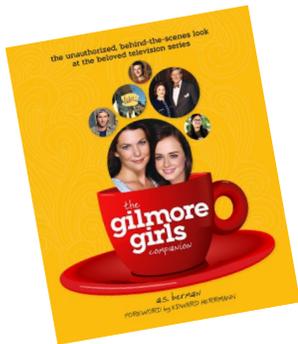

Edward Herrmann



The following interview with Edward Herrmann was conducted on July 3, 2009 for The Gilmore Girls Companion by A.S. Berman.

[We began our conversation discussing Mr. Herrmann's interest in old time radio...]

Fred Allen is a favorite of mine, and of course [Jack] Benny and the concept of radio. My wife and I, when we drive, really enjoy Sirius radio off the satellite and listening to the old radio serials.

I guess I cut my teeth way back in the '50s with a pair of iconic comedians – you either love them or you don't get them – Bob and Ray. Bob and Ray could take *Mary Noble: Backstage Wife* and turn her into *Mary Backstage: Noble Wife*. It's amazing how close their parodies are to the real thing. But they are magically bizarre, Bob and Ray. Mary McGoon...

Wally Ballou....

Yes. And Webley Webster who plays the pipe organ and can never complete his rendition of "Jalousie!" All day long I could bore people to death with Bob and Ray stories. I love them and the whole concept. I



also love the old radio equipment...they're beautiful, beautiful things. Old microphones...

I suppose we should probably just dive right into *Gilmore*. First, can you explain a bit about how you came to be on the show? You seem to be someone that [executive producers Amy Sherman-Palladino and Dan Palladino] would've approached personally.

For years my agents had hoped to get me into a series at some point and I wanted to avoid it. Then, for some reason, I thought it was a good idea. Actors reinvent themselves all the time, and it seemed for some reason the right time to do a television series.

I started reading pilots, and this one just jumped off the page to me because it was hip, it was funny, it suggested something of the world that I was living in, in Connecticut. What I really loved about it was that it turned the populist idiom upside-down. Here was a girl in public high school who was bored silly with boys and makeup and wanted to read *Les Miserables*. That, I thought, was charming. Then the quirkiness of the characters and the writing.

I went in and talked to them. I'm not good at auditions

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but I must've said the right thing. I said "This is the best thing that I've read in many years. Whether you cast me in it or not, I don't care, but I just wanted to meet and congratulate you on writing something really original and fresh and funny."

Amy tends to be spontaneous in her decision making often, and virtually offered me the part right there, which I thought was nice. So we did it. We went up to Canada and shot [the pilot] there in Toronto. For a while, which would've been fun, they were contemplating shooting it all in Toronto to save money, which would've been a very easy commute for me from Bradley Field in Hartford. But Los Angeles it was. What was really pleasant was that it was shot at Warner Brothers. I love that studio.

Did they see you right off for the audition?

I don't know how many people they saw for the part, I really don't.

I'm thinking more in terms of when you went there, was it Amy and Dan the first time around as opposed to having to run the gauntlet with the casting directors first?

No, I just went in and saw Amy and Dan. I think there was a casting person there. I don't know if they had me in mind or not. I was very happy to be chosen.

In my experience, it's best not to know how choices are made because you're either the first choice or the 10th. Somebody couldn't do it, so you're called at the last minute to come in and do it like *The Cat's Meow*, the Bogdanovich film with Kirsten Dunst about Marion Davies and William Randolph Hearst. I think I was the sixth or seventh choice in that one.

And the way decisions are made. The eccentricity and

the almost willful disregard for the art of the piece or the correctness of a choice.

Decisions are so often made by people who have no artistic understanding or sensitivity whatsoever – they're executives, network or studio or production company. It's been going on forever. Some chuckleheads at MGM cut the song "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" from *The Wizard of Oz*, you know. "Well, we don't need this slowing things down. She shouldn't be singing in a barnyard anyway. It's undignified." Who ARE these people? So, happily in that case, it was stuck back in.

So I stay away. I really don't know at what point I was chosen, or how, or anything like that. I just make a habit of not knowing.

A blissful ignorance.

Well sometimes it ain't so blissful, but at least it keeps my sanity. I'll concentrate on something else.

You said you had avoided being in a series until then. Why did you change your mind?

The whole landscape of our business has changed so radically since I started back in the mid '60s in repertory theater, and at that time too, New York was such a center for movie production as well.

