

## Tracy Conway

*"Almost Live!" performer, writer, 1989-1999. Interviewed in person June 1, 2024.*

"There were people who never had any goal of being an actor and were working at the [KING] TV station or were maybe an intern, but sometimes they were really the perfect delivery of a line, like a really great sketch that Bill Stainton wrote and was featured in it, 'Simile School.' 'Busy as a bee.' 'Slippery as a--'?" "Bee?" She was perfect. I think she was an intern. We would go around and say, "We need people to make up a classroom. Can you spare this person for 25 minutes?"

[The 1989 Space Needle collapse sketch was your entry to the show. Michael Schauer mann played the anchor. He's no longer living.] "That's true. Michael and I were actors. I was a theater actor and trying my damndest to get paying work, which is a challenge in Seattle, but I was in the HR department, so that's how they found me. Everybody has to go through HR for something, and I was in the Seattle theater community at that time, and I guess it's still like that. You work with someone, and somebody knew Nancy's husband Joe [Guppy], and they got to chatting, and they said, 'Y'know, there's an actress who's just working to pay the rent, but if you ever need somebody, she's the HR secretary right now,' so that's how Joe found me. I actually shot something, a sketch for him that hadn't aired yet, and then this Space Needle thing came up, and so they were holding that other sketch to find when was a good time to slot it in in the next month or so.

"Michael was also a trained actor, and somebody knew him, and they went, 'Y'know, Michael would be a great look, and we want people they won't recognize as 'Almost Live!' cast.' So that's how both of us were chosen. Either John [Keister] or Bill [Stainton] came down and asked my boss, 'Can we grab Tracey to do a man on the street? We're just going to do it in front of the building and take 10 minutes,' because it's a man on the street. It'd be the same as catching any man on the street. It wasn't perfect camera or lighting, just put a mic in her face. And they told me, 'This is a bit that we're going to do. We're going to say that the Space Needle falls over for April Fool's Day, and we want you to be the person who just saw it happen.'

[Did they give you a script?] "Well, not a script. I'm pretty sure it was Bill who was coaching me through this part of it. He basically said to say, 'I looked up, and I saw it swaying, and then it just went over,' and to just kind of go with that. Of course, in TV you don't go too big because I'm trained for theater, and people were always telling me, 'You're great, take it down a little bit,' so I took it down and did one take, and Bill said, 'We've got a great one.' He said, 'Do it one more time and just give me a little more upset and energy,' and that's the one they used: 'I just looked up, it was swaying, and it was like the bottom got kicked out of it, you wouldn't believe it!' He said, 'That's it,' and I was back at work.

"None of us had any idea of what was going to happen when that aired that night. I wasn't there. In fact, I don't think I'd ever been to the show. I just was excited to get something to do, to put on my reel at that time, because you never got paid to do these things. They were just fun.

[You didn't see it?] "I might have because I knew I was going to be in it. I probably tuned in and watched it at home. [The collapsed Space Needle looked pretty real.] Yeah, now you look at it, and you think, 'Oh god, how did they believe that?' But come on, we didn't have high-definition TV. It was plausible. [So you think you tuned in.] I don't remember watching it, but I'm vain enough, 'Hey, I'm going to be on TV,' of course I'm watching it.

[Then all hell breaks loose. Phone calls, national news. John talks about big trouble.] "It absolutely now is a prank legend, not at the level of 'The War of the Worlds,' but a local legend of it. People know because the Space Needle's an icon. But no, it was not good for quite a while. It really took for the Space Needle to come around and say, 'We just got a lot of fantastic publicity' before it was kind of hushed down. And at the station, they were going to cancel the show. It was very serious.

