

**Music at MIT Oral History Project**

**Lionel Kinney**

*Interviewed*

*by*

**Forrest Larson**

**June 5, 2008**

**Interview no. 1**

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Lewis Music Library**

Transcribed by: University of Connecticut, Center for  
Oral History, Tapescribe, from the audio recording

Transcript Proof Reader: Jonathan Krones  
Transcript Editor: Forrest Larson

©2009 Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Lewis Music Library, Cambridge, MA

## Table of Contents

1. A musical background (00:17—CD1 00:16).....	1
<i>American Legion ensembles—Springfield public schools—piano &amp; trumpet</i>	
2. Academic studies in high school and MIT (19:19—CD1 19:18).....	5
<i>Civil engineering—MIT Summer Surveying Camp—thesis: dam construction</i>	
3. Music resources at MIT (35:54—CD1 35:53) .....	9
<i>Hayden &amp; Music Libraries—Walker Memorial—practice rooms</i>	
4. Klaus Liepmann (50:13—CD1 50:12) .....	12
<i>recorded music—Jordan Hall—Phyllis Curtin</i>	
5. MIT bands (1:02:47—CD2 00:00).....	15
<i>John Corley—ROTC—MIT Tech Show</i>	
6. MIT Combined Musical Clubs (1:10:38—CD2 07:53).....	17
<i>Techtonians—Glee Club—Institute Committee</i>	
7. Combined Musical Clubs management (1:18:55—CD2 16:09).....	20
<i>Symphony Orchestra president—construction of Kresge Auditorium—Walker Memorial</i>	
8. The Baton Society (1:35:33—CD2 32:47) .....	23
<i>All-Tech Sing—Tech Night at the Pops—“Arise Ye Sons of MIT”</i>	

### **Note on timing notations:**

Recording of this interview can be found either as one continuous file or as split up over two audio CDs. Timings are designated in chapter headings in both formats, with the timing on the full file preceding the timing on the CD version.

## Contributors

**Lionel Kinney** (b. 1932) received a B.S. degree at MIT in Civil Engineering in 1953. He played trumpet in the MIT Symphony Orchestra, MIT Concert Band, as well as in the all-but-forgotten ROTC Band. He also held various leadership and administrative positions in the orchestra and band, and was president of the "Combined Musical Clubs." As both a musician and student leader, he worked closely with Klaus Liepmann, the first professor of music at MIT, and John Corley, founding director and conductor of the MIT Concert Band. His professional career was with Caterpillar Inc. in Peoria, IL, from 1957-1997, retiring as Senior Staff Engineer.

**Forrest Larson**, Library Assistant at the Lewis Music Library, has attended training workshops in oral history methodology and practice at Simmons College and by the Society of American Archivists, and is a member of the Oral History Association. He is also an active composer and violist.

Interview conducted by Forrest Larson on June 5, 2008 in the MIT Lewis Music Library. Duration of the audio recording is 1:46:33. First of two interviews. Second interview: June 6, 2008.

## Music at MIT Oral History Project

The Lewis Music Library's *Music at MIT Oral History Project* was established in 1999 to document the history of music at MIT. For over 100 years, music has been a vibrant part of the culture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This history covers a wide variety of genres, including orchestral, chamber, and choral musical groups, as well as jazz, musical theater, popular and world music. Establishment of a formal music program in 1947 met the growing needs for professional leadership in many of the performing groups. Shortly thereafter, an academic course curriculum within the Division of Humanities was created. Over the years, the music faculty and alumni have included many distinguished performers, composers and scholars.

Through in-depth recorded audio interviews with current and retired MIT music faculty, staff, former students, and visiting artists, the Music at MIT Oral History Project is preserving this valuable legacy for the historical record. These individuals provide a wealth of information about MIT. Furthermore, their professional lives and activities are often historically important to the world at large. Audio recordings of all interviews are available in the MIT Lewis Music Library.

## 1. A musical background (00:17—CD1 00:16)

FORREST LARSON: It's my honor and privilege to welcome Lionel Kinney. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from MIT in 1953. It's June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008. I'm Forrest Larson. We're in the MIT Lewis Music Library. Thank you so much for coming; it's a real honor to have you here. So tell me about growing up in Springfield, Massachusetts, and give me your birth date?

LIONEL KINNEY: It's a pleasure to be able to do this oral history. I was born in Rutland, Vermont.

FL: Ah!

LK: February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1932. I spent the first two years in Castleton, Vermont, where my parents owned a couple of homes. They decided that since I was an only child, and came along rather later in my father's life, that they would rather move to Springfield, Massachusetts to take advantage of a better school system. So we moved to Springfield in 1934, and I attended schools there until I went to MIT. My parents had a bed and breakfast, which in those days was called a tourist home, in Castleton. In addition, my father was a barber, although he had trained as a bookkeeper at Castleton State Normal School, now called Castleton State College, and had worked for years in bookkeeping, nowadays referred to as accountants, at a number of resort hotels in Vermont and eastern New York. He met my mother at one of the hotels after his service in the First World War, and they married in 1922.

FL: Can I interrupt for a sec? Give me your parents' first names?

LK: My father's name was Byron Eugene Kinney. My mother's maiden name was Ruth Victoria Anderson. The American Legion was very active in those days, after World War One, and my father, who had an interest in music, became the drum major for the American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps in Castleton, Vermont. Thus, there was an early connection with music.

FL: So, tell me more about this, your father being drum major for the bugle corps. Had he played prior to that? Did he have musicians maybe in his family background?

LK: There were really no other musicians in the Kinney families in the Castleton area. He had always sung tenor in the church choir, and he did play piano—not professionally! [laughs] So that was basically it, as far as any other music connections.

FL: Mm-hm. Did your family go to concerts, or listen to music on the radio, or records, very much?

LK: No, they didn't really. So, [pause] you know, other than maybe a concert on the green! [laughs]

FL: Yeah, sure!

LK: Things like that.

FL: Mm-hm, that's very common. So tell me how you came to play the trumpet.

LK: When I was in school in Springfield, in elementary school, I started piano in fourth grade. I took piano continually, up until the last year of high school—

FL: Wow!

LK: —from a private teacher.

FL: Mm-hm, and what was the teacher’s name?

LK: Gwen Robinson—not of any particular note, but she did a good job of training me in the basics of piano. When I entered junior high school, in seventh grade, that was the first time you could choose to sing in a chorus, or play in the school orchestra.

FL: Uh-huh.

LK: They wanted me to sing. I don’t know why they thought my voice was [laughs] worthy! But I chose to take up an instrument. They wanted me to play saxophone, but for some reason I said, “No, I’d like to play a trumpet.” So my parents purchased my first trumpet. It was a Conn, with the sharp-edged bell.

FL: Uh-huh.

LK: And I played in the orchestra in junior high: seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. The school system at that time in Springfield was a six-three-three, so ninth grade was still at the junior high school, but counted towards your college entrance requirements. All this time, I was continuing with piano lessons.

FL: Did you have private trumpet lessons as well?

