

**INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD SOLO
DIRECTOR OF ORIENTATION**

October 22, 1987

Dr. Hartzell: Interview with Richard Solo, formerly of the Chemistry Department, and now responsible for various student activities. That is the letter that went out to some members of the faculty with questions. The purpose is to get recollections of the early days, let's say up to 1971, and do that before people die off.

Richard Solo: And forget, or both. Certainly death will shorten one's memory.

Dr. Hartzell: I wrote that letter for Jerry, and he just sent it out. The idea had been originally to have a history of the University I think for the first twenty-five years, then they realized that that had gotten by them. Then the history for twenty-five years for this campus didn't seem to be quite right, and the thirty year history didn't seem to be quite right. And they had looked at one or two other people, I think Homer Neal started it, and found that there were biases, admitted biases, one way or another toward John Toll and others and so Jerry Schubel just pulled back. Originally I had learned about this project of writing the history and offered to be helpful for the three years where I was acting, and then Schubel called me in one time and told me what he had run into about trying to get somebody to do the history. And I had incidentally checked to see if Judge Sullivan, who had been chairman of our Council, had, I knew he had passed on, had left any records, and I got back a letter from his second wife that everything in his home had been thrown out, and she had checked with his secretary at the courthouse and there were no records left there that related to Stony Brook. So I sent that letter to Jerry, and also pointed out what was pointed out in there that the three Governors were dead, Tom Hamilton was dead, our dean, Stan Ross, was dead, people were passing off.

Richard Solo: Let's hope there's not a cause and effect between

Dr. Hartzell: No, this all happened prior. So he asked me if I would do the oral history, collect information which should be helpful in interpreting what written records

we have. Now, as far as you are concerned, I have asked questions about student life, situation in the dormitory, the quality of student body, student-faculty relations, that sort of thing. And I haven't gotten a great deal yet. Tilley is coming over.

Richard Solo: Ah, wonderful, you did trace him.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, I did.

Richard Solo: Did Don Bybee help in that or did you get an independent route.

Dr. Hartzell: I don't where I got, I think Max Mobley had the telephone number.

Richard Solo: That should be wonderful.

Dr. Hartzell: And I'm going to see Don Bybee too.

Richard Solo: Good.

Dr. Hartzell: So

Richard Solo: Both of them at that time, although this is perhaps slightly off the point, were involved in the admissions office, and therefore in a relatively small institution were central to the development and understanding of the student body. Indeed, Dave Tilley was the Dean of Students until difficulties of an unimaginable sort came along. I am somewhat aware of that, as is true of most of us, none of us understood anyone else's life very well, and our own some times not as well as we should have. Well, we may get to that later.

Dr. Hartzell: Okay, well, let me suggest then that we start with the questions so that there is some structure.

Richard Solo: We will chat, it will probably be easier for both of us. According to the list of questions, it starts with name, department, rank or position. I can give you a number of them. When I first came here I was an Assistant Professor in Chemistry and was that until about 1967, 1968. I came in 1962. The first year that Stony Brook was physically at Stony Brook was the first year I was here. I remember some few moments that we had. I then found that I wasn't productive enough in the traditional academic sense to continue in the department, but nevertheless had enjoyed myself a great deal at Stony Brook, and determined to try an alternative academic and non-academic position.

In a transition summer I was involved in something called the Change Clinic around 1967, 1968. A Change Clinic that Alexander Pond and other people put together to develop mechanisms that involved students who would be sophisticated in their efforts to make changes, both conceptual and practical changes, in the institution. This is now the mid sixties, late sixties, a very interesting time; we'll get back to that. Then the following September I was an Associate Director of Residential Counseling.

Dr. Hartzell: Did you work with

Richard Solo: With Scott Rickard. Who was the first

Dr. Hartzell: Larry DeBoer, was he involved?

Richard Solo: No, Larry at that time was probably involved in the beginnings of the Residential College Plan, we'll get to that in a minute. There was a very complicated and unsatisfying period for a few months at that time that led to the removal of the Vice President for Student Affairs. It wasn't Trask, maybe it was Trask, I'll have to think about it.

Dr. Hartzell: Trask was Chairman of the History Department.

Richard Solo: There was someone -- might have been Trask -- who was VPSA for all of two to three months, better check that out. And Scott Rickard, who was the Director of the Residential Counseling Program, who was an unknown, became the Vice President for Student Affairs, probably in part because of his talent and in part because no one knew who he was. These were very difficult times. Then I became the Director of the Residential Counseling Program, strange for me to be in that position, but none of the other people could agree on each other, and it was one of those least enemy type things. We had a very active program and were responsible for the counseling aspects of people known as Residential Assistants. My office was, in fact, in one of the dormitories. About two or three years later I also became involved in the Residential College Program, the tensions between many of the faculty, the President and students, and all of that wrapped in one interesting picture, led to a change of Larry DeBoer's position, among other things. I became Director of the Residential College Program for about two years,

and it would be safe to say I had very few friends in that position. Some thought I was directly responsible for the destruction of the program. Others thought I had saved it for a few years -- probably neither of those exaggerations are the truth, but again we may get back to that -- because the Residential College Program was one of the most interesting early experiments in alternative education at Stony Brook. After that I became more directly involved in counseling and the orientation program, and now I am primarily responsible for the orientation program of new students with a number of other responsibilities, but my primary one is the orientation program.

Dr. Hartzell: What's the size of the freshman class?

Richard Solo: Our current size of freshman class is a little under 2,000. And there are fairly good data, since I looked at it recently; I was trying to answer a question that seems to be asked of people who are around long enough these days, how have things changed?

Dr. Hartzell: Ray Maniuszko has a lot of data.

Richard Solo: Oh, yes. Not many people have really looked at that stuff. But I looked at 1966 data from something called the American Council on Education Student Information Survey, 1966, 1977 and 1986; data that dealt with decade, more or less decade changes, in which one can, with some care and with some reservations, talk about the academic profiles, social profiles of the high school students that became our students at Stony Brook. It would be safe to say, at least on the basis of that kind of data, that our student body in the mid late sixties, 1966 is one data point, were spectacularly more academically successful in high school than the current group, which is successful. The current group is 1986, 1987, in high school, because that's what the American Council on Education would measure. It examines attitudes and records of people who are entering the freshman class. So what it portrays is more what the high school senior realities were than what our Stony Brook students were like. But one assumes that people don't change as dramatically as some would like. So we knew about their attitudes, some of their

political attitudes, some of their academic interests, their place in their high school class and the data at the time could relate those attitudes to the national norms.

Dr. Hartzell: One thing I don't think shows up, whether they are housebroken or not.

Richard Solo: Well, I think we know the answer to that. There are, let's talk about that, let's talk about the sixties and seventies. I think it would be fair to say that the degree of destructiveness of the students in the late sixties had no SUNY parallel. It may have been, in terms of the degree to which this campus was reduced in its physical attributes, whether that's the furniture in the lounges, whether that's the students rooms, and whether it's in fact many of the public spaces as well. I can't think of any campus I've visited that had as many deep and lasting scars on it from the activities of the students during the late sixties as has Stony Brook.

Dr. Hartzell: Why?

