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**Oral history interview with Jo Harvey Allen,  
1998 April 21**

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# Transcript

## Interview

**Interview with Jo Harvey Allen  
Conducted by Paul Karlstrom  
In Santa Fe, New Mexico  
April 28, 1998**

### Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Jo Harvey Allen on April 28, 1998. The interview was conducted at Jo Harvey Allen's home and studio in Santa Fe, New Mexico by Paul Karlstrom for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funded by the Pasadena Art Alliance.

SESSION ONE  
28 APRIL 1998

JHA: JO HARVEY ALLEN  
PK: PAUL KARLSTROM

[SESSION 1]  
[TAPE 1, SIDE A]

PK: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, a taped interview with Jo Harvey Allen in her home/studio in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on April 21, 1998. The interviewer is Paul Karlstrom. Let's talk about how you see yourself, as everybody has to have some sort of label. You said you don't like the term "performance artist," so how do you describe yourself?

JHA: Usually, if I am filling out a credit form, I usually put writer/actress. That's enough to get you rejected right there. I've just always been unsure of what I was going to be doing next and I have done so many different things and have taken so many right turns along the way that I got tagged "performance artist," right at the beginning. But, actually, I have written poetry and I took a half hour worth of poetry and used it in my first one-woman play. It was all scripted, but it was made up of poems so it was a poetry performance and I had never heard of one. The poets at the time who had been supporting me were Phillip Levine, Mark Strand, and Pete Everwine and some of those guys were really supportive as long as I would do a reading, which I had been doing for a year. Once I started venturing into something else they then thought it was no longer poetry.

PK Well, we were looking at some photographs on the wall. There was one from that, what was the name?

JHA: A Moment's Hesitation.

PK: What year was that?

JHA: Let's see, I guess I was 35.

PK: So, is that a convenient marking part for the beginning of a certain phase of your career?

JHA: Not really, because I left when I first got to California. I wanted to be an actress. I went out for a lot of crazy interviews and immediately got the job, but they were all just shoddy deals. Anyway, I got regular jobs. All my first jobs in L.A. were hilarious. I studied to be an interior designer and work for the mob and it was a great experience. When I couldn't take the gangsters anymore, I went to the phone company and worked for a short time selling advertising.

PK: What does the mob need an interior designer for?

JHA: I met a woman named Dottie Reesie, who was 40 at the time. She drove a yellow Cadillac convertible and picked me up every morning. I'd been going to Woodbury College of Design to be an interior designer. I quit six months before I graduated because they were cheating me out of \$60. I didn't get a degree, but got this job working with her as her assistant and her husband was a gangster and we worked with all the mobsters in town who owned all of the properties around L.A. They went bankrupt on every single job. They treated me great! Dottie Reesie would pick me up at 10:00 in the morning and we would go shopping on Robertson Boulevard and then we'd have lunch with five or six gangsters. Then we would go work on the model homes and have drinks with them at 5:00.

PK: What was the scam? Was it a legitimate business?

JHA: They were just crooks. They went bankrupt on every job. She made sure I got my money and made them swear to treat me well. And they treated me very well, but then I heard one of them talking about killing somebody and I decided I'd bail out and get a regular job. After that I got pregnant and that's really the main thing I wanted to do. That was the most creative thing I've done in my life. I was always positive that's what I wanted. Then I had Bukka and then four months later I was pregnant again and had Bale. I told Terry I wanted to do something and he came in one day and I said, "I want to go to radio school." Because I had to find something where I could stay home with the kids, and also have some outlet, so I said, "I'm going to go to radio school." The next day he walked in the door and said, "Are you still going?" I said, "Yes." Then he said, "Well, I got you a radio show today." It was one of the first underground radio stations, KPPC-FM. Everybody was excited about that station because we'd have William Burroughs out and you would get by with saying anything and everybody was glued to it. I was doing a country show. I was forbidden as a child to listen to country music by my grandmother, so I became an avid fiend for country music. The reason she didn't want me to listen was it reminded her of her roots. She was always very poor, but very proud and trying to get away from that, so I wasn't allowed to listen to country music. I did this program and that was my first experience with actually producing because they were theme shows. Terry would help with the music and research and I would do everything on the air and tell stories.

PK: You were the voice. These were self-contained programs that were very often a one-person production, right? Did you look at it as an art piece?

JHA: Yes. We would go to New Orleans and interview the snake people and do Cajun shows. We were playing Willie Nelson for the first time in L.A. I was actually the first woman country D.J. [disk jockey] in the country. It was a novelty at the time to have a woman on the air. I told stories about my hometown and we would have all the people that came to L.A. and entertain them. We would back it up with rock and country [music]. After our show on Sunday – it was called Rawhide and Roses – would be the Burney Pearl Blues show and then Fireside Theatre. We had these marvelous broadcasts from the basement of the Pasadena Presbyterian Church. It was really about producing and doing the show. That was the first thing I did.

PK: So in your view, other than giving birth, this was the most creative thing you did?

JHA: Yes, it was. That was all the last part of the 60s. At that point, because of the radio show, I was asked to do a film at the time and it was called, *The Last Movie*, with Dennis Hopper and [Kris] Kristofferson. They went to Peru and were wild and crazy – this was after *Easy Rider* – and we all thought this movie was going to be the best movie that ever came down the pike. I had these little kids, so Terry said, “I’ll keep the kids and you go for two months and it will be okay.” I knew it wouldn’t be okay, so I didn’t go. I always made decisions all along the way, which I never regretted. But I always opted for what would keep my life intact and try to make me happy in the long term.

PK: You seem impulsive. And you certainly have a zest for life, which you communicated, but it’s within the framework that does look ahead and even looks at consequences of action. Is that right?

JHA: No, I don’t think so. I think I’ve made a lot of choices based on that because I thought of the things that other people would think of would be career choices wouldn’t be life choices to make me happy.

PK: When you were talking about having children and how important that was and then using the word “creative,” not distinguishing between that which many women can do.

JHA: I know it’s not a timely thing now, but it will be again. It will come back around. There’s great joy in making your environment – it’s creative. I cannot work if my surroundings aren’t good. I just cannot do it, yet, I’m really adaptable. It takes me three days in India to settle in and figure out how to do it in that environment. I get things set for myself where it’s visually pleasing. It’s all the same thing.

PK: Yesterday we were talking about the whole feminist art/activist movement, which is characterized by artists like Judy Chicago. Your position is interesting, because there is a whole group of younger women who have evolved in a self-conception of an ideal of this union of creative life and domestic life.

JHA: In the last 20 years some terrible things happened. I was invited to be the entertainment at one of the annual women’s conferences a few years ago in California. I don’t think they knew what they were getting. It’s like a stick of dynamite because I was on a rage over some of the things that have happened. For as many gains as we’ve made, I think we’ve had major setbacks which I think have had a huge impact on the country and on women and women’s happiness. The main thing that started happening was that women would apologize to me because I had kids -- and loving it -- and at the same time I had a semi-career going. I was always doing something and women would apologize to me and the phrase started coming up that lasted for 20 years. It never existed before that time and women were saying, “I’m just a mother.” It’s so horrible because being a mother is so creative and so important and it takes so much energy, so much of your time, and is a fabulous thing to be, but it got degraded in there somewhere.

