

**INTERVIEW WITH ELWIN STEVENS  
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, SUNY ARCHITECT**

**December 22, 1986**

**Dr. Hartzell:** I want the early picture of how the show gotten on the road, so to speak.

**Elwin Stevens:** Have you gone back as far as the legislation and rationale for why it was set up. It was originally a college for math and science teachers; I mean that was the real emphasis. In order to even get a college of the State University down on Long Island at that time, that's the only way that they could get the Budget and Legislature to agree. You know, the State University Trustees at that time and the Board of Regents really had a great deal of conflicts. And so that college actually was originally approved at the outset, now there wasn't much intention from the way I understood things at the time that they would actually follow through and concentrate on that particular, specific direction that the college was supposed to take. I mean it was the intent of the University, quite frankly, to develop a liberal arts program there with a strong emphasis in sciences for the Stony Brook campus; but the connotation of this teachers quickly disappeared from State University's, I mean, I assume you got all of that.

**Dr. Hartzell:** That's in the correspondence, there is correspondence, yes.

**Elwin Stevens:** I can give you some interesting stories on how it actually got started.

**Dr. Hartzell:** This I would like to know because that won't be in the minutes of the Trustees and that sort of thing. What was your position at that time?

**Elwin Stevens:** I was Associate University Architect under Otto Teegen, but it wasn't too long before I was put in a position of being Director of Planning and Development. Now, that generally is a term in university circles for, I guess, fund-raising, but it was a term used at that particular time meaning exactly what it said, planning and development, in other words I was selected by Sonny Greenman, who was a member of the Board of Trustees, he's an old member, and Frank Moore for this particular position. I don't

know, I guess they looked around and I guess I was good as anybody they could find at the time.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Probably better.

**Elwin Stevens:** My particular assignment was to try to develop a method of projecting the, from a planning standpoint, projecting the facilities needs and the kind of University structure and the, to put together a plan, you know what I mean, that we could use. We were heading into at that particular time the bond issue. This is the old 250, there was going to be a series of four, that was Frank Moore's idea, four \$250 million bond issues. And we went after the first one; the first one was voted and approved, in fact it was approved at the highest majority of any bond issue ever put on the voters' rolls in the history of bond issues in New York State at that time.

**Dr. Hartzell:** When was that?

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, god, I can't give you the dates. Karl, you're asking me, I'd have to go back and look in my files, but you'd have to see when the bond issue was approved, that was, it's in the '50's.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Did Mitchell have anything to do with suggesting the finance, the method of financing, because I've heard that.

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, oh, wait a minute, he came way later. My god, he's so far down the pike, has no relationship to this. I'm giving you, I mean, in terms of what you're asking, I'm giving you, from my particular recollection and whichever you could find in the correspondence, the early beginnings of Stony Brook. Stony Brook, you know, it had such a disastrous beginning, including the means the University used, I mean what I told you about the science and engineering aspects of teaching, I mean, not science and engineering, science and mathematics and teaching, of how the hell Stony Brook ever got finally on its feet because there were all kinds of roadblocks put in the way.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Can you cite any of them?

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, yeah, including that guy Lee that they had as President one time, which is one of the biggest problems that they had; didn't you take over after he bounced?

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes, I came September '62.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, well that's when we started the Construction Fund. But I am giving you now '50's, okay. All right. Well, anyway, we got the legislation passed, and I was sitting in the Capitol where the old flag room was, I mean all of our, Charlie Foster and the whole bunch of us were up in the Capitol at that time, that's when we operated with Deans, and we had four Deans: a Dean for medical colleges, a Dean for two-year college and community colleges, that was Larry Jarvey and you had Reuben Frodin who was the Dean for the four-year colleges and sort of the and Cornell, and you had Herman Cooper who was the Dean of the teachers colleges. Well, the original legislation, obviously this would have come under Herman Cooper, but there were a lot of problems in the Central Office going on at the same time, including questions as to whether, Carlson was there as President at the time, see, including whether Carlson was really, how long, it was just a matter of time as to how long he was going to last. And there was all kinds of things that came out, including the Blegen Report. I don't know if you ever ran into that or not?

**Dr. Hartzell:** I need to get a copy of it, but

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, the Blegen Report was a report done by this guy Blegen, uh, and a guy who later became Congressman got fired from State University over that Blegen Report, because he was the Director of Public Relations, he was let go. Whether that was paid for by the Research Foundation, I don't know. Mort Grant could give you, his name was

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was it Froed, F-R-O-E-D?

**Elwin Stevens:** No, no. His name, he was a local guy and he got elected to Congress after that. I'll think of his name. In any event, the Blegen Report called for a major central State University, it was not in keeping with the thinking that we sort of doing and