Richard Solo: Why? I can't speak comparatively about the effectiveness of the management of the institutions other than Stony Brook, and so I can't say we were better or worse. But I think there was a blend. I think there were two reasons that I can think of, and I probably could think of thirty more if I thought more about it. I think first, in the life of the young administration of Stony Brook in the late sixties, after you came along, most of the administration was quite young in terms of higher education, people in their probably forties and fifties, and probably had never, and I don't think very many people in this country had ever experienced in higher education the kinds of pressure that the Vietnam War, the sexual revolution, the drug revolution would present; and therefore, there was nothing to fall back on. Therefore, one had to imagine effective responses. Two, I think that Stony Brook looked like a place for the Hawthorn effect to appear effective. Let me explain what I mean by that, that we attracted, because we were new and because we were exciting, even if some of that perhaps was an exaggeration, but not by much, we attracted some of the more experimental students, some of the more likely dismalcontents, but bright malcontents, very effective leaders --not always effective in

the sense of their cause, but effective in the sense of rallying people. We had almost no traditions, we were in 1966, 1967, 1968, we were at Stony Brook for all of four, five, six years. We had very little in the way of traditions we could draw from that came from Oyster Bay. So in reality we had very little to stop and break any excessive behavior. We had a very strong attitude among some of the faculty who were quite young and some of the students who were obviously quite young, a certain degree of hostility to authority, not just the students, but also the faculty, that could express itself locally, we could become our own enemy, we could use the administration to some extent, and when I say we I'm on both sides of all of this, in a sense you might say I'm a student, I'm a faculty member, I'm an administrator, so the 'we' I'm speaking of at Stony Brook, but I'll go on in a moment, because I did some strange things at that time, not exciting, don't get nervous. But it became clear that the institution was its own enemy for some of the faculty and some of the students, so there was a willingness to allow a good deal of self-destructive behavior to go on. There was confusion about what effective responses would look like to reduce the amount of drug experimentation and sexual experimentation and political experimentation in a time when perhaps to some extent we had modest terrorism in our midst, if you want to really think about it in a more modern term. I don't think anyone ever described the students and some of the faculty as terrorists, but it would be easier to see some of the attitudes in those terms, perhaps, than we did at that time. The campus became almost unmanageable in terms of day to day behavior for about two to three years, from roughly 1966 to about 1970, '71, in that region give or take a year. What do I mean by that, I mean that there were times that we couldn't offer final exams because the bomb threats were so frequent. There were times when the sit-ins would last days and more days and stop and start again. And indeed some of this referred to strange behavior on my part was that I was neither a friend nor an enemy of very many people, and not an enemy. Therefore, during many of the sit-ins I would spend many of my days and nights in the library while the building was being

controlled by the students. I was neither viewed as a friend or an enemy, and I thought I might be more useful to calm some of the people down by being inside.

Dr. Hartzell: Who were the people, students?

Richard Solo: Primarily students, our students, a few inside influential people who had come either from the city or some party, probably their influence was exaggerated. There was even Alan Ginsburg would be sitting with some students and some faculty trying to write up some set of demands or manifesto. I was part of that. Much of what had appeared to be on the inside of the buildings involved what were commonly called human activities -- people had to eat, people had to sleep, people had to try to reason their way, and I use the word reason, reason their way through the next step in a struggle. I am sure, because I also saw part of that, that the administration was trying to provide and as much progress toward the educational mission of the institution as it could. These groups did not speak well with one another because as 1966 became 1967 became 1968, the methodology became more one of legalism and resorting, as it probably had to, to the use of legal force -- ejection of people from buildings, if for no other reason the frustration of trying to run a university in this chaos was just unacceptable. But it would be a mistake to assume that the group of students, because I was a part of them physically, not of part of them organizationally, the students and some faculty and some outside people were crazy people, they were largely purposeful and used the disruption of the campus as a way to force their issues.

Dr. Hartzell: How many

Richard Solo: And there was some destruction as well.

Dr. Hartzell: How many other Mitch Cohens did you have?

Richard Solo: Well, I think there was only one Mitch Cohen, since he is still with us. I don't know of anyone else who has survived. I think it would be fair to say at that time that there were dozens of fairly articulate, purposeful and occasionally confused and occasionally very confused students, and maybe Mitch was part of that, but Mitch had some very strong political leanings and some very strong directions that were not shared

by everybody. But if we look at Mitch Cohen as an organizer, and if we look at him as a student of those times, and we look at him as someone who tried to accomplish something, no matter how unsuccessfully, he was by no means alone or the single leader. The general leadership quality of a large number is perhaps too strong, perhaps dozens of students compared to the quality of the student leadership that expresses student leadership in 1986-87. The quality in 1966-67 was far greater, these people were academically far more successful in their high school classes, but all of this was new territory. It would be a mistake to assume these people had come to Stony Brook in 1966 to destroy the institution. But the response, we need to talk a little bit about the dorms in a moment, the response to Vietnam, the response to political chaos and vacuum, the credibility of our leadership in the eyes of many of these students, the credibility becomes so low that I think people were willing to experiment with political alternatives that were I think in the long run viewed as either foolish, naive or destructive. But the values that people were seeking to explore, with some serious exceptions, were not as crazy as one might assume, values that express themselves in religious experimentation as well, there were a good deal of attempts to examine the eastern methodology, human developmental groups.

Dr. Hartzell: What values can you pick out?

Richard Solo: The one the students were looking for?

Dr. Hartzell: Yeah, what do you think they were looking for?

Richard Solo: I don't think there was ever a consistent set. I think that some of the values were as far in one direction to destroy authority for its own sake, chaos; some of the values could be expressed as political responsibility as viewed by the people who stated it, that doesn't mean everyone would agree, but there was a strong hostility to the Washington leadership of the time that developed and deepened to the war in Vietnam to the possibility of being conscripted, so that the value there in some case might be self-preservation. The strong value I think involved the right of the individual to do anything the individual wished to do with as little external influence as possible -- parental,

institutional, organizational. The value could almost be the creation of a personal order that brooked no input from the outside. The would be childish. I mean if you want to think, that's an early attitude of a child that wishes to do anything for the sake of doing it, but it was a value that people considered important, very childlike values. There were values that I think had to do with mystical and spiritual values, to find the source of power. Many of the students I spoke with were involved in eastern religion groups, there were ashrams in the nearby neighborhood; I had visited a few. It wasn't profoundly my style to express myself in that form, but students would invite me and I'd go along to see what it was that they were interested in. There were some faculty who became very much involved in eastern ways that probably now they could barely remember if they were pressed.

Dr. Hartzell: Were they from the arts or the social sciences?

Richard Solo: No, I can think of one who was a physicist that I spent some time with. I would say that there wasn't as clearly a particular type of person, at least that I understood as a type of person or a particular academic background, I think it was pretty much, it might have been even, but there certainly wasn't non-science or science preference that I could pick. I think there were values of people that were literally treating the value of the freedom to explore as a value in and of itself. Unfortunately that took on every imaginable form -- political, drug, sexual, family. I met some interesting people in that as well, in all of those areas. The institution as a quick resident you'll ask another question in a moment, but I want to point out that it was around this time in 1967 or '68 that the institution decided to experiment in coeducational dormitories. I think it was 1968, but not far from that. And the experiment was thought to be initially an experiment, where some dorms would be coed and others not. And although that was true, there were many more that immediately adopted coeducational structures than had been originally planned; there were only two or three at most of our maybe fifteen or so dorms at that time that were of a single sex. And they quickly disappeared within probably three or four years after that. You were going to ask something.

Dr. Hartzell: No, I don't think so. I'm interested in the reaction of both faculty and administration to this period of free expression.

Richard Solo: Relatively free expression and experimentation. I think the answer is that you won't find again two people who would agree. There was significant faculty support for some aspects of the experimentation and exploration and chaos. It would be a mistake to assume one or two. If one had to intuitively put a percent on it, it would not surprise me that somewhere between 15, 20 or maybe 30% of the faculty were sympathetic; some of those were deeply involved in helping the students and themselves express their concerns for the issues that they viewed important. Many of them were related to the anti-war issues, and clearly some of them represented a desire to create alternative universities within Stony Brook. In some ways that was one of the unwritten, I think, agendas of the Residential College Program. I'm going to come back to that. But it would be fair to say that a significant component of the faculty were sympathetic. But the administration, it would be fair to say a smaller, but by no means negligible fraction of the administration, I'm thinking of one or two people in the president's office, I'm thinking of a couple of people in student affairs, some people in residence life -- then it was probably called housing.

Dr. Hartzell: Was Ackley still there?

