

**INTERVIEW WITH JOHN PRATT  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**June 21, 1989**

**Dr. Hartzell:** This is an interview with Professor John Pratt of the Department of History, June 21, 1989, in my office. All right. I'll start off with the questions again, and I'm sure you'll get into it.

**John Pratt:** My name is John Pratt. I'm in the History Department and hold the rank of Associate Professor. I came to Stony Brook in the fall semester of 1963. Let me think here now, I was going on 31 years old when I arrived. I had come from a postdoctoral year at Harvard Law School, which followed my first teaching appointment in the History Department of the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Did you get an L. L. B. in Harvard?

**John Pratt:** No, it was a postdoctoral fellowship that they ran at the Law School for teachers in the social sciences who offered courses that touched on law, gave us a shot at the law curriculum and at the faculty that year, a nice year.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Four, who was primarily responsible for your coming?

**John Pratt:** Well, I found about the opening here through Professor Robert Wolf in the History Department in Harvard. I think he was either chairing the department that year or was the placement officer there.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Here?

**John Pratt:** No, at Harvard. He got an inquiry from this institution, I think through Stan Ross, about the opening in the department here, and he thought of me and got in touch with me. I then was in touch with Stanley, and one thing led to another.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Did anyone else interview you besides Stan Ross, who was Dean at that time?

**John Pratt:** Well, I met and chatted with, it wasn't really a formal interview arrangement, but with all the members of the department. It wasn't a large department,

but with each one of them, I had an opportunity to talk on an individual basis. And then there was what amounted, I think, to an institutional interview, the group meeting at the Three Village Inn for a luncheon composed of Stanley and then the people associated with various departments -- Alec Pond was there, Martin Travis from Political Science, Marvin Kristein from the Economics Department, I think Francis Bonner was in the group from Chemistry, you may have been there.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I don't remember.

**John Pratt:** I don't remember for sure, but you may very been. And there was quite a bit of exchange there at that gathering. After that Stanley brought me back to his office, closed the door and made an offer to me; an offer I couldn't refuse.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Good. What was your reaction to the group?

**John Pratt:** In the department or the luncheon?

**Dr. Hartzell:** Both.

**John Pratt:** Both of them, well, I was impressed by the kind of enthusiasm and friendliness of the department group, which in those days consisted of Bernard Semmel, Hugh Cleland, Dan Gassman, who later left our department, I'm trying to remember who else, Dick Morse I think had just left to go up to Yale.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes, I never saw him; he left before I came in 1962.

**John Pratt:** Who else did we have? I think perhaps Alan Wildman had come in Russian history.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Let me stop for just a second, all right, go ahead.

**John Pratt:** This is the first time I ever heard myself on tape with that upstate nasal twang of mine, I had no idea that my voice was that distinctive. I know I don't even have to identify myself on the phone most times.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Are you from upstate New York?

**John Pratt:** Up in the Finger Lakes region, yeah.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Whereabouts?

**John Pratt:** A little place called Waterloo, New York, up on Seneca Lake area, near Seneca Falls and Geneva.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I taught at Geneseo for five years.

**John Pratt:** Ah, well, then you know that area.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Why did you come, six?

**John Pratt:** The one, my wife and I wanted to get back east. We'd enjoyed our short stay in Wisconsin in the Milwaukee area, and people were wonderful and friendly, but we thought of ourselves as easterners and New Yorkers and wanted to get back. Why Stony Brook? The attraction here it seems to me was the kind of strong and enthusiastic commitment I encountered here to developing a good program in history, and the institution generally developing itself was attractive.

**Dr. Hartzell:** How did you react to Stan Ross and the other members of the firm?

**John Pratt:** Stan was, well, you remember Stanley, he was all business.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I appointed Stan.

**John Pratt:** Yes, all business, but I found in my dealings with Stan you knew where he stood, and you could rely on him. My other colleagues I also found to be, well, it was pleasant working with them. We, during those early years when there wasn't much choice about eating places at noontime, we brown bagged it and ate our lunch together with members of the Political Science Department over in the Humanities Building, and I think Charlie Hoffmann of Economics joined us on a regular basis, and we had quite a good group, it was small and intimate, very nice.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was that continued in the Social and Behavioral Science Building?