I think there is a 30-year range of women who are trying to achieve the “big deal” and if they don’t get a screenplay published or land a big acting career, they feel like they’re failures. I think they never stop. There’s so much pressure on these women and you cannot do it all. I remember early on I read something in a magazine that angered me. It said, “Okay, here are your choices. You can be a mother, a wife, or have a career. You can pick two, you can’t pick all three.” I thought, “Well, of course, you can be all three.” After all these years, I really believe now that it is impossible to have all three at once and do a good job. I think it’s all about timing. I also think it is possible to have all three and have this full, rich spectrum, but I think you have to realize it’s about timing.

PK: There is no question that the demands are put on a woman that, I guess, she puts on herself. It

can be exhausting. Unless you have money, it makes it easier.

JHA: You miss out on a lot of the fun of it and the creativity of it. One thing I think happens is that part of the whole thing is saying to yourself, "What do I want?" What really makes you happy instead of what everybody else wanted for you. I think a lot of women feel so obligated right now to do so many different things that they don't really stop and think what do they want and it's okay not be anything. It's okay not to have a big career. It's okay not to have children. It's much better to figure out what you really want.

PK: Obviously, you feel that's exactly what you've done.

JHA: Well, I've sure tried to do that. I remember once when the radio show was going and I had just gotten an agent for acting and things were going well. I wanted to leave L.A. because of the smog and it was just a fast track and I was always feeling like, for a lot of years in L.A., I was still a small-town girl. I wanted to go back to Texas, so I made this demand that we leave and I remember my neighbor saying, "My God. What is it you want?" I said, "I want Little League ball games." I knew that if I had gone the starlet route, I wouldn't have had the Little League ball games, because I couldn't handle the fast life that we were in then.

PK: So you went back. I think this is a good moment to move back because we now have learned quite a bit about you. Where and what did you come from and why don't we go back to Texas?

JHA: I've always been blessed. Everything has just come gushing at me. I was raised in a big old house. My father went overseas and my mother lived at home with her brothers and sisters so I was the only kid.

PK: This was in Lubbock?

JHA: This was in Lubbock during the war, in this big old boarding house that my grandmother ran, who had so much pride and was so clean you could eat off her bathroom floor. My father's mother, Grandma Cuzzy, lived exactly catty-corner in a little bitty shack across the street and she was filthy and funny and listened to country music full tilt. Cockroaches would be running across your face at night if you stayed over night. My mother tried to get me not to eat there, but both grandmothers got along. One was fat in a shack and one was skinny in a big house, total opposites.

Their history was very interesting. My father's mother had been a beautiful German woman with nine kids and his father was a gambler who owned vast range lands and hotels. He got cancer during the dustbowl and went belly-up on everything. My daddy said all the cars – there were six cars – were covered with dust. When he died, my grandmother, who never worked a day in her life, took all these kids in a car with a wagon pulled behind and went out and hired out in fields in west Texas. My father only went to third grade, but was so smart. They wanted him to come to [Texas] Tech to teach math, but they wouldn't let him really teach. They wanted him to teach the teachers because he didn't have a degree.

PK: How did he develop this expertise?

JHA: He was a smart man who was very self conscious. He wore my mother's high school ring over not being educated. He was a carpenter and worked very hard and then started manufacturing things. My mother worked in a dress shop, so my two grandmothers kept me when my father was in the war. My mother was the glamorous one. She had a job downtown as I was growing up. She was one of the only mothers that I knew who worked. She always wore beautiful suits and looked

fabulous. So there were these three women raising me, day and night. The family gave me everything, every advantage and just poured love on me. I always had more confidence than I should have. I felt like I could do anything because that was the way I was raised. I was an only child.

PK: I can see that all of this grown-up attention was focused on you and it sounds as if you had several different role models.

JHA: Totally different.

PK: It also seems to me that you decided early on that you didn't have to choose just one, but you could take from each.

JHA: Also, because I had everything lavished on me, so I was always the best dressed kid wherever I went. My mother had rickets from the depression and she came from a little oil town where half of the town struck oil. The mailman turned up rich one day, and their family didn't. They were always striving to get things because they had been so poor. My mother and father were always dressed beautifully and they gave me everything to compensate for what they didn't have, so I had this really incredible upbringing. Then, when I was 14 I had to go to work because my mother said you have to know what it is like to wait on people and you can do whatever you want with your money and they gave me more. I was the only one of my friends who was working. I always had to have a job. Every holiday I had to keep the house. I had to do physical work so that I could appreciate what it was like to serve other people, which I think served me well.

PK: That is interesting that you eventually resented this or felt that you've done your time and now it was time to leave that behind.

JHA: No.

PK: Because homemaking obviously involves house keeping and family, a lot of that very same type of thing.

JHA: But even if some are working here, I work along with them. I have had a housekeeper for years, but I have always worked with them. It's part of the whole thing because I was raised to appreciate that because I know what it feels like.

PK: You have described a way of being brought up with certain values that were instilled with an awareness of other people. Do you feel that is in any way connected to your performing and a way of relating to other people?

JHA: I know I feel a strong obligation of what those plays say and what they do. I know when I was writing a play called Hally Lou about a revivalist preacher, I'd traveled for years taping tent revivalists and wrote this play and I'd cry at night. It upset me because I wasn't doing my own sermon, but was doing someone else's.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

PK: Continuing an interview with Jo Harvey Allen. This is tape 1, side B.

JHA: What really happened was that Terry really bailed me out, as he often does. He brought me a quote from Flannery O'Connor knowing that she had her religious background and loving her work.

Let me paraphrase it, "If you have an ounce of faith, you have to present a character as you really find them. You're not obligated beyond that. That's enough." Because my characters have always been real characters, I, with very little judgment, was attracted to them. The overall statement is true and is hugely important to me. I don't want to put something out there that I don't feel good about. I'm not interested in it, but I think if you can just get at the truth, which is so simple, but the hardest thing you ever do. It's the most difficult of all to tell the truth and I think that's where you're obligated, because that's what people understand.

PK: So you would describe that as the ethical basis of your work.

JHA: To be truthful.

PK: I am very interested in hearing about how you developed your art forms, but we still have you as a youngster back in Lubbock. What is your maiden name?

JHA: Koontz, Jo Harvey Koontz. K -O-O-N-T-Z. It's a German name. I think Koontz means art, but I don't think it's spelled the same. When I met Terry -- I was 11 -- we went to a dance, a Rainbow Girls' dance. It's the first dance party I ever went to in my life and we danced all night together. We ditched our dates and danced together. I had to be home by 9:00, so we danced until 9:00.

