

**INTERVIEW WITH DR. LEONARD OLSON
FIRST CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
AT THE OYSTER BAY CAMPUS WITH THE TITLE OF DEAN
ACTUAL FOUNDER OF THE LONG ISLAND CHAPTER**

JANUARY 23, 1989

DR. HARTZELL: All right. You want to know what my role in this whole thing is?

DR. OLSON: Yes. Yes. I have been wondering about that all day so when speaking to you I will have a little better sense of what your understanding is already.

DR. HARTZELL: Okay.

DR. OLSON: There is no point in my going over history with which you are already familiar.

DR. HARTZELL: In a way there is because.... I joined the state system in '62.

DR. OLSON: In Albany?

DR. HARTZELL: Yes. In Albany as Executive Dean of the Albany office. Immediately I am detailed to Stony Brook for one year.

DR. OLSON: Executive Dean of what?

DR. HARTZELL: There was no ... I was to be a troubleshooter.

DR. OLSON: Without portfolio?

DR. HARTZELL: Without portfolio. I had been Dean at Bucknell University for six years, Academic Dean.

DR. OLSON: What is your background?

DR. HARTZELL: History. European history--a Harvard Ph.D. under Crane Brenton. I was his second Ph.D. I was to be at Stony Brook for a year until they could find a successor to you.

DR. OLSON: A successor to Lee.

DR. HARTZELL: Oh, that's right. A successor to Lee. After you left and after Lee left, initially Tom Hamilton would run Stony Brook from Albany. They soon discovered that they couldn't do it.

DR. OLSON: Wasn't Harry Porter involved?

DR. HARTZELL: Yes. Harry had been President of Fredonia and was brought into the Central Office as Provost. You knew him, didn't you?

DR. OLSON: Not well, but I knew him. Yes. I had attended several meetings with the various Presidents of the State University system and that's how I came to know him.

DR. HARTZELL: So, Harry brought me down to Planting Fields in September. September 4 that's when I came.

DR. OLSON: This was in '62?

DR. HARTZELL: In '62 ... and introduced me to the faculty group. As far as I could find out, they knew very little about me. I was to be the Acting Chief Administrative Officer and Dean of Arts and Sciences for a year.

DR. OLSON: Acting Dean of Arts and Sciences as well as Chief Administrative Officer?

DR. HARTZELL: That's right. The Acting came first and in theory I would go back to Albany. A week after I got there, Tom Hamilton announced that he would resign as of December 31 of '62 and that left Frank Moore who was Chairman of the Board of Trustees with a task of finding a successor to Tom Hamilton. It took him 18

months after December 31 and just simply stayed on actually for three years in that position. At the end of the first semester, I realized that we needed to have a Dean of Arts and Sciences, in other words I couldn't wear those two hats. So, I appointed actually the Chairman of the History Department, I did not go outside at the time. That was Stanley Ross, he had succeeded Bors who I never knew, but who was, I think, Chairman of the History Department. Bors went to Yale. So, that part was taken care of. I had dealt with Stanley Ross in his search for staff and I found that the way he went at it was intelligent and that he was interested in high quality and being in the same field I felt that I had a fairly good basis for judging what he was doing. So, I appointed him and he was there for a number of years before he went to Texas.

DR. OLSON: As Dean of Arts and Sciences?

DR. HARTZELL: He went to Texas. Yes, as Dean of Arts and Sciences, Acting to begin with. Then in '65 John Toll came in as President. The question was, would I go back to Albany or stay with him. I had previously been, 10 years previously, in the Directors Office at Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island. We had friends on Long Island. I had a hand in bringing in John Toll. I went down and interviewed him for the job and briefed him when he came up to Planting Fields en route to his first interview with the people at the Central Administration, briefed him as to the kind of people he would find and what the difficulties were. So, I could have gone back to Albany and probably to another position in one of the other institutions. When Sam Gould asked me whether I wanted to do that and I was only lukewarm about it.

DR. OLSON: Sam Gould, is that the President of SUNY Central?

DR. HARTZELL: Yes, but when he came in they changed that title to Chancellor. So, apparently he talked with Johnny, I am told, and felt it was important to have

some continuity. So, I stayed on as an Administrative Officer in John Toll's office for a year to see how it worked out. It worked out well. We got along well. He was an unusually fine individual, very energetic, friendly, open and xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx quality. I stayed until '71 when I retired at 65. Since then I have had an office on campus in the Library and I have done a variety of things and I am on campus committees and right now I am doing this oral history program for the Provost.

DR. OLSON: Who is the Provost?

DR. HARTZELL: The Provost now is Jerry Schubel.

DR. OLSON: His name was on the memorandum.

DR. HARTZELL: Yes. I wrote that letter for him. They had an idea that they wanted some kind of a history of the early days for the 25th Anniversary. Well, the people to whom that was assigned were two faculty members, but shortly one of them went to Washington so the program never got anywhere. I had said that I would be glad to be helpful for the years that I was active. When Schubel came in, he asked me if I were still interested and would I take it on. At that time they still were thinking of somebody great and pointed out that a lot of the people were dead. The three governors, Tom Hamilton at that time was dead, Stanley Ross was dead ...

DR. OLSON: Who was Stanley Ross?

DR. HARTZELL: He was the Dean of Arts and Sciences.

DR. OLSON: Yes. Oh, yes, of course.

DR. HARTZELL: Jeff Sullivan who had succeeded Ward Melville as chairman of the local council, he was dead, and none of his papers could be found.

DR. OLSON: What about Ward Melville?

DR. HARTZELL: Ward was dead at that time. Ward lived to be about ninety-three or something like that. I had heard that since they could not find the Sullivan papers they better start interviewing.

DR. OLSON: Did you know a George Collins?

DR. HARTZELL: I knew George very well at Brookhaven. He and I had played tennis frequently.

DR. OLSON: Yes. Yes. I knew him fairly well.

DR. HARTZELL: Oh, you did?

DR. OLSON: Oh, yes, yes.

DR. HARTZELL: I interviewed him. Would you like to take a quick look. I have done over 80 of these interviews.

DR. OLSON: That is very enterprising.

DR. HARTZELL: This is the booklet. Name, department, rank or position. What were you when you first came?

DR. OLSON: I was Dean and Acting Chief Administrative Officer.

DR. HARTZELL: Right. Right. What did they call the center then?

