

CALVIN RAND

I got involved to begin with through a telephone call that came to me at my house in April or May 1962. I was living in Niagara as a landed immigrant with my wife and family. The telephone call said: "Mr Rand, this is Brian Doherty. You don't know me but I'm your neighbour and I'm interested in developing a theatre down here. Would you like to help?" It was that simple. I said: "I don't know you but it sounds like an interesting idea. Let's talk about it." There was a group of people including Brian; Jean Marsh, who is now in a nursing home down here and was a founder; I think Dorothy Middleditch, who is still active, was involved; Barbara Tranter may have been involved at that point, and there was a visitor there, Peggy Pat Meyer, whose father was married to an American woman who lived in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and she was over here temporarily, a Broadway actress who had been in Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* in the fifties. They had a meeting in Jean Marsh's apartment in the winter of 1962. This was I guess a month or so before Brian phoned me and was where the idea of a Shaw festival was conceived.

As I've written in a chapter I've done on this, it's unclear who said, "Let's do Shaw." There are two stories. One is that Brian Doherty said, "Let's do a theatre," because he had founded two theatres—the Red Barn on Lake Simcoe and one other up in that area, two summer theatres—and he was the kind of guy who started things and he loved theatre. He was a theatre person; even though he was a lawyer, he was more of a theatre person than a lawyer. At any rate, someone said, "Let's do a theatre to get things going in town because we love theatre," and someone else said, "Well, what are we going to do?" and either Brian or I was told it was probably this Peggy Pat Meyer said, "Well, why don't we do Shaw?" What was behind all that was that the Stratford festival had been going for about 10 years and had inspired all of us to focus on a playwright. None of us was interested in doing summer theatre; there was a lot of summer theatre around, warmed-over Broadway shows and so on. We wanted a focus, we wanted a great playwright, we wanted sort of intellectual and that sort of thing. So Bernard Shaw was decided upon. There was a Shaw festival in Malvern, England, which Shaw had written some of his later plays for in the 1930s and 1940s—I guess it died with the war—so there was a precedent for a Shaw theatre.

The next meeting to continue what had started at this meeting with Brian and three or four ladies was I believe at Brian's home, which is right behind where I'm sitting—it's Randwood Apartments, the gatehouse right over here on Charlotte Street; I was living up there in the big house—and I became part of the group and that was sort of the beginning of it. I took a leading role with Brian. He was the leader, the founder, and I became his associate working very closely with him from the beginning on every aspect of developing the theatre. But he had done it before, I had not; I had just been a theatregoer. I was a teacher, a professor of English at the University of Buffalo at that time. That's how I got involved originally. I liked the idea, I knew most of the people except him, and he was a charismatic character by all means. He just carried you along on his enthusiasm. He was amazing, one of those found types, the classic founder type. I can't say enough for his contagious enthusiasm for something like this. I felt this was great fun to get involved in and very inspiring.

Interviewer: Did you help round up the actors for that first season or did Brian do that?

Mr Rand: No, he did that. I helped round up a lot of the money through patrons and friends. He had been living in Niagara Falls before he moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake and he had pretty good contacts with the little theatres, the amateur theatres in the area. He was able to use those contacts to round up the local people. So people came from St Catharines Little Theatre, Welland Little Theatre and Niagara Falls theatre and Niagara Falls, New York. Brian knew Maynard Burgess, who was an executive at the Carborundum company and was a director of the Niagara Falls, NY, Little Theatre, and he became the

first artistic director. So it was amateur theatre, no one got paid; it was just little theatre. The idea was to start very slowly on weekends, doing something simple like *Don Juan in Hell*. I think the Broadway production of the *Don Juan in Hell* sequence from *Man and Superman* had been done around that time with Tyrone Power, Sir Cedric Hardwicke—that's two of the four; I forget who the other two were. I think Ricardo Montalban was one and the woman was—it wasn't Irene Worth, it was someone like that. But that reading of *Don Juan in Hell* was sort of current at the time, so it was decided to do that. There were no sets, costumes—I think in the New York production they were just in black tie, evening dress, so maybe this one was too, I don't remember. Then *Candida*, which is also a simple one with a small cast, was done. We had a very good leading lady from St Catharines, Barbara Ransom, who was very good. The *Don Juan in Hell* part, in looking back, was not so hot. It's a tough thing to do, you need some great performers, and of course they read it, they didn't have to memorize it like Ian Richardson many years later who had to memorize the entire thing in 1977-78; it was one of the great productions of the Shaw Festival. He played John Tanner in the whole thing including *Don Juan in Hell*. It took him about a month to get into it. But this was just a reading. But Barbara was terrific. I remember that *Candida*. We've done good *Candidas* several times since then but that stands out. She was really fine.

It was decided to do just four weekends. I'm sure you've heard from other people that on opening night in June 1962 it was about 95 in the shade, so unbearably hot that a lot of people just couldn't stand it. They raced out because there was no air conditioning and we couldn't open the windows. To sit in there listening to Shaw for three hours was awful; I'll never forget it. Dorothy Middleditch and I went around town borrowing fans from the liquor store and other places to put up in the auditorium but it didn't help very much, it just circulated hot air. It was horrible, and we all wondered why the Shaw Festival lasted after that first night. But people came back and it did cool off.