We had different dates, but we met each other and danced all night -- bopped together. Then I met him again when I was in the 7th grade. I changed schools and I was very unpopular that year. I had a brown mouton that was fake, and all the rest of the girls had white ones. I just couldn't quite cut it. I went home from school every day -- that was a miserable year. But by the end of the year I got an invitation to the country club to a big dance. Feeling very unpopular and not having made friends at this new school -- mainly because I was never at school. I play hooky everyday, but I got this invitation and it was from Terry. I thought he had invited me especially. He'd invited everybody in the school. He had never seen me yet in this school and I went to the dance, which he was throwing. He was called "rubber legs" because he was a fabulous dancer. He threw this big dance and saw me and we danced all night again. We danced all night again at his party.

PK: This was a couple of years later?

JHA: There was a year between when we weren't at the same school. As soon as he moved over to this school, we became best friends. We were best friends through high school.

PK: How was he able to invite the whole school?

JHA: His daddy started that country club. His daddy, "Sled" [Fletcher Manson Allen (1886-1959), was a pro golfer and pro baseball player. He was a good guy around town. He brought all of the entertainment to Lubbock. When Elvis came to Lubbock, Sled had the Sled Allen Arena, which broadcast live on the radio on Saturday nights. He did black dances with all the greats -- B.B. King and all those guys would come. He did those on Friday nights in Lubbock. Then he would have country music broadcasts on Saturday night. It was my favorite show. My grandfather, Daddy Jess, would baby-sit me on Saturday nights because my folks always dressed up, fit to kill. They would go dancing and the bootlegger would come and it was a big event. I would stay with my Granddaddy and I would dress him up in drag. Paint his toenails red and paint his fingernails and we'd listen to the Saturday Night Jamboree. Terry was doing the set-ups out there. When I was in the 6th grade for my birthday party I could do anything I wanted, so I went to the Saturday Night Jamboree with a bunch of friends. I'm sure I met Terry as well.

We would talk all night and I'd sit in the closet and give him presents. I gave him a John Lennon album. I'd never given a boy that I wasn't dating a present. I said to my mother, "Why couldn't I fall in love with somebody like Terry?" and she said, "What's wrong with Terry?" We had 17 dates one summer. We had fun and everybody was out of town so we dated each other. I would not let him kiss me for 17 dates, because I'm a very loyal friend, and I had a girlfriend who was mad for Terry. So I wouldn't let Terry kiss me because of her. He really hated me for that and wouldn't ask me out for another year.

PK: Did that make you sad?

JHA: No, we still continued to be friends. Every time we had a date he would come over before and after the date. We'd double a lot, but then we didn't have anything to do with each other. One day he came over and it was a rainy day, I'll never forget it. I did everything I could think of to get him to kiss me and he just wouldn't pay any attention to me at all. But when we went to the drive-in that night that was it! The next day we went on a ski trip and fell madly in love.

PK: How old were you when this happened?

JHA: We were 17. And then we were 18 when we married. We had a huge wedding and Terry and I've always been passionate lovers and I decided two days before I married him that I didn't want to marry him. We had a big church wedding planned for 7:30 in the morning because I wanted to sing, Oh, What a Beautiful Morning. There were a thousand people invited to the wedding, all relatives, practically. My mother and father paid for this thing and then I wanted to back out at the last minute because I got mad at Terry. My mother said, "Okay, you don't have to go through with this marriage, but you have to go to the rehearsal dinner because I bought all the steaks. I said, "Well, I'll go, but I won't sit next to him [Terry]."

PK: What did he do?

JHA: I drove by and saw him in Sharon Marcus's living room. Sharon was a rival, who was a very cute blonde, and I think he was telling her good bye. We both had dated up until two weeks before we married. I was 18 at the time. When Terry asked me to marry him, I just thought, "God, this is going to be fun." That's how we approached our whole life.

PK: Did you or Terry have a notion of the future?

JHA: I did not have a clue and it didn't concern me. I never even thought about it. The furthest I ever thought about it [the future] was that I wanted to be "Gidget" on the beach. I thought that we would have a hibachi and live on the beach and bar-be-que at night. I wanted a hammock for a bed in our bedroom. That's about as far as I thought.

PK: It sounds like you already talked about going to California.

JHA: We flipped a coin in class, New York or California. He knew he was going to art school.

PK: So the art was in the picture already? You knew that his future somehow would involve art?

JHA: I didn't have a clue and I never thought "How would we make money?" Before we were married, Terry parked one night and said to me, "I can promise you one thing, this is going to be a different kind of life than anybody here that we know. I don't know what I'm going to do." I knew he could write and would be a writer, artist, or musician. He would change the order, so I knew it was going to be something weird, but I didn't have a clue, but it didn't even matter to me. Isn't that

amazing?

It was an adventure and it was going to be fun and we could also sleep together, which I thought was just too great. Then he called me on the phone to ask me to marry him and that he was going to California six months before we got married to start art school.

PK: He had already applied for art school?

JHA: He had applied and I thought he was running away from me. When I thought he was leaving, and I drove it out to the middle of a cotton field in my Thunderbird. I got out of the car in the middle of nowhere, this flat world around me and screamed and screamed and screamed. He left anyway! When I decided I wouldn't marry him at the wedding, my mother said to me, "It's okay that we spent all this money and planned this huge wedding. You don't have to go through with it, but he's going to get in that black Ford and he's going to drive away and he'll tell you good bye. I never want his name uttered again." I couldn't conceive of not continuing this fight with Terry, so we got married and went straight to L.A.

We spent two weeks on a honeymoon. We went to Disneyland. Terry had already seen Disneyland, so he wouldn't let me see the Park until the next morning when we got up at 7:00 and rode the monorail. We were kids! He rented an apartment. I had never seen an apartment house and thought it was going to be like the Veterans' Administration in Lubbock. I was very naïve. We went to Kenmore Tropics, right off Wilshire. It was a nice area and this apartment had glitter specks and colored lights rotating on the walls and palm trees. "Oh my God," I thought, it was the fanciest place I'd ever seen. He carried me up all the steps and at the end of our two week honeymoon we went to this apartment.

I thought this was a fabulous place and had gone to [Texas] Tech for six months studying Sociology, so Sociology and Design were my interests. It's amazing how it comes back around, but I'm working on a big project right now that is exactly what it is. It combines both of those. It's funny how things wrap around and I never had a plan. I don't think I've ever had a plan in my life.

PK: So do you just basically trust fate?

JHA: I totally trust fate and I have faith and I trust faith. I actually have an incredible pattern of what I think are full-tilt miracles. Very strange things that have happened in my life and they've been dictated by a lot of the things I have done, totally dictated it.

PK: Obviously, you pay attention to what's happening and probably read signals. Is this true?

JHA: Yes. And there are really strong ones and it's fascinating.

PK: Have you thought about that in any way that might be cosmological or other-worldly? Do you think in terms of some force?

JHA: Events! Events have happened in our life. Terry's skeptical and doesn't like to talk about it or anything, but he's seen some of these events happen that really dictated what I did in my life.

PK: What would be an example?

JHA: It takes so much time to tell some of these things. If you believe in angels or people that appear to guide you that may not really exist. We've tried to find places that we thought existed where things have happened – events – and couldn't even find them, but major life-changing

events have happened where it's so much beyond synchronicity. I'm not kidding! I'm not joking about this.

PK: I believe you.

JHA: It is so much more than even what you call the ultimate synchronistic pattern. It's like miracles and I believe in them.