"But for me because I wasn't part of the cast at that time and I wasn't hanging out with them, I didn't know, really, how bad it was. He had to make an apology? Woah! I figured people would figure it out. It had a little buzz, but if you have it on in the background and you're half paying attention. [And it's opening a show that you don't expect to be there because it's usually 'Lifestyles of the Rich & Famous.'] Exactly, whereas, I don't think 'Almost Live!' had anywhere near the viewership of Lifestyles of the Rich & Famous, not at that time.

[It put the show on the map.] “I haven’t really thought of it that way, but yes, it got people talking about the show for sure, and people were, ‘Maybe I should take a look at this.’ [John credits you with it going over so well because you were so realistic.] I appreciate that.

[What happened for you afterwards?] “It was more gradual. It wasn’t set up for ‘Here’s a really good actress, we could use her in a lot of places.’ You had to write to be on the show. That season had to end, and we had to find out if it was going to get picked up for another year. At that point, it was at the end of the season. I got snagged every once in a while when they needed a wife or something they knew [I would fit]. That was April, going into that fall of 1989.

“I was still doing theater work when I could and had two really awful things happen in my personal life. My brother suddenly died, and that kicked off something in my father, and a few months later my father died of leukemia. When he’d become so seriously ill, I’d gone back to New Mexico for my brother’s service to be there for that, and then I came home, and my sister was saying dad was not doing well, They had shouldered everything, so I had to think that I’m just going to take care of dad for however long. So I packed up my Siberian Husky, I quit my job, and I told my housemate at that time, I’m just going to take Tasha and go and be there as long as I need to be there. Unfortunately, my father did not last long at all. It was maybe two weeks. Then we went through all the processes of wrapping things up.

“I’m 33 years old, I’m almost 10 years out of my MFA [drama] program. It didn’t work for me in Los Angeles. I’m struggling, I get cast, but I can’t make a living. Am I going to be one of those people who just struggles forever? Even though I thought I was a good actor, it was terrible. I decided I’m going to see if KING will take me back as a temp, and I’m going to apply for work at NPR and other places that I’d done side jobs in LA. So that’s what was going on in the spring. I’d been back temping at KING for months. I sat at the news desk for a while, took viewer calls about tips, and I was all over the building.

“At some point, Bill or John, I can’t remember which one it was, came and said, ‘Hey, we really like working with you,’ because they would grab me occasionally to do sketches. ‘You get with the guys. A big part of it is your personality. We think you’re a great actor, you’ve got a lot of variety.’ A big part of it was, do you fit with the chemistry of the show. It’s surprising, it really was one of the most important things. We were small, we had to do all of it, and ‘we need you to be able to write. Do you think you could write a sketch?’ Well, I know I can write, I got to graduate school, and I had a good sense of humor, but I’d never written a sketch. So that really intimidated me, and I continued to apply for other jobs while I was thinking about this. ‘Oh, we’re just checking back with you. We’re going to have to make a decision fairly soon.’ And I had friends say, ‘Are you out of your mind? You would be not a temp, not a secretary anymore, you would be acting. Just try.’ And so I slaved away at home trying to come up with some parodies of ‘Thelma & Louise.’ At that point, I felt I was supposed to bring the female point of view to the show, and I changed my point of view on that as time went on. Y’know, it was like, whatever’s funny. You don’t have to be the voice of femininity or feminist or anything.

“I wrote four or five things and wrote a few jokes for the John Report, and I turned them in Friday to Bill Stainton, like ‘OK, I did it, whatever.’ And on Monday he said, ‘We want to hire you.’ They just wanted to know was I teachable. ‘Can we take her, use her the way we need her, and oh, she does have a good sense of humor. We can work with her.’ So that’s how it happened.

“It was a very gradual process from the time that I saw the Space Needle fall over to me joining the cast the fall of 1990. A year and a half. Somebody has to either leave and go to L.A. or die for there to be a spot open to have enough money to offer somebody a spot on the show.