The first four films I did were all very big films, and they were all cast out of New York: *The Great Gatsby*, *The Great Waldo Pepper*, *Day of the Dolphin* and *The Paper Chase*. (That was very modest but it was a studio movie.)

You could do movies for television. You could do two or three a year and live comfortably. I think in retrospect I may have made mistakes in not doing a

series early on. But I always wanted to do theater and film, and the odd television project that was really good, because there's great writing and great work to be done on television. But those kinds of parts the business has squeezed upward for the top-end people, it's squeezed very much downward for the middle range actors who work all the time. We can't make today what we made 10 years ago or 15 years ago. A TV series can provide steady money, often very good money.

But really it's a terrible situation for most actors. The studios and the networks cry poverty and they do everything they can to destroy SAG's ability to protect the earning power of its members. I'm not saying that SAG handled negotiations this year [2009] particularly well. In fact, they did a miserable job of it and didn't achieve anything except to piss everybody off. And most of the acrimony was between SAG and AFTRA, which is not a good situation.

The actors are push-me, pull-you. Yeah, we can stand up for our rights and wave the red flag and it's not as if SAG was asking for the moon – I'm in quite strong agreement with what they were asking for – but the circumstances are such and the economy is such that we were never going to get it. And when the directors cave immediately and make a deal, and when the other unions make deals, SAG has no bargaining power. That's another issue.

The point is that by the time I decided to do a series, it was time for me to make a series. (Is that a tautology?) I have a kid in private school and she likes to ride horses.

I had a nice contract with Dodge for a long time in the '90s and a long-term contract with The History

Channel, and both were very nice steady gigs. But I had never done a series except for a brief flirtation back in New York in the mid-'70s with our version of *Upstairs, Downstairs* – it was *Beacon Hill* shot in New York. That didn't go more than 6 episodes, 7 episodes, and that was the end of that. But that was almost just a fling. *Gilmore Girls* just turned out to be a success, and it was delightful.

In several interviews with you, there's an undertone of your being tired of being cast as "elite" characters.

It is rare that an actor likes what he's first famous for. The first role that most people saw me in, generally speaking, was Roosevelt. The roles I did before that, in *The Paper Chase* it was a young law student. But then a boat driver in *Day of the Dolphin*, the piano-playing Klipspringer in *The Great Gatsby*, and a quirky inventor in *The Great Waldo Pepper* with Redford. All of those were different parts, but the stereotype that everyone saw me in after I played Roosevelt was, basically, this upper-crust guy.

Casting people and producers and so forth tend to go with what they know, what they see, what has been successful. "He did FDR. This guy can't do a drug dealer, he can't do anything else." So actors get these roles that define them to the public and the industry and then they spend most of their time trying to break that mold.

Here was Richard, this WASPy fellow, but he wasn't just any WASPy fellow. He was written with humor and an edge and an intelligence and I thought this might be fun, especially since I don't have to... This will sound terrible, but I didn't have to work very hard to find him. He was an easy man for me to understand.

I grew up in Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich., which is an upper-crust community on the east side of Detroit. Not that my parents grew up in luxury; far from it. They were from Indiana. My dad was the first one to go to college in my family. He was an engineer at Purdue.

Back in the early 1920s, when kids could handle the work, they skipped grades. He was a freshman in college when he was 15 – a very smart kid. But his father was not rich by any means. Neither my mother nor my father were born with the silver spoon affixed.

Father had moved to Detroit in 1940 then worked in Washington D.C. during the war, where I was born, and moved back, where a friend who sold Packard automobiles helped him get a little house in Grosse Pointe Farms. And I mean little.

My parents were Unitarians and so we had an intelligent group in Grosse Pointe, and they tended to be on the liberal side. Mother was a Democrat, father was a Republican, but he didn't like McCarthy – he was one of those disappearing Republicans that we read so much about. He was humane and he was just a capitalist, but he was a decent, honest guy. After Nixon, he never voted Republican again.

But I grew up surrounded by a world that vaguely resembled the world Amy was creating for Emily, Richard and their daughter and granddaughter. I've known people like that. So I thought this will be fun because I don't have to practice with a lisp or a limp or do something wildly foreign to my nature.

The situation was rich, the characters were rich. When I found out that Kelly [Bishop] was going to do it, I was delighted – somehow we had never met. Both

of us knew everybody in the New York scene of the '60s and '70s and '80s, but we had just never worked together. She's a delight because she's so practical. (Dancers are great.) And she's intelligent and funny and a wonderful actress. So that was fun.

