She was Liza) "1925-26. This was the year that UBC moved from Fairview to the Point Grey campus. Now the Players' Club had a grand new auditorium for its performances and what a wonderful stage. For the first act of "Pygmalion" we actually had a taxi drive forward on the stage to pick up Eliza. Also rain was made to fall. I think Tommy Lee was responsible for a great deal of stage magic. Freddie Wood was our kindly dedicated mentor, loved and respected by us all. One of my personal, hilarious memories is of the late D'Arcy Marsh, who played Alfred Doolittle, trying to help me acquire a cockney accent."</p> <p>Grace Hope Stevenson of Arts '27 played Mrs. Eynsford-Hill in "Pygmalion". "Good to have a reminder of those halcyon days of the Players' Club. I still have the photos someone took on the Spring tour with "Pygmalion", coming down in a launch from Britannia Beach, Avis Pumphrey, D'Arcy Marsh, looking very theatrical, Freddie Wood, with hat on one side, posing. I remember that by the time we returned to Vancouver in June 1926 after thirty performances, we felt like professionals, ready to take on and do Seattle or anywhere else on the continent. I have seen "My Fair Lady" and "Pygmalion" since, but none compare with our own version. (laughter)</p>
S. Risk	<p>Now another member of the cast was Willoughby Matthews and he has a brief comment here. I will just read it to you. "The details in my own mind are now almost totally submerged in one glorious memory of wonderful friendships, adventure and mild achievement." Now another prominent member of the cast Pygmalion was our chairman this afternoon, Harry Warren, who is right here and can tell us something about his memories.</p>
H. Warren	<p>I think the most interesting thing that I can report was that Freddie was determined to have rain actually on the stage, and I had to design a great canvas trough so when the rain came down the cast, after the rain had fallen, we mustered it and carried it off. We had no other way of getting rid of it. The only place that Freddie capitulated was in Britannia. The stage was so small that he allowed...we pretended that it was raining. Freddie was a very hard task master over that rain business.</p>
S. Risk	<p>Harry, were you in charge of producing this rain?</p>
H. Warren	

	<p>I was in charge of producing rain and at Salmon Arm, when we got there, we found there were no stand pipes anywhere about the theatre. The nearest was two blocks away--one block down one way and one block the other way--so we had to get pipes from the citizens of Salmon Arm -- then we had to time how long it took the water to reach the stage -- I put my hand up like this when the rain was to come, and the rain would come through about two minutes later. And then we had to make a signal for the rain to stop, you know--and it was quite exciting--but I can say it was quite an awful job because we had to cart this through in a huge crate everywhere we went, I think the baggage people got very disgruntled about it all. (laughter)</p> <p>We had another tragedy, or near-tragedy in "Pygmalion". As you know, Peter Price was the leading man and he had beautiful curly hair which the girls loved to put their hands through. Peter found this very embarrassing and one of the leading ladies insisted on doing this and Peter, finally, was very naughty, he picked her up, put her on the floor, picked her ankles up and dragged her all round the hotel, she was letting out squeaks and squeals and the rest of us were horribly embarrassed and didn't know what to do about it. But no one, none of the women put their hands through his hair any more, that was at Revelstoke. The hotel is now burnt down.</p> <p>(Voices: you played Colonel Pickering. Yes, I was Colonel Pickering)</p>
S. Risk	Now that brings to a close our formal program and I'm going to turn it back to our chairman for winding it up. Harry.
H. Warren	<p>Well, I have one or two things that come into mind. Freddie was always the soul of tactfulness and I remember I wanted to try out for a part--I suppose it was the part Kenny got -- and when I went in to Freddie to get the part he looked at me and he said "do you know Miss Buck very well?" "No" I said, "no, I tried out with her once that's about all." "Well," he said, "perhaps you would be wise to try for another part". I wasn't anxious to be put off so I said "no, I think I would like to try out for this part" and I took my part and went round the corner. The first line was "Darling, you haven't kissed me yet" and of course at that time I was just paralyzed with fear. When the try-out came up in the old building we were both of us so nervous that I fell flat on my face on the steps going up, which I think lost me the part and I think that is why Kenny moved in and took the lead.</p> <p>Freddie--I think I got in well with Freddie--I'm not sure. Bea may be able to correct this. But the try-outs--you used to have to pay a dollar to try out and a lot of people didn't pay their dollar if they didn't get in, they just disappeared. And of course, I was the treasurer that year, Alfreda Berkeley was the president. I started a system that they didn't go on for the try-out til they put their dollar in my hot hand, and I think Freddie found this was a very salutary way of collecting the dues for the Players' Club. Freddie and I remained great friends ever after.</p>
D. Somerset	I'd like to make one comment. Avis, I think it was Avis, or was it you Mildred, referring to the fact that you felt you were professionals. You know that you had been on the tour, I think it was you Avis, you had been on the tour of so many productions and done so well. We've talked about the past here which is what we have come to do, we wanted to, talk about the Players' Club and Freddie in those early years. I would