“My friends used to ask, ‘Oh, my gosh, I’d love to audition,’ and there’s no such things. They just don’t have auditions. And then we wanted to bring in my people of color, because we were being looked at as, ‘You’re awfully white.’ First it was ‘You’re awfully male,’ and now it was ‘You’re awfully white.’ And we were, but not because we were trying to be that way. We just had a lot of restrictions on us. And it was hard to say, ‘We’re going to fire you so we can get a black woman.’ I say that very blithely but it sounds awful. We tried to really hard to get people who had the right chemistry, who would bring the right skills and would be happy there. And a lot of times, you’d find somebody and you’d think this is going to be great, and they would be great, and they’d be off, they’d get an offer to go to L.A., and they’d be off.

[It was the day of fledgling internet.] “Exactly. Now you can do it on your phone. You can do it wherever you want. We are of a very interesting generation that grew up with a wired telephone, a TV you had to get up and go change the channel, we had radio in our cars. Those people who were musicphiles, audiophiles, they got the eight-track tapes in the car and all that. You think what we have witnessed, probably nothing compared to someone who grew up throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, but for us, my gosh, what we’ve adapted to. It’s funny how it has completely altered businesses, killed businesses, magazines. I really wonder. I don’t know if it’ll be in our lifetime, but I wonder when the pendulum will swing back.

[When the show was canceled in 1999, some said it was for KING to add internet staff.] “We had to remove seven people from the building somewhere, and where can we just take seven people. I don’t know what the truth is about any of that.

[Did other cities have this kind of a show?] “No, I don’t think any did. I honestly don’t think there was. The way I base that is not because I was in that end of the business, or if we had competition, which we didn’t. There was nothing. Nothing! J.P. Patches was totally entertaining but not the same thing at all. Evening Magazine has had amazing longevity and really talented people, and Jim Dever is a phenomenal talent. He could have been on ‘Almost Live!’ for his timing chops, but Evening is also apples and oranges. There was nothing like what we were doing at all.

[How you came here.] “I moved here in 1986, and I fell in love. I came and visited a friend, I grew up in New Mexico, I had my six years in L.A., I was struggling in L.A., it was the most giant town of all. I had a theater friend, a director, who said, ‘Come visit me, there’s a really cheap airfare,’ and I came up in October when it was raining and as different from L.A. as it could possibly be, and I deeply fell in love with this city, and then a few months later her housemate was getting married and moving away, and she said, ‘I’ve got half a house, why don’t you come here and live for a few years and see if you like it better? And I did. So I moved up here. It had been rough.

[Why came to West Seattle.] “My best friend lives here. She and her husband, he’s from Anacortes and ended up in Pomeroy, going to high school there, they were high-school sweethearts and eventually wanted to get out of there, and they moved over. I don’t know how they found West Seattle to start with, but they had been here for a few years. The house that I was sharing with my theater friend was on a number of ‘Almost Live!’ sketches. We would shoot at Steve [Wilson]’s house and at my house because we were the single people on the show and didn’t have spouses and children who were going to get disrupted. So the house we were living in needed to be sold, the landlord had passed away, and the kids wanted to pick up the money, so I had to move, and my friend said, ‘Think about West Seattle, it’s an easy commute to KING,’ because she was also at KING, that’s how I met her, and I’ve been in this house, which I do not own, I rent, for 30 years. Isn’t that crazy? It’s crazy that I’m still allowed to stay and rent it. I adore this place.

[The bridge closed during COVID.] “I had to have heart surgery during that period. We survived it, but it was not easy.

[Did you know you had heart problems before collapsing on the show?] “I did. In high school before you go to college you get a wellness exam, my dad being in the military, we were treated in military hospitals, but by this time we had switched over, whoever the doctor was said, ‘You have a heart murmur, don’t be upset about it, they’re common,’ and then we remembered my brother also had one. He was in the Army Reserve, so I’m sure that’s when they discovered his. At some point, I came home to Albuquerque when I was still living in L.A. I lost my mom to breast cancer in 1981, so when I would come home to visit my family I would go to the regular doctor.

