

**INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT DODD  
AND TOBIAS OWEN  
Department of Earth and Space Sciences  
November 10, 1988**

**Dr. Hartzell:** An interview with Professors Robert Dodd and Tobias Owen of the Department of Earth and Space Sciences, November 10, 1988. Let's start with you, Bob, because you came a little bit before Toby did, and let's follow the questions down to, I guess, number 7.

**Robert Dodd:** Do you have the sheet?

**Dr. Hartzell:** I thought you had.

**Robert Dodd:** No, I don't think so.

**Dr. Hartzell:** You don't, all right.

**Robert Dodd:** Okay, name, Robert Dodd; department, ESS; rank or position, professor. I came to Stony Brook in 1965 at age 29. I came from the Air Force Cambridge Research Laboratory at Hanscomb Field, Bedford, Massachusetts, and Oliver Schaeffer was responsible for my coming to Stony Brook. He interviewed me; I was also interviewed by David Fox, who was then the Graduate Director, and by Karl Hartzell. I came because I am a New Yorker and because I was very excited by the prospect of what appeared to be a very ambitious new educational institution. I don't understand: what was the vision being transformed into reality?

**Dr. Hartzell:** What was the purpose of the institution as you understood it.

**Tobias Owen:** Transforming mud into buildings.

**Robert Dodd:** Transforming mud into buildings, bricks without straw, with increasingly without straw. The vision was that it was going to be the flagship of the state system. It was going to be the most influential science center in the system, and a comprehensive graduate and research institution. I know that's the vision that Oliver had and that most of us had at that time. That was my understanding of what Stony Brook wanted to be, the expression used was "Berkeley of the East," which was a little intoxicated.

**Dr. Hartzell:** It was probably used by John Toll.

**Robert Dodd:** No, before John.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Even before John.

**Robert Dodd:** Yeah, because it was in *Time* magazine and I found out about Stony Brook from my mother, who tipped me off that something big was going on, and it just happened that I met Oliver in the fall of 1964 at a meeting, and the two events coincided.

**Dr. Hartzell:** In 1964 was he already at Stony Brook?

**Robert Dodd:** He was already teaching, but the department didn't exist.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I see.

**Robert Dodd:** He was teaching, I think, probably at the behest of Francis Bonner. He and Francis were very close.

**Dr. Hartzell:** At that point why don't you say what you know about Ollie Schaeffer. See I knew back at Brookhaven, and had dealing with him one way or another, see, I was in the Director's Office, and he had a laboratory. But I did not know his background professionally, where did he get his Ph. D., his training?

**Robert Dodd:** I would want it verified, but I'm pretty sure it was Columbia. But I think he was at Penn State before that. He is a Pennsylvania fellow, I would say Pennsylvania boy, but that's

**Dr. Hartzell:** And he came here directly from Brookhaven?

**Robert Dodd:** From Brookhaven.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, anything further that you know about him, what do you know about his reputation?

**Robert Dodd:** His reputation was very good. He was by training a nuclear chemist, and he had used this in the early stages of solar system research, in particular the use of local gases both to determine the ages of extraterrestrial materials and also to determine the radiation history, and he was very well regarded on this side of the water, and I would say even better regarded in Europe.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Is that right.

**Robert Dodd:** A very strong following in Europe, particularly in Germany.

**Dr. Hartzell:** All right, let's stop here and do the same thing for you now.

**Tobias Owen:** Okay, so, I'm Toby Owen. I'm a professor in the Earth and Space Sciences Department. I came to Stony Brook in 1970 at the age of 34. I was a Visiting Associate Professor at Cal Tech immediately before that, but my home base at the time would have been the IIT Research Institute in Chicago. I came to Stony Brook, my initial awareness of Stony Brook came from a guy named Ichtiaque Rasool, who was at the time at the Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York; and he had been in contact with Schaeffer and also with Steve Straub, and he was quite enthusiastic about Stony Brook. He had run a summer school out here; and in fact, he had invited me to come to one of them. I was pleased with what I saw. I think I was quite excited about the idea of having astronomy together with the earth sciences; that was a unique combination as far as I was aware of, and the sense of growth, of openness, that we were going to be free to pretty much direct the research and curriculum was very appealing.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was the building up then?

**Robert Dodd:** No, I guess it was when you got here.

**Tobias Owen:** Yes, the building was done when I got here, right. But at the time I arrived the building didn't belong yet to the Earth Space Sciences Department, it was occupied by several other groups, including the, Gelber's operation, whatever that was at the time.

**Robert Dodd:** Undergraduate Studies, I guess.

**Tobias Owen:** Okay.

**Dr. Hartzell:** That's the history of the University, the building with a multi purpose had to be for a while.

**Tobias Owen:** So, Schaeffer interviewed me, and I also spoke to the, of course, the people who were already here at the time. I guess the only official interview would have been Schaeffer. I never saw anybody else in the administration, and I learned later that was not uncommon. Okay, I told you why I came. I guess I didn't have that much of a

vision about Stony Brook in the SUNY system; it was more in the sense that here was a vigorous growing university and how open everything was, there were not a lot of entrenched positions.