Interviewer: The programs for 1962 list you as stage manager.

Mr Rand: Well, I probably did everything. I became associate producer at one point, I became vice-president at one point, I was probably stage manager during that first bit. We all did everything in those first years. In the second year it became a professional theatre with Andrew Allan as artistic director. Things changed then, but the first year we did everything. We swept the floors, painted, stage-managed. I don't know how I was listed. I don't think I've seen anything on that first year. I have the programs for the second year, 1963.

Interviewer: I got the program from Tim Devlin.

Mr Rand: I remember Tim Devlin. Now, who was he?

Interviewer: Marchbanks in *Candida*.

Mr Rand: Was he in *Don Juan in Hell*?

Interviewer: I don't think so. He just talked about *Candida*.

Mr Rand: In the St Catharines paper, Betty Lampard, the drama critic, was supportive right from the beginning for about 20 years until she died. So if it hadn't been for these local towns and their theatres and newspapers, it never would have gotten going. It started in just the opposite way from Stratford, which was a big thing. This started as small as you can get—amateur theatre. I was even stage manager; I had forgotten that.

Interviewer: Was there much support in Niagara-on-the-Lake?

Mr Rand: Well, it was so small at the beginning that I don't think they really knew what was going on. There were people who lived in the town who were friends of ours and connections in some way—whether it was Margherita Howe or Gerry Wooll's wife, who is now deceased, or Barbara Tranter. These were people we sort of knew who lived in the town and were supportive, but the average person in the town didn't really know too much of what was going on.

The big dispute in those days was to get an agreement from the town on using the Court House for any time during the summer. There were several times when the vote was really close. There was one time back in those early years when Gerry Wooll was the mayor and the council was tied three-to-three on whether to allow the Shaw Festival to use the place in the summer. It wasn't used by anyone else—it was too hot to be used—but they didn't want just anyone to use it. I think some were suspicious of theatre as being licentious or too jazzy or not the appropriate thing. In one of those early years, Gerry Wooll, the mayor, broke the tie in favour of it. I wouldn't say there was a negative feeling, although this may have happened from time to time, but there was a feeling: "Who are these people? What are they doing? Why do they want to do that? Why should we allow them because someone else may want to use it." That was an argument that was used. The second year, the first pro year, was three weeks and the question was: "Why should we give some organization three weeks to use that Court House?" As I said, no one else wanted it for three weeks but they were reluctant to do it. There was a struggle each year for a long time—because we went from three weeks, to four, to nine, to twelve—of someone tying up the Court House all summer. We put our own air conditioning eventually.

There was always sniggering and questioning from people in the town; there always is for something new like that, a theatre. There was no great support from the town overall, but individuals who liked theatre supported us, so we built up support and raised money from the town. My wife Pat was very instrumental in getting program ads in those early programs. She went around from store to store asking them to put an ad in, and a lot of them did. She knew them anyway. A lot of the patrons on the patrons list for \$50, \$100 or \$200, were friends of Brian's and mine. Brian got quite a lot from St Catharines and Niagara Falls and I brought in a lot from down here and Buffalo. In those days there were a lot more Americans living here. I think we are one of four now, but there probably were 20 or 30 in those days. We corralled them and got support. And fairly early on we got some government support from the Ontario Arts Council and began to get corporate support from the wineries. The Hatch family in St Catharines were friends of Brian's. Theirs was the only winery for years, Brights, so it supported us. So did some local business, like Gerry Wooll's company, Genaire. Gerry was very suspicious of theatre, and maybe still is, but he was a great supporter all these years because he thought it was sort of a good thing for the town, until it got too big.

That's another question we should get to eventually—what theatre has done to this town and whether we would do it all over again. It's a big question. I think I would do it over again but I'm really upset with what is happening to this town. I know Gerry Wooll will probably say no, we shouldn't have done it. He was very suspicious about building a big theatre. He wanted to stay small with just the Court House and maybe the Royal George without getting into a big thing because he saw what was going to happen. He was right about that.

The Royal George originally was a vaudeville house, in the twenties, before my day. Brian Doherty began a Sunday-night film series in the early sixties, doing art films, but when I was growing up here in the thirties it was a derelict. In the forties and fifties, a man by the name of Dewey McCourt, who ran the taxi

here, renovated it and did movies. We saw Ben Hur there, and movies like that. Then it just sort of collapsed and was nothing for a while. Brian also founded the Canadian Mime Theatre, which Harold Mascow and the Potato People—what is that called now?—it's an offshoot of the Canadian Mime Theatre which played in the Royal George. It was usable but in pretty bad shape in those years. Then Walter Carson came along and put up the money to make it into a really nice theatre.

Interviewer: You talked about government support. Paxton Whitehead said he didn't think the Canada Council supported the festival very well in the early years, or in his years. He seemed to think that Canada Council support didn't really come through until after Christopher Newton took over.