"I'm at USC for graduate school, I was living with my boyfriend, and I went to the student health center. I went to have a checkup to get birth-control pills, and the doctor at the student health clinic listened to my heart for a long time and said, 'Ms. Conway, I'm just not comfortable giving you birth-control pills because I'm picking up a lot of extra and skipped beats, and it's something I just don't want to risk you with these.' His name cracked me up. Gynecology was his emphasis, and his name was Dr. Flesh. He said I needed to get a full cardiology workup, so when I went back to New Mexico, I saw the family cardiologist, and they made me check into the hospital for a couple of days to check the medication. I could not believe they made me do that. But then they decided, 'Yes, we are picking up a lot of extra beats, we're going to put you on a beta blocker.'

"So I had been on a beta blocker since the age of 24, and then I was 38 when it happened (collapsing on the 'Almost Live!' stage in 1995). So 14 years I'd been on it, and I'd gone to a specialist after my brother died suddenly from a fatal heart incident. I did a treadmill test and all that kind of thing. But when I had my cardiac arrest and survived, I wanted to know more about it because I was being asked, 'Could you do some programs trying to get the word out that heart disease is a bigger danger to women than cancer, even ahead of breast cancer?' I said, 'I get it, I lost my mom to breast cancer. But I wanted a lot of information because I figured people would ask me questions.'

"So I requested my files from when I originally went in to have all of it electrically analyzed, and when the files came to me, I laughed. Obviously, I was going to die. It was just right there in the cards, because the doctor who took care of me early on and the person who took over when I was in the hospital, the two physicians who worked with me — the first one, his last name, was spelled Croke and the other one was spelled Uhl, so in the file it said, 'Uhl-Croke' ['You'll croak.'] And I did. I fell right in line with what they said.

[Nothing like this had happened before that?] "Oh, yeah, but not that I ever thought, 'This is something that I could actually die (from).' I'd passed out before, a couple times. I didn't know what it was. You're an idiot, you just think, 'I was working out too hard, I didn't have enough water, I didn't have enough electrolytes, blah blah blah blah blah. No, no, no, NO!' Eventually, I had an episode my heart could not correct. It happened once in an aerobics class, and I had it happen when I had the flu. I was back in Albuquerque, I was in the kitchen, I was taking a drink, I was pouring a glass of orange juice, and suddenly I realize I'm leaning over on the dishwasher, and how did that happen? My heart rhythm must have gone out long enough that I didn't get enough oxygen to my brain, and then it connected, and I came to.

"That is what I've learned can happen, that your heart can get out of rhythm enough that it can't get it back fixed, and the only thing that will do it is defibrillation, where they stop your heart and allow the natural pacing to try and kick in again.

[The collapse onstage was when after the end of the show when everybody was waving.] "Yes. [Is this on film?] No, dammit. No. We'd said goodbye, the camera stopped rolling, and John always would say, 'Hey, we're just going to do a real quick check to make sure everything's on the tape before we leave. Does anybody have any questions?' So the camera operators are starting to coil up their cables and things, and I turn to Bob Nelson — I don't remember any of this, I don't remember any of that whole day or the next four or five days — but apparently I turned to Bob because I was next to him and said, 'I don't feel so good,' and I just went down. Unfortunately that's not on tape because that would be really wild. But I heard from many people who witnessed it that it happened. Crazy. I'm so blessed, I'm not religious, but a young, very strong firefighter in the audience just knew. 'She's turning blue, that could be a heart problem.' John, when he turned around to see what was going on behind him, 'Oh, she's fainted,' so he got down to look at me, and I'm going grey at this point. He said, 'Look, I'm not kidding. I know we just spoofed "ER" tonight with "ERR," but no, I'm really serious, something's very wrong with Tracey. Does anybody have medical training?' This kid, just stood up and said, 'I'm a volunteer firefighter,' and John said, 'Get down here,' so he came down, he did the whole thing, checked my pulse, they called 911, and he started CPR.

