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Vera Andrew Harvey

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ORAL HISTORY

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Vera Andrew Harvey

Date June 21, 1974

(Signature - Interviewee)

1325 6th Ave
Address

Huntington, W. Va.

Date June 21, 1974

Timothy Olson
(Signature - Witness)

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

Vera Andrew Harvey

CONDUCTED BY:

Timothy Olson

PLACE:

Huntington, West Virginia

DATE:

February 8, 1885

? (miscellaneous birthdate)

TRANSCRIBED BY:

Kim Lady

Vera Andrew Harvey

TO: This is a taped, Oral History interview with Vera Andrew Harvey of 1325 Sixth Ave. Today's date is June 28. Mrs. Harvey was born February 8, 1885. She's a former state poet laureate, a former English teacher at Marshall College. My name is Timothy Olson.

(Blank in tape. Picks up with Mrs. Harvey apparently responding to a question by Mr. Olson.)

VAH: . . . largely basic English and that uh, meant uh, composition was and particularly uh, grammar was. So many of these students had absolutely no background at all. And then you had them that were uh, very receptive, but some of them were absolutely not. They, they couldn't see any reason to speak correctly since they were understood when they spoke so poorly, you know. And that probably prevails uh, today. I'm not sure that I was a particularly good teacher in that respect. I did have uh, themes. We read themes in class, had them write. And uh, we made corrections. In fact, I collected um, a list of themes I thought at one time, that uh, I would uh, publish a book of themes. (TO: Um, um.) And it is only this year that I've thrown them out. I found uh, those in some uh, records that I had upstairs. And uh, I had quite a few that I was going to put into a little book that I thought might be helpful to students who were uh, writing their English themes. (TO: Um, um.) Then um, (TO: How did you . . .?) I might say that (Mrs. Harvey laughs) that I did (Mrs. Harvey laughs) some very irregular things. (TO: Yes.) And one thing I do remember very distinctly that I did. One (Mrs. Harvey laughs) of the terrors of all teachers was Henry Tadlish. Now, you won't know too much about Henry Tadlish. But Henry just disrupted every class that he ever got into. Well, he got into my class. Mixed composition class. I got to talking to Henry. Of course everything was funny to Henry, everything he, he just wanted to laugh and joke and have something going on all the time and I thought well, what in the world can I do with Henry. So, I got to talking with Henry and Henry told me that he'd like to write a novel. I said, alright, suppose you just start right now. When you come into this class, you go to the back of the room and write a chapter every day. I'm not sure that he wrote a chapter, but that subdued Henry. We'd go over the work. Of course, he was getting really special attention.

[Henry Cavendish - CPT]

(TO: Um, um.) But he was keeping quiet, at least, so you could do something with the rest of the class.

TO: What did you do with the rest of the class?

VAH: Well, of course there were other things that, that were going on uh, uh, then. There would be uh, uh, probably uh, some themes being read and uh, some um, instructions in English composition. Well, (Mr. Olson interrupts.)

TO: This wasn't a lecture class? This wasn't a lecture class?

VAH: Oh, no. It was not a lecture, lecture class. You must remember that this work was largely secondary work. (TO: Um, um.) And uh, so (Mrs. Harvey laughs.) where did Henry Tadlish get. Henry Tadlish graduated from [Henry Marshall. One day, I was quite surprised to find that he uh, was on the staff of the Herald Tribune in New York. And then the next thing I knew, he was the Paris representative of the Herald Tribune. And I just wonder, of course the novel (inaudible). I don't know where the novel is at all. But I've often wondered if I helped Henry Tadlish to get, you might say oriented and to get settled, I just wonder. That is probably the most outstanding irregularity that I committed in the teaching um, um, profession. I think sometimes, as I have told you, that my work in Dramatics and then the work in my little uh, uh, storytellers group were more effective than uh, other things that I did. As least they seemed to be a little more glamorous, you know, then just the continual teaching of uh, composition and grammatical construction and so on. I'm not sure the classroom teacher that I was really very effective. Probably, I was uh, inspirational, I might have been, I don't know. But I've often thought, I wonder, imagine, I had no idea he'd ever get that far, you know.] (CAVENDISH CP)

TO: Did you have a lot of students get that far?