discussing with the Trustees in terms of the structure. Now, I got in on a lot of that stuff because, as Director of Planning and Development, I was working with the Trustees on what structure the University would take. And we early on discussed the system of University Centers and colleges and, I mean that particular kind of hierarchy, and then major emphasis in different places too. And quite frankly, in our book, Stony Brook was to, if it was going to develop, would develop eventually as it did today, a University Center. So, that kind of thinking was very early, but due to the Blegen Report and the problems that this entailed on Carlson. Carlson's days were sort of ..... and Carlson had sort of problem with Reuben Frodin. And Frodin, who was out of the University of Chicago, I'll tell you, one of his first assistants was Stu Gordon, that ended up as Provost down at Binghamton. Well, after Stu left and went down to Binghamton, Reuben Frodin brought in Len Olsen. And, but then, Carlson saw to it that Reuben Frodin left. So Len Olsen and I used to go to lunch down in downtown from the campus, down in the YWCA, time and time again. He was a nice guy, quiet, my god, you couldn't get two words out of him. But I was working my goddam head off as to what we were going to be doing down there.. And here's Len Olsen sitting over in his office reading books on philosophy; he was a philosophy major, I think. I went into Carlson one day, and I said, look, if we're going to get this thing started, I got a suggestion in terms of the way we can start it, but I'm only getting something started from the physical facilities aspect. I said, it isn't going to do us any good to get something started there unless somebody's got started, I mean, that means sense in terms of heading down the pike for academic, I mean somebody's got to go down and get a faculty. Well, yes, you're right, what did you have in mind. Well, I thought that we could start using Oyster Bay, Planting Fields, and I said I've already talked to a couple of people, and I think that we could, in a short period of time get something done there to get started in a marginal way. But, I said, it's a place where you could at least collect a faculty and get going until we get things started out at the site. The site selection and so on is a different story from this, out at Stony Brook.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I'll need to get that.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, all right. Well, at any rate, but I said, what I suggest is you take Len Olsen and put him on the road and give him a travel, let him go around and start picking out some people, I says. I no longer got back to my desk and I heard the phone ring and it was Len Olsen across, because he was just across the flag room, from me, and Len, I told Len what I was going to do, he says you're kidding. I says, no. Well, he says that would be very interesting, and so Carlson called him in and Len Olsen was assigned the task of, it was, oh, it was hectic days. Anyway, Len then started, and I started on

**Dr. Hartzell:** This is around April?

**Elwin Stevens:** Yup, and we wanted to have, well, no, it was earlier than that, because I remember that we wanted to have some work done so that the following September we could have something going on a Planting Fields, and that was in February, I remember that. So, I think that there was some time in there, you know what I mean. Anyway, it wasn't much time. In fact, we still have the guy that I picked out of the old DPW, and I went to Carl Larson and Charlie Kowecki, we was in DPW at that time, and said we need to have some people, I need to get something done fast. They took Donny Lambert, that's still, he's on the way to retire, but anyway they selected, he was working for the old DPW, Division of Architecture at the time, and we assigned him the task of going down to Planting Fields, which he did. And I went around with the building and said this is what we want to use the original Planting Fields building for, we had some other things in terms of, eventually we'd put some temporary, which we did, some temporary structures there, but we wanted to convert the barns there, you know what I mean, into the thing, and start using the Planting Fields main house. So, he went down, in fact he had a, he slept there in the building. I mean he and, I don't know if he has anybody else, but Donny stayed down there.

**Dr. Hartzell:** You used stables.

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, we used the stables and converted that into some housing units and a dining hall, very nice job, but Donny stayed in the main building. Oh, yeah, he had

a room in the main building where he stayed. And we started putting that together in terms of classrooms and office spaces and so on and some safety things we had to do with it, and they did it very quickly by going around and making a spec for each room and having the contractors come around and bidding on the things as it was posted, so that they knew what they had to do in the building. We got the work done that summer, such that Len Olsen was able to have an office and able to bring people in that following September. We got the thing done, we started. Now, you have to tell me what year that was that we started.

**Dr. Hartzell:** '57.

**Elwin Stevens:** '57, all right, that makes sense.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Started in the fall.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, '57, and then we went on with their, of course, the conversion of the stables and the dining hall of the main barn and so on came a little bit, I mean that was finished later. And then we put up some metal buildings and some dome type buildings and different things for some science labs.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Remember the geodesic domes?

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, geodesic domes, we were doing anything that we could get some quick stuff erected and that was one way of doing it. There's all stories connected with all those things too, but you don't need all those. In any event, we got it started at Planting Fields. It was a little bit difficult and shaky because even there Len Olsen found that really wasn't in charge of Planting Fields because Planting Fields was an arm of Farmingdale Ag and Tech Institute. And the guy that was head of the Horticultural Department, who really got Planting Fields given to, he had an office there, what was his name? What the hell is his name?

**Dr. Hartzell:** I'm trying to think.

**Elwin Stevens:** I don't think he's living any longer.

**Dr. Hartzell:** No, he's not.

**Elwin Stevens:** Carl, his name was Carl too.

**Dr. Hartzell:** It was Carl.

**Elwin Stevens:** Carl, I'll think of it.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I can look it up.

**Elwin Stevens:** Carl something. Well, anyway, the office that I had picked for Len Olsen, he was occupying, which was just the Library, just off of the main entry as you go in, and it took us a while in order to work out the logistic part to get him out of there and to

**Dr. Hartzell:** He went upstairs.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, to put him upstairs and to get Len into room; well, didn't you occupy some of that space at one time?

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes, I did, that was my office for three years.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, right, while Stony Brook was still, this is after Len Olsen left.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes, considerably after, it was after Lee had gone.