Mr Rand: I think that's right. [Told that PW said Barry Morse had said Canada Council grant should be sent back because of small size:] Good story. I don't remember that. But the Ontario Arts Council was always much more supportive, and still is. I think the Ontario grant is twice the Canada Council's right now, in spite of the cutbacks. But I remember those years; everyone was always down on the Canada Council. I'm not sure why. I think they wanted to spread it around the country and the Shaw Festival was fairly small potatoes until we built the theatre in the seventies. Ontario was always very good but they were small grants. I think the first one was something like \$3,500 around 1964 or 1965 and that was a big feather in our cap to get them on board, even to get \$3,500. It meant quite a lot, probably about the same as \$100,000 or \$200,000 today with a budget of \$10 million or \$12 million. The budget was probably \$200,000 or \$300,000 in those days. I know the very first year, I'll never forget it, since it was amateur and no one got paid—we had to buy materials for sets and so on—we ended up with a surplus of something like \$288 in 1962. The next year when it was a professional year, there was a pretty good deficit.

The next year we had to have some sort of air conditioning. The heat system was just horrendous it was so hot. We got through 1963 with no air conditioning. One of the other directors and I, Dr Blue from St Catharines, who was a great supporter, signed a note with the bank to buy an air-conditioning system for \$5,000. Then it was too cold, people were complaining that it was too cold, I remember. Sixty-four was a very slow year, it sorts of went down with not too many customers for some of the shows. It was cold and empty in there and we were pretty depressed by the end of 1964.

Interviewer: I was wondering whether putting in the air conditioning improved relations with the town council, whether they looked more favorably on the festival.

Mr Rand: I don't think they did. I don't think they cared. I don't think they liked us mucking around putting something in which we didn't give to them. It wasn't permanent in the sense that there was all sorts of new ductwork. As you faced the stage, it was a proscenium stage then, it was stage left, over in the right-hand corner. It was just a great big machine which was very noisy, it made a buzz, and we turned it off most of the time and put it on during intermission. That helped, and sometimes it didn't help too much. It never really worked very well. I suppose it was semipermanent, but as soon as we could I think we worked with the town to put in a fairly permanent system. But that was 35 years ago, a long time ago, and there have been many systems put in since then, I think. But it saved the festival because people would not have come if they had had to put up with the heat. You couldn't open the windows. There are a lot of summer theatres where there is no air conditioning but there are doors and windows that can open. This one is so enclosed with buildings on both sides, with noise from outside, that opening the windows didn't help. We tried. There were dogs barking. Some friends who lived right next door, Harry Sherlock, on the opposite side from the liquor store, kept a lot of hunting dogs out in the back and they barked all night long. Even with the windows closed you could hear those barking. It was a big issue

way back.

We did get paid back from that. We got out of the bank on that loan. People think I bankrolled the Shaw Festival in the early days, which I did not; I was never more than a patron really, although I did sign a few cheques when it had to be done. The only big outlay was for the air conditioning and Bill Blue and I did get paid back a few years later. It earned its own way. We raised enough; the Ontario grants increased each year; the Canada Council eventually came through. Paxton was almost too stingy—stingy's not the word; what's the word? He was called stingy often—too economical, too conscious of—I think he prides himself, and he may have told you this, that not once in his years there was there a deficit while he was artistic director. There was once when he took a sabbatical for a year. It was an unfortunate year. Tony van Bridge was artistic director. There was a loss that year. Barry Morse was the same way and Chris Newton is good. There have been losses during the Newton years but during this early years very rarely was there a loss. We did keep a very close eye on the budget so there was no extra spending by the artistic people. Paxton was accused of cutting corners, but there was no deficit so he kept going.

Interviewer: There were no understudies even.

Mr Rand: No, or very rarely. He went on several times. I remember one time, I believe it was in *Misalliance* or it may have been *The Philanderer*, he went on with the book and read the part. An older actor got sick at the last minute, I think it was in the National Arts Centre in Ottawa when they were on tour, and I remember Paxton going on with the book and he got through it. Two or three years ago, or last year, one of the actors hurt himself, twisted his ankle or something, and there wasn't an understudy. There is not an understudy every time here either, so someone, whether it was Chris Newton I don't know, went on with the book and read the part. In the early days, no, there were none. Paxton was criticized for that too. He said, "We can't afford them."

Dressing rooms barely existed. They hung blankets in a room to provide some segregation between men and women. There was a kitchen in the Court House on the far side. You know the section of the hall which is divided off and is now the dressing rooms. I'm not sure whether they were in there; I think they were further up toward the main theatre. There was a little area, a tiny area, that everybody was jammed into with a few primitive washbasins. It was awful. I don't know how they did it but they got through it. Actors will put up with a lot fortunately. But in 1968, when we had people like Jessica Tandy there, a very distinguished actress, it was hard for someone like that. I know Paxton had to apologize profusely to her well in advance of what she would see.

