

JEAN PICKER FIRSTENBERG: It's a real treat for me to be able to sit up here this afternoon after doing what I think is the most fun thing to do in the daytime: go to the movies. My father was an exhibitor, and he saw two movies every day and when he came home at night all I would say is, "What did you see today? What was it like and did you like it?" And that's all we talked about at dinner. So, whenever I can see a movie in the afternoon I consider it an absolute treat. Seeing a movie like *Clueless* is just a delight because it captures so many things about our culture and our society and gives us such an extraordinarily entertaining experience. And, so, it's a great pleasure to welcome an AFI graduate, Amy Heckerling.

Amy and I are not close friends, but I know enough about Amy to know that she is very gracious to be here because she really doesn't like to do this. So we can be very, very informal. We're going to make her as comfortable as possible. And, I'm so full of this film, but I was wondering if you could help us go back a little bit in your career as we start. When we were chatting in the Library, you were saying you'd been around for 20 years, and you know what it's like to be a director and a writer in this town. But tell us a little bit about your voyage, and how you came to this profession, and why you wanted to make movies and tell stories and give us a little bit of you, if you will.

AMY HECKERLING: Oh!

JPF: Surprise.

AH: That's a hard one. Well, let's see. I come from the Bronx, and I couldn't stand the schools that I was in. Then we moved to Queens, which was equally hideous. I used to draw and watch movies and daydream. The idea of going to high school with these characters I had known my whole life was just beyond awful, so I wanted to get out of the neighborhood, I wanted to get away from the people I knew, and I went to art school in Manhattan. New York has special programs. There are high schools that specialize in art, music and acting, so I was fortunate to get into the High School of Art and Design. Then, everything was changed; it just all clicked in. Everybody there wanted to be something specific; they wanted to paint, they wanted to do stage scenery. Everybody was 14 or 15, but they were directed. I felt so much better in a place like that. And I had an English teacher, and she really encouraged me. So, I found myself writing these little stories, just on my own, and showing them to her secretly and she was always very supportive. One day, we had to write compositions on what we wanted to do. I wrote mine on why I wanted to be a writer for *Mad* magazine, and the boy next to me wrote his on why he was going to be a movie director. And I thought, "Wait a minute. Movie director is for big shots; people in Hollywood. Who told you *you* could be a movie director?" I was just so jealous, and I guess it started to dawn on me that that was what I wanted to do.

JPF: So high school was sort of the defining moment. I'm going to come back later to other chapters, but *Clueless* is a movie that I asked Amy about in February. She was here for a Third Decade Council seminar on motion pictures, and it was on comedy and motion pictures. And Garry Marshall gave the keynote address, and the panel was

incredible. It was Garry Shandling, John Landis, Ron Underwood, Bonnie Tucker and her partner who wrote the *Brady Brunch*, and they come from *Saturday Night Live*. And there were a couple of others. It was an incredible panel. And I said to Amy, "How's your new movie?" and she said, "Silly." I'm not sure about that, but that was February and you were still editing it.

AH: We kept it silly, but people would say, "What's your movie about?" And I'd go, "It's about a really beautiful stupid girl." And they'd go, "Oh, great. Sounds like a hit."

JPF: What were your feelings about the film when it was finished, but before it came out?

AH: They changed the release date, so that was a very, very small chink of time, fortunately, for me to ...

JPF: So you didn't have to suffer long?

AH: I've been there. *Look Who's Talking* was put on the shelf for half a year. And, so, I had a long time to agonize.

JPF: Were you pleased with the film you made?

AH: I haven't seen it since I finished it. I just remember the last thing was that we had no money to do anything interesting with the credits, and that's where my involvement was last. So I haven't really thought about it since that particular problem.

JPF: How did you react to the reaction? To audiences, to critics?

AH: What I really enjoyed was I got good reviews and so it was, wow. I mean, who ever thought that a movie about teenage girls called *Clueless* would be taken so seriously?

JPF: A silly movie. And that surprised you.

AH: That knocked me over. Yeah.

JPF: Alright. Let's open it up and let the audience participate in this.

Q: There are echoes of *Emma*, Jane Austen's work. Did you think about that in advance of writing it or did you not think about it?