Richard Solo: Sheldon Ackley was definitely there through most of this period. He would be viewed as not sympathetic in his role as assistant to the president. He may have had concerns with the ACLU, have had some personal feelings about it, but in the few discussions I had with him, my recollection is that he had a very simple loyalty to the objectives of the president's office, which would be largely to run a responsible organization, and he drew some of the ire of the freedom loving group -- and laugh about that -- but anyway. But before him, I'm trying to think, John Burness came in shortly after that. John's up, I think, at Cornell now, and would be an interesting other person, I don't know if he's on your list, but he's around. And John was clearly a person trying to guide when he could the president -- we need to say a word or two about John Toll -- but

anyway tried to guide the president into more novel approaches to disengaging himself and sometimes the institution from confrontation. One of the things early on in John Toll's attempts to deal with this was that he was willing to take onto himself the role of being the focus of negotiations and of the embattled negotiations at that. And it did not disturb John Toll at all to deal with the morass of the hostilities that were part of that certain circumstance.

Dr. Hartzell: He had a certain amount of personal courage.

Richard Solo: Oh, he had great courage. I don't think anyone would deny that. The trouble with that is that he not only saw it as probably what he should do but often saw it as his sole responsibility in terms of who else could be in that position, meaning that he would put himself on the line, the public line, quickly and easily and realize that his rational style of problem solving tended quite often to raise the level of the confrontation; he was not an effective negotiator in this particular domain of confrontation. He understood what he wanted, he would not alter his position in any dramatic way that anyone could detect with a group of people who were probably as adamant about what they wished as he. Again, this was new territory. John Toll, Dick Solo, Karl Hartzell and all the people on your list were not educated in the methods of what was required of us in the sixties but depended upon learning quickly from one's experience. I recall that one of the more significant negotiating breakthroughs was to permit other people, other than the president himself, to take a step in the direction of trying to negotiate or at least broaden the range of negotiation, including Alec Pond, including John Burness, including some faculty.

Dr. Hartzell: You want to mention any of the faculty? Max Dresden was

Richard Solo: Well, I'm trying to think, Norman Goodman would be in there, and I occasionally found myself agreeing with Norman, he more surprisingly with me, and we spent time quite often trying to help students out of buildings before they might be arrested. Norman was by and large trying to provide some rational networks, even if he was no one's greatest ally, he attempted to bring reason into this. Max in Senate

meetings and otherwise was clearly a person of integrity and credibility. I'm not sure, I really have to go through a list, even your list here. Surprisingly some people who were clearly working with the president, I think John Burness in his way as an administrator, tried to find routes that would be more productive than simple confrontation.

Dr. Hartzell: How about Dave Tilley?

Richard Solo: Dave was almost out of the picture. Dave was sacrificed, and maybe that's my word, on the drug issue. Dave Tilley was a powerful, demanding, thoughtful, I thought excellent vice president for student affairs or dean of students. He was given the impossible task of trying to also control student behavior, because he was titled. If anyone had to be called responsible for the student behavior, he had to be. And now we would look at such notion of responsibility perhaps differently than we would then when we were still coming out of traditional norms when a dean of students in effect would be held responsible for the students behavior *in loco parentis*. He was trapped in terms of drugs being planted on him, so were a few other people. Not on him personally but in his office. He ultimately, along with a number of other faculty, were

Dr. Hartzell: Who did the planting?

Richard Solo: It was some students. He was also the enemy of some students. He was held accountable for the students activities and we had a major legal investigation; I went to the trials in New York City in Vesey Street or something like that. I can't recall the exact name of the trials, but a number of people were indicted, a number of sealed indictments were unsealed, a number of people on the faculty as well as the staff were at that time held accountable for the behavior in the institution. I can think of a few names at that time even now, and it was within one or two years after those investigations that Dave Tilley was removed and other people in student affairs office were asked to change or leave or whatever their roles. And probably it made sense to a lot of people at the time that there could be someone accountable for the behavior of the students. I don't think now in retrospect that makes any sense at all; at the time it may have. I felt that Dave Tilley was trying to discover, and for him it meant rationally discover, the construction of

a new form of a dean of students to deal with these new behaviors at a time when no one understood this very well, and I think he probably didn't satisfy anybody. I think his own staff was not understanding. I think that the students clearly would view him as the enemy because he was at least more or less accountable. I think the administration must have felt betrayed by his inability to do more. And while he was probably trying to explain all sides to all sides at one time or another my guess is that he must have made no sense to anybody. I went to a number of meetings with him, we had a number of conversations. Despite the fact that to this day I have a very high regard for him, I think he was an impossible person at an impossible time. He was too demanding in terms of the profession of being a student administrator, and that meant the nature of research and b..... readings and deliberations and professional commitments and so forth to one's organization on the one hand and a profound involvement with the student environment on the other in a world in which no one had any good answers. Anyway for what it's worth I have very high regard for his attempts to deal with what he had to deal with. He became an expert shortly after that in drug education. His response was, I don't know if he put it this way, but I would, having been badly burned by a particular technical issue, he would damn well be a master of it. And he has been in a number of different jobs since then, but frankly I haven't kept close tabs. And a progression of vice presidents followed him, most of whom had very little luck. I'll give you an example, when Scott Rickard came in I think it was Dave Trask was in this vice president spot for three months. He was obligated, Trask I think, can't recall exactly, he was asked to do something. And it turned out that he was in some ways I think himself betrayed in portraying some particular situation. It might have been a drug policy, it might have been a presidential policy, it might have been a housing policy -- I don't remember the details. But it became fairly clear that he became a non-credible person. He may have been set up unintentionally and discovered in some difficult situation. These were not good times, interesting times for sure, but not good times. He only lasted a few months. He probably would have continued if he could have but my guess is he had a lot of alternatives to

choose from, this is madness, why should I do this. I think it was only about a month and a half, maybe two months. Scott Rickard came in and we were dealing with such issues as whether to run the RAs into student informers; the RA would be a Residential Assistant working in the dorms. And I was at one of the most horrific meetings and learned a great deal from it in which the President, who wanted to be his own man, was explaining to a group of about ballpark 200 students who were RAs that they would have the responsibility of turning in any other students for drug abuse. And it was one of the most, I was in charge of that meeting, and I was absolutely without any clear idea of what to do, it was new for me. I wanted to stop what was happening. Whether I could have or not is debatable. But here's the President, you know it's very hard to sort of step in and say look let me take charge of this thing when the President is literally being roasted by some uncontrollable students, who by virtue of their position as RAs are in a sense university employees who at the same time are also in some cases part of the 'freedom loving group.' So I had a tape of this thing, I may still have a tape of this meeting, I don't know why I taped it, I did. And I was saying, should I, it was one of those things. I think if I were a couple of years older or whatever I would have just insisted that I take over the meeting. And I'm not saying it would have done any good. But I felt, and then I walked back with the President, probably if he were a different person would have just fired me on the spot for not either having more respect shown by the students, as if they could done that, or done something about it. After all it was a group that I had some small responsibility for. We talked about that, and I realized that I was not being very helpful to the President in trying to explain to him what I thought was happening in the minds of the students at that time. Nor was I very helpful with the students in trying to help them understand the dilemma of the President. For different reasons I was not very effective at that time. But it was an illustration of the President's willingness to take an incredibly unpopular position and present it himself and ask for no help and no one's opinion, in my case I can say no one. He may have consulted with other people. My guess is that his

consultations were often either taken or not taken on the basis of whether they agreed with what he expected and wanted.