PK: Could you think that it had a particularly important or significant impact in your life or in your work, in your career?

JHA: It's been a huge factor in my work. After the radio show and I got in the fast track, but we lived in a railroad house that had kids and we always tried to have normality around the kids, and we did. We were raised in Lubbock and that's how we were raised, but we ran with a real fast pack of actors and people coming over in their Mercedes who had these big houses. We were doing exciting things and they all came to our house because there was this kind of family of "wacko," but normal people. They liked to hang out at our house.

PK: Do we know who they were?

JHA: There was Peter Duel, an actor who had three T.V. series going at once. He was one of our best friends and he was also doing film. He practically lived at our house. Kim Darby, who had just done True Grit was at our house a lot. There were a lot of actors hanging out at our house, also artists and writers. I stayed at home all day and he worked in the back room. He had a sign on the door that said, "Even if you're [Bob] Dylan, don't bother me." I entertained people and stayed home with these two children all day. I read two or three newspapers a day, watched the news, and entertained, morning, noon and night and played with the kids. That was my life for a while and I was doing the radio show. It got too fast-track for me. Terry and I were going crazy. We were having problems with our marriage. We were just thrown in with a really wild group. I didn't think we could keep our family together. I was also worried about the smog and the kids in L.A. When things were going very well for both of us, I demanded that we leave. So we went to Lubbock for six months. I was just about to syndicate nationwide the radio show and I thought I could continue to do the radio show in Lubbock. Terry was going to his work in Lubbock. He wasn't really for going, but I demanded that we go and he did. The other plan in Lubbock was that Terry would do his art and I would be a weather girl on T.V., but there weren't any weather girls in Texas at the time and they couldn't get anyone to sponsor me after they gave me the job. They said, "Who would believe a woman?" So I lost the job.

PK: Well, there have been some improvements due to women?

JHA: Exactly, a lot of them. Anyway, we went to Lubbock and six months later Terry got a job offer at Berkeley teaching for a short stint, so we left and went back [to California]. I had pretty much felt that I had given up possibilities of my acting and it was okay because it was my choice to run away from all that. I lost the radio show; they wouldn't let me continue in Lubbock because they never heard me on the demo tape where I'd said that Lubbock was the wettest-dry town in the country. So they wouldn't let me use their only equipment that was stereo equipment in Lubbock because I'd made the comment about Lubbock.

PK: A besmirching image of Lubbock?

JHA: That's right. Terry taught six months in Berkeley and then we looked on the map. He was

offered a job in Fresno [California] because it was a short term class teaching deal. We looked and we thought, "Well, this might be ideal. It's right between San Francisco and L.A. and it may be like Lubbock and it sort of was. We went there and stayed for 17 years, until the kids graduated high school.

We were in Fresno for 17 years, in the same house. We had this life of traveling, working, and doing things at the same time. We had this pretty small house and Terry had a studio and we had this normal lifestyle that I craved.

Terry taught for six or seven years and then he quit. We continued to stay there, but a couple of years into living in Fresno I was feeling pretty frustrated not doing anything. Yvonne Rainer came to teach at the school and everyone was taking advantage of her talents, so I worked for three days, day and night, putting up one-woman shows, just to take advantage of her. About that time Terry did a play and I acted in it. It was called *The Embrace Advance to Fury*. I was the actress in it and wore a clear mask. This was my first real acting and I wanted to do it more. I wore this mask on my face that was clear and I would wear it until it would cut the sides of my mouth. My mouth would be bloody because I loved the feeling of being another person. I loved what acting enables you to do. I was offered one T.V. job during that time and it was going to conflict with a trip to go with Terry, so it was a huge thing for me to make that choice because it was the only real acting job that came my way in a period of three years. I turned it down to go on the trip with Terry. I still have no regrets, but I really had to think about, "What is most important here?" I still knew that I wanted to act, so what I realized was that I had to do my own. It led me in a completely different direction of writing and making my own pieces. An interesting thing happened when you're talking about this weird stuff then is that I got a call one day from Tom Donahue, who was the big Rock and Roll promoter at the Fillmore in San Francisco and brought all the Rock and Roll shows. He heard a tape of the old radio shows that I did and called me and wanted me to come to KSAN in San Francisco to do a radio show. I thought it was on Sunday night and would be broadcast to Folsom [California State Prison], so I had the responsibility of thinking that all of Folsom was going to be listening on Sunday night. What would I do? I hadn't performed or done anything in a while so I decided to get a hook – a comfort zone hook – and I thought, well, I'll talk about this grandmother in a shack who taught me when I was a little girl to sing *Peace in the Valley* and who had told me always that I could sing it for the Second Baptist Church in Lubbock, which I never got to do. When I was a little girl she introduced me to country music and I thought I would tell her stories. I'll play *Peace in the Valley*. Then it will get to Folsom and they'll get a really wonderful religious song at Folsom for Sunday night and it will give me a hook and I will talk about doing the radio show and my introduction to country music and all. While I was planning this out I was washing dishes in Fresno, and I felt myself pour into my body. I'd been totally gone! It was like hot liquid pouring into my body. And that's the only time in my life that ever happened. It was right in association with these events that started happening and when that happened I had been trying to figure out what to do in San Francisco. Now this sounds crazy, but it's very meaningful to me and it had a huge impact on me. I got obsessed by finding the song *Peace in the Valley* that my grandmother taught me so I would have something to play on this radio show. We couldn't find *Peace in the Valley* and we went to San Francisco early and to Sausalito to all of the record stores and couldn't find it. They had thousands of records at the radio station. They didn't have it. I was really disappointed that I couldn't find it. I went in for a meeting with Tom Donahue and what he really wanted me to do was to be Wolfman Jack of country music, the girl equivalent. He had a proposal to do two shows a year at Madison Square Garden and he wanted to produce me all over the country with radio programs. We were going to split the money and do it. Well suddenly we didn't have a lot of money and this was going to be a lot of money. I went in to do the radio show on Sunday night with all this pressure thinking, "My gosh this is much different than doing one's show and I wanted to do it right." So I go in without my song

and someone brings this cut of Peace in the Valley. So I do the show, talk about my grandmother and they ask me about what I'm working on. I make up a lie. What happened was that I had been hired in Fresno to do an interview at the first Willie Nelson picnic in Fresno with these country singers...

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

PK: We are continuing this interview with Jo Harvey Allen on April 21, 1998, this is tape 2, side A. You were on this radio show that could have opened up some real big possibilities. This was on the San Francisco station KSAN, right?

JHA: Right. I was doing it at KSAN. What had happened was that just prior to that when I had gone to Texas for these interviews I didn't do any of them, I just flaked out. I didn't go back and do any of them. I suppose to have interviews with Waylon Jennings Willie Nelson, and all these people. I didn't do them. I went to the festival and I just bailed out. So I was whining around in a café to Terry on our way back to California, moaning how I didn't do my interviews. Terry said, "Why do you have to interview famous people anyway. This waitress is probably as exciting." And the waitress came over to our table and I said, "Can I come over to your house?" And out of the clear, this waitress said, "Yeah, when I get off work." I was sitting on her porch with her little girl when she walked in. Now, this waitress was bubbly and exuberant in the café. She walked up holding a rag on a black eye. She looked like hell! She had been drinking at a bar. Her little girl was sitting there trying to get dinner. She actually told me that she had borrowed 15 cents from a neighbor to get some McDonald's French fries. I went and talked with this woman with a tape recorder. That was one of my first interviews and I talked to her for hours that evening about her life and how she could get out of her situation, which she couldn't. She was so poor. It was so tragic.

