



Chapter 14

Thomas Alexander Stokoe at Skyline High School, 1969 – 2000

I Love Skyline High School. It has been a great 31 years teaching here. The students are fantastic. Their talent and ability never cease to amaze me year after year. The studentbody officers, cheerleaders, stagecrew, faculty, administration, and staff have been great to work with plus the various organizations within the school.

There is more than just a school here. There is a spirit live, vibrant and forever growing. It is a spirit of excellence, a spirit of tradition that will long endure beyond our passage through its hallowed halls.

Three decades have produced many choice memories. I share but a few:

MY MOST MEMORABLE FOOTBALL GAME: The 1969 State Championship game, Skyline verses Layton. With less than a minute remaining in the game, Layton scored to take the lead. The Layton fans went wild with jubilation. Skyline fans were silent. Some of the cheerleaders were crying. With final seconds ticking off the clock, quarterback Steve Marshall threw a screen pass

to sophomore Dave Barton who ran some 68 yards for the winning touchdown. Skyline fans erupted in tumultuous elation. I went hoarse shouting repeatedly , “Go Dave, go! Go! Go!” I wasn’t the only one who went hoarse. It was a fantastic finish.



Layton players laid on the ground devastated, heart-broken. Skyline was in total euphoria. This was a phenomenal ending to a high school State Championship football game, and to me, the most exciting Skyline championship finish.

THE GREATEST CATCH: It was a region football game in 1970 where quarterback Robbins seemed to overthrow running back Steve Marlowe by 20 yards. Marlowe kept running and leaning forward almost to the ground, bounced the ball two or three times off his extended fingertips, hauled in the pass one-handed, and went into the end zone for the touchdown.

BANNER YEAR IN THEATER: 1972 when we did 5 major theatrical productions, the Drama Team took 1st Place in region, and won 1st Place Sweepstakes and the Championship Trophy at the State Drama Meet held at BYU.

REGION AND STATE DRAMA MEETS: In the 1970’s competition events for Region and State Drama Meets were as follows with each school allowed to take six entries per event to region but only one 30 minute 1-act play or cutting of a play: Humorous interpretation, dramatic Interpretation, storytelling, monoacting, pantomime, scenes from plays, improvisation,



Skyline 1979 Shakespeare Drama Team

and 30 minute 1-act play or cutting. These were 8 excellent events and gave a good number of drama students an opportunity to participate.

For the state drama meet, a school could only qualify three entries per event and only the top 2 or 3 plays from a region could go, depending on the number of schools in the region. Eventually, storytelling and improvisation were dropped.

Improvisation was dropped by a vote of 32-31 by drama teachers across the state. I was sorry to see this event dropped for it was a lot of fun for the participants plus an audience. It was dropped because 32/63 drama teachers felt it couldn't be judged effectively. Next to be dropped was storytelling because it was felt the state drama meet was too big and the universities could not accommodate over a thousand drama students competing on campus.

Originally the state meet was held at BYU, then at the University of Utah, then at Weber State and finally ended up being dropped from the universities altogether and being hosted at high schools. The 5A state meet was held at Taylorsville High School, 4A and 3A combined elsewhere, and likewise the combined 2A and 1A. I enjoyed coaching students for the drama

meets. There were some drama teachers in the state who did not like competition so their schools did not participate. They were inclined toward a non-competitive festival format.

Utah High School Shakespeare Competition



Skyline Shakespeare Team, 1st Place, Utah Shakespeare Competition

Each October we would attend the Utah Shakespeare Competition held in Cedar City. All events were from Shakespeare plays. They included 3 Monoacts per school, 2 Duo/Trio scenes, a Group Ensemble scene, and Technical Theatre competition. Years later they added

Dance/Choreography competition and Madrigal and Minstrel competition. We enjoyed going to Cedar City. It was an excellent venue for high school and junior high school drama students.

THE MOST MEMORABLE THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE: The year was 1972. It was the Region Drama Meet held at Skyline attended by all seven schools in our region. Each school fielded a one-act play in competition. Our play was “Where Have All the Lightning Bugs Gone?” by Louis Catron. There were two in the cast, a boy and a girl and the play ran 27 minutes. Scott Zogg played the role of the boy and Alexis Cairo was the girl. Alexis lost her voice the morning of region performance. Alexis pantomimed her role, Scott took her lines plus his own, the play ran 27 minutes, took 1st Place at region, Alexis won Best Actress and Scott Best Actor. At the State Drama Meet two weeks later, with her voice returned, Alexis won Best Actress and Scott Best Character Actor. These were two amazing performers and their accomplishment under the most challenging conditions at the Region Drama Meet, is unparalleled in high school drama in the state of Utah.

THE GREATEST PLAY I EVER DIRECTED: “Hamlet” with a superb cast led by Randy Keefe in the title role in the 1970’s. The cast in this play was outstanding and the rich talent made the play click marvelously, a tribute to each cast member.

THE BEST DECADE FOR DIRECTING PLAYS: 1970’S when we had over 3,000 students and tons of talent. The supply never ended. It just kept flowing.