LK: Yes, I had private trumpet lessons from an excellent trumpet player and musician, who in those days still played for shows in the theater there. And so I would go downtown every Saturday, and take a trumpet lesson.

FL: So what was his name?

LK: Wojcik, shortened from whatever the real Polish [laughs] name would have been.

FL: Do you remember a spelling on that?

LK: Something like W-O-J-C-I-K.

FL: Okay.

LK: Stanley, I think, was the first name.

FL: Okay.

LK: But in those days, you still had the variety shows, and my parents liked to go to some of the variety shows, and that was what he played in, the orchestra and/or the combo. So I took trumpet lessons all the way through high school.

FL: So what kind of music did you work on with him?

LK: It was nothing other than scales, practice, and you know, instructional type material.

FL: There must have been, like, some solo pieces you worked on?

LK: Yes, I don’t recall any, though, in particular with him, but I’m sure I still have, probably, some of them at home.

FL: Yeah, yeah. So these pit orchestras, that’s probably—was that some of your first live ensembles that you heard as a child?

LK: Yes, mm-hm.

FL: Yeah. Did you go to the Springfield Symphony concerts?

LK: No.

FL: No.

LK: But, I was a member of the Springfield Junior Symphony.

FL: Oh, uh-huh!

LK: And that was in, I think, '47 and '48.

FL: Uh-huh.

LK: And by '49, I was so active with some things in high school that I kind of dropped out from the Junior Symphony. But I noticed that you had mentioned here that the symphony was established in only like 1944?

FL: Right, at least that was according to some research that I had done, right.

LK: And the conductor of the Springfield Symphony also conducted the Junior Symphony.

FL: I'm forgetting his name. Do you remember his name? I've got some records.

LK: I think it was Leslie [Alexander Leslie], and I can't recall the last name. But he was an excellent conductor, and very interested in fostering the young people, and getting them into the music. And I think it's probably unusual to have the symphony conductor actually conducting a junior symphony.

FL: Right, right.

LK: And we did give concerts at the City Auditorium, like, twice a year, and we practiced in the main hall of the Museum of Modern Art in Springfield [laughs], like every Monday!

FL: Do you remember some of the pieces you played with that group?

LK: No. I had quite a few other activities, too, besides the Junior Symphony. As far as the technical high school went—

FL: This was the Springfield Technical High School, yeah.

LK: Right. I was in the marching band. There was really no concert band, although we did play some concerts and competed in some competitions as far away as Maine. As a marching band at Tech High, we didn't do a lot of fancy field work and marching, like many high schools or colleges get into.

FL: Right.

LK: We really had no place to practice that! [laughs] So I was in the band at the high school the three years, being a three year high school.

FL: Who was the conductor of the—the music director?

LK: Well, in the freshman year and the second year, I don't recall the name. I probably could maybe get it out of an old yearbook. In my senior year, we had a new band

director. There was a problem. After the first grading period was over, he got into some trouble with the law. He was fired. This left us without a music director. Four of us kind of ran the band through the football season! [laughs] We shared responsibility for conducting for rehearsals, for taking care of the marching plans on the field, et cetera. They finally hired a local music store man that—name was Stroman. And he was good; he was a musician, and he kept the band going through the rest of the, what was my senior year, '48 to '49.

FL: Right. Now this person was not in charge of the orchestra, it was just the band, right?

LK: Just the band. We did not have an orchestra.

FL: Okay.

LK: Now, we had a jazz band.

FL: So in the junior high you had an orchestra, but not in the high school?

LK: Right. We had a—

FL: Interesting.

LK: —orchestra in junior high, but not a band. In high school we had a band, but not an orchestra.

FL: [laughs]

LK: Now, you have to recall, this is a technical high school. If you went across U.S. Route 20, in the middle of Springfield, to Classical High School, you had an orchestra. [laughs]

FL: Okay, uh-huh! [laughs]

LK: The education system was divided into Technical High School, Classical High School, Commerce High School, and Trade High School.

FL: Uh-huh.

LK: And those just went exactly with the type of education you went through. In Technical High, that was headed towards schools like MIT.

FL: Okay. Yeah, I wondered.

LK: In the high school there was also a jazz band, called the Tech—well, it was a jazz band. Its major purpose was to put on an annual show called “Tech Tantrums.”

FL: [laughs]

LK: And I played in that jazz band for three years.

FL: Uh-huh, wow!

LK: The show was quite a production. One year, in fact in was my senior year, it even included freezing a skating rink on the stage, so that they could have a skating display, ice skating.

FL: Wow, my goodness!

LK: There was like an accordion duet. The jazz band, of course, was kind of the background for the whole show.

FL: Right.

LK: And it was a real fun thing, to participate in something like that. And then outside of high school, I was in the American Legion Post 326 marching band. And as a auxiliary to that, there was a small combo band that was directed by the director for the marching band. We played weddings. We played at some taverns! [laughs]

FL: [laughs] Uh-huh.

LK: We played at some supper clubs! We played for money! [laughs] With the combo. Now, in that, I played piano.

FL: Oh, interesting.

LK: Not trumpet.

FL: Wow!

LK: Piano players were hard to come by, and since I was well-versed at playing the piano, I played piano in that, and then another small, separate band made up of some students from Tech High.

FL: Wow!

LK: And that was all gigs for money.

FL: Yeah.

LK: Of course, in those days, five dollars for a night was pretty good! [laughs]

FL: Yeah. Do you remember some of the music that you did with that combo?

LK: Typical big band music. If we played at the Blue Moon Supper Club, of course we played “Blue Moon.” [laughs]

FL: Yeah, yeah.

LK: We played quite a lot of Gene Krupa and Stan Kenton music.

FL: Yeah, okay.

LK: When we played weddings, polkas. Polkas and more polkas! [laughs]

FL: [laughs]

LK: So, and we had, occasionally we had a vocalist, female vocalist that, you know, participated with the combo, also. So I was very active, and didn’t have time for much else [laughs] than music during high school.

## **2. Academic studies in high school and MIT (19:19—CD1 19:18)**

FL: Wow! So as a child, tell me about your interest in science and engineering, before you came to MIT.

LK: Springfield, Mass. had a very advanced museum complex for its day, and there was a—Museum of Natural History was one of the ones there. [Editor's note: now called Springfield Science Museum] And every Saturday, I spent all day at the Museum of Natural History, and participated in some of the activities there. Of course, that's science based. MI—or, not MIT, but the Natural History Museum had one of five planetariums in the country. It was the only single-ball planetarium, and the designer of the instrument was Frank Korkosz.

FL: Do you remember how that name is spelled?

LK: I think it was K-O-R-K-A-S. [Editor's note: correct spelling is Korkosz]

FL: Okay.

LK: And it was during, you know, the Second World War that—part of my time at the Natural History Museum, because I really started in junior high school going to the Natural History Museum. And the planetarium was used during the Second World War to train navigators and pilots flying the planes from the United States to Europe. They were generally flying out of either Bradley Field in Hartford, or Westover Field in Springfield. And being one of five in the country, it became a very important thing, but still, Saturdays was available for general public.