You had such a wonderful chemistry together.

We liked each other. We had the same sense of humor about things. I tend to be slightly right of center, she's left. Even our arguments were fun. As Emily, she took fiendish delight in being unlikable. Have you talked to Kelly?

No, I haven't had the opportunity. [Note: The author did finally manage to interview Kelly Bishop later for the book.]

She likes being nasty, the character. Being belligerent and unpredictable and difficult. A lot of actors want to be the good guy, want to be liked, they want to be understood. She didn't give a crap. That's the level of her self-confidence. We had fun.

That's what I'm intrigued by. By those two characters and a few others on the show. If you were going to play it lazy, you could very easily slip into those molds. And some of it was definitely the writing that kept you guessing, but a lot of it too was the performance.

We're both theater people in the sense that no matter what you get, you try to make it work...you know your lines and show up on time and hit your marks. And I could see after seven seasons how bad it could be for an actor.

After the second season or so, or even the first season, you start making inroads and you've got a niche, and they begin to write for the quality of the actor, the rhythms of the actor. You can get off the plane and

go do your thing without even thinking about it. On some shows where the writing isn't nearly as precise or demanding as that on our show, you can virtually ad lib your way through it. But the fact that Amy insisted on crossing the t's and dotting the i's, often to good effect, but sometimes to not such good effect, it made you concentrate. It really made you focus and not get sloppy, which was good.

It was tough because the scripts were so long. They were 70 and 80 pages, which is the size of a feature. An hour show is 46 minutes. So yes, there was lots of fast talking, and even for old pros like Kelly and myself it was tough. When Amy was on the set, one was able occasionally to modify a line. I'd say "This is a dangling participle, you can't do this," and you could schmooze her around and you could get it changed. But if she wasn't on the set, it was like adamant, you just couldn't change anything. That got tough to deal with.

The lack of flexibility on that level was sometimes hard to take, but I can understand it in retrospect. When you have a project like that, that you're in control of, you want TOTAL control. Because there are so many people that want to take it away from you.

I'm in the process of producing a piece right now, it is being written, and we have Harold Ramis [*Editor's note: Ramis passed away in February 2014*], who wants to attach himself as executive producer and director, and it's being written by a couple of policemen in Chicago, and I'm learning the ropes about producing this thing. We're polishing the script and changing some things before we start to shop it around.

But I can see already how many people want to attach

themselves to it, and how all of their opinions can multiply the weight on it and crush it. So I understand Amy's reluctance to let anybody mess with her baby. But it was often tough on the actors. The good part of that is that it kept us focused because it was difficult material to do exactly right.

Is this being foreseen as a television or a film project?

This is going to be for television, but it has a whole different tonality than *Gilmore*. I may be part of it as an actor, I may not. It's fine with me if I'm not. It would be fun to be in, though, because there are some really juicy characters.

What keeps us focused is the interest of the relationships. But you do run into an intractable problem in television, especially series television: You can't move beyond a certain resolution in character relationships and development. In other words, there can't be that wonderful or terrible moment between father and daughter when things are pulled up in a Greek cathartic explosion and things are resolved, or not resolved.

This was true in *Gilmore*. If the father can at last tell his daughter how much he loves her and the daughter can at last come home and be embraced, the characters could move on. But that can't happen because if you do that, you lose the tension, the frisson between these two people. You think "When are we going to move on, when are we going to move on, when are we going to move on...?!!!"

That's a theatrical actor's question because the stage is all about emotional progression, either to triumph or ruin. A television series keeps characters in a kind of stasis and ours was a seven-year stage production!

Which didn't really have an end...

I know, but that's another story. But the wonder of the show was that it kept one's interest for so long without the characters essentially moving on.

You mentioned in one of your questions [*Editor's note: The author emailed some questions to Mr. Herrmann ahead of time*] that there was a change, a growth in Richard, that there was a kind of warmth that was generated. I tried to do that. I tried to incorporate that into the way that, even when he was being waspish (small "W"), there's a reason for it. It's a broken heart that has done that to him. [Lorelai's] hurt him, and he absolutely adores her, which is very easy to do with Graham because she's so adorable.

She has this quality of intelligence and humor and standoffishness. She's very warm, but she's not going to be taken advantage of as a person, Lauren isn't. That was a quality that I loved about her and made her extremely attractive. And it was easy to play on the one hand, I mean an edgy quarrelsome Father, but it was tough on the other because you just want to hug her, just wanted to say "Calm down now, let's have fun instead of always just fighting."