**John Pratt:** I think inevitably with growth and the, particularly the growth of each department in that division, that no, it has not continued. There isn't that kind of stretching or reaching across departmental lines that we once did, perhaps more out of necessity than anything else, there were so few of us in the History Department.

**Dr. Hartzell:** You have close friends across departments.

**John Pratt:** Oh, yes, particularly in the Political Science Department, a number there, I think Professors Travis and Scarrow, for instance, Howard Scarrow came the same year I did, and it's been a good acquaintance over the years, yeah.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Number 7, how did you understand the context in which the University was set?

**John Pratt:** Well, as I discovered, I made inquiries from others, not members of this institution, of course I had been forewarned about the infighting that had occurred here in administration, the kind of problem that brought you here originally, but the indications were that that was settling down and smoothing out, and that Stony Brook had been designated as one of the University Centers, it would become one of its major graduate training institutions. And I think another factor here was the knowledge that the Rockefeller administration was strongly committed to the growth and to increasing the quality of State University system, so these were all powerful influences.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Okay, number 8, your impressions of Stony Brook, the campus, the people, leadership, spirit.

**John Pratt:** Well, the campus when I arrived, of course, was in those early stages of what would be a recurring and ongoing condition here, the stage of growth and raw construction.

**Dr. Hartzell:** This was a construction site.

**John Pratt:** Yeah, when I arrived there were, compared with today, just a very few buildings, that old light brick architecture, what was it somebody once described it as New York penal, I think.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Neo-penal.

**John Pratt:** Yeah, so there was that impression, but along with it was, as I said, the real enthusiasm, I think both of leadership and of the faculty here to quality growth, so that at least for that period one could tolerate the inconveniences of growth because you knew you were heading in a very positive direction.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Do you think that the people who were in positions of leadership understood what quality was?

**John Pratt:** I think they did, yes. Speaking now from my area of the discipline, of the curriculum I should say, history, very definitely a commitment there from the leadership, from Stan Ross for example, to attracting good historians. I think that he certainly was instrumental in doing that.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Do you know how he went about it, do you have any picture of what

**John Pratt:** Well, Stanley was one of the, I think, political statesmen of the historical profession. It was interesting to watch him operate at our professional conventions, the American Historical Association meetings, the Old Mississippi Valley Historical, which is now the Organization of American History; he had far-flung contacts with other equally prominent figures in the profession, and I think that through this he was constantly alert to the possibilities of attracting good people here. And, of course, another avenue was through the members of the department already present and what contacts they had. We knew clearly what areas, what special fields within the subject area that we wanted to attract new personnel to. So he sort of presided over this job of constantly keeping your antenna close to the ground and sifting and looking at and inquiring and drawing the people. I think he was a key figure for our department.

**Dr. Hartzell:** What events, what persons, what experiences stand out in your mind, that's nine.

**John Pratt:** Oh, probably if I had to think of what series of events more than anything else had its impact on me, it would be that time of troubles we went through in the late 1960's and early 1970's. I like to think that's when my hair began to turn gray, Karl. They were kind of an unsettling time for me, and I think probably for many of my colleagues too, difficult time. Of course, immediately coming off that, we began to encounter financial problems in the State University and the State government generally, was it 1975, if my memory is correct, that Hugh Carey first put us into austerity situation

and one sensed that after the Rockefeller years there wasn't that spirit of progress and growth associated with the University.

**Dr. Hartzell:** There was no vision, Carey didn't have visions for it, what the needs were for higher education; it's a sad picture. What about the Vietnam War, was the faculty in your department basically opposed to it?

**John Pratt:** I would say the large majority, yes, almost from the beginning. But that I could understand, but it was the effect that the war, the increasing concern and involvement of undergraduates and graduate students that led to a kind of militancy and challenge to expertise and to authority here, well, the whole society experienced that challenge. It kind of unglued certain established relationships, and I think administration, faculty and student body at that time and shortly afterward had difficulty reestablishing older relationships, at least on the grounds of the kind of confidence and trust that I think existed before this series of events here at Stony Brook.