Anyway, what I had decided after talking with her was that I was going to interview more waitresses and I was basically going to do what I thought in my mind what I was capable of doing and that was a photo book with just a bit of dialogue. I thought, this will be easy and I'll be able to knock it out. That had been a few months before I was in San Francisco and they asked me what I was doing. So, I was pretty much telling a lie when I said, "Oh, yeah, I'm writing a book."

PK: That's not exactly a lie.

JHA: Well it wasn't exactly, but believe me what I had in my mind, it was a pretty boisterous thing to say at the time. So I walked out of this radio station to see if we were going to be rich and famous and all of this. And this guy had been doing coke and was completely smashed and he couldn't tell me if I had done good, bad or indifferent. We were going to spend the night in San Francisco and I told Terry, "Terry, I want to just go home to Fresno." This was already midnight and Fresno was about three hours away. Because we had lived in Berkeley, we knew Berkeley really well. We got off of the freeway in Berkeley to get a cup of coffee, and, of course, I was upset and had a splitting headache because I felt so much pressure. All of a sudden I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to take this opportunity to do something creative and also do something exciting that would bring in some money. We started looking for coffee to drive home and I had this massive headache. We drove deeper and deeper into Berkeley, which we knew, but could not find a coffee shop. We got into Oakland and ended up on a back street in the Oakland neighborhood. There appeared – and I say "appeared" because we have never been able to find it since – a café that was open. We parked on the side of the café and walked in. There was a long counter to the left and Terry and I sat at the place at the counter where there was an open space to walk out from the counter in

front of the cook's slot and station and a waitress standing there. A word was never uttered in this café the whole time we were in there. The waitress set up a cup of coffee down in front of me and had the most penetrating stare that you could fathom. She gave me coffee and looked into my eyes so deeply and then walked past the slot behind me and pressed the jukebox and played the very version of Peace in the Valley that my grandmother had played and that I had obsessed over looking for it as my hook for the radio show – a song that's not on any jukebox anywhere. She played it and then stood in front of me. The cook came out from behind his station and stood in front of me and they both stared me down while the song played and I started crying. Terry never even got a cup of coffee. When the song was over, the waitress went over and played, What a Friend We Have in Jesus. Now remember my grandmother taught me how to sing Peace in the Valley and it was the same grandmother that taught me one other song, it was What a Friend We Have in Jesus. Nobody knew that but me in the world. She went over and pressed that song and played that one. When we got up to leave, Terry said, "Jo Harvey, what's going on here?" It was clear to me, I said, "What's going on is that what's going to happen is what's meant to happen and I am totally out of control here. I have nothing to do with it and I am totally accepting of whatever." I was really rattled by this time. I went home and my thought about religion has always been that it's an open door and that it is so creative because who knows what and I've never believed in this any other way. I never believed in this "rigid," this is the way, but I think it's all ways, all possibilities, everything. Because I was brought up going to Sunday school and raised to go to church. Sometimes, I opened the Bible at random, after two days of saying prayers about this event, and got the verse for Peace in the Valley, "No lion shall be there, no any ravenous beast shall go up there only." It was the duplicate of the song in the Bible and I thought I was going to die. That's what I thought it meant. So I made this deal with God to please give me more verse, and verse I got – it's up there in my altar – it's everywhere – it's all around me. It's about working – how your fields will grow over, if you don't work and how things will go very bad for you. It was two verses in the Bible simply about work and I thought and thought and thought. I thought, "But I don't have any work," then I thought, "But a waitress brought me that message and I really lied about writing this book." I set out and wrote a 400 page book on waitresses and traveling the country. That book then became my first really successful play. It was just an interesting progression of how things happen. I never got on an airplane for many years without asking for a Bible, and opening it to those two verses. I didn't graduate from college, but I started getting asked to lecture at colleges. My first time was in North Carolina and I was so impressed. They brought me there and I had this beautiful room and I was going to talk to college students. I couldn't believe that I was getting asked to do this. I walked into my room the Bible was open on one of those verses. When Terry had a show at the Smithsonian, do you know this guy who does the tin foil who worked in his garage his whole life and put up that piece? It is so fabulous!

PK: At the National Museum of American Art (now, the Smithsonian American Art Museum)

JHA: Yes. Terry was installing his show and there weren't any guards around and I crawled over the ropes and went up to the main altar of this whole installation of his lifetime work. The Bible was open to one of those two verses. Everywhere I went, those followed me. They continue to follow me in such a dramatic way. When I wrote my third play, Hally Lou, I was depressed for two weeks over not thinking that I had anything in me to ever do again and an extraordinary circumstance – as extraordinary as the first one -- happened again where I was introduced to those two verses at random that are duplicated in another part of the Bible that had instructions with them. I started on a whole other work that I've never attempted. It's now a screenplay and I hope to direct a movie of it. It's gone on for all these years. It's called Hally Lou and it directed me as clear as if someone was pointing an arrow and saying, "Go here, here, and here."

I've always just said a little prayer that when things happen that are telling you something – your prayer is just that you have the courage to follow it. If that means that you never write another word or you start to sell real estate next year, that's what you're going to do if that's what you are supposed to do. That's the only thing you pray is that you have the courage to do that when you're given those opportunities, which are really a blessing to be given those signs.

PK: That's an extraordinary story and pretty hard to explain in terms of coincidence. You no doubt talked with Terry about this and told him what was going on. What was his response? Was he a little skeptical, dubious?

JHA: He is and he isn't. He doesn't like to talk about it. He thinks it's not necessary and he doesn't like it being talked about, but he believes it. He knows it's true. I sat there and I wrote a 400 page book and then I did a play that traveled all over the country which was a big success for me. My successes came in an unrealistic way. I had opportunities that I think were pretty extraordinary for what I was doing at the time. I went straight to New York. My plays early on were successes and they were all directed by things like that.

The way I did the waitress play was that I went to Anchorage, Alaska, and I did the play for the first time and I did in a real restaurant called the Chicken Burger Café. I went to do it with the man and woman [Fonzo and Naomi] who owned this little joint. It had a big chicken and a big flat-board sign outside and they said, "We're real religious and we don't want a play in here." Of course, my waitress cussed like a fiend. Her first line of the play was, "I do not wanna get married. I started messin' around when I was 11 and 14 when I married a shit-ass," and it goes on like that. She's a lovable character. You love her in the end because she is real, word for word.

PK: These are passed on one of your interviews?

JHA: Many interviews for years and years with waitresses all over the country.

PK: One character really comes out of the interviews with many.