**Dr. Hartzell:** You haven't said what your particular field was, and then I'd like to get yours too, Bob.

**Tobias Owen:** I was trained in astronomy, but my specialty was planetary studies and that pretty much states the case. At the time I arrived, I had just become involved in space missions. Up to that time I had only been working with groundbase observations, using telescopes. But I had just joined the Viking project to land on Mars, and I was beginning work on the what became the Voyager project to the outer solar system.

**Dr. Hartzell:** All right. What was your field?

**Robert Dodd:** I was trained in geology, and as a consequence of a commitment to the Air Force became diverted first to lunar research, and then into meteorites; and I'm quite confident the reason Oliver brought me here was because I was interested in meteorites; we overlapped in that respect. And that's been my principal concentration ever since.

**Dr. Hartzell:** When did you first get the Moon rocks back, when was that?

**Robert Dodd:** That would have been 1969, late summer of 1969. And I believe we didn't get them here until quite a bit thereafter. A lot of the work was done in Houston, the preliminary work.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was Ollie involved in that?

**Robert Dodd:** He was very much, in fact, he produced the first radioelectric age for lunar rock; he did it somewhat *sub rosa*, and lost one or two friends as a consequence, nobody important, just Jerry Wassenberg. I wish he were here to tell it, Karl, it was a marvelous little story.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Why don't you tell what you know.

**Robert Dodd:** Well, Oliver arranged it so that himself in a little receiving laboratory so that he would be next to S. R. Taylor of camera, ....., Rouse was detailed to measure total potassium. Oliver was measuring Argon 40, and he realized that

all he needed to get an age was potassium, plus Argon 40, plus some reasonable assumptions about the isotopic distribution in the lunar material; and he came up with an age. It was not his job to come with the age; and how it got to *The New York Times* I'm not certain. But the upshot was he scooped Jerry Wassenberg and Wassenberg was extremely upset. And of course at Stony Brook the flags waved. He didn't do anything wrong, as Oliver said, he just looked over and there's Roston, it was just an obvious thing to do.

**Dr. Hartzell:** What about the evolution of the department. What can you say about that; how many people were here when you came, Bob?

**Robert Dodd:** There were three of us in the first year: Oliver Schaeffer; Sam Goldich, who was a geochemist of considerable age and even greater reputation; and I was the third one. The objective was to develop a department of 60 faculty in four disciplines, which would have been astronomy, geology, meteorology, oceanography. At full complement it would have been 60 faculty, and we anticipated 200 graduate students. That was the target. Quite early on we populated astronomy, and I think we did that, as a matter of fact, the first, the second year, I'm looking down here, no, I don't think we started astronomy until the third year. The second year we started with oceanography, but it aborted. We had two oceanographers who moved across to marine sciences; we lost the initiative there. But since very early we've had strength in astronomy and in geology, and through Toby in atmospheric. That's a capsule of it. I think we were in full development, at least at our present size by the 1970's. We grew by leaps.

**Dr. Hartzell:** You had good support, did you, from the administration?

**Robert Dodd:** Yes, I'd say in the first five years we had excellent support.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Did you have a hand in planning the building?

**Robert Dodd:** Yes. The way that typically worked was that Oliver and Sam disagreed on almost everything, and I would try to be the swing vote when Sam would tell me to go to hell or shut up or something else inappropriate. I had a small impact on the building. I was there.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I think I remember that the building received some sort of an award, architectural award, can you be specific about that?

**Robert Dodd:** My understanding, Karl, is that it was the most building for the fewest dollars. I don't think it was put quite that bluntly, but I think that was the thrust of it, which was that it was a bargain. I'm not persuaded at this distance from the event that it was, but I think that was the nature of the award. Toby, do you remember anything about that?

**Tobias Owen:** No, no, it was before my time, not much.

**Robert Dodd:** We spent a lot of time on it, laying out the building, and Oliver in particular.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Did you have any contact with the Central Office, with the State University Architect, his name was Steve?

**Robert Dodd:** I'm sure we did, but I don't recall being involved in that. I think that was probably just Oliver. Most of the design was Oliver's, because he and Sam tended to be opposed on almost everything, Oliver made most of the decisions.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I see. Do you want to pick it up from there with regard to your own work?