It may be that it was a quality that came naturally to her. But she is such a good actress that it may be a quality that she emphasized strictly for the part. I still don't know.

There was something about the way you and Lauren Graham played off each other that appeared to almost reach a level of acting brinksmanship in some scenes, a parry and thrust that was obviously keeping with the characters. But it looked like it must've been a very intricate ballet between you two. Can you talk a bit about that

dynamic between yourself and Lauren. I wonder if some of that had to with—

Personal relationship?

No, more what you were just addressing earlier about trying to keep that tension going, that you can't have a resolution. But also just the sheer amount of difference between your acting experience and hers at the time.

Lauren had done theater work, but she hadn't been at it as long as I've been because she's young and beautiful. She didn't have to spend a long time getting grubby in the theater.

No, she's done theater work but there is no time working in television, especially in a series, to do scene work. There's no time to dig into characters. Generally you present what you're going to do and it's either accepted or not accepted. [That's] what you learn in the theater, or a certain level of theater, which I learned over the long years I spent in repertory and regional theaters and places like the Williamstown Theater Festival.

There were a group of us up there in the '80s – Sigourney Weaver and Diane Wiest and Chris Reeve and Blythe Danner and... oh gosh, a bunch of us - who would go every summer. We learned in a two-week rehearsal how to do a play by Gorky or Ibsen or Chekov, and you don't do these plays in two weeks! But you rehearse in front of the audience basically.

You take enormous risks and you trust each other. You have to listen to each other and play off each other. You pick up an invaluable habit, it seems to me, which is that you really listen to what the other person is saying. You sense what the other player is doing. If they do something that is lively and different and

interesting, then don't just give the standard response to it, let it change you. Listen to it, keep open to it.

I try to do that now with any actor I work with, but often the other actor is – how shall I put this – phoning it in. Not listening.

But Lauren is so bright and so sharp that sometimes things would vary and it was wonderful, because then I would respond to it. I'm not sure brinksmanship is the right word; I never had a feeling that we were competing for the scene. I just wanted to stay with her. And she had the same feeling – she responded to intelligence. When she got bored and tired, it was with people that weren't on her level, they weren't as bright as she was.

We all got bored. It's impossible to do a show for seven years without running into some episodes that are a little formulaic and they're not breaking any new ground and they're not showing you anything really interesting. Then there are those episodes and those directors that suddenly: Whoa!, this is great, this really pops along, and you brighten up. But I never expected anything from Lauren that was less than professional and that was less than focused. She was always present, she was always right there, which was great fun. So was Kelly, by the way!

You mention being open to where she's going with a certain scene, yet it was so hard to change so much as a word – do you find new ways to be open to where another actor is going with a scene?

Oh yeah. The subtext can change, the line can stay the same. Generally speaking, our scripts were a cut or two or three above regular television writing. If you start with a soap opera, someone will come in and say "I'm mad as hell at you, how could you have done

this?!" Better writing is if you're sitting around and you're talking about things in a normal voice, then anger's building up. You'll express it not by changing the dialogue, you'll just say "Pass the salt, please!'" There are a hundred ways you can say "Pass the salt." You can be sarcastic about it, you can be sexual about it, you can be anything about it, and you don't change the line.

If what's coming out from her is using the same line but using it in a different way, you really want to respond to the WAY she's giving it to you. That's how you change something. That's what I mean by listening and going where she is, and she would do the same with me.

If I had an annoyed reaction to what she was saying, that was very easy for her to respond to. She would always crack wise. Lorelei deflects everything, she doesn't let anybody get to her. She's got this armor. It's this constant assault of her father trying to get through it and his weary withdrawal from the field: "Oh God, when is this going to end?" That's a wonderful color and a wonderful thing to play, and she was brilliant at it.

The one thing I keep coming back to with this show, and it's influencing how the whole book is being written, is just the fact that you can't really take anybody – in front of or behind the camera – out of this equation and still be left with the same show.

This was a discovery for me too because I'd never done a show like this, or this long.

The chemistry off camera does influence what goes on camera, even if you don't immediately adjourn at the end of the day and go out and have a drink and

hang out together and all the rest of it. There was very little of that, but that's not unusual for a series. You're working 14, 16 hours a day and you're tired, you go home.