DR. OLSON: Oh, there was no name at first. It became the State University of New York, College on Long Island.

DR. HARTZELL: What year did you come to Stony Brook.

DR. OLSON: Come there? In 1957. I was appointed Dean in February of 1957 and came to the campus almost immediately. I was the only person there when I came. No business offices, no secretary, no nothing.

DR. HARTZELL: How old were you at the time?

DR. OLSON: 43.

DR. HARTZELL: Oh, 43. From what institution and position did you come?

DR. OLSON: Well, I came from the Central Administration in Albany where I was First Assistant to the Executive Dean of Four-Year Colleges and Professional Schools, John Slocum, and then John Slocum and I had a falling out and I became the Assistant to President Carlson. When I was there, I was asked by President Carlson to coordinate the activities regarding an institution on Long Island.

DR. HARTZELL: Do you know how the idea that there should be such an institution on Long Island developed?

DR. OLSON: Do I know?

DR. HARTZELL: Yes. Where did the idea come from? Whose idea was it?

DR. OLSON: I don't know. In a sense, the common opinion at the time was that with the burgeoning population in New York, it was apparently no doubt that in the State of New York there was increasing pressure to add at least another public institution. To make another public institution available to the people in Downstate New York. Especially, with the growing population of Long Island, Long Island seemed like a reasonable place to put it. You probably know more about the political climate than I do, but the sense was at the time that private institutions were strongly resisting any further development of the State University of New York.

DR. HARTZELL: Yes. These were the big ones, Columbia ...

DR. OLSON: Oh, yes. Columbia, NYU, Cornell, and Rochester. So that the original mandate for Long Island, as you probably know, you should check this in the records, the original mandate called for an institution for preparation of teachers of vocational schools, for teachers of vocational subjects in secondary schools, and for teachers of vocational subjects in community colleges. Obviously, very carefully restricted program.

DR. HARTZELL: Mathematics and science?

DR. OLSON: No, there was no statement about mathematics and science. What happened was that President Carlson asked me to coordinate Has it stopped?

DR. HARTZELL: No, I just want to make sure this thing is going.

DR. OLSON: When President Carlson asked me to coordinate the activities, I went around and interviewed the Executive Deans and everybody else that seemed they might be involved, and I found that for all practical purposes nothing was going on. When Carlson asked me to do this, he said he would wake up in the middle of the night wondering what was going on fearing that nothing was, his fears was corroborated by what I found.

DR. HARTZELL: Nothing of what?

DR. OLSON: Nothing was going on by way of actions being taken for this institution on Long Island. Not even any parting word, because I found that each of the Executive Deans thought somebody else was taking responsibility for it.

DR. HARTZELL: Each of the Executive Deans in the Albany office?

DR. OLSON: Yes. In fact nobody was assuming responsibility for it, so no action was being taken. I reported this back to President Carlson and he asked me to think about getting it started myself. I was not ready to commit myself right away, because I was not quite sure what I would be committing myself to. So, I went back to my office and settled down with the books from the vocational schools and the community colleges and so on. There was such a wide range of areas, such as automotive engineering, dairy farming, horticulture

DR. HARTZELL: This is probably Farmingdale.

DR. OLSON: There are a number of community colleges, of course, and Farmingdale is only one of them ...

DR. HARTZELL: On Long Island?

DR. OLSON: Oh no, generally, throughout the state, such a wide range ...

DR. HARTZELL: Cobleskill ...

DR. OLSON: Yes, so I drew up this list, it was extensive and also appalling. The thought of being responsible for an institution providing lavatories and facilities for all of these areas did not interest me. But I also realized that any attempt to provide specialized faculty in all of these areas would be enormously expensive and would not be well received by anybody responsible for financing such a venture. It occurred to me that to afford an opportunity for doing something about it, I started a fairly extensive memo for President Carlson in which I argued that since it was impossible to deal with the specialized activities of all of these institutions, the best thing to do is to provide an institution which would give subject matters a basic law of these areas, namely physics, chemistry, mathematics and to do a reasonable job with those, one should also have good programs in the social sciences and humanities. I said, I put this in a memo to President Carlson and he transmitted it to Jim Allen who was Commissioner of Education. Shortly thereafter, we received back from Wally _____, who was Deputy Commissioner, approval of the proposal which was contained implicitly in the memo of what should be done with the institution on Long Island.

DR. HARTZELL: So, you got your approval from the State Education Department.

DR. OLSON: Yes.

DR. HARTZELL: That meant the Regents, too, didn't it?

DR. OLSON: As far as we were concerned, they could speak for the regents.

DR. HARTZELL: What about the trustees of the State University? Were they consulted?

DR. OLSON: Well, all I know is that they were consulted to the extent that ... I am backtracking, just a minute. I don't know at what point it was decided by the Board of Trustees that this institution should open in September of 1957. This is probably ...

DR. HARTZELL: It's probably in the trustees minutes.

DR. OLSON: It was late in 1956 that President Carlson had asked me to coordinate the activities regarding the development of the institution on Long Island and I thought if nothing was going on, time was running out. The only knowledge that I have of his talking with the Board of Trustees about it was the February meeting of the Board at which time he proposed my appointment as Dean and Chief Administrative Officer to get the thing going since it was already announced that it would be in operation in September of 1957 and this was February of 1957.

DR. HARTZELL: You had short notice and were short of time. all right. Was Frank Moore Chairman of the Board then?

DR. OLSON: To the best of my recollection, I am quite sure he was.

DR. HARTZELL: I did not know Frank Moore. Well then, were you ...

DR. OLSON: Excuse me, but I am a little cold ...

DR. HARTZELL: Are you? All right. We can ...

DR. OLSON: I don't want much, but a little bit . I've just been recovering from a cold so I am sensitive.

DR. HARTZELL: Where is the ... there ... that's the wrong one.

Where is the other one? I can turn that off before I can give us some heat. How about a little low heat?

DR. OLSON: I think that sounds great?

DR. HARTZELL: All right. Try that.

DR. OLSON: You had a question there as to what were my instructions.

DR. HARTZELL: Yes. Right.

DR. OLSON: I suppose that stated very simply there were none.

DR. HARTZELL: Just right off the seat of your pants?