Dr. Hartzell: I knew relatively little about what was going on at the time, but in my own memory there is very little of it. I don't know how I would have reacted if I had been in his shoes. I would have probably been inclined to take a confrontational approach, although

Richard Solo: The question is how. See everyone, there can't be any question that it had to be confrontational. One couldn't agree with the students, neither could I. I had long discussions with many students about what I saw as their self-destructive behavior. And whether I won or lost or whether the students won or lost, sometimes you are never too sure. I met some of those students ten, twenty years later. Confrontation it had to be, the question was whether anyone learned quickly enough how to be more rather than less effective. There was no way to simply win. The President chose a very dramatic confrontational methods. He agreed or disagreed. I mean it wasn't a question of negotiating. Negotiation, I mean even now I'm not sure that there is a way one could describe how you would have done it even with the hindsight of almost twenty years or more. But confrontation certainly had to be understood. We had no trust to fall back on. We didn't have people who had been in the system for twenty to thirty years. We didn't have what one might call the great statesman that some institutions would have had who might have been able to at least tone it down. Everyone in 1966 and 1967 and 1968 and for another year or two after that were all new to the business. Stony Brook business, I'm not talking about maybe some other places. We also, we must remember, as you would know better than most, 1961 involved a presidential shift. There was a major confrontation that was fomented and developed at Oyster Bay. These were the so-called Chicago group and other people, I wasn't there but I've heard a few things. One has to assume the faculty learned how to be reasonably hostile. You inherited that faculty. The people who are here now have no idea how much internal faculty dissension there was so much given that kind of young, energetic, opinionated and not bad opinionated, people

had principles. Throw in the late sixties, middle and late sixties, in terms of the students and the presidential problems in the United States and the war and this goes on and on. It's not hard to understand how we at Stony Brook had much less of a handle, and more importantly credible stabilizing resources to draw on. And in many ways the President must have felt isolated. Toll must have felt pretty much isolated from the tools that maybe other institutions would have been able to call on, such as people who had been distinguished and accepted by the students. So neither the faculty was all that stable nor certainly the student body in certain parts. I think Toll made the decision that he would continue business as usual as much as he possibly could, and he did. I think at a very high price.

Dr. Hartzell: He was under pressure from Albany and the community.

Richard Solo: And that's a good point too. We are out in the community in which we are viewed, I remember an attempt by John Toll just about this time to go off-campus to develop with Semerjian some space that's at the corner of Nicolls and 25A on the eastern side and he went to a number of local civic organizations of one sort or another and he presented his slides and his developmental plans, beautiful stuff, well thought out; he was roasted. The local people couldn't imagine anything worse happening to them than the development of a significant University. And even worse than that the development of some, actually again by any current standards, attractive dorms that could have been used for conference center; brilliant idea, not complicated, but brilliant, bright and all the rest. But the attitude of the local community, which obviously fed through the Council and on up to Albany and so forth must have put the President in an awful position to try to make significant progress in the areas he could have and should have but couldn't in fact.

Dr. Hartzell: Ward Melville had a set of plans drawn up by one of his architects for what was called cluster housing. And it looked to me as though it would have improved the south side of 25A no end, but

Richard Solo: Well, we had some cluster plan, that was pretty much what Semerjian had and others, but I saw these plans. And my point to some extent is that you were right, the local communities and Albany and other places were putting on a great deal of pressure on this institution. The President must have felt that everyone wanted something else, certainly nothing that was possible. So he had to ultimately, I guess, fight his own battles. He must have had a lot of enemies and a lot of friends, but more enemies is my guess in his attempts to not deviate from the academic development of the institution which meant what, you remember in the sixties, certainly throughout the sixties, this was largely a construction zone.

Dr. Hartzell: They were keeping school right in the middle of a construction site

Richard Solo: We were running a university and the university was physically coming into its being. And again a lot of people can't understand that, which meant that the amenities often were only in name, and that, for us the greatest achievement in the late sixties, early seventies was there wasn't mud everywhere. If you didn't have to walk through the mud, because finally the buildings that you had to deal with were completed and the walkways were completed, never mind grass, flowers, trees, just simply that you didn't have to walk through the mud, and thank god for winter because it froze everything, but there was always a thaw that got you twice. In any case the sixties also were presenting the students, to get back to your first question again in a moment, with these rather difficult, very difficult, environmental issues which fed all of the frustrations that the people had in other dimensions. So the dorms in part took a beating because they were typically occupied between, well it was interesting, six months too late and six months too early. They always came in later than they should have, which meant that we had a horrendous tripling problem. Students tripling on this campus till this day, even though the issue so much smaller now, has always believed that the symbol of the incompetence of everybody, and certainly a sacrilege in terms of one's personal comfort. There's an element of truth to that. So we moved into the dorms as quickly as we could, as soon as they were safe, never mind well furnished, but safe, we moved in. And they

were often just barely completed, usually a number of things, in fact, didn't work. So we moved in too early but always about six months later than the University had designed their occupancy for, so the students, if you look at the issue of student destructiveness, we set the state unintentionally by moving people into uncompleted dorms too early even though we had tripled them for a whole semester before they could then move into these new dorms, and they took an awful pounding. And indeed they are still in awful shape. If you walked around in many of them, you can still see a lot of the scars from the sixties. For years the faculty have been blaming the students of their current year to year group for destroying the dorms, when in fact the major destruction was done twenty years ago, and we have never been able to convince, perhaps we shouldn't, but I wish we could have, Albany to come in to clean the stables. It's really a Stygian stable problem; nothing but major hoses and streams would really have cleaned them out and a lot of reconstruction. We still have dorm problems but that's current history or current fact. But if you think back to the sixties our dormitory sequencing of events, the opening of Roth, the opening of Kelly, one dormitory after another was always late. So we were not credible in one of the most sensitive areas, which is where you live. And G and H, if they were not built as well as block houses, so to speak, physically as well as they were, then I'm sure they would be razed by now. In fact they took the pounding rather well. They just don't look very good, indeed the walls didn't come down. In the case of Roth, in the case of some of the other areas, they took much more visible pounding in the sense that the destruction was easier to achieve. Cafeterias didn't open on time, things didn't work, so in the context of these early years it wasn't really any kind of simple one dimensional problem, and it isn't today either. I think today John Marburger must wake up in the morning and say 'why me? Why does this have to break down? I've got a million things to be concerned about, why this one?' Whether it's the Lecture Center or a pipe that bursts, or someone running over an electrical wire or tree falling down, whatever it might be. Things you would not have counted on your probable list of troubles, when you've got a long enough list as it is. Sixties was that times ten. Then again as you really think

back we were building, physically building a university in the sixties, we were visited by major national, international turmoil that rested in part at Stony Brook but many other places as well. We had a group of students who were interested in innovation and willing to create innovation somewhat willy-nilly. We had faculty that was promised a great deal, as you can remember, because we almost doubled in budget and in resources every year in the early and middle sixties. The idea was that if you were greedy you could probably satisfy your greed because promises would be in fact honored, if not this year, next year. It may be unfair but I think it's true. We doubled almost, not exactly doubled, we developed dramatically from year to year. We had a rather energetic and selfish may not be quite the right word, but aggressive faculty, opinionated, isolated, isolated in the sense that each wanted their own empire.

Dr. Hartzell: People that thought otherwise.

Richard Solo: People that thought otherwise. And in that we put all of these other problems, including trying to have a dean of students manage the students with every faculty and administrator and whatever trying to indicate that peace and quiet would be only acceptable. So the fact is that we got through those years. We could say a lot more about those year, maybe you want more about them, but you have to sort of paint with all the colors in the palette. And if you do that, it's amazing that we didn't literally in fact self-destruct. I wonder whether Albany ever sat down -- by that I know what I mean when I say Albany but some group of people who could have made the following decision: I wish we could just wipe out this experiment called Stony Brook and we'll all sleep better. That didn't happen obviously, and I think we owe something to John Toll for not ever letting that perhaps come close to happening, but they were tough years.

Dr. Hartzell: Apparently what went on in Old Westbury, this was a real institution.

Richard Solo: Yes, at Old Westbury it was, of course, a temporary home, beautiful but with great agonies of its own. The faculty, in other words, was setting the stage without their knowledge through the dissensions in Oyster Bay for, and developing the

techniques for confrontation, strong opinions being expressed. They would be continued for a good decade through the sixties.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you remember the faculty meetings that I ran?