THE MOST ENJOYABLE COMEDIES I EVER DIRECTED AT SKYLINE: Contemporary plays –“See How They Run”, “Don’t Drink the Water” with Sean McGarry and Missy Casper, and “The Foreigner”. Shakespeare – “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” in the 1970’s, “As You Like It” in the 1990’s with Chelsi Stahr and Missy Scharrier, and “A Comedy of Errors.” As for musicals – I enjoyed all 30 that I directed with the production team of Jim Miller as Vocal Director, Richard Chatelain as Orchestra Director for 27 years, and several choreographers over the thirty year period with Linda Blackham being at Skyline the longest at nine years.

I did not direct a musical my first year at Skyline, 1969-70. I wanted to but did not have the support of the Vocal Music Department. I was informed being in a musical ruined student voices. Also, the Home Economics Department turned me down for help with costumes, but was willing to sew sheets of muslin together for the building of flats. I had to turn to rentals and student help for costuming over the next thirty years.

However, with the arrival of Jim Miller the fall of 1970 as a new Vocal Music teacher who endorsed musicals, a thirty year musical production team would begin with the Drama Department, Vocal Music Department, Orchestra director, and Jim Stewart of the Art Department. The dance teacher came aboard in 1972 as choreographer of “Fiddler On the

Roof” and we had a choreographer from then on. We were now in alignment with the rest of the high schools in the state producing annual musicals.

THE MOST MORABLE POEM WRITTEN BY A STUDENT IN MY POETRY CLASSES: Gym Kimball, Skyline quarterback “Chainsaw Massacre or Cutting up Dogs with Chainsaws.”

THE MOST CREATIVE IMPROMPTU MONOACT & TALENT: Scott Zogg, 1971-72, a senior who commenced a monoact as soon as I had taken roll at the beginning of the period and kept it going creatively until the bell rang at the end of the period. It was a 45 minute non-stop monoact. Scott Zogg was a fantastic actor, one of the most outstanding actors I ever had in the Drama Department, in a play, on the drama team, or in a theater class in my 31 years at Skyline. He was absolutely amazing, superb, brilliant, and phenomenal.

Scott was interested in attending an excellent acting school and one in London was holding entrance auditions in New York. The auditions were to be conducted by a theater professor teaching at a university in New York and consisted of a humorous monoact and a dramatic one. We worked on a monoact from “The Middle-Class Gentleman” by Moliere as his comedy, (he played the lead role in this play at Skyline) and his dramatic monoact was taken from “Dr. Faustus.”

Scott flew to New York and auditioned and his performance absolutely blew away the PhD theater professor. The professor was so impressed he phoned me and praised Scott to the heavens. He said he had never seen such talent before even among his beginning acting students at the university. He went on praising the monoacts and how masterfully Scott had rendered them. He was impressed with Scott’s talent beyond all measure.

Scott was accepted to the Guildhall School of Acting and went to London, England. He had played leading roles for me all three years he was at Skyline, was three years on the drama team winning region and state acting awards each year, and involved in class room theater activities. He was a seasoned high school actor and acclaimed at the state level.

After a year in London he returned to the U.S. He told me the first year acting students at the school were not given the opportunity to participate in major plays. The instruction in the classroom was alright, but the opportunity to act playing roles in major productions and enjoy extensive enrichment acting did not exist for him. He felt stifled and so never went back. I never saw Scott again or know how his future panned out, but I will always cherish the theatrical work he did and his tremendous talent and commitment to theater.

THE MOST HAIR RAISING EXPERIENCE ON STAGECREW: A sophomore stagehand who flew 50 feet in the air in 3 seconds when he mistakenly took off too many weights counter weighting scenery. As he released the brake that locked the scenery in, the scenery came crashing down

onto the stage as the counter weight rope he grabbed with two hands went flying up taking him to the top of the grid. For him, that was a memorable 50 foot flight.

THE MOST UNIQUE ACT OF LOYALTY BY THE STAGECREW: I needed a sixth pantomime for the Region Drama Meet (a school can take six entries in each area of competition except one-act plays). I asked the stagecrew and one of the techies volunteered. He would rehearse during stagecrew period and the stagecrew would critique him. However, on the day of the Region Drama Meet at West High School he failed to show up.

The next day in class, the stagecrew asked me how he did at the Drama Meet. The pantomime techie had not yet arrived in class. I said he failed to show up. The crew then went to work building scenery. Toward the latter part of the class period, I went across the hallway to the drama room to prepare for the incoming drama class. I had told the stagecrew if the bell rings, put the tools away, turn off the lights and lock up the stage.

The bell rang and drama class began. About fifteen minutes later, I needed a box of props that was on stage. I opened a stage door, entered in the dark, and grabbed the box. Suddenly, I heard strange muffled sounds coming from above the stage. I crossed to the other side of the stage and turned the work lights on.

There, bound and gagged, hanging upside down, attached to a batten up in the fly well was the pantomime techie. He was like a unit of scenery or a backdrop suspended in space. I went onto the bridge, lowered him down, ungagged and untied him. I asked, "What happened? Who did this to you?" He weeping replied, "The stagecrew because I didn't show up for the Drama Meet. They said I let them down, and the Drama Team and the school."