The big year, the year that really made the Shaw Festival, was Barry Morse's one year in 1966. Nineteen sixty-four was a really low point; 1965 began to pick up. Then Barry Morse was hired and he would only accept one year. It was he who got Zoe Caldwell, Tom Kneebone and Paxton and all those people. Barry did *Man and Superman*; Ian Richardson did it later. It was a bit of a disaster because Barry directed it, he designed it and he starred in it. He also swept the floor, he painted the walls, he was one of these one-man shows, he was spectacular, and the opening night was a total disaster. He didn't know his lines and his timing was right off. I remember going back to see him right after the opening and he asked me, "What did you think? What did you think?" I guess he could tell my reaction was, "Well..." I said, "You really tried hard," and he went into a fury. He said, "Is that all you can say, that I tried hard? Wasn't I magnificent?" I said, "Well, it's going to get better, isn't it?" and he turned on his heels. But it did get better. It only ran for two or three weeks.

The same thing happened with Ian Richardson. His opening night was not very good. That play was on all summer. He took two or three weeks. It's the longest part in the English language, except for *Hamlet*;

it may be longer than Hamlet but it's about the same. But Barry did get these wonderful actors, and that Misalliance that he did that year with Zoe Caldwell playing the Polish aviatrix and all the other people in it was just about the best ensemble piece the Shaw Festival has ever done. People still speak of that production in 1966 when it was still pretty primitive around there and Zoe Caldwell was just incomparable as the Polish aviatrix. Leslie Yeo was wonderful; it was a very good company. The other play was The Apple Cart with Paxton Whitehead playing the king and Zoe Caldwell as his mistress. The festival really took off after that year. That put it on a higher level. It was just a great year. The first three years of Paxton's were wonderful. Arms and the Man in 1967 was by far the best with Douglas Rain and Martha Henry. The Doctor's Dilemma in 1969 was terrible, a great disappointment. That was not a good year. Nineteen seventy was good with Stanley Holloway. That was a wonderful Candida. The Philandere in 1971 was wonderful too. It was on tour in Ottawa. This is the year when I think Paxton took over for the sick actor, when we did Misalliance in Ottawa.

We had to have an office somewhere and the little office on Queen Street was a necessary step. I don't know what year that was, 1963 or 1964. It was just a small administrative office. Things were done in all different places. The construction wasn't done in the Court House, probably in someone's backyard. The costumes were done in—Betty Taylor had a seamstress shop in town and there were various people doing early costume work in the back of her store. There was an insurance company in town called Usher's and we used its offices for tickets, telephones and for an outlet. So people would lend their shop for certain services, but we did have our own thing at I think 40 Queen Street.

One thing I do remember in 1968 happened when I was in the front office and Paxton was in the back—there were only two offices—and I heard this great whooping, yelping, howling, and he came rushing out and he said, "I've just got Jessica Tandy to agree to play in Heartbreak House." That was a big coup. Who ever had heard of the Shaw Festival? The New York Times reviewed it that summer and called it a jewel, and the reviewer used that great phrase we have quoted so many times: "Finding a Shaw Festival in little old Niagara-on-the-Lake was like finding a Renoir in a country fair" or something like that. I'll never forget Paxton coming out with that, his eyes blazing. "Jessica Tandy's going to come here next summer. I hope we can handle her," or whatever. One of the reasons she came was because he had already gotten this wonderful English actor, Bill Fraser. In the trade, he was a famous British comic actor. I think the director, Val Gielgud, who was John Gielgud's brother, was able to get Bill Fraser to play Boss Mangan. Jessica Tandy knew him or had worked with him and that was the draw.

There were a lot of very good things in 1963. Nineteen sixty-four was a low point. That's when Christopher Newton was here the first time and he'll tell you it was a low point. Heartbreak House was not very good; John Bull was not bad. There was a wonderful Irish actor from Toronto, Gerard Parkes, and he and Sean Mulcahy were very good in John Bull's Other Island. It's a long, difficult play. The Dark Lady of the Sonnets was a very good show, but the year just didn't quite click. Things really clicked here in 1963 with Androcles and the Lion. Andrew Allen was at his high point. Things kind of levelled off in the early seventies when the building of the new theatre kind of preoccupied us, although there were some wonderful shows.

I don't remember when the opening-night parties started but it must have been almost at the beginning in 1963 or 1964. At that time we did live in the big house on John Street, and it was a big house; it must have had about 30 or 40 rooms in it. After each opening we did invite everyone to an after-theatre party. Pat and I didn't make the sandwiches; we had a women's committee and the women's committee organized all of that. But we had everyone into the house so there were 300 or 400 people. The theatre was much smaller. I think there are about 300 now working for the theatre; at that time there were probably about 30 or 40, with the cast maybe 50. In the audience there were maybe 200 people. They

weren't all in the house because there were doors leading out and terraces. There was a swimming pool that people got into one way or the other, with and without clothes on. I remember one actress going in one night with just her hat on. It was fun, it worked very well and everyone enjoyed it. We had hardly anything ever broken and I don't remember anything ever stolen. I remember one or two wet nights when we had to cover everything with some sort of plastic not to bring mud in but it really worked amazingly well. There was music and dancing and there was food and sitting around. That lasted for almost 10 years. Obviously when the new theatre came along we couldn't do it then. I can't say we did it every year but we did it most years for about 10 years.