Kelly and I would make sure that we would have a drink three or four times a season. It's the same with Lauren. But there was no "Come on gang, let's get together for pizza and beer Friday night" kind of thing.

But the energy that each actor had off camera really did translate onto the screen. Actors work out of themselves anyway. They're self-involved because that's the only thing they've got. They are the marble that they work on; they're not separate from it. Lauren's energy really informed the cast, it really informed the whole project, Lauren's and Alexis'. (Is that right: Alexises?)

Alexi?

No, Alexi is more than one Alexis, the plural of Alexis. Let's just say Alexis'.

As Lauren described Alexis... Lauren is first and foremost an actress. And it takes a while to get to know somebody like that. But as Lauren put it, Alexis flew under the radar. There was something about her which wasn't an actress. One of your questions was about Audrey Hepburn.

I believe you compared Alexis to Hepburn once.

I did because there is something about Audrey Hepburn, too, which is not actorish, it is simply this "presence." Alexis has this transparency about her. There's no character except this extraordinary presence. It's raw. Whatever is said to her has this ripple that goes through her – she's extraordinary.

She had a very tough time the first couple of seasons because she didn't have any acting experience to speak of, she was a model.

And talk about an audition. She came in sick with a cold and didn't want to be there, and the way she reacted to everything, Amy just said "That's it, that's what I want!" What was tough about it for her the first couple seasons was that this series depended so heavily on the interaction between Lauren and Alexis, and they were on camera so much of the time, that it was almost burnout time for them.

The single camera 1-hour show is the toughest medium there is, except for maybe Cirque du Soleil in Vegas, bouncing three stories high on a trampoline five shows a day. But for the lead in a 1-hour television show you just never get a rest. Unless you're an old scarred-up pro who knows how to budget their time, knows how to relax a little bit and slough the tension off a bit, you can run out of energy very quickly. As Stanislavski says, you wipe your feet when you leave the theater.

She wasn't able to do that, and she was living by herself in Los Angeles and she was young. Her parents were in Houston. She was not a wild liver by any means, but it would get to her. She'd have difficult times. For a while there I was designated [to] "Find out if Alexis is OK." I said "She's burned out! You're burning her up! She's exhausted." She didn't know how to deal with this stuff, so we'd go out and I'd take her to Musso's.

I mean this was a kid who didn't know who Jimmy Cagney was. We were standing outside the soundstage and talking. She'd had a difficult moment and we were just outside talking and I said, "Well, at least we're

here at Warner Brothers." She says "What do you mean?"

"Well, it's a beautiful studio. Look at those beautiful roofs. And there are great ghosts on this stage. Look at what was made on this stage: *Angels with Dirty Faces* with Jimmy Cagney."

She looked blank and I thought Oh my gosh. And this is a very intelligent girl. I picked up a book she was reading, some extraordinary social analysis of affairs in Africa or India or something like that, clearly a very bright girl. But the show business part of our lives there at Warner Brothers just didn't seem to interest her very much. (*Bogart* she had heard of!) And I could very easily have made the mistake of dismissing Alexis as young and thoughtless, not worth my time.

I've made some terribly stupid, arrogant blunders in my life; I will probably continue to make them. I would look down my nose at somebody who didn't have an archival memory bank of old movies, actors, directors and plays.

Then I'd think Don't be an asshole! By dismissing this person with a smug turn of phrase, you've just made an enemy for life. Envy them, you fool! If they haven't seen Bogart in *The Maltese Falcon* or Cagney in *Public Enemy*, or in any of his great, great, great parts, then they're lucky. It's like discovering a new Shakespearean play. Imagine discovering Jimmy Cagney when you're 21 and never having heard of him?! That's like a gift.

I just adored her. Still do. I think the feeling was mutual. After the second season, I believe it was, she came back from a trip with a boyfriend that carried them all over the West. She'd had something of a relationship with him and suddenly she was more

mature and able to handle some of the pressure. I think she dated [Milo] Ventimiglia for a little while, but I'm not at all sure he was the one she went traveling with. (I liked him – we share an interest in car collecting.)

I realized, not for the first time, how difficult it is for everybody to deal with doing a series with no time to have a social life. Yes you do have two days off on the weekend, but if you're kind of a stranger in town, who are you going to meet? Who are you going to go out with? When do you ever meet somebody that's your age that you want to go to dinner with and get to know? You're in a pressure cooker.

