

**INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TRASK
FORMER CHAIRMAN DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
ACTING VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS
April 28, 1989**

Dr. Hartzell: Friday, April 28, 1989, at his home in Washington, D. C. We'll start out with the group of questions, suppose you get located, Number 1.

David Trask: My name is David F. Trask. I was in the History Department and I was, I came as an Associate Professor and later was promoted to Full Professor, and I served as Chairman of that Department as well from 1968 to 1974.

Dr. Hartzell: What time did you come, what year?

David Trask: I came in 1966, and I was 37 years old.

Dr. Hartzell: Where'd you come from?

David Trask: I came from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Nebraska. The History Department recruited me; I'd known several members of the Department. The person I knew best was Tom Angress, because we had gone to college together at Wesleyan.

Dr. Hartzell: I didn't realize you were a Wesleyan graduate.

David Trask: Oh, yes.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, so am I.

David Trask: I know that.

Dr. Hartzell: You know that too. All right.

David Trask: I also knew John Pratt, I knew Hugh Cleland, and I knew Stanley Ross.

Dr. Hartzell: I see.

David Trask: So I knew quite a few people, more than most people would know in that Department and knew of other. But it was Hugh Cleland was the person who contacted me directly and brought, Hugh was, I think, the Chair of the Search Committee.

Dr. Hartzell: I see. What was your particular field in American history?

David Trask: My field was diplomatic history and military history.

Dr. Hartzell: I see. Why did you come, 6?

David Trask: Well, I had, of course, grew up in the East and was educated in the East, had gone out to the Middle West, but I wanted to return to the East Coast, and so I was interested in the region. And Stony Brook seemed attractive because it was a new and growing institution that looked like it was going to be an important place to be.

Dr. Hartzell: All right. And you liked the people in the Department?

David Trask: Yes.

Dr. Hartzell: Can you be specific about 7 in some way, what was your reaction to the institution?

David Trask: Well, in those days Stony Brook was advertised as a University Center, it was going to be a very important center for advanced research, as well as for undergraduate education; and since I was interested in both undergraduate and graduate education, I came here. It seemed, it was attractive simply because it was a new place, it seemed possible that there would be a flexibility to do things there that maybe might not exist elsewhere. Besides, it seemed likely younger people would be able to do more sooner.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, right, right.

David Trask: There seemed to be opportunity there that was attractive to me.

Dr. Hartzell: Did the relation, the close relation to New York City have anything to do with it, or the nature of the location on the Island have anything to do with it?

David Trask: Long Island is attractive, New York, I can live without New York City.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes.

David Trask: I'd just as soon ship it out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, but Long Island was indeed attractive.

Dr. Hartzell: In other words you didn't need the libraries in the City?

David Trask: I did, yes. I went into the City regularly in what was known as a research car. I went all the time. Bernard Semmel and I were maybe the most frequent users of that car. We'd go in there on our Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Dr. Hartzell: I see. All right, number 8. When you got there, what was the institution like, the campus, the people spirit?

David Trask: Well, it was smaller.

Dr. Hartzell: Incidentally, this is not a whitewash in any sense. I want to get the reactions one way or another.

David Trask: Well, it was a relatively small campus. There were maybe only 3,000 students when I first came and the faculty was still relatively small. But it was obviously expanding and it was rough, there was so much construction around, a lot of mud. It was certainly not a very prepossessing physically, because it was in its early stages, but nevertheless, it was interesting because practically everybody was new, and people were thrown together had a relatively common background. And there was a strong, most people who came were younger people.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, you were building.

David Trask: It was a building situation. So, it was, I liked the leadership on the campus. I was impressed by Toll and by Alec Pond and by Sid Gelber and others who were.

Dr. Hartzell: How about Stan?

David Trask: And Stanley. And they were very different. There were all kinds of different people there. But they did seem to work together well, much better than most administrators in my experience.

Dr. Hartzell: What about the character of the student body?

David Trask: Well, it was a kind of an odd student body, and it was, in those days, it was a very heavily New York City student body. Over time it became more varied and representation of Long Island began to send more students and even from upstate. And, of course, the graduate students came from all the place. But the students were all pretty bright. They were, they came with good test scores and backgrounds because Stony Brook was fairly selective at that point and other factors that caused, I think, some lowering of standards weren't operative then. On the other hand, the student, Stony

Brook wasn't attracting leadership type students; they were going elsewhere, maybe to Cornell upstate. So the students, the absence of leadership was a very obvious, seemed to me an obvious thing about the student after coming from a place like University of Nebraska, where their very best students in the State as well, there was open admission so everybody came, there were all kinds of different leaders and followers. This was largely a group of relatively hard working, but passive students and fairly good students.

Dr. Hartzell: Offhand, what proportion would you say were first generation college?

David Trask: I just have no idea, but I think it was relatively high. I think it might have been 30 or 40%, maybe more. But I just, I don't know, although I believe statistics existed at that time on that particular question among others. I heard some statistics. I was interested in the composition of the student body, and I remember there was information available about that.