AH: They are similar. The same exact structure. I had this character in my head, the girl, and the kind of things she was doing, saying and sort of the journey. I wanted to take her through. But I needed a strong plot, and I had read *Emma* in college. And, somehow, it came back to me, and I read it again and said, "This just lays out perfectly. This is just the most perfect structure for what this girl should go through." And when I would get stuck, when I would be at story meetings and they would say: "Well, this should be more this ... this ... there." And I would just re-read it and I would go: "No, this is what it should be."

And then, you could come back and say, "Maybe you're feeling this because of that, so what if I did this?" But it was all there in Jane Austen. It wasn't there in the studio meetings.

Q: Well, I've been flying around a lot lately, and everywhere I see a studio executive on an airplane reading Jane Austen, all because of you. [Laughter]

AH: Well, first of all, a number of things have happened. There's a couple of Jane Austen projects, one I think Hugh Grant is in. And then there's that whole thing now that she was a lesbian, so everybody's going, "Oooh, let's re-read that."

Q: As you describe your background, it sounds so different from this girl. How did you get the idea to make it about this kind of girl?

AH: There's just so much people want to know about Jewish girls from the Bronx and I think it's ...

JPF: And move to Queens, right?

AH: I think a lot of it has all been said. It's been said a lot. It's been said very well. I bore myself with my background. It seemed newer and fresher. I also have a 10-year-old daughter who is growing up here. And, after a while, you say there's just so much you can sit down and say, "Interior, candy store, Queens," where you're just going, "What am I talking about? I spend more time at the mall, maybe I should deal with that."

Q: You had some success in the past. How hard was it to get this movie going, especially without any real name actors?

AH: Well, this particular movie has a strange history because actually I went into the Fox network with an idea for a TV show and they said, "You know what? We don't want to do this. We don't want to do what you're talking about. We want you to do something about teenagers. We're tired of shows where people keep coming in and pitching us ideas about nerdy teenagers and we want to do something about the cool kids."

So I said, Well, I could deal with that if they're stupid. So I like went off and did this pilot for them and what came out of that was I sort of hit upon this character, this girl, that I really loved writing. And they read the pilot and they said, "This is great, we're going to pass." The movie, Fox Movies, bought the pilot from the TV company for me to develop as a film. And then I went back and read *Emma* and started to work out the structure. And then I kept having a lot of meetings at Fox where PCU had come out and they were a little uncomfortable with the whole idea of a bunch of young people doing anything in particular. But on top of that, they were really worried about girls being the main characters. They kept saying, "Let's see more about what the boys are doing. Let's see this boy in his home and this boy with his car and this boy doing this and that." And I said, "But this is an inner monologue in the girl's head, so what does her head know about what's going on with him at his house with his car?"

So I was really at odds with them and it wasn't working at all, and ultimately they put it in turnaround. Then it was sort of languishing and somebody showed it to Scott Rudin. There was a producer from Fox that was within Fox but he was on vacation, so he wasn't particularly selling it. So when Scott Rudin read it, he loved it, he comes into a meeting and says, "I want to do this," and everybody goes, "Okay, Scott," and so then it was done. Was that your question? So, yeah, it was kind of difficult.

Q: So how long did that process take?

AH: Well, let's see. The whole thing with writing and rewriting for Fox was over a year. You know, until you hand a script in, until this one reads it and loves it, they are going to show it to that one, that one's on vacation, okay, they're back, now they're going to read it on a plane, okay, now they're going to show it to the top guy, then he needs to think about it for a while, tells the other people--you're always 50 percent writing and 50 percent waiting.

JPF: As a writer, what's your structure? You write alone. How hard is that? How disciplined are you?

AH: Each day you sort of have to decide on certain problems to solve or certain things have come up that you think would work well somewhere. I do sit down and do it every night.

JPF: Night?

AH: Yeah. I do it at night. I know a lot of people get up, they have breakfast, they sit down and write for four hours, they have lunch and they write another three hours. And I'm going, "How the hell do they do that?" I sort of do it in my sleep, kind of. It's like the middle of the night, I'm watching David Letterman, I'm scribbling a little, I'm watching some videos, I guess I have to work on this scene, I do a few pages, I decide to re-read other stuff and then I go to sleep. And then it seems like there's a pile of yellow pages suddenly. I go, "There must have been elves here or something."

JPF: In addition to the Jane Austen structure, what was the primary research that you did into the character, into the contemporary scene?

AH: I could call it research. It's more like fun. Let's see. I went to Beverly Hills High School.