**Tobias Owen:** Well, I'd like to pick it up from there with respect to questions down the list there, how things have changed since arriving, and I wanted to follow up a couple of things that Bob said. I think it's true that support was very good the first five years, but then we ran into a change in attitude in the State, I guess, and also a different set of priorities in the country and funding became very tight. We are sitting now in Bob Dodd's laboratory in a building which I guess at this point is 20 years old, all right; and when we got here it was brand new. And it's always exciting to work with new things, especially things that have been carefully designed, or at least had some thought put into them, to serve the function that they actually served. But 20 years is a long time for a building, and I think the disappointment I have felt and others as well is that we, for whatever reasons, have not had sufficient support from the State to maintain the level of

excitement and vigor that existed at the time we came, and we've seen the manifestations of that in paint peeling off the walls, water marks, and the deterioration of the physical plant. That is a very depressing thing to live with. It not only lowers the mood of the faculty, but it is a message that the students get as well. In this building right now we have a what should be and was at the time a very nice auditorium, but we can't use it, and we haven't been able to for over a year. The stuff is falling off the ceiling, water comes pouring through when it rains, I mean it is appalling. And we had to close it, we had to stop having public lectures there until finally the campus closed the thing down completely. We were still giving lectures to students in what amounted to a slum, and this is a very sad situation.

**Robert Dodd:** The roof has leaked for upwards of ten years, and nothing was done about it for almost that length of time. When it was finally dealt with, it was discovered there was asbestos in the ceiling, whereupon it got to be two jobs instead of one. The asbestos is being cleared now, but Gil Hanson tells me it will not be, the lecture hall will not be back in service before fall of 1990. It will have been in a ..... state for 13 years.

**Tobias Owen:** But at least that particular thing is getting concentrated attention, but the rest of the building is deteriorated. I mean this building in places looks as bad to me as buildings that I was used to at the University of Chicago that were 50 years old or more.

**Dr. Hartzell:** What is Gil Hanson's position now?

**Robert Dodd:** He's chair of the Department.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Because there was a Hanson who was the engineer on some of the campus projects.

**Tobias Owen:** It wouldn't have been Gil.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I see.

**Robert Dodd:** I know two other Hansons on the campus, but neither would fit those specifications.

**Dr. Hartzell:** To whom do you complain, to whom do you go?

**Tobias Owen:** Well, the department was very unified on these issues, and we had gone to everybody we could think of all the way to the President. We talked to the buildings and grounds people; we talked to vice presidents in charge of this stuff; we've written endless memos.

**Robert Dodd:** It is very depressing, Karl, and I didn't know when thinking about this interview how far you wanted to go into changes in our perception of the place.

**Tobias Owen:** Well, it's one of the questions, that's why I picked it up.

**Robert Dodd:** Those of us who were here in the beginning I think are probably more torn up over what's going on now than even Toby, because Rockefeller had a dream, and large component of that dream was this campus. And I remember when he came and dedicated the place. It was beginning of student unrest, and he was magnificent, he was strong for Stony Brook and for the state system.

**Dr. Hartzell:** This dedication of this building was

**Tobias Owen:** The cornerstone says 1968 out there.

**Robert Dodd:** Yeah, but I think the dedication was 1969. Before that we lived in Old Physics, all over Old Physics, one in the attic, one in the third floor, one in the first, down in the basement.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, Rockefeller was a Phi Beta Kappa from Dartmouth. You didn't have to talk to him in words of one syllable about a university.

**Robert Dodd:** That's true.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Since then everything has been downhill.

**Robert Dodd:** Steadily.

**Dr. Hartzell:** In the sense that central office

**Robert Dodd:** My enthusiasm for Cuomo for President is only partly because I think he would be a good president, I'd also like to try somebody else in Albany because I don't think he is very good for public education.

**Dr. Hartzell:** No, he is a graduate of St. John.



**Robert Dodd:** Sure, but then again, Rockefeller was a graduate of Dartmouth. There's more to it than just the private/public. No, I think Rockefeller, my god, he nearly bankrupted the state in the process but what he left behind is so good. Never mind, we'll pay for it somehow. But the present situation is most distressing. I have to go to Admissions to a meeting at 3 o'clock and the prospect depresses me utterly because

**Dr. Hartzell:** I wanted to get into that, I wanted to get into the quality of students.

**Robert Dodd:** Do you want to do that now?

**Dr. Hartzell:** Might as well. How far back can you go on the quality of students.

**Robert Dodd:** I can go to the beginning, and at the risk of this falling into the wrong hands I'll even make some very strong ethnic comments because they are cogent. When we came here in 1965, there were not enough students in the department to launch normal courses. Our real courses began in 1966, and they were small classes; but the students were in general very bright. They were very largely Jewish students, and they were principally kids who didn't go to Harvard principally for lack of money, but they were intellectually very, very strong, and they were exciting people. For the first few years of the department we had very few graduate students, we used undergraduate students, many of whom were fully competitive with what later came as graduate students. My own feeling is that the thing that really tipped things away from us was the decision to allow tuition assistance money to be used in private schools around the state. And I recall John Toll and Alec Pond being terribly upset about that, and at the time they felt that this was step was going to tilt the table back toward the privates and away from places like Stony Brook, and it did.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I think it did.