JHA: A lot of women. I made a composite character, but every word was a word from a waitress. Hally Lou was word-for-word. All the sermons, all the people were extensive interviews for years with real women preachers. Anyway, that play started a pattern because I did it in the truck stop. I had a play that was about two hours. It was really funny because Naomi and Fonzo said, "We won't allow anything we don't approve of," and when they heard me cussing I just had a massive headache because I just knew they were going to go crazy when this character opened her mouth. Which they did, and he stopped me after about ten minutes. He said, "Young lady, I don't approve of this." I said, "Fonzo, give me 30 minutes, please." And he said, "Okay." After about 30 minutes, Fonzo said, "You know, I'm starting to like the old gal."

PK: Which one was this?

JHA: This was the waitress and her character name was Ruby Kay.

PK: What's the name of the play?

JHA: It was first called Tables and Angels and that's when it was performed in real locations. The next time I did it was at the Chat N' Chew café in San Francisco and I would go in with real people, real truckers. When I opened the play at the Chicken Burger, they were videoing it and a diesel pulled up front and the guy didn't know what was going on. I went and got on the side of his truck and said, "Hello, darling," and kissed him on the cheek and said, "I haven't seen you in two damn

weeks.” And walked in with him and he didn’t know what the hell was happening. So, we walked in for a half audience who had come to see the play and half real people who were eating. Naomi and Fonzo were cooking and I was serving while I had a total two-hour scripted play. I served and every once in a while Fonzo would yodel or throw in and I would interact and pick right back up. I knew that play forwards and backwards.

I then took that play to L.A. I hired a director Joan Tewkesbury and Bo Welch, who is a big Hollywood art production person now, to do the sets and I gave over my own work for the first time where I would really listen to somebody else and I did the play in a different way. I did it at an art gallery down in Venice and we did a two-week run. They were turning people away every night. It was just packed and we did that play and then went straight to New York after that. Then it toured for years. I still do parts of that character when I’m doing a one-woman show. I guess it was Allen Lansbury [Bruce?], I think that’s his name, a Hollywood producer then. He brought his trucks to film it and it was going to be a television production. I had a clause that it had to meet my approval. I had to approve the final on everything and it got into a big legal hassle and never went on television.

PK: What year was that?

JHA: I wonder if it says on that poster. I haven’t got a clue what year that play was. Look at this poster right here.

PK: Counter Angel?

JHA: Counter Angel, it was called that when it started in galleries and theaters.

PK: This was from a production in Dallas.

JHA: I can’t tell you what year. I lose total track. I’d actually done two plays before that.

PK: Well is this in the ‘70s?

JHA: I’m trying to get the order straight. The first real play I did was Terry’s, *The Embrace*... *Avance to Fury* and that’s what gave me the bug. I loved being in Terry’s play and the way we worked together is that one or the other is always the boss. Our collaborations are not the greatest because we fight too much and so I’ll write a song for his or I’ll act in his or he’ll do the music for mine or direct. We have our roles to play and that helps, but anyway, I’m trying to think. I did Terry’s first and then I studied with Yvonne Rainer. Yvonne Rainer had really encouraged me to perform and Yvonne said, “Use what you know.”

Oh, I know, here’s how it went. After I wrote the waitress book, I had a style in the introductions of each waitress’ character that was dictated because of my limited vocabulary. It was very sparse. I’ve always been very plain. I’m a plain cook. I’m a plain talker. I’m a plain, sparse writer. It was based on a limitation of not being well-educated or well-read. I didn’t have a good vocabulary, but I always felt it’s important to get the point across. After I wrote that book, Terry suggested that I study poetry with Philip Levine because he was a great poet and a friend and he was available. I studied with him and I’ll tell you this much, I wanted to study with a poet who wasn’t quite as good because it was less intimidating. Terry has always been the one that has goaded me to go the better route. He really encouraged me, he said, “Go to Levine. He’s a better poet,” than the choice I was making at the time. So I studied with Levine and I thought poetry was lofty and something I didn’t relate to at all and would really hate. But I knew that I wanted to hone my own writing down further because of this style I was developing and I thought, well what better way to learn to do that than to study

poetry. What happened was I wrote a book and published it. I got a lot of encouragement from these poets and Levine suggested for the first time that I go away to a writers' workshop that he was conducting in Port Townsend [Washington] that summer. I didn't even give it a thought. At that point I had never gone anywhere without Terry, except for short trips with the kids home. That's when I was about 35. He was teaching at Fresno and I told him that Levine had thought I should go off and do this workshop for my writing. Terry said, "Make up your mind right this second if you're going to do it." It was a couple months down the road I said, "Okay. I'll do it." Terry said, "Okay. Now I'm going to tell you something. I'm going to talk you out of this. Everyday I'm going to be obsessed by trying to talk you out of doing this thing because it threatens the hell out of me. Not only that you're going to go away for three weeks with a bunch of writers, but that you're going to be doing your writing and doing all this stuff and it's is very threatening to me. But you have to do it and I really want you to do it, so no matter what I do to sabotage this, you much go." He nearly had a nervous breakdown while I was gone, but he really was threatened by my going. He's always been that honest with me and always encouraged me to push myself and you can't ask any more than that from anybody. It's great! I went and at that point I wasn't doing much and had this kind of notion that Terry was taking all the thunder and we were getting to do special things because of Terry's art and I was the mother and wife and not doing anything. I was a bit resentful of that. I had too much of an ego to tolerate it. When I went there I thought nobody will know me, nobody will talk to me because Terry was not there and I can't run with this pack of very famous, wonderful writers because Terry was not with me. Then I found out that I could. They encouraged me to do my own writing and that was all it took to just be a little spark to say, "You can pursue this. This is something that you have a little talent for and you can pursue it." It was a big boost right at that time because I hadn't been doing anything for a long time, creatively. I don't really mean to negate what I was doing as far as outside work other than being at home.

I wasn't unhappy, but I was a bit frustrated not to be doing something at that time. So for a year I did poetry circuit and then I did poetry on the radio in Houston and started singing right in the middle of it. Of course, I'm not a singer, but I could never do that poem without singing a particular song after it again, and then pretty soon I just started to add things. I couldn't do that without flailing my arms or going off on these tangents and stories, so I put a poetry performance together and that was right at the very beginning of performance art. So I got labeled a "performance artist."

I was crawling around the floor burning my shoes, and my knees were bloody and I was reciting my poetry and Yvonne Rainer had inspired me to go to poetry performance because she said, "Go perform. You've got this knack." I'd already been in Terry's play and wanted to and she said, "Maybe it's true you won't get any more opportunities from Hollywood or whatever, just go do your own." So with that encouragement, the encouragement from writing that led me to poetry, I put my first play together. The next time I performed it, I went straight to New York with it.

PK: Which play was that?

JHA: That was A Moment's Hesitation. That was my first play that I wrote and performed. It was a one-woman play and right after that I did a play called Duck Blind at the Coronet Theater in L.A. I performed and toured all those plays. All the plays I've done, I've performed and toured. When I did Counter Angel, it started me on that track of doing plays in real locations with real people.

PK: Counter Angel was your third play?