"It's been explained to me that the reason I probably survived with good brain activity is I got really strong CPR before I got shocked. If you really 'prime the pump' of the chest-compression process to begin with, before you defibrillate, it helps. And he was probably on me in less than a minute. But I had to be shocked. Six times.

"It doesn't haunt me. [Maybe just put it out of your mind sometimes?] For a long time I did because I was in really good shape when it happened, and that was another reason I was able to survive so easily — well, not easily. I was at Harborview for four days, and then they sent me to the UW [University of Washington]. I needed an implantable defibrillator because they didn't know why this happened, it could happen again. But I was back on the show in two weeks. Insane.

[Other than your memory blanking, you were still yourself.] "I was. When I was still unconscious, my family and friends were warned, 'We don't know what's going to happen. She may have personality change. She may have significant memory loss.' Turned out, I was back to myself completely within a week to 10 days. But in terms of how I looked at it, I felt pretty good, and I was so surrounded by support that it was kind of easy to say, 'That awful thing happened, but I feel OK, they're telling me I'm doing well, so get back to your normal life. That's what they want me to do, and that's what I'm going to do.' With the caveat, 'We don't know why your heart went into V-Fib, so we want you to always have a defibrillator because it could happen to you again at any time.'

"That [the onstage collapse] was best-case. If this had happened to me 20 minutes later, I'd have been in a car driving home, and I could have not only died myself but also killed someone else.

"It is scary if I do get that feeling, 'Oh, I think I'm going to pass out.' So far, every time, if I just take a deep breath, it passes. But I always know there is the chance that my heart has gone into a rhythm that's so dangerous that my device is built to detect. If it goes too long and too fast, I'm going to get a shock, whether I'm conscious or not. So I've been pretty relaxed about it.

"I've always had a Siberian Husky since I've lived in Seattle, and we walk a lot. In December 2021, I was going around the block, and I really couldn't quite catch my breath. My electrophysiologist told me, 'Your mitral valve is still stable, but as time goes on, we're going to have to think about repairing or replacing that. I was like, 'OK, what'll be the signs?' 'You'll know. You'll be short of breath.' And I thought, 'Oohhh, OK.' And sure enough [eventually] that's exactly what happened.

"[I started] my speaking career when 'Almost Live!' came to an end. I worked my own business. I haven't been under any corporation. For two years, I was a spokesperson for Valley Medical Center, and I built into my contract, 'You have to do enough to TV and radio ads to qualify me for health care through AFTRA,' and when that ended, 'OK, I'm going to have to be on an independent contract for insurance,' and it was getting insanely expensive, just crazy. That's when my doctor said, regarding my need for mitral-valve surgery, 'Hang in there. Let's get you to Medicare age.'

"When I turned 65, I said, 'I can go now!' and I was very fortunate, but in 2022 it was at the height of COVID, so I had to put off my surgery for a week because they couldn't get enough surgical staff to cover everything they had to do. That was the first time I really felt vulnerable. Because I had no memory of the [1995 onstage] trauma, it's like it didn't really happen. But for the surgery, I had done everything dutifully that they'd told me to do. And now that I've gone through it, mitral-valve surgery recovery is much harder than dying.

"I'm not haunted by it in that I worry about it all the time. Having lost my mom, my brother and my dad and, very close to that same time, an early boyfriend to AIDS, losing other people and dogs that I love was so much harder for me than thinking about dying myself. And that has continued to be the hardest part of my life, having to say goodbye.