**Dr. Hartzell:** When did Jackson Turner Main come and what about the Institute for Colonial History?

**John Pratt:** Jack Main arrived, without checking now the precise date, I think it was 1967.

**Dr. Hartzell:** That late.

**John Pratt:** Yeah, yeah, and initially there really wasn't much activity in terms of the Colonial Institute, it was established, but it certainly was an outgrowth of Jack's appointment here, the understanding.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Did you have the Institute before he came or was he the one who set it up?

**John Pratt:** I think the idea came from within the department and from Stan Ross, and then in his, in the department's discussions with Jack Main, it was sort of given substance and structure from that point, and I think Jack Main dealt most directly and continually probably with Sidney Gelber in getting this off the ground.

**Dr. Hartzell:** He was then, Sidney was Vice President for Academic Affairs.

**John Pratt:** I think that was the title, yes.

**Dr. Hartzell:** He succeeded Bentley Glass.

**John Pratt:** Uh, huh.

**Dr. Hartzell:** In 1971, Bentley, as an administrator, retired in 1971.

**John Pratt:** 1971, okay, maybe in his initial dealings, what was Stanley's, Sidney's title before he became Academic Vice President?

**Dr. Hartzell:** He was, I think, chairman of the Philosophy Department.

**John Pratt:** He didn't serve as a Dean of the College or anything like that?

**Dr. Hartzell:** I'm not sure of that, but it could be.

**John Pratt:** I think he may have been in that position at the time when Jack and he were piecing together the plan for the Colonial Institute.

**Dr. Hartzell:** There was somebody else in the Institute.

**John Pratt:** Cavanaugh, Pete Cavanaugh was brought here to originally to identify, locate and microfilm colonial documents, especially from the Long Island region.

**Dr. Hartzell:** How did that work out, Jack left, do you have any idea when he left?

**John Pratt:** Well, let's see. Within the last three years, three to four years, again, I'd have to check my diary on this, but Jack's been gone three or four years, I think. He retired early at 62; he went west with his wife, who had accepted appointment at the University of Colorado.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I see.

**John Pratt:** The Institute had fallen apart long before that.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Oh, really.

**John Pratt:** Yeah, yeah. It was crucial that some outside sources of funding be identified and tapped to finance the Institute because it became clear when we went into austerity, the State was not prepared to carry it any longer, well, that just didn't happen. The Department got out of it though the Institute years saw considerable purchasing of published early American materials and that brought strength to our library, to the department.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Ten, what was your understanding of your own place in the future of Stony Brook, where did you fit in the Department?

**John Pratt:** Originally I think I shared with the rest of what was then a very small department the sense almost that the sky was the limit. The opportunities were there if you were prepared to take advantage of it. There was considerable opportunity, especially in those early years for your own ideas about developing new courses and things of this sort. And we all worked closely together; there was constant feedback and interchange, something that has been less prominent since the time of the troubles of the late '60's and the early '70's.

**Dr. Hartzell:** In your own field was what?

**John Pratt:** Well, my field that I had been trained in most directly was American constitutional history and legal history; but I also had specialized in the early period of our constitutional history and also trained with Samuel Elliot Morrison in the colonial period. So when I first came here, it was as a teacher of colonial American history. Now that wasn't directly, precisely my primary field. When Jack Main came, he took over that responsibility for the colonial period, and then I was able to move directly into the constitutional legal field, and I also taught New York State history through the years. So, as I say in the early period there was considerable freedom and opportunity for initiative in terms of courses, teaching schedules and so on, and we all sort of shared in and did enjoy.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was the initiative of individuals fostered within a departmental framework or concept of what the department should be doing or was there no overall departmental picture except as developed piecemeal by the individuals that happened to be brought in?