The crew had tied his hands behind his back, gagged him, put cushions around his ankles to protect them, bound his legs and ankles with rope, then tied the rope end to a batten (pipe) and flew him suspended upside down above the stage.

I believe the pantomime techie learned the importance of responsibility, commitment, and loyalty that day. As for the stagecrew, well, they demonstrated the importance of loyalty too. This was in the 1980's.

INTERESTING BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM EXPERIENCE: When a girl went into an open backstage dressing room to use the toilet and didn't know where the light switch was (it was outside the toilet room and you had to turn it on prior to entering). While she was seated there in the dark, I unknowingly locked the door and went to teach my classes. She was there in the dark for four hours. I discovered her at lunch time when I went backstage and heard "Help!" I believe that must have been her most memorable toilet room experience and might have qualified for the Guinness World Book of Records.

THE MOST UNUSUAL FOOTBALL PLAYER I EVER HAD IN THE CLASSROOM: A senior in the 1970's, who on game day, would come to drama class and pace around the room with clenched fists, elbows extended, breathing heavily. I would ask him what was wrong and he would reply softly but intensively, "I want to kill." "Kill who?" I would ask and he would name the school we were playing that day. Then he would ask, "Mr. Stokoe, is it ok if I go pace around on the football field? I can't act today." And I would say something like, "If it makes a difference in how you will play today and your contribution to the team, go ahead." Later on I would look out the back door (my room was next to the football field) and sure enough, there he was pacing on the football field.

THE MUSICAL THAT UPSET THE GIRLS: "Paint Your Wagon." It only called for two girls in the cast and they were wives of a polygamist. They were upset that there were only two female roles. We cast 45 guys in the show but next year we cast over 80 girls in the musical.

THE LARGEST CASTS: South Pacific, 1971; Fiddler On The Roof, 1973; and The Music Man in the 1970's. We cast around 130 per show.

THE TALLEST AND BIGGEST ACTORS EVER IN THE DRAMA DEPARTMENT: Mike "Stretch" McGlone, 6' 7". Shawn McGarry 6' 1" and Hubbell Palmer 6'2" both at 260 plus pounds.

THE KNOCKOUT: "Fiddler On The Roof" in 1973. Backdrops are weighted at the bottom with metal pipe to stretch them taut thus eliminating wrinkles. During a performance, between scenes in the dark, a fast descending backdrop hit a girl on the head knocking her out for 2-3 minutes. She recovered and was alright.

NOAH'S FLOOD: Returning to school one year January 3rd after Christmas break, I heard running water backstage in the hallway. Opening the backstage door, I flipped the light switch but there was no electricity just the sound of flowing water. Removing socks and shoes, I waded through the backstage hallway and flooded dressing rooms to the stage. Water covered every square inch of the stage and was cascading into the orchestra pit like Niagara Falls. The orchestra pit was virtually full to the brim with water. You could swim in it.

Sub-zero temperatures had caused pipes to burst flooding the entire back stage and stage areas. I informed the administration and within an hour the district arrived and commenced pumping out the orchestra pit and flooded areas. It took four months for the buckled stage to subside with fans on literally 24 hours a day except for an activity on stage. The stage was sanded down and looked like new. This same incident would occur two more times over the next six years.

THE MOST UNUSUAL ROOF: The leaks in the auditorium roof never left. They just moved to different spots each time the roof was repaired. Dripping water would fall upon actors,

dancers, singers, and musicians during rehearsals and performances on stage. During a dance concert performance in the 1980's with a rain storm pouring outside, the stagecrew had to mop the stage between dances. We couldn't keep it dry. When water flowed into an electric floor pocket during a dance, there was a sudden flash and explosion. Sparks flew eight feet in the air and smoke billowed across the stage. It was one of the most exciting light effects we ever had in a Skyline dance concert.

THE MOST EXCITING COLLAPSE: It was 5pm and we had just finished play rehearsal. Suddenly there was a roar from the ceiling and the sound of rushing water. The cast and I ran backstage as hot water poured down from the ceiling above the hallway and dressing rooms. The pipes had burst. "Save the stage!" I yelled. We ran to the costume room and got blankets, sheets, and costumes and built a dam at each doorway leading onto the stage. We had to contain the water backstage or the water would flow on stage ruining it once again. Already it was flowing toward the orchestra pit but our dams stopped further flow onstage. We got mops and mopped the wet areas of the stage.

We worked furiously as water and ceiling tiles rained down upon us soaking us thoroughly. It was as though we were taking a shower. Every single tile in the backstage hallway ceiling fell to the floor. I informed the custodians and within an hour the district arrived and turned the water off. We had saved the stage and the district a few thousand dollars. That was one play rehearsal the cast and I will always remember.

