

**INTERVIEW WITH HERBERT WEISINGER
DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

March 21, 1987

Dr. Hartzell: This is an interview with Dr. Herbert Weisinger, formerly Dean of the Graduate School at Stony Brook, in his condominium in Sarasota, March 21, 1987.

Dr. Weisinger: Do you actually have to hear how I came to Stony Brook, is that of interest.

Dr. Hartzell: It certainly is. I'd like to follow these general questions for a while, then I've got some more questions for you.

Dr. Weisinger: Right. I came to Stony Brook as Chairman of the Department of English in 1966, and a year and a half later I became Dean of the Graduate School, a position which I held for ten years, at that administrative retirement at the age of 65, retirement from the University was at 70. So I had five years in the English Department after I retired as Dean. I retired in 1982, so let's see, I was at Stony Brook almost as long as I was at Michigan State, from which I had come. I was born in 1913, so that means I'm 53 at the time. I came from Michigan State where I had been Professor of English, Chairman of the Department of Comparative Literature, or more precisely the Program in Comparative Literature, and Editor of the Centennial Review. Who was primarily responsible for your coming to Stony Brook? That's an interesting question. I was, in 1955-56 I was Byrd Professor of English at NYU, a visiting professorship. I had in my class then a young man who was an instructor in one of my classes, a young man who was an instructor in English at Stony Brook, and he asked the Department to invite me out for a talk. After I gave a talk, I was virtually interviewed for a position I didn't know existed, which was the Chairman of the Department of English. I also knew Alfred Kazin, who had come out to Michigan State to lecture and visited us at our house. And at that time the Department had had no permanent chairman and was

looking for somebody to take the position. I have to laugh because I didn't know until after I came there that the English Department was regarded as a tiger, and that people around were wondering who was going to put his head in the cage. But I had been at Michigan State for twenty-four years. I had reached the point where I had all the perks that full professors get, and I could have stayed on, of course, but having gone to New York I also realized that we were missing something of the excitement of the proximity to a big city. We found that Stony Brook was a beautiful place physically, I had no idea. People would say to me, oh, you've come back home. I'd say, oh, no, I've never been to the north shore of Long Island. That was for young people, when I was growing up, that was not forbidden territory, but one didn't go there. And so we found it quite beautiful. And I had received offers from other institutions to go as professor, but I have to confess now that, like all teachers, I nourished the illusion that somehow or other if I were chairman I could do a better job. If you've been at it long enough, you get that conviction. And Stony Brook struck me as a wonderful opportunity, it was a growing institution, had money, I knew it was going to be a major research institution, and the opportunity to help build that was virtually irresistible. I should also say that there was a sentimental reason, but not a major one, but still a strong one. When I got out of Brooklyn College in 1934 and wanted to go to graduate school, there was no state institution available, the only places I could go to were NYU or Columbia or any of the prizing schools. And I simply couldn't afford to go there. As it turned out, it was cheaper for me to go to Ann Arbor to the University of Michigan and live away from home, than it was to stay in New York at home and pay tuition. So I felt, it was a good feeling to be able to come back and give students of that generation what my generation didn't have. Maybe it's sloppy sentimental

Dr. Hartzell: No, no, I think it's very

Dr. Weisinger: It was a very strong feeling on my part. Anyhow, I came to Stony Brook. It was a hard decision to make. My wife was in business, we had built a house, we had friends of twenty-four years. People asked me, why don't you become chairman

at Michigan State I said you can't be chairman in a place where you have friends, where you have to deal with friends in a position of chairman. I just couldn't do it. I have no trouble with new people, because I don't know you. And I can deal with you objectively. I didn't find the Department a tiger. There were difficulties, but then all departments are difficult. And it was marvelously exciting, two things: one was building the Department. The first person I hired was Louis Simpson. Everybody thought the first person I hired would be a scholar, but I had always known about Louie, knew him and he was just the combination of scholar-poet that I wanted. So,

Dr. Hartzell: It was a good appointment.

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah, he was a great appointment to have. And then I had others. I tried to get the Department to get out of the straight English-American literature, so I got people who were interested in theology, and people in science. Essentially it was a comparatist approach. And we enjoyed it very much. I recruited like mad. There were times when I couldn't bear the thought of another dinner between Billy Jim. But the other thing that was very exciting, we had money to bring in visitors to stay a week. We could put them up for a week, at Sunwood or wherever else. We brought in poets and critics and scholars. And the students found that

Dr. Hartzell: Can you mention a few of those.