**Elwin Stevens:** After Lee had gone.

**Dr. Hartzell:** See, I came in September of '62, that was the year that they moved out to Stony Brook, everything but the Biology Labs, and so I commuted in reverse, I went out

**Elwin Stevens:** We had built, you were living in the Coe Cottage, you and your wife. I remember traipsing through there one day, scaring the hell out of her one time, with a whole entourage of people. Well, in any event, all of the things that happened there happened as a result of getting Stony Brook started as a campus on an ongoing, and that's when Len Olsen went out, and he's the one that hired Bonner and Ek and Eisenbud and that particular

**Dr. Hartzell:** By Ek you mean Erk.

**Elwin Stevens:** Erk, E-R-K, Frank Erk; he was a

**Dr. Hartzell:** Biologist, yes.

**Elwin Stevens:** Biologist and Bonner was Chemistry, and Eisenbud was

**Dr. Hartzell:** Physics.

**Elwin Stevens:** Physics, I think, and they were the three, and then there was a guy in Mathematics, right, I can't think what his name was that they hired. At any rate, they had some good people. Len did all right in getting started. So, anyway, it was going as a functioning institution and then Len Olsen was no longer in favor in people's minds and so things began to change, and I think you got all of that particular path in terms of, but one of the biggest problems, of course, early on was the mistake made in getting this guy Lee in there, because he, it turns out, that he had problems, and it was obvious rather quickly that he had problems. He was almost impossible to work with.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yes, I believe that Olsen brought him in initially.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, he did.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was it as Dean of the Graduate School or

**Elwin Stevens:** No, I think it was in Engineering, I think so. Olsen was the guy that brought him in, and then when Olsen left, they saw fit to bring Lee, Lee was a great promoter of himself, but it was just one of these disasters that never should have happened if people had paid attention; but they were so anxious to try to keep things going that, and the local Council really got buffaloed and people paid attention to the local Council, when they should have really been under closer scrutiny within the Central Office, I mean, to get things started at that time.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Let's see, was Ward Melville Chairman of it then?

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, I guess he was on the Council, he might have, Christ, he was everything else, he might as well have been on the local Council I'm sure, yeah.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, look

**Elwin Stevens:** Now

**Dr. Hartzell:** All right, you go ahead, I'll want to get back to why Melville made the offer of the land.

**Elwin Stevens:** Tax, tax benefit, oh, yeah. In the meantime when we got started, we were looking for sites for the main campus there, and I went down there like I always did on site selection and looked at various places, and then



**Dr. Hartzell:** What other places did you look at?

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, golly, I looked, I don't know, there ought to be a record of them some place; I can't tell you, I visited two or three or four places, other places. There were a lot of good sites around at that particular time. There were some estates and there, well, even, I'll tell you we had a Master Plan done for Planting Fields; oh, yeah, there was a big area next to it, oh, yeah, we considered Planting Fields very, very seriously at one time, absolutely. That was prime in our, until Melville came up with this. Now, there was a guy who was Melville's, Bayles Minuse, was Melville's

**Dr. Hartzell:** Bayles Minuse.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, I don't know if he's still living or not.

**Dr. Hartzell:** No, he's dead.

**Elwin Stevens:** He's dead.

**Dr. Hartzell:** See, that's what's happened.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, well, anyway, Bayles Minuse was his sort of real estate man of Ward Melville; well, they made contact, and the guy you could talk to about that would be John Slocum.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Where is John?

**Elwin Stevens:** John is retired and lives down in Chatham.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Chatham.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, he used to teach at Albany. Anyway, I was

**Dr. Hartzell:** Chatham, New York?

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, Chatham, New York.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I don't know where it is.

**Elwin Stevens:** But anyway, he was, John was very much involved with Bayles Minuse in the early days. And what happened there was that Melville made the offer of the land. I was sent out, I remember, to take a look; and is this something we could consider. And I remember going out there with John Slocum, and John, who used to love his martinis, and so did Bayles Minuse, and I don't know whether this should be here, but John ended

up having his own problems in that regard; he's a hell of a, and he still is, one of my good close friends and was a very, very capable guy. Anyway, he was about three sheets to the wind when I picked him up in the car and it was a winter of whatever winter it was that we went down there, and it had just had a heavy, wet typical snow of Long Island, and about six or eight inches of it had fallen down there. But I wanted to get a look at this particular site; I knew it was wooded, but this is long before Nicolls Road was ever cut in or anything else. And so I drove up into the housing area that was up above, it's near the temporary parking, that housing that's up above the site, you know what I mean, it's on a higher level, that housing development has been there ever since we started. Well, if the Sound is one way, the housing is the other way, in the other direction, the Sound is to the north, this must be to the south of the campus. So, anyway I parked the car up in there and I had a map as to what the hell it was, and I had L. L. Bean boots on, and I mean I was equipped. John was going to see, well, I said John, you're not going to see much, I just want to see what some of these contours do and I want to walk down here and I'm going to walk right back. I said, you don't need to come. No, I'm going to come; John has a topcoat on and black shoes and silk socks, black silk socks, and he starts walking on through, he got as far as the first fence and he decided he'd turn around. But he was not in any condition to walk any distance, and when I finally came back, he had his shoes off and the heater going in the car and he was wringing his socks out, and he never caught a cold so that's how much martinis he had in him. Well, anyway, I did, I looked over the site, it was very difficult to picture what it was like because it was heavily wooded; I mean, it was that typical, wooded areas that we now have are very typical of what it was like. But it was obvious that, I mean, with the tract of land that it was there, and the layout and so on, we immediately looked and see what we could do with the State Transportation Department and the Nassau County in terms of highway access.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Suffolk.