**Robert Dodd:** And in recent years we've had a great difficulty meeting the state's requirements as to enrollment, and the cost of meeting them or even approaching them has been to lower the standard and the result is a fairly weak student group. That's my picture of it, you see them every day too.

**Tobias Owen:** Yes, I think I would agree that the quality of the students has gone down, and the way I would say it, I guess, is that when I first came here for the first two years there were always some really bright students that you'd encounter in a large class or a small class, not a whole, but always some. They would go on the best schools in the country for graduate schools—Cal Tech, Cornell, MIT—and then they began to get fewer and fewer. We just don't seem to have those top echelon or at least it isn't as visible in our department. I don't know how much of that's a question of those students simply not being on campus or whether they are on campus but they are taking courses in other departments. All I can tell you that my observation is that I don't see them here these days.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, I think Ray Maniuszko would be able to tell you that. He's the person who has been in charge of University Studies. He's a very bright guy and been on top of what has happened statistically in student body for about 15 to 20 years.

**Tobias Owen:** Who's done this?

**Dr. Hartzell:** Ray Maniuszko.

**Tobias Owen:** Those are the real data. Obviously our impressions are bound to be subjective, but that's all we have to work with.

**Robert Dodd:** Well, as an example, Karl, and Don Lindsley could give you the same story, both of us taught the freshmen geology class early in the history of the department, and are now teaching it again. In my case the gap is something like 18 years. I go back to my notes from the earlier period, and I am astonished at how much more I gave them then than I can give them now. And Don has had the same experience. He's pulled out old examinations which simply would destroy the present classes. There's no doubt there has been a real change.

**Dr. Hartzell:** How many graduate students do you have?

**Robert Dodd:** I think it's between 50 and 55 now.

**Tobias Owen:** But that's another change that has occurred.

**Robert Dodd:** We peaked at about 70 several years ago.

**Tobias Owen:** I think that was triggered in part by that oil crisis or something.

**Robert Dodd:** Yeah, the oil crisis and also for a long while we were fueled by the enthusiasm for space research.

**Tobias Owen:** That's right, that too, and there has been a general decline across the country the physical sciences. There were statistics in something I saw recently, maybe *Physics Today*, that over 50% of the graduate students in physical sciences these days are foreign born, and that's a change that just happened in the last few years, I guess.

**Dr. Hartzell:** How do you account for it?

**Tobias Owen:** Well, I think there are a variety of factors. One of them seems to be that this mysterious subject called business, which when I was in school was regarded as beneath contempt, is suddenly a very popular and exciting field. So a lot of very bright people are going into that and becoming investment bankers or whatever with an M. B. A., earning vast amounts of money and living happily ever after, I guess.

**Robert Dodd:** The job opportunities are also rather limited in the basic sciences.

**Tobias Owen:** Yeah, if you look at the comparison, it's pretty devastating what you can do with an M. B. A. and what you can do with a Ph. D. in astronomy, forget it.

**Robert Dodd:** That national fascination with science has lost its bloom.

**Tobias Owen:** Yes, that too.

**Robert Dodd:** And for that I hold the administration in Washington very largely responsible.

**Tobias Owen:** I think our leadership has been pathetic, and I'm anticipating four more years of it.

**Robert Dodd:** Plus, we're paying very high bills and getting nothing back except receipts for interest. So the country is not awash in money to spend on projects. Basically once the Apollo mission flew things began to skid in the space program after 1973. By 1973 people hardly paid attention to a lunar walk, and thereafter it's been rather steadily downhill.

**Dr. Hartzell:** You say once the Apollo missions were through

**Robert Dodd:** Once it flew, once the first one flew. The same thing with the space shuttle, the first one seems to create great excitement and uncorking champagne bottles, and then the public interest diminishes very swiftly.

**Tobias Owen:** But the money that's available for basic research probably isn't too different, right, except it's different in different areas. But you're talking about the enthusiasm of the public, their awareness and their orientation.

**Robert Dodd:** Yeah, there isn't public pressure.

**Tobias Owen:** That is true. But again, I think it's part of a general pattern that you have to look at what's happening to our electronics industry, for example, where we used to be the best in the world, or the automobile industry or various areas of innovative technology, we are just not there any more, and somehow it's connected. I don't think it's a coincidence.

**Robert Dodd:** We were terribly damaged by the 1979 embargo, we were not at all ready for that, the oil embargo. Reagan loves to play ....., basically it was the strength of OPEC at that time that decimated our economy and shock waves that have traveled all the way up to the present.

**Tobias Owen:** But the sense that doing innovative technology is an exciting career or doing basic research, doing science is really fun and exciting, I think that's just not there at the same level that it used to be.