Also, before the theatre we had the dinner party. Today the dinner party goes around to various places in various tents and people's homes, but I was president of the festival from about 1965 to 1979 and the opening-night dinner most of the time was at our house. We didn't have the Queen; the Queen was at the Pillar and Post. Trudeau was down for dinner and when Madam Gandhi was there, the various provincial premiers, or the ambassadors from various countries, we would have them in for dinner. That was very exciting, out on the terrace with about 30 or 40 people. Dinner was catered, usually by the Oban Inn. It was black tie, glamorous, fun. For many of the performances we had dinners inviting people down who could make a contribution, could get involved. That's how you fund-raise everywhere these days, and in those days by inviting down people you want to get interested, having them for dinner, taking them to an opening night. Now the opening dinner, certainly on the first opening night, is the corporate night. Half the people there are corporate people from the sponsoring organizations. They get 40 or 50 tickets to give to their employees, mostly at the senior level but not all. That's a little different from the old days; we had some corporate people there but now it's very much a corporate thing, as it is with every other organization. So entertaining was a big part of it. I must admit that after 10 years I never wanted to see another dinner party or another person walking up those steps. I mean it; by 1978 or 1979 I had totally run out of gas on that. It had been too much, too long. So we got out of town and moved to New York City.

Interviewer: I understand quite a few of the actors stayed in houses on your estate. Reid Willis, Kate Reid's son, remembers that he and his mother stayed in a house here.

Mr Rand: They may have stayed right here, where we are. We stayed up there, and this was much of a guest house. I don't remember much of that. They stayed in town mostly but there may have been some cases where they stayed. There is a house out in the back and my cousin used to live there. For a number of years it was vacant. People rented that place; I think the Shaw Festival rented it out. Kate may have stayed there. But it wasn't the normal thing. The town charged what the traffic could bear, and more than what the traffic could bear. A lot of people saw the Shaw as an elitist, wealthy organization because they saw a lot of us going in black tie. They thought the actors were paid very well so they charged them exorbitant rates. That was a big problem, to try to convince people that they don't get paid very well at all. I haven't heard much about it in recent years, but for years we looked into building a residency, a series of apartments that the Shaw Festival would use. We almost did one year, about 15 years ago, but it fell through. So they struggle along. I don't know where they all go now.

Interviewer: There seems to be quite a good organization at the Shaw that keeps a listing of available places.

Mr Rand: Yes, and there are so many B&Bs around now that there may be some spare rooms, but it certainly was a big problem in the early days.

Interviewer: A lot of them stayed at the Prince of Wales, I gather, when it wasn't as it is now.

Mr Rand: Yes, it was quite a place in the old days. There were only about half a dozen rooms. It was a beer hall, a tavern—colorful. I remember going there as a boy when I could barely drink beer, and barely allowed to drink beer. It was a colorful spot.

Interviewer: Joan Draper says a lot of the townspeople didn't like the theatre because they thought the actors were all smoking pot and encouraging their children to do it by setting a bad example.

Mr Rand: I don't know, I think that's partly true. I can't see actors encouraging children to do that, but they probably were smoking pot, sure. I think there was always some of that but it was never a big deal. There was always some suspicion of that. There is a story that Christopher Newton, in an interview we did with him, this was back in 1964 when he was playing in Village Wooing, a two-hander. He was playing opposite a very beautiful young woman named Linda Livingston. Very well endowed, she liked to sunbathe topless. There was more of a beach then and people did use to swim down at the mouth of the river, at Queen's Royal Park. Chris Newton tells the story, which we have on another tape when we interviewed him, that she was out sunbathing with her top off and he was there and some local kids came around and sniggered and began throwing things at them jokingly. The police came down to stop these kids and saw her with her top off. They didn't run her in, but Chris uses this as an example of the prudery against actors who were free spirits or whatever. But I never heard Joan saying that although I'm sure people did say that sort of thing. I'm sure it existed but it was never a big thing that we had to deal with.

Talking about borrowing our plates, we all used to lend furniture. We lent everything—sometimes furniture, sometimes clothing; for sets, costumes, props, all sorts of stuff. I remember Maurice Strike, who was the resident designer under Paxton for years, coming up to our big house, and picking out things that he thought would be suitable. That house was sort of Victorian with lots of Victorian stuff in there and these were Victorian times. He liked that sofa, he liked this— We had a bunch of white wicker furniture on our front porch and he thought that was terrific. He said, "I want this. I want this." So we lent him about four pieces from our porch, which were gone for about a month. I guess we didn't notice them on stage but when he brought them back they were all blue. They had all been spray-painted blue because he wanted blue, not the white. That's why we didn't recognize them in the play. I don't know what happened, whether the Shaw took them back and resprayed them white; I think for a while they stayed blue. There were cases of people who didn't get back some stuff they lent, or there was some breakage occasionally. That sort of thing was much more serious than worrying about some people smoking pot.