Richard Solo: Some, I was there. In fact we had a lot of people showing up at those meetings, we had a high proportion of faculty showing up. In the early sixties they were almost the same but not quite but they became insane shortly after you left, not because of you as much as what was in store for people. Had you been there for another couple of years, I think you would, I don't know, you would have had to have played a lot better tennis. It's amazing what happened; it was very tough in the very early sixties, 1962, '63, '64, '65, '66 but after '66 it was still tough with this whole new student dimension taking over. And I don't think anyone frankly, no matter what anyone says, I don't think anyone could have possibly had the answer. It was a question of surviving.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you remember anything about the impact of the assassination of Kennedy on the student body.

Richard Solo: Yeah, I think that all of us had a personal reaction, and I think that each of us almost remembers that as much as anything else, forgetting what we've learned since about Kennedy and all the rest. Yeah, I think it had a major impact on many students. I feel they felt betrayed, but there was also an element of confusion, there was also an element of near chaos anyway. It's a tough question, I've talked to a lot of people but very few people verbalize what was for most people emotional.

Dr. Hartzell: Quite deep. I wrote a little something trying to express for the students and myself how we felt, and it was put on the bulletin board. But Dave Tilley later said that that did quite a little to calm down student hostility, that was '62 when he was assassinated.

Richard Solo: And I can count back to that because my son was born, one of my sons, a day or two after the assassination. He doesn't know, we've told him I guess, his name is Michael K. Solo; we never gave him a middle name but K was in part, there were a number of reasons for K and one of them was Kennedy, another had to do with my

wife's family, there were a number of reasons, but one of them was that it was a way for us to remember that time. Had we the luxury and the history of about twenty more years before the middle and late sixties, we would have suffered, we would have grown, we would have learned, but there could not have been a more difficult, I don't think an institution in the country than one we were in terms of the timing

Dr. Hartzell: Right. I'm going to change over to the other side.

Richard Solo: 1962, I think I was 26, I was born in 1936.

Dr. Hartzell: Twenty-six when you came; where did you do your graduate work?

Richard Solo: At Berkeley, I worked for a year after Berkeley in California.

Dr. Hartzell: Why did you come east?

Richard Solo: A lot of reasons, I've never really fully explained them. One, I wanted to teach, I had too good a job. I had a job that was paying me in 1962 about \$13,000 a year, when I came to Stony Brook I had almost \$8,000. I realized that if I stayed in that job I'd probably stay there for the rest of my life because I couldn't afford to leave, so I figured I better leave while I could understand poverty. I wanted to teach very much, I wanted to do research, I wanted to be part of a university. I wanted to do very many things, which as I've learned professionally is probably a foolish thing. But you know

Dr. Hartzell: Broad interests.

Richard Solo: Very broad interests. I played in one of the original brass groups, we played for the president at his wedding, John Toll's wedding. From what institution, I had come directly from a place called Aerospace Corporation where I had done some research. It was tied directly in with the Air Force, and I felt a little uncomfortable about that. I had been interviewed a year before that at Oyster Bay; I met Lee, I guess his name was, and I'd met most of the people in Chemistry, and they didn't have a position then. But the following year after I'd interviewed they did have a position and said, would you like to come to Stony Brook? And I thought about it, they never told me what kind of problems they were having, I mean I learned to resent that, but what the hell, and I came.

Who interviewed you for the position here? Well, there were a few people in the Chemistry Department. I remember Ted and Bonner, of course, Francis Bonner was the Chairman. I remember talking to a few of the other faculty who were there, just about everyone, as a matter of fact, who was there at the time. Sei Sujishi was there, Bill Lenoble I think was there, I think Art Leffley was there, people like that. Why did you come? Well, I've given you a little bit of that. What was your understanding of the purpose behind the creation of Stony Brook? It was probably fairly well informed. You might call it a conspiracy to become a great research institution. I think anyone who thinks that wasn't part of the plan from, I don't know about the very beginning, but certainly within a few ticks of the clock from the very beginning, I have no doubt in my mind that there was a very strong compelling desire to be a significant university research institution. If people didn't know that, then they weren't paying attention. I wouldn't mind being a part of that, I thought that was pretty nice stuff. What was the vision being transformed into reality? I don't understand, I think what you mean is was the vision of a research institution being transformed into reality, I would have to say yes. I think considering the circumstances Stony Brook should be viewed in some ways as a miracle. If you look at it in terms of what it is, and how much time it has taken to become what it is and how many barriers it had to overcome, including many of its creation, I would say this place is a positive miracle, a problem, but overall it's a positive, constructive, creative, gigantic miracle. We'd like to do better but. Give us your impressions of Stony Brook when you first came. I've given you some. What events, what persons, what experiences stand out in your mind? I've given you all of that, and that's kind of interesting that you skim the top of one's recollections.

Dr. Hartzell: Remember the Crystallography Conference?

Richard Solo: Yes, but not in any great detail, that was a very large, that was an international conference, as I recall. Natalie Fiess was involved in it-- that came a little bit later, I think, but I don't remember it exactly. I don't place it and time it right, but I remember Natalie, I remember her involved in it; I remember I knew about it, but I can't

place that one right in time. Certain of my earliest impressions were impressions of trying to create a research program which finally paid off, it didn't in the long run pay off. I did some, I think I did some very nice work. Anyone who came to visit said, you're doing some very nice work, and they had no reason to tell me that if they didn't believe it. But, I didn't publish anything. And that became in a sense my own doing to some extent. That's a complicated story that perhaps isn't the point of this. But in that, in those days I recall a lot of contact with some faculty, some administration and the earliest days were days when just about everyone knew everybody. To give you a, still to this day, two thoughts that sort of distill it. Whenever I drove home, which was out into East Setauket, I recognized every car I saw because there were so few. And once, in what was nearly a blizzard, I was driving up 25A towards Port Jefferson, no one else would have been on the road, I assumed, it was in the early sixties. I just decided to stay as far away from both sides of the road as possible, figuring no one else would be on the road, and prayed that if there were any lights on any cars I'd see them, and I drove through this horrendous storm right down the middle of 25A because it was my assumption that no one else would be on the road, because normally there wouldn't be any one on the road but for a few cars and those few couldn't possibly be on the road, which says what. We were the only show in town. Port Jeff was really in

Dr. Hartzell: What time of day was this?

Richard Solo: This was about 5:30, 6 o'clock. It was winter, of course, it was dark, and that's better because at least you could see any oncoming lights and the snow was coming sideways and it's mostly blizzard conditions. But in those early days the point is that Stony Brook was in the middle of nowhere. One of the few unfortunate, desperately unfortunate realities was Stony Brook really is in the middle of nowhere. There is no city, there is no off-campus life that would be, I think, a part of almost any other large or nearly large academic institution. But these are just quick impressions. You hardly ever saw anyone or anything that you didn't know because there was so little going on. When there was a faculty party, the people showed up. When there was a basketball game, the

basketball stadium, so to speak, the gym was full for a campus that was a third, not zero, not ten percent, it was bigger than people think. A lot of people think somehow the undergraduate population slowly grew, but in fact it was growing very quickly in the early sixties. We filled the gym, same gym we have now that we rarely ever fill. There was a lot of spirit. The students that people often refer to as unwashed and unholy -- some of which is true -- were also dramatically involved in the development of this institution. That doesn't mean always for the better, worse, it's more complicated than that, but they were actively a part of all of this business.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you remember the presidents of the Student Council, any of the presidents?

Richard Solo: You mean way back then. Maybe, but I'd really have to think about it. I can't think of names offhand.

Dr. Hartzell: Spivak, do you remember him?

Richard Solo: No.

Dr. Hartzell: Lenny Spivak?

Richard Solo: No, we all remember Lenny Mell but that's a whole other story. What else, what was your understanding of your place in the future of Stony Brook? Well, that's an academic challenge. Certainly I think in 1962, '63, '64 I would not have expected it to develop the way it did. But, well, so what. What expectations did you have when you came? We've said something about that. How did these expectations work out both personally and for the institution? I think it was fairly accurate for the institution. One has to view the difficulties of the sixties as to some extent and aberration, the direction of the institution was clear, purposeful and undeniable.