Dr. Hartzell: Okay, what events, persons, experiences stand out?

David Trask: Well, the most significant experience was the great drug bust and its aftermath, it's the thing that probably most dramatic. I think it led to my own temporary service in the Student Affairs area as an Acting Vice President for Student Affairs, as kind of a troubleshooter and a faculty person to fill in for a while and sort of hold back the whole business. But it was surely that event and the circumstances that followed in the student "Three Days."

Dr. Hartzell: Oh, yes.

David Trask: Business that was held.

Dr. Hartzell: What was the "Three Days?" Was that

David Trask: This was a kind of general University, all elements in the University, faculty, students, administration, and even I think the Board of Trustees and the Council participated in a kind of general review and discussion of where the University was and where it was going. What the direction should it follow. My own impression of the business was that it really didn't lead to too much change, but it sort of gave everybody a chance to blow a lot of steam and express themselves. The basic direction with regard to

student life had been taken. They had established a college program, the residential college program. This, the whole purpose of that program, I am sure you will recall, was, it was a reaction to the fact that the modern university was such a large and such a large and complicated place, and also an impersonal place. The complexity, the size, the impersonality, the thought was to try to cut the University down to manageable pieces, to get back to colleges where you would, where people would get to know each other, where the faculty and the students, where there would be a living and learning situation, was the slogan, where you would both live and learn in the college. But the college program never developed at Stony Brook, although there was quite tremendous interest and support for it from the administration.

Dr. Hartzell: Why didn't it?

David Trask: Well, I think there were two reasons. One was the character of the student body. The students, it was hard for them to relate to something like this. But I think that the principal reason for the failure of the college program was the failure of the faculty to support it. What tended, to my way of thinking, the least desirable and least effective faculty tended to be attracted to it. The better faculty didn't come into it; and this was understandable, people who were coming to Stony Brook were people who really were research scholars, they were people who gave their teaching responsibilities, which were relatively light compared to most places, they worked hard at their teaching, but they didn't want to go beyond that. Only a few, only a few of the leading faculty people who had national standing in their fields participated in the college.

Dr. Hartzell: Can you name names?

David Trask: Gee,

Dr. Hartzell: Max Dresden?

David Trask: Max was one; he was involved.

Dr. Hartzell: What about Homer Goldberg or?

David Trask: Homer was involved, but only briefly.

Dr. Hartzell: Larry DeBoer?

David Trask: DeBoer came as the Director. The Colleges were set up about 1966, '67. The original College Masters began in the Fall of 1967; I was one of those. And then there was a Council of Masters, of which I became the Chairman; and that was a kind of coordinating and planning committee, with which particularly Alec Pond worked closely and, of course, the Student Affairs people, like Tilley. And that, out of those, that was a kind of institutional framework for deciding where to go. And it was in that context that DeBoer was hired and brought here as the first Director of the Residential College Program; that's how he got in.

Dr. Hartzell: How'd he work out?

David Trask: Well, not so well. He had certain strengths and certain weaknesses, but he, I think, got kind of confused by Stony Brook, the nature of the faculty, the students. I don't think he ever really came to grips with or understood the situation, and it took a different kind of person. The second person who came was Scott Rickard.

Dr. Hartzell: Scott Rickard, yes.

David Trask: And Scott was more, had more recent, was more

Dr. Hartzell: Professional.

David Trask: He had background, he had been in touch with students. He was more qualified for the job. And there was another fellow named David, who was briefly an interim person, who was one of the staffers. David Tilley had been the head of the Student Affairs, had been really, I think, part of the problem. Of course, we are talking now about days when there were tremendous struggles over view, ideological struggles over where to go. Tilley represented very strong anti *in loco parentis* position; he represented the knock down all the constraints and limits on behavior. There was one group that wanted to keep things as they were. Most people were in some middle ground. That's where the Residential College Program was really on middle ground and tended to attract the moderates, of whom I was one. But there was a lot of tension between the moderates and the radicals, to use the terminology of the day. And Tilley was very suspect by the middle grounders, who believed that he really was unreliable. He had lost

confidence of practically everybody and, I think, ultimately was taken out of the And my appointment as Acting Vice President for Student Affairs was part of the process of easing Tilley out of the situation, because there was a widespread feeling that he wasn't actually

Dr. Hartzell: Well, that is part of the picture that I haven't had from anybody else at first hand really. I didn't get it really from Dave, I'm thinking of Dave Tilley because he, well, in his recollections there was no depth, no philosophical analysis of what went on.

David Trask: Tilley was an empire builder. It was my opinion and the opinion of a lot of other people, and I think generally shared by the top level administrators, Bentley Glass, and, oh, another person I should have mentioned I thought a lot of.

Dr. Hartzell: As an administrator.

David Trask: This group built, it was their feeling, and I shared that opinion, you could do about twice as much with twice as few people, so that it was an overblown empire that wasn't doing very much, it wasn't helping and maybe it was hindering in some way the student. That the Student Affairs, the ethos of the Student Affairs program with Tilley there was really a kind of anti-faculty program. Of course, there was a lot of irritation with the Student Affairs people on the part of the faculty. Some of it unjustified, some of it justified. Some faculty just didn't want to respond to the problems that young people were having, they were really unwilling or unable to recognize that there was a big problem that you had to do something about. But what to do about it was the great question. And it was a tremendously interesting and difficult period, very difficult.