Dr. Weisinger: Sure, the best known one was Kenneth Burke, who was there twice. And there was also one who went down to Suffolk Community College, uh

Dr. Hartzell: Connor Cruise O'Brien?

Dr. Weisinger: No, Connor Cruise came out because, that's ironic, I brought him out to be interviewed for the deanship of the Graduate School. I didn't know that I was going to get the job. I had known Connor at NYU. At the time that I was Byrd Professor, he had just been appointed Schweitzer Professor. We lived in the same building and got to be friendly. And I thought he'd make a great dean, but apparently Johnny felt that we should not take a Schweitzer Professor from NYU. That didn't prevent the privates from taking our people. But Johnny had an odd punctiliousness about these things. So that

fell through. And then we had any number of poets come through and stay and the students found that particularly exciting. What with interviewing candidates, and what with the poets and critics around, there was never a dull moment. And I enjoyed that part of it tremendously. I was always introducing people.

Dr. Hartzell: You brought in what man from Harvard, Levin?

Dr. Weisinger: Harry Levin, yes. Harry would have come if we could have offered him a Schweitzer Chair. He a name chair at Harvard, and that meant a lot to him. And Johnny offered him everything he had at Harvard without the name professorship, but Harry had great This, I suppose, this won't go into the history books, I remember Alfred Kazin telling me if Levin comes, he goes. But the issue didn't arise. they had not gotten along well. But that was a decision I would have to make when the time came. I had a very clear notion what the decision would be, but we couldn't get a Schweitzer professorship because we had the Einstein. I thought it was, again, a little silly because to build a university you get the people you want and don't worry about all these kinds of rules and regulations. My feeling isif the other institutions couldn't recruit people of the caliber of Harry Levin, it was their hard luck, not mine. But, we couldn't do it. You know, the great villain was always Albany, if you couldn't do anything, it was always Albany's fault. After a year and a half, when Bob, what was his name, he was acting dean of the Graduate School, went to the University of Washington,

Dr. Hartzell: Jordan.

Dr. Weisinger: Bob Jordan. They interviewed; as I said I brought in Connor. And then to my utter and complete surprise, the position was offered to me. I really did not think about it. I didn't even know I was being considered. And to this day I am convinced that the reason I was offered the deanship of the Graduate School was that I was the fox known to the humanities and social sciences, because all the other administrators, Sidney had not yet been appointed, you know, the other major administrators, at least the three major administrators were scientists -- Johnny, Alec, and

Bentley -- at the time. And I guess there may have been repercussions, and so the position was offered to me. And I have to confess that if I ever had an academic And I enjoyed every moment of it for eight years. The last two years were difficult; when the cornucopia closed, it became difficult as Albany tightened up. Also, you know ten years is a long time to be Dean. I discovered the average life of a graduate dean is about three years.

Dr. Hartzell: Like a president.

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah, I outlived my usefulness three times. But through that position I got to be a member of the GRE Board and other committees of graduate deans.

Dr. Hartzell: GRE, Graduate Record?

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah, I was a member of that Board for four years. I represented that Board on a number of other graduate committees, and also was active on the Council of Graduate Schools. I helped found the Northeastern group of the Council of Graduate Schools. I was pretty active in graduate school affairs outside of Stony Brook, which gave me a very good perspective on what was going on. Who interviewed me for the position? Well, there was nobody *per se* in the English Department, except the whole gang of them; the actual offer was made to me by Bentley. Again, I don't suppose this will appear in the history, but in those days Bentley had a great desire to offer everybody an Acting position, and I said, no way. I'm not going to go into that situation, an acting position, because that's being a lame duck before you start. So he acceded to that. I saw Johnny, at least I think I saw Johnny, but I'm not altogether sure. Essentially, it seemed to be when the Department said okay, it seemed to be between Bentley and me, he conducted the whole negotiation. Who is this again who was, I guess was he Dean

Dr. Hartzell: Bentley was

Dr. Weisinger: He was Vice President

Dr. Hartzell: Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Dr. Weisinger: But I'm talking of the man who went to Texas.