THE SHY HORSE: It was "Camelot" in the early 1970's. I had a vision in my mind of bringing Lancelot onstage riding a white horse singing his opening song "Cest Moi." We got a beautiful white horse but it was shy of the orchestra playing. Every time it came to center stage it would turn its rear end toward the audience and Lancelot would be singing to the backdrop. I told Lancelot (Paul Ince 6' 4" and bearded) to control the horse but the horse had a mind of its own. We finally resolved the problem by having a squire lead the horse to center stage facing the audience and stand there. It worked and Lancelot received a rousing ovation each night.

THE NIGHT THE LIGHTS WENT OUT ON BROADWAY: It was in the 1970's and we were doing the comedy "See How They Run." It was a wonderful cast, truly excellent. The play had barely begun when an area blackout hit. So I went out on stage in the dark, explained to the audience what had happened, and if they would just bear with us for a few minutes the show would go on. We then opened the backstage roll up door and drove a truck into the stage right wing and turned its lights on. The play resumed. Each time the maid, Tracy Melville, came on she would place candles around the set. With sufficient candle power we turned the truck lights off. The electricity never did come back on and we did the rest of the play in candle light. In life there comes a time when the public roots for the underdog. This was such a night and the appreciative audience gave the cast a rousing ovation at the end of the play. In fact, this

performance was the best of the three night run. I am sure this was a performance that Liz Krone, Craig Shipler, Tracy Petty, Chris Batman and the rest of the cast would always remember. I hope I've got the casts right because I directed this show three times during my 31 years at Skyline – one production per decade.

THE CASE OF THE DISAPPEARING FURNITURE: One of the teachers wanted to borrow a sofa, four chairs and a table for a project in her class room in A Building. She asked if she could send the custodians to pick them up. I said, "Sure, just send them down anytime. I'll have the props onstage for pickup." Then I promptly forgot all about it. (I'll now write in the present tense). Three weeks later, we are performing a matinee for some 120 drama students from Wasatch Junior High School. Being the school is next door to Skyline it was easy for them to walk over.

The play is a comedy, the curtain opens and the show begins. Naturally all lights are out in the auditorium and it's dark except for on stage. The set is a living room furnished with a sofa, table, chairs and decorative props hanging on the walls with stage left and right entrances. About thirty minutes into the show, in walk two custodians and approach cast members sitting on the sofa. One of the custodians is named Byron, an interesting fellow, and he says, "We need this sofa. Get off it." The cast is in the middle of saying their lines but when Byron repeats "Get off" they oblige and get off all the time continuing with their lines. The two custodians walk off carrying the sofa. The cast is wonderful and none break character they just carry on.

The play is moving along beautifully when the two custodians re-enter the stage. They approach the actors seated at the table and Byron says, "We need the table and chairs too. Get off." What happens next is classic ad lib between the cast and custodians as they argue over the furniture. The cast refuses to relinquish the table and chairs so what begins next is a tug-of-war between the custodians and cast pulling the table and all kinds of funny ad libs are flying all over the place – and the cast stay one hundred percent in character! The Jr. High kids are loving the show and think the action is neat.

Well, the custodians take the table by force and exit the stage only to re-enter to claim the chairs. There are four chairs total. One custodian grabs two of them and takes them off stage. Two actors immediately sit on the remaining chairs and refuse to get off them. There's humorous banter back and forth between Byron and the actors when the other custodian returns. They dump one actor on the floor and the other custodian runs off stage with the chair. Then they try to dump the other actor but he grips the chair so tightly he can't be budged. All the time there is hilariously ad-libbing going on with the cast urging the actor not to let go and the custodians to get lost – all in character!

Now there is only one alternative for the custodians - and that is to carry the chair and actor on it off stage which they do. The audience is laughing. In the stage right wing is an empty metal garbage can which they run into, the banging noise causing the audience to think they dumped the actor in the garbage can. The audience laughs. They think it's great. They love the show having no idea what-so-ever that all this custodian and cast interaction and dialogue has nothing to do with the play at all. This was a most unique, comical and entertaining matinee.

This play, and I can't remember its name, will always be one of "my favorite, funny improvisational moments on stage." The actors were absolutely wonderful, so creative in character, so improvisational magnificent. The performance that day had impromptu humorous moments far superior to the lines and action in the actual script, and unlike the Wasatch Jr. High students who thought the custodians were part of the play, the custodians had no idea they were engaged in an actual performance of a play. If the actors had been fooling around with the lines on their own, I would have been upset. But this was spontaneous action and dialogue the cast created to compensate for unexpected circumstances caused by the custodians – and they all stayed in character the entire time. Marvelous!

THE DINNER THAT DISAPPEARED: It was the fall of 1969 and the play was "The Middle-class Gentleman" by Moliere. There was a dinner scene that called for actors eating. It was opening night, and real food was needed so I went to Albertsons and bought some nice warm, fried chicken and rolls. I placed them on the dinner table which would be carried out all set and ready for the feast. When the scene arrived, I looked down from the balcony and saw the cast seated at the table pantomiming eating. There was no food. They were at the table pantomiming eating while engaged in conversation. I found the absence of food most disturbing. Later I enquired where the food was and the cast said the stagecrew ate it. I made the stagecrew buy food for the remaining performances.