DR. OLSON: That's about it. The response to that memorandum which I just told you about having been in the affirmative was simply that it was assumed that I would do what would be in keeping with that memorandum. There was no explicit discussion of that, I assumed it and nobody was acting to the contrary, but I was never told in so many words what I should do. On the basis of my experience in Albany, I knew that there were budgetary restrictions. I knew that I couldn't just offer whatever salaries I wanted to offer and I knew what the salary schedule would be and so on.

DR. HARTZELL: Well, now ... just inject this. What was your background?

DR. OLSON: Well, at the time I was appointed Assistant to the Executive Dean, I was Assistant Professor at the University of Chicago where I was teaching Humanities and I was Assistant Dean of Extension which is the ...

DR. HARTZELL: Evening and adult?

DR. OLSON: Adult Education Division of the University.

DR. HARTZELL: At the undergraduate level?

DR. OLSON: Appointments in Chicago are not at levels, but my teaching was at the undergraduate level and the extension part of the university was not distinguished in terms of graduate and undergraduate courses even though almost all of them were undergraduate and a great many of them were not for credit.

DR. HARTZELL: I just gave an eight-week seminar for people over 55 and the title was "Exploring American Values." That's what I happen to be interested in. Now you have mentioned President Carlson. Did you know him before you went to Albany?

DR. OLSON: No, I did not.

DR. HARTZELL: How did you come to Albany?

DR. OLSON: Well, I came to Albany at the invitation of John Slocum, who was the Executive Dean of four-year colleges and professional schools. I think I had met John Slocum ... Excuse me, that is wrong. I came to Albany at the invitation Reuben Freuden.

DR. HARTZELL: He was the Executive Dean ...

DR. OLSON: He was the one. He was Executive Dean of four-year colleges and professional schools before John Slocum. He was the Executive Dean whom I had met, only very briefly. He was Assistant to President Hutchins at the University of Chicago before going to Albany. I knew him very briefly, but I knew people who knew him and apparently someone had recommended me to him and he called me in Chicago and asked me if I would be interested. I said I would think about it and subsequently called him and told him that I was interested.

DR. HARTZELL: ... and your position in Albany at that time?

DR. OLSON: It was Assistant to the Executive Dean Reuben Freuden.

I moved from being his Assistant to being Assistant to President Carlson when there was a falling out between Reuben Freuden and President Carlson and I won't try to state exactly what the issues were. Incidentally, as you probably know, President Carlson himself subsequently fell out with the Board probably over his release of a report by the Graduate Dean and _____ and his analysis of the

university where he had called it an animal without a head which is essentially the same planning that was done on the Smith Committee on which I had served somewhat prior to the complaint, on which we reported the same thing.

DR. HARTZELL: Was it an individual or central

DR. OLSON: The findings of the Smith Committee was that what characteristics would be appropriate for the university such as Ph.D. 's, mathematics, economics, sociology, physics, chemistry, philosophy, history and so on. It started with knowledge for its own sake and was concerned almost entirely with the practical application of various specialized _____. It was the release then of the Blegen report which found pretty much the same fault with the university. It was the release of that report to the public without having first cleared it with the Board which sparked the departure of Carlson and then the appointment of Tom Hill.

DR. HARTZELL: I have gone through very quickly the material you left with me. Tell me a little more about the reasons for the Smith report.

DR. OLSON: It was a committee, I am not sure whether it was appointed by the Board or by the President. I was asked by the President to serve on it. It was a committee to examine the state of the university.

DR. HARTZELL: Do you remember the date of it? Offhand?

DR. OLSON: Well, I didn't arrive A lot happened in a relatively short time. I didn't arrive in Albany as Reuben Freuden's assistant until December of 1955, so this committee must have been appointed in early 1956. I would have to get access to the files to get the date straight. I didn't arrive there until December of 1955 and it wasn't immediately that I was asked to serve on the Smith Committee although I hadn't been there very long before I was asked to serve on that committee to study the university.

DR. HARTZELL: Who else was on it? Do you remember anybody?

DR. OLSON: Mark Grant who is Director of the Research Foundation. I forget ... the publisher of the Albany newspaper.

DR. HARTZELL: The Knickerbocker Press?

DR. OLSON: I am not sure. Whatever the newspaper was at that time, the prominent newspaper. A couple of faculty members of the university system and, of course, Smith who was the President of one of the teachers' colleges.

DR. HARTZELL: Oneonta? Rockport? Cortland?

DR. OLSON: Cortland. He was the President of Cortland.

DR. HARTZELL: I taught at Geneseo a long time ago.

DR. OLSON: Well, that committee assembled material from all of the institutions within the system. It was an enormous amount of material and after numerous meetings and discussions on this mass amount of material, I was asked by Smith to write a report. I simply used the principals of organization which I commonly use when I organize material of that kind. I was able to assemble it in intelligible units and so I wrote the initial draft of the report. It was edited several times over during committee discussions, but as I said the findings of that investigation were pretty much like the findings of the Blegen investigation. I had a fairly extensive discussion with Blegen so it was not a surprise to find out that we pretty much agreed what the big fault was with the State University of New York.

DR. HARTZELL: There was some idea that the State University of New York should copy the other land grant institutions and have one central institution which normally would have been Cornell if it had not been a private institution centrally located. That was given up very quickly as I understand it with the idea that the public institution should supplement the existing private institutions and be located

wherever there were gaps in the available higher educational institutions. Is that a fair statement?

DR. OLSON: I wouldn't attempt to judge. There is a book, as you probably know, "New York Establishes a State University". I forget who the author was.

DR. HARTZELL: Well, there are two books that I know of. One is by Owen Carmichael who I think was Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

DR. OLSON: That is not the one I am thinking of.

DR. HARTZELL: Then there is another one by Frank Hewitt.

DR. OLSON: I am quite sure that the one I am thinking of has the title: New York Establishes a State University.

DR. HARTZELL: All right. I'll look it up. Anyway, I think that states pretty well where you came from.

DR. OLSON: I guess so. I suppose then that it is not surprising to respond with another one of your questions now that I am recruiting faculty. Since my appointment in Chicago had been in humanities, I, of course, was most familiar with people in humanities and I had great respect for Harold Zyskind and he was one of the first I turned to. I knew Merrill Roden pretty well and he was an excellent teacher, and then I got in touch with ... I knew that I should not concentrate solely on one university, of course, in finding new faculty.

DR. HARTZELL: But those were the people you knew best.

DR. OLSON: Yes, those were the people I knew best. I got in touch with Justice Buckler at Columbia in order to get in touch with possible candidates from Columbia and I got in touch with a professor of philosophy at Yale...