JPF: We have guessed that.

AH: There was one teacher there who taught debate, Mr. Hall, and he let me sit in his class a few times. And then through doing that, the kids would always come, "I'm in the drama club, you'll have to come see our play," and then you'd call them up and have these

long conversations where you ask them questions about their lives and they love to tell you.

JPF: How long did you do that for?

AH: I was doing that during the course of writing. By the way, this is Twink Caplan, our associate producer.

JPF: Twink, stand up. [Applause]

AH: Twink was very involved in this phase because she was finding the places where they would let me in.

JPF: Was it hard to get in? They knew of Amy?

AH: But, you know, finding skateboarding contests that would be within driving distance. To find the various places I wanted to go to see what I needed to see. Also, I watch MTV constantly.

JPF: That's your channel of choice?

AH: Yeah. But, you know, if you wind up just going to the places they go, watching the things they watch, reading what they read, you get a lot of background. But it's not like, oh my god, I'm doing a thing on coal miners striking in 1930, where am I going to find them? Just get off your butt and go to Judy's and stand by the closest group of girls talking. You hear a lot of stuff.

JPF: It was easy.

AH: It was easy. Way easy.

JPF: I'm not so sure about that. I think it's one thing to go there, it's another thing to hear and then be able to understand enough to convey it. Not for you?

AH: This one was fun for me.

Q: During the character's transition to realizing that she's clueless and then turning her life around, to a certain extent, were you ever tempted to place more of a burden on her shoulders as to what was going to happen, how her life was going to turn out? Because you had a delicate balance there.

AH: It's such a light movie that even if you want to say that she realizes that the world is not makeovers and materialism, how much do you want of the real life? Is she going to realize that people are being bombed in Bosnia? Is she going to worry about the ozone layer? How heavy can you get without ruining the lightness of the movie? And so you want her to wake up, in a way, but you don't want it to sort of put a brick on a balloon.

So I made up that arbitrary Pismo Beach disaster. Pismo Beach, it sounds funny, it sounds like a beachy place. Something happened there. We don't imply that anybody died. But they need things. So, the feeling is there without the heaviness of "Oh my god, the weather is changing, we all have to shut our air conditioners off or we're all going to die."

Q: I like the balance there.

AH: Yeah. That I had to keep real light and real fluffy.

Q: I wonder which filmmakers are your major influences and if you could compare yourself to them.

AH: No. You know, I love Marty Scorsese, Sidney Lumet, Sydney Pollack. I love Lina Wertmuller and Fellini. Some of my favorite movies, I couldn't even tell you who directed them. Like I love *Bye Bye Birdie* but I forgot who made it. I mean, obviously, I'm influenced by that one. What you love and appreciate doesn't always work for what you're doing.

Q: I was just curious. Did the actors and actresses really get into their roles and improvise much or was it fully scripted?

AH: The actor who played Josh, Paul Rudd, he had the kind of mind that could come up with funny lines that worked for his character. The other kids were pretty much following the script all the time. Although I do enjoy that, with people bringing funny lines that work for the movie. In this case, they're very young, very young actors and it just turned out that they weren't that type. Sometimes you do have actors that are good at that and are full of ideas. These people were just different kinds of actors.

Q: Also, you haven't seen the movie yet? Is that right?

AH: Well, I've seen it the whole time I was making it and when it was finished there was an MTV beach party. I was there. But I haven't looked at it since it was done. I spent the last year looking at it. Enough.

Q: As a writer and director, when you write, do you write thinking like a director or is that a separate thing for you?

AH: I'd imagine every writer see scenes in their heads, whether or not the director makes the movie exactly as it was in the writer's head. But I don't think anybody just writes down stuff without having a vision of how it plays.

Q: You wrote it knowing you were directing it. Is that a mindset you get into as a writer/director as opposed to what you might think if you knew you were just writing?

AH: I don't think I would do anything differently. Like, oh, maybe some genius will fix this for me? You try to make the best script you can. And, whether or not you know you're directing it or anybody is or it'll ever get made or whatever.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your AFI experience and what happened right after you got out of AFI and sort of how things progressed?

AH: Let's see. When I came here, there were very few people.

JPF: We talked about that this morning, the difference. Do you remember? What year was that?

AH: '75, '76? There were maybe 12 directing Fellows.

JPF: Probably under 50.