THE IMPOSTER: The production was "Oliver", the fall of 1973. We had around eighty in the cast. Having blocked the musical I knew where actors were located in all scenes. It was the second performance of the show and the tavern scene with cast members seated at tables singing "Um Pah Pah." As I gazed down from the balcony at the tables and singing actors, I saw a person I had never seen before in my life. An imposter, in costume, was seated at a table swinging his mug and pretending to sing along with cast members. I was irate.

As soon as the number was over I went back stage, found the boy, took him into the boy's dressing room, slammed him against the wall, and grabbing him by the front of his collar demanded why he was on stage when he was not a member of the cast. He said he had seen the musical the previous night and so enjoyed it, that he wanted to be in it. So he went and got a costume and joined in this particular scene thinking he would go unnoticed.

My anger immediately subsided and I had compassion for the kid. Here was a boy who loved theater and enjoyed our production so much, that he couldn't resist wanting to be in it. I forgave him and told him next time he wanted to be in a show to audition. He departed.

THE WITTY DEBATER: It was time for the annual Region Debate Meet featuring seven schools and Skyline was hosting. Debate coach, Maj Sylvester, asked if my room could be used and I consented. In my classroom is a stage one foot tall. It was upon this stage that the debaters performed. A debate got under way with Skyline the Affirmative team and the other school the Negative team.

The four debaters, smartly dressed in suits, sat on chairs on the stage. Each one stood when it was his turn to speak. A Negative debater had just finished speaking and sat down on his chair which was perilously close to the edge of the stage. The Skyline debater then proceeded to wrap up his summation and was on the verge of concluding with, "Ladies and gentlemen....." when this Negative debater moved his chair and fell off the stage onto his back, his hands and legs extended upward like a dying cockroach. With brilliant wit and gusto the Skyline debater said, "Ladies and gentlemen, you have just witnessed the fall and demise of the Negative team. I rest my case!" All in the room laughed, even the judge. Doubtless to say, Skyline won the debate.

THE PROP GIRLS, MOON, GREASED POLE AND BASKET: I directed Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" three times at Skyline, one per decade – 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's. It was a fun play, fun for the actors as well as the audience. In the 1980's production, I had two girls in charge of props who were present backstage each night of performance.

There is a scene where the rustics or comical actors (Quince, Bottom, Snug, flute, Snout, and Starveling) call for an almanac to see when there would be a full moon. An almanac is produced and they all huddle around it searching for the date proclaiming "Moon."

The final performance of the show, unbeknownst to the actors, the prop girls pasted a picture in the almanac of a large fat woman bending over displaying her huge posterior. When they opened the almanac and saw her "moon", the actors all broke character. They laughed so hard they couldn't continue the scene. Bottom (Derek Dahlstrom), tried to speak but his lines wouldn't come out. And when they did, they were halting punctuated with laughter and heavy breathing. The actors never recovered and this gag by the prop girls, and the inability of the actors to stay in character, ruined the scene.

The set for the show was built in front of the counter weight system and incorporated the bridge. It was a forest scene with forest flats extended across the bridge covering the operating lines or ropes and there were multiple levels of rock formations. The forest was a tall, elegant set beautifully painted by students of the Art Department. The entire rock

formation set extended from a 4' stage upward to 30' on the stage right side. The front of the bridge had a railing with support poles extended upward to the grid. A rock wall masked the railing. The audience sat on the auditorium stage facing the set.

During the performance, Puck (Reese Jensen) was to leap grabbing the center pole and swing in a 360 degree circle landing on the top of the bridge railing. On this same night before the play began, the prop girls decided to grease the pole. When the moment in the play arrived, Puck leapt with enthusiasm toward the pole his body slightly arched to do the 360, only to slide down the pole landing on the bridge. It was lucky he didn't slip and fall 6' to the next level. There are times when a couple of high school kids on closing night think something like this is cute. Such antics only serve to sabotage moments in the show.

The second time I did "The Merry Wives of Windsor" by Shakespeare, the jealous Master Ford accompanied by villagers, enters seeking Falstaff (Hubbell Palmer, Skyline studentbody president) whom he suspects is in a large laundry basket being carried on a pole by two servants. He opens it to find it empty. The rest of the scene is contingent upon the empty basket.

On closing night one of the actors thought it cute if he was in the basket and when it was opened he stood up with a stupid grin on his face. I was devastated. The intent of Shakespeare's play at this moment was totally destroyed. A professor friend from the University of Utah Theater Department got up and walked out disgusted by what this actor did. I still feel bad at what this kid did to this very day. To me, it blemished the entire production of "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

THE ROOSTER HEAD, SPINNING WHEEL, & STAGE POWDER: It was "Annie Get Your Gun", a fun musical with a cast around ninety. Annie Oakley was to shoot the head off a wooden rooster perched on top of a building. The head was hinged to the body with an unseen length of string attached which a stagecrew hand pulled when she fired the gun and the rooster head would disappear from view of the audience. Annie's line was "There you see it (she would fire her gun) now you don't."