Interviewer: When the new theatre was being built, someone kept writing letters to the *Advance* objecting because he said Shaw was a communist.

Mr Rand: Again, I sort of remember that. I'd like to see that letter. I wonder if that was answered that he was a good Fabian, he was not a communist. I can think of a number of people around town, very far to the right, who were always calling Trudeau a communist.

The big issue in building the new theatre was the site. It was very complicated, very controversial, about where we were going to put this big thing. A lot of people, even board members like Gerry Wooll, whose bark is worse than his bite—I don't think he felt we should have built the theatre at all, and a lot of people didn't: "Don't get too big. It's going to ruin the town and it's going to be too expensive. You've got this big investment and what's going to happen if—" And so on and so on. We had to deal with those arguments and the letters to the editor. But the site thing was the big thing, as we had three or four sites we went through and there was great antagonism. The golf course was terrible and that was stupid. I was in a real jam on that. The problem was we had no alternative. The federal government was pushing for

this and it was going to give us that site. But I was not at all happy with the golf course site and I didn't say no, I didn't say yes, I didn't know what to do. I sort of let it go, hoping the townspeople would turn it down, which they did, because a big thing out there would have been pretty bad. There was a site behind the Court House. That went on and on until we all realized that was impossible. The Queen's Royal Park was a possible site. The town finally turned that down and I think they were right, it would have been too big down there.

As it turned out, the final site couldn't have been better, so there is something to be said for democracy and letting all these factions oppose and support and eventually something will happen, and it did. The feds never offered us that site until much later; they wanted to build a golf course out there. Even when we got the site, they were still talking about moving the golf course, which I see is being discussed again—talk about moving it back to its original site over here on the Commons and making the present site into a park, making it more accessible to tourists and people.

Interviewer: Somebody said one of the problems with the golf course site was that there was no communication, that the first indication it was being considered was when some people connected with the theatre were seen out there wandering around.

Mr Rand: It's possible. I don't remember, but I won't deny it. It's possible; sad but true. Maybe we were looking around, not wanting to announce anything. I remember walking out there with some government people, it may have been the same time, and there was a man I knew vaguely who lived along a side street, Simcoe I guess, down toward the ninth green, maybe he was playing golf, but I remember seeing this man come across the street, I think he had a golf club, and just glare at us, and you could feel the daggers and feel the hate. He didn't say anything, he just looked at us as if to say, "I know what you guys are doing." That would have been pretty bad; I don't think it ever would have been guilt there because there was too much opposition. There was opposition on the board; quite a few members of the Shaw Festival thought it was a bad idea. But we were in a bind, we wanted to do it and there just didn't seem to be anything until—I don't think the federal government offered us a site, I think we went to them and said, "If you're going to build a golf course there, could you give us that swampy little corner to build a theatre," and after some thought they said yes. Then we had to get the approval of all the people along that street. Tom Burrows was our general manager at that time and he went door to door and sat down with all those people and explained it. Anyone could have objected; so could the hospital, because that big thing across from the hospital was not a happy thought for many people.

I'll never forget when it was being built, in the fall or winter of 1972. I don't think Queen's Parade was built then, there was a gravel road through the middle of the Commons, but I saw this building going up. It just looked enormous and it looked so high. It was mostly just the structural steel, and I said, "Oh God, this is going to be awful. Even on that site it's going to dwarf the town." A lot of people wondered about whether it would be higher than the trees and whether people coming into the town would look at Niagara-on-the-Lake from a distance and just see this great huge building. And that's what it looked like. I remember speaking to the architect and he said, "No, it will sink down, it just looks that way. Don't worry, once it's landscaped—" and he was right. But I remember—and I'm breathing hard now—a terrible thought that we had made a—it was irreversible at that point—that it was too big for the town, too out of scale. Now they've got Queen's Landing which is totally out of scale. I think it's terrible.

Those were very difficult years, in the late sixties and early seventies, getting the site, raising the money, getting the commitments from the government, finding the fund-raising people, the leadership. I spent a lot of time on it. But it would have died. I've thought about it many times since. If we could have expanded the Court House a bit and got maybe a couple of hundred more seats in there in some way, but

I don't think the actors would have come down and lived in those kitchens and dressing rooms. With only 300 or 400 seats you don't have the revenue. It would have died eventually, or would have been just a very small theatre. There are some around, small summer theatres with several hundred seats which somehow survive. We looked at tents, all sorts of possibilities; expanding the Royal George but we couldn't because we were just jammed in down there; expanding the Court House. One scheme was to add on behind the Court House with the entrance in the front and build a theatre behind but the parking problem ruined that, and I don't think it was a good idea. It wouldn't have been ours, either, it would have been partly the town's. There are drawings and models of what some architects proposed on these early sites and some are quite interesting.

Interviewer: I think Paxton was quite keen on the golf course site. He thought it would be a good location because people could go out from the theatre and look out over the lake.

