

**INTERVIEW WITH DAVID FOX
PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS, RETIRED
FORMER DEAN GRADUATE SCHOOL**

December 8, 1988

Dr. Hartzell: Interview with David Fox, retired Professor of Physics, December 8, 1988. The questions were developed by a group of people, all friends of yours, Cliff Swartz, Francis Bonner, Sid Gelber and Tom Irvine; and I had a long list of questions and they cut it down. So let's go through these first, they are fairly quick, and you just give your name, department

David Fox: David Fox, Physics Department, Professor. I came to Stony Brook, actually to Oyster Bay, in 1959, and I was 39 years old at the time. I came from the University of Rochester; I was an Assistant Professor in the Institute of Optics with a secondary appointment in the Department of Physics. I was advised about the opening of Stony Brook by a physicist at Syracuse, Peter, do you need his name?

Dr. Hartzell: Not necessarily.

David Fox: It's a well known name, that's why I feel silly about, it just slipped my mind.

Dr. Hartzell: Where is he now?

David Fox: I've lost track of him; he's probably retired by now. He's a general relativist and a rather well known one, anyway, he knew Leonard Eisenbud and had heard from Leonard about Oyster Bay and Stony Brook. Who interviewed me was, I came to Oyster Bay and gave a talk when the Physics Department consisted of three people at that time, so they gathered up an audience from what later became, or maybe was at that time, the Science and Mathematics Division, and I was interviewed by Leonard Eisenbud; and I also talked to a lot of other people in the that division, particularly Francis Bonner.

Dr. Hartzell: Did you talk to Olsen by any chance?

David Fox: I must have, but I just don't remember the interview, it was, after all, some thirty years ago. Why did I come?

Dr. Hartzell: What factors were important?

David Fox: Well, I was, I had in my youth some political, left wing political connections which in the McCarthy days made me *persona non grata* on many universities, and I had great difficulty in landing jobs in those days, although of course those incidents were long past, the McCarthyists were not forgiving. The other factor was, although I had a position at the University of Rochester, it was on soft money, and there were four people ahead of me on line for tenure and the likelihood of getting only one tenure position among all that soft money in the Institute of Optics for the next several years, so they said stay as long as you like and in the meantime look for a tenured job if you want to. My understanding, that's number 7, my understanding was that Stony Brook was developed to be, as is only half jokingly put then, to be the Berkeley of the East.

Dr. Hartzell: That phrase was that old, was it, it was being used in 1959?

David Fox: I don't really remember, it certainly was used during the Oyster Bay days. But it represented my understanding even though that particular phrase may not have been used, that is, that there were, the East, the northeast at least had at the time no very good state universities as opposed to private universities with state money. And I knew, having been at the University of California for many years as an undergraduate and graduate student what a good state university could be like.

Dr. Hartzell: Where were you as an undergraduate?

David Fox: At Berkeley and again as a graduate student.

Dr. Hartzell: I see, so your Ph. D. is from Berkeley, is that right.

David Fox: Yes, yes, so I was looking forward to having New York State having a first rate institution. What was the vision being transformed? I'm not sure I understand the

Dr. Hartzell: Well, that's, all I'm saying is really a repetition of 7.

David Fox: Uh, huh.

Dr. Hartzell: In other words, what was the purpose behind the establishment of Stony Brook as you understood it.

David Fox: Well, I answered sufficiently, or did you want more detail.

Dr. Hartzell: I don't think there was a Master Plan then.

David Fox: No, but individuals spoke to me about what they considered to be the purpose. As I later found out, there was a good deal of disagreement among the faculty members who were then there. You surely have heard all this.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes.

David Fox: And I had originally spoken, when I came down there, of course, to the science people, who had a particular view of what it should be and what their expectations were, and only later, that's at the time I came down for the interview, which was in the spring of 1959. After I came in September, of course, I learned about the split among the faculty. Eight now.

Dr. Hartzell: Eight, right.

David Fox: Well, and of course every time it says Stony Brook, I'm interpreting it, at least in reference to the early years, as Oyster Bay. It was a very exciting place, there was a lot of vision of the future, very stimulating as a result, and I liked the idea of building something. People were involved, deeply involved. On the other hand, of course, I was unhappy about the intensity of the split. I mean, I think it is perfectly right to have a variety of opinions, but I thought, if not at first, but as the thing developed, that the split raised the danger of almost destroying the institution. Opinions were so violent. As it turned out, after we moved to Stony Brook, that died out, that part of it. And we were still in exciting days, which you are sure to remember, that was when you came. I thought the top leadership was a little weak, but that was more than made up for by the fact that, this was in Oyster Bay, by the fact that there were so many builders among the faculty members, that that made up for it. It meant, of course, that there were two distinct thrusts in different directions, but it was

Dr. Hartzell: That must have taken quite a lot of energy on the part of some people away from either their teaching or their research for a while.

David Fox: Yes, well, most of the original people in Physics later, let's say the first seven people, of those only one is still active in research.

Dr. Hartzell: Who is that?