**Elwin Stevens:** Suffolk County and highway access and so on and determine that it was possible to consider the Nicolls Road extension as we brought it through there. That

made it, that made the site that much more attractive. And so we started with the campus planning. Well, I went back and wrote a report agreeing that this site was an acceptable site for State University. Now, I say, the reason why he did it, he did it, it's obvious; if you look up the record, you will see that we got that site given to us in separate tracts of land; we got it over a period of years.

**Dr. Hartzell:** You got 340 acres, I think, to begin with, and then it wound up 80.

**Elwin Stevens:** No, no, no, we got in 60 or, 60 acre parcels, and they were all defined legally in the area, we could get a parcel every place we needed it, and we could get a parcel, but we got in this 60 or however they broke the thing down, about 65 or 70 acres or something like that, parcels. Now, I think that one year we got double parcel, but that was unusual. We got these acreage, and as I say, we figured it out on a map, on the campus development that we had as to where we needed it, if we were going to be designing buildings there, you know what I mean, and we could this so we had the ownership of the land, but he was giving it to us in that way for tax purposes, that was the rationale. Now, as I say, Stony Brook to get to where it is today, with the problems it had, it entailed, was, is very, very fortunate, because Ward Melville was one of them, inasmuch as he had given the land, and the way in which he was giving it. He and his relationship to the Council, his idea was the you were going to build a sleepy little Ivy League college, you know what I mean, in Stony Brook to go along with the Stony Brook Village restoration that he was involved in. Of course, our ideas were a little bit different than that, because we were already working on the structure of the University and had earmarked Stony Brook as being one of the University Centers. I know don't know when the Master, the Master Plan must have been in '58 that we first came up with the Master Plan for the University.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was the prior to the Heald Report or after the Heald Report?

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, no, no, that was

**Dr. Hartzell:** Heald Report I think was '58 or '59.

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, it was almost along with the Heald Report, I remember talking to people about the Heald Report, you had to get the timing in there. But the structure of the University, of University Centers and colleges was something that was, that we had sort of settled into in the Central Office

**Dr. Hartzell:** After the Blegen Report was turned down.

**Elwin Stevens:** Turned down, yes, and we went with the decentralized, with, in fact, we entertained five University Centers at the very beginning.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Where was the fifth?

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, we were thinking about Oswego, but it never got much thought. In other words, to hit a central place in New York. We had the southern tier with, well, the expansion of Harpur College you see, and we hit the Buffalo area, but this was before we really had the merger settled with the University of Buffalo, we simply had the Buffalo area, and then we hit the, Oswego would have been geographically correct, you know what I mean, on Lake Ontario, Albany and then Stony Brook. But, Oswego quickly got, you know what I mean, it didn't get favored, it obviously wasn't there in terms of enrollment potentials that the others had. In any event, we went on with the site, and we started master planning. Now the original Master Plan there, we used the same people that did the Master Plan in the very beginning at Binghamton, which was Moore and Hutchins, they were the original Master Plan architects. They were a very, in fact, even today people will tell you that Moore and Hutchins were probably one of the early people in analyzing and doing campus Master Plans, because people point to the, what they did for Goucher College in Maryland as one of the real first solid Master Plans for a new college campus. So, they did the Binghamton Harpur College for us, again that started out as just a little college, and then as we got started with the Stony Brook Master Plan, the, and we had a good Master Plan, in fact, we followed it for the most part, we

**Dr. Hartzell:** You had some fingers, when I came in somebody was telling me about a finger for science, a finger for engineering and so on.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, yeah, we had the Master Plan, we had the central core of the Library and Humanities and Student Activities, Administration, we had the housing that was down by Nicolls Road out in that particular direction and ringing the campus; we had a Social Science coming out from the Humanities wing that became where the Lecture Hall Center is and that particular aspects of the Social Sciences. We had a Science wing coming out from the Library to another direction, and then we had an Engineering wing and then we had play fields and physical education and athletics. So, the Master Plan and the road work that developed pretty well, the way in which we had decided that we would move on that particular campus was actually the way we ended up doing it, but in the meantime we had another roadblock thrown in our way because along comes changes in administration and people political, I mean, it was long before we had the Construction Fund involved in the act. And things were happening with it, and people decided we weren't going fast enough, and the only way

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

**Elwin Stevens:** Political.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was this Frank Moore?

**Elwin Stevens:** No, it was not Frank Moore. Frank Moore was perfectly satisfied with what we were doing.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was it Harriman?

**Elwin Stevens:** This was under Harriman's administration and a guy by the name of Brill came into the act, he was then the Chair, he was appointed, whether he was a former General or what the hell he was, I don't know, but anyway he was Chairman of the Thruway Authority, I think. And this guy Brill came into the act and whether he was from the Telephone Company or, now I don't know, but all of a sudden we were informed that the way we could get this thing started was to give the whole thing over to a single architectural firm. Our path was to do this, we were to take the Master Plan that was developed, and we were going to hire architectural firms for each one of these units I defined we would have one for housing, one for the central core, one for the Humanities-

Social Science, one for the Sciences wing, one for the Engineering wing, and one for the, probably Student Activities and Physical Education and so on, so that we would have some prominent architectural firms working out. As it turns out that's about what we did, but, in the meantime, much to our chagrin, politically we found out that what they were proposing here was to give this over to Voorhees, Walker, Smith, Smith & Haynes and said that this particular outfit was the architectural firm had the size and ability to do this whole thing, and they would all be under one control.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was this Phelan?