DR. HARTZELL: Brian Blanchard?

DR. OLSON: No. I don't know why I have this trouble with names this morning. I guess it is my cold.

DR. HARTZELL: Ah, Waldo Weyliss?

DR. OLSE No. He wrote a book on Plato's mathematics. I know -- Robert Braunwall. Anyway, I got in touch with him regarding possible candidates from Yale and he gave me some names at Yale and these led to other contacts. Eventually, I got in touch with Richard Mold and

DR. HARTZELL: I tried to get him to come to Bucknell.

DR. OLSON: Oh, is that so. Lots of people wrote to me, telling me both how good they would be and about the wonderful people they knew. The most memorable example of this was when the Dean of the Teachers College at Columbia University called me and told me

DR. HARTZELL: Oh, Violicz?

DR. OLSON: No. He wrote a book on Plato's Mathematics ... Brumball. Robert Brumball. Anyway, I got in touch with him regarding possible candidates at Yale and he gave me some names at Yale and these led to other contacts and eventually I got in touch and told me and recommended an appointment for a professor in Physics. I interviewed the one that she recommended and my judgment of him was that he might be a good teacher of physics in high school but nothing beyond. When I refused to appoint him, the Dean of Columbia Teachers College called me and said "Do you think your judgment is better than mine?"

DR. HARTZELL: That wasn't Harry Carman?

DR. OLSON: No, this was a woman; I don't remember her name. My response was only that I was responsible for the appointment and she wasn't. Anyway, I was getting lots of recommendations from all the place. One amusing

one was from Buffalo where a person pleaded with me because he couldn't stand another winter of shoveling snow.

DR. HARTZELL: Well, that's a good reason to come to Long Island. What do you know about the Heald Report?

DR. OLSON: I don't know anything about the Heald Report. The name rings a bell; if I ever knew anything about it, I've forgotten.

DR. HARTZELL: The Governor when you came was Harriman?

DR. OLSON: Yes, that reminds me of an amusing incident. This is before the institution was opened on Long Island or very shortly thereafter, Governor Harriman apparently had written a comment regarding a television show sponsored by Encyclopedia Britannica, which was a quiz show, in which he pointed out an error in, I forget, I never did really know exactly what it was all about, but that he had pointed out an error in the judgment regarding the answer to a question on that show and in token of their appreciation, Encyclopedia Britannica presented him with a copy of the Encyclopedia Britannica; whereupon he or his public relations officer called me on Long Island and said that the Governor would like to give this as a present to the new university or the new college on Long Island. So, would I please come up to Albany and receive this as a gift from the Governor. So, I went in to the Governor's formal, ceremonial office, lots of people were around, and the Encyclopedia Britannica was sitting on the desk before the two of us and so we both came up to the desk before all the people and the cameras and what not, we both stood there and Governor Harriman turned and looked at me and said, "Well, aren't you going to say anything?" That put me on the spot, because I didn't really know what the circumstances had been because of which he had been given this encyclopedia; but I gave out with whatever could occur to me regarding his interest

in education and his interest in the accuracy of information and so on. But, I think you should say just a little more just exactly what the circumstances were; and I hesitated, so he went on to give them himself. Well, then the formal presentation, he reached for them and then he handed them to me, then he wanted to take them back again and it became apparent to me that he thought that I was the representative of Encyclopedia Britannia instead of being from the College of Long Island. So, he and I had a kind of tug-of-war. Finally, he realized what was going on and he said, "Well, how are things on Long Island?" I have a picture of the two of us, each of us thinking that the other is; anyway Governor Harriman was the governor at that time. While I was on Long Island the ground was broken for Stony Brook for the new campus, at that time Nelson Rockefeller was Governor so he was the one that came down for the groundbreaking ceremony.

DR. HARTZELL: Do you remember the gist of what Rockefeller said?

DR. OLSON: No.

DR. HARTZELL: That speech is not in the Governor's papers. I would be interested to find it.

DR. OLSON: As I recall, it was very brief, so I suspect it didn't go into much detail.

DR. HARTZELL: Did you know Mr. Cole, by any chance?

DR. OLSON: Which Cole are you speaking?

DR. HARTZELL: Robertson, in other words, the person who had given Planting Fields initially to Farmingdale.

DR. OLSON: Well, that Cole was dead. But Bill Cole, his son, I knew; Bill Cole was on the Council of the College of Long Island, along with George Collins. But he was not active in any way.

DR. HARTZELL: What is your impression of the quality of people on the Council and the degree of their interest in what was going on, except for George Collins, of course?

DR. OLSON: Well, Ward Melville was actively interested; although I had very little discussion with him outside Council meetings. I regularly presented the Council with detailed statements about what the activities were at the College at that time. There was always discussion of those reports, but there was never, as I can recall, any attempt on the part of any of them to take any active part in what was going on. (end of Side A)

DR. OLSON: The nearest thing to that was after John Lee was appointed President, Ward Melville appeared at my house one day and said “I have heard words to the effect that John F. Lee has split the faculty down the middle in that there is conflict in the faculty; is that true, or isn’t it?”

DR. HARTZELL: He came and asked you that?

DR. OLSON: He came and asked me that. That put me on the spot of course, but I couldn’t lie to him and I said, “Yes, it is.” Whereupon he asked me no further questions, he got up and left. Other than that I never had anybody ask me any such direct questions as to the state of affairs at the college, so where they actively interested, well they always seemed interested at our Council meetings and they discussed what was going on freely, but I never had any attempt on the part of any of them to engage actively in the administration of the college. George Collins, however, I consulted, especially when I was looking for possible appointments in the sciences.

DR. HARTZELL: Was he helpful?

DR. OLSON: Yes, he was morally helpful if not a source of, the only name I can remember his giving me at the moment is that of Clifford Swartz. This conversation is confidential, isn't it?

DR. HARTZELL: It doesn't go anywhere else, except into the archives at this point.

DR. OLSON: I don't know then how to say about what he told me about Clifford Swartz; it isn't really relevant, is it?

DR. HARTZELL: If it's relevant, fine; if it isn't relevant.

DR. OLSON: Well, I think all I would want to say is he told me that he thought that Clifford Swartz would be a good teacher in an undergraduate program in physics.

DR. HARTZELL: He has subsequently published at least one textbook and he has received the Orested Medal, which is for physics teaching, it's a distinguished medal in the discipline; he just received it a couple of years ago.