VAH: Many others?

TO: Yes.

VAH: Oh, many of them taught and many of them uh, told me the things they used, they, I don't think that they uh, uh, certain things that carried over from my classroom into their classroom, don't you know. Well, of course, with the um, I forget now about the, the uh, the students that had composition. I required a certain amount of reading. (TO: Um, um.) And uh, they uh, were to bring in on three by five cards. They, what they had read, the author and their reaction. That's just about all. I think they (Mr. Olson interrupts)

TO: Did they read classics or, what did they read?

VAH: Well, it would be, it would depend upon (inaudible) with the uh, the public school teachers that I had. Uh, it was the uh, that they um, literature for um, children mostly that they would report.

TO: And uh, the rest of your students, they would get uh, the standard fare. Did they read poetry perhaps, sometimes?

VAH: Oh, yes. They would report what they had read. It was rather primitive work and I felt it was rather primitive for um, one who had a Masters Degree. I should have preferred very much uh, doing the Shakespearan course, (TO: Oh, I see.) course.

TO: And all you had was grammer courses? You taught grammer?

VAH: Oh, it was composition. Don't say that all of it was grammer. (TO: Um, um.) It's pretty far away now and I'm not quite sure I did have a course on uh, two, one course on the beginning of liturature. I think we got as far (inaudible). We studied Beuwulf and, and the beginnings of um, English literature. I don't uh, I don't consider that uh, my work was outstanding as a teacher.

TO: Were most of your students specialists?

VAH: Were they what?

TO: Were most of your students specialists?

VAH: Specialists?

TO: Yes, m'am.

VAH: Yes, that's it. Most of them were uh, that was true when I went back and substituted that one year. There was, the man who headed that work just handed over to me a, a book that uh, he had been using.

TO: A textbook?

VAH: A textbook. (TO: Yeah.) It wasn't a textbook, it was a, this was a strange thing. The, the book had uh, a typed, I have forgot. Oh, it had spaces the student had to write in (TO: Um, um.) the corrected word, (Mrs. Harvey coughs.) the corrected uh, spelling or something. Largely, the corrected word. And uh.

TO: Was this a hardbound book?

VAH: Yes, it was.

TO: This was a workbook then.

VAH: It, and the man who was heading the department then was um, a defrocked Catholic priest. And (TO: Here at Marshall? inaudible.) Here at Marshall and uh, the Catholics over here. And uh, Monseignur just couldn't stand him. Well, what, no, I can't recall about that, but uh, I had to uh, I wasn't supposed to grade the papers. That was uh, somebody that was uh, being uh, given a scholarship or some help, you know. (TO: Um, um.) He was to grade the papers.

TO: You taught the class, but they graded the papers.

VAH: And I didn't do much. And unfortunately, I gave the papers back to them.

TO: The students.

VAH: I think. And that was supposed to be a terrible thing

to do. And I don't remember why.

TO: You mean uh, (Mr. Olson clears throat.) faculty policy not to let the students see their papers?

VAH: It was a uh, a faculty policy not to tell them what was correct apparently. It confused me, I must say, I was all confused. That was about as unsatisfactory as anything that I ever did at (Mr. Olson interrupts.)

TO: When you were, when you were at Cederville, that wasn't the policy? That wasn't the policy at Cederville, you always knew what you made?

VAH: Yes, exactly. And at other places, you know.

TO: You were puzzled about it here.

VAH: Yes, uh huh. But it was, oh, that one book. Well, what was wrong with that book. Something that, I wonder if they use it often or not. It's supposed to be very good for the freshman.

TO: Um. You don't have a copy of it now, do you?

VAH: Oh, no. I don't have any copy of that now.

TO: You wouldn't happen to remember the name of the author?

VAH: No. I wouldn't remember, I wouldn't have it now, but um.

TO: Did you use blackboards or any other extracurricular type of materials?

VAH: Oh, yes. You had the blackboard that you could use at anytime.

TO: Did you ever take your students out onto the lawn or anything? Was that unheard of back then?

VAH: No, I never did that. We uh, we didn't seem to have any, very great devotion in class.