"I realized when I was alone in the hospital, that was the hardest part. That was the big lesson for me, because it was the height of COVID. Two of my siblings I've lost to cancer and heart disease, and I'm the baby of the family, and my older sister couldn't come due to her own fragile health. My dear friend here in West Seattle took me to the hospital early the morning of my surgery, dropped me off outside and gave me a hug. They had to be in touch with the medical team by phone. I was in the hospital for a week. That was hard because they were understaffed, although the people were great who took care of me, but I was alone in a frickin' hospital in the ICU, and you're just there. You don't feel good. You're emotional, you hurt, even though you're on pain medication. Your heart is still doing weird things. That was much harder than my cardiac arrest. So I am a little more vulnerable now than I was when I was actually gone for a while.

"[In 1995], I was clinically dead. I wasn't biologically dead, but clinically dead. But this one, I have a different appreciation, trying to shore up what I can and be there for people who love me.

[Early women's roles on 'Almost Live!'] "I knew a couple of women who did some stuff. They had other jobs at KING, and they'd get pulled in, and I knew them because I was in HR. I was in the catbird seat when they asked me to join the show. For two years, I got to be the only woman, and if they needed someone else they'd bring them in, but I got all the plum parts.

"And so when Nancy [Guppy] came back [in 1992] to do Comedy Central with us, we were very warm and open to each other, but it was also that she'd been kind of the main woman and then I was the main woman. It was like, 'OK, we're going to share now.' It was never like, 'You girls go do stuff together.' It was never that. But they thought, 'Maybe you guys want to come up with something and brainstorm together.' I welcomed that because I knew performing was my strength, but with writing, I had some home runs, but most of the time my stuff went in the dirt or went foul, and I was willing to live with, 'That's not why I'm here, but I do have a good sense of humor, and I'm certainly strong enough that they're never after me.' Nobody asked me to leave, so I knew I was valuable. But Nancy was a true writer. I would have enjoyed working with her, but she had worked with her husband [Joe] as a team, and I think she was really eager just to write on her own. I had to realize, 'OK, we'll work together, but we're not going to write together. We're very different types. I like to play things off type. She likes to play things off type. Let's just let each other have as much leeway as possible.' She wrote some fabulous things for me, very generous.

"As an actor, you bring some of your personality. Nancy is a firecracker, fearless. And I would do anything they would ask me to do. She trained as an actor, too, but not the way I did. With my theater training, I liked to lean on much more traditional theater, thinking about a character and subtleties. It was hard for me because I could play either really subtle or broad because I've done a lot of onstage work. So for me, the challenge was, 'OK, you can't think too much, comedy moves fast.' As an actor, I love getting to get in there and be all indulgent, and that just didn't work. I had to go with instinct, and if they like it, don't ask for another take because we don't have time.

With Nancy, one of our favorite pieces we did was the 'Classic Conversation,' a conversation between two women who were friends, and they haven't seen each other in forever, and the one [me] is trying to break it to her that I've married your father. We loved that because we got to play very realistic, and yet the comedy was so outrageous. But that was rare when you got to do things like that. On that level, she's a wonderful actor. But she is so willing to go angry and crazy in a way that was hard for me. Playing 'Worst Girlfriend in the World,' it was hard for me to be so cold and bitchy. We would do a take, and John, it was his bit, he'd say, 'That's good. Give me more. Be worse,' that sort of thing. 'You're being too nice, Tracey. You've got to be crueler.'

[What sketches you love best?] "I loved doing the 'Classic Conversations' because they were realistic, just as an actor. It was really fun to do those. One piece that Nancy wrote that I just adore all three of us in [with Bob Nelson], it's called 'New Boyfriend.' Bob is so funny and underplayed in that and is the victim of two very intense moments in that piece. Of course, I loved 'Worst Girlfriend,' I loved getting to play her, but it was hard. It was not an easy thing to do for me.

“Most of the ones that bombed shouldn’t have been on the air. We had to fill a half an hour, and you just didn’t have ‘A’ material all the time. They would approve sketches of mine that I didn’t think were that great because we needed another two-minute piece at the end of the show. I don’t even want to name them because some of them are so bad. So bad.

