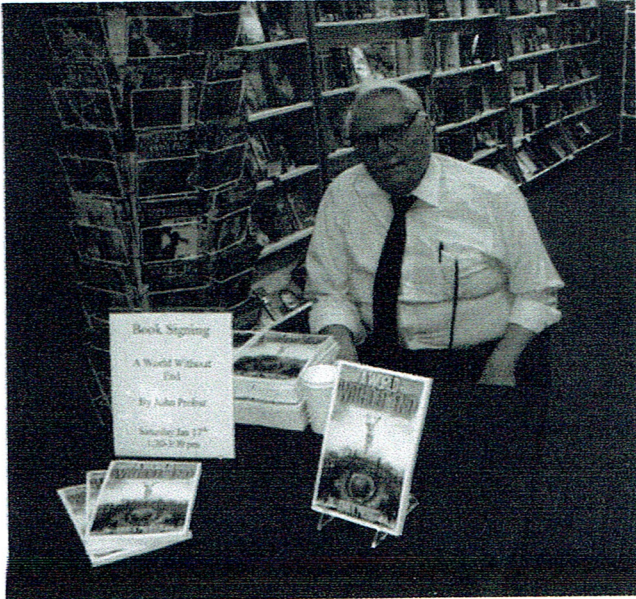


# ALUMNI



John Probst. Contributed photo.

## O'Dowd Connections Remain Strong Over the Years

Throughout the years he taught English, choral and drama at O'Dowd (1965-1980), **John Probst** frequently traveled to Quincy, California, during the summer to teach and direct summer musicals at Feather River College. After leaving O'Dowd, Probst served as drama director at the college until 2005.

Several years after graduating from O'Dowd, **Earl Thompson '65** moved with his family to Quincy, and Thompson wound up starring as Harold Hill in a Feather River College production of *Music Man*, directed by Probst.

After Thompson retired, he built the West End Theatre, a traditional black box theatre, with a cutting edge lighting system, that provides an intimate space for community performances.

In recent years, Thompson and Probst have teamed up to produce a variety of shows and concerts at the Theatre. In August, the duo joined forces to present *Oliver!* - with Thompson producing, Jeffry Bryan, a retired Los Angeles actor directing, and Probst serving as musical director. The production was performed during the Plumas County Fair at Thompson's West End Theatre.

During the years he was at O'Dowd, Probst directed three performances each year - a dramatic show in November (presented in the small gym); a dramatic show or monologues in January (performed in the drama room); and a full musical in the spring (staged in the large gym) - all staged without benefit of O'Dowd's current state-of-the-art theater which opened in April 2000.

Performances ran the gamut - from musicals like *West Side Story*, to the one-act play *Zoo Story*, to *In White America*, a documentary play about the history of Blacks in America, from slavery through the Civil Rights Movement.

"*Zoo Story* starred **Jerry Rubino '69** and **Don Bilotti '69** and the show was performed and recorded in my drama room on a reel-to-reel machine," Probst recalled.

# NEWS

"And we took *In White America* on tour all over Oakland - including Holy Names High School and College - and to the Library in San Leandro, where we were picketed by white blue collar workers," Probst said.

"The lead actors in the play were an African American Girl and a white boy. Because of the times we were in, I asked their parents if they minded seeing their children in the more intimate scenes together. Neither objected and I thought that was a great example of interracial acceptance and tolerance," he added.

Probst has compiled several O'Dowd performances on a DVD; and says the quality of the orchestra in *West Side Story* is amazing. "**Russ Ferreira '73** was attending college, majoring in music, and when he found out I was doing *West Side Story* he reached

out to 18 different musicians at the college to join the orchestra," he said. "And the 15-year-old 'kid' at the piano was **Carl Danielson '79**. That score is a veritable concerto of difficulty, and he was terrific. Today Carl is an actor in New York and also runs a studio which prepares professional actors for auditions in plays and musicals. He is also a composer."

Any alumni wishing to reconnect with Probst can contact him at [jkprobst65@gmail.com](mailto:jkprobst65@gmail.com).