**Robert Dodd:** I have a local theory for Long Island that doesn't explain the general statement, I think you're right that it's nationwide, but I think on Long Island we have a particular problem, which is that about ten years ago the standard outlet for the quartile of Stony Brook students was high school teaching, produced a tremendous number of teachers, most of whom did not stray far from *alma mater*, and when we get kids at really miserable introductions to science in high school, I always have the dark suspicion that it's our product that taught those kids. In fact in some cases I know it to be the case.

**Tobias Owen:** Not encouraging.

**Robert Dodd:** The chickens are coming home to fowl. No, it is discouraging, and the mood on this campus I think is frightened.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Faculty mood?

**Robert Dodd:** And if the students aren't frightened, I think it probably says something terrible about their lack of sensitivity because it was a sharp edged place, well, you remember when you were running the place. It was not comfortable, not pleasant, it was muddy and miserable, but there was an aggressive enthusiasm, there was a feeling that we're wading through thick and thin, we're really building something. You could get ulcers from it, but you wouldn't die of boredom. Now there's a constant feeling of, well, you want your lab cleaned, stand on the queue, it probably won't be done until next month because we are short-handed. I ran all over the campus looking for a key to get a projection screen to work in Old Chemistry because it doesn't have a building manager. It's under the wing of another guy who's over in the new Chemistry building. All over the place you are inconvenienced by a lack of the doers on the campus. Like the fact that we get rid of the secretaries and janitors.

**Tobias Owen:** Just watching new buildings go up, watching old buildings decay, and that's a very different feeling. You don't have to have new buildings going up all the time, but you need maintenance and a sense of excitement; and I agree with Bob it just doesn't seem to be there right now.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Where do you think is the frontier of your fields? NASA seems to be symbol simply for the shuttle at this point, what else is it doing?

**Tobias Owen:** Well, I can speak to that. We have gone through a very dark period. It's been ten years now since there has been a launch of any vehicle to go out and explore other planets, and this decision has nothing to do with Stony Brook, it's been an administrative problem, partly within NASA and partly within successive administrations. That's about to change and next year we hope to have two new launches, and we have a new project which has just been put forward which may get approved this year, and if so, we'll have a very vigorous program again.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Within NASA?

**Tobias Owen:** Yes, within NASA. This new project involves cooperation with the Europeans, and there are studies going on now looking for cooperation with the Soviet Union for a major Mars exploration, which if it happens, toward the end of the '90's, would be comparable I think in its intellectual excitement to the lunar program at the end of the sixties. But it's not clear it's going to happen. It's pretty clear the Soviets are going to go to Mars, it's not at all clear that we're going.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Manned?

**Tobias Owen:** And bring samples back;, no, unmanned, but the big excitement is collecting Martian materials from identified geological areas and bringing them back to Earth for analysis. Well, it's very late to be doing that. We could have done it a long time ago, but at least it's going to be happening, but the United States has to get going if it wants to get on this boat, because the boat's leaving. But there are signs it might happen, that the U. S. will get involved and the Soviets are encouraging it. In fact, they are almost flaunting it, they are saying, hey, guys, you want it or not.

**Dr. Hartzell:** What was

**Robert Dodd:** .....

**Dr. Hartzell:** Go ahead.

**Robert Dodd:** No, I was just saying that is encouraging.

**Dr. Hartzell:** What was John Toll's role in the development of the department?

**Robert Dodd:** I used to have great fun with Johnny when I needed ..... because we were classmates, yeah, we both came in in 1965. In fact, before he got married, he was over for dinner one night, we were talking about the fact that we were physics class of '65. John was very supportive. In those days, in those first two years, I know Oliver had the impression that the name of the game was spend the money before it goes away. He worked for the government for a long time, and it was there. We were, I wouldn't say we were lavish, I think we were pretty clever about the way we spent it, but we didn't feel there was a ceiling above you that you were constantly bumping your head on.

Whatever you came up with simply ....., John gave us pretty much what we wanted. We went up like a skyrocket with faculty. Alec Pond occasionally resisted us a little bit because we were continually wanting more and more and more and part of his job description was to make sure we didn't outrun everybody else. But John was very supportive.

**Tobias Owen:** I would support that too with a shorter time base. I would say, I remember two incidents in fact, one, we were trying to recruit a rather distinguished senior person, and the gates had really closed on open season, open hunting for new faculty, and it wasn't at all obvious that this was going to be looked on favorably, but in fact Toll got solidly behind it, and I believe he went personally up to Albany to arrange a professorship for this guy. In fact, it fell through because Harvard made him a better offer, but the point is Toll really put himself on the line to do this at a time when it wasn't easy to do. I mean, he must have cashed in some chips to get this appointment.