David Fox: I. But not very intensely, low level. One died, that was Jim Raz. Let's see, one, two three, four, five; one has been active, I'm sorry I'm talking about research in physics; one has been active, also low level, in research using physics in another field.

Dr. Hartzell: Who is that?

David Fox: It's Fred Meuther who has been examining, first, paintings, and then old manuscripts, so he's doing it as a physicist, but of course the purpose is

Dr. Hartzell: It's applied physics.

David Fox: Applied physics in a sense, but there are different definitions of applied physics. This is even one step removed from what most physicists called applied physics in that it's using the physics techniques in an entirely different field. I think that when a doctor uses an x-ray machine, it's not applied physics, he may call it applied physics, but it's not really. It doesn't, applied physicists are the people who developed; in that sense Herb was an applied physicist in that he developed a technique, but once it's developed, then it's art, you see, or medicine in the case of the x-rays. And most of this is because once you, you work so hard on administrative things, I'm using administrative in the broader sense down to the individual faculty members involved with the administration, but once you work on that such a long time, you are away from your field, you haven't read very much, and it's so hard to catch up.

Dr. Hartzell: That's right.

David Fox: So, that is true. People who came a little later, that is in the last year at Stony Brook, who are they, one, two, three I can remember, no, four of them I think, but I can't remember who the fourth one was, are still active in research, but not the people

who came the first three years, except in a very limited way. Oh, and also Cliff is very active but no longer in physics research.

Dr. Hartzell: I think it was great that he got the Medal.

David Fox: It was well deserved.

Dr. Hartzell: You said you thought the leadership was a bit weak, what individuals did you have in mind, on the campus or in Albany?

David Fox: Well, I think the Albany leadership at that time was nothing really, it was only later, a few years later, I think, well, remember I had very little contact with Albany in those years. I have very indirect and vague impressions. I don't mean this statement to be anything more than an impression, that until Sam Gould came there was nobody really with a proper vision of the University.

Dr. Hartzell: Not even Porter or Tom Hamilton?

David Fox: That's right, I'd forgotten about Porter. He may have, but he wasn't there very long, was he. Well, then I'd better, you're straightening me out now on my memory of this time, and I better withdraw my statement.

Dr. Hartzell: Hamilton resigned December 31, 1962.

David Fox: So he was only there about two or three years.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, a little more than that, but how long I don't know. I don't know when he came.

David Fox: Yeah, it may have started with Hamilton rather than with, that's true, and he brought in a lot of new people. But no, I meant the leadership on campus. I think that Olsen certainly was, could be the head of the kind of institution he thought of, a small liberal arts college with some orientation that he believed in, but he didn't have the vision of a university, nor did he have the feeling for a university. A university president, even if he comes from a particular field, has to have some sense of the needs of all fields. That's something that I learned even as Graduate Dean; in the first few months I learned how different the needs of an English Department were from those of a Physics Department. He had absolutely zero feeling for the needs in the sciences. I don't know

about the social sciences, I have no idea, certainly the sciences, he had no feeling whatsoever.

Dr. Hartzell: Being a Dean is a liberal education in itself.

David Fox: Well, but even as late as the time that he left, he's made statements that made it clear, the one thing that saved the situation is that he knew that he didn't know, and so he deferred to people like Francis and Leonard in their opinions. But what he really wanted was very different from what later, and some of those experiments, and I'm not an expert on general pedagogy, but things like the St. John's experiment, I guess no longer an experiment or Hampshire College, may be fine for the liberal arts, but I see the products in the sciences and the only time they are successful is when students who could have learned that without ever going to college, the kind of independent student who is going to study no matter what will be successful there, but they learn really, it's really great for teaching the history of science and the philosophy of science, which are very important, but it's terrible preparation for graduate school, and it's no preparation at all for industry, which is all right, I mean not every university has to prepare you for industry, but it's no preparation to be a physicist. It's preparation for a person who wants to think about physics or who wants to go into an allied subject like history, philosophy, sociology of science or something like that. And the kind of thing that Olsen wanted to do would have meant really giving up the idea of physics as a research subject, giving up, in fact I think it would have been disastrous for teaching physics. There was some idea, for example, from the very beginning that every, having unity in all subjects. Now I'm all for, I like to point out to my students the connection between this and that. I mean synthesizing is a very important aspect, but sometimes you have to look at the details, and there's no, I mean what is the connection between a neutron and Shakespeare, and they were going to search for that. I'm exaggerating, of course, but not terribly much exaggerating, because there was one course that was designed to cover everything. So, anyway, that I thought, well, that gets too much into my opinion as a partisan on that, but the net result of this all, you see, is that the administration there, they were running the

school, which, originally, by the way, was designated a science college, which none of us wanted, even the scientists didn't want, they wanted a University, and they ran the science college in such a way that, sorry they didn't run it because of this deferring to Francis and Leonard and probably to the, who was the chairman of Biology, probably Frank Erk, but it would not have, the science program, had they had their way, the science program would fail, unless they wanted to change it into the social science of science, you know the philosophy and social science of science. Does that cover that?

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, I think so, the spirit, yes, you've indicated that people were excited about creating something.