- TO: Did your students recite much? Did you have them recite or read aloud perhaps, sometimes?
- VAH: Yes, we did quite a bit of that, but. It's strange that I can't remember just exactly what we probably did. Uh, as I've told you, I never thought I was very much of a teacher.
- TO: Did you like teaching?
- VAH: Yes. I liked teaching. (TO: Um, um.) In a way.
- TO: Did any of the other members of the English faculty have the same problems, did, did they teach composition also? Did they, uh, were you the only one teaching composition then?
- VAH: There was a Miss Higgins who was there and taught. I think there were about uh, three of us that, when I was there that were teaching.
- TO: Was your course a required course?
- VAH: Oh, yes. Uh, huh. They required English.
- TO: They passed the students from your classes into the higher division?
- VAH: Yes.
- TO: Um, um. Was there much uh, alliance between the Latin and English Departments? Did they agree on (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)
- VAH: Not a great deal.
- TO: No. Was there cooperation in the department?
- VAH: Now that was a uh, very strong department in a way. And um, it was remarkable that so many people liked Latin don't know how it happened that uh, the uh, woman who headed that department got such a hold on the students. She had a great hold on the students. This is an awful thing to say, but um, the coach there would uh, send his, the uh, the athletic coach, football coach, you know. Would send his students into

her class, they were sure to be passed. And uh,
(TO: Ahh.) That was uh, she was a good teacher ,
I will admit.

TO: Did the students have to write term papers in your
class?

VAH: Yes, uh. In uh, when there was any particular uh,
English uh, study involved, you know. (TO: Um, um.)
Yes, we did that.

TO: Did they uh, do more than one per term? Or (Mrs. Harvey
interrupts).

VAH: Just one.

TO: One per term. Did that even out to about two a year
then?

VAH: Yes.

TO: Um, um. Did you have an office?

VAH: No.

TO: Um. Did any of the faculty members have offices?

VAH: Not that I recall. Just uh, everything was in the
classroom. Things were rather primitive back then.

TO: Um, um. Were there, were there closets or lockers for
the professors to keep their materials.

VAH: Not that I recall.

TO: No? Did the President have an office?

VAH: The President had an office.

TO: He has his own office, right?

VAH: Yes. And uh, there was the outer office where the
secretary greeted the visitors and then he had his own
private office. That was just at the entrance of Old

Main. Right as you come up from um, 16th Street. (TO: Um, um.) Was on the right. And then of course, you go right into the um, the light you could go right into the auditorium. There was no, I don't believe, there was only, there was only one entrance, I think. And we had an auditorium office that was further to the right.

TO: Um, um. Yes, I see. Tell me now, I'm going to ask you some questions about your pageant now. How long did it take you to come up with the idea for your pageant? Uh.

VAH: Well, I don't know. I had to come up with it immediately. I didn't know I was going to have to do it till about uh, the uh, till about Fall.

TO: Well, who prompted you to write this, pageant?

VAH: Why uh, Mr. uh, Mr. Hamilton wanted it. (TO: Mr. Hamilton?) And he relieved me of some work. So that I could uh, go on the work of the pageant.

TO: Mr. Hamilton was in the English Department?

VAH: No. He was the President of um, Marshall. He did not have a Bachelors Degree and I'm not sure that he ever did have a Bachelors Degree. He went from here to um, I believe it was Bradley College at Peoria, Illinois. Is that Bradley?

TO: I think so.

VAH: Was uh, he went from here out there and I think that um, he got quite a uh, name for himself while he was out there. But whether he ever got a Bachelors Degree, I don't know.

TO: Um, um. So, he was the one who prompted you.

VAH: Yes. Oh, yes. It was uh.

TO: Did he have anything particular in mind?

VAH: Just the history of the college.

TO: Did he present it to you, this, this (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.).

VAH: He wanted me to get the (Inaudible) to the college. Well, you may recall that about that time there were not too many colleges being used. (TO: Um, um.) They were just coming into use. And so of course, it was quite an inovation here to have a pageant here. And uh.

TO: How long did it take you to write the pageant, do you recall?

VAH: Well, I was working on it practically, oh, about three, from early Fall till, I, I read it in March. And then we got uh, the, got this, the assignment was made for the students. I don't know how it ever came out as well as it did, but it came out very nicely, but I didn't expect it to.