“But there is a favorite. It will fall into all kinds of categories that I don’t know that people now would think was appropriate or even funny, but it was meant with such love when I did it, which was the spoof of ‘The Patty Duke Show,’ called ‘The Patty Dyke Show.’ As an actor it was fun because I got to play two characters like she got to do. I got to have all this great screen time with Pat [Cashman], who was unique and brilliant and such fun to play with.

“The whole point was that, ‘Gosh what a cool woman,’ that he stopped seeing her as a girl girl. She was a cool person he wanted to spend time with, and she was surprised by the same thing. She really had a good time with him. And I feel like, isn’t that the goal? Aren’t we supposed to spend time together and talk together and realize, ‘Hey, I really like you,’ and not get hung up on a word that might be, to some, offensive. One of my very best friends all through high school and college, she came out, and — I’m straight, she’s lesbian —we continued to be the dearest of friends. I lost her during COVID. Terrible, terrible thing. But she thought it was hilarious. She said, ‘I thought you made a really cute dyke.’ The word was OK between us, and it never occurred to me that because I’m straight maybe I’m not supposed to be using that word and using it in a way that involves humor. That kind of breaks my heart because it really was coming from a place of love.

“I feel like we should put together a quick montage of could not be done today: the ‘Lame List,’ ‘The Patty Dyke Show,’ ‘Roscoe’s Oriental Rug Emporium,’ saying ‘fag’ in ‘East Side Story,’ ‘Billy Quan’ written by a white guy. The people who loved Billy Quan the most were in the Asian community.

“Bob [Nelson] is the genius of the show, by far. The writing, and the big juicy cherry on the top was what a unique and strong performer he was. He was there a year before me. The writer, it was clear. When you contrast it with his personality, you wouldn’t call him a milquetoast, but he’s the nicest person, writes the craziest, darkest, funniest stuff. ‘Middle Management Suckups,’ ‘Yelling at Whores.’ ‘Wally Hoaglund, Crappy Cult Leader.’

“He wrote a sketch where we played a couple, and he wanted to come talk about the relationship. ‘You love me?’ ‘No.’ ‘You like me?’ ‘I’ll have to think about that.’ The performance on both of our parts is so good. I’m not articulate enough to describe his skill. He has so much personal heart. He was nominated for an Oscar for writing ‘Nebraska,’ which is a combination of heartbreaking and laugh-your-ass-off funny. They’re out there on the tracks looking for a denture. ‘It’s not mine.’ There’s so much truth to it, but the absurdity. Bob has a special place in my heart.

[Multi-generational appeal of ‘Almost Live!'] “People say, ‘I watched it with my parents.’ I do think there is an appetite for it. I do think that people like getting together as an audience. I do think that there’s hope for something like this. But how do you reach the people amidst all the other things? I hate to think that it will all just sort of disappear.

“I adored the movies of the 1930s that my parents told me about. I couldn’t wait to see Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, 40 years ago.

“But I don’t know that the DEI’ers, that they will allow people to laugh at some of the stuff that we were doing. What do they think the court jester was, for god’s sake? I understand that there has to be gallows humor in emergency rooms and to some degree with police. That’s how we cope with a lot of bad things. I’m not saying I’m better than you. I’m just pointing out I’m different from you, and we all make mistakes.

[Without 'Almost Live!'] "I wouldn't have had my second career as a heart advocate. I would have died. I ended up fulfilling my dream of what I wanted to be since I was a teenager performing in plays. All I wanted to be was a working actor. It took me until I was 33 years old. I never dreamt of being a writer. It was stressful but a joy when it worked. I never thought I would end up on sketch comedy show. On 'Almost Live!' I had my talent recognized. It was beyond my dreams, actually having an ongoing job. I spent four years in TV City trying to get work, then was frustrated, and I came to Seattle and ended up on a TV show for 10 years. I was supposed to be here. I will be forever grateful and beyond fond for my time there."