Opening night she aimed her gun, said "There you see it (fired the gun) now you don't." But the string broke and the rooster head stayed upright on the chicken. That was disappointing. Next day in stagecrew class I told the stagecrew to make an explosive powder packet, out of special stage "gun powder", rig a wire to it attached to an electric socket that could be activated from the light booth, and blow the rooster's head off on cue. We practiced once and it worked beautifully.

The stagecrew made a second "gun powder packet" and attached it to the rooster's head. However, they put too much "stage gun powder" in the packet and when Annie fired her

gun, the rooster head was blown upward knocking down an overhead microphone amidst a cloud of billowing smoke and the head fell slithering across the stage. It was quite the explosion causing the stagecrew and I in the light booth to laugh. I don't know what the audience thought but it sure was funny to the stagecrew and I.

THE MISFIRE & FALLING SEAGULL: In this same production, Annie Oakley was to observe a seagull flying above, shoot it and a stagecrew member located in the grid above the stage would drop a seagull on cue which was Annie's line. Chief Sitting Bull observed the action. The opening night this worked well but the second night the gun misfired, the stagecrew member dropped the seagull and when it hit the stage the audience laughed. Chief Sitting Bull (Mark Taylor) exclaimed "Good Shot!" bringing a second laugh from the audience.

THE SPINNING WHEEL & MORE POWDER: I had Annie Oakley and a fellow enter the stage riding on a motor cycle. The action called for Annie to shoot bottles on a spinning wheel as they circled the stage. The Art Department baked clay bottles for us and the stagecrew attached a packet of "stage gun powder" behind each bottle on the spinning wheel. Each bottle was rigged electronically to explode when Annie fired her gun (though the firing sounds came from taped sound effects and the real explosion of bottles).

We set everything up ready for a test during the first dress rehearsal and on cue Annie entered on the motor cycle firing away. The stagecrew in the light booth triggered the explosions, and like the rooster episode, excessive powder caused the bottles to explode showering pieces of clay as far as 70' into the auditorium. Other than a girl and her brother, no one occupied the seats. The orchestra was in the pit but was okay. Fortunately, the stagecrew did get the powder amounts correct and the scene worked perfectly during performances.

THE NEW LIGHT BOARD AND DILEMMA: The Davis Light Dimmer we had in the light booth in the balcony sparked and flamed. It could ignite a fire at some point. Granite District considered it dangerous and decided to replace it and put in a new computerized light board. The departments of Vocal and Instrumental Music, Dance, Drama, assorted organizations, faculty members and studentbody officers needing to use the stage or auditorium seating area, would enter and flip the light switches on the auditorium walls. On stage by the act curtain was a switch to turn on the stage work lights. It was convenient for everyone.

The company contracted to put in the new light board did not provide for turning auditorium lights on and off by the use of the switches on the auditorium walls; likewise stage work lights with the onstage switch. Instead, the new system now called for going upstairs into the balcony and light booth, turning on the computer light board, and tapping certain keys to turn on auditorium lights and stage work lights. This was absolutely impractical and totally ridiculous. It meant anybody who had the need to turn lights on and off would have to have a

key to the balcony, a key to the light booth, and know how to operate the computer light board.

I complained to the company we had to turn the lights on downstairs and onstage just as we had been doing since the school opened in 1962. So they ran wires and made it possible to turn on and off the auditorium lights downstairs. But they did not enable the stage work lights. It still called for going upstairs and turning on the computer light board.

I reiterated to the lighting company we had to have stage work lights turned on and off by the switch backstage. The company said they had fulfilled their contract, the job was finished, and permanently left. This put us in a terrible bind – no stage work lights with a functional light switch on stage.

A stagecrew senior (Wade Spencer) who had worked with his grandfather building houses and wiring them for electricity said that if we ran a wire from the old switch on stage, over the auditorium ceiling and down into the booth and light board, the problem would be solved. The contract company had forgotten to take a couple of spools of wire when they left. I said go ahead, do it. So he and some of the stagecrew boys did it. We now had normal work lights on stage operable by flipping the onstage switch.

Well, the district became aware of what we had done and didn't like it. A special meeting was called in the principal's office attended by our administration and eight or nine district officials. I was to give an accounting of what happened and why. I explained everything, and that I had authorized the stagecrew to run the wire enabling stage work lights to be turned on and off backstage; and yes, I was aware that students were not allowed to tamper with or adjust Granite School District property. I received a reprimand and warning and that was the end of it. At least everything was back to normal and the auditorium and stage lighting operable and convenient for all who used the facility. The district electricians came to inspect the work and added a special switch in the booth to turn on the stage works lights on and off. This the stagecrew and I appreciated.

AUDITORIUM, STAGE & STAGECREW: During my 31 years at Skyline we had many excellent dedicated and committed stagecrew members. We also had a few slackers and a few "curious explorers". I really appreciate the dedicated, committed, hard-working and reliable ones. As I told the stagecrews over the years they and the studentbody officers were the two most important student organizations in the school. The stagecrew was responsible for running everything in the auditorium: all technical aspects, lights, sound, setting up, taking down, storing, shipping out, not only for school functions but also for rentals, community, church and political events. We had a very busy stage.