David Fox: Oh, yes, they were very exciting times, and that lasted into the sixties, and then the realities of running a large university on too small a budget begun to make themselves felt, and it's hard to maintain that, I've been through this twice, by the way. In the fifties, the Israelis decided to take the Teknion -- the Israeli Institute of Technology -- and change it from what was just sort of a minor, rather poor engineering school into, they also had this phrase, not the Berkeley of the East, but the MIT of the Middle East, so before we called it the Berkeley of the East, they called it the MIT of the Middle East, and I was hired by a man by the name of Minten Rosen to be the chairman, who is still in the United States, and I went over there for four years. And that was an exciting time too, the time of building, and this is the kind of thing I like. But after a while, you know, you are no longer building, that excitement has to die down.

Dr. Hartzell: Okay, nine.

David Fox: We're up to nine, yes, events, persons and experiences that stand out in my mind.

Dr. Hartzell: You don't have to stay in Oyster Bay, I want to go as far as 1971, you can go into the three years that I was running the place, and go into John Toll's early years.

David Fox: Well, of course, my memory, I'm getting to a point where my memory is no longer clear on many things, some of the things of my childhood are clearer than

any of the things that far back. But I would say in my own department, of course, the first, when we hired Max Dresden, that made a change, and then, of course, the enormous step of Frank Yang coming. There is, and this I think, a lot of this has to do with Alec Pond. That is, he is a man of vision, he is a man who worked very hard to get things done, and he really built that Department. Leonard has to get a lot of credit for starting it, but taking it past that initial stage was all Alec's doing, and I know that

Dr. Hartzell: He came in September of 1962.

David Fox: Yes, that's right, he came when we moved.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, same time I did.

David Fox: Yeah, right. When Frank was to come here, there was a time problem, that is the, it would take some time to set up the Einstein Fellowship for him, I mean, it had to be approved by Albany, and there was a lot of paperwork and so forth. So he sought some funds, he meaning Alec, sought some funds so they bring Yang here a semester earlier, and he wrote to the New York State Institute for Science and Technology, some organization of that name, I think it's one of these semi-public groups the State set up to bring science and technology to New York State, and he wrote this, I don't know, fifty, hundred page proposal, whatever it was, telling the effect on the University, the effect on the Long Island economy, the effect on New York State, and the intellectual implications, and everything, and a few years later I met the president or chairman or chief executive officer of that Institute

Dr. Hartzell: Remember his name?

David Fox: No, I don't. And he had nothing but praise, he said it's so far above and beyond the quality that is Alec's proposal. Great, you wished all the others were like that, nothing came even near that. So, I didn't meet the man again for three or four years, and again, still, this is about six or seven years later, he was still enthusiastic about that proposal; it was really a marvelous thing. By the way, there's an interesting little story, just for your own sake, but I wanted to mention about how Frank, the whole business of his coming here, let me remind you this is an institution at that time that was hardly

known, the Physics Department that is, it was hardly known. We did our recruiting by contacting friends because we weren't known generally. Alec and Max and I were having lunch one day and talking about the building of the Department, and one of them said, we have to get somebody really absolutely first-rate, and whom shall we get; and one of them said, how about Frank Yang. Do you know the word 'chutzpah,' ever come across it?

Dr. Hartzell: I have, yes.

David Fox: Unmitigated gall. The 'chutzpah' that we had was represented by the fact that all of us nodded and said, yes, that would be very good, you know, as if this nothing institution, this nothing Physics Department could hope to get a person like that. And then we got him.

Dr. Hartzell: That's before Toll's name had come up or

David Fox: I think his name had come up, but nothing serious was being done yet, yes, I think it was just at the beginning. There was a whole bunch of plans, and one of them, of course, was to see whom we could recommend for, it was a time of big recruiting, including a lot of administrative fellows, so the word went around, you know, the search committees, I don't know if you had search committees in those days, but whoever it was wanted suggestions, whom shall we suggest. And it was right around that same time that Toll's name came up, I don't mean at that lunch, but something of that sort. So, anyway, a story, just a little background story. Let's see, outside the department, well, at that point, well, of course, all the administrators -- you and John Toll and Stan Ross, I remember well -- and what was being done. But in the faculties of the other departments, I began to lose touch with people except as my job as Dean necessitated, no, that wasn't true, while I was Dean I still had lots of time, while I was Dean I still had a great deal of involvement with departments.

Dr. Hartzell: When were you made Dean of the Graduate School, was that it?

David Fox: Yeah, in 19, Arnie was appointed and then resigned when John Lee was, and the word came from Albany that no new deans would be appointed.