**John Pratt:** I think in that early phase of my years here clearly there was an idea of a department as such, and where this department ought to be heading. But it was an expansive view that we all took of where we should be going, with the idea that this department could grow and become sort of a broad-gauged department capable of



offering graduate level work in virtually any field. In the beginning growth was directed, I think, the most prominently to United States history and Latin American history. But in very short order we began to build European history.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Who were the European history people?

**John Pratt:** The year I arrived Tom Angress, Werner Angress, came as a modern German historian. And that then began or led to the development of the European field. We already had strength with Bernard Semmel with British history, and that was built onto with Karl Bottigheimer's arrival here, but on, well, I should say we had Russian too with Alan Wildman. In the years immediately after I arrived, strength was developed in, not only modern Germany, but modern France when Richard Kuisel joined us from the west coast, European intellectual history and also the arrival of Joel Rosenthal and Helen LeMay gave us strength in medieval and renaissance European history.

**Dr. Hartzell:** What was Joel's main field.

**John Pratt:** Joel's field was medieval Europe with particular emphasis on England and the British Isles generally, in that sense the European area developed quickly. We had early on Bob Lee in Asian history; Bob has just recently retired from the department. And of course the strength in Latin American history, and to a limited extent British Empire and Africa, people like John Williams. But the sense in those early years was that we were going to develop a department that could offer advanced work in virtually any one of the major geographical areas of historical study.

**Dr. Hartzell:** That's quite an undertaking.

**John Pratt:** It was, and of course it didn't succeed, but we advanced a long way toward it in those earlier years.

**Dr. Hartzell:** How do you estimate the Department now; you say the plans did not succeed.

**John Pratt:** Well, again, we ran into problems with either obtaining new lines or holding people that we had that were the result of the austerity in the '70's. I have to stop and think here. We had a young man who joined our department whose specialty was

renaissance Italy, he also was a trained economist and probably the first member in the department with some background in modification in computer skills. Now he combined these and did some really first-rate work in the Italian merchant families in the renaissance here.

**Dr. Hartzell:** The Medicis?

**John Pratt:** Yeah, and in other similar mercantile families. Now, I have to stop and think, his name now escapes me. We lost him, he left the academic field and joined an economic consulting agency that has an international business out of New York City and has since become their chief executive officer with a salary and bonuses that he couldn't hope to have matched here when he came to Stony Brook. So, there were other instances where we had openings but really weren't able to attract the kind of people we wanted because, again, of the fiscal squeeze that started in the mid-'70's.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Okay, were your activities confined to the Stony Brook campus, this is 13?

**John Pratt:** For the early years, yes, not confined to my department because in those years I had opportunities either through faculty committee work or administrative work, for example, I think it was my third or second or third year here, I was detached by Stanley to serve as the first Assistant Dean of the Graduate School under David Fox, who was the Dean at that time; and that program was beginning to get off the ground. It had to have been my second or third year here, and there were certain things that needed to be done. I spent that year in part teaching a reduced teaching load, and my afternoons over in their offices which were out of the rear of what was then the Biology building. David Fox, two secretaries and myself was the Graduate School operation then. One of those secretaries is still here with the Graduate School and in a much more responsible position, Phyllis Reed, I think I mentioned her to you the other day, Karl, so she goes way back and has seen a lot of the development in the Graduate School. Later on I had an opportunity on several occasions to make contact with people from other branches and divisions of the State University. I served on visiting committees for going up to State

University College at Oneonta, their history department was forming a master's program in history, and this visiting committee was to look it over and suggest to the graduate level administrator in the University whether it should be approved or not.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Who appointed you to that?

**John Pratt:** I think probably a recommendation from the department here. They were looking for a committee of three who particularly had a background in United States and Latin American history. So, it was two United States historians, one of them myself, and a Latin American historian. I went to Oneonta. As I say, I think the recommendation came, might have come from Stan Ross that year. On other occasions I've mixed with historians and other faculty members from other branches of the University through the review process for Research Foundation grant proposals; they would bring people in from all over the State to look at the applications and to make a judgment about their merit. Most recently I

**Dr. Hartzell:** Did you function in that capacity in Albany or down here?

**John Pratt:** We met in Albany for this, yeah, for this process.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Do you know what your committee was called?