Some shows arrived in semi-tractor trailers fully loaded. On occasion Oasis Stage Werks came in and ran the rental shows with additional 100 plus lights and a massive sound system. I shall always be appreciative of the dedicated members of the stagecrew who worked with me running the stage and auditorium. All events held in this facility would not have been possible without their help. They were of tremendous service to the school.

The stage required a lot of invested time. There were times when the stagecrew and I were there at 6 am and times when we didn't go home until 10pm – midnight. The latest we ever stayed was to 1:30 am on a Sunday morning taking down, packing up, and loading a rental into a semi-tractor trailer. There was many a day, year after year, when I would leave home in the dark early morning and return home in the dark of night. I never knew what it was like to go home regularly after school dismissed for the day. I wasn't the only high school drama teacher and stage manager in Utah with such a schedule. There was always something going on in drama and the stage Monday through Friday as well as Saturday rentals.

There were times when I would see my kids on Sunday and not see them awake until Saturday. Skyline took my time Monday through Friday. I came home at 5 pm one day and my young son David looked startled and said, "Dad, what's wrong? Why are you home?" Coming home at 5 pm was unheard of. Being Drama teacher, Director of theatrical productions, Drama Team coach, Drama Club Advisor, and stage manager of the Skyline stage and the auditorium took my time.

In the 1970's, I asked principal Mr. Pizza, if someone else could be stage manager and run the auditorium and stage. I would continue being Drama teacher, Director of plays, Coach of the Drama team, and Drama Club Advisor. His reply was, "Have you thought of looking for a job elsewhere?" I got the message loud and clear. I also brought this up in the 1980's. The principal replied, "We could transfer you." Again I got the message loud and clear. When I retired from Skyline in 2000 after 31 years there, over the following 12 years 7 different drama teachers took the job – an average of one and a half years per teacher.

Having six sons and bills to pay, Diane home tending our young kids, there was a need for more income besides teaching. So I got a job working Saturdays and Sundays. With two jobs I worked seven days a week for seven straight years 1978 – 1985 until Diane was hired to teach at Kennedy Junior High School in 1985. I kept a log of the different organizations the stagecrew and I worked with that used the Skyline stage and the 3,000 seat auditorium. Here are some of them as follows:

Yearly Republican and Democratic Party Conventions. Boy Scout leadership conventions and Boy Scout Pow Wows. Amway conventions. Community theatrical productions. Musicals, plays, dance reviews, and vocal and instrumental concerts. Touring shows: Coca Cola

National Touring Company. Various touring groups from around the nation. Touring Hawaiian Polynesian show. Speakers such as Zig Ziggler. Sports figures like Steve Young and Dale Murphy. Community meetings. Ririe Woodbury Dance Company. Several performances of "Saturday's Warrior" the musical. Community production of "Charlie" and "Finian's Rainbow." The Olympus stake production of "Music Man." The Utah Opera Company. Choral festivals and coral concerts. Band festival and concerts. Orchestra concerts, wind ensembles and drum corps. Religious group rentals. Piano concerts presented by nationally known artists. Touring vocal groups, barber shops groups, the Sweet Adeleines. Variety shows. The King Sisters. Public forums and panel discussions. Fashion shows. Miss Teen America Pageant. The University of Utah Ski Club. Dance festivals and Dance concerts. Pioneer Memorial Theatre's traveling version of "Man of La Mancha" and "Spoon River Anthology." Utah Symphony Orchestra. In-state and out-of-state rentals, Rock concerts (until the smell of marijuana in the auditorium ended Rock concert rentals) plus more.



TEACHING DRAMA TO STUDENTS FROM JAPAN

Weber State University contacted me in the spring of a year in the 1980's and asked if I would teach a Drama class for students from Japan. I was one of three high school drama teachers contacted. Each one of us would teach a drama class for three weeks. The students would arrive in June. All three of us consented. At the end of the three-week period each class would present a 30-45 minute theatrical production.

Each morning as the students entered the class room they would say "Harroh Teacha." I had approximately 17 students and needed to accommodate them all in a production. In as much as this was to be an English language and cultural theatrical experience I wrote a script entitled "Pioneers of Westward Expansion."

The script was based on the historical theme “Manifest Destiny” with eminent explorers such as Ponce de Leon, Jacques Cartier, Hernando de Soto, Samuel de Champlain, Coronado, Lewis & Clark, Daniel Boone, Joliet and Marquette, La Salle, Davey Crocket, Jim Bowie and others. It was tied together through a narrator and included singing and a little action dancing. It was a fun script; the cast enjoyed it and I enjoyed directing them.

On the final day of class, we performed. As soon as the show was over I immediately led the cast outside and gave each one a Book of Mormon in Japanese and thanked them for being good students and doing an excellent job in the production. There were tears. The Spirit was strong. On the day they went home, I bade them farewell at the airport and waved my sweater in the air as they entered the plane. Teaching and directing them for three weeks was a choice experience.

I believe it was a good experience for them too.