Dr. Hartzell: Stan Ross.

Dr. Weisinger: Stan Ross, I interviewed him, but I didn't have the sense that he had the final word, and Ross was an interesting character.

Dr. Hartzell: I appointed him about

Dr. Weisinger: Did you?

Dr. Hartzell: About four months after I had gotten on the job. I came as Acting Head and Dean of Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Weisinger: I see. I forget what Stanley's position was, it was an odd title.

Dr. Hartzell: He was Dean.

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah, but then he got something else. He had some offer, Johnny created a position, which never lasted after Stanley left. But it seemed to me that negotiations were done by Bentley completely; the offer of the position, the finances and whatever. So I had to go back to Michigan State for a half a semester to finish up our obligation because it was all rather sudden. And so I came in, I guess it was either November or December of that year.

Dr. Hartzell: About '66.

Dr. Weisinger: '66, and immediately plunged into recruitment. It so happened that that year MLA was taking place in New York, and we went. And since I wanted to know the Department, I got myself a suite and everybody in the English Department was there all the time. In fact, I remember interviewing candidates in the bathroom because there was no room and no quiet in the living room, because everybody was there talking to each other and drinking coffee and what not. Because I realized very quickly one of the things the Department lacked was a sense of itself as a group of people in a common enterprise. And so Mildred and I gave many parties, many, many parties.

Dr. Hartzell: That was a pretty general situation throughout the University.

Dr. Weisinger: I didn't like the fact that people lived in New York. I couldn't keep them from living there. I did say to a number of people who wanted to come, who were from NYU and Columbia, but who wanted to remain in New York -- Eric Bentley was one of them -- but they wouldn't come out. And I tried to make a condition in

appointment, which of course was not possible but he did get a job at Stony Brook; he lived in the area, because I wanted students to have access. One or two people said yes who did live there in the city, nothing you could do about it. But, I felt that very strongly.

Dr. Hartzell: I think you're down to

Dr. Weisinger: I'm up to 7.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, you're up to 7.

Dr. Weisinger: Seven is a good question. I thought of Stony Brook as a major research institution in a state that needed a major state supported research institution. I didn't think that Buffalo, certainly not Albany, and very problematically Binghamton, were going to be that. And I thought Stony Brook had the potential, which is one reason that I came.

Dr. Hartzell: They had the model certainly in the science area in Binghamton.

Dr. Weisinger: I assume that because it was a comprehensive State University it was going to build up just as well in the other fields. And I think in some areas it did. Of course, a model, not a model, I guess in a way a rival would be the University of California at La Jolla; it was begun at the same time, had very strong science very quickly. I'm not sure that they did as well in the social sciences, the humanities; they certainly didn't do as well in the sciences. I think that in the sciences they did better than we did. In the humanities and social sciences, I think that it's a question, I'm not sure they did. The potential was great. The location was wonderful, it was beautiful, it was 60 miles from New York which is, when you're young, practically nothing. So it did build up. In some departments, music is one, we did very well in music. I can put it more negatively. We didn't do well in the languages at all. We did poorly in art, which struck me as very sad because art could have done what music did was to relate both New York City and the Hamptons, the East End. They never could make it. The other one that didn't make it, and I don't know whether they still or have, was theater. For some odd reason they couldn't. Music took advantage of this location. But the other departments

Dr. Hartzell: Who, was it Billy Jim?

Dr. Weisinger: Billy Jim, he worked full-time. He and I came at the same time. But he recognized the potential because he had that kind of academic imagination. I think one of the problems with music and art, not with music, with art and theater was the influence of the man, it seemed to me when I came there, it was one department that encompassed all these fields.

Dr. Hartzell: John Newfield.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, well, I don't want to speak ill but Newfield was too vain to have people of quality around him. I can only go by results, because this is what you go by. It doesn't matter what people say or what they look like; you go by performance. And he never recruited, never attracted top rate people the way Billy Jim did.

Dr. Hartzell: You depended very heavily on department chairmen.