Dr. Hartzell: Who succeeded you, do you remember?

David Trask: Scott.

Dr. Hartzell: Scott Rickard.

David Trask: Then there was, after Scott there was a lady, okay, now I don't remember what her name was and I never had much to do with her, but later on at a point when I was

Dr. Hartzell: Elizabeth Wadsworth.

David Trask: Yes, when I was active doing other things and was on leave, I was gone for two different years, one on sabbatical and another year I was a Visiting Professor at the Naval War College, and so I was, my connections were, but I had more or less exhausted my capabilities and utility in this tremendous burst that was associated with the drug thing, with the departure of Tilley, the “Three Days” business. I was sort of a brief incident in the whole episode, though I was there at a particularly critical and difficult time and I had had a

Dr. Hartzell: Now, let’s see if we can pin it down in terms of years. The bust was ‘68, I think.

David Trask: Yeah, it was about February of ‘68, it was in exam period January of ‘68, it may have been January.

Dr. Hartzell: Did you ever see the big brochure with the picture of the knight in a helmet that was gotten out by the Police Department, did you ever see that?

David Trask: I recall seeing that, but I wasn’t too happy with the Police Department. There was this tremendous display of, what was interesting was that the Police Officer, whose name was Cummings, Sargent Cummings, was later on convicted, as I understood, on drug dealing, was put away. Do you know that?

Dr. Hartzell: No, it wasn’t Bob Cummings.

David Trask: I don’t remember that.

Dr. Hartzell: He wasn’t of the Old Field Police.

David Trask: No, no, no. This guy was Suffolk County, he was the head of the Narcotics Squad, and he’s the one that ran the drug bust. But later on it turned out that he was a drug dealer and convicted and went to jail.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I’ve heard and understood that the reason for the bust in the first place was that the Republican Party suffered, had suffered P. R. wounds, let’s put it that way, because of the sewer district scandal, and they needed to recoup themselves. Here was a chance at that.

David Trask: That was surely an element, although, of course, there was a problem with drugs on the campus. To me this surprised me, I really wasn't aware of the drug problem, it hadn't touched me, I was just not, it was something completely outside of my experience, I was really surprised and shocked by this because I, my College, George Gershwin College, was the only one where they didn't find anything. It may have been just, you know, we did have, I think, a better program there and maybe more attention paid and so on, but I think it was just a matter of accident. I don't think there was anything peculiar about that, it may just have been that particular mix of students and maybe the police who came missed. But in any event, as it wasn't a part of my own experience, and I don't believe it was of other people in the College program, except a certain group of faculty people who knew these kids and maybe in some way involved themselves in the drug culture, but I think this whole thing kind of surprised and shocked the faculty. We weren't aware of this, just how widespread this whole business was. It came to me, at least, as a real surprise.

Dr. Hartzell: I remember that when we had a problem with one of employees who burned down the shack

David Trask: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Hartzell: And I had to go to the County Offices in Hauppauge, I was talking with some of the officers, and one of them, who was on the Narcotic Squad, asked me about whether we had any drug problem, and I said not to my knowledge. And he said, well, it's coming out to the Island from the high schools, and that was around '64 or '65.

David Trask: It was clear once the whole thing blew open and the pattern of development became obvious. I've always wondered in later years the extent to which I think this was sort of surprise to the senior administrators. I don't think that President Toll or Alec Pond or Bentley Glass or Stanley really had much knowledge or feeling or sense of anything like this, that the problem was as extensive or so much of this as there was. I think it came as a surprise generally to the administration, though I can't be sure about that. That's something you might want to ask some of those people, to what extent

where they cognizant of all this kind of thing. I think it was a considerable surprise to most people on the campus, the faculty and staff. How much the Student Affairs, this fellow I'm trying to think of

Dr. Hartzell: Bybee?

David Trask: Not Bybee, well, Bybee, I think that those people knew a lot more about this, that didn't talk about it, and I think they should have, should have done something, should have communicated, I think this was a case where the administration and the faculty may not have been well served, because this is, after all, the group most likely to gain information. And I really had a feeling they did know a lot about this, and I think some of those people were in a way participants.

Dr. Hartzell: We'll start again. What were your expectations personally when you came to Stony Brook, where did you see yourself in five or ten years?

David Trask: I had traditional training and traditional notions about college. I thought you were supposed to work very hard with the students, and you were supposed to pursue a very energetic program of research and writing, and that you had a collegial responsibility to contribute to the institution, institutional loyalty seemed important to me. That's what, but institutional loyalty was, it was really a relatively small group of faculty who felt that way, and this had something to do with the sociology of the times, the kind of people who were attracted to Stony Brook and so on. I didn't think ahead much, to be honest. I just, I didn't think about where I'd be ten years from now; I didn't have any kind of a master plan. As I discovered later on, some people did have it. I just, I just simply, I knew what my work was, I was highly interested in it. I just did those things, I didn't, but I realize now that I had a somewhat different perspective on the notion of university life than some did.