Tom, Jim Miller, Richard Chatelain – the 3 Amigos of the Fine Arts Department - at the Huntsman Center at Skyline graduation 2010.

ANNOUNCING SKYLINE FOOTBALL GAMES

I enjoyed announcing the Skyline home football games for 13 years and am grateful to Steve Marlowe for giving me the opportunity. When Steve first asked me I declined saying there were others on the faculty more knowledgeable and capable than I for the job. But when Steve asked again, two days later, I couldn't refuse him a second time and agreed.

I went to the Utah High School Activities Association and asked director Evan Excel for advice on announcing the games and what the Association would like announced. He was most helpful giving me excellent advice which I followed. Among the helpful pointers was “be fair to both schools, treat them equally, no favoritism, be respectful, considerate, observe and announce the flow of the game, have excellent spotters, acknowledge and thank support, work

with radio and television announcers as needed and the newspaper media ” There was more but this was the essence.



Inside the Skyline Booth announcing a game with Deb Bennett and Phil Talbot.

Having started out for three years as gate keeper, opening and closing the south gate for players, personnel and officials to enter and exit, I moved to the chain gain when an opening came available. The chain gang was fun as we were directly up front viewing the game and were part of its flow: Charlie Whiting, Darol Clegg, Wayne Moyle, Phil Lundgren, Craig Barlow and I and later Mark Jasumback and Derek Bunting after I moved to the booth. I spent four years on the chain gang.

Biology teacher, Dan Snarr, had been the announcer for several years. With his promotion to Skyline Assistant Principal, I became his replacement. I really appreciate Arthur and Jeannie Healey as spotters for a decade and their children replacing them when they left on their mission. Spotters are crucial to the announcing of a game. Several pairs of eyes scanning the action on the field are better than a single pair.

There are always special occasions at a football game, homecoming in particular, plus the presence of television and radio personnel filming and announcing the game. One special game I really enjoyed announcing was the game between Skyline and Kahuku High School from Hawaii in Rice-Eccles stadium on the campus of the University of Utah. It was a very enjoyable 13 years as announcer and 20 years football involvement. It ended at the end of the 2011 season when Diane and I were preparing to leave on a LDS mission to South Africa.

Skyline verses Brighton at Rice-Eccles stadium, University of Utah campus.



Jim Miller retired with 30 years and I with 32 years in Granite School District. Next for me would be one year with Salt Lake Community College assisting their program at the Draper prison, followed by 9 years at Mountain Ridge Jr. High School, Alpine School District as Drama and Speech teacher. I enjoyed directing 27 theatrical productions there – 9 musicals and 18 major plays, running the stage and auditorium, and coaching the drama team. Thus ended my forty-two year career as an educator 1968-2010.

I decided to retire after 32 years in Granite School District basically because I felt it was time. I had talked to Darell Clegg who had retired and to Joan Hahn who retired as drama teacher at Cottonwood. They indicated the pros of retirement. I also talked to other retirees who said the same. I had been mulling it over for several weeks and the last day to inform the district of retirement arrived.

Jim Miller had announced he was retiring. That impacted my thinking. On this particular day I gave stagecrew members assignments. Four or five started on them, but the rest sat around talking. They were lazy which was an ongoing characteristic among some of them throughout the year. There were about 15 on the crew. I did not choose them. They were placed in the class by the counselors.

After telling the lazy ones again to get cracking and get to work and they still sat there talking doing nothing, I felt discouraged and decided to retire. So I went down after school to the district office and filled out my retirement papers. When I got home I literally felt the weight of the world lifted from my shoulders. A tremendous joy raced through my being. I was on cloud 9 ecstatic with happiness. My spirit surged with elation, an overwhelming

confirmation I was now free from the burdens of the Skyline stage and auditorium, Drama teacher, Drama Director, Drama Team coach, Drama Club Advisor, and 31 years of averaging 500-800 extra curricula hours per year, and free from telling lazy students what to do and nothing happening. This was the ultimate joy, a euphoria I had never felt before. I was free at last.



Jim Miller and I at the Granite District retirement banquet

The night before Tom's retirement dinner Diane had a strange dream. She dreamt that she and Tom were young and preparing to marry when a beautiful young woman approached her claiming to be Tom's first wife. (Tom had never been married before and did not have a first wife.) However the woman persisted. She went on to explain that she had no ill will toward Diane and was more than willing to share Tom. But as first wife, she would always claim his time and talents before Diane needs would be met.

This dream was rather startling until Diane realized that the first wife represented Tom's love for theater, teaching, directing and coaching. This would always take precedence over Diane needs. Far too often she found herself in situations she had to resolve alone. Tom was busy with classes, directing a play or running the Skyline stage. Diane had married him because she knew he would support her financially and take her and her boys to church. He was a worthy priesthood holder and she admired Tom's integrity and strong work ethic which reminded her of her dad. After divorcing Pete, Grandma Farley had encouraged her to find someone "as much like you as possible and then you will have all the problems you can manage." In that respect Tom fit the bill other than the problems of being raised in two different worlds.