So I became involved in all kind of science projects. You had to go around and fill out questionnaires from the exhibits and things. Also, became involved with helping to build some things for displays there, take care of some of the few animals that were kept for display, live animals. And the friends that I had at that time were all the science or engineering type, that were in those various groups centered around the Natural History Museum. They all went on to things like engineering schools, or science.

FL: Yeah.

LK: So I was with people that had that type of interest.

FL: What other interests in humanities-related subjects did you have in high school? Did you read literature? Did you like plays?

LK: I always was usually, up until high school, part of some reading club, you know, in a library. I liked to read. I didn't particularly like fiction. I like to read history. Oh, and in high school I did receive Daughters of the American Revolution Award, which was given annually, you know, to a senior who excelled in American History.

FL: So what area—so was there like a paper you wrote for that award?

LK: No, it was based partly on your grades, you know, in history, partly on your activities in high school, and your extracurricular things, you know, like music.

FL: Right.

LK: And I was always kind of proud of that.

FL: Mm-hm. So how did you get interested in civil engineering? Were you thinking of that before you came to MIT?

- LK: I always liked to build something. [laughs] And my father was good at building things. So I had a model railroad, and I and one of these other friends from the Natural History Museum, we kind of pattered around with model railroading, on the side. I did do a little with the Model Railroad Club after coming to MIT, but I sort of got out of that area, whereas a couple of my other friends went on to the full-sized things, like the Trolley Museum. [laughs]
- FL: [laughs] Did you know, I mean as far as, specifically, civil engineering—was that a field that you kind of knew about before you came to MIT, or was this something—?
- LK: Yes, I think so, because my parents used to like to drive around on little trips, and one of the things that always impressed me, I was only in junior high school at the time, was the construction of Quabbin Reservoir [Belchertown, MA], which is the Boston water supply.
- FL: Oh, yes. That's right.
- LK: And we visited there several times, watching construction equipment.
- FL: Ah-ha. Ah! [laughs] So that's maybe where you got interested in kind of big construction machinery? Wow. So, you started at MIT fall of 1949, is that correct?
- LK: That's correct. And I was accepted, without examination, based on my standing at the Technical High School in Springfield. If you were in the top ten percent of the class graduating from Springfield Technical High School, you could apply and be accepted at MIT.
- FL: Fantastic! Wow. So, when did you decide to be a civil engineering major at MIT, and how did that come about?
- LK: I was already interested in construction and things of that nature, so I entered as a civil engineer, and never had any reason to change my thing. The only thing was, what options: structural engineering, planning, construction, management, things like that. And I chose planning and administration option. In those days, environmental engineering wasn't really part of the curriculum, nor was—there was sanitary engineering, but it wasn't a major portion, either.
- FL: Yeah, that's really changed. Tell me about your thesis advisor. We'll talk about your thesis in a second, but Professor Henry Paynter, P-A-Y-N-T-E-R?
- LK: Yes, Hank, as everybody referred to him. First encounter with him was at MIT Summer Surveying Camp, in East Machias, Maine. [laughs] And went up there not in the right sequence, because my freshman, after my freshman year, the first summer, I still had a job, summer job, in Vermont. And [clears throat] normally you went to surveying camp after your freshman year. So I went after my sophomore year, and Paynter was one of the major instructors there. He didn't really seem to think that my topographical plotting was up to par! [laughs] Anyhow, I got decent grade!
- FL: Uh-huh.
- LK: That brings us back to the trumpet again. Every morning, bright and early, Professors Shea and Babcock, and Paynter, would come out by the flagpole and fire a cannon. [laughs] And then a bugler would play "Reveille." And of course, at night there

would be a ceremony for lowering the flag, with “Taps.” Fred Brecker, who is currently our ’53 Class President, was the bugler. Well, I guess some of the other students didn’t appreciate his bugling, so they threw his bugle in the lake! [laughs] I had my trumpet with me, because I always took it, usually kept up a little with my practice. So I became the camp bugler, and of course, being a valuable instrument [laughs], it—and personally owned—it didn’t get thrown in the lake!

FL: [laughs]

LK: But maybe I was a little bit better than Fred at playing! And then I didn’t encounter Hank Paynter again until he was assigned as my thesis advisor, in my senior year.

FL: So your thesis was called “Effects of Dam Construction on Connecticut River Backwater Curves.” This was your bachelor’s degree thesis in 1953. How did you get interested in this—that thesis topic?

LK: Many years ago, on the Connecticut River, there was rapids that could not be navigated between Hartford, Connecticut, and Springfield, Massachusetts. Otherwise you could navigate the river from Long Island Sound all the way to Hartford. There was a dam built way back in the early 1800’s, with some locks—a low dam—on the Massachusetts side of the state line, to make it possible for the boats at least to reach to Holyoke, Massachusetts, which was a major water-powered mill town. And that dam had ultimately been destroyed or damaged by floods, so it was pretty well decimated by the time I came along.

People wanted to bring navigation back, so there was plans afoot to build a new dam and locks in essentially the same location, just south of Springfield, on the river. And there was a lot of controversy locally, in the papers and things, about the effect of building a dam, the people in Springfield and West Springfield having still suffered from large floods in the mid-thirties, the hurricane flood in 1938 [laughs], and things like that. And dikes had been built on both sides of the river as a result of those floods, and you know, a lot of people claimed the dikes would be topped.

So I became interested in looking at that potential problem, and Professor Paynter agreed that that would be a good subject. So I spent a lot of time in the City Engineering Department, who was able to provide me with cross-section drawings and all that kind of information. Weekends I would go home and work there, getting all the data I needed in order to go ahead and make all the calculations. And the net result was that there would be no problem with flooding, if the dam was constructed, but it never was.

FL: Oh, interesting. It never was—wow.

LK: And so to this day, there’s still a problem of trying to navigate the Connecticut River above [laughs] Hartford or Windsor Locks, Connecticut.

FL: So was your research used by the Engineering Department there, your data?

LK: No, I don’t think it was ever used. It was, I guess, an impressive enough thesis to earn me an A, so—

FL: Yeah, I was pretty impressed with the work. I’m not an engineer, but there’s a lot of work that went involved in that.

LK: In those days, you didn't have the advantage of computers.

FL: Yeah!

LK: So you did all your calculations longhand! [laughs]

FL: That's right.

LK: Or, slide rule.

FL: Yeah, there's a lot of—did you have a particular interest in river hydrology?

LK: I still am interested. I belong to the American Society of Civil Engineers; always have since, you know, joined here at MIT. The group that's called Water Resources, and things—I still receive literature from that subgroup of the American Society of Civil Engineers. I've always been interested in reading about canal construction and things like that. It's just interesting, historically.

FL: Yeah, absolutely. It's a fascinating subject.

### 3. Music resources at MIT (35:54—CD1 35:53)

FL: All right, so moving on to MIT, the Charles Hayden Memorial Library was dedicated on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1950. The previous year it had been occupied, but the formal dedication was 1950. And for this dedication, MIT had commissioned a piece from the Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů. It was a trio for violin, cello, and piano [*Trio in D Minor for Violin, Cello and Piano*]. Did you happen to be at this dedication ceremony?