**Elwin Stevens:** No, no, this was before Phelan. So, actually Mr. Teegen knew this firm. he had worked for Voorhees, Walker, in my estimation they were not the firm to do this sort of thing, and this was a mistake to do it this way, we were better off if we had stayed where we were. And then all hell broke loose, by this I mean, why people didn't mind their p's and q's, I don't know, but through Brill and through a guy by the name of Haynes, and one of the Smiths at the architectural office, they went through and accepted this assignment without, even though they were told that another architectural firm was already working on the project. Now, this is highly against the AIA ethics, I don't know if you've run into this before or not, but anyway, they were given this thing, and Moore and Hutchins stepped back and then Mr. Moore and Mr. Hutchins went to the AIA and said, look, you can do what you want to, but this is not ethically correct to have this sort of thing happening and they at least needed the courtesy of a phone call, who they Ralph Walker quite well. Well, how, why the hell they did what they did, I don't know, it's, but anyway the whole thing went through a Hearing with the AIA, and Voorhees, Walker ended up to be censured, in which Haynes was suspended for two years, and Smith one year, and Ralph Walker a former President of the AIA was censured, I mean, that's how serious a blow it was. When I say it got off to a bad start, it got off to a bad start because, quite frankly, architecturally Voorhees didn't have the ability to do what people said that they did, and I was rather taken aback, I was younger and I had my own ideals and thoughts, and when I see the way in which the buildings were being developed down

there and the first buildings that they took on, the Library and the Humanities and the Science Building

**Dr. Hartzell:** Chemistry and Biology.

**Elwin Stevens:** Chemistry and Physics and Biology, the first Engineering

**Dr. Hartzell:** The brick buildings.

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, but you see, this is where Melville loused up the act, they got into the act in which they were trying to make these pseudo-Colonial small college things, you know what I mean, things, and the buildings took on the scale and they took on, and they weren't buildings that really were going to do what the hell we wanted them to do and to make the statement that we did. So, our involvement with them, we were kind of discouraged, to say the least. Well, I can also tell you later on in the history here of how they got

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is another interesting little story, in any event they did go ahead and they did design the early dormitories and they did the Library, that they named the Melville after Melville's father, we did the Humanities Building. Fortunately we surrounded the old Library, it was such a bad building, with a new building that is fairly good now, and we just ate it up, and we made major additions to the other thing. But the other buildings are still there, you can see them, make out what they were.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Why did you put the Chemistry, why did you put the science buildings, Chemistry and Biology, so close to the Library, when Humanities, which are really the ones to use the Library

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, Humanities was close to the Library.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, it's

**Elwin Stevens:** Yeah, off the front plaza.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yeah, but it's much farther away than Chemistry.

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, we were emphasizing the sciences at this particular campus at the time, I mean, when Rockefeller come in we were, I mean his idea was the we were to

build the Cal Tech of the East at the Stony Brook campus. I used to laugh at people and used to prove that they really didn't much about what the hell they were talking about because I used to go around and say to people whenever I'd hear this, I'd say, well, look at, tell me, Cal Tech you know. Oh, yes, yes, they'd say, we know Cal Tech. I'd say, well, first, I want to ask you a couple of questions about Cal Tech, is it a public or private college. Well, everybody would tell me it was a public university, and I said was it a college or a university, and they would say it was a university and then they'd say is it public or private and they would say, well, it's a public college. I'd say, well, tell me, roughly how big is it, you know. And holy cripes, I would get anything from fifteen to thirty thousand, you know. And I'd say, well, I'll tell you, the last time I was there, which I did take a trip with a guy before, I mean, involving the whole programming of the Stony Brook campus, out to California, I said they were in a struggle at Cal Tech trying to determine if they could increase their student body by 10%, you know what 10% of their student body was, 60 students, they were trying to go from 600 to 660, and they were having a turmoil trying to do it. Well, it floored everybody because they had no idea that Cal Tech was this kind of an institution. That was the kind of people we were dealing with here in the East. So, we did get the architecture started down there and building, and I don't think that we did it any faster with the fact that we had Voorhees in there. It would have been much better obviously, in my estimation, had we gone with the original intent of the, but we followed pretty much the Master Plan that Moore and Hutchins had developed. There's copies of that around, of that Master Plan. Moore and Hutchins has them, as a matter of fact, there's some nice renderings of it. Then by this time, when we were under way, we finally, you know, come up to the point where you weren't going to do things through the old process of the old Department of Public Works, and all the rationale for creating the Construction Fund was there, and we worked in the Central Office

**Dr. Hartzell:** Essentially what was the rationale?



**Elwin Stevens:** Well, what was happening is it was obvious that the University was going to expand faster and bigger than, see, it was held down by the Budget Office and the Board of Regents for so long, enrollments were curtailed and the size and the way in which you had an opportunity to expand these places, it was dreadful of what you had to do. I mean they wouldn't let you go out and, of course, you could do a Master Plan for Binghamton for Stony Brook because they were plots of land, but these other campuses that were around in the cities and other places in Albany and so on, everybody expected you were going to expand, what the hell was there. And so you'd had no land acquisition policy, you had no plan on which you could do it in a logical organized manner because they wouldn't allow you to do it. So, the need was to get things on a more professional, higher level, I mean, I remember I wrote many, many memorandums on this as to the need of doing master planning for the campuses, rather than hodge-podge planning that we were doing, because we were picking up back yards of people's properties to build buildings on, and it didn't make sense, you know, nothing worked. Brockport was a great example for that. So, anyway, the old Department of, Division of Architecture, Department of Public Works process just didn't work. And the other thing we were hamstrung with, was the thing that this year they are trying to repeal, was the Wicks Law. We had to go out in those days because of the law and everything with separate bids, I mean, for the primes and the generals and so on, so we needed to get a few things changed if we were really going to do what you had to do. And we wrote an autonomy bill for State University, and part of the autonomy bill that we had, were working on that with Jack Creary and Charlie and Larry Murray, the group, part of that autonomy bill was the autonomy for the capital construction program. And we had a lot of these things single bid, we had the need for master planning and speed in terms of do things and the kind of demographic studies and things that we needed to do to make sense out of the whole thing. Well, we slowly got the autonomy for State University, but by autonomy I meant this, State University was still in those days operating with Civil Service