TO: Did you have a deadline? A time that you had to finish it?

VAH: No, I, I. But uh, it had to be ready, it was the first of March that we had it, that I read it to the faculty and they all (Mr. Olson interrupts.).

TO: In 1921?

VAH: Yes. In 1921.

TO: Then you really didn't have a deadline, but uh.

VAH: But uh, well, I knew I had to do it, you know.

TO: You could finish it at your convenience. I see. Mrs. Harvey, where did you find the material for you pageant? Did you find them at Marshall College or the townspeople?

VAH: Yes. I got them from the townspeople and then there were uh, I, I gathered all the books I could find, you know.

TO: Go to the library for that?

VAH: Uh, wait a minute now. Border Warfare, whose, whose was that. I found some material there. And, but uh, what I found, I found mostly out there. I found by (Mr. Olson speaks, inaudible.) discussing uh, things with people, don't you know.

TO: Um, um. Did people volunteer information to you?

VAH: I beg your pardon?

TO: Did people volunteer information?

VAH: Yes, yes. They volunteered. They told me what they knew, you know.

TO: Um, um. Did you uh, when they found out that you were doing this did they seek you out uh, to tell you an interesting little antedote about the college?

VAH: Not too much. No.

TO: No. Where did you find uh, the rumor that George Washington was down into this area?

VAH: Well, now I didn't find that. That is not uh, I, well, he was up at Point Pleasant. (TO: Oh.) And uh, yet, there was great discussion at that time about George Washington being here. And, there's uh, in uh, over in uh, Kentucky, someone called the traipsin' woman. who has these uh, folklore festivals every year. I read a poem out there a few years ago. And uh, she mentions that she could look out and see the very cliff on which George Washington looked down over to Ohio. Well, I think that's all a lie. But there was an idea that uh, prevalent here, that he had been in this section. Well, it gave us an opportunity, I think you will find in the pageant, I think the pageant tells you that uh, that it was just purely imaginary, something that we thought that he imagined. But, I spoke of the Wyandottes. The Wyandottes loud cry. Well, that passage came out in the paper and there was a columnist here by the name of Wyatt Smith who was one of these very all-knowing people. And he called me up and he

said to me, "Where did you ever get that idea that the Wyandottes were in this section?" And uh, I said, "Well, I have called Mrs. Virgil Lewis." Now, the man who wrote the history (Mrs. Harvey coughs.) West Virginia was Virgil Lewis. He, his two daughters are living here now. And I asked her about it and she said yes, that the Wyandottes were here. Oh, he said, there were no Wyandottes here, there were Mingos here. Mingo. Well, if you will find that out here in Huntington is the oldest house in Huntington. (TO: Um, um.) And, there is a mound out there. I, I have that upstairs. I saved it. What'd I do with that. Came out when I could see to read. A mound out there that is a Wyandottes mound. The Wyandottes built a mound there. Now (Mr. Olson interrupts.)

TO: Well, that just proves your thesis.

VAH: Uh?

TO: Well, that just proves your thesis immediately.

VAH: Well, it made me feel I hadn't made such a fool of myself as he seemed to want to think that I had. And uh, oh, what is the name of that person. She'd a music teacher, lives there alone. It's the oldest house in Huntington. Built in the 1840's sometime. And uh, I think uh, they're Catholic. But, there is that. Oh, what is her name!

TO: But that was evidence that (inaudible).

VAH: Yes, I was right. So, I knew I was right. Uh, Mrs. Lewis had told me that I was right.

TO: Did you get any of your information from the Huntington papers?

VAH: Papers?

TO: Yes, m'am.

VAH: No. I don't remember getting any information.

TO: They weren't very helpful, were they.

VAH: (coughs) No. They were happy to publish all of it, but I didn't get any information down there. No.

TO: I see.

VAH: It was just going around, talking to people, and uh, well, pageant is upstairs. I can't read it now, but maybe I can uh, I think that I have documented everything (TO: Um, um.) that I have said, uh (Mr. Olson interrupts.)

TO: Mrs. Harvey, I was just curious as to where you found these sources. (VAH: Uh, huh.) As you know, (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: I think it's Withers, Border Warfare, I found a lot in there. About some of the old farmers, you see.