JHA: It was the third play. I've done about eight plays and my most recent play, Homerun, I'm touring now.

PK: How does that work in your life? It seems that your life is characterized by a great deal of moving around. I'm sure you're together much of the time, but separately you have your own various projects, right?

JHA: It's been equal. We love to stay home, but we travel a lot.

[END TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B]

PK: This is tape 2, side B. We're now learning about your plays and you were beginning to describe performing together with Terry. I know he does the music and what do you do?

JHA: Well, maybe I'll write a song for one of his plays or I'll act. I've acted in almost all of his radio plays. I have done some of my own and I've done some with our son. We work with our kids a lot. We did a play. At one point we were invited to Washington [DC] to do a play about an American family. At the time we lived in a little apartment in Washington and it was for the PFA [Project for the Arts]. We wrote a play called, Do You Know Where Your Children Are Tonight? We wrote it with our kids who were around 12, 13, or something then. We spent two weeks working. Terry thought he was doing most of the work because he's the only person that could type. He would stay up all night. We stayed up until 4:00 every night. It was really one of those situations where there wasn't a director, a boss, or any one in charge. It was an across-the-board endeavor between all four of us. Our kids had as much voice as we did in it. We damn near killed each other doing it, but I don't think I've ever been quite as proud of anything in my life as that play with the kids. We toured some, but the kids got so big. The last time we did it in San Francisco, we did a run and they were already getting too big to do the play.

PK: What was it called?

JHA: Do You Know Where Your Children Are Tonight?

PK: Oh, yeah, you said that.

JHA: It was about an American family and it really talked about everything. It talked about alcoholism, infidelity and it had language that people weren't used to hearing. I know people were shocked in Washington when they would meet our kids after the play. They would say, "They're such really sweet-hearted kids. We can't believe the range of language and subject matter that you are able to talk about." We were always really pretty open with our kids. We never censored our kids. Terry was fabulous with them. We went to the movies every Friday night when they were little and then we would come home and draw the movie and then play music and read out of books that related to the movie and answer all of their questions about things. So it was always a very open situation with the kids. Terry all along the way has always pushed me and I would make the better choice. It's hell to be out on the road. We've never done it well, but we decided that if you're going to fight, and we obviously do a lot, you might as well fight over something that's worth it. You might as well not be fighting because you didn't try to do something. You might as well be fighting because you got out there on the edge of the cliff.

PK: Is your artistic vision similar to Terry's? Do you feel that this is something that somehow reflects your long time together and your growing understanding of yourselves?

JHA: Kenneth Rexroth once said, "You can't teach art to anybody." But he said, "It's impossible if you're around an artist or a very creative person that it doesn't rub off on you." I think Terry has

obviously rubbed off on me. I admire and respect him. I think Terry's an absolutely incredible artist. I'm in awe of Terry, really! Terry has to be an artist. Terry's driven, I'm not. We're very different. We have different sensibilities. We think a lot of different ways about things. For instance, when I wrote *The Beautiful Waitress*, the first book I wrote. I showed Terry my first chapter and he said, "Now, start over." I tore it up and started over. When I did my first play, *A Moment's Hesitation*, after I finished it I showed it to Terry and he said, "You should be honing down every line and be sparse again. Every line has to stand on its own and be that important." I halved my play. I edited out half of my play on his advice and it was good advice. He's always been there as a person that I could really believe. When I showed him *Homerun*, he didn't like the written *Homerun*, my last play. I'd already done a work in progress for two weeks on it and Terry still hadn't seen it. When I showed it to him, he was on a plane to Europe and he called and said that he really liked it. Later he told me he wasn't so sure it was all working on the page. It was his favorite work I've done.

PK: When did you write that?

JHA: This was a couple of years ago. I trust his opinion very much.

PK: So he functions as one of your better critics?

JHA: Totally. I listen to what he says and I don't always agree with it. We worked on a play about four years ago called, *Chippy* which I thought was an ideal writing situation. I would sit in the chair in the living room and would write out the first draft. I had 10 years ago optioned these diaries of a west Texas hooker, who for 30 years had written in her diaries all during the Depression. She was extraordinary! I found them and optioned them with the hopes of doing a movie. These were actual diaries that belonged to some library or something like that. They are very obscure, but I got the diaries. I had heard about this woman who was extraordinary and we worked with all of our friends from Lubbock who are a real talented bunch, Joe Ely, "Butch" Hancock, Wayne Hancock, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Jo Carol Pierce, and Robert Earl Keene, a line-up of singers. They were all the "Johns" and I played *Chippy*. Terry and I wrote it. We had a ball! We did it at Lincoln Center [New York City] and for the American Music Theater Festival in Philadelphia. We cut a CD of the music.

PK: So that was the one that won the L.A. Times "Best CD of the Year."

JHA: "Best CD of the Year." Anyway the way Terry and I worked on that play was that I'd write it on a few yellow pages and take it out to his studio and he would type it up. He would make changes and add to it and then he would bring it back to me and I would add to it. We'd piece scenes together and that's how we worked. If we didn't agree about some scenes, we'd fight it out and I mean we'd fight fiercely over all that, but I would listen to him. I listened to him and he's really clear.

PK: I'm interested in some examples of points where you didn't agree and how you thrashed it out together.

JHA: Oh, there might be a simple thing. It's like I can't write for other people. I tried to do a project not long ago for PBS [Public Broadcasting Service]. If some people tell me to change something that I believe in, I can't do it. I would just as soon die as to change it. So it comes down to words. It can really get crazy over a sentence. If you think it's right and the idea behind it really important, and he says, "Well, it's not." That's when we really fight it out over things like that.

PK: Does this suggest that perhaps you have slightly divergent visions of what the piece really is?

JHA: Totally.

PK: So how does that get resolved?

JHA: It's a compromise when you work together. You figure it out. Terry's language is different than mine. I love to do his plays. He did the most beautiful play called Anterrabbit/Bleeder, a biography about an old friend of ours who was a very colorful character. He ran between the Dixie mafia and the politicians and died at the end because he was a bleeder. He was a hemophiliac. Anyway, Terry wrote a play about him and I played all the women characters in his life, his mother, his girlfriend, his wife. I knew most of them. The first scene of this play was very short. He had a show at the La Jolla Museum. He would bring the sculptural pieces from the show into the theater as props, which I don't think anyone has ever done. The first scene of this play – Richard Bowden came out in a tux with his violin playing Auld Lang Syne. There was a long banquet table full of china and crystal and the body of our friend in a shoulder holster with a gun in his tux shirt lying across the table bleeding where he'd been shot. The blood trickled down his arm into his hand. I was sitting at the end of the table in a black suit and a veil and black hat, with my hand on his hand in this blood. At the end you hear Auld Lang Syne being played and at the end of the song trained white doves fly from under the table. One lands on the perch by his violin. One lands on our bloody hands and the curtain closes. That's the end of the first scene. So it is a very artistic, beautiful play. And the language would be so, "He spooked the proper remark, wore stormy tweeds and smoked gracefully. He was born to cattle; married into oil; and lived intact. Every item in his home was of a combative influence. Whatever mythologies that had been gathered were carefully placed behind glass. Lyndon Johnson wrote him letters." And that's the way Terry writes. I write, like I said to you so plain, sparse, simple. It's very different. I love acting in Terry's plays, because they are so dramatic. When it comes to working together, I'll say, "People don't talk like that, Terry." I've always thought I was better at dialogue so it's those kinds of ways that we fight. We've done a lot of things together and we seem to work it out. I love it! I want to do more and more. When I just hear [Robert] Rauschenberg talk in Houston, and he was talking about his work with [Trisha] Brown all the years and their collaborations, it made me really inspired to work more with Terry. The theater's really hard.