DR. OLSON: I am not quite sure whether I got the name of Francis Bonner from George; I'm a little.

DR. HARTZELL: He was at Yale, wasn't he?

DR. OLSON: Francis Bonner was at the Arthur D. Little Company and to my knowledge he had not had a faculty appointment prior to his faculty appointment on Long Island.

DR. HARTZELL: I think now at this point we should go into, you can take whatever order you want, a discussion of the differences in points of view with regard to the curriculum or you can talk about the circumstances leading up to the appointment of Lee, which should come first? Were you aware that there were two different points of view with regard to the curriculum or perhaps more?

DR. OLSON: Well; I would say. Let me answer that question correctly. My conception of the institution from the start was of a liberal arts institution. Although I knew that was not what the mandate called for, the mandate, I reported to you, was a very restricted one, but there had been a subsequent approval of a more generalized institution providing basic work, particularly in mathematics and the sciences, with the inclusion of the humanities and social sciences as well. Altogether this constituted in my conception a liberal arts institution, but at that time the only degree that had been approved by the Board of Trustees was a B. S. degree. Subsequently, about the time of the appointment of John F. Lee, I was pushing hard, as hard as I could, for the addition of an A. B. degree.

DR. HARTZELL: When did you get it?

DR. OLSON: There was a meeting of the Board of Trustees I would guess about '60 or '61.

DR. HARTZELL: There was a Master Plan as of '60, I think.

DR. OLSON: You're talking about the Master Plan at the instigation of John F. Lee?

DR. HARTZELL: Not that I know of; I didn't know he instigated.

DR. OLSON: Well, when he first came on the scene, he asked us to draw up a faculty list for a full-scale university with all of the departments and all of the positions that would be required in each of the departments and with appropriate salaries and so on. That I would not call a master plan. That was simply a kind of.

DR. HARTZELL: That was after the Heald Report too, I think the Heald Report was '59.

DR. OLSON: I don't really know.

DR. HARTZELL: One of Rockefeller's first appointments was to have this committee headed by Henry Heald, who was president of the Ford Foundation.

DR. OLSON: You're talking about a plan then for the whole State University system. Perhaps as a result of which four basic areas were designated as centers of the University.

DR. HARTZELL: Comprehensive university centers.

DR. OLSON: Yes, Long Island was made one of them. The one I was referring to.

DR. HARTZELL: You got a mandate for a 4-year liberal arts institution before that, I think.

DR. OLSON: Well, we didn't get a mandate. I was in the New York offices of the State University of New York on the day the Board of Trustees was to meet. I had previously talked with John F. Lee about the utmost importance of the broadening of the degree powers to an A. B. degree in order to hold faculty members in areas other than the sciences. But John F. Lee had done nothing about it. I didn't discover this until I had a chance to talk with Tom Hamilton just before the Board meeting and I asked Hamilton about it and he said it was not even on the agenda. So I talked with Tom for as much time as I had before the Board meeting started and succeeded in impressing him with the what I considered to be the utmost importance of broadening it to include the A. B. degree; and he said that he would try to get it on the agenda and he did and it was approved at that meeting.

DR. HARTZELL: All right, can you give the date of that meeting?

DR. OLSON: That's my problem, I can't. All I can say it was subsequent to the decision to appoint John F. Lee as President; whether he actually was appointed president, he was not on Long Island at that time, he was still in Raleigh, at N. C.

State. But whether or not he had been formally appointed, I can't remember but I would roughly indicate the time of this Board meeting I'm talking about. Anyway, that indicates my conception of what the character of the institution should be. If I had had from the beginning, as I told you, I served on the. (break in recording)

DR. HARTZELL: You were talking about the Smith Report.

DR. OLSON: The Smith Report, in which the chief criticism of the State University of New York was that it lacked and it lagged the essential characteristics which would constitute a full scale university. And it was my hope that a full scale university could be developed on Long Island, which would satisfy the lag which I saw in the State University otherwise; in short, it would have full scale Ph. D. programs in mathematics, physics, chemistry, philosophy, the humanities generally, and social sciences. Now, then insofar as the difficulties within the faculty, there was constantly a kind of pressure on the part of the physical sciences, on the part of those in chemistry and physics and mathematics to increase the amount of time which they could command of the students' time working for a degree at the institution. I had to try to protect the time allocated to the social sciences and the humanities, knowing that, unless I could do so, I would lose the faculty in those areas and would be unsuccessful in recruiting new faculty for them. So, I had to adopt a fairly rigid stance saying that beyond a certain point the sciences could not go in taking the students' time. I argued with them that they did not want to become a technical institution but that they themselves wanted to be members of a faculty at a university and after we had a kind of extensive discussion at that very point, I at least heard no more objection from them. But there was a kind of tension which one can understand; always trying to increase the

amount of time for laboratory work and so on in order to do the kind of job which they thought would be the best kind of job in their fields.

DR. HARTZELL: That's on the level of teaching, what about their own research and their conception of the place of research in the institution?

DR. OLSON: As far as my recollection goes, there was never any discussion of that. At that stage, we began as we had to begin largely by pressure of circumstance, we began not by having a full scale university with undergraduate and graduate departments, but rather we began by having a freshman class and then freshman and sophomore class and so on until the last year I was there, there was a graduating class. So the teaching at that point was all at the undergraduate level, the teaching loads were as light as the budget would permit. I forget exactly what they were.

DR. HARTZELL: And I don't know; twelve hours?

DR. OLSON: I don't think they were that heavy. My recollection is that they were nine.

DR. HARTZELL: Two preparations or three?

DR. OLSON: Well, that would vary depending on the particular assignment.

DR. HARTZELL: Now, you left in '61?

DR. OLSON: I left in '61. After John F. Lee was appointed president, I was there as Dean of Faculty for some time.

DR. HARTZELL: This was in '61? He was appointed president in '61.