Dr. Hartzell: There has been quite a change, and I don't know when the change really began in the concept of teaching, in the concept of the role of the faculty member.

David Trask: The '60's is a good time, this was surely a revolutionary period and the thing that happened, more and more faculty thought of the University as a context for a

working out what became known as a lifestyle; they saw the University as a context for their own activities rather than as a place where they taught and did research, and where teaching and research became rather secondary in some funny ways, and a lot of this attitude, a lot of these people were hand in glove with what I thought was really a relatively undesirable group of people who were in the Student Affairs office. If I had remained there for long, I surely would have and begun to weed it out, to streamline it, to cut the costs of it, to get different people, I thought to look for people who were really committed to the, to what nowadays I think would be thought of as rather old fashioned notions about the role of the University. I had a middle ground position on the matter of *in loco parentis*, I thought that we had gone too far, that we had been too parental earlier that we had broken down, for example, the dorm. I didn't like the idea of entirely mixed twenty-four hour dorm. I thought, I personally thought there ought to be some mixed dorms, there ought to be some, that there ought to be a range of options available. I knew a whole lot of female students who didn't want coed dorms. They wanted to have, to be able to control their existence and so on and so forth. What we did was turn from one type, which was too restrictive and unduly controlled to a complete uncontrolled situation. I think that it really hurt the students. Of course, we had a big problem there that went away, namely the lack of dormitory space. You remember what was called tripling and quadrupling in rooms for two, three or four students would be in a room for two students. But I, the faculty, most of the faculty were really not committed to the development of the institution. They saw the institution as a context for working out their own professional careers.

Dr. Hartzell: This is a kind of individualist

David Trask: They didn't see it, they didn't see their own achievement as coming through the growth of the institution, they saw the institution simply as a kind of context for their own activities, the base of operations or whatever.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I think a counteracting force for that sort of thing is the traditions that are slowly built up and the presence on the faculty of individuals who have your

point of view and have loyalty to the institution and also understand that it's main purpose is the education of the student body and are interested in that and have the personal characteristics and abilities to make a contribution. Some of the ones at Stony Brook certainly did. But there were others who, even if they had been told to, wouldn't know how to do it.

David Trask: I think the emphasis on the natural sciences in the early, much easier to build a science department than an arts department, but I think the people in those fields, with notable exceptions like Max say tended to be more, their lab was their temple and so on and so forth, it was their experiment that interested them, and everything else was secondary.

Dr. Hartzell: We have a new Provost who is an historian.

David Trask: Yes.

Dr. Hartzell: And, I have never met him, he's taking Schubel's place July 1st. Schubel was a first-rate chap.

David Trask: I never met him. Who is the new Provost, what is his name?

Dr. Hartzell: His name is Edelman, I think.

David Trask: Yeah, something like that. I have heard of him, and John Pratt told me he was coming because a place was made for him in the History Department.

Dr. Hartzell: Oh, really, what did the

David Trask: Of course, those administrators, as you well know, when they come, they want to have an academic, tenured academic appointment to fall back on.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, I never insisted on that, but I came from

David Trask: I think that only developed in the '60's; I don't think that happened very much in the early years, because most administrators were homegrown and were recruited within Stony Brook, and now generally national searches will be conducted, but in the old days administrations were very small and were usually recruited from within, with the exception usually the President. At Wesleyan, gee, I don't think, every

administrator I knew while I was there was a homegrown, only later on did they begin to bring in people for administrative jobs

Dr. Hartzell: Wesleyan now has a new President.

David Trask: Yes, Chase.

Dr. Hartzell: Chase, right. Were your activities confined to the Stony Brook campus, that's 13.

David Trask: Well, no, I had a lot of connections outside the University. I was active in the faculty governance. I was, what was the name of the outfit the Board that set up that represented the faculty, I was involved in this.

Dr. Hartzell: This was the state-wide faculty

David Trask: No, this was our own little organization, we had

Dr. Hartzell: The Faculty Senate.

David Trask: The Senate existed, but there was a small group, a kind of steering committee was elected by the faculty, what the dickens was the name of it? I served on this.

Dr. Hartzell: What did it do?

David Trask: It represented the faculty on issues, it dealt with the administration a lot, it presented faculty points of view to the administration, worked with the administration. I had gone up to Albany on a good number of occasions for one purpose or another and had worked, I also, on five or six different occasions served either as a chairman or a member of a visiting committee to review the history programs at Buffalo, at Binghamton, at Oneonta, at several other places.

Dr. Hartzell: Where you involved with Albany's loss of a Ph. D. program?

David Trask: No, I wasn't involved in that one. I never got in the Albany matter, but my advisory in Graduate School, Ernest May, was; he was the chairman of the committee from the outside that recommended that.

Dr. Hartzell: Is that right.