AH: Oh, yeah. More like 24.

JPF: Really.

AH: Because the directing Fellows were the most. And then there were some cinematographers and producers and writers. Jan Kadar was here, and he gave wonderful seminars, and then Slavco Vorkapich, who invented montages, gave a series of lectures. He was a tiny, tiny little guy in his 80s. And I don't know if you ever saw the Warner Bros. movies where the stock market is crashing and the money's building up and the people are running and the whole building collapses and it's all these shots all on top of each other. Anyhow, he was the guy who did those. So he gave a course here that was really wonderful on just how visual images go together and that was astounding. And Nina Foch was teaching acting. So it was pretty great.

JPF: But a very different environment now from then.

AH: Yeah. I mean I don't know what it's like on a day-to-day level, what you guys do. We were all very focused on getting to make a movie that would be your movie and did you get to do it or not and very competitive about that. Unlike you guys. Unlike this love-fest. So it was no more competitive within school than it was when we got out.

JPF: What happened? The next chapter after AFI. How hard was it for you?

AH: Actually, one of the Fellows, Jon Avnet, was working for a producer and he got me an assistant editing job. So while I was in school I was also synching up animal footage to animal sounds.

JPF: I didn't have that on your resume.

AH: *That's Entertainment* had come out, so they were going to do *That's Entertainment* with animal footage and my job was to take like a squawk and put it in the parrot's mouth and that kind of thing. So I was doing that. He got me that job which led to other assistant editing jobs, which led to editing. So that's sort of how I was making a living. It also paid for my AFI film. And then once I had the AFI film, I showed it. They'd have a screening of your film, and you tried to get industry people to come. You bothered everyone you knew to bother whoever they knew and from that I got an agent. So then I was going into the studios and pitching things. So it was a fairly smooth transition.

Q: Do you think the time you spent in the editing room was crucial for your directing? Without it, do you think it would have been harder to figure stuff out? Do you think it got you ahead?

AH: It's always been an important part to me. But possibly, I would have felt more comfortable on a set had I been working more on jobs where I was on a set all the time. I'm very comfortable writing and being in the editing room. I'm very nervous when I'm shooting. There are a lot of people and I have to talk to them. [Laughter] But possibly if I had been more of a PA and then worked my way up through directing programs or whatever I might have felt differently in that situation. I don't know.

Q: Those pitching sessions that followed, to me, is the thing I wanted hear about. How much was it important to you to be also a writer? Were you writing then? Were you pitching stuff?

AH: I was pitching stuff that I wanted to write. I mean otherwise I would not have had a job. But I suppose, based on having a student film, it might have been possible. I could have gotten into the various DGA programs and then worked my way through. Like Thom Mount had said: "Do you want to go watch Jack Klugman? They're shooting *Quincy*. Go hang out on the set and maybe you'll learn enough and you'll go direct some of those." But, instead, I wound up pitching things, so I went off and wrote. I was really going the route of writing and then if they liked the script they'd let me direct it. I didn't really start out directing smaller things, leading to bigger things.

Q: *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. How did you get started with that? That was originally a Cameron Crowe story or newspaper article?

AH: It was a book that Cameron wrote, a novel based on him going undercover in a high school for a year. I didn't meet him. I knew the producer who had seen my short film. And Thom Mount, who was at Universal at the time, had seen it and so he was trying to help me get in there to be one of his directors and when the script came in for *Fast Times* they showed it to me and I gave them notes and told them what I thought and we were all pretty much in agreement. So then they went and asked Ned Tanen and got the okay and then we did it.

Q: Is it still a cult high school film? Were the kids hip to *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*? Did that help them to open up to you? The kids you did the research with at Beverly Hills High.

AH: I guess so. I guess if you say the director of *Fast Times* wants to sit in your class it would be okay as opposed to some 40-year-old pervert wants to sit in your class. Maybe not. Yeah, I guess it helped.

Q: I wonder what you think directing is about?

AH: What is directing about? God!

JPF: That's a really heavy question.