DR. OLSON: He was appointed president in '61 and I stayed on as Dean of Faculty; his initial statement to me was that I should continue just as I had before he came and that his concern would be largely with the external organizations of the institution. But it became apparent before very long that his concern was with

all aspects of the institution and it wasn't very long then before he appointed himself Dean of Arts and Sciences, as well as president of the college. Which left me in no-man's land, with really no responsibility at all. He, about this time, for reasons which were never really very clear to me, became completely disaffected with me and thought that I was working against his best interests, whereas we had had adjoining offices, he moved me to an office far removed in what had been the servants' quarters of the institution and subsequently sent my secretary along with me to have her desk in the same office. About this time it became apparent to Albany, both to Hamilton and to Slocum, that the relationship between John F. Lee and me were impossible and I was withdrawn from Long Island as it were and appointed to the staff in Albany but still left on the campus at Long Island. About the time I was asked by the Deputy, I forget what his exact title was, of the Ford Foundation to act as a consultant to the King of Jordan in a consideration of establishing a university in Jordan and so I got a leave of absence from the State University of New York to assume those duties and I never returned to Long Island.

DR. HARTZELL: I read your letter of resignation, which was in the file there. I have interviewed Lee out in La Mesa.

DR. OLSON: What's he doing?

DR. HARTZELL: I think he's retired. He's with one of his daughters. I think he's living with one of his daughters, who has just graduated from University of San Diego. What were the circumstances leading up to his appointment?

DR. OLSON: You may recall that I reported to you the problem about the establishment of an engineering school on Long Island. Where the action had initiated, I don't know, whether it was with the State Legislature, it might well

have been. With the necessity for having an engineering school on Long Island, or at least having another engineering school in the State of New York under the State University system, of course there hadn't been any. So, John Slocum and the Executive Dean who was responsible for community colleges were appointed a committee of two to get it started, whatever that might be. And they were allocated the magnificent sum of \$10,000 to do this. Sometime later John Slocum called me and said, and he gave the name of the other dean, and I have traveled all over the country talking to members of faculty of engineering schools and we're no more near getting an engineering school started than we were when we began and he said "Len, how would you like to take it over?" Not knowing anything about engineering, I, of course, was reluctant, but finally I decided that if anybody was going to do, I'd rather do it myself than have somebody else do it, because I could see right away that I would want it to be the kind of engineering school that would be appropriate for the kind of university I had in mind. So, then I went all over the country talking with people.

DR. HARTZELL: Where specifically did you go?

DR. OLSON: Well, I went to MIT, I went to Cal Tech, I went to there's one in New York City in Brooklyn, Brooklyn Poly. I talked with members of the faculty at all of these place, and in the course of my talking with them, I did encounter the name of John F. Lee from time to time as somebody who knew quite a bit about engineering. I forget how they identified his particular field, it was thermodynamics or something like that. Anyway, then I found myself in the same fix that John F. Lee and his colleague had been in, that it was all right to talk with all these people but none of them was interested in taking time off actually to get an engineering school started. So I was really nowhere. I could not get an

appropriate of funds more than that initial \$10,000 unless they had a program. And, I could not get a program, since I did not have anybody to draw up the program and I obviously was incapable of doing it myself. So, finally I went to see Clarence Linder who was Vice President for Research for General Electric.

DR. HARTZELL: In Schenectady?

DR. OLSON: I suppose he had an office in Schenectady, but I saw him in his office in New York, in Manhattan, and after I had talked to him for a while, he became deeply interested in the project and called up engineers all over the country and assembled a committee. I told him that if they would help us draft a program of study for an engineering school, that I would see that it was presented to the Board, but I could not assure them that it would be approved or that anything would happen as a result of it. Anything more than what I had just said. But, that was sufficient to satisfy him; he was obviously interested if there was going to be an engineering school that it be the kind of engineering school that GE would be interested in. And I was pretty sure that the kind of engineering school that GE would be interested in would be the kind of engineering school that I would be interested in. There were quite a few who had been trying to persuade me to establish an engineering school for highway engineering and so on, and it didn't seem to be the kinds of thing we ought to have. Anyway, so they set up this committee and they worked with our faculty and finally came up with a set of about 150 clothbound volumes of a program for an engineering school, 150 copies of a clothbound volume.

DR. HARTZELL: Tom Irvine, was he with you then?

DR. OLSON: No, you see there wasn't anybody, nobody in engineering.

DR. HARTZELL: This was what year?

DR. OLSON: This was before, this must have been 1960. Before Lee came, nobody had come, I was still certainly the only person; there was nobody in engineering. Nobody, not in Albany, not any place.

DR. HARTZELL: You sure it wasn't '59.

DR. OLSON: Oh no, it couldn't have been '59. '60. Anyway, so the program for an engineering school as drawn up by engineers from GE and members of the faculty of the college of Long Island.

DR. HARTZELL: Who were some of those members who were involved, they must have been physicists and chemists?

DR. OLSON: And social scientists and humanists; Harold Zyskind was involved, Bill Lister was involved, Jay Williams, who is in social sciences, and Francis Bonner and I think probably Cliff Swartz. So they all met, the members of the staff at GE were impressed with the faculty members at Long Island that they had to work with in drawing up this program. The program was then submitted to the Board and approved and that provided the go-ahead for authorization for us to hire a dean for engineering. And again I consulted with people that I had gotten to know in engineering around the country and I particularly got an enthusiastic recommendation from a Professor Engineering at UCLA, whose name I am sorry I can't remember, and that was enough for me to call up John Lee and suggest that we talk.

DR. HARTZELL: This man at UCLA recommended John Lee?

DR. OLSON: That's right. And so I went to Raleigh and interviewed John Lee. Now wait a minute. John Lee came to Manhattan and I interviewed him in Manhattan and then I made a recommendation to Hamilton in Albany for the appointment of John Lee as Dean of Engineering.

DR. HARTZELL: Did you check back on the Raleigh campus to see what the opinion about John Lee was from different points of view?

DR. OLSON: No. In retrospect I realized acutely that I should have; in retrospect I remember being very puzzled at the time I came down to Raleigh to meet with John F. Lee after I had this initial interview that I spoke of in Manhattan, I came to see him, I forget why, I came into his office, his outer office which was a fairly large office with university secretaries and so on, and in retrospect I remember an atmosphere of hostility such as I have never encountered in an office before or since.

DR. HARTZELL: Hostility to you?

DR. OLSON: Just tension. Nobody seemed able to be affable with me, nobody seemed to be able to carry on a conversation with me, there was a kind of stony silence as I waited until Lee was available from whatever it was he was busy with in his office. That should have told me something, but at the time I was so desperate for trying to get this load of getting an engineering school off my back, since my chief interest was not in engineering, I was doing it only because I had to. Anyway, that was the first indication I had of what it was like being with John Lee.