Dr. Weisinger: That's right, and what departments don't realize is that administrators see departments that were making shadow chairmen. And if they send up to you as their representative a guy for whom you can't conceive any respect, then you say to yourself, what kind of department is it that wants this man to represent them.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, John had been there before I came. And in those days we had multiple disciplinary departments to begin with.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, I know. You see, I ran into him rather quickly. He was not interested in the kind of graduate research that I was. And it was very difficult to cooperate with him. Even in the multidisciplinary field he represented, after all I did come to Stony Brook with some reputation in comparative literature, and I had seen research from other departments and institutes, I knew something about art, which

Dr. Hartzell: Which institute?

Dr. Weisinger: The Warburg Institute of the University of London. I was there for two years, probably the finest art historical institute in our time. came from there, Panovsky came from there, Vauxhall came from there. It was a great opportunity for me. So I knew something about the comparative method, I myself was always

interested in music, and it was delightful to be with Billy Jim; we spoke same language. But Newfield I'm afraid didn't, and I think those two departments suffered. But music really took off.

Dr. Hartzell: Sam Baron has been a tremendous

Dr. Weisinger: He comes down here, you know. He comes down, not this year, but he comes down regularly for our spring festival or summer festival, and Timothy Eddy comes down.

Dr. Hartzell: Bernie Greenhouse.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, but he hasn't come down lately, but they are on the faculty of the summer, it's our little Aspen; I think it's quite good. And down here in Sarasota they give six concerts in June on successive weekends and Mary and I subscribe to that. We get a great variety of chamber music.

Dr. Hartzell: Must be early June, because the Bach Aria Festival is the last two weeks in June.

Dr. Weisinger: Well, but Sam comes in the first part, the first three weeks, so there's no conflict. But this year I think he's not scheduled. But, so we did very well. You know, one of the things being Dean of the Graduate School is you do have, I was never quite sure what the Dean of the Graduate School does. I took over this job and went to meetings of my colleagues from other institutions, I found an enormous variety of responsibilities, there was no one such thing as a Dean of the Graduate School. Some of them had tremendous authority, some had where it was just a nice position. I was lucky because, well, the first thing I did when I became Dean is I got hold of the Assistantships, and all those Assistantships belonged to my office. And when one fell vacant they came back to my office. So that I had a talking point, to put it mildly, with department chairmen. I was surprised that my successor gave that up, because

Dr. Hartzell: Who was your successor?

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, the chemist, I forgot what, I think he stayed a year. He came from Rochester, I've forgotten his name completely.

Dr. Hartzell: Ross?

Dr. Weisinger: No, no, no. He was a chemist. In any case -- I think there have been four deans since I left -- but he gave that up. And you know, when all is said and done, you reduce academic life to its reality it's the flow of money that counts. And the man who answers the telephone has the authority, and since I could control that flow, I could have some input into what was going on, because without it, it's a very nice position but it's meaningless. I finally decided that my job was to see to it that our graduate students got the best possible education of which we were capable. I did not regard it as my role to worry about faculty needs. There were other deans who took care of that. But I persisted in seeing everything through the eyes of the graduate student, which got me into a lot of difficulty with the chairmen. And it also at the same time enabled me to evaluate what was going on. What people wouldn't understand that it's true I didn't know anything about sociology but I knew enough people in administrative positions in other institutions and enough people elsewhere where several phone calls you could get a pretty damn good fix on how good a department was as distinguished from what they told you, because I soon discovered that every department told me that they were the best. Well, that was very nice because if every department was best none was best, you started all over again. But by virtue of the fact that I conducted reviews of every department every five years by outside consultants, and even those I didn't like because they tended to be guild reports because if the department nominated these individual evaluators, you had to be a little suspicious. If I did it, they were suspicious, so we compromised. But then I was on the committee of SUNY that instituted the Regents evaluation, and indeed the practice and criteria came very much from Stony Brook, people are not aware of that.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, initially Dave Fox and I wanted to make sure that when we went into graduate work we were not criticized for going beyond our capacity, exceeding our abilities. We already had, when I came in '62, we already had graduate work in

Chemistry and Physics, but when Biology came up I insisted we get some outside people to take a look.

Dr. Weisinger: Well, I continued that practice for every department every five years.

Dr. Hartzell: We were never turned down while I was there for an application for graduate work.

Dr. Weisinger: No, and none during the ten years that I was there, but we did present our cases and I didn't present a number of cases which I wouldn't present. It's not common knowledge, because I didn't want it to be, but I simply refused to submit the papers.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I remember the English Department wanted to go into Ph. D. work. I had a committee of R. J. Nicholson and Bill Dix was the Librarian at Princeton and one other person, I've forgotten his name, and they made it quite clear they didn't think we were ready for it.