PK: We were talking about the differences between your style and Terry's and how much you enjoy acting in his play and working together because of the language.

JHA: I can go for months without working and I'm content, happy, but Terry works everyday. We're very different in so many ways. He is not supportive of my movie career. He doesn't like it. He thinks it is a lesser of what I'm capable of and I think he's probably right. But it's fun! It's easy money. The parts I get are always fun to do, but they don't require as much of me because I don't get parts that I can really sink my teeth into, so it's the lesser of my talents, I always feel.

PK: Tell me a few movies that we might know.

JHA: The first one that I did was with David Byrne called True Stories. I wrote half of my line in that and I really loved the way that film turned out. It was collaborative. David and I have remained friends, and since Terry's become very good friends and worked with David, I see this as a working friendship that will go on forever. We really work well together.

We have many interesting friends because Terry is a musician and because we go in so many different circles that it makes it interesting. We've always had a lot of friends who weren't in entertainment or music or art and I like the diversity. I just like people, period! I did Fried Green Tomatoes and that was fun. I've done wonderful movies, maybe 11 or 12 features that were all good and I enjoy it. I'm really opinionated and, of course, I argue with everybody because I want to do my own lines, but I don't hustle. I don't want to be in L.A. and I don't want to do a series. I told my agent, "Never call me on a series." I had a Hollywood agent for a lot of years that was Abrams and I

just quit and went with a smaller agent that I'm happier with. They couldn't believe I did it. He was in Texas at the time, now he's gone to L.A. and Texas. Ted Bosie is his name. I really like him and he understands me better and he's a friend. It's a lot different than the other agency. I had an apartment for years in L.A. and I gave it up. I just realized I just don't want to be spending a lot of time there because I think it would wreck my life. I have a very nice life; for instance, my plans for the summer are to stay home and garden, walk and exercise and come in and put in at least three hours every day at the same time writing. I don't want to be writing for any purpose except for myself. I don't want to publish it. I'm booking and touring my play, and I'm excited about doing that, but I just want to really learn to write. You have to put in time.

PK: I have just a couple of more questions because I know you have to get ready to drive off to Lubbock. First of all, how did you get here in Santa Fe and for how long?

JHA: 10 years. We were living in Fresno and I got this apartment in L.A. I'd done three films back-to-back, not a day between them in L.A. and was working there and going back on weekends to Fresno. The kids had just graduated from high school and we were having our mid-life crisis period and crazy as hell. We'd always wanted to live somewhere else. We just took out on the road for a month in Terry's truck and we got here and saw this one house and as fate would have it, again! We were going all over the country and all through the South looking for some where to live. We looked at this first house. The realtor brought us here – it is much different than it is now. There was dirt up to the front door and a lot of things needed to be done. Anyway there were four buildings.

PK: No separate studios?

JHA: No, there were. There were structures that had the possibility of a house, two studios, and guest house and I loved that. We went to El Farol, a little restaurant about 4:00 in the afternoon after looking at this house and the only other person there was the owner of this house. We had dinner with him and then he gave us the keys. He wasn't at the house when the realtor showed it to us. It was totally a coincidence that we saw him at the restaurant. We came back to the house and looked at it at night. I peed horizontal across the drive and said, "This is what I want!" The next morning we got up, flipped a coin, yes or no – that's how impulsive – can you imagine?

PK: It came up heads?

JHA: And it came up heads. We called the realtor and said, "We'll take it!"

PK: Just the way you flipped a coin when you were in high school?

JHA: Right, about going to New York or L.A.

PK: You do have confidence in fate.

JHA: I totally have more confidence in that than anything. I'll tell you something else I'll just leave on this little deal about my new play, Homerun. Terry had written a fabulous song called Flat Land Boogie for Homerun. I love the song and of course I was so flattered because it's all about our love and everything. There's a line in this song that says, "Some old angel from Amarillo must be helping us hold it on the road." Of course, that's his mother who has passed away. We are always talking about this treacherous road holding our life together, which has not been easy, but it's not ever easy for anybody. But that's the line in the song. Well, I wrote this whole play and then I started to perform it and did the work in progress and then I wanted to really type it. I'm such a slower typist,

but I wanted to hone it in and make it just what I wanted. So I worked out here for three weeks – on my computer, which I'm not very good at. Just before I finished I looked at it and thought, "Oh, shit! I should put in that song. I can't believe I've written this play about my life and Terry's and I haven't used this wonderful song. So I'm just going to put it in. I knew it wouldn't work, but just wanted it in print. I'm just going to put this verse in and I knew I'd never do in real, but it'll be in the play." I wrote it in about three quarters of the play. When I reached to print out my play after I wrote, "The End," I finished my play after these three weeks of honing it. I pressed for it to print-out and when it got to the last page, it said, "The End," centered, and then it skipped down about an inch and a half and it took an excerpt out of the text, pages ahead, "Some old angel from Amarillo must be helping us hold it on road," and centered underneath "The End." It said, "Must be helping us, period, which wasn't there in the other verse, "Hold it on the road." I sat there stunned looking at the end of my play after all this work for three weeks getting it perfect and this had come up perfectly centered under "The End." I really knew that it was the truth and that I was getting some help. Then I opened the Bible. A very long process that made me write this play started where I did an art installation and sculptural piece that told stories and then wrote this play. A lot of my plays start out with a sculpture or design. It goes back to that designing. It's funny how I'll start to draw the play before I write it. Anyway, there had been a long process of mystery about this play that I didn't understand. The play solved in a very unusual way an important mystery in my life that'd been going on for 20 years of not understanding things that had happened. There were real archetypal dreams and a series of things that were in dream life and real life that were very, very strange to me. The reason for writing the play was to examine what this was and to learn. I think when you're writing you sort of know the story, but you don't. The entry is the mystery of what you learn in the process of doing the writing. You never want to deal with anything you know about because it would be so boring. I then got the Bible verse and it further verified to the absolute, the solving of the mystery. I called Terry and I told him about these two things that happened with the play, and he couldn't believe it. It was the end of a mystery that got solved for me, personally, by writing the play. Truly for me, it was the verification that I did have some help and continue to have help.

PK: So finally, your work comes out of your own life experience or at least it's very much connected to that and to these values you've been talking about. I gather from what you said that there is a very strong philosophical and spiritual aspect and perhaps, even a quest. Is that fair to say?

JHA: It's all about learning about those mysteries and learning about things. I think if I come out here and wrote day-after-day, I will learn so much.

PK: This is a great place to end this interview. Thank you.

JHA: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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