AH: Directing what, though. Well, in this film, the decisions that I made are very different than what comes up in other films. To me, it was keeping the kids focused and having color schemes for the scenes and making sure that there was the proper coverage to get across whatever jokes or scenes or material we were dealing with that day, making sure we had everything before the sun went down. I guess you're looking for some sort of statement of what kind of interpretive art it is, but since I wrote it, I wasn't thinking, what does the writer mean? It was like, how much pink can I put in this scene? [Laughter]

Q: You kind of said how you did your first film, but I'm curious as a woman--you're doing what I would like to be doing, so tell me how to do that. [Laughter]

AH: I used to come to these lectures and various writers and directors would come and tell you how they did what they did but it was like, what am I going to do? Let's see. The reason I went to AFI in the first place was, I was coming out of NYU where they taught us a great deal, but we had these dicky little black-and-white eight-minute movies of people doing silly physical comedy in Washington Square Park. And, I said, "I'm not going to get a job based on this." And so I knew I needed a better calling card. I needed something to show to say this is what I do.

The movie that I got to make at AFI was a lot more professional. People were at a higher level. The materials and the equipment and the actors that you had access to, it was all many steps up. And so it was a matter of really polishing that small, little film that I was going to do to the most glossy thing to show people. For me that was very important. Other people were very intent on having a film and a script as a thing they would show. I was more thinking that I really wanted this one movie to be perfection and then have some ideas to follow it up with so if they said, "Okay, what do you want to do next?" I'd say, "Well I have an idea for a comedy with two women," and be able to have a pitch that I could work out. So that was what I did. And then when I had my AFI screening and various people who worked in different agencies or people who knew people who did would say, "Yes, I'll show it to so and so where I work." So then it was a matter of getting the film to these various people and then sitting down and having meetings and

not looking like a total schlemiel. And then they get you into the studio. So that was it. It really was based on this little 20-minute movie.

JPF: It's probably hard to admit that it was 1974.

AH: '74. Did you just look it up?

JPF: Yes, I looked it up. If that's right.

AH: I graduated college in '74, so it must have been when I came here, in '74.

JPF: So, 20 years later, how different do you think it is for these men and women coming out into this particular business climate? This particular decade, this sort of particular point in history or time, as a professional trying to carry a script, carry an idea, carry a film?

AH: I don't know how much that changes. What other programs and boulevards are available, ultimately, if you want to be a writer. Is that what you want to be?

Q: I'm in the screenwriting program here, but I have directed short films and I went to USC and art school in New York. So I'm kind of in the boat, except I'm not going to come out with a film after two years here because I'm in the writing program.

AH: So when you get into an office with studio executives, say, "This is my idea," and have them go, "Hmmm, we'll give you some money, go do it." I mean, that's not a very different situation than existed 20 years ago. What the idea is and what ideas they're open to changes constantly. But if you have material that you've already written that people are responding to so that an agent calls them up and says, "We have this kid fresh out of AFI, she's written this thing, it's wonderful, it won X and Y awards and she has an idea, you should hear it." I think there was just a lot of money paid to a high school student who wrote a script.

Q: *Kids*?

AH: No, not *Kids*. Something else. And so nobody's saying, "Oh, you're just students, get the hell out of here." In fact, it's possible that movies like *Clueless* and *Kids*, if they make money, then people are going, "Oh, we want to appeal to that young audience so we need the young writers and come on in." I don't think that what you have to do is all that different from what it was.

Q: I was wondering how you feel about *Kids*, especially since you grew up in New York City and you made a film about teenage life. And both films essentially treat the same subject.

AH: I read the script, and I haven't see the movie yet. I've been out of the country. But I really loved the script. While I was casting, he was shooting, so I called up Harmony, the

writer, and I said, "I love your script; we should meet," and we were going to but we both couldn't get away. But I thought the script was amazingly wonderful. I haven't seen the movie, but I imagine it's great. But it's the polar opposite of what I'm saying: Imagine a world where all people get along and have money and blacks, whites, gays, all love each other and go shopping together. And they're saying: Imagine a world where you have sex for the first time and you get a fatal disease. A very different movie. So, I think that it's great that it's out there. There is no comparison at all.

JPF: Can we stay with the casting issue, because obviously that was a very important part of this movie. Can you sort of describe how you do this very important aspect?

AH: That is the fun part. It's like you're going to have a party and you're figuring out whom to invite. I was writing the script, and I knew I wanted somebody new and wonderful who'd be beautiful and funny and be able to pull off this sort of oblivious quality and yet still be somebody you'd care about. And I saw the Aerosmith video where Alicia was bungee-cord jumping, and she was just so engaging. She's so beautiful and you just watch it and you go, "What's this little girl going to do next?" I just loved her. So once the movie was a go, we went through the process of seeing a lot of girls. But I knew I wanted her, and then I met with her and her manager and she had read the script and really liked it and in person I really loved her.