I just finished a film with Nick Swardson and Christina Ricci, *Born to Be a Star*. I talked to Christina a little bit – she started when she was 8. She's had publicly chronicled difficulties in her romantic life. Well why not? How in the hell can you have any kind of relationship in the public eye like that? When do you grow up? When do you fall on your face in private?

So it was difficult to watch the pain that Alexis went through in the first couple of seasons. But it was gratifying to see how she matured and was gradually able to handle it.

In her first movie, *Tuck Everlasting*, she was working with a very difficult actor. When she asked me about it my response didn't help.

"Oh my God, you're not working with him?" "Yes, yes. Is he-?" I said "Yes, he has a reputation for being very good but very difficult and he is difficult, so you're not wrong."

But she's very intelligent and she has a way of protecting herself. It's more Cancerian I guess, it's more water based. She doesn't confront or fight, she

floats through. And who's to say that doesn't work? I think she's brilliant. I think she's just great.

I have to say your name comes up over and over again when I'm speaking with other people on the show. You were the person everyone went to when they were facing an acting challenge that they couldn't get their minds around. That puts a lot of responsibility on you and how you shaped the rest of the show. But I'm wondering if you had your own challenges that were difficult for you to tackle on that series.

I never thought of myself as a guru of the show. I know that at one point Amy talked to me about sounding out Alexis and seeing if I could help soothe her a little bit or talk to her if there was a problem.

I have daughters. I have a 29-year-old daughter and I have a 13-year-old daughter. I know something about the stresses and strains of adolescence and growing and all of that stuff.

Also, old actors have taught me a great deal. As a young player I gravitated toward the older actors and learned some lessons about the lead in a company. It's not necessarily the star – it should be – but not necessarily. There's an actor or two that provide a kind of gravitas, a kind of center. You can depend on these guys. It can certainly be a woman as well. But they spot potential difficulties and hotspots that could blow.

The danger is, of course, that you meddle. If you see something going on and you want to go in and solve it ...well, I've been in situations where I've tried to do that and it was just a disaster. The guy's not behaving well or she's not behaving well, it's not actually up to you to go referee it. But a word here, a word there, to mollify, or at least to let the person vent a little bit at a

certain point so it doesn't reach critical mass and blow up can be very helpful.

There were times when I'd blow, when I'd really get upset. I realized pretty early on that there weren't a lot of people that I could go to vent with. I had to pull out some tricks from the bag and deal with it as I could.

I'd blow about this line or that line, the insistence on a particular word order that I didn't think was even grammatically correct, and nobody was around to change it, it would drive me nuts.

Finally Lauren began saying "Oh God, Ed, don't take it so seriously, just change it!" I said "Yeah, but you're the star of the show. I'm just this little wee person." "Yeah. Right!" would be the answer. Some such exchange as that would help.

Did it work?

Oh yes. Finally you just have to take a breath and make it work. Hang on a second, I'm having a phone meltdown here. [Answers phone.] Stage manager from the play that I'm going to be doing up at Williamstown – we start rehearsals on the 7th.

I'm looking at the clock. I said I would only keep you for 45 minutes...

No, go ahead. I made you wait, I'm sorry.

That's not permission for me to hold you over the coals for an hour.

You haven't been particularly annoying, so what can I say? I talk too much anyway.

It's very hard to write a book if nobody speaks to you.

Yes, I imagine, otherwise it's a bunch of opinions that

you have to speculate on and then the actors get upset. But you didn't say anything, so what's he supposed to do?

I have to say, generally speaking, I had a wonderful time on the show, I really did. The dinner scenes were always fun. Well, how many times can you shoot a dinner scene? Some of them got very tiresome because of the setups. It was difficult to shoot. But I was always working with either Lauren, Alexis or Kelly, and they're the best, they were wonderful.

Occasionally we went to Luke's Diner, and the whole sequence at Yale was a lot of fun, going to the classroom at Chilton with Liza Weil. (Yes dear. I have a note from my wife, so she has to wait until you rake me over the coals. How's that for blackmail?)

You've got this down to a fine art.

No, no. Who ME?

The overall feeling I had on the show was great respect for the work. I loved the crew.

A series is a delicate kind of construction. Crew members have an enormous input with their personalities and their energies on the set. The designers, the cinematographers, the pool of directors they use, all have a particular energy to contribute to the way something works.