TO: Um, um. Well, anyway, once you got started in writing this pageant, did you have particular students in mind for certain roles or did you just (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: No, no. I just, we just got them all together and uh, and uh, worked it out. I, where did I, there was some pageant I read, where was it? We had the chronicler, the one who told you what was coming on (TO: Um, um.) in each episode, you know.

TO: How did you cast the pageant anyway?

VAH: How did I what?

TO: Cast it. How did you cast the pageant. Were, were there auditions for the parts or uh, did students just (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: Yes, we would, that's what we would do, yes. (TO: Auditions?) We had some auditions, that's right.

TO: Did this take a long time?

VAH: It did not take too long. There weren't too many people

who were available. And, then of course, the physical education director uh, took care of all the dancing that was done. And uh, that was something. And uh.

TO: Did the music department take care of the music or did you have someone else play?

VAH: Did what?

TO: Did the music department take care of the music or (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: Uh, no. We had to get the orchestra from out in town. (TO: Oh.) There was no orchestra at Marshall, you know, (TO: Um, um.) at that time, (Mr. Olson speaks. inaudible.). There was just a teacher of public school music. It was all rather primitive as I look back upon it. It was very, very small compared to what you have now, and the resources that you have now.

TO: Um, um. Do you remember the name of the orchestra that you brought from in town or was it just an assemblage of musicians?

VAH: No. Uh, uh, it, I don't remember the name of that orchestra. It was very good but. We did have Jennings for a long time. That might have been Jennings orchestra.

TO: Um, um. Then this was a professional orches- (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: Yes. And uh, um, some of those songs that I had had to be orchestrated, you know.

TO: Did you pay them? Did you pay the orchestra?

VAH: Oh, yes. Yes. The orchestra had to be paid.

TO: Did they charge a lot or, or was it a (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: That I wouldn't know. I didn't pay any attention to that. They uh, and of course, the pageant was free. (TO: Um, um.) The state donated the money for it.

- TO: You said Mr. Holliday made up the uh, scenery in the background for the pageant?
- VAH: No, no. (TO: No?) Uh, that was for uh, two plays they put on.
- TO: Oh, I see. Well, who, who made the background and scenery for, for this pageant?
- VAH: Oh, it was outdoors, you know.
- TO: Oh, this was outdoors?
- VAH: Yes. I did have uh, for the, for the background, I did have some uh, large screens made of uh, chickenwire and covered with uh, with vines, you know. (TO: Um, um.) And that helped with rather, entrances and exits, you know.
- TO: I see. Where was this shown outside, which uh, (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)
- VAH: Where the old student union building was. (Mr. Olson speaks. inaudible.) It's already been torn down. (TO: Um, um.) There was no building there at all then.
- TO: There was just grass?
- VAH: Uh, huh. Just grass.
- TO: Just grass. Was this in the evening or did you hold it in the afternoon?
- VAH: Six o'clock. That was a strange time to have it but it was held six o'clock in the evening. (TO: Um, um.) But it had to be I guess, on account of the uh, uh, of the uh, sun, don't you know, on account of the night.
- TO: How many people attended the pageant? Do you recall?
- VAH: The paper said 2,500. (TO: 2,500.) But I don't know. All the, the papers just came out with big headlines about the thing, you know. "Twenty-five Hundred People See the Pageant!"

TO: Was it ever put on again? Did you ever (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: Oh no, no. Never put on again. (TO: Just that time.) Oh, I put on a little bit of it when the state education association met here in the Fall. (TO: Oh, yes.) Mr. uh, Hamilton wanted something done, don't you know. (Mr. Olson speaks. inaudible.) And I talked to them and told them what could be done with, with material that you have. How you could work it into um, uh, some uh, uh, uh, into a pageant. Course there's many of them now, that they're not (Mr. Olson interrupts.)

TO: Many Marshall pageants you mean?

VAH: No. Not very many Marshall pageants, but many pageants. Uh, it was new at that time. It was just beginning to be uh, to be used.