personnel, and we had Civil Service Librarians and Registrars; I mean, important positions, you know, it was very

**Dr. Hartzell:** They were treated just like another State Department.

**Elwin Stevens:** State Department, right. it didn't have any kind of academic structure to it.

**Dr. Hartzell:** There was nobody who really understood what it was.

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, but they kept it under their thumb of the Board of Regents and the, in fact, I tell you, people, and rightfully so, Rockefeller with the great expansion of the State University, but when he first came into office, those of us in State University we were already witnessed the moratorium that was put on things by Harriman, and then when he came into office, quite frankly, we were worried. And the worry was that Rockefeller had given every indication of supporting legislation that would enhance the private universities and colleges with State support in order to meet this particular demand, rather than see to it that State University was built. So, for the first couple of years we were very, very concerned. What year did Rockefeller come in? He come in in '58, didn't he?

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yeah, I think I've got that here somewhere. What turned him around?

**Elwin Stevens:** Frank Moore.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Frank.

**Elwin Stevens:** That's right, he turned him around. They're all dead now, so I can say anything I want, I guess, but that's how he got turned around, yeah, it wasn't Rockefeller that got hit by the bolt of lightning down in Pocantino Hills, it was, Frank Moore, see, was already working for Rockefeller Foundation, he had government, for government, you know, so, he was a good friend. In fact, Frank Moore was one of the first influential ones to get Rockefeller to run for Governor, one of the first backers.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I don't have it; I do have it, but I gave it to Jerry

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, in any event, we had these other setbacks with the moratorium of Harriman and the

**Dr. Hartzell:** Something did turn him around.

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, yeah, absolutely, we put together quite a document for, it wasn't as polished as I would like, but it was as good as we could do at the time, in which we indicated that what we needed was about a billion dollars, I mean in those days in terms of the kind of expansion we were talking about and not that our original idea of the bond issues maybe wasn't the thing and it was, I don't know where exactly, where the concept of using the bonding thing, and that's when Mitchell finally comes in, I mean, he's later down the line, Mitchell. In fact, I went with Larry Murray at the very first meeting down in New York in Mitchell's office when he signed the first bonding, he was as bad then as he is, was later, he was a cold fish, that guy.

**Dr. Hartzell:** This was, he was what then?

**Elwin Stevens:** He was the bond counsel at the time for the

**Dr. Hartzell:** State?

**Elwin Stevens:** No, no, for the bonding company that did the first bonding using the, you know, the moral obligation bonds, the concept of the moral obligation bonds, yeah. He was the bond counsel. At any rate, it came along that Frank Moore got Rockefeller to recognize, as far as I'm concerned, the University. I remember Frank Moore come in and announced to us one day that things were going to be different, and they were. And the next thing I knew I was working with a guy by the name of Frank Willy, who was a , he was counsel to the Rockefeller, and in those days Rockefeller had Ronan in his office and George Dudley was in his office.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Did you see anything of Larry Walsh then, or had Larry Walsh left, he was, I knew him as Assistant Legal Counsel under Dewey under Charlie Bartle.

**Elwin Stevens:** He had long left. I remember the name, he had long left. I came under Dewey when I first came in. But what we did was take the original, that autonomy bill that we had developed, and we started using various segments of that and that was the, I worked to write the technical aspects of the Construction Fund bill, that is what we needed to accomplish technically in the construction and architectural and so on. The

financing arrangement of that bill and that whole side was, I think that was Rockefeller's people and Frank Moore and the Trustees and other people that they got involved, because we had some pretty high level people off of Wall Street on our Trustees at the time, and it came up with that particular concept of the funding. And of course, the bonding is what made it.

**Dr. Hartzell:** When did Norman Hurd come in?

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, Norm Hurd was in for quite a while, Norm Hurd was, you see he was an Economics Professor at Cornell before he ever came here. And Norm was here, I think he was here under Dewey, then he left for a while, then he came back and he was Budget Director and then he went for a long, long time under Rockefeller, and then, of course, he went from Budget Director, finally he took Ronan's place when Ronan went down to, and Al Marshall, first it was Ronan and then it was Al Marshall, and he became the number one, number two man under Rockefeller, I mean Rockefeller's office, Norm Hurd took on that particular assignment. Norm's still around.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I want to see him.

**Elwin Stevens:** Do you, he's wonderful to talk to. I see him quite often and I see him at Spack all the time. I saw him just the other day, in fact, on the street.

**Dr. Hartzell:** He helped me with my chapter on agriculture of the *Empire State at War* that I wrote for Governor Dewey.