David Trask: Though I never talked to him about that for reasons of delicacy, but I was not involved in that one, thank goodness, what a mess that was.

Dr. Hartzell: I have a son who is an Associate Professor in Albany now in Music. Well, let's see, what about your relations to your own discipline, American Historical Society or

David Trask: I was active in professional associations, the AHA, the Organization of American Historians, and I was one of the founding fathers of the Society for the History of American Foreign Relations.

Dr. Hartzell: Really.

David Trask: Which was organized in the late '60's, but I was an officer of all of those organizations, member of the editorial boards, so I was quite active in the profession in those professional organizations.

Dr. Hartzell: Okay, did you see people in Albany, do you have any recollections of any of the individuals who were in the Central Administration?

David Trask: I never really dealt with the Central Administration people, we dealt with the Legislature mostly.

Dr. Hartzell: You did, directly.

David Trask: Now there were always some people escorting us, we went through with people from the State Central organization. I'm trying to think of one particular fellow, did you mention, Hurd, did I see his name there?

Dr. Hartzell: Norm Hurd, Norman Hurd was the Director of the Budget under Rockefeller.

David Trask: He was the person we dealt with on several occasions.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you have any picture of him?

David Trask: Not much, I remember him but there were various assistants to the President who was of the State University

Dr. Hartzell: Sam Gould?

David Trask: Sam Gould came, there was one who preceded him.

Dr. Hartzell: Tom Hamilton.

David Trask: Yeah, Hamilton, Gould.

Dr. Hartzell: But Hamilton left before you came.

David Trask: Yeah, he did, that's right. Gould was the principal figure.

Dr. Hartzell: He came in '64.

David Trask: Oh, he had connections.

Dr. Hartzell: And then Ernie Boyer, did you have any

David Trask: Boyer, he's the one.

Dr. Hartzell: I see. Do you have any picture of Boyer and Gould as in their relations with Stony Brook?

David Trask: I never could really get a sense of this. I thought that President Toll was especially effective in his dealings with the Central Administration and I never, he did so well, relatively speaking, that it didn't matter, he took care of that. Faculty people, administrative people went up there, we went up on a relatively disciplined basis to say this or to do that and there were occasions when we were called up there; when people from other institutions, I went up there, let's see, it must have maybe ten or twelve times on one occasion or another.

Dr. Hartzell: For our budget?

David Trask: For different purposes, sometimes it was budget, sometimes it was questions of policy, graduate, I remember going once on a question of, there was a discussion about whether to history programs, and this happened in other disciplines as well, whether Albany have Latin American Studies and Binghamton would have Asian Studies, Near Eastern Studies, but we didn't like that; we felt that we should have a comprehensive program, and that all the Centers should, that it was, that you couldn't really, that the mix, and I can remember, that's an example of the kind of very often substantive educational issues were, the budget was a relatively, the executive budget wasn't handled then, I don't think very many faculty ever got involved. I don't believe

Dr. Hartzell: Do you remember Larry Murray at all?

David Trask: Not offhand.

Dr. Hartzell: Okay, he's probably before your time. Do you remember Harry Porter?

David Trask: No, but of course there was a lot of mention of him, he was a legendary figure.

Dr. Hartzell: He was an historian incidentally.

David Trask: Yeah, but he was obviously a significant presence because his name was constantly about.

Dr. Hartzell: I dealt with Harry. He had come in about a year before I joined the system. I joined it as Executive Dean at the Albany office on detail down to Stony Brook for a year, and it took three years to find a successor to Hamilton. Well, let's see, can you name individuals who did things that were important for the future development of the University as a whole or some part of it, talk about individuals.

David Trask: Well, surely the group Pond, Gelber, Ross and Glass, that quadrumvirate, they were the key figures that struck me in terms of the building, the tremendous growth of the University, they are the ones who were the really the central leaders in, that is always assuming the direction of President Toll, who was a very strong and tremendously energetic leader, he had his finger in everything. Of course, a separate figure was Pellegrino, who was a dynamic, powerful presence who jammed that medical school, for good or ill, and he was a memorable figure, a charismatic figure surely. In terms of leadership, my recollection of faculty leadership is rather vague. There was so much, leadership moved so rapidly, people rose to prominence and departed rapidly, nobody stayed in a position of leadership for any great length of time, except with an exception of a few people who kind of made a career out of it, like Norman Goodman. People like Norman who seem to still do the same sort of thing, and that's their life, I guess. We used to call him Norperson Goodperson, we said he had a sexist name and should change his name. But there are a certain group, like Norman, who were, probably a kind of a strange breed to me, they were always rather critical and sometimes damagingly critical of the institution and its leadership, yet they wanted to be close to the leader, they wanted

to be in on things, and to me I found it very uncomfortable to deal with that particular group of faculty people because you couldn't, well, I guess I didn't trust them. Never knew what they were going to do and they tended to be, they tended to shift, they had so many antennae out, they didn't have any, they catered to whatever happened to be happening in the way of shifts in opinion and so on and so forth, they catered particularly to student whims, and also then of course there was a strong tendency on the part of those people never to let anybody on the faculty get to the left of them politically, so they wanted to be centrists and radicals both, and I didn't like that. I felt that the time when you had to make choice, so I became increasingly alienated. You know, these people were very important in the college program and other aspects of student life that seemed important to me, so I got to know them, but over time I became increasingly alienated from them because I had very different notions about where to go and how to do things than they did.