Mr Rand: Well, he was right on that score. I guess he probably was pushing that. I guess that was another squeeze I felt because presidents of these organizations get in between the artistic side and the community side and I think I was in a real squeeze. I think you're right, I think he was pushing that. He couldn't figure out why the townspeople were objecting so much. He was also interested, and we did look into it, in building a sort of Edwardian theatre, almost a reconstruction or re-enactment of a theatre of Shaw's day, not on the golf course necessarily but somewhere. We had an architect who has since died and he did some drawings for us of an Edwardian, turn-of-the-century, nineteenth-century theatre. Everyone including Paxton said, "No, we don't want that. That's just putting back the clock. It would be ridiculous, a museum." Paxton commissioned it but he was one of the first to say, "No, I was wrong. We want a modern theatre of some sort."

I remember going out to California, not necessarily for that, but they were building a theatre out there with the attempt to incorporate a lot of traditional things, like certain balconies and a lot of boxes. If we got into constructing a modern theatre, how were we going to incorporate nineteenth-century characteristics like boxes? That would have been in the late sixties. I did look at that theatre but it was too big, it was enormous. But there has been one built in recent years in Sarasota, Florida, called the Osilow Theatre, and it's a modern theatre but it was patterned on a theatre in Scotland that was a late nineteenth-century theatre. One of the directors we had at the Shaw under Chris Newton was a Scots lady, very small and very sparky, and she was a consultant in Florida on that theatre. It's a modern theatre but it has all these Victorian things, again like these little boxes that came down and letting people into the boxes. It's a very nice theatre, the kind of thing we could have built here. So the concession is those little boxes that go down at the side of the balcony that Ron Thom put in.

The architect Ron Thom was our first choice as soon as met him and saw what he had done, but there were a lot of other prominent architects who did drawings for us, at the expense very often because they wanted the job, and it was very interesting; that was the interesting part of building the theatre, getting to know these architects, talking with them, seeing some of their ideas. Arthur Erickson, the famous west-coast architect, wanted to do a big thing in the woods at this [west] end of the Commons that would have cost about \$10 million I think. We got to know him through this but we had no interest in what he wanted to build. It would have been much too big and complicated and the government never would have let us go into the oak grove. He saw something right in the oak grove.

Speaking of that office on Queen Street, I remember hiring Tom Burrows as general manager in 1970 or 1971. He was at Yale. I remember sitting and talking with him for about half an hour and being very impressed. He's a very bright, very smooth guy, very persuasive.

The story of building the theatre is a long story because you could through each of those half a dozen architects, the sites they were interested in, why they wanted those sites. If we could find some of their drawings and pictures of what they wanted to do on those sites—

Interviewer: Would any of those be in the archives?

Mr Rand: I would think so. We have a few around. The one that Paxton commissioned for an Edwardian theatre, I remember seeing those drawings but I never saw them again. I don't know whatever happened to them, but I would think they might be up there, if they belonged to the Shaw Festival. They might have belonged to the architect himself. The only way to get his name would be to dig it out. There must be some minutes or something from the early seventies up there. There was an Australian architect who built a lot of the work at Guelph in the late sixties and early seventies and was very interested in the Shaw. We were impressed with him but I can't remember his name. We went to Guelph and looked at what he built. We went up to Trent University—that was Ron Thom's latest at that point—and Massey College at UofT. We really liked what he had done. I think he was the right choice; it turned out very well. Ron Thom as died but Peter Smith, the project architect, is still very active in Toronto. He's done several additions to the Shaw theatre in recent years. He was the man on the job of building this theatre.

We had a budget and I think we compromised on the backstage. Even though there is a lot of backstage space, I think they realized at the time there wasn't going to be enough. The main thing was to get the auditorium and the front-of-house and worry about the other later. There also was a big controversy about the lobby. I can't remember what it was. I think the lobby was supposed to have been larger. But it's really fine the way it is. We could really use some more bathroom space, especially for the ladies, but that always gets cut back in every theatre it seems.

Paxton played a big role in building that theatre, as did designers and people working with him. We thought that was important, and so did Ron Thom. He was very perceptive with the arts people worked there and he listened, he was a good listener. We could tell that some of the architects we interviewed were not very good listeners. They came in and told us what they thought should be done. Thom was either very clever, which he probably was, or intelligent, which he was too. He really spent a lot of time talking with Paxton and the artists about what they wanted, not what he wanted to do. But when he wanted to do something he was very definite too. He wanted British Columbia cedar on the inside. I know it was a big expense but that was one thing he thought we should have, so the acoustics are terrific.

There were a lot of crises in the theatre in the late seventies and early eighties. Those are the times of troubles with artistic people. It took Christopher two or three years to settle in. Then he couldn't come one year so we had to have a replacement for him, his first year. There were times before that, so there was a lot of trouble in the late seventies and early eighties. In the year after Paxton left there was no artistic director there, there was a producer, Richard Kirschner, and that was pretty disastrous. Then we hired Christopher but he couldn't come for two years, so he sort of hand-picked Leslie Yeo, whom we knew very well, to be an interim and that was not a very good year, so we had two bad years there in 1978 and 1979. So the end of Paxton's time was not very good and it took Christopher a couple of years to get going, but as I said earlier, there was no financial debacle.