Dr. Hartzell: There was no change in the context, the state context or the purpose.

Richard Solo: No, people may have thought somehow or other we changed a lot along the way. Did you have relations outside? No, I didn't deal with Albany with some of the characters you were dealing with. There was a general feeling that Albany was the enemy, there was a general feeling among the faculty, the students and everyone else that

if everything else failed, it must have been Albany's fault. And it is only recently that people are willing to begrudgingly admit that perhaps Albany isn't always wrong. But certainly in the early days if anything went wrong on campus, it was convenient, who knows, it may have been accurate that Albany has done it to us again. It was as if Albany other than Rockefeller's aberration, so to speak, to encourage the development of SUNY in a dramatic way -- and I remember the groundbreaking here. I even remember Harold McDowell, which most people

Dr. Hartzell: I remember him.

Richard Solo: That's twenty stories right there. And I've kept in touch with him up until a few years ago, and I just couldn't handle it any more.

Dr. Hartzell: You must have remembered, the groundbreaking here on this campus was in 1960.

Richard Solo: Then it was a dedication perhaps. It was not groundbreaking, dedication, clearly it was something here, so it couldn't have been groundbreaking. What do you feel you have accomplished at Stony Brook by 1971? I feel I have done a lot. I felt, along with a very few people, that I engaged in the day to day realities of what the students had to face, by no means all of them. But in the various positions I held, both in terms of teaching, and I had up till recently been doing some teaching, that between the teaching responsibilities and administrative responsibilities and the other, whether it's playing trombone in the band or cleaning something out, sitting with students in a sit-in to understand and help them be people I felt that I contributed a great deal to some harmonizing and some transmissions of understanding between what are often viewed as separate groups, had to do that. I also learned a great deal myself about things that clearly none of us would have thought of.

Dr. Hartzell: They're not taught in graduate school.

Richard Solo: Well, yeah. I was an undergraduate at MIT. I played in the band, I played in a pick-up band. I was in a car with a trumpet player and a few other musicians, we were on our way to play some particular show, nothing big. And I hadn't seen this

particular trumpet player for about three months. I said, gee, where have you been? He said I've been drying out. Drying out, I mean where did you get wet. He laughed, he said no, no, I've been involved in some heroin addiction and I was drying out, I was getting it out of my system. My first thought was, I'd never thought I'd meet anyone in my life like this, now that will show you how naive I was. Two, I wanted to get out of the car as fast as I could. If it weren't for the fact that my mind kept my feet in place, I would have. I said to myself, I know this guy, he's a nice guy, plays a fine trumpet. He's altogether a reasonable person, how could he be using heroin. He never tried to give it to anybody. I was shocked, and I dealt a great deal with thinking about what does all this mean. And I think that that attitude was consistent with a lot of the faculty and students attitudes when this thing exploded in the sixties. What in the world, how could people take illegal drugs, this is incredible. Had that not happened to me, I didn't use the drugs but I met someone and I discovered these people weren't monsters, even though they had done something stupid. But to me it showed me, while my background hadn't involved that kind of activity, and I assumed that a great number of the faculty had worked hard in school and developed and so forth had no background in drug activities. In graduate school I met some friend of mind who was importing LSD from I think it was Switzerland, and he said LSD, and I said, what's that. Oh, you know, lysergic acid. What does it do? Oh, it creates strange effects. I had no idea about this stuff. But by the time the sixties came around I still didn't know very much, I didn't want to know very much, and it just exploded.

Dr. Hartzell: I know that we had a problem with some person on the maintenance force who set fire to one of the old wooden shacks that was on the property, and he came up before a judge in the court. After it was over and I was standing around and on the point of going home, one chap I had gotten into a conversation with, and he was a member of the narcotics squad of Suffolk County. This was about 1963, '64. And he said, well, the whole thing is coming out to the Island, and it hasn't gotten to you yet, it will.

Richard Solo: And it did.

Dr. Hartzell: It sure did.

Richard Solo: We also in those days, of course, the developmental hotbed for the drug and sex revolution that had not arrived in the local high schools, so we were a desirable and frightening entity for anyone who was concerned. By the middle and end of the sixties, when we had begun to develop our reputation in the 1968 bust is just now, just now, receding into the forgotten. How do I know? Running orientation I get a chance to talk to parents, and I was doing that for better than twelve to thirteen years. In the mid-'70's still thought this was a druggie school; their sons and daughters would not be sucked into that. It's only in the last three or four years when I ask the question what reputation does Stony Brook have, I have no idea what the response will be. Some will still talk about it as the drug capital, some still remember that. Other people only think of it only in academic terms. Some people talk about the shootings of last year in terms of what I learned from last summer. But it's only literally within the last three or four years that a typical parent doesn't really associate that drug of 1968, it's taken a better part of twenty years to almost get away. The drug activity coming out meant that we also had a significant number of runaways, we had a significant number of local crazies that were going to all the high schools and would visit us. We had people from the city, we also had narcotics agents. One of the worst situations I recall as director of the counseling program was discussions about the staff about what we could say in confidence not knowing whether the person we were counseling was a narc. You think about the circumstance. If you say anything that would encourage the person's development that what might under some circumstances make sense and not say stop immediately because you needed to develop some trust with this person because of something maybe even worse, maybe suicide or something else might be going on, the person am I possibly accountable, could I possibly be viewed as not being negative enough about this activity or being set up. We filtered into this in the late sixties, it was a significant, not random pattern so to speak, since people had no basis for their doubts, but there was a

sense of doubt, and it developed and increased from the earliest days when people were pretty naive about this until later on. I had spoken to people who had been nearly arrested who were law students, pre-law, pre-med, who were taken behind a local 7-11 or at that time a supermarket and told that if they didn't collaborate with the police their futures would be ruined. And they went around turning in other students, there were a number of those people around the campus, not a large number, but a number of them. So there was a great deal of doubt because it only takes a few of these people for people to doubt that perhaps the person they trust isn't worthy of the trust. In some ways I've never had to face the problems as a student, because the students in the sixties, nor seventies, nor the eighties, nor right now. I never had to worry because now the student has to start worrying about AIDS. I never worried about drugs or worry about venereal disease. Somehow or other there was an innocence in the hard work of the fifties, very early sixties that suddenly turned into very serious activity. I had to worry about the Korean War, the Second World War, whatever. But I think often we view the students of the sixties as just simply monsters, which some of them were. But people who were also at that age in this country had never had to deal, never is too strong, in my life at least I had never seen a time when that was the issue. The Second World War was that kind of an issue. I was too young at that time to be in the war but I certainly felt it. Here we've got a group of people experiencing some life threatening drug activity, some complicated problems with sex which led to abortions that at that time were illegal that led I remember loaning some students some money that I never got back. I remember just a horrendous morass of what we would consider very adult, tricky value-ridden problems. What do I do if I'm pregnant? What I do if I'm the father, what do I do if don't even know who the father is, what do I do if I start using drugs and my mind begins to fall apart or I never expected that, but here it is, my mind is falling apart. Again, I met a number of those students. I never had to deal with that when I was a student. I had to work hard. In a way I thought that was just that was just the normal way of business. But Stony Brook never changed its academic standards. Now we teach pretty much the same way we

taught in 1966, if you want to look at it that way. Tough, demanding, has it really, I don't think our values, our grading system or our expectations have changed to go down, if not anything maybe it's gone up. The students of that time were under tremendous pressure to perform academically. At the same time they had to deal with things that no one in their family, no religious groups could deal with. And sure, we all wanted it to go away, but in reality the students still had to face it. It doesn't make the students heroes, it doesn't make them villains, but it adds to the complexity, not only of our attempts to run the University, but needs people to function as students at the same time that they are involved in some pretty destructive activities. They didn't know how to behave in many areas and made bad mistakes in many cases. I never had to deal with that so I couldn't draw on my own life experience to help them. I had to learn from them, I learned a great deal. Anyway.