Now somebody had to do the job, and I happened to be chairman of the Graduate Council, so for one year, actually from May, the last couple of months in Oyster Bay, and then the whole following academic year here, I was chairman of the Graduate Council but as such ran the sort of budding Graduate School. We had 25, the whole University had 25 graduate students at that time, so, and then at the end of the year, I think, I'm rather hazy but it must have been that you asked me to be Dean, and I was Dean for three more years, and this was one year that I served without title. And I remember I resigned three times, the reason for the three resignations was the following: I resigned, we started the very beginnings of a search, that is just getting some names together, and then at that point the John Toll thing came. And I discussed it with some people and decided that if he was going to come, let him be involved in the choice of the Dean, it's not fair, you know, just before he come in, if he comes and there are people who are deans already, that's different, but if, by serving one more year, I could allow him to be involved in the choice, I thought it would be useful, so I withdrew my resignation. And then I wrote to John when he was appointed, this was in early spring, it must have been 1965, or mid-spring, sometime in the spring semester in any case, and I congratulated him on the appointment and then I said, I'm resigning from the deanship; that was my second resignation. He wrote back to me and said, I can't think about this now, could you serve another year. So, I served another year and resigned again; but for some reason John at that point thought I was, I didn't leave the University, but I took a sabbatical that next semester and John was under the impression I was coming back as Dean. I don't know whether he had forgotten that I had resigned or just didn't believe me; so in a sense I had to resign a fourth time, only this time it was verbally, a verbal reaffirmation of the third resignation. Anyway, that's my own personal history, not so much Stony Brook's.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, that is reminiscent really of my position. I came, as you know, as Acting Chief Administrative Officer and Dean of Arts and Sciences and for one year, until they could find a President.

David Fox: That's right, you were actually appointed to the position in Albany and leave to run this campus, yes.

Dr. Hartzell: I was Executive Dean in the Albany office.

David Fox: Right.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you remember the first time that I met the faculty, were you one of those that met around a long table in Coe Hall when Harry Porter brought me in and introduced me to everybody?

David Fox: Yes, I remember you being introduced, I just don't remember anything else about that meeting.

Dr. Hartzell: How much did you know about me beforehand?

David Fox: You know, I don't remember, you see I learned about your deanship at Bucknell, but I can't remember whether I learned about it before that meeting, or at that meeting, or after the meeting; I just don't know.

Dr. Hartzell: It was a little bit amusing to me that here I had been appointed Dean of the Cornell College only after I had sat with two of their major committees and given my philosophy of education; this is when I was coming from Brookhaven. Then at Bucknell the President brought me in, and as far as I know, the faculty didn't know much about me at all. It was just superimposed on the faculty; and here again was another instance, and I wondered how much the faculty had had a hand in

David Fox: None, none. The system at that time, I can answer that because of my memory of your case, because I knew the system at that time. The faculty was generally not consulted, we discussed academic matters at great length and had great battles, you know, at faculty meetings. We were not consulted about things like appointments, deanships and so forth. I remember, for example, that the equivalent, I think it was called a Promotion and Tenure Committee at the time, or some phrase like that, had no right to criticize the choice, to examine the qualifications of any faculty member being promoted or offered tenure or appointed. All they could do was say, to report to Olsen that the file

was in order; they had no rights about that. That I think was changed about the time we moved to Stony Brook, I think you changed it.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, well, you had some say about one or two of the people who were proposed by Harry Porter. Do you remember Oscar Lanford being proposed?

David Fox: I remember the name.

Dr. Hartzell: He was proposed for President by Harry Porter.

David Fox: Was that after we moved here.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, after.

David Fox: Oh, that's after it changed.

Dr. Hartzell: Right, because Harry had been President of Fredonia, and Oscar Lanford was then President at Fredonia. Harry Porter had him in mind as his idea of the kind of person who might be president at Stony Brook. And the, I think it was called the Graduate Council then, interviewed him and turned thumbs down.

David Fox: I remember that, that I remember. But, no, when I said we had no say in anything, at least certainly in the early years at Oyster Bay, and I think all the way up to the time we left; I'm not absolutely sure. My impression, and I remember this, is that you made those changes.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, it could very well be. I've forgotten.

David Fox: You may not have made them yourself, but you may have designated, you may have, there may have been some faculty committee that you asked to look into the question. There's a faculty governance committee of some kind, wasn't there? And the whole governance structure was changed, actually not all in one step but there was not real governance in Oyster Bay, except in purely academic matters.

Dr. Hartzell: Right. One thing I want to ask you about, the process by which we determined here on the Stony Brook campus which departments were ready to apply for graduate, permission from Albany to get either an M. A. or a Ph. D. program, do you have any recollection of that?

David Fox: Yes, that I remember, because we went through it many times, and then I, with the same system with modifications is used now, when I, I don't know how this was done before Physics, Chemistry and I think it was Mechanics they called it at that time, which is now called Mechanical Engineering, those three departments were the first three to have graduate programs. That was done under Arnie Feingold, and I have no idea how those were set up. When I took over, I think after we arrived in Stony Brook, I, you know I had known in other places that people bring in visiting committees, so, review committees variously called, so I set up that system. Now, what amused me was that Harry Porter heard about this, and he spent a few minutes once when we were at a meeting saying that's a marvelous idea, I'll adopt it for the whole University, because he was sort of Graduate Dean, they don't call it that, but head of all graduate programs. And I started to say, but, but, but, meaning to say, I thought it was standard at other universities, and he was so enthusiastic, I could never get it out, so I finally let it go, and he still, I think, probably I think he continued to give me credit for this marvelous idea which wasn't my idea at all. Anyway, I remember a few of the committees. I remember a committee for Engineering, one for the English Department.