This happens all the time—it's happened a couple of times under Christopher and it happened under Leslie—things look very good moving into September, even after the last play because we usually finished in mid-September in those years. I remember Leslie coming in and saying, "It was good a year. We did very well and we're in the black, but all the bills haven't come in yet." With Paul Reynolds, under Christopher, the same thing happened. I remember him coming back two or three months later and

reporting to the board, "A lot of things we hadn't foreseen have come in and we're going to end up in the red very heavily." But Leslie was just devastated because he really thought he had a winning season.

Earlier, Paxton went away for a year and Tony van Bridge was there. There had been a lot of criticism of Paxton for not doing Canadian plays, new plays, this sort of stuff. In those days there seemed to be more of that around than today, and there were critics around who were very Canada-first. Tony had been in a play that Robertson Davies did on Broadway some years before called *Leaven of Malice*. I think Tyrone Guthrie directed it down there and it was a disaster on Broadway, for good reasons I guess. I remember Tony saying to us, around 1974 or 1975, "I was in this play by Robertson Davies in New York and it was a disaster, but it wasn't done the way it should have been done, it wasn't done right. Why don't we do it this year and answer some of the critics about not doing a Canadian play?" So we did it and it was terrible. Tony was very upset. Davy was just not a playwright; he was a terrific novelist. I know The Canadian Stage Company, which was called something else 10 or 12 years ago, did one or two of his plays but they never did very well. He just didn't have that kind of dramatic sense. So that was not good. We lost a few bucks that year.

As I was saying, Paxton was much criticized in the mid-seventies, especially by Gina Mallett of the Toronto Star and others, for not doing Canadian plays or new plays but also for doing light, frivolous stuff and not doing weighty-enough plays. Somewhere during that time he decided to do the farce *Charlie's Aunt*, which he had done before and he was wonderful in it. We announced *Charlie's Aunt* and several board members raised their eyebrows and said, "I don't think we should be doing things like *Charlie's Aunt*." Paxton said, "Well, it's a high-style comedy and should pack them in." It was very successful and was well received, but when critics like Gina Mallett saw the Shaw Festival was doing *Charlie's Aunt*, they had a field day. It's instructive to note that many years later Christopher Newton announced he was going to do *Charlie's Aunt*—not a sound. Times had changed, critics had changed, but there wasn't a word about *Charlie's Aunt* being frivolous when Christopher announced it, but there was in the seventies.

Talking about Richard Kirschner, who came in in the mid-seventies as general manager, when Paxton left we had this hiatus for a year or two and Kirschner talked us into having him be a producer or artistic producer. He decided he would really sock it to the critics and do a heavy, serious or weighty season. One of the plays he wanted to do was Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*. He was a great fan of Kate Reid's, and vice-versa, so he had Kate Reid, Frances Hyland and Douglas Campbell playing *Borkman*, three great performers. I forget who directed it but it was awful, an absolute disaster, so we lost money that year. The critics just savaged him. I think it had been done in England not long before that and it was done in New York a few years later by Circle in the Square and was a great success, so something went wrong in Niagara-on-the-Lake that year and Kirschner was very upset about it. We also did *Major Barbara* that year and he cast as Barbara a very hot young actress in the alternative off-off-Broadway type theatres in Toronto and she wasn't very good. Kirschner was showing we were not a stuffy, elite theatre, we were picking good young Canadian actresses for these parts and doing weighty plays but it was a terrible season. You've got to be careful with listening to the critics too much and trying theoretically to do something that's not going to come off on stage. Of course, you never know what is going to come off on stage anyway. That was a very difficult year. Then with Leslie Yeo's unfortunate year the next year, which was a very good season but a lot of bills came in late to be paid so there was a deficit there.

Interviewer: Leslie and Dick Kirschner didn't really get along, did they?

Mr Rand: No, I don't think they did. There was some administrative person that Kirschner brought in that Leslie had to fire somewhere along the line and they had a big battle about that.

Once we got the theatre up, all these things started to go downhill a bit in the late seventies. It was a real time of troubles. Christopher Newton had one or two years at the beginning but then he pulled out of it and was magnificent. He's done very well, some years better than others obviously, but good programming.

The first time we toured in Washington which was I think 1972, we toured *Misalliance*, and we had an opening-night dinner before or party afterwards in an apartment building called *The Watergate*. I guess this was in May or June, before the season. I remember our hosts or a few people murmuring about a break-in in this apartment building a few weeks before, just casual conversation, and there we were of the Shaw Festival. There was a lot of touring in those years and there was money; the Canada Council had a touring program and did put up money. We toured to Ottawa, Montreal, New Haven—we did *You Never Can Tell* in New Haven and it was terrible. We played the huge Schubert Theatre in New Haven, the Loeb Theatre at Harvard, later to the Walnut Theatre in Philadelphia, a couple of times to Washington. But I just remember there was a break-in in this place and no one had ever heard of *Watergate* so it was a bit of history.

Curtain