	like to just look at Freddie from the point of view of the future. This is in the twenties mostly and then there is the Players' Club in the thirties and the forties, but the theatre in Canada, which of course is what Freddie cared about, the theatre above all, it was growing apace. And then the CBC came along and it had jobs for professional actors, and it was obvious that the world of professional theatre was going to come to Canada, going to come to Vancouver. And I am thinking now of all the hurrah there was over the laying the cornerstone of the new festival theatre in London, in England, do you remember? Well, Freddie laid the cornerstone, I am thinking of an actual occasion, of the professional theatre here, from the University's point of view, because it was Freddie in 1945, himself, who recommended that there should be credits within the English Department for theatre, recognizing the fact that with the Canadian theatre offering more and more opportunities for professional theatres that they would need the extra training. So that in a way, that motion that he made to Senate, which was seconded by Garnett Sedgewick, was the beginning of the University becoming involved in professional theatre. That was an important mark I think.
H. Warren	Sydney, I think that we should all of us mention the fact that you, Sydney Risk and Dorothy Somerset, have carried on what Freddie started, in a marvellous way, and I myself regret that the Players' Club, as such, does not exist today. I, as an engineer, Kenny as an Aggie, all sorts of uneducated people got some education, and while there are some marvellous performances in the theatre today I don't think there are very many engineers or agricultural students, at least as far as I know, performing.
Gordon Letson	May I speak first dear. I never do anything without your permission. (voice: yes darling) I wish to thank you for the privilege of having been able to sit here and listen. It was very nostalgic at least, and I think it a most important thing to do because recently I have come across two or three things of interest which you cannot now find the history of and there is no one to tell you anything about it. Now you've got it on record, and you can use that and you are doing an important job. I guess whoever started it should be congratulated. Apart from that, I've enjoyed myself, but I have nothing to contribute. Now, I'll let you speak.
Gertrude Letson	Well, as a matter of fact various things came up, memories particularly Betty, holding up Alfreda and talking to her and poor Alfreda's legs, and you say that lovely voice that came again. Also it's just marvelous to have Freddie brought back. He just appears the whole time...we all have special memories of Freddie. Particularly once, Mildred, the Christmas play? (voice: you tell the story dear.) It was a Russian play and I was Varavara. You were-I've forgotten who you were. (voice: yes, I've forgotten too, but it was a woman.) It was a very dramatic Russian play (voice: "The Little Stone House".) "The Little Stone House" was the name and I have forgotten what part... (voice: Tubby Shore was in it and Lloyd Edgar) But who was it whose moustache...(Voice: Lloyd Edgar's). He was about to speak and the moustache came off, and I caught Mildred's eye and she caught mine and the worst happened...uncontrollable, uncontrollable giggles (Voice: giggles) At that moment I had to go off stage to bring in an axe. I think it was, it was a prop anyway, and I had to face Freddie who grew taller and taller and taller and glared down more and more and more and said "I'll see you on Monday and handed me the axe (voice: where was this?) The Christmas play. It was one of the worst moments, but my it was funny Mildred.
D. Somerset	Jack, you forgot a story, you were a rugby player

J. Clyne	I played rugby yes. (Voice: Well, tell your story) Freddie called me one day, the Spring play started on Monday, and, (Voice: which one was it-do you remember?) well, I forgot the play I think it was "Mr. Pim" but anyway, yes it was "Mr. Pim", and I was playing rugby on Saturday and Freddie said "you can't play rugby on Saturday because we are playing at the Avenue starting our show on Monday." "Oh", I said, "I can play rugby, don't worry I won't get hurt". So I said, "no I'm going to play rugby" And then I went back to class and a little later I got a call from President Klinck and I went to his office to see him, and he said, "my boy, Professor Wood tells me that you are playing rugby on Saturday and you are taking the leading part in the play on Monday" and I said "yes" he said, "my boy, you cannot play rugby on Saturday", and I didn't. There was a certain amount of discipline in (voices: yes, you have to behave yourself)
D. Somerset	I would like to interject, not interject, I want to add to the tape, so that it may be on record that all of us concerned with the history of the University and the history of the Players' Club in particular, these we have mentioned today, are very grateful to Laurenda Daniells without whom this would not have been possible. I think that should be on the tape and kept on the tape. (Applause)
L. Daniels	Thank you very much. (Voice: May we have a drink?)
S. Risk	Yes, now, I just want to say that over on the table by the window there are programs, Players' Club programs and many pictures and you are now free to go and browse through them and look at them. (murmurs) Yes and Bea's picture too.
L. Daniels	I would like to thank Dorothy Somerset, who devoted many hours to producing and directing this afternoon's session, Sydney Risk, who was our master of ceremonies and kept things on track, Harry Warren, who, with the Heritage Committee of the Alumni Association initiated the project, and especially all the members of the Players' Club who shared your memories with us.