LK: No, I was not, and I have no idea who the cellist was.

FL: Yeah, I've since found out who that was. So, it was Klaus Liepmann playing violin, Gregory Tucker on cello [editor's note: piano], and George Finkel on cello. Does that name, George Finkel—was he possibly involved at all with anything at MIT?

LK: I don't recall that name.

FL: Okay. I don't think that he was. That name is vaguely familiar, and I'm try—I'm gonna try to figure out more, learn more about him. So, the Hayden Library building had a number of different wings to it, and the, what now is the Music Library was planned as a listening lounge and not as a library, but that changed very shortly afterwards. Did you spend much time there, in the library?

LK: No. I did stop a couple of times and listen to some music. That was when there was special large speaker unit that was up in one corner, what would be I guess northeast corner. And [coughs] it was built by people at MIT.

FL: That's right.

LK: I had connection with a music librarian here, in connection with the work with the music clubs, who was very helpful with some of our music club activities. I think her name is Tusha Scott [Editor's note: Ducha Scott, formerly Ducha Ziegel, and currently Ducha Weisskopf].

FL: Yes, right, from the yearbook. I wondered—they mentioned a music librarian, and I wonder if that was referring to the music library here. Okay.

LK: It was. And she and Mary Torrey, who was the secretary for the three music professors— [Klaus Liepmann, Gregory Tucker, John Corley]

FL: Oh, okay.

LK: —were both very helpful in taking care of lots of paperwork, and handling procurement of scores and things for concerts, and helping with some of the ticket sale processing, and oh, many things.

FL: So there were regular events where they would actually play music over the P.A. sound system in the Music Library?

LK: Yes.

FL: That probably started right after it opened?

LK: I imagine it did. See, most of my activity was centered around Walker Memorial, and with all the studies and things, I never found, really, time to spend much time in the library, listening. As far as taking out recordings, or things to play, my sophomore year, which would have been '50-'51, I had a record player in my dorm room, and I would go up to the Cambridge Public Library and borrow some records. After that year, I didn't even have time to bother listening to records in my dorm room, it seems like! [laughs]

FL: So the Music Library here at MIT didn't loan out records at the time? Is that why you went to the Cambridge Public Library?

LK: Well, see, that was right at the beginning of this library.

FL: Okay.

LK: We were talking '50-'51, fall of '50 into spring '51. They may have, but for some reason, I would just walk up to the Cambridge Public Library.

FL: Do you recall if they had any concerts in the Music Library?

LK: No. I never attended a concert in the Music Library in my time here. They may have had some performance, like a trio or a small group, or something, but I never attended anything in the library.

FL: Over the years there's been a lot of small chamber concerts here at the library and I was just wondering. So, while you were a student, Kresge Auditorium had not been built; that was finished in 1955. What were the main performance places for the MIT Symphony and the Concert Band?

LK: [laughs] Walker Memorial dining hall.

FL: [laughs] Oh!

LK: Terrible [laughs] place to have a concert! Of course, for the annual Christmas Concert, there was Jordan Hall at the New England Conservatory. That's where we had our Christmas Concert. Oh, there was a Tech Sing that was usually in the lobby of Building 7 at Christmas time.

FL: Right.

LK: So for both the concert band and the orchestra, it was Walker Memorial.

FL: My!

LK: And it was necessary to move tables, bring equipment in, set up for the rehearsal, which was done at the south end, or Memorial Drive entrance end, put everything away afterwards.

FL: And where was all the equipment stored, in the basement?

LK: Third floor. [laughs] And there was a slow freight elevator at the north end of the building! And you had to go through a small area used for exercise at the rear of Walker, on the third floor. There was quite often a fencing class going on up there. [laughs] So we would have to bring kettledrums, bass fiddles, stands, you know, down, take them back up.

For concerts, the location for the orchestra, band, or glee club, was generally at the north end. And then of course, the tables were removed and the dining hall was set up for audience seating. Somebody else took care of that type of function; I assume it was some of the maintenance or staff people at Walker. But for rehearsals, we had to do it ourselves. And as I recall, we had orchestra rehearsals like Monday evening, and band, concert band, Wednesdays. The Techtonians generally didn't rehearse there, but—and the glee clubs, choral groups, rehearsed over in Building 2.

FL: Oh!

LK: And that's still there today, to my knowledge! [laughs] Not in very good condition!

FL: Do you remember the room number in Building 2?

LK: No, but I can show you the location.

FL: We can look at that later. I can—yeah, yeah. Were there any practice rooms for people to practice individually? That's been an ongoing issue over the years, and.

LK: The practice rooms were generally the second floor of Walker. Each side of the main entrance there were pianos available, grand pianos, and you could also have other practices there. And I think probably the Techtonians, Logarhythms, you know, groups like that, did some of their practicing there. Beyond that, there wasn't really any rooms. If you lived in a dormitory, you had to practice in your dorm room. And of course, during my freshman year—I was lucky. Through a little underhanded deal, I was able as a freshman to get a dorm room on East Campus. There was the Barracks, for freshmens, in those days. Building 20?

FL: Uh-huh, yeah!

LK: And of course, you couldn't do anything over there! [laughs] It was just bedlam! So people would come to places like the Music Library to study, you know, or over to East Campus, maybe a lounge—wherever they could find. The practice room situation was terrible. The [clears throat] pianos were in good condition. We had a pianist who practiced and played at the Boston Pops, Tech Night at the Pops Concert, called "Eph" Miller [Ephraim M. Miller MIT class of 1950].

FL: Uh-huh.

LK: He played [Felix] Mendelssohn's *G Minor Piano Concerto* [*Piano Concerto no.1, in G minor, op.25*] at Tech Night at the Pops.

FL: Fantastic!

LK: And I can remember for a whole year, hearing him there in Walker, practicing.  
[laughs]

FL: [laughs] Did you do any piano playing when you were at MIT?

LK: No.

FL: No.

LK: No, I was strictly trumpet or management-type functions.

FL: Yeah, so did you play trumpet in the MIT Symphony for all four years?

LK: I played all four years, but the senior year I had to kind of drop out of most active playing, like the rehearsals for the *Judas Maccabeus* [oratorio by George Frideric Handel] concert at Christmas. I was too active with other Music Club business.

FL: Right, because you were the general manager.

LK: Yeah, and things like ticket sales, et cetera, et cetera. The student leader in the fourth year, the one that kind of took over and took charge—

FL: The student leader of the orchestra?

LK: Yeah, orchestra, was Alan MacKenzie [Alan K. MacKenzie, class of 1954] and—a bassoon player. The concert band, you know, the first couple of years I was most active in the orchestra. And I sort of would sit in and play some with the band. In the last two years there seemed to be a little shortage of some people for the concert band, and so I was maybe more active the last two years in the concert band, just as a player, than in the orchestra.

#### **4. Klaus Liepmann (50:13—CD1 50:12)**

FL: So tell me about Professor Klaus Liepmann, who was Director of Music at MIT, and conductor of the orchestra. Tell me about him, what he was like in rehearsal?