JPF: How old was she?

AH: She was 17 then. Now she's 18. So then it was dropped, then she had other jobs but we always knew we were going to catch up to each other. Then it was picked up at Paramount when the dates worked out with her dates, so we all made it work. From the time I saw her on-screen, that was who I wanted. And then the other people, it was the usual process.

JPF: Can you describe that, please?

AH: We had casting directors in Los Angeles. We also made trips to New York. We had everybody of that age group coming in. If anybody is in a play within that age group you rush out and see it. You're seeing all the movies where anybody is in that range, and then even some calls are out to the casting directors in other cities. You're getting tapes from Chicago or wherever. You start to shake loose all the people that don't seem to work and the few people that seem right, that seem talented and look right and get it and seem to form a nice connection with the others start to emerge.

And then you start mixing and matching, having them read with each other. I like to call people back a lot because sometimes somebody that you discount the first time starts to grow on you and other times people that just blow you away when you first see them, they seem to be repetitive, they don't bring anything new each time. It seems like they've blown their wad, you saw their little thing and that was it. Other people, as you start to talk to them or they do other scenes or whatever, you just realize there are a lot more

colors. So it changes, and you do have to see them a lot, I think. Especially with young people.

JPF: How difficult was it to direct young actors?

AH: I love it. They're so gung-ho. They're so willing to try anything. There's something wonderful about people who are happy to be in a movie. That sounds stupid, but when you say, "We're doing a scene in the classroom and, if you like, you could also be in that class. You won't have lines." "Yeah, yeah, I'll be there!" It's just so energizing when people around want to be doing what they're doing.

JPF: Have you had experiences over the films you've made where you've had tension on the set?

AH: Yeah.

JPF: How do you learn to deal with those pressures?

AH: I'm not real good with dealing with it. I did one movie that I never tell people I did, *European Vacation*. It was just horrible because we'd hop from one country to another to another and in every place the crew was new. They didn't care about us, they didn't care about the project. And the lead actor, Chevy Chase, I guess it wasn't the most artistically challenging role for him, so he was a little less than enthusiastic about the entire thing. Anytime you go to a place where you say, okay if we can shoot in front of this monument we could do this, and then if we build a this or a that we could do a joke about blah blah. And then you come back on the day you're supposed to shoot, and then they've put everything in scaffolding. And you go, well, what happened? And suddenly everybody needs bribes, but nothing's going to change. And you say, "Well, what am I supposed to shoot here?" And they say, "Go write something new before the sun goes down." You can't believe it's going on and you say, "Thirty-four more days, and it'll be over." It's just, "I'll just get this shot and then I'll do that." Just going minute to minute, and you hate everything. I've been in those situations.

Q: You said that a producer had developed *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. Could you talk about your relationships with various producers and how they've evolved?

AH: In that situation, it was my first movie, and Art Linson was the producer. He was very protective. He felt like I was right for the material. The ideas that I had and the way I worked with the camera, it seemed like he appreciated that. And then they'd show me a board and say, "Can you do it in 35 days and here's the board?" And I'd go, "What's a board?" Really very paternal and walked me through things. "You can do this with 100 extras?" And I'm going, "Gee that's a lot of people. Okay, I can do that." And he was really wonderful. He just kept me believing that I could do it.

Then I've worked with other producers where it wasn't as warm and cozy. There was one producer on a movie who thought that the script was hysterical and anytime an actor

would come up with something or I would come up with something he would start poking me and going, "In the script it says ..." "Alright, but let's try this." Everything was always an argument. Whereas Scott Rudin is just this heavyweight. He'd just go into the heads of studios, and they had formerly worked for him and he says, "This is a good movie," and they'll go, "Okay." So each situation varied so much.

JPF: After getting the green light on the film, was he involved?

AH: Scott's got 10 balls in the air at once. So he'd be on the set on the phone to Sabrina, but when you need something it was handled. And Twink was right there all the time.

JPF: Were you involved in the marketing of the movie, the positioning of it?