**Robert Dodd:** He really played to win, and the administration in recent years has seemed to play to lose. Part of it is because they maintain they are poor, the resources are not there, but part of it is they are very poor in spirit. We have, for example, lost an imaginative fire

**Tobias Owen:** Almost reckless I would say.

**Robert Dodd:** Pardon.

**Tobias Owen:** Johnny was almost reckless, but you need some of that in order to deal with the bureaucracy that's this amorphous.

**Robert Dodd:** And it isn't, Johnny has been doing very well in Maryland. I know several people who are associated with the university, they think the world of him. It's characteristic of this place that by the time he left, a lot of the faculty felt it was time for him to leave, and the last person they wanted to replace him was Alec. What they basically wanted was an administration they could push around, and they've had it, they've had it.

**Tobias Owen:** Maybe the pendulum will swing

**Robert Dodd:** I don't know, I don't know. I think it's very sad; we've reached the point now that we're no longer head and shoulders above the other centers. We are in many areas trying to reach them, they are growing, their recruitment is booming, and ours is dwindling. Parenthetically, we have a new admissions officer, and from what I can see of her, she's going to turn the boat around if the administration helps her. But she's been here for less than a year, and she's already got an arm-long list of things that she was told she would have and doesn't have.

**Tobias Owen:** That is a recurrent theme.

**Robert Dodd:** And happens all the time.

**Tobias Owen:** That is another demoralizing aspect of life at Stony Brook in the last, what, ten, fifteen years or so. These promises are made, and then they are not kept.

**Robert Dodd:** I'm at the point of writing to Marburger and telling him that I reckon he's got ten months to think of a better way of saving energy than turning off the air conditioning for two days each week during the summer because I have grown mold and mildew and I have problems with the computer working. And when I come in on Monday morning to teach a class during the summer, the conditions are unbearable. What kind of economy is this.

**Tobias Owen:** You can't work in your office; I have to work at home.

**Robert Dodd:** Well, of course, and that's one reason why a lot of people do work at home, which is untrackable and which is destructive. My goodness, aren't we cheery.

**Tobias Owen:** Yes, we're getting pretty discontented here.

**Robert Dodd:** I hope you weren't planning to write a story with a happy ending.

**Tobias Owen:** Well, hey, it's not over yet, it's not over yet.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Okay, let's see. Are there any other questions, you covered them all, I think.

**Tobias Owen:** With an oil slick. What is this for, by the way, is it going to be a memorial volume or something?



**Dr. Hartzell:** Did you get this letter? There was an idea about I guess three years ago, this was Homer Neal's idea, I believe, that there should be a history of Stony Brook for the twenty-fifth anniversary. And they had asked two people, Trask, David Trask and John Pratt to start collecting material and thinking about it. Trask went to Washington to the State Department, and since retired from that; and John said he has a little material, but I don't think they got very far. And then nothing was done until Neal came. And when I heard that there were plans, all I did was to offer Homer what help I could with a guide to the three years that I had been in charge. And nothing else transpired until Jerry Schubel came, and he picked that up and called me in and asked if I would be interested to be helpful and I said yes. And before he got back to me, I checked out William L. Sullivan's second wife, he had died, to see if there were any papers, he was chair of the Council. He succeeded Ward Melville as chairman of the Council. And word came back from her with a nice little note that all of his papers had been thrown out at home and nothing was available apparently through his secretary in the chambers. All I did was pass that on to Jerry with a note saying this is typical of what we will be up against if we sit around and wait. The three Governors that are really responsible for the University are all passed on -- Dewey, Harriman and Rockefeller. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees in key years, Frank Moore, he's gone; Tom Hamilton, the chap who appointed me, is gone, is dead; Stan Ross is dead.

**Robert Dodd:** Is that right.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes, Stan went down, for some reason or other, I don't know; and of course, Ward Melville. And so the idea was changed to forget the writing but try to get some recollections on tape from people who were important in the creation and development of the University. That's what I've done so far the starred people.

**Tobias Owen:** You mean all these people?

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes.

**Robert Dodd:** My god, you've been busy.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, I interviewed Francis Bonner and I'm working on existing property largely, but I have a call out to Boyer who is president of the Carnegie Endowment for the Advancement of Teaching and to John Lee, the first president, who is out in Palos Verde just south of Los Angeles. That's as far as I will carry it, I think, because I have my own writing work to do.

**Robert Dodd:** It's a monumental contribution, but I wonder if anybody is going to want to dig through it. I'm working on the collected papers and diaries and field notes of a geologist in anticipation of writing a biography, my god, that's only one guy; what a phenomenal job it is to sort through all this stuff, because he apparently was born with a pencil in his hand and dropped it when he died.

**Tobias Owen:** But you know this would be a nice project for a history student; they do this kind of stuff.

**Robert Dodd:** That's true.

**Dr. Hartzell:** A history graduate student?

**Tobias Owen:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Robert Dodd:** Somebody approached me about doing something of this sort, I guess it was Sujishi. He got drunk one night at a party over at Sunwood, strolled by me and said Homer Neal is looking for somebody to write the history of the University, are you interested. I said, do you want a long answer or a short answer.