LK: Klaus was fairly new at the time.

FL: Yeah, he started in 1947.

LK: He was a taskmaster. He did have a temper. He broke a few batons [laughs] over the music stand.

FL: Uh-huh. [laughs]

LK: But you could talk to Klaus about music. He had a dream. He wanted to record some music that hadn't typically been recorded, and be able to have commercial records made, and the income devoted to the music program at MIT. That was how we first

got into performing something other than *The Messiah* for Christmas concert. So his first selection, which was not available on commercial disks, was *The Creation* [by Joseph Haydn].

FL: The Haydn *Creation*.

LK: Mm-hm, and that was followed in the next year, '51, by the *Elijah* [by Felix Mendelssohn].

FL: That's Mendelssohn, right.

LK: And then in the December of '52 by *Judas Maccabeus*.

FL: And that was Handel, yeah.

LK: And then there was also another recording made in the spring of 1951 of some Bach cantatas. If we had ever done that as a commercial recording, we woulda had to have gone to a studio, because trying to make a decent recording in Walker is—nada! [laughs]

FL: Yeah.

LK: Because of problems with recording at Jordan Hall, none of the recordings were really of commercial quality, particularly *The Creation*, because that was the first one where it was an attempt made. The good old reel-to-reel tape machines were affected by changes in the DC power supply system to Jordan Hall. That part of Boston was still on the old Edison power system!

FL: [laughs]

LK: Instead of the Tesla system. [laughs]

FL: Right, so you had variations in pitch because of the variations in the—

LK: Right, pitch, and yeah, of course, speed of the recording and pitch. Try as they could, particularly on *The Creation*, the acoustic people at MIT could not manually correct for the problem. Later recordings like the *Elijah*, a little better, and you know, knowing that they were going to be faced with a problem, I think by the time *Judas Maccabeus* came along, probably they were fairly successful. The one thing that I didn't like about those Christmas concerts at Jordan Hall: the organ tended to overpower everything. And we had very good soloists that were hired for the concerts, including, *Elijah*, I think we had Phyllis Curtin [well regarded operatic soprano].

FL: Oh, my goodness! Wow!

LK: As soprano. And of course, at that time she was very well known in the opera field. I'm not sure how Klaus arranged for soloists, but we always had good soloists, professional people.

FL: Right.

LK: It's just that you have to be there, really, in the audience, which I was for *Judas Maccabeus* since I wasn't playing on stage for that concert. You have to be there in the audience to realize how the organ can just overpower everything. It was the professional organist that usually played in Jordan Hall that was the organist.

FL: So getting back to Klaus Liepmann as a conductor, you said he was a taskmaster. But was he also inspiring? Some taskmasters also have a way of being inspiring at the same time.

LK: No, I wouldn't say so! [laughs] And at some later time after I left, graduated—I don't know, '54, '55—I know that some of the orchestra people that were still here and playing quit. And I think they were getting disgusted, and I don't know any particular details. I know in the case of a couple, they left the orchestra and they switched over to glee club. [laughs]

FL: Uh-huh.

LK: It's possible, maybe if you wanted to contact and talk to Jack Dennis [Jack B. Dennis, MIT class of 1954, Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science], a little, you might find out some more details, if he was willing to talk about it.

FL: Did Klaus give you an idea about what his expectations were, or were they just these—some conductors give you an idea of what they're looking for, and sometimes they don't.

LK: I would say that he didn't. Just reiteration and correction.

FL: Did he talk about composers or pieces that he was particularly interested in? Did you get a sense about what really interested him?

LK: No. No, other than his dream of making these commercial recordings.

FL: Yeah, yeah. It's also interesting, Klaus Liepmann was a violinist, but he had a particular interest in choral literature. Do you have any sense about where that came from for him, or why that was?

LK: No, no. His daughter, who was in high school at the time, played with the orchestra.

FL: Oh. What's her name?

LK: Lisa.

FL: And she played what instrument?

LK: Violin.

FL: Uh-huh.

LK: [laughs]

FL: Wow.

LK: But no, I don't know of his connection with choral work.

FL: So shortly after Klaus came, he formed the MIT Choral Society for the purpose of doing major choral works. The glee club repertoire was often times more light and popular—

LK: Right. Well you see, that would have been needed for the oratorios.

FL: That's right.

LK: So that probably ties together with his idea of doing these orator—unrecorded pieces.

- FL: From what I can gather, the MIT Choral Society was open to not just students, but other people from the community. Is that correct?
- LK: That's right. And well, all the music clubs were. I mean, well, the Logarithms, of course, was a try-out thing. The jazz band, the Techtonians, of course, that was more or less try-out, too. But the orchestra, the concert band, and the glee club, and the choral society were all really open. Of course, the choral society wasn't officially part of the music clubs.
- FL: Right.
- LK: It had its own management, president. A lot of the people would have been on the staff at MIT. Others would have been just from the local Cambridge area. We had, you know, a few of those in the orchestra. And sometimes there was somebody that came, played a solo or something, from the local area. I can remember one concert that was given in Walker. I can't recall the piece that was played, but I th—and I can't quite recall the name, but this was an eleven year old boy who played a piano concerto with the orchestra in Walker—
- FL: Oh my.
- LK: —that Klaus wanted to feature. He was a local Cambridge musician, and he was excellent as a pianist, even at eleven!
- FL: How often did the orchestra have guest soloists?
- LK: Only for the Christmas concerts, and of course that Bach concert. And that was, you know, the piano player. And there might have been another trumpet player at one time that played [Aaron] Copland's "Quiet City."
- FL: Oh, beautiful piece—yes!
- LK: And those are only, you know, the boy pianist and the Copland, is the only two other ones that I recall.
- FL: Were there ever any student soloists?
- LK: No, I don't recall student soloists. "Eph" [Ephraim] Miller, who did the Boston Pops, didn't play with the symphony orchestra here, except for practice. I mean, he was able to practice with the symphony on Mendelssohn's *G Minor Piano Concerto*, because of course, he needed to practice with an orchestra. But no, he didn't give a concert here, as I recall.

## 5. MIT bands (1:02:47—CD2 00:00)

- FL: So moving on to the MIT Concert Band, so your junior and senior years, when you were active with the concert band, right?
- LK: Mm-hm, yeah. Mostly, because that was a little easier to take, you know, to fit into my schedule than the symphony.
- FL: Talk about John Corley as a conductor. What his—?

LK: Well, John was decidedly different from Klaus. John was very amicable. He didn't break batons on the stand. I think there's quite a few times he probably counted to ten before commenting to the band! [laughs]

FL: [laughs]

LK: But it was usually a very constructive experience. And he was very well-liked. He was very helpful to the musicians, and I was very glad to know that he went on to be [MIT] symphony conductor for all those many years that he was here.

FL: Right, right.

LK: We did have another musician group at MIT, and that was the ROTC Band.

FL: Oh, that's right. You mentioned on the phone to me about that, yes.