Dr. Hartzell: What proportion of our students would you say are first generation college?

Richard Solo: We can probably answer that quantitatively. It's changed only a little bit. It is conceivable, despite the clock, that we haven't made much of change, which means we are running counter to the national norms. In 1966 we had very few minority students. We had a lot of students at that time who were Jewish and were coming from the city. Fifty percent of our students in 1966, give or take, were Jewish; now it's probably closer in the incoming class to 13%, so we were in a sense more heterogeneous and less heterogeneous. We more heterogeneous in terms of religious and local background, meaning that it was Nassau, Suffolk and New York City and a little beyond. We've never been much more than a regional institution. Now we are much more local, Suffolk and Nassau, less New York, and our religious preference by far is Catholic. So we are much more of a reflection of the local area. My guess is that if you add that in, but again we can look at the ACE's, we can look at mother's education or father's education, it wouldn't surprise me if it hasn't changed much and it isn't much more -- I have to look at the numbers -- but my impression is maybe 50% have had a

college degree. The biggest change may be in the mothers but there is a great deal, compared to twenty, thirty years ago, a great deal more participation on the part of women who become mothers who have gone to college. And then in the early sixties there was a lot less, not zero, but a lot less. Our male-female ratio in early years was about 60/40; now it's about 50/50. So there has been some shifting of that. Up until this year there were slightly more women. I have a theory about why we have more men in the incoming class this year. My theory is that the safety problems of last year would have an uneven effect on parental influence in terms of selection of college. I don't think I can prove it, but the data looks like there a hundred more men this year roughly than women, and it's been a few more women than men for a number of years. The only explanation I can think of that would be the parental influence to stay away from an unsafe school. That will disappear in a year or two. But in the short run it had an effect, I think, I'm willing to bet money on it, it will improve. So, I think that we are still for a significant number of people first generation college. We have, give or take 1 or 2 percent, Asian population, and almost all their parents, with a few exceptions, are not college experienced. So that's probably been increasing the group without college experience, whereas time has increased everyone else's. Those two probably are offsetting. If anything, there has probably been a slight upward trend, that's a prediction but I can prove it one way or another, there's data about. So a number of our students I think are still naive in terms of what is expected of them in college. That's not what was happening in the sixties. The people then weren't naive, they were actively testing the limits of authority and their own personal limits. They were testing the limits of almost everything and in reality often without great positive effect at all.

Dr. Hartzell: How far back do you go in the students' background before you find a progenitor who was from the old country or from abroad, two generations?

Richard Solo: No, I think if you go back into the sixties, again, a very substantial number of students would have had, and in some cases now with some of the Asian minority students, not all, I'd say they themselves are first generation. I think there is

still a significant number of that, that's dropping. In the early sixties, especially people on the Island, were often, who came to Stony Brook, were often first generation, second generation.

Dr. Hartzell: Their parents had been born abroad?

Richard Solo: Oh, yeah, and I think it would be safe to say, at least to my recollection, I think we can prove it, nah, it would be harder to prove, that many of the people I talked about when I started talking about their grandparents, clearly, again this is recollection, it would be interesting to prove it, but my recollection is that when people talked about their grandparents, they often talked about the fact that the common language at home was other than English. And clearly their grandparents were people born in another country, quite often Italy, some Germany, Scandinavia, you just take a profile of the ethnic background on the Island, somewhat the city. And even in the Jewish population it's only now that a lot of the people are talking about second, third generation. So, back then, I would probably say that there were a lot of first generation parents, many of whom were even not first generation. The students in general, there weren't that many I think themselves were born in another country, yet there were some. We probably have some data on that.

Dr. Hartzell: What about the Near East?

Richard Solo: We have a very large, up until recently, a very large Iranian population, somewhat large Greek, African, a lot of which has decreased in the last few years.

Dr. Hartzell: African?

Richard Solo: Yeah, we had a number of refugees, not a large number, but Ethiopians. I had an Ethiopian student on my staff, orientation staff a number of years ago, refugee. I think the international student population, again we have data on that, so we don't have to really guess about it. But we have one of the largest Iranian populations in the country about ten years ago, I'm not sure, maybe less, and probably it's still significant, if you listen to the students. I haven't followed that very carefully, but I think

our international student population has been decreasing a little these last years. The dollar was very high two years ago and three years ago and four years ago and even last year, somewhat last year, and a lot of people simply couldn't afford, no matter what, to come here. That may change, but we had a large international population. Middle east, very few people from Israel come over. Iran was the biggest group that I could recall before and after the Shah.

Dr. Hartzell: I know one Iranian family, I know them quite well. I helped one of them pay his way through college, Sigaris, Reza and Ali.

Richard Solo: Oh, yes, I think I remember him, that's not that long ago. I think there were a couple hundred was my recollection at one time. That's a lot.

Dr. Hartzell: And divided also in their loyalties.

Richard Solo: We had a very complicated period of a few years when, just before and just after the United States recognition of mainland China. Chinese student interaction with others on this campus has always been tentative, sometimes with a lot of the individuals non-existent still. But it was very tricky for a large number of the Asians that always have been here, much larger now but large then, then being 15 years ago. I'm not sure about, I think 20, 25 years ago it wasn't terribly large, and they had major family battles along the lines of loyalty and credibility, and it was painful and dangerous for about two years while that transition was going on. My guess is occasionally even now for a while not occasionally between the nationalists and the mainland group, and clearly we had very few mainland Chinese students here, but it was a question of whether one could admit to a broader loyalty or a broader open-mindedness when you had been trained for so many years to be absolutely hostile. It was very, very tricky, and I think we're, I think one of the wonderful things about this institution has been our capacity to draw from the Orient for a long period of time in faculty obviously and student body, graduates. I like that. I think some people are not happy about it, but I think it is a very good aspect of our institution. The Iranian issue is interesting. It may get to be more interesting before we are done.

Dr. Hartzell: My closest contact with a foreign student group has been with the Saudis.

Richard Solo: Who've have We had, I think, more Indian students for a while than I think we have now, some Pakistani, which is not the Near East and a few Japanese students way back. I think there were fewer than Indian, a few undergraduates, but I think we seem to have more of an international mix in the sixties at the undergraduate level, not in terms of numbers but in terms of the countries represented than we do now, even though we have still a large Asian population, many of whom of course were born in this country, many of whom were not. So I think there has been a change. I don't see very many international students other than from Iran or from Africa, hardly any European undergraduates, graduate school is a whole different story. I think that's a shame in a way, I'm not sure I understand why that's happening. It may have to do a little bit with the economics of education, maybe they go other places. I don't know enough about the national trends to really make the comparison.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you want to make any comments about the function of our Admissions Office, the extent to which we actually screen or recruit?

Richard Solo: Well, I'll make a comment. I'm not sure what to say exactly. I think until about 1971 or 72 or 73, again we can figure it out pretty closely, we were such an attractive institution that we were pretty selective. And again, we can put numbers on this. We had a big downturn about 1975, partly because the state cut us way back in terms of the budget for a year, there were a few problems. We never, I think, adapted to moving from a person or an operation Admissions Office in the driver's seat, an organization which had to recruit more dynamically and forcefully. And of course after the years of that gentle transition go by, you can't back and live on the luxury of once having it really good. We've never, therefore, once we finally woke up to the fact that times have passed us by, put enough money into the operation to become a professional admissions office. We are not, despite what people may think. It doesn't matter how good our staff is, they don't travel very much. We are still a regional institution, our

publications are becoming almost first rate at a time when everyone's publications are first rate, so it becomes part of the blizzard. There is so much money being spent on admissions projects by everybody else that our feeble attempts, not matter how clever, are really second rate. We are just not playing the same game. It's like two professional baseball teams -- one has a coach, the other doesn't; one has uniforms, the other doesn't; one has baseball bats, the other doesn't. So when we got out to play baseball we have to borrow from everyone else or just leave the field. So I think admissions has become the whipping post. Everyone can run the Admissions office, everyone knows how to tell them what to do, and they foolishly have listened to everybody. As a result they are running around, or have been up until recently anyway, running around to satisfy everyone's whim. And as a result the admissions process in the Admissions Office has now become a reflection of whoever seemed to have the strongest or any wish. And since the reflections are feeble because there isn't much money behind them, it's not an effective program. You can't be very effective in a high pressure world of advertising and recruitment unless you put the resources into it.

