Hi Elaine,

It was really great speaking to you on the phone.   I will try below to put together some words on what we where recalling and hopefully this will be understandable.

**Sydney in my Life!**

In the fall of 1974 I saw a news story on the KABC TV evening news.   It was about a small theatre, named Megaw, and located in Northridge that was starting up.  That same year I had just built a little stage platform and lightning system for my high school and was interested in technical theatre – amongst other things.   It is all a bit fuzzy.   So anyways, I called up Megaw theatre and Sydney answered the phone.   We spoke only for a few minutes and she explained that she was the managing producer and Elaine was the director.   She asked me about my interests and I told her I was interested in lighting and technical theatre stuff and heard on KABC TV that the Megaw was looking for people.   Syd invited me immediately for an interview and orientation session and about a week later I showed up to an empty little theatre where after knocking at the front door for a few minutes I met Syd for the first time.   Looking back, there are few encounters that are truly life changing – my initial meeting with Syd and the Megaw would prove to be one of those rare life changers.

I cannot recall exactly when my initial interview was but it was probably in January or February of 1975, when I was a senior in high school.   I recall Syd explaining to me for the first time that the Megaw Theatre was an Equity Weaver House.  Meaning it had 99 seats (< 100) so they where exempt from union wages and could use volunteers who where interested to learn and polish there acting and associated crafts.   Syd did not ask me much during that session but explained a great deal of things to me.   She told how great a director Elaine was and how they do a sequence of plays and always end the season with a large popular musical production in the Spring.   The summer was off and in the fall a new set of shows would start up – little did I know that the summers where not really off time.   Syd told me about Bob Googooian, the quiet, resourceful and very intelligent lighting and technical director the Theatre had that I would be eventually spending countless hours with.   She told me about David Lukas, the super creative and incredibly detailed oriented set designer and scenic carpenter they had, who I would work closely with for the next couple of years.  She explained that besides Bob and David there where an entire group of other people that helped out – often in dual roles.  She gave me a tour of Megaw, explaining about the stage, lighting booth, etc. I recall her desire to have a curtain – something that would be installed several years after our initial arrival. We wrapped up after about an hour or so and she told me to come back and meet Bob and start helping out if I was still interested. During our initial session Syd told me all about the Theatre and key people, but she never explained to me exactly what she did. This would become apparent to during the next five years that I was in contact with her and the Megaw.

During the spring of `75 I showed up at Megaw one weekend and recall Sydney graciously introducing me to everybody. It was a time when they where building out the set for ‘Kiss Me Kate’ - that years spring musical production. Initially all my time was spent, helping with odds and ends of set building. Later it was hanging and focusing lights with Bob. Recall not quite understanding Syd’s role in all this but remember seeing her ether painting something or washing something during my first working visits.

After a few working days, Syd, I guess had spoken to Elaine and Bob about my interests, and she asked me if I could run the lights for the “Kiss Me Kate” production. Being all of 18, enthusiastic, having absolutely no musical theatre experience, I agreed to the job. Worst still, at that age, I was not familiar with my own eye condition that would indeed make it impossible for me to see what others where able to pick up. Well, it turned out the decision for me to be the lighting operator on this show was a very big mistake. During the dress rehearsals I could not make lighting transitions flow with the music, nor could certain subtle cues given in the dark be picked up. After about a week of dress rehearsal frustration (and Elaine yelling at me ☺) a change was in order. The afternoon before opening Syd and Elaine called me in the office privately and informing me I was no longer doing the main light operation for the show. Instead they asked me to operate a little make shift follow spot. Elaine was quite busy with all sorts of stuff and after the news was given left immediately, however, Sydney and I sat in that office for an hour or so talking about it. Cannot recall the details of our talk, but as a frustrated, angry, disappointed young man, I do recall Sydney calming me in preparation for the task at hand.

Almost without glitch Syd and I operated dual make shift follow spots that evening and for next eight weeks (or whatever it was) on Kiss Me Kate. Following this production, as she had suggested in our conversation, I ran lights and sound for various other plays to the point of being board with the job.

Syd telling me years later how proud she was of my work.

Persistence and adapting to changing roles….

Syd doing odd jobs, cleaning restrooms, stage managing, painting sets, and producing was her main job.

Syd teaching me ushering.   Dealing with people with egos

Syd directed a series of one acts and I designed the lighting.

Repurposing learned and filling odd jobs

Recall installing that electrical patch panel in the lighting booth at Megaw and then I spent hours wiring the thing up. And Syd was really concerned that I was not doing the correct thing so she quietly asked Gary Montgomery (our lightning equipment supplier and another lighting designer) to check out my work.

Demonstrated later is my life:

Like Dave Lukas both Syd and Elain have also taught me about persistence and working terribly hard.

Cal Poly Senior Project inspired by the Theatre

Repurposed an old appollo 11 antenna mount for VLBI

Dealing with the talent at WB and similar egos at JPL/Caltech on various programs

How did this all place me into developing the MSL software tool?