LK: And if you played in the ROTC Band, you didn't have to do rifle drill over at the armory—

FL: [laughs]

LK: —at the corner of Albany and Mass Avenue. [laughs] So naturally, I immediately joined my freshman year, when I joined ROTC, the band. And the military had a director for the band, a Major Harris.

FL: Do you remember his first name?

LK: I think it was Frank, but I'm not quite sure. Anyhow, you'll see him in one of those pictures I have playing a bassoon with the symphony.

FL: Oh, my!

LK: Because he played with the symphony all the time as a bassoonist, and he was here all four years as director of the ROTC Band. And so we would go over there, and we would march all around the athletic field, or we would practice in the armory.

FL: Uh-huh, and what kind of events did you play for?

LK: For the annual ROTC parade! [laughs] And then sometimes he could arrange for us to go outside, and one of the concerts that we did play was for a girls' school, the House of the Pines, down south of Boston here, somewhere, one of those exclusive prep school kind of places. And so we did, you know, a couple of little concerts on the side like that.

FL: Do you remember the kind of music you played? Obviously you would have played marches—

LK: Yes.

FL —but what other kinds of stuff did you play?

LK: In the ROTC band, just basically military marches.

FL: Yeah, mm-hm.

LK: Things of that nature. Because of course, that was part of our ROTC! [laughs]

FL: Right, right. I want to get back to some more things about John Corley, the conductor of the [MIT] Concert Band. At some point, he made a decision to only play music

written originally for concert band, and not do orchestral transcriptions. When you were playing had he started that, or do you remember—?

LK: I wouldn't recognize that from anything I remember with John. So up through spring of 1953, I don't remember anything which was basically, you know, American or new composers.

FL: Okay, I wondered when that started.

LK: Probably subsequent to my time.

FL: Was there any particular music you did with the concert band that kind of got your interest—maybe at first you didn't like, but John kind of encouraged people to like? Because he was famous for doing that.

LK: No, I don't recall anything unusual.

FL: Mm-hm. John had also started a brass choir at some point. Do you remember—and sometimes he would have the brass choir do stuff in a concert band concert. Do you recall any brass choir or brass ensemble stuff?

LK: No, I don't recall any particular pieces done in my time, again.

FL: Yeah. Did you ever play in the pit orchestra for the MIT Tech Show?

LK: No. [laughs] In fact, they were a nemesis to the music clubs! [laughs]

FL: Uh-huh. [laughs]

LK: They would borrow instruments for the Tech—so now, some of the musicians, you know, like from symphony, Tectonians, things like that, would participate in the Tech Show. But, they would borrow percussion instruments. They would borrow bass fiddles, you know, depending on the show. And they weren't always available to us, then when we needed them for practice they wouldn't get them back here. And there was some bad damage to a couple of bass fiddles one time, which required us to take them over to Boston and get them repaired.

And during one of the Institute Committee meetings where they had a representative, and I was the representative for musical clubs, we had a discussion to try and straighten out this problem of scheduling the instruments. Of course, the damage was mentioned, too, that one time, but, and it would have been their show, I think, from maybe the fall of '52. But the biggest problem was having the instruments available for the music clubs' use, when they'd been carted off for Tech Show rehearsals or actual shows.

## **6. MIT Combined Musical Clubs (1:10:38—CD2 07:53)**

FL: So, I'll ask you a few questions about the Tectonians—this was the student dance band. And you mentioned just before we started the interview a student leader, William Phinney, a trumpet player who was also class of 1953.

LK: Mm-hm.

- FL: So did you play with the Techtonians at all?
- LK: No. That was strictly a try-out deal. I never tried out, and I may not have actually been good enough! Because I wasn't that good at adlibbing, or improvisation, and of course in a jazz band, you had to be able to! [laughs]
- FL: You had some of that as a piano player with the group that you played earlier.
- LK: Yes, but you know, not so much. We played from music, even in high school, in the jazz band and the bands. And oh, you had to do some runs or something at the end of a set or something, you know, to let the audience know, or the dancers know, that you weren't going to be playing for a while, and then you'd come in and bang around a little before the next set started. But that was it. I was never very good at that kind of thing.
- FL: So was it fairly competitive to get into the Techtonians?
- LK: I would think it was. And they were good! And they did sort of play, you might say, professionally.
- FL: Right, I hear that from time to time they played professional gigs.
- LK: And income they derived was handled separately from the music clubs. Their income was used for their purposes, basically. It was always a little bone of contention, you know, with the other clubs, but it remained that way even at the time I was general manager, and I wasn't able to get it turned around.
- FL: Right, and that seemed to be an ongoing problem, because there were times when the Techtonians were not part of Musical Clubs because of that issue. I looked at some past records, and so—
- LK: Bill Phinney [William Phinney, class of 1953] personally was a very active participant in the management of the clubs, made all the board meetings, you know, and discussions and things, but just couldn't seem to resolve that problem.
- FL: Yeah. Do you remember students doing other informal jazz playing, trios and quartets and stuff like that, just kind of playing around campus? Was there much of that?
- LK: No, no. You know, [sighs] dormitory situations during the early fifties were not the ideal. Baker had been completed in what, maybe 1951, because that was when some of the people were able to move from East Campus and from the barracks [laughs], you know, into Baker over on west campus. But that possibly offered some places where small groups could play. For East Campus or other areas, there still was nothing.
- FL: So I want to ask you: the musical clubs—there was this umbrella organization that administered the student-run groups. Sometimes it's called just the Musical Clubs, and sometimes it's referred to as the Combined Musical Clubs.
- LK: [laughs] I guess, you know, that the, whatever was on our bylaws there—see, we just referred to it on the constitution as the MIT Music Clubs. For the Executive Committee and the Institute Committees, you know, it was referred to basically as the Combined Musical Clubs.

FL: And the yearbook says the Combined Musical Clubs.

LK: Yeah. And it just, I think, varied with whoever was writing it down! [laughs]

FL: Okay, I wondered if there was—what would you say the official name was? The MIT Musical Clubs, or the—?

LK: MIT Combined Musical Clubs, I think, would be the best to consider, at least in those years.

FL: Right, and so that covered the Symphony Orchestra, the Concert Band, the Glee Club, the Tectonians, and the Logarithms?

LK: Mm-hm.

FL: Yeah. Was the Glee Club at the time both men and women? Because even as late as 1947 there was a separate Men's Glee Club, and a separate Women's Glee Club.

LK: There, I think, were a few women—not students. Well, maybe there was just five or something. There were some staff people, but I'm pretty sure that there were some that were singing with the Glee Club.

FL: So by the time you were there, the Glee Club was open to both men and women?

LK: Yes.

FL: Yeah, yeah.

LK: And of course, the Choral Society was where you found most of the women, but then some of the men would sing in both.

FL: Right, right. So these musical groups at the time were called clubs, I guess indicating that they were extracurricular organizations. And they were under the larger administration of what was called the Institute Committee, or also known as Inscumm.

LK: Mm-hm.

FL: Right, this was the predecessor of what's today the Undergraduate Association. It took a while to figure that out!

LK: Okay, could be. [laughs]

FL: Let's see. So, the MIT Tech Show was not under the auspices of the Combined Musical Clubs, nor the MIT Choral Society, as we mentioned.