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, he's a very knowledgeable guy and would have a lot of input into all this sort of stuff, yeah, he's be very good. Norm was always a good person to

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, he was an academic.

**Elwin Stevens:** And he understood more than some of the others. But the scope, I think, until Rockefeller took it over, the scope of what the hell was necessary sort of was missed by an awful lot of people as to what the hell a university was. We got a hold of a lot of deaf ears. I mean they couldn't visualize and couldn't understand the scope of what the hell was necessary to be done.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yeah, even when I came, I had the feeling that they were thinking in terms of the State, rather than a national, an institution of national stature and there was a relativism between, within the State that couldn't break out of a kind of a lockstep with Albany and Binghamton and Buffalo in any sense. I may have been wrong, but that's the way I felt, and of course, when I came Hamilton had already indicated that he would leave, that was a week after I got on the job.

**Elwin Stevens:** Tom was a very bright, very capable guy. He had a, I think he did a lot for the University, but he had a tough road to hoe too while he was here, but academically he knew what should be done and what had to be done. He had a very nice assistant that I liked very much, who later became a college president, he was a Rhodes Scholar who was here with him. Well, anyway, taking back to Stony Brook, eventually, I just want to finish up the story about Voorhees office. When the Construction Fund finally came in in '62, that was when you went there, right, when the Construction Fund started. One of the early things I indicated was that we had to do the master planning which they took over and we started all of that master planning business throughout the whole thing, but I was thoroughly disappointed and disgusted with what was happening at Stony Brook. And so the first thing we did was to get some additional firms on board to start some facilities that had to be from a size and from a design standpoint were a hell of a lot different than what we had there under Voorhees. Well, in any event, I guess to placate Voorhees office, they felt under the Construction Fund that somehow I wanted to have everything ended with Voorhees office, and they thought well, under our direction, we can get Voorhees to do some decent stuff down there. So, I said I don't believe it. You're not going to change an office like that. Well, by god, they were going to change day into night as far they were concerned. I mean, a lot of these early guys that were enthusiastic about this thing. They had a guy that went down to Voorhees office and he was going to teach them how to practice architecture, I guess, well, good god, that was an old State office, I mean they had a method of doing architecture in a style and you know, nobody was going to change. So, they gave them a Student Union and Administration building

that was to be on the campus. And things were happening awful fast, but one of the parts of the law, if you read the Construction Fund law, you'll find that in addition to a statement that the Construction Fund is within the State University of New York, the one saving grace that we had in the law, see, I was University Architect at that particular time, was that the University was responsible for approving the architectural concept. Well, most of the architectural firms that we had working in other places, I had given the names of the firms to so that we could get that kind of, Ed Barnes and we had already hired Ed Stone long before the Fund come in to do the Albany campus, and we hired Skidmore Owings and Merrill to do the Oswego campus, but it was that kind of a firm that we were looking for at these campuses to broaden ourselves out. And Voorhees firm wasn't the kind of firm that we had in mind. So, whoever the young fellow was that was in the Construction Fund at the time, again, in time I could give you names, because I can remember most of them, but he went to Voorhees office and they turned something, and they went right straight ahead and completed working drawings on these two buildings and advertised them for bid, never even told us.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Checking with the Construction Fund.

**Elwin Stevens:** No, never checking with the University. And so I let them know that, look, I was serious about the approval of the architectural concept, and they might as well find out early on that, you know, this was not the way to do things. I says, it may very well be, turn out, but I says you've got working drawings completed nobody's ever seen, and you've got these now advertised, so they brought the drawings in, and we were all under one roof up there at 194 Washington Avenue, brought them in Tony's office, in that particular time, Tony Adinolfi, , who, he and I got on pretty good, and laid them out. And George Dudley was there that day, he was one of the first Trustees of the University Construction Fund, and the kid that was doing the thing for the Fund brought these in, and I remember Frank was there, Frank Metzky, anyway they spread these out so that I could look at these buildings, and so I took one look at both of these, working drawings now, complete, advertised for bid, and I thumbed through the drawings; it was the same

old hat, it was the same thing. And I said, gentlemen, I thought that when we got started in this that we were going to make a mark and that, as I explained early on, we weren't responsible and we certainly didn't want to repeat what the hell we had at these campuses as we were going on at Stony Brook. I said, gentlemen, I want to tell you something, even if it means my job, the architectural concept of these two buildings is disapproved. Well, some of those people that were there had only seen them the first time too, you know, they rolled up the drawings, paid off Voorhees, Walker's office. That was the end of Voorhees of ever doing anything in State University again, and they hired a conglomerate firm in those days of Damaz, Pokorney and Weigel to do the Administration and the Student Union buildings. And so these sort of things had happened, when I say the appointment of Lee, getting started under the, you know, all the way back to the science and for teachers, you know, for science teachers and getting Lee involved, and poor Len Olsen and, I mean, all these were disasters or kind of broom handles we think people see. Well, anyway, then we got started architecturally with the thing and the way in which we are going down there today. So, it was a shaky early start, no question about it, and a whole lot of other interesting side stories that I could give you but time probably wouldn't permit for that.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, I've got all the time in the world. I noticed that things were going up.

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, we bought the site for the medical college. That wasn't given to us.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I know damn well you did.

**Elwin Stevens:** I said that we'd get that site across the way. We needed that bad.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, you know, one day, see, I knew Bayles Minuse. And one day he said, you know, I was concerned about land because looking twenty, fifty years down the road you needed more land than you had.