AH: Not so much. I had certain dates to meet in post-production which, once they decided that another weekend would be much better (since I was in agreement with them), I then had to sort of psych all the post-production people up into really accelerating. And everybody would say, "We can't do this; we can't do that." And it was like, "No? Well, you see, we all have to because of this. So, I know you would like to spend the time to put in every sound but we're going to have to do it this way."

JPF: Outside of the credits that you couldn't get, are there other things that you wanted to do on the movie that you couldn't do because of time or money?

AH: I kind of knew what kind of budget I was dealing with coming in.

JPF: What was the budget?

AH: It was \$15 million. So I wasn't thinking extravagantly. There was one situation--and I don't know if people even pick up on this--where, once we found the house that Cher lived in, we still had to find a place for Miss Giest to get married. And they said, "Well what if Cher threw the wedding and it's in her backyard?" And I thought, well, that doesn't make any sense. Why would a student throw the wedding for a teacher? But ultimately the backyard was beautiful for a wedding; the house was perfect for what I wanted. The other places we saw for weddings were just really going to make it small and ugly and not pretty enough for the end of the movie; that to find something that was pretty enough and wonderful enough for the end of the movie for such a one-day scene of a wedding was too expensive; and having a house for her house was more important. So, ultimately I said, "Alright, we'll have the wedding in the backyard." Now, I don't know, does anybody notice that it's Cher's backyard that the wedding is in? And do you think, "What the hell is the wedding doing in Cher's backyard?" I don't think it took away from anything. It's possible that sometimes you get married in a friend's house because they have a beautiful yard so it's not out of the realm of possibility, but had I had the money to find a different-looking place that would have been as joyous and beautiful for the ending and not taken away the money that I needed for the house, I would have done that.

Q: I'm curious about the casting of some of the supporting characters, particularly the father. Did you basically apply the same kind of casting approach to that?

AH: There's a story in that one. I can't take complete credit. I wanted Harvey Keitel. I said I wanted to see someone that you expect to be murdering people be her father. I wanted her to have a father who was really scary, but she wouldn't be scared of so that even if he yelled and screamed at other people, a normal kid would be scared but she was just like, "That's Daddy." So I had this image of Harvey Keitel. But also they couldn't be too gruff because he was a lawyer. He had to look like somebody who got through law school, who wasn't just like a psychotic murderer.

Scott had worked with Dan Hedaya on *Addams Family*, so he was one of his friends. And I just thought, Harvey Keitel, it's got to be Harvey Keitel, and people kept saying no, no, no, and I kept begging them to make offers to him, and they said he's too expensive, he's too expensive, you can't have him. So Scott said, "See Dan again," and so I said, "Okay," and then I thought that'll be great. I respect him, and there were some things that he didn't exactly agree with that he would go along with, so I felt an obligation to, do some things that he would like.

Q: He has the best line in the film, "Get out of my chair."

AH: I can't take credit for that either. When I introduced my father to my first boyfriend, that's what he said.

Q: Can you talk about your working relationship with the cinematographer?

AH: Oh, I love him! He's such a doll. I came to him having worked with other cinematographers and never been really happy--or happy in parts but not really happy entirely with the relationship or with the looks of the movies I've done. I said, "Look, I grew up in the Bronx, and they never wanted us to put the lights on overhead. It was always to save electricity, so the windows had to provide the lights and there was no cross light and it was all from one side. Everything was lit from one side. It came in from the window and it was ugly and I hated it. I hate light from windows. I hate it, I hate it, I hate it. And I hate daylight. And I hate being out in the sun. I think the sun is ugly and it makes harsh shadows on people and it's ugly." And he said, "Okay. Look." And then he'd take a bunch of pictures and say, "Isn't this pretty though?" And he'd show me windows where the light was pretty. And I'd go, "Alright, but there's a lot of fill on the face over there." He'd go, "Okay, okay." Or he'd pull me over to some trees and say, "Look how the green leaves are all lit up." And I'd go, "Alright. But as long as there's no harsh shadows on the cheeks and nose." And so he'd say okay.

I was always telling him things were depressing me, and he was always figuring a way to make things beautiful and yet still light enough to please me without being garish. Just making it work for my particular fears. I came at him with a lot of things that upset me.

Q: *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* is one my favorite films. I was wondering since that was your first project how the shoot went and how you feel you've grown as a director since then.