Dr. Hartzell: You were a midwesterner.

David Trask: My background, I came from western Pennsylvania, I came from

Dr. Hartzell: Whereabouts in Pennsylvania.

David Trask: Erie.

Dr. Hartzell: I see.

David Trask: And I had a very different background than a lot of these people, so I felt by and large almost all the people who were trying to influence or be helpful or do something in Students Affairs were people who I didn't trust, to be perfectly honest, and over time it became more and more difficult to work with them, because they became less and less and more and more organized, of course, there were the house radicals like Zweig, Mike Zweig, and Ted, Ted Goldfarb, people of this sort who I thought, to be perfectly honest, I thought they were irresponsible people.

Dr. Hartzell: Self-servers.

David Trask: That they had, whatever, they may have been sincere in their political feeling, but I thought they were confused and wrong headed and that they hurt rather than

helped, they were part of the problem. But of course they would say the same thing I am sure about me. But I did find them

[end of side 1 of tape]

Dr. Hartzell: This is side 2 of the interview with David Trask at his home, April 28, 1989. All right, well,

David Trask: There were tremendous, of course, the ideological divisions of the time reflected so and over time these became more and more divisive, became greater and people had a lot of divisions. When I first came it was relatively small, people got along with each other, everybody knew everybody, over time, and of course part of the difficulty was a growing faculty, but it was, it divided along political lines, who knows on what other bases, and but particularly on political lines, and it made life increasingly uncomfortable and unpleasant for many people, particularly if you were in positions of leadership, because you were constantly being buffeted, it was difficult. At this point something happened that I think was a great mistake, which was the introduction of elected chairs. I took the view that the chair was the lowest level in administration, and was an administrator whose loyalty was to the administrative chain, that obviously the chair of a department or program had to reflect the interests and the feelings of the people, make these known, but I felt that basic direction and policy should come from the administration and that the role of the chairmen was to execute them, not to, if the department opposed something, simply be a, interfere. I had an old-fashioned notion about the role of a chairmen here and the elective chairmen principle, of course, turned the chairmen into an out-and-out advocate of who, whatever the prevailing politics was of the department, and I think that was a serious mistake; but it was inevitable, nothing could be done about that, I realize, but the administration increasingly less able to, gave up on this one sort of, I think, tended to propitiate the chairs and so on. But I really don't know what happened after that because I got out of the network and not really sure what happened much after 1975. I remained as chairman, but I was gone.

Dr. Hartzell: When did you leave?

David Trask: I left in 1976, it was my last year as chairman was about '73, '72. But I was one of the few chairs who sort of spanned the whole unrest period, so I had a very long tenure relative to by comparison with most chairs and I was at the beginning, middle and the end of the whole, the real outburst of difficulties. I felt that the two great things that educated the students were the drug question and the draft question. And that most of the student protest was really related to drug culture and to the participation in the draft. Stony Brook students weren't really radical students, they were very, with the exception of a very few, most of the mixed up kids like Peter Adams and people of that sort, with the extent of a few mixed up kids who thought they were revolutionaries, most of the students who participated, most of the students didn't really, weren't activists in any sense. The activist group was a very small group and a relatively ineffective group. I think that Stony Brook came out of it a lot better than a lot of places simply because, ironically the absence of real leadership types in the student body had something to do with the ultimately the ineffectiveness and the fading out of undue student militance.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I think a lot of the students had parents behind them who were pushing them to get ahead and they didn't have time to do anything but study and go along the lines that their parents projected.

David Trask: That's right. I think that's fair. Most students who came here came here to get a degree and they were thinking in terms of advancing up the scale of American life, moving up, and they were rather less sensitive to political, the two things that obviously did influence them was the drug business, which was much more pervasive than we believed, and of course the draft. Once Nixon went for the volunteer army principle, political protest stopped. I think was true a lot at Stony Brook. The two political issues were drugs and the draft, and when the drug thing sort of got subsumed and when the draft ended that pulled the rug out from under so that the students at Stony Brook became very tame, a rather inactive place from the student point of view, a little bit of a bubble here and there, but really not much. As far as I can see, and my knowledge isn't complete, it remained that, a relatively quiet campus.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, what do you hear about it now, do you hear anything about it?

David Trask: I don't hear much about it now. Obviously Stony Brook was very well talked about during recruitment, the whole, so many people came there, but it's clearly the whole business of becoming the center of the system as Berkeley was in California, the Berkeley of the East business, gave Stony Brook a lot of notoriety, and some of those early faculty appointments like C. N. Yang and so on and Bentley Glass attracted attention, but when after President Toll left, there clearly, perhaps he left because he got caught onto by Albany, but surely as long as he was there, he kept us ahead; we were ahead, but it stopped. Whatever happened, that is to say, Stony Brook's privilege and special position was taken away. Maybe this was probably inevitable but I think, I don't think that Stony Brook has anything like the, it's certainly a well known known place but it doesn't have the position of leadership, it isn't known as an outstanding place in the way that we were thinking about becoming, wanted to become, were building toward, it didn't happen.