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, yeah, sure, absolutely.

**Dr. Hartzell:** You needed more land than you had and Levitt had just taken the land to the south.

**Elwin Stevens:** That's right, that's a big tract.

**Dr. Hartzell:** You better get the rest of it.

**Elwin Stevens:** That was the site that had the water tower on it and Bayles Minuse was on the Water Board.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yeah, and Bayles said you better get those 150 acres, that was on the east of Nicolls Road, pretty soon before somebody else.

**Elwin Stevens:** St. George's Country Club was just down below us.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Yeah, right.

**Elwin Stevens:** We had our eye on that too.

**Dr. Hartzell:** So I went back and called, I was dealing with Herb Gordon at the time, well, I told him about my conversation with Bayles Minuse, and I said you better get it soon. He said, well, you know we're running into difficulty with the Trustees, they seem to say we're not in the land bank business, and, but somehow it worked out all right. Every now and then the people on the golf course would say does the State University want to buy that.

**Elwin Stevens:** I went to the Trustees on that land.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Did you.

**Elwin Stevens:** Absolutely.

**Dr. Hartzell:** On which land?

**Elwin Stevens:** On the land for the medical, absolutely. And also we bought land up there where the Surge parking lots are, we bought that land too. Oh, yeah, and where we built the Surge buildings, we bought that land, that wasn't part of the original tract.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Oh, I know it.

**Elwin Stevens:** I remember very well. Then there was a piece of property that finally went down and went down to, what's the name of that road there?

**Dr. Hartzell:** Pond Path.



**Elwin Stevens:** Pond Path Road, yeah, we bought that, well, we bought that because there was a possibility of having a extra way out, you know what I mean, we were looking for other exits to go along with.

**Dr. Hartzell:** I walked all over that and that's where you have your great big parking lots to the south, Stony Brook Road and Oxhead Road. Because I've just been out to Michigan State, Michigan State has 18,000 acres. Well, of course, it's an agricultural and technical, as well as a general so, and here you had Johns Hopkins with less than 100 acres in the middle of Baltimore. It didn't seem to me that, while the land was there,

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, yeah, no that was recognized early in planning that we needed that particular property. And we have none too much even today in terms of what the hell we're trying to do down there. I think we're all right, but I mean we

**Dr. Hartzell:** We have some room to move. Okay, we're almost through with this particular tape. I notice that if you take laboratories, lecture halls or lecture rooms and offices, on the campus there are at least three different ways of handling the relationships among those. The old Humanities Building, the classrooms are all in the middle and the offices are on either side, you don't have any lecture hall. Well, you have one lecture hall.

**Elwin Stevens:** One, and we had a lecture hall in each one of the original science buildings.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Science buildings, and then in those buildings you had laboratories on one side and classrooms on the other, and then you have

**Elwin Stevens:** That wasn't much different than the original laboratory science building that we used to do for the science buildings, the number ones we called them. In fact, that's how Oscar Lanford got associated, I mean, see Oscar was a, he was a Dean at Albany early on, and when Sputnik went up, everybody got excited, and this is before the Fund, this is 1950?, when was Sputnik?

**Dr. Hartzell:** '57.

**Elwin Stevens:** '57, well, anyway, everybody got excited and the next year's budget, we had six or seven science buildings in the budget for various colleges, they were all teachers colleges at the time. Well, you didn't have any people in science at the colleges that could tell you even what the program needed to be, so Oscar, who was a Chemist and was Provost then at Albany under Eb Collins right across the street from where we were on Thurlow Terrace at the time, I got to know Oscar through his involvement with Atmospheric Research Center with Schaeffer. Oscar was one of the founders of the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center. I don't know how many people know that. But, anyway

**Dr. Hartzell:** He was also President of Fredonia.

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, that's how, I'm telling you how he became President of Fredonia. Oscar, I went to Larry Murray and I said, Larry, we haven't got anybody at these colleges that knows anything about these science facilities, we've got to have somebody that's going to do a program for us of a general nature so that these buildings can become, everybody will go to maybe one or two science buildings a lot of these colleges are going to have. And I says, you know, we can design something, but we got to know what the hell to design. So, Oscar wrote the original, I mean, together with our particular office, Oscar was our consultant writing a general purpose science facility that we could build at these campuses, and it's pretty much the same program at all the campuses around. Well, then through his particular activities in relationship with Larry Murray, when Harry Porter came to the Central Office as the Provost in the Central Office early on, the opening came at Fredonia, and so Larry and I got talking

**Dr. Hartzell:** Was Porter President of Fredonia?

**Elwin Stevens:** Oh, yeah, he was President of Fredonia, and so we got talking one day, and I said, hey, why don't you throw Oscar, he would be a damned good college president I think, he had been great to work with on this thing, and Larry, by the time we contacted, we knew a lot of people in those days, everybody was kind of a close knit family, and some people on the local Council out there, and the next thing we know,

Oscar is appointed as President of Fredonia. So, my association with Oscar goes back years. Of course, fortunately he came in here after that, after his stint there. So, he goes back a long ways.

**Dr. Hartzell:** Well, look, um, I've taken up enough of your time at least this time.

**Elwin Stevens:** Well, it's kind of fun to reminisce about it.

**Dr. Hartzell:** It certainly is.

**Elwin Stevens:** It's, as I say, it's

[end of tape]