Dr. Weisinger: In fact, before I came to Stony Brook, papers had been put in and an interviewing committee for evaluation team. I came from Michigan State to be there for that. As it turned out, I knew everybody on the committee, and it made a difference, I think, because we did get the program approved. But what was most important, when the Board of Regents decided to evaluate all graduate programs in the state, public and private, I was in on that from the very beginning; and I participated in many sessions and I knew exactly what was thought of every graduate program in every school of the state. And that was really where the chips were down. And

Dr. Hartzell: Albany suffered.

Dr. Weisinger: Well, I was in a particularly difficult position because I represented SUNY, not Stony Brook, but I sat on that board at SUNY and I would not be put over about this thing.

Dr. Hartzell: My son is an Associate Professor in the Music Department at Albany.

Dr. Weisinger: I see; well, it's different now.

Dr. Hartzell: He just had a 100 page paper approved for publication in Anglo Saxon England.

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, really, that's good.

Dr. Hartzell: He researched the origins of many musical notations.

Dr. Weisinger: That's great. But you know Albany wasn't like that. There used to be a practice, you know the Provost for Graduate Education for the system, who came from Buffalo and Dean of Pharmacology, his name escapes me, it will come to me perhaps, but he instituted monthly meetings with graduate deans, it usually took three days, two days with the deans for graduate work at the university centers and one with the deans of the graduate programs at the other institutions; but the graduate centers met, the other ones kind of petered out after a while, but the graduate ones kept on, he was very insistent on that; and we went to each others institutions and evaluated the programs as though we were external examiners. And then we would evaluate our program at meetings, and it's quite interesting that Buffalo and Stony Brook were very tough on themselves but Albany ranked everybody 'A.' Now you know that's ridiculous, of course that self-deception is what did them in. You're playing in a very hard ball game, and there is no use deceiving yourself. I always respected Johnny, though while publicly he might have seemed to approve of everything, he had a very sharp sense of who was what, what department was what. I always respected him for that. He couldn't always act on it, but he had political constraints on him, local political and Albany political, but we, when we had to talk over a motion, we got the papers and I took that very seriously, and we would go over that together. I always respected and admired him. As busy as he was, he knew very well what was going on. And one of Stony Brook's problems was Albany, people were brought with exaggerated notions of themselves, and it was very difficult to get them to realize the reality of the situation. I think if I had any problem with Stony Brook, it was that the implementation was not up to the expectation. You could just about divide a department into two, there were those who brought in people worse than themselves and

therefore got worse, and there got worse; and those who brought in people better than themselves, and therefore got better.

Dr. Hartzell: You want to list some of the departments?

Dr. Weisinger: Well, I can do some of them. You know it's been some time, almost ten years, and I don't know what the situation is now, but from my point of view I thought that Physics was excellent, except if you looked over the list you realized that excellence resided in a handful of people, it was not across the board. But then I know that's the case in any big department. You can't have a department of Nobel Laureates. The only place where we encountered was at Rockefeller Institute, we came across a department of three or four faculty, at least two whom, if not more, had Nobel Laureates, but no students; that's an exception. I told you about the Music Department.

Dr. Hartzell: Chemistry?

Dr. Weisinger: Chemistry was not anywhere near the same caliber as Physics, it was a good, competent department, but it had airs that it was equal to Physics but it was not equal to Physics in my judgment, and in the judgment of people I talked to. It was a good department, but I wouldn't say it was a great department. It wasn't as devoted to students as was, too. That was one of the interesting things about Physics, there was a wonderful rapport between faculty and students in that Department. Biology was not good, terribly uneven. There were some aspects of Biology that were excellent, but there were also aspects that were woeful. There were reasons for it but it may be just as well if I don't say. Well, I will say because you're not, you're going to edit these. I thought Bentley himself was, Bentley had not kept up with what was going on and he did neglect the field that ultimately came at the cutting edge of Biology and did support fields that ultimately didn't amount to very much. So I was disappointed in Biology. I had great hopes that the medical sciences the Ph. D. program

Dr. Hartzell: What about Pellegrino?

Dr. Weisinger: I got along poorly with Ed, but