LK: That's right, it was, but was, as a Class A activity, also automatically had its general manager on the Institute Committee.

FL: Oh, okay!

LK: See, all Class A activities were represented on the Institute Committee.

FL: Okay.

LK: And then, of course, representatives from the individual classes, you know, like the class of '53. And of course, what else, but *VooDoo*, [laughs] magazine—

FL: Yeah, of course. Yes!

LK: —you know, things like that, too. [laughs] The *Technique* [yearbook], the *Tech* newspaper, you know, and what have you.

FL: Right, right.

LK: And Association of Women Students. But you know, as I recall, out of a student body of approximately eight thousand, we had a hundred and twenty-five women students, something like that.

FL: Wow.

LK: And it certainly has changed!

FL: It certainly has.

## **7. Combined Musical Clubs management (1:18:55—CD2 16:09)**

FL: So according to the MIT Yearbook, you were personnel manager of the Symphony Orchestra your sophomore year. Is that correct?

LK: Yes, that was, you know, a position just to keep track of who was there! [laughs] You know, and send out notices or contact them, routine things like that. That's one of the reasons why we rewrote the constitution and bylaws. We needed to expand the music club management. We needed to get more people involved. So we tried to add, you know, other positions for each club. And then we also had a few little minor changes in order to fit with the revised bylaws of the Institute Committee.

FL: I'll have some more questions about that. Then you were student leader, according to the yearbook, of the orchestra, both year three and four. Is that correct? So you were general manager of the club, but you were also—

LK: Okay, right.

FL: I wondered about the year four, if that's correct?

LK: Well, year four, of course, is when I was general manager of the Combined Clubs.

FL: Right.

LK: Otherwise it was in the orchestra. And I started out the year four, you know, as student leader for the orchestra, a repeat from year three. Each year, at the end of the year, the existing Combined Music Clubs management would choose and vote on the new general manager for the next year. I would have remained as just student leader for the orchestra, and of course, its representative on the Combined Music Club board. However, I was elected general manager for the Combined Music Clubs over someone that had expected to be elected to that position. That person had been the concert manager for the Combined Music Clubs at the time, had been for a number of years general manager in the orchestra, or student leader for orchestra. He resigned his position on the Music Club—Combined Music Club board, although he continued to play in the orchestra.

And as a result, we had to reshuffle some of the positions on the board, and we had to have a new concert manager, and we had to switch around a couple other positions. And as a result, we nominated and elected Alan MacKenzie, to replace me, sort of, as student leader for the orchestra for the senior year. So I started out, but that didn't last long. [laughs] Because we needed to have somebody that could devote a little more time to that function, as orchestra leader.

FL: Right. Now you had mentioned some of the reasons for revising the constitution and bylaws for the Musical Clubs, which you had written, and that's dated January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1953. Are there some other things you want to talk about, what was behind the revision of the bylaws?

LK: Well, overall the object was to have more positions available for participation by students, hoping that if we could get more students interesting in something other than just coming to a rehearsal and playing, it would expand the clubs. And it was all in preparation, also, for the fact that we were finally going to get an auditorium, [unclear] the Kresge Auditorium [laughs] [Kresge Auditorium was dedicated May 8, 1955], in place of Walker Memorial! And practice rooms.

FL: Right.

LK: So it was looking towards the future, when Kresge would be finished. So that was all part of the reason for updating the things. Unfortunately, some of it apparently didn't work out, because the Glee Club, when I was here to visit in 2006, they're still in Building 2! [laughs] [Editors note: the MIT Glee Club has been defunct since 1977, although student a cappella groups rehearse near building 2] And there are problems with scheduling so that the orchestra and band and things can have the space in the practice rooms in Kresge.

FL: Right. [laughs]

LK: So I guess it's still not the way we had envisioned when we updated the bylaws and things.

FL: Yeah. Were there some other—as general manager of the Combined Musical Clubs, were there some other issues that came up, that you want to talk about?

LK: Well, we could talk a little bit about increasing participation and interest on the part of the students. In 1952, we decided to construct some displays for Freshman Orientation. And the idea was to use them to entice people to sign up for one of the clubs. In the fall of '52, for Freshman Orientation, we installed our display at the junction of Buildings 2 and 6, where the stairs are. Actually, that's also the entrance to the Hayden Library, [laughs] the corridor. We had quite a large display. Most of the physical work on constructing the framework out of pipe and things for this rather large display was done by I and Jack Dennis in the third floor storage room in Walker [laughs] for the display work that was done by various clubs, to be attached to this framework. And we were quite successful in getting people to sign up during Freshman Orientation. Which ties back into trying to offer, with our new bylaws and things, additional positions that people could also sign up for, besides just singing or playing.

FL: Right.

LK: I don't know whatever happened to that, you know, after I left, but of course, we still had our offices in Walker. We had the one room where there were large, old wooden desks [laughs], which were for use by the various clubs, and then an adjacent office there on the third floor which was storage room—lots of file cabinets for music scores, and things like that, were kept there. And across the hall was *VooDoo* [laughs].

FL: [laughs]

LK: Around the other side, on the third floor, was the *Technique*, the yearbook, and the *Tech* newspaper. And of course, on the third floor in the whole center was a gymnasium in Walker, and then of course out at the rear was our storage room for instruments. I would quite often help out, even though I wasn't playing that night or something, with the orchestra or concert band, because I lived on East Campus all four years; come over and help bring things down, and maybe come back later and put them back! [laughs]

And I think we were trying with Klaus, having discussions with Klaus—and John Corley, of course—but mostly Klaus, of trying to get the music program moving more at MIT. And [sighs] beyond that, there's a number of other interesting things, tasks that have to be done, like ticket sales! [laughs] And other little sidelights that we can talk about.

FL: Do you remember what the tickets went for?

LK: [sighs] No, I don't. I think, though, that tickets for Jordan Hall for Christmas might have been ten or twelve dollars, something like that. For a concert in Walker, you know, some special concert, [sighs] it might have been two bucks, or a buck, or something like that! [laughs]

FL: Right. So the—we'll use the orchestra; I guess that's my line of questions about—a lot of the administration was done by students. What administrative role did Klaus Liepmann have with that, and how did that relationship work?

LK: [sighs] Klaus's main purpose as far as the clubs were concerned was selection of music. And then, for something like the annual Tech Sing, the one year I can recall would have been December '52, in particular, over in the lobby of Building 7. He'd call some of us together, and sometimes the people from the Baton Society were involved with those things, too. And we'd get together in Klaus's office and talk over what pieces we were going to have for the Tech Sing, or something like that. And I can recall a discussion over how many verses there was in "Silent Night."

FL: Uh huh! [laughs]

LK: And Klaus and I had a bet! [laughs] And I won!

FL: [laughs] Wow! And he was German—he should know!

LK: Anyhow, I recall that specific incident.

FL: Did Klaus Liepmann talk to you about his thoughts about the future of the MIT music program?