Dr. Hartzell: There was a committee for Biology.

David Fox: There was a committee for Biology, yes, yes.

Dr. Hartzell: With a chap from Brown and a chap from, I think it was either MIT or Harvard, I've forgotten which, but I did the telephoning to bring them in.

David Fox: Yeah.

Dr. Hartzell: In the matter of English, the people we brought in steered us away from applying for a Ph. D. at the time.

David Fox: Yeah, they gave us a set of shortcomings, and I discussed this, maybe we both discussed this with the English Department; and the Department promised to correct this, and by the time they applied again for the Ph. D., the new committee agreed with them.

Dr. Hartzell: Yeah, so we were never turned down on any of our applications, as far as I know.

David Fox: To my knowledge that's correct, not in those years, and I've not heard of any later, and I was active on the Graduate Council again for about six years, something like that, and there again were never turned down. This was in the seventies or early eighties, it was in the eighties, or maybe two periods. That's right. We did the turning down ourselves, and in the case of English we didn't void the whole application. We accepted the Master's part, and postponed really, postponed the Ph. D. consideration.

Dr. Hartzell: I brought in Bill Dix, who was the Librarian of Princeton, to look over our collection.

David Fox: I'd forgotten that, yes, I remember now, right. Then there was a woman, retired

Dr. Hartzell: Margery Nicolson.

David Fox: That's it, Margery Nicolson, yes.

Dr. Hartzell: Turned out she was the daughter of Dean Nicolson at Wesleyan when I was an undergraduate.

David Fox: Uh, huh, I see. Remember I said learning something about English Departments as Dean and so forth, I also learned about differences of ways of judging people at that time. The, she made a statement, well, you don't have any really senior people here. Now, coming from the Department of Physics where a thirty year old man, if he's good enough, can become a senior person, you know, if not, thirty-five is probably more, and here there are people in their fifties, and she didn't consider senior. And I realized it was so, that in areas of, where criticism, and I'm using this with scholars, really criticism is only a narrow part of it, where scholarly work is most important, you have to build up an enormous background. Whereas in areas where creative activities are important, that includes music, not music history, but something like music composition or theoretical physics, it's the young people who do the exciting things, and the older people are important in their contribution to development and criticism and guidance, you

see. So, a young person could become very eminent and, look at Einstein, did three really world shaking pieces of work, three distinct ones at the age of twenty-six, he's only famous to the general public for one of those three, and didn't become eminent immediately. By the time he was thirty-two, thirty-three, of course, all these things were thoroughly recognized. So that was one thing, and the other thing was in the other direction where some of the committee members from the humanities and some of the social sciences would say, how can you promote that man in Physics or Chemistry or whatever, he never wrote a book. And I had to explain to them that you write books in physics as a duty to the profession or to make money because books are totally unimportant, they are only texts, they are only collections of ideas, there's nothing new in a physics book, whereas in a history book, there's, and that's it, all your analysis goes into there, it may never have gone to an article, couldn't understand it, so I finally gave up. Anyway it was a marvelous educational experience. I'm sorry for these little offshoots.

Dr. Hartzell: They're very important, they're really very important, because a university is an institution and an institution is a collection of individuals organized for certain purposes, and it's the purposes and their method of implementing them that counts, that really becomes the history of the institution.

David Fox: Uh, huh, are we up to eleven, where are we now.

Dr. Hartzell: I think so.

David Fox: What expectations did you have when you came? Well, I've fairly answered it but in bits and pieces, so I'll just summarize. Expectations of a major university, which would be one of the leading universities of the country, and let me combine that with twelve, the expectations worked out in a spotty sort of way. Compared to the big state universities, we're fairly small, and that means also small in the number of faculty members, I mean it's a good sized institution, but it's small compared to the midwestern universities and California. And so we don't have the breadth that they have perhaps, but within the areas that we do represent, we range from excellent to a few

departments that I hear are still pretty poor, a number of world famous departments, some other very good ones

Dr. Hartzell: Can you be specific on this in your judgment.

David Fox: Well, the only one where I really have a right to judge is Physics, and I think you know about this. I think that my understanding that the Music Department is first rate, several of the departments in the Biological Sciences, that is on both sides of the road, in the medical school as well as here, are world famous, the Chemistry Department is not up to the Physics Department but does have some substantial standing and the others I don't know too well. Some of the social sciences are, I gathered one or two of the social science departments, but I really don't know them.

Dr. Hartzell: What about Mathematics?

David Fox: Mathematics, yes, that's right, that's one where I can judge, and that's really very good.

Dr. Hartzell: It is.

David Fox: Right. The rest of them I just don't know. I understand that here is one language department that has some, but this is just all vague rumor to me, you know, I just don't know.

Dr. Hartzell: Okay, all right. Where your activities confined to the Stony Brook campus, that's 13.

David Fox: Yes, well

Dr. Hartzell: Did you have relations outside?

David Fox: With some of the central offices in Albany, of course, while I was Dean I had, you know, whatever you expect, and not as much perhaps as you did certainly, but in the areas I was involved I had continuing relations mostly through Harry Porter.

Dr. Hartzell: Did you have relations with Dave Price?

David Fox: Minimal.

Dr. Hartzell: Vice President for Personnel, he was a big help.

David Fox: He helped me on one occasion, but generally my work was, I was not involved much with personnel, I mean, beyond hiring secretaries I really did not do anything else. Stan Ross would call me in to meet various people that were being considered for major positions in the faculty, and I would give my opinion and that was the end. If the person was hired, somebody in Stan's office would follow the paperwork through, I had nothing to do with that. So Dave and I met on a number of occasions, for example, if I'd go up for a budget committee hearing, he, of course, would be there. But as far as direct contact, I think it was only occasion. On the other hand, I had extensive, quite a number of times when I interacted with Harry Porter, which was his job.

Dr. Hartzell: What were your impressions of Harry, and what was your impression of Stan Ross?

David Fox: I think they were both good at their jobs, but I think both of them had limited vision. I think that was more true of Harry than of Stan. But I remember the number of times that Stan would say, well, this is the way we did it in Nebraska. My feeling is Nebraska is a good university, but we should, even if we don't reach it, our goal should be the best university in the country. If you don't reach it, okay, you don't reach it; but if you set your goal at Nebraska, you'll wind up down below Nebraska, you see; and he could never see that. Otherwise, I thought he did a fine job for what he had to do, but he just didn't have, let me contrast it with Alec. Now Alec had the problem that he didn't communicate properly with people in the humanities, let's say, he had these difficulties, but he was a man of great vision, enormous vision, and he always set the goal much higher than we've eventually achieved, but by setting it that high, you get higher than people would have. This was something that struck me in the building of the University, the contrast between the people, and there were a number of people like Alec, I think Alec was just the exceptional example among them, and the other people who always played low. One example, a department chairman was on leave during a year when the department asked for a graduate program, and the acting chairman asked for in the budget for five assistantships, remember in those days the money was relatively

plentiful compared to what we it is now. I mean we have budgets much larger now, but I'm talking about the per capita budget for every faculty member that is, or per student for that matter. Rockefeller had been relatively generous with us, and the money was there, we could get it. And I said why don't you ask for ten; he said, oh, they'll never give it to us. And I said, ask for it and see. He got the ten; and I said, can you use ten, and he said, where will we get the graduate students. I said, you'll go out and you'll recruit them. And of course when the chairman came back, he agreed with me thoroughly and he recruited, he could have used fifteen. Anyway, this kind of thing, now I'm talking only about this one thing, the people with the lower level of expectation were sometime extremely good let's say in their fields or other administrative aspects, but there's one thing that in order to build, you must have this kind of thing, that was very striking to me.

Dr. Hartzell: Who else beside Alec do you think had that kind of vision?

David Fox: I think, let's see, I'm sure to leave out people, one that I remember was Harry Kalish, that is, not the extent that Alec did, and Harry actually had a little joking about this, took lessons from Alec, Harry would actually come over to discuss and learn when Harry began to be chairman of the Department; he went to Alec for ideas.

Dr. Hartzell: Was he chairman back in Oyster Bay?

David Fox: I don't think there was a department in Oyster Bay.

Dr. Hartzell: I know he had his pigeons in Coe Hall.

David Fox: Yes, right. No, I think, my vague memory is that there were rudimentary departments in the science and mathematics division. The division in other words was the basic unit, but there was anticipation of a breakup, and there were separate subunits already which are called departments but had to go through the division somehow. My feeling is that the other divisions did not have departments. However, they certainly existed when we came to Oyster Bay. In fact, Harry may have been the only person in Psych at the time and maybe one other, at Oyster Bay I mean, and the building started after he came. Who else, well, certainly Francis Bonner, uh, and you see

I'm tending to name the people in the areas that I know the most about, because I just don't know the others well, and Leonard did, although his period as chairman was so short and the department was so small that he didn't have a chance to implement that. Now in other areas I suspect that

Dr. Hartzell: Dick Levine?

David Fox: I didn't know him well, I have to say, I just don't know. I mean I knew him, wait a minute, there are two, there was Dick Levin and one is Levine, which one do you mean.

Dr. Hartzell: The one who was chairman of the English Department.

David Fox: Oh, I didn't know him at all except to say hello to, I mean, we knew each other but that's all. Dick Levin I thought you meant, but he wasn't ever an administrator, and in any case I just don't know that well enough. Sidney Gelber probably, and I say probably because I just didn't get, wasn't involved with him as much.

Dr. Hartzell: Certainly in the arts I think Sidney had a vision.

David Fox: Oh, yes, that's right, in fact that confirms In a way I have a colleague in Israel, and he visits me and I visit him, that is we collaborate, and I was there one day when I heard, this was at the Desert Research Institute which is in the middle of the desert about thirty miles from its parent institution which is the Ben-Gurion University in Beer-Sheva. I don't know if you know Sidney is on the Board of Governors there very often.

Dr. Hartzell: No, I didn't know that.

David Fox: Yeah, he's on the Board of Governors, Frank Yang was for a while but I think he probably gave it up. And Sidney has been working very hard to raise standards there, and so they gave him an honorary degree and I came, he didn't know I was there, it was kind of a little surprise to him to see my face in the audience. Anyway, let's see what else do we have in that question.

Dr. Hartzell: Did you have any relations with the discipline, within the discipline of physics

David Fox: Oh, let me finish the Albany connection, after I got out, after I was no longer Dean I was a member of a number of statewide committees, was Senator for a while and as such a member of some of the subcommittees. I was also, yeah, I was chairman of the graduate committee and a member of one or two others. I was also a member of, I've forgotten the name of it, but what was then the governing, no the faculty advisory board of the Research Foundation, whatever Board it is that contains faculty representatives.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you have any conception of the functions of the Research Foundation and its relation to say the four University Centers, the extent to which it siphoned off funds from our administrative, oh, I've forgotten the term

David Fox: Overhead funds.

Dr. Hartzell: Overhead, yes, that's what I mean.

David Fox: Well, it's changed since then, and I don't know the details now, but I've heard things here and there. Now apparently, you see at other universities when they are not forced into this double setup where the university has its own research office that actually collects the money, collects overhead, that money just goes to the university, you use it for anything you want. In those days none of the money came to the campus at first, until finally they gave some of the money for local people administrating research, administering rather, research grants, that is, what do they call it now, the research administration office or something of that sort.

Dr. Hartzell: You mean Bob Schneider's

David Fox: Not the aspect, there are two offices of research administration, one of them does the bookkeeping essentially, and one of them worries about grants and things of this sort, I mean the one doing the bookkeeping, they understand where the first ones, there was a single man was paid by Albany by the Research Foundation

Dr. Hartzell: Research and Graduate Studies Vice Provost, that's Bob Schneider; then there's the Research Foundation Business.

David Fox: I think that's the one, and they got money enough to hire, the University got money enough to hire one man, who is really an employee of the Research Foundation, and that was it. And then gradually things changed and more and more money came back, and in recent years it is my understanding that we do get free money not merely for expenses connected with the research grant operation, but actually which can be turned over to departments for additional research funds. It's not nearly as much as private universities get but it is something. And in those days you couldn't get it. Apparently this was a policy of the Central Office, they wanted all that money. They used as an excuse the fact that if they gave it back to the campus, the legislators would claim it all belonged to the State of New York and go to the treasury. How true that was I don't know, but apparently they found a way around it now. The main difficulty that I found was that before Stony Brook, nearly all the research money -- is it running out?

Dr. Hartzell: No, not yet.

David Fox: Nearly all the research money went to the medical schools, and let's see, there were three at that time before we had our medical school -- Buffalo, Upstate and Downstate -- and they controlled the policy completely. As an example, there are two extra costs one puts on a grant: one is overhead, and one is fringe benefits. Now on overhead each campus is considered a separate unit, and the new campuses because the buildings were newer and there had not been time for amortization, that is the buildings were still valuable, the overhead costs were very, very high. On the old campuses they were lower, on the other hand at the, when it came to fringe benefits, we were one big university, and again we lost because it turns out that there are a lot of graduate students who get no fringe benefits. We pay less in fringe benefits than let's say a medical school; and yet we all had to be even. And every time I'd say, why don't we have separate policies on fringe benefits, oh, we're one big university, you want to be separate little campuses. I said, why don't we have one policy for overhead, oh, that's different, that's

different. I never could get proper answers, and the medical schools would benefit thereby because they got the best on both sides. And since there is practically no search money from the campuses in the early sixties, I mean compared to the medical schools, there was nothing we could do. The other beef I had there, what was it now, oh, I've forgotten now, but it was a difficult committee assignment, and finally I resigned in protest over some impropriety. Oh, I remember what happened, it was a bad budget year federally, the federal government, and the NSF in anticipation of a big budget cut sent out a notice saying that all the research investigators, principal investigators, should be very careful about their budgets, not spend anything in the early months unless there might be some money taken away, there was. This modification could not, under the federal rules, go to the campuses because the contractor so to speak, the granting agency, the representative rather, was the Research Foundation. It went to the Research Foundation, and they didn't tell us about it. And they said, well, you know it wasn't going to come into effect for three or four months, but those are just the three or four months when you could save money enough, spend half your budget and then the stuff you didn't have all the other half what you expected, so it was an extraordinarily badly run office. I remained with that impression until Francis Bonner, who was actually not on the committee that I was on, but actually on the Board of Trustees or Board of Governors or whatever they called it, told me it's altogether different now, completely different attitudes, much more cooperative with the campuses, much more recognition of what their role is. It was one of these self-contained kingdoms, you know, that operated for itself in the early years. The trouble was they didn't know they were doing that, they thought they were giving us service, they thought they were giving us good service. Anyway, that's Albany. As far as other off-campus activities are concerned, well, you know they are mostly professional, I mean my professional activities. I was editor of a series of volumes, and I was on the editorial board of

Dr. Hartzell: What were the volumes?

David Fox: They were called “Physics and Chemistry of Organic Solids,” a Wiley publication. We got out three volumes, and they are going to have a continuing running series, you know. One of these volumes where people write extensive review articles of the whole sub-field, and as new things develop you ask another author and you get a few more, and you put out another volume. And after the third volume, I just tired and quit. In any case a journal had come out in the field, so there was no longer a need. And then I was on the editorial board of the journal for two years or so.

Dr. Hartzell: What was the name of the journal?

David Fox: Originally, “Molecular Crystals,” which was my field at the time and later changed to “Molecular Crystals and Liquid Crystals,” the second half I know very little about. Does that cover 13.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, uh, huh.

David Fox: You know, if I take too long on these things, it’s just

Dr. Hartzell: No, no, I want to get as much as you can. What do you feel you have accomplished at Stony Brook?

David Fox: I personally you mean?

Dr. Hartzell: Yeah.

David Fox: Well, I’ve gotten the graduate school started, I had helped to some extent in the Department, and getting to get back to my field of research.

Dr. Hartzell: Did you bring in any people, were your responsible for recruiting anybody that you can remember?

David Fox: No, I don’t think so. The reason was as follows, you see, the main, the people who really looked for others to bring in are, of course, the people in their individual fields, nuclear physicists wanted to bring somebody, they get together and think of someone. I was a solid state physicist, but I was in a rather odd area of solid state. Odd, not really odd, that’s not the right word, I meant it was an area in which there were many more chemists than physicists. And even if there had been a physicist, I didn’t think it was appropriate to bring him into the Department. Department needs were

different, I mean, the more physics, solid state physics was important to build up. David Hanson, with whom I've collaborated, does this sort of thing in Chemistry. It could very well be in the Physics Department, but it's just that the nature of the subject was such as to attract chemists, it was the molecular crystals field, where originally they got into the field because they thought it was a good way to study molecules. And then they learned that they had to understand the solid state properties in order to understand what they were seeing. And so some of them actually became what at that time were called solid state physicists, you know, they were chemical physicists essentially. And then also, what is his name, Japanese, I know it well, Hirota. Professor Hirota was here until he went back, for many years, in fact we all thought he was going to stay here, but his, apparently he and his wife felt that their children were not getting a proper Japanese education, and he was offered a Full Professorship at Kyoto, so he went. The three of us were involved with each other. And so, anyway that's other stuff. But it will answer the question I think that I was not, the people I knew I would not have brought into the Department. They were first of all mainly chemists, and so couldn't teach some of the advanced courses in physics, although they knew a good deal of physics.

Dr. Hartzell: Okay, well, let's see, did things that were important for the future development of the University as a whole or some part of it.

David Fox: I think I've done that, haven't I?

Dr. Hartzell: I think so, do you want to comment about John Toll.

David Fox: Yeah, I think that John came here at the right time for developing a size that might not have otherwise been developed. I think, as you know, John antagonized some people even more than Alec did. And at a certain point I think it was good, in a way, for the University when he left. This is not meant as a criticism of Johnny, what I mean is he has talents, he has great talents which were very vital to the University at that time, but they were, he was a builder, but after the peak of those talents of his and tasks, the other aspects of his antagonizing a portion of the faculty, I think, negated some of his other

Dr. Hartzell: What portion of the faculty

David Fox: I think most of the people in the social sciences and humanities, not most, but in humanities certainly and a lot of people in the social sciences, and I say this, even though I am very fond of Johnny and extremely glad he was here.

Dr. Hartzell: Right, okay.

David Fox: That seems to be the end, huh.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, that's the end of the questions, anything else for the good of the order?

David Fox: I can't think of anything, if I do, I'll just jot down a few notes and send it to you.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you have any papers, any files?

David Fox: I do, but it's going to take me some time to sort out things, so I'm going to wait until the Christmas vacation, if it's okay with you.

Dr. Hartzell: Then let Evert Volkersz have them.

David Fox: Who?

Dr. Hartzell: We have a University Archives on the second floor here in the Library, it's called Special Collections and the man's name is Evert Volkersz.

David Fox: If I see it in print, I'll remember it.

Dr. Hartzell: He's, wait a minute, he is, there, you want to read this. It's an appeal for files and recollections and some people have sent in their files. If you want to keep anything that is significant, copy it, and send a copy.

David Fox: I think I'd better consult him. I've got a lot of junk, you see, and I'm not sure he'll, I know that librarians, for example, one of their banes of their existence, people think they are doing some good in giving all of their old books which duplicate things they have and so forth, so I think maybe I'll just indicate to him what I have and see what he wants.

Dr. Hartzell: While you are here, you might just as well go down to the second floor.

David Fox: Well, I actually have to, oh, 3:13, I have to get back to the Department now.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I would be glad to go down with you and simply introduce you, so that you know where it is and who he is.

David Fox: All right, but I can't spend time there, okay.

Dr. Hartzell: I'll go with you.

David Fox: Want to turn that off?

Dr. Hartzell: Yeah.

[end of interview]