**Tobias Owen:** You gave him a short answer.

**Robert Dodd:** I gave him a short answer.

**Tobias Owen:** Right.

**Robert Dodd:** Actually, I think it would be a lot of fun, but I think it's something that somebody with more experience

**Dr. Hartzell:** I would enjoy doing it, but I have a project that's very close to my heart, it's writing on a book on human valuation, which can serve as either a text for an introductory course in the field of values, valuation, or a book for the intelligent layman to read to help them sort out the values they have and get them organized.

**Robert Dodd:** Send a copy to George Bush, definitely.

**Tobias Owen:** I really have to get going. I have one other negative comment here before I flee, and that is in terms of has Stony Brook met your expectations. I think the first few years I was here, I was very impressed with how we were recruiting such good faculty and they were coming in one after the other. But then I began to notice they were leaving one after the other, too; and I think that's not just true in our department but I've been aware through friendships, committee assignments and so on that other departments too. Stony Brook is having a consistent problem in hanging on to good faculty, and I think one thing that it would be interesting for you to do as part of this project maybe is to talk to some of those people who have left and gone on and pursued happy and very productive careers elsewhere, why did they leave?

**Dr. Hartzell:** I intend to do some of that.

**Robert Dodd:** It's largely the young ones.

**Tobias Owen:** Yes.

**Robert Dodd:** And at least one of the reasons is they can't afford to buy a house.

**Tobias Owen:** Well, but that's become a problem in other places too.

**Robert Dodd:** But particularly

**Tobias Owen:** What you're willing to put up with

**Robert Dodd:** Yeah, you have to have something drawing you. We went through the years of mud, and it was almost a red badge of courage. You had the feeling that this is absolutely miserable but we're doing something and it's worth doing. The kids didn't see it that way. The poor kids, they said this is absolutely miserable, period. And unfortunately the student picture of this place is still in terms of the plain brown wrapper. And yet we haven't managed to beat that back. In part because it does come in a plain brown wrapper, and as Toby says, since I've said some things that could be construed as definitely not favorable to John Marburger, let me applaud the fact that we have flowers all over the place.

**Tobias Owen:** Yes, the place looks a lot better.

**Robert Dodd:** That's an improvement, but that just means if you can keep people from going inside the buildings, you can make a favorable impression.

**Tobias Owen:** Right.

**Robert Dodd:** I think there are positive signs, Karl. One thing just happened which, Toby, I don't whether you've seen the effects of it, but I sure have, the pass/no credit option which has been an abomination on this campus -- the arrangement by which a student can opt to take a course for a 'P,' pass, 'NC,' no credit -- this has been abused miserably. And the faculty finally put a limit on it; it's restricted to certain courses; you can't take it with the required core courses. And it's had a dramatic effect on my class. I see better attendance, more students asking questions, fewer students coming up and asking what they have to do to get 6 to zero; it's quite a turnaround. And I think it's something we ought to applaud. But the people on this campus that are dictating academic administration, the ones that are engineering the curriculum, to a man and a woman, opposed that change. So I think there is hope; I think the enrollment thing could be turned around in a matter of two or three years with intelligent recruitment, which we have not had for many years, and we have a fireball on the job. A fireball who is likely to be gone, I suspect that we are going to lose her. But if we do that sort of thing

**Dr. Hartzell:** ..... on the job.

**Robert Dodd:** On the job in admissions, the head of admissions

**Tobias Owen:** And we've had that problem, the same problem I'm talking about of keeping young faculty, in the administration too, that people who tend to be innovative and work hard and so on get terribly frustrated.

**Robert Dodd:** It's a real serious problem. But there is hope. The state is a formidably strong. Other parts of the State University are prospering, so I have to believe that there is some local problem, and we ought to be able to do something about it locally.

**Tobias Owen:** Good, on that optimistic note I think I'll

**Robert Dodd:** See you later. We've got to get together, it's too seldom.

**Tobias Owen:** Right, lunch.

**Robert Dodd:** Why don't we, sure, let's do it. Let me know, I won't forget, I'll be in touch.

**Tobias Owen:** Right.

**Robert Dodd:** Well, sit down, Karl, no need to rush off, unless you are finished with all that you needed. It's a fascinating place, it's a frustrating place, and I think I've been here too long. I think I probably should have moved out quite a long while ago. It's generally not a good idea to spend your whole career in one place. I think that's a mistake. It's a mistake quite a few senior faculty have made at Stony Brook. The corollary of our rapid turnover of junior faculty is that we have quite a few senior faculty who have been here since the doors opened, and I don't think they are mentally healthy, I don't think we are mentally healthy, I think some of us spend too much of our time thinking about the old dream, some of them 1960's radicals who completely lost their mission when the Vietnam War ended; and I think that's an unfortunate property. And yet, and yet, it has such potential.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, leadership really has to come from the top, morale has to come from the top, and my *alma mater* is Wesleyan, and it's just changed presidents, and the new chap came in from Stanford with enthusiasm and admiration for the institution as he found it, and I think that's got to happen for this institution. And the man's got to come in with his eyes open and know that he's probably going to hit his head against the wall

**Robert Dodd:** He's got to be willing to hit that wall many, many times.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes, well, John Toll was willing to do that.