Dr. Hartzell: I think there are a number of reasons for it. The leadership was not in the Central Administration, and when Rockefeller left, the subsequent two Governors have been disasters as far as any educational leadership is concerned. Wharton made an effort as the Chancellor to get some freedom for the University system, and he got half a loaf at least, not all the recommendations of the Commission, Friday I think was the Chairman of it, were implemented by the Legislature, But the appointment system for getting people at the top is not the best. I know enough about the Harvard system of appointments to wish that we had it, we don't.

David Trask: Well, I think that Stony Brook made a mistake with the faculty that everybody made, you got all of these young people and they promoted, practically everybody got promoted. I managed to block two promotions in the History Department, but if I had had my way, I'd have blocked three or four more of them, but you simply politically couldn't get away with it. But we promoted too many people, we promoted people who simply weren't good enough. Everybody got promoted. Now at the

University everybody is growing old together, there's hardly any junior faculty, this is stultifying, this, I think, this was a mistake. Of course, people who ran Stony Brook, the administration, they did every where, you can't blame anybody, but I think it was a mistake; I think that only a minority of people in the History Department should have been kept. I think, you got to build an outstanding University, you have to have tremendously high standards; and I think they made a serious mistake by keeping so darn many of the people we shouldn't have kept, and they are. Take the History Department; when we first started, it was a very well known History Department, but the good people left

Dr. Hartzell: Who, for instance?

David Trask: Poor people.

Dr. Hartzell: Who left?

David Trask: Bob, French history, Vichy France, Bob, people like this. Other people

Dr. Hartzell: Morse.

David Trask: Richard Morse is another one. And of course Stanley; some of these people left for other reasons.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, Stanley took his place.

David Trask: Yes, that's right.

Dr. Hartzell: What kind of job do you think Stan Ross did?

David Trask: Well, I think he did a good job. He irritated a lot of people and he wasn't very, he wasn't a diplomat by any means, but I think that, I just, he was aggressive, he worked very hard, his job was to get faculty and he got them. Stanley had, to me, a rather fuzzy philosophy, an outlook, but he was very circumspect as to what he talked about, it seemed to me. Most people didn't have any, he had been rough on them or whether it was a personal thing, Stanley never had, he didn't appear to take a position on many of the great issues, though I know he must have had them, and I knew Stanley pretty well. I maintained my association, I had relatively pretty regular contact with him one way or another, especially after he left Stony Brook, much more so than most people did.

Dr. Hartzell: What happened to him, do you know?

David Trask: Well, he went down to Texas.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, I know that.

David Trask: He rose in the administration there, became second in command basically, became Provost. Then there was a tremendous, then a woman who was became Acting President, who had been one of Stan's allies but they got into a row, and Stanley got purged.

Dr. Hartzell: Is that right.

David Trask: He then became the Director of that Latin American, very important He did a lot of this But that's what happened.

Dr. Hartzell: Then he became ill.

David Trask: He spent several years trying to get himself a job, a presidency. He applied for and got onto, I think, quite a few short lists, as Alec did the same thing. Alec finally got out of the State. Alec has, I was a partisan of Alec's. I thought he should have been the President of the University. But we had gone through a lot together, we were good friends. Maybe there were good reasons for his not being President, but all this, the question of whether he would be President or not, was something that came after I had left there. But Alec was very disappointed, it seemed to me he was the person who understood what was going on there and could have sustained some of the, a lot of people objected to him, they thought that Alec was simply a builder of things, that he wanted to build buildings, but I don't think so, to my way of thinking he had a very clear, he had very high standards and clear notion of what the University should become; he recognized that the arts and the humanities side of the University needed development as well as the science. He didn't have a, he wasn't anti-, he wasn't, he was balanced in his own. I had a very high opinion of him, and the success that he has encountered at Rutgers seemed to me to suggest that I was right. But I had a high opinion of most of the senior administrators, that group in particular you'd get mad at them, disagree

at times but I never lost respect for them, including Pellegrino, who I thought was a really unusual person. And his later achievements suggest he was a very worthwhile person.

Dr. Hartzell: A very broad gauged person. Well, anything else for the good of the order.

David Trask: I

Dr. Hartzell: Why did you leave?