DR. HARTZELL: The sciences are departmentally organized rather than divisionally and top quality individuals are interested in their research because that is the avenue for promotion of course, so you have an ideological and to some extent an administrative difference of opinion, difference between them as a body and humanities and the social sciences.

DR. OLSON: Well, I am not sure I see that as a difference, that is, I think that people in the humanities and social sciences in a university are interested in

doing research and publishing in order to achieve their promotions as well as those in the sciences.

DR. HARTZELL: That's true, that's true. But there seems to be an easier give and take across disciplinary lines.

DR. OLSON: Yes, in the social sciences and humanities than there is, that's right there is; I don't know, you may be pointing to a problem that I had in starting the institution. I started it with division. It is not surprising that that thought occurred to me since I came from a university which is still is organized on a divisional basis. There are four division in Chicago and those divisions are both graduate undergraduate. And so an appointment at the graduate level in most cases at the university is an appointment also in the college; so there is not a dean of arts and sciences in Chicago, there is a dean of humanities and a dean of social sciences and so on and then there is a dean of the college. So, in establishing the institution at Long Island, since I was interested in promoting interdisciplinary activities, I started with divisions, with the expectation that in the future there would be departments established within the division, but initially with only fifteen members in the faculty, there didn't seem to be any need for departments.

DR. HARTZELL: Now, you looked to Chicago and you looked to Columbia and Yale, what about Princeton and Harvard or Stanford or Berkeley?

DR. OLSON: I didn't know anybody at Harvard, I didn't know anybody currently with whom I might correspond regarding appointments to the faculty; the same thing was true of Princeton. Although I welcomed suggestions and of course Leonard Eisenbud came from Princeton; I guess there's nothing more that I can say.

DR. HARTZELL: You were under the gun to get on with the job fast.

DR. OLSON: Yes, that reminds me of a rather interesting problem I had. In the very beginning my concern was chiefly with getting in a faculty assembled to teach the students who would appear at the doors in September of 1957. Since I started in the spring of 1957, it didn't leave me much time. So I was frantically assembling a faculty and the newspaper announcement of the opening of the institution in the fall of '57 had simply given the Albany to reach the office as the office to which to apply for admission to this new institution on Long Island. Well, my secretary was receiving all of the letters that came in regarding admission to this new institution. I kept checking with her to see how the applications were going and she kept giving me these numbers that kept going up and up and up and, good heavens, I have got to work harder at getting a faculty together for all of these students until finally one day I said, "I think maybe I had better look over all these applications from students to see what they look like." I looked over all of them and there wasn't a single complete application among them; they were all requests for information and not much more; and at that point what we had was not a single student, so I faced a rather appalling situation that a public institution was to open with fifteen members of the faculty and no students. So I immediately turned to the only source with which I was familiar, which was the office of the dean of students at the University of Chicago and got them to recommend somebody who was one of their top men, namely Al Austill, and persuaded him to come and serve as dean of students and start getting busy in the matter of recruiting students, which he did, and was successful in doing so.

DR. HARTZELL: How much do you know, let's see, Dr. Lee left after you did?

DR. OLSON: Yes, yes, I severed my connections with the State University of New York formally in order to accept the appointment as Assistant to the Provost of the University of Chicago.

DR. HARTZELL: I see; remember the date?

DR. OLSON: I'd have to check my files.

DR. HARTZELL: Your letter of resignation would probably be the date roughly.

DR. OLSON: Yes.

DR. HARTZELL: We have that.

DR. OLSON: Edward Levy was Provost of the University asked me to accept that appointment, I said that I would not do say without first informing Tom Hamilton, giving him an opportunity to say anything that he might want to say before I accepted the appointment. So, I did not accept it immediately, but upon coming back to New York and talking with Tom Hamilton, I then called Edward Levy and accepted the appointment.

DR. HARTZELL: Did you at any time have the idea that you would have liked to be president of the Long Island institution?

DR. OLSON: I don't think I ever thought I would in any unqualified sense because I never felt fully committed to the life of an administrator. I envied the members of the faculty who could devote themselves to their studies and their teaching, that's what I wanted to do. When I came to the University of Chicago after leaving Long Island, I did so only on the understanding that I could be teaching as well as being engaged in my administrative work; this Edward Levy agreed to. So, well, but I understood all along that although my appointment as dean was not acting, my appointment as chief administrative officer was acting and that it was pending the appointment of someone whose special field was

engineering or science. So I always understood, knew that any time somebody might be appointed over my head. So I was not surprised when I recommended the appointment of John F. Lee as dean of engineering that I got a call from Albany saying this man looks pretty good, how about considering him as president? And I knew of no reason, at least at that time, I knew of no reason to hesitate and I said, "Yes, I thought he would be a reasonable candidate." I forget, I was either talking with Hamilton or with John Slocum, I am not sure which, "Would you arrange to have him meet the faculty," and so I did.

DR. HARTZELL: What was the faculty's reaction?

DR. OLSON: The faculty's reaction generally was affirmative. There was some hesitation expressed on the basis that it was too difficult to know him well enough in so short a time as to be sure.

DR. HARTZELL: Was there some hesitation on the part of the people in the humanities and social sciences to have a scientist appointed president?

DR. OLSON: I recall no such hesitation. I recall hesitation on the grounds that he looked good but that not enough was known about him to be certain about him, and that's all.

DR. HARTZELL: Were students involved at all in?

DR. OLSON: I don't think so, I don't recall if there were.

DR. HARTZELL: Do you know what the circumstances were that led to his leaving?

DR. OLSON: Well, my understanding of it is and I, of course, was not as much of the time during which the difficulties built up, I was away, I was in Jordan.

DR. HARTZELL: In '61?

DR. OLSON: Yes, because as I told you, I was sent by the Ford Foundation as consultant for the establishment of the university in Jordan. And it was during my travels with, I then went with three Arabs to various universities in Europe and the United States, with these Arabs. The Ford Foundation was concerned that it not appear that this was an attempt to impose an American conception of a university upon Jordan, so they wanted it clear that they were free to investigate the character of universities in Europe, in England and in the United States, in order to get a model for what they wanted to do in Jordan. So I traveled all over Europe and the United States with them and in the course of those travels I visited the University of Chicago where it was at that time that I met and talked with Edward Levy. It was at this time that difficulties with John F. Lee were developing. When I left the Long Island campus when my appointment was changed from Long Island to Albany, John F. Lee took it upon himself to reassign Allen Austill from Long Island to Albany. He was then informed by the administration in Albany that that was beyond his power to do so and that such an appointment was not effective, so Austill was left in his position in Long Island. But that was the kind of action on the part of John F. Lee, which it was my understanding, characterized his actions repeatedly because of which I was then told by people in the office in Albany that he was impossible to deal with.