**John Pratt:** Uh, well, the Research Foundation had groups for each subject area, we were the historical group in charge of looking at all Research Foundation applications for funding that came from faculty in the area of history and with that we broke down into our specialized fields -- American history, European history and so on. It was a large operation in those days, we met for several days in Albany, worked around big tables reading proposals and discussing them.

**Dr. Hartzell:** What about the quality of proposals, were there any proposals from Stony Brook?

**John Pratt:** Yes, there were, and I think my impression was that the best proposals were generated by the University Centers. There were several good proposals out of what had been the teachers colleges, but they were still I think getting used to the new arrangements, and there was still quite a holdover faculty from the days when they had

primarily teacher training. But that began to improve as they attracted new faculty. Again, those were the years when all branches of the State University campus were growing and enlarging and drawing new and young faculty.

**Dr. Hartzell:** So you, what about your own discipline in its national organizations, where you involved in that?

**John Pratt:** I never had any of the elective positions but have been over the years an active member of the Association of American Historians, the American Historical Association. Early on the Old Mississippi Valley Historical Association, which is now the Organization of American History. I've been active in the annual meetings of the American Society for Legal History. And New York State has, through the auspices of the state historians operation up in Albany, a group that meets annually at a conference on New York history. And I think generally over the years it's been the smaller groups, the Legal Society and the New York that, like many other of my colleagues, have tended to attract people more than the huge gatherings of the large national societies.

**Dr. Hartzell:** All right, 14, initially I worked out these questions with four members of the faculty -- Sidney, Francis, Tom Irvine and Cliff Swartz.

**John Pratt:** Your mention of Tom Irvine reminds me, he was one of the people there at that original sort of luncheon interview that I had at the Three Village Inn when I came here.

**Dr. Hartzell:** He was Dean of the College of Engineering at the time. We were going to cut this pretty sharply at 1971 because this was considered to be on the early years.

**John Pratt:** Well, I can address that within that time frame.

**Dr. Hartzell:** If you have to go beyond 1971, I don't have a problem with that.

**John Pratt:** Well, I think that by at least by the '70's, the mid-'70's within our department that I made a contribution to helping build it. We, as a department, especially in the early years, were not terribly hierarchically conscious of the differences that different rank, junior members, senior members, all were encouraged to participate in the, for example, in the interviewing of prospective members of the department, candidates

for positions in the department, so we all had an opportunity there to contribute. By the mid-'70's, I can use that as sort of a data point here, several of us had had a great deal to do with defining, creating and getting into operation the graduate program in the history department. A central figure in that was Werner Angress, the German historian, but I was part of a committee that worked on that, set that program up and got approval for it.

**Dr. Hartzell:** All right, let's get into that a little bit more in detail. When I came Chemistry and Physics already had, and Engineering, approval for graduate work. The first department that I was involved with was Biology, they wanted to go into graduate work and David Fox ..... before we sent the application to Albany for graduate work, we ought to bring in some outside people from first-rate institutions to take a look at us, to make sure that we were at the level that could justify graduate work. And Harry Porter, at the time we told him about and presented the credentials for Biology, said that he thought that was an excellent idea, and he was going to make it a system-wide requirement that before applications came in for graduate work, there should be an outside review committee. In the case of the sciences, take a look at the staff, the laboratories, the program; in the case of the others, take a look at the staff, the library and the program. Now, did you bring in anybody from outside to review your graduate work.

**John Pratt:** This would be in 1965, we started I believe in the fall semester of 1965 having received approval from the necessary authorities. We did have an outside group look at us, but for the life of me I can't remember who constituted that visiting committee; but they did come in and look at such things, as I recall, the kind of staffing we had for the areas where we wanted to concentrate in those early years and admitting graduate students and awarding graduate degrees, particularly European, modern European history, United States history, Latin American history, the library, certainly those resources were looked at. Again, in those years we couldn't order fast enough. The money was there, whatever limitations there were on our building up of a historical collection library were the limitations that there are only twenty-four hours in the day. So, yes, we did have outsiders look at us, but again, I say, I can't recall precisely who

they were. Stanley, I think, was probably instrumental in putting the group together, but who they were, without checking records today, escapes me.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Where is Tom Angress today?