LK: No, it was basically centered around the availability of the Kresge Auditorium. And he didn't go beyond his hopes of having a place permanently, have set up for practices, and a place to perform. And as far as music or expanding music at MIT, because after all, it was a small program in those days. There wasn't much offered, you know, in the way of music education or things. So, never got involved in any discussions like that. This is sort of a transition era. You know, things were changing, and we now had three professors—

FL: Right.

LK: —each one conducting.

FL: Right.

LK: We were getting a new auditorium, supposedly places to practice. And we were in the music clubs, trying to generate more interest among the students in participating. So I think all the emphasis was more hope for the future, but can't recall Klaus ever getting into any further discussion of ideas for the future.

FL: When you were planning, when there was planning for Kresge Auditorium, was there much input from Klaus, and student input, as far as needs?

LK: Not from students. We were never consulted at all. If there was any input, it was independent of the student performing groups, and would center around Klaus and John [Corley], and maybe Greg [Gregory Tucker]. And I'm not aware of what their input was.

## 8. The Baton Society (1:35:33—CD2 32:47)

FL: So I want to ask about this organization that's no longer in existence called the Baton Society. You were a member years three and four, and you served as secretary. Tell me about its purpose and functions. It seems like it's kind of vague, in some ways.

LK: Well, yeah. It's an honorary society for those that had worked hard in some music form at MIT. But its one main function for the year centered around Tech Night at the Pops. And, you know, if we refer back to one of these older write-ups on the Baton, it says: [reads from MIT yearbook *Technique*] "An organization formed to further musical activities at Technology. Society's twenty-one members—" was here; I think I saw twenty somewhere in another book. But, "—are chosen from students who have themselves made outstanding contributions to music here at the Institute. By their membership in the Society these students can contribute even more. Regular activities include organization and management of the All-Tech Sing." Now, that's not the Christmas Sing.

FL: That was a competition in the spring, right?

LK: Yes, mm-hm. And dance. There would be an All-Tech Sing, and then clear the chairs away, and you had the floor of Walker Memorial available for dance! [laughs]

FL: Right.

LK: “The Society is driving force which revived the idea and brought it again to its place in the yearly functions of the Institute.” Yeah, it’s a kind of nebulous statement. “But towards the end of the year, the management of the Tech Night at the Pops fell to the Baton Society. And ticket sales, and a myriad of other arrangements, are handled by the group.” They supposedly were involved with some smaller groups, but they just weren’t! You know, there wasn’t much going on in the way of smaller groups, recitals, you know, things like that. At least, during my time. Finally, they just say, “To make music a more important, better understood, and more appreciated fact of undergraduate life at the Institute.” But the one big, time-consuming function was Tech Night at the Boston Pops.

FL: Right.

LK: And it’s quite a job, selling out Jordan Hall at the price that you had to pay over there.

FL: So it was at Jordan Hall, not held at Symphony Hall?

LK: Jordan Hall. And—oh, Tech Night at the Pops?

FL: Yeah.

LK: Oh, excuse me. Yeah, Tech Night at the Pops, of course, was Symphony Hall. And of course, in time we’re talking about, Arthur Fiedler was still the conductor.

FL: That’s right!

LK: For ’49 - ’53 era. And their one problem in my senior year, in the Baton Society, but also involved, because of the symphony and being general manager of the Combined Music Clubs was trying to obtain a tax exemption for ticket sales. Because if you didn’t have to pay tax, then you had a lot more profit! Well, our friendly local director of the IRS had issued an edict that MIT had to pay tax on their Christmas Concert. And we tried to get agreement—and this was I and a couple of people from Baton Society, but I was sort of wearing two hats: Baton and Combined Music Clubs—[sighs] tried to get the Institute to allow us to ride on their tax exemption. But I guess they had some discussion with the IRS, and they couldn’t come to agreement. So finally, I remembered Jack Smith [Jack W. Smith, class of 1954], who was treasurer, at the time, of the Combined Music Clubs, I think, and also a member of Baton. We, the two of us, went over and met with the business manager at Boston Symphony, and we worked out a deal to let us ride on their tax exemption.

FL: Fantastic!

LK: And so we worked that out, and were able to get the maximum profit from our ticket sales in the Fall of ’52. What happened after that, in later years? I’m not sure, but of course, Tech Night at the Pops is still an ongoing tradition.

FL: Right. Now, when you were involved with it, it was part of their—the Boston Pops regular spring season?

LK: Yes, yeah.

FL: It wasn’t a—?

LK: If you were to get a program, you know, and this particular one was from 1983 [shows printed program]—by that time, John Williams was conductor—you’ll find

that there is, in the same program, here, there's [pause] the MIT Night at the Pops, and there's WCRB Night at the Pops! [laughs]

FL: Right, right.

LK: And I guess this particular program doesn't have one of the other schools in it, but I can remember one that, like, Harvard's night was there. Here's one: the Friends of the Armenian Culture Society Night.

FL: Mm!

LK: [laughs] So everybody had a night at the Pops! [laughs]

FL: Yeah, right, right! So did the Glee Club always participate? It seemed like they were kind of a regular part of the Tech Night at the Pops. Is that right?

LK: No.

FL: No?

LK: Not necessarily a regular night. For example, this program, let's see, what was on this one, in 1983? [pause] No, nothing. Now, see, there might be a soloist, and that's where I mentioned earlier, you know, was "Eph" [Ephraim] Miller, who did Mendelssohn's *G Minor Piano Concerto*. And I know this year, tonight, will be a cellist from the class of '58? Something like that.

FL: Right, yeah, Carlos Prieto [MIT class of 1958], yeah.

LK: Yeah. And if the Glee Club participated, it would have been something special.

FL: I see.

LK: They might have been performing a new song, you know, or something.

FL: Were any of the MIT songs sung?

LK: We'd always sing "Arise, Ye Sons of MIT" near the end of the program. Now, "Arise—"

FL: "Ye Sons of MIT," I think they call it.

LK: Not anymore! [laughs]

FL: "Arise Ye—" I forgot what exactly what it is. I forgot, yeah. [Editors note: correct title "In Praise of MIT," revised lyrics (1985) by Alvin Kahn]

LK: Well, anyhow, you know, you've got to include the female segment now.

FL: Of course. Right.

LK: So the words have changed a little; it's changed over the years since Professor Wilbur [John B. Wilbur, class of 1926] wrote it, back whenever. Wilbur was the head of the Civil Engineering Department.

FL: Oh, my! I wondered.

LK: Which I was part of in my years here, '49 to '53. He wrote that song, and the music for it.

FL: Right. I didn't realize that he was a professor here.

LK: Yeah. He was head of the Civil Engineering Department. And he wrote some other songs, too. I'm not so sure that—

FL: We can look up some of those.

LK: Yeah. There probably should be some record of what he did, but he was involved in composing—

FL: Fantastic.

LK: —at MIT as a little side job.

FL: That's great. Well, I think this is a good place to stop, and tomorrow you'll come back for a second session, and we've got a lot more to talk about. Okay?

LK: All right, [unclear].

FL: Well, I want to thank you very much. This has really been fantastic.

[End of Interview]