Dr. Hartzell: What kind of resources beside publications?

Richard Solo: Well, we have to decide whether we want to seriously recruit outside of the region. Besides if we don't recruit outside of the region in any significant way we are at the mercy for better and worse of our current undergraduate students and faculty. Almost anybody we can go to Stony Brook knows someone who lives on the same block or within a quarter of a mile who went to Stony Brook. A lot of our students, despite what people may think, are very happy about Stony Brook. They admire it, find their education purposeful and valuable, have good contacts with faculty through one mechanism or another and who admire even themselves. They say, I have accomplished something, and that is transmitted in their local communities. And we get people who will come here because of that. The flip side of that are an unfortunate large number of people who are unhappy or who will speak in an unhappy fashion about their Stony Brook experience. So, despite what we may think about our local recruitment, it's almost

meaningless. We do it; we work hard at it; but we have such recruiters out there, that you Our faculty is by and large negative, they are by and large apologetic, maybe at best apologetic or downright hostile when it comes to the issue of whether they would recommend Stony Brook to someone that comes to them for recommendation. That may shock you, but I think there is no question about it.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, well it shocks me. It seemed to me that illustrates a failure of the Admissions Office and the Dean of Students Office, Personnel Office in their relations with the faculty.

Richard Solo: Well, the failure in relations with the faculty of course are universal. No one, no President, no officer -- it was worse then than it is now; then being the sixties and early seventies -- have ever been able to convince the faculty that they are at least as much responsible to this institution as they are to their profession. The loyalty of the faculty at Stony Brook when you think about how we attracted the faculty to Stony Brook is not surprising. Their loyalty is to their profession, to publish, to obtain grants. There is almost a second University which is the Research Foundation and the money of the order of \$60 Million a year which is channeled through that, and all of the rules of the game and the tenure issues and so forth. I'd rather not debate about it, but I think that the message is rather clear that the faculty have decided to have their first loyalty to the profession are behaving correctly, which means that there is an elitism, among other things, with respect with what they do. There is also not a great attraction on the part of this faculty to the undergraduates. The faculty are not attracted to the undergraduates as a group of people to spend time with. They are not rewarded for doing so. And if their instinct is indifferent or hostile, that instinct is rewarded. The people who have worked closely with the undergraduates may or may not suffer anything for it, but clearly they do it because they choose to. We don't have enough faculty to choose to do that. So that on the average, I have no doubt that if I could prove it, I could prove it, I'd bet money on it that the average faculty member is relatively hostile -- I'm not talking about going out there and stopping people from coming to Stony Brook, but I'm talking about

indifference, hostility. And I think more than the hostility, would you like my, do you think it's a good idea for my son or daughter to go to Stony Brook. I think that most of the faculty, most, not 100%, maybe 50-60% would say, no, I don't think it's a good idea. Some for good reasons and some just knee-jerk reactions. And the rest would not go out, with many exceptions, but by no means large numbers, and argue that they would recruit vigorously for the institution. Nor is the institution clearly stating that the undergraduates have the priority in terms of resources that they would like.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you think they should?

Richard Solo: I think a mature institution, which we will become in maybe twenty or thirty years, will. I think that people underestimate how much energy it takes to fill the first role of Stony Brook, which is to become and continue to be an established research institution. I think people take those words too naively. There is a great deal of meaning in claiming that the President has said it and other Presidents have said it that we are in the shortest phrase 'a research institution.' It will take a long time before we have the diversity and the maturity in our faculty to wash away the starkness of that priority. It will happen, but it will take a long time. I don't see it as so awful. Hey, I'm not happy about it, but I think you have to be very naive to not understand what it means to develop in a short period of time a major research institution. It just can't be done without the focus, not 100% focus, but probably 80-90% of the focus of this institution is direction, goals, money, time, priorities, down that road. I think anyone who thinks otherwise is only occasionally lucky and right that there are some faculty who, not only are accomplishing that, but are making a major contribution at the undergraduate level as well. I think that's part of our developmental scheme. I don't like it. I don't think on the other hand that one can be surprised by it. I think it will take time. If you have the luxury of great distances, then it can make some sense. And I don't think we should change. I think we really do have to pay our dues for a while. People don't want to say that. I am sure that other of my friends in the administration would cringe at this kind of observation, but I don't think it's anything else other than inevitable. I think you have to fight it. And I

think the individuals who tend to be able to make the leaps across the research and the other boundaries to undergraduates and so forth and some of those boundaries are not so terribly high. There are undergraduates who can participate in research and so forth and do. But these projects need to be helped, and they are being assisted now. But for the average student we have as an undergraduate, it has little impact. The best of our undergraduates, well, then we have to decide the admissions question, and that is why don't we have 100% of the best students that are available. The answer is our competition is fighting for the same students. The competition is outgunning us in 1987, and we may not like that, but that's the way it is. So we have an undergraduate population that doesn't fulfill the expectations of the faculty and they blame admissions for that. I can't hold admissions accountable for the attitudes among the faculty because indeed the Admissions Office can be a reflection of the values of our system, but they can't lead the way. And I think our administration, and I mean by that the President, has made it quite clear about the fact that he would like everything but among all the things that are equal, clearly the research direction is more equal. I don't see that as evil. I don't see that as so surprising. And I don't think we should be so shocked, but I don't think we should also be so terribly shocked that we see the effect of that in some of the areas where we're vulnerable, such as the attractiveness of this institution to the undergraduates. And there are a few conspiratorial things. We still don't have a city next door which would help us. We still have a 21 year old drinking age, which is forcing us to be extremely hostile to undergraduates who choose to try to drink in the dorms, which defeats one of the benefits of drinking or at least near drink if you don't drink. I don't drink very much, which was fine, and that is that people socialize, even if they don't drink, they can socialize. We are finding ourselves turning down some of the directions in which students can become more friendly with other students and that's terribly important to people who are young. So we are unfortunate currently on that. No, I think that it's miracle developing and wishful thinking to assume that we can put into the hands of the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Admissions Office the responsibility for

that attitude. They can merely assist what I think is the general belief in what is important. They can run counter to it to an extent, but I don't think we can turn around the faculty attitudes that easily. It will happen. I have no doubts about that, but it's not in the present. It's still down the road in the future.

Dr. Hartzell: It's priorities probably.

Richard Solo: No, it really is. And someday we will realize that our reputation is also developed on the basis of many, not just a few, of our undergraduates. We'll understand that. Everyone understands it, so to speak, intellectually. Everyone understands that, but it's a question of when we start comfortably integrating that into our lives as faculty and staff. And that won't happen until we don't feel that we under the pressure to continually prove ourselves. We're still the new guys on the research block, and I think we have to do as much as possible to reinforce that. And I believe that myself; I think it has an effect. It will continue to have an effect, as I say, I think for many years.

Dr. Hartzell: Okay, well, thanks for coming in.

Richard Solo: Pleasure to talk with you. There are millions of other things we can talk about, but I think you've got such a list of interesting people here that I envy you the task. I don't envy your attempts to sort it out and bring reason to it.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, the question is I have my own research.

Richard Solo: I love your *The Greening of America*. Clearly a good deal of that was active concern in the sixties. Educational experimentation in this country is by those standards currently feeble. I also have strong feelings about the Residential College Program but you'll find that everyone does, so I will let that one go.

Dr. Hartzell: I'd like to know more about, just take a quick look at that.

[end of interview]