AH: Well, the shoot went pretty smoothly. I was busy having fun working with the camera and rewriting scenes and then rehearsing the actors. I was totally loving that. Art really worked at surrounding me with people that were youthful enough to have fun with that kind of a movie yet just really the kind of people that were professional, knew what they were doing, were helpful to me. There were no prima donnas or anything. The DP in particular was very helpful. I was surrounded by people who knew it was my first film and were being supportive and that was very important. On this movie, I knew what I wanted. It was very specific. I knew what colors I wanted in every scene. I knew how I wanted the light to look. So, it was another situation of getting people who were excited to work within those parameters.

Q: How involved were you with casting? It was a great cast.

AH: Just completely involved. We saw everybody. You know, there were situations like what I described with Dan Hedaya where you have one idea in your head, but then you go with another idea. In other situations, where they'd say, "Here's a list for Mr. Hall." And I'd go, "No, no, no. I wrote it for Wally Shawn, who's my buddy. It has to be him."

Q: Do you have any desire to direct something dramatic, something totally different from this?

AH: No. Not totally different. I love movies where something very dramatic is going on. but I can't stand movies that are humorless.

JPF: Isn't there talk about a TV series around *Clueless*?

AH: I think it would make a really good TV series, and I've expressed that to various people and networks are interested. But the studio, I think, wants to see how it goes foreign, they're talking about a sequel, but I don't think there should be a sequel. I don't think Alicia should be in a sequel. I don't think she would want to be, and I think it's best left alone. But I think it's the kind of thing where those characters on a TV series would work fine.

Q: I know you were involved with the *Fast Times* TV series. What did you learn from doing that that you would take with you to turn this into a TV series?

AH: I don't know. When CBS had a change of people in charge they got rid of it immediately. And at the time, there wasn't much interest in shows for young people. I think that's changed a lot. Everywhere they're looking to program for the 20-somethings, as they call it. And so I think the climate might be a lot easier now.

JPF: When you were at AFI in your First Year, did you make exercises, before the Second Year?

AH: I don't know if you do this now. They would assign us three pages of a play and assign you certain actors and then say, "Here's a camera and a cameraman. Go in a room and do this." And I hated that. I didn't know what the hell to do. Everything I did stunk. Then, when we were doing our last one, I said, "Can I write one, can I write my own?" And then they said okay. So then I wrote one, and I used some of my friends and it was just a whole other thing. So then the next year we were working on film. The First Year was video. I guess this is all very different, but if anybody would force me to watch my little scene from *Bell Book and Candle*, I'd just scream my head off. Horrible.

Q: Was your Second Year film a comedy?

AH: Yes.

JPF: Could you look at that again?

AH: Actually, I just got it transferred to video so I could. It's pretty goofy.

Q: After *Look Who's Talking*, did the studio come to you about the sequel, or how did that come about?

AH: A few hideous things were happening at once for me. I was in the middle of a lawsuit and a divorce and so to sort of get time off from those things I went off and did the sequel. I said to them, "You know, this would make a good TV show," and they said, "No, we want a sequel." But, you know, the babies are already talking, the people are already in love, there's no reason to go on. And they said, "But the foreign and domestic box office were too high to not do it." And I really thought it was a wrong idea. I really thought you can have a baby talking for years, but you can't explain why in the next movie the kid's not talking. So I didn't really want to do it as a movie, but I didn't want to hang around and do what I had to be doing in my life, so I did the movie instead.

JPF: As we approach the end of our time here, let me ask you this. Has your 10-year-old daughter seen *Clueless*?

AH: Oh, yes.

JPF: And what's the family opinion?

AH: Well, there's a bit of a problem. There's a scene where the boy is skateboarding, and then afterwards there's a scene where the two girls come up to him and they say, "We'll all go out and eat something later." This is before she says she likes him. And when they go up to him and make this little plan, he's being interviewed by a little kid from his school newspaper, who was my daughter. And so I had to get a few minutes out of the movie, so I had to cut my daughter out, and she sort of hasn't forgiven me.

JPF: I can understand that. That must have been extremely painful.

AH: It really was.

JPF: How did you tell her? That's a job. I'm really sorry I brought that up to make you relive this whole thing. Well, Amy, I think that it is very clear that your work has really found an audience here. And I think it's also very clear that you're a very self-effacing filmmaker, but we're very proud that you went to AFI and I hope you'll bring your next film here because we can't wait.

AH: Thank you.

JPF: Thank you very much.