TO: Was it Mr. Hamilton's idea to use a pageant as a (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: Yes. It was his idea to write it. (TO: I see.) I mean that it was his idea, that's what he wanted. And why he choose me, I don't know. I have told you, I've always been picked out up there for things to do that uh, that uh, nobody else did. I don't know why.

TO: I was talking to (inaudible) the other day and uh, and he said that if Marshall didn't have a copy of the pageant that you'd be willing to give uh, them your copy?

VAH: Well, they may have mine if they don't have it. You can find out about (Mr. Olson interrupts.)

TO: Well, we looked through the archives the other day, yesterday as a matter of fact. Mr. Brown and I looked through the archives and we couldn't find nary a hair. (VAH: You can't?) No. We can't, can't find nary a hair of that, that pageant anywhere. And uh, I was just wondering if you wanted to keep your pageant, if you want to keep your copy, and uh, if you're willing to let us photostat it, we'd be satisfied with that. But uh,

(Mrs. Harvey interrupts.).

VAH: Oh, I think you better just take the copy probably. I, I don't know, uh. Just let me uh, think about that, will you?

TO: Yes, m'am. (VAH: I,) Oh, we're very interested in it.

VAH: I'll put it in an envelope and uh, it can be put with these books, I guess. Maybe, something. But that (inaudible), why Miss um, oh.

TO: Was it the Historical Society perhaps?

VAH: No. Miss Oliver, who was the librarian, told me it was there. It was not long ago, that she had all those things there.

TO: Oh really?

VAH: Have you seen her?

TO: No, no. I haven't seen her. Uh, we searched the archives. We figured that's where it'd be, up in the archives. (VAH: Well,) But uh, we can't find it (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.).

VAH: Well, of course if it isn't there, you better just take what I have. But then I, I expect you'd like to have it.

TO: Well, Mr. Brown expressed an, an interest in it. (VAH: Uh, huh.) I assure you, I assure you. You said that you footnoted your pageant. Now, was that, what's the value of the footnote? Do you just have to (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: Yes. Because they give you the um, the, the uh, the authority, don't you see, from which I got that. No, I can't uh, but a great deal of it was just picked up here say, you know.

TO: Um, um. Uh, Mr. Gold said that what percent of your footnotes? [Mr. Goans - off]

[Goars]

VAH: Well, Mr. Gold said all this is documented. He's the man that goes around collecting his own books. I've sold him a good many books. And uh, he was very much pleased with that, he said I, and he also, he wanted another one, from uh, uh, another copy of the pageant, but uh, I think I sold him one. (TO: Yes, uh, huh.) And uh, then uh, he also uh, bought that uh, the uh, Silver Green that I wrote. That was a pageant of the uh, the West Vir- (Blank in tape. Picks up with Mrs. Harvey.) . . .pageant was well documented. Now, right now, I just can't remember what uh, what I did put in there. (Mrs. Harvey laughs.)

[Silver Green]

TO: Well uh, if I was to get the pageant and look at the footnotes, do you suppose you could help me find where these materials were? Or (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: I have uh, I shall have Sharon get that for me. And uh, she'll uh, I'll try to get her to, she's coming tomorrow and we'll try to go over that. In the meantime, I'll call Miss Oliver (TO: Um, um.) and see what she knows about that. Uh, Miss Oliver told me not too long ago that she had all that material there.

TO: Oh yes? Well, we'll have to inquire about that (VAH: Well,) if we do have it at the library then they should be put in the archives, scholars (Mrs. Harvey interrupts.)

VAH: Uh, huh. I think that, she has it up there somewhere. So I'll call her and get in touch (TO: Um, um.) uh, with it.

TO: Um, um. Well, when you have Sharon read you the pageant, uh, give me the titles of, could she read you the footnotes could you eliminate uh, (VAH: Yes, I'll do that. I'll put it down.) If the source was uh, townspeople (VAH: Yes.), or if it was, uh, if it was (VAH: Yes.) from a book where that book could be found, uh (VAH: Yes, I,), where you found it specifically. (VAH: Yes.)

VAH: Oh course, I could call Miss Oliver now and ask her if she (Mr. Olson interrupts.)

TO: Oh no. That's alright. That's okay.

VAH: We can call her now and I can see if she knows anything about it.

(Tape discontinues. Interview ends.)