**John Pratt:** Tom retired a year ago this last spring, and initially with the idea he would go down to North Carolina; I believe he has some sort of a visiting semester relationship with Duke University in his retirement. But he since decided to locate, I think permanently, in Berlin, his old birthplace and where he grew up as a child.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I see. He went to Wesleyan, if I'm correct.

**John Pratt:** Yes, he did.

**Dr. Hartzell:** That's my old *alma mater*. All right, let's see, now, can you name individuals who did things that were important for the future development of the University as a whole or some part of it, in other words you have a better contextual, institutional viewpoint than a lot of other people that I have interviewed, so get down to individuals.

**John Pratt:** Yeah, I think those that I would have to mention, of course I would start with John Toll, the builder, the Robert Moses of Stony Brook, if you will, and the realization that he had and the dream that he had developing the plant, the physical plant of this campus on the assumption I guess that once politicians see a building go up, there is not much chance they're ever going to direct that it be taken down. That particularly I think was impressive to watch over the years as we grew physically.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was that what the faculty saw primarily in John?

**John Pratt:** This was a large part of it, but not all of it. I think there was the sense too that Toll was fully committed to seeing these new expanding facilities being utilized by quality programs and quality faculty. I think there was that sense that he was building for not simply buildings for the sake of building, the buildings that would make this attractive to and I think provide the kind of plan for a first-class academic institution. I can mention another individual, it would be you, Karl. You came at a particular, now this is before my arrival, but I have been fully briefed on it from a number of sources

[end of side 1]

**Dr. Hartzell:** Okay, can you summarize what you were just, what you said.

**John Pratt:** I think at the point when the tape ran out, Karl, we were, I think, turning to look at the kind of impact I think you had as the chief executive officer here in turning attention away from the old Oyster Bay squabbles and getting us to look more directly at what our future mission as an institution was and to get us working toward that. I think I indicated, again on our subject here that we're looking at right now is who amongst the leaders on campus, I was suggesting you in those early years because of your facility in the face of much, well there was a continuing rancor among some members of the faculty going back to the incidents at Oyster Bay, your ability to draw old and new faculty, or at least a significant number of us together and direct us toward what was to be our future mission, rather than allowing the old battles to dominate our concerns. And looking back through the perspective of the years of the late '60's and '70's when we had so much turmoil and incivility here on this campus, you did it in those early years always with, I think the thing that struck me about you, Karl, was you did it with civility and always the gentleman. In later years we saw a lot of rather ungentlemanly conduct on campus here, and looking back through and I think that was a great strength, and I am sure you were sorely tried at times by one faction or another. But always I thought that a source of your strength were your gentlemanly and disinterested qualities in dealing with the problems that you had to deal with.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, as I said, I was not a party to the situation at Oyster Bay, and I refused to take sides with people who wanted to keep the friction going. It was counterproductive, and fortunately there was a large group of the faculty that wanted to get on with the job building the institution and put Oyster Bay behind it.

**John Pratt:** And that group was constantly being augmented by new faculty coming in to whom the Oyster Bay affair meant little or nothing, yeah, so but still that had to be blended and brought together, that kind of new consensus about our future, and I think you had a major hand in that.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, I look back on it with certain amount of satisfaction. Anybody else, you mentioned Sidney.

**John Pratt:** Yes, I think too I should mention Sidney Gelber as having impressed me during, this would be during the early period of student demonstrations and protests here in the later sixties. Right after the first round of student protests, now I can't recall, I know for a fact that the first student demonstration on campus here, and I think it was in 1967, spring of 1967, late winter of 1967, had nothing to do with politics, but it had to do with the state of the campus, the physical condition, and particularly a major item of student concern was the whole outside lighting system was not dependable and constantly failing.