Some directors we didn't like and some directors were "Oh great, we can relax now that she's going to do it or he's going to do it." If you know that you're going to have another sort of director, the cast and crew know what her liabilities are and you can sort of act around it.

It's not easy for directors or guest artists to come on to a show that is established because there is a rhythm and a style about the show that has produced success and they're not going to change it.

I did an episode once of *M*A*S*H*. I had never done anything like it and I walked on (everyone wanted to do *M*A*S*H*) and I saw how some actors were simply entrenched, others were flexible and fun and wanted to work with you. They already had their work done. These guys had been doing it for God knows how long. They knew exactly what to do.

I think we became kind of like that. But I will always, in the back of my mind, think "Look, this is a new script, try to bring something fresh to it. Try to make it not just predictable. This guy is not just what's on the page, there's something else going on." I think that Amy and the writers picked up on that.

As you pointed out in one of your questions, Richard did change over the seasons. He was more flexible. I think that was Amy's idea from the beginning, to have this relationship between the grandfather and the granddaughter blossom. Which was very hard on the daughter to see – this unaffected affection being expressed between her father and her daughter. That was a lovely dynamic element in the show that I really enjoyed.

I usually hesitate to ask any personal questions, but I think in this case I would at least like to try, and if it's none of my business please feel free to say so. Playing the part you did and for as long as you did, did it give you any sort of insight or reason to reflect on your own relationships with your children?

Yes. That's a good question. Yes it did. My two

oldest children are 30 and 29. They bore the brunt of my parental learning experiments. They have both turned out wonderfully well, but working on the more acrimonious scenes between Lorelei and Richard reminds me of the foolishness I exhibited when I was a younger parent. I see now how much they suffered at my blunderings and insensitivities.

Our youngest came along, and when I started doing the show, she was not even 4. There came a time she would just see Daddy getting into a car and being driven to the airport. At one point after I don't know how many episodes, she came up to me, holding on to her tears and said "It's OK, Daddy, that you're going, because I know you're going to come back." Oh God, send the car away, I'm not going.

It was helpful having a daughter because it helped me understand the character of Richard and his relationship with Lorelei. My oldest daughter and I get along rather well now, really. It was very difficult between the two of us for a while. And I used that for Richard's relationship with Lorelei.

But also the relationship with my youngest was very helpful in dealing with Rory. I think life informed the character rather than the text informing me, if you know what I mean. My personal side was very helpful to me in understanding the dynamic of those two characters, Lorelei and Rory.

Because my oldest daughter is 29 and my youngest has just turned 13. They're very tight as sisters, though their experiences are miles apart. It was a happy chance really that my relationship with my two daughters mirrored Lorelei and Rory.

For you, was there a defining scene for Richard?

There was that scene where the father of a kid accuses Lorelei of something and I defend her. I get really angry with him. Then she comes up to thank me for it and I blow my stack about what she's put me through. It was early on in the series, and it was the closest Richard ever came to actually explaining why he was so hurt and so angry.

That kind of defined the direction of that intractable problem that was the engine for the rest of the series for me. How does he deal with his disappointment, his anger, his love, that Greek sort of tension? You can't change what happened, but you somehow have to pray that it makes you wiser and not more bitter. I think Amy had her finger on that brilliantly. I thought the basic structure of the show Amy built was just wonderful. That scene defined his dilemma with Lorelei.

Then the scene taking Rory to play golf and realizing that here was a child who can actually be a delight, and that he can go there in the steam room and say "My granddaughter's gonna go to Harvard and she's gonna go to Chilton," and have the other grandfathers say yeah, [their granddaughters] are trying to figure out tattoos and where to pierce their bodies. It was very, very clever and very funny. Those two scenes helped direct the character for the rest of the show for me. But there were others over the years.

Emma, my youngest, was too young to really get it for a while until, I don't know, a year ago or two years ago she started watching it, and then she sat down and watched them all. She would pop in and say "How can you be so mean!" And then she'd come back, "Oh, Dad ... You are so funny!"

But she was sobbing in the dark one evening when I came home. When I asked the trouble, she said "It's OVER. It just is OVER and nothing is settled! Does she marry Luke? What HAPPENS? You guys have to get together and make the ending. Can't you just make a movie about it?" The explanation that the series didn't belong to us didn't mollify her. It still hasn't. I have the feeling millions of kids (and mothers!) feel the same way.

Edward Herrmann passed away on Dec. 31, 2014, leaving behind a grieving, grateful audience that spanned generations.