**Robert Dodd:** Sure, and Alec was. Alec got in trouble just before he left, I don't know that it's a fact that Albany was strongly opposed to his being the president here, but I know he squawked about what he felt was a very uneven and very unfair distribution of funds toward the Amherst campus up in Buffalo. I've seen that, and they certainly did a job; it's handsome; but at the same time they were sapping everything else in the system in order to redeploy resources that way. Alec complained about it, he went public about it, and I think that sealed his fate. But a lot of the faculty were prepared to lie on the

railroad tracks rather than see Alec as president. And I thought he was good, I thought he was very smart. I don't think he had quite the imagination that Johnny had, and he was a colder person, but he was efficient, he could do the job, and he said what was on his mind.

**Dr. Hartzell:** It's a pity he didn't marshal the whole institution behind him

**Robert Dodd:** No, in particular he didn't, he had absolutely no appeal for the people in the humanities and social sciences who were frankly pushing for a softer institution; those folks are still here and Alec is not. Marburger is, you know, a number of things, a gentleman, ....., delightful, but the place isn't operating as it should, and I think that he would leave if he could. The problem is that soon in that game you can't leave. The rumor was that he was shortlisted at Stanford a few years ago; I don't think it's going to happen again, that's a problem. ....

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, it's difficult to envisage clearly the good points and the faults of individuals. Nobody comes black or white in an institution.

**Robert Dodd:** I don't who recruited Johnny, but I think he was just the right man for the job at the time. And I think he realized he was not going to be able to function in his mode, and that's why he left. Maryland gave him a few more years ..... and I think he's taken good advantage of it. .... Although on the other hand Stony Brook is still ..... graduate institutions but you have a little leeway around you. If you were at Brockport or Oswego you would all be teaching much more and doing much less on the outside, so it still is a good base from that standpoint.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Do you have any relations with local industry, Long Island industry one way or another?

**Robert Dodd:** No, not in this department. One of Oliver's mistakes, in my opinion, was that he steered the department very strongly away from anything of local use. He was not unhappy to see the oceanographers leave because he didn't like the applied bent that they were showing; he disapproved of it, didn't feel it had any place at Stony Brook. Neither he nor anybody else in the department has had much enthusiasm for local

geology. The only exception is Steve Engelbright, who is very interested in it. So what we did basically is build a department which is a microcosm of much of the University, much of the University has functioned in the same very narrow way, leaving it to places like the Marine Sciences to be useful as well as ornamental. And they paid a price for it. We don't have the constituency in Engineering and Marine Sciences

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, Harriman College is moving back, I think, toward specific problems in the economic field.

**Robert Dodd:** Well, one of the things that's always struck me about Stony Brook is that the best thing that anybody ever did for us was to tell us we could be ....., the worse thing they could do was to tell us we could be Berkeley, because ever since there has been an assumption on the part of the press, and I think particularly John Hildebrand who's no friend of this place, that to the extent that we are not Berkeley, we are deficient. Stony Brook could be one of the premiere state universities in the country if it would recognize it doesn't have to be Berkeley. There other state universities it could model itself on more appropriately. If a department like this were involved in everything geological in the New York City region, if it were the fountainhead of information for the New York City region, we would be ever so much more valuable, and we would be functioning in the State University mode. But somebody got a little off the track; Oliver was off the track a lot. I used to argue with him about it. Damn it, he went to Penn State, he knew what state universities were for. I went to Cornell, and Cornell was a fairly contentious place, it was an *angst* school. And service is a large part of the State University's mission. I think we missed it. Now, Jerry has carried on over in Marine Sciences, he has taken full advantage. His predecessors were not quite as good at it as he is, but he really did a job at recognizing that's something the State University can do very well.

**Dr. Hartzell:** And he probably knows how to do it.

**Robert Dodd:** Yeah. Well, I'm glad to hear you're not going to write all this up, because I was going to suggest a title, and it's not a very nice title; I was going to suggest "From Rags to Riches and Back Again."

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, okay.

**Robert Dodd:** But it's, I hope somebody does write it up because

**Dr. Hartzell:** I hope so too.

**Robert Dodd:** You know, you can't use history if it isn't accessible, and aside from the occasional death of a faculty member, which get rolled out like a cannon on fourth of July, you get to say how it was in the old days.

[end of interview]