David Trask: Well, I was, I had always been interested in public service, Wesleyan was that sort of a place, communicated a public philosophy, the Public Affairs Center was founded while I was there, the notion of public service, being a responsible participant in the workings of government was something that I had absorbed as a student. And I was always sort of in and out; I had worked down at Yale, down at New Haven in the summer for this renewal agency when, so when an opportunity to go down and join the State Department came along, it was to me a very attractive, but I don't think that I wouldn't have under ordinary circumstances done that. I felt that I had run my course, that I, my own particular activities there, I had gone full bore, I had sort of used up all my political capital. What was left for me at Stony Brook was simply to sort of go into semi-retirement for the next twenty-five years because I had worked my, I had used up my potential as a leader. I wanted to do some things, I wanted to, I didn't feel that, I felt that I, I enjoyed my years at Stony Brook and there were some rough periods, but I didn't leave in any kind of bitterness or anything of that sort. But I just felt that I had made my contribution there, that it would be a matter of just taking the money and running the rest of the way, that I wouldn't really be in on things, and I wanted to be in on things, and then this opportunity came and so I went. What I did at the State Department, I was the Director of the Office of History, I was the historian, it has a rather large program of responsible, I was involved in a lot of activity during the Carter administration, then I moved on to serve as the Chief Historian of the Army for the last seven years. So I had a, I'm the only person I think to have been the head of two major and I was one of the founding fathers of so-called public history, and I had many opportunities to

do things and be involved in activities that wouldn't have come my way at Stony Brook. But I passed Stony Brook by or Stony Brook had passed me by, whatever. The moment of my usefulness has passed and maybe, and I left at a good time. I know a lot of people who I think wish they had done what I did.

Dr. Hartzell: I see.

David Trask: Who are just waiting now for their retirement and felt deprived

Dr. Hartzell: Hugh Cleland?

David Trask: I haven't really seen Hugh very much of him since I left there. The people I know best, with whom I have regular associations are Bernard Semmel and John Pratt.

Dr. Hartzell: Those are the two people that I think I know best.

David Trask: They were the people that we shared common views and outlooks about the University, but I think both of them are kind of feeling they didn't, not by choice, but by circumstance, they lost politically, so we lost.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, I see.

David Trask: The moderates in a way lost, they, the other crowd won, and it's been uncomfortable for a lot of them. I think the wounds and the memories of the late '60's, early '70's are very, very powerfully influence, people don't forget.

Dr. Hartzell: When I came to the conflict of the Oyster Bay days was still present, was still very much present.

David Trask: That split was very evident when I came, the factions, but it was a low level type of split compared to the split which came later on, never really over.

Dr. Hartzell: Yeah, well, did you, by any chance, know George Howe, he did the book on the African campaign.

David Trask: And wasn't he one of the editors of the bibliography of

Dr. Hartzell: Could very well have been.

David Trask: The one, publication of 1960.

Dr. Hartzell: Could very well have been.

David Trask: I did not know him, I knew of him.

Dr. Hartzell: He's a cousin of mine by marriage.

David Trask: Is that right.

Dr. Hartzell: Yeah. I did the *Empire State at War*, World War II for the New York State War Council published in '49, which was the history of the organization of the State on the homefront during that war.

David Trask: I had a student who was going to do this, New York, the State of New York during World War II.

Dr. Hartzell: Really.

David Trask: I don't what happened to him, he left.

Dr. Hartzell: What's his name?

David Trask: Can't remember his name now, but he never finished his work. He was a very bright, he got involved in something, some other opportunity came; he left Graduate School and went on and I don't know what happened to him. I'm sure he's successful, he was very bright. But that was a very interesting subject.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, that's

David Trask: John Pratt, of course, is the New York historian.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes.

David Trask: The Department teaches the course in New York History. But the kid's first name was Jerry, some Irish name; he came from Iona College.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I was appointed Director of Records at the end of the War before the War Council, of which the Governor was Chairman, and I had five field men under me that were of historical values, all the State departments and 108 War Councils

David Trask: Are they in the New York State Archives now?

Dr. Hartzell: The Department records are, and the special war activities, war bonds, those war efforts also are there. The War Council itself, its records are there, but the records of the local War Councils are either, in the case of New York City in its war

efforts library, or elsewhere where there was a chance that there was an existing organization that was, that had survival value, either the County Historian or a local historical society that was strong or the County Clerk's office, it depended from place to place where the greatest historical interests lay, and there was considerable variation, but I interviewed a number of people and number of department heads by a stenotypist. Well, let's see. I think probably I ought to be going along. Thanks very much for being willing to sit still and go through this with me.

David Trask: It brings back interesting memories. It's amazing what I don't remember.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, right. I've got to do this sort of thing myself for the years '62 to '65; I haven't done it yet, but I will.

David Trask: Are you planning to interview John Pratt?

Dr. Hartzell: Uh, I certainly shall.

David Trask: I think he would be very interesting.

Dr. Hartzell: I certainly shall.

David Trask:information. He's been here since 1963.

Dr. Hartzell: '63. I've interviewed Bernie, Semmel, yes.

David Trask: Did you have Hugh on that list, Hugh Cleland.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes.

David Trask: He's another one.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, Hugh's there. And I finally interviewed Olsen and Lee.

David Trask: Lee?

Dr. Hartzell: No, John Lee, the first President.

David Trask: Oh, John Lee, the President.

Dr. Hartzell: I interviewed him in San Diego and I interviewed Olsen in North Carolina.

David Trask: That's interesting.