**Dr. Hartzell:** A certain amount of individual safety, particularly for the girls.

**John Pratt:** Yes, there was concern about open and inadequately screened ditches and things of this sort, and then wasn't it somewhere in this period that awful incident of the young man who fell in the manhole.

**Dr. Hartzell:** He thought he could jump across the manhole and fell into it.

**John Pratt:** Well, those tensions were beginning to build up over these issues. Then, of course, came the political dimension, Vietnam and the whole assault on expertise and authority that followed from it, but I have a vivid recollection of a group of students and faculty and John Toll over here in what was then the Old Humanities parking lot stringing up temporary electric lines so that the lights in that parking lot would shine at night.

**Dr. Hartzell:** We were keeping school on a construction site, which Albany never had to face because their buildings were built on a golf course while school was being kept farther downtown.

**John Pratt:** The old campus, yeah.

**Dr. Hartzell:** The old campus, so we had hard hats who were the construction people and who were patriotic individuals when it came to the Vietnam War, and students for whom they had little love.



**John Pratt:** Yes, yes, how well I recall that. In those early and difficult times, I thought Sidney Gelber handled himself particularly well in trying to rebuild what was a crumbling kind of a sense of community among administration, faculty and students here.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I think Alec Pond handled himself well in dealing sometimes with students, and there was Max Dresden who also was not afraid to get up and talk to students and tell them where to get off.

**John Pratt:** Well, I recall numerous occasions when Max took the podium to address, a role I am sure he has relished over the years as an orator of sorts. I can remember when we still were small enough faculty that we met all together to help govern the faculty in the years before we devised a representative faculty senate system for this business. But Max was certainly one of the more outspoken members of our faculty senate over those years.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Were you in the faculty when I introduced John Toll?

**John Pratt:** I have no direct recollection, I must have been, I must have been. Because in those years we were a small enough group to begin with, but we were quite faithful in our attendance at faculty meetings. I think many faculty here began to sour on the faculty meetings when they were continually being disrupted by demonstrators -- students and faculty -- marching about with a Vietcong flag, you remember that, Karl, I am sure.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes, we couldn't keep the ivory tower isolated from the social and political ..... complex.

**John Pratt:** And it was hard for those of us who had come out of a background where the ivory tower had meant something positive and attractive to encounter the new and freer and easier age. Though I do regard as one of the great benefits of that time the new casualness in dress. I haven't worn a starched white shirt and starched collar in a long, long time, and I used to regularly undergo that torture in the classroom.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Okay, well, I think I've run out of questions. Anything that you recollect for the good of the order?

**John Pratt:** I think we've pretty well canvassed it; I can't really think of anything more, Karl.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Who else in the department do you think I ought to interview? It's been Bernard Semmel

**John Pratt:** You have interviewed Bernie?

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes.

**John Pratt:** This will tell me here, won't it? Semmel, have you interviewed Hugh Cleland.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes, I have.

**John Pratt:** Okay. In terms of giving you that perspective, probably the only other members of the department who have that

**Dr. Hartzell:** What about Williams?

**John Pratt:** John Williams.

**Dr. Hartzell:** John Williams, no, who was the, John, was it?

**John Pratt:** There was, from the old Oyster Bay crowd there was Jay Williams in the political science department.

**Dr. Hartzell:** That's right.

**John Pratt:** He's been long retired, hasn't he.

**Dr. Hartzell:** He's retired, I don't know where he is.

**John Pratt:** Of that early group, Hugh Cleland, Bernard Semmel, myself, are the only ones really left. Tom Angress joined us, but he's retired and gone. Alan Wildman has gone off to Ohio State; Danny Gasman, the youngster in the department, left and returned to the city; Stanley's gone, and that was our department in its first years. I think you've got it in terms of that particular slant on the department.

**Dr. Hartzell:** If you could find out Tom Angress's address.

**John Pratt:** Okay, have you got a piece of paper for me, I'll write a note to myself.

[end of interview]