DR. HARTZELL: Do you remember who in Albany?

DR. OLSON: I wouldn't like to name names.

DR. HARTZELL: Okay, all right. What was the role of the press in all of this?

DR. OLSON: Well, the Long Island, what's it called?

DR. HARTZELL: There were then two newspapers: Newsday and the Long Island Press.

DR. OLSON: Newsday, as I recall, was particularly interested; and if you look at the files, I am quite sure you will find clippings of the articles written by one reporter in particular at Newsday, who kept reporting on the College at Long Island, which as you know became known as the Long Island Center, and even when I was vacationing in Michigan, where I happen to go with my family to a lake in the middle of it, he called me long distance while I was there to try to get me to tell him things that was going on on Long Island, because he had gotten wind of the difficulties and wanted to know more about them. You may recall, you may know that there was a meeting which the press heard about in Manhattan in the offices of the State University, which Tom Hamilton called for a discussion with John F. Lee, with me, Bill Lister, Harold Zyskind, I think Jay Williams.

DR. HARTZELL: Was Palmer there?

DR. OLSON: I don't think so, I think he just asked for divisional deans, not divisional chairmen, so that would have been Lister, Zyskind and Williams, and Lee and me. And he called to that meeting in which he went around the table asking each person to give his understanding of what the status of affairs was at the College of Long Island; he didn't call on me for obvious reasons. That there were difficulties obviously emerged from that meeting. Hamilton subsequently called me into his office and said, "I know you think that John F. Lee has serious problems in administering that institution and that they will not go away." He says, "I just think that he's made a mistake and he can rectify it and that everything will be all right." I said I didn't think so. He was quite determined that that was the case. End of that discussion.

DR. HARTZELL: One further question, we have had in subsequent years many complaints about the layers of the bureaucracy and how difficult it has been to get

decisions and the extent to which the initiative for the establishment of Stony Brook gradually was transferred from the central office to the locality and with the locality beginning to push for its received growth direction farther and faster than those in the central office seemed to either understand or prefer or be happy with. What can you say about your difficulties, if any, or the support you got from the central office in the establishment of the center?

DR. OLSON: I would say that for the most part I received support, that there was very little attempt on the part of the central office to control my activities other than by requiring me to submit budgets and get approval of those budgets. I never had an appointment turned down, I have never had a request for funds turned down, I never had anybody from the central office calling me and telling me what to do. I was left almost entirely on my own, I could consult with them and I did, I frequently consulted with Charlie Foster regarding business matters but.

DR. HARTZELL: How about Dave Price, was he there?

DR. OLSON: No, or if he was there, I had nothing to do with him.

DR. HARTZELL: He was Vice President for Personnel when I was there.

DR. OLSON: I vaguely recall the name but I don't know him and I never had anything to do with him.

DR. HARTZELL: Did you have any alter egos there with whom you could talk philosophy, educational philosophy?

DR. OLSON: Not really, when I had problems about difficulties I might be having, I could talk with John Slocum but John Slocum was a very good listener and very little inclined to give me advice as to what to do.

DR. HARTZELL: Did you know what was his background?

DR. OLSON: His background, he had a, his Ph. D. was in business economics or something like that from Cornell. I think he did his other graduate work in Chicago, I think so, I'm not sure; anyway he knew people at Chicago, as I did, he knew Reuben as I did. So, I talked with him and there was never any attempt on his part to tell me what to do or even, as a matter of fact, to advise me what to do.

DR. HARTZELL: What about your connections with the Education Department, was Joe Nyquist from Chicago?

DR. OLSON: I knew him as Wally Nyquist, and he was a classmate of mine at Chicago. We had both been members of the senior honor society, so we got to know one another there, so I knew him, but I had not had any contact with him after our undergraduate days until I came to Albany. So, I had not any contact with him between those times.

DR. HARTZELL: Are you Phi Beta Kappa?

DR. OLSON: Pardon?

DR. HARTZELL: Are you Phi Beta Kappa?

DR. OLSON: No.

DR. HARTZELL: I have the impression that Jim Allen was a broad gauge educator with sufficient breadth to appreciate and work with people in the central office of the State University without being antagonistic.

DR. OLSON: My experience in being, I met with him and numerous members of the Education Department and with people from around the State in a meeting that he called in his offices in Albany and there was some discussion in that meeting of the need for extending the facilities of the State University to meet the needs of New York but those needs were being conceived almost exclusively in terms of business needs, and so I proceeded to point out that the matter of needs was a

subtle matter, that needs could be interpreted in various ways, that the State of New York needed more educated citizens, they needed better philosophers, they needed better economists, they needed better physicists and the needs extended across all areas of the University. After the meeting was over Jim Allen came up to me and said that he was happy to see somebody with that kind of interest involved in the State University of New York, which obviously indicated that he too was sympathetic with that kind of conception of the role of the University.

DR. HARTZELL: You probably felt somewhat alone?

DR. OLSON: Yes, I daresay.

DR. HARTZELL: Rockefeller was Phi Beta Kappa from Dartmouth and I had the feeling that where education was concerned he had a broad conception of the needs of society. Well, I think we've covered about everything I can think of, let me take these and I appreciate very much your frankness and willingness to come over here, particularly in view of the fact that you have a cold.

DR. OLSON: Well, I think I am about over it.

DR. HARTZELL: Good, that's good. All right.

DR. OLSON: Well, I have only the interest of seeing the history of the institution reported as accurately as possible.

DR. HARTZELL: Right. I think there are people who feel that Stony Brook and UCSD are the two outstanding examples of the development of higher public education since World War II, and it just so happens that while I was in San Diego I had the opportunity to talk with Roger Revelle, who is the real founder of San Diego from its initial condition as the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, of which he was Director, and one of the five colleges that they have established is named for him, Revelle College; that's the college that has the science orientation, but he was

determined to have Scripps Institute broadened in terms of graduate work in all sciences and then also in terms of humanities and the social sciences, and with an undergraduate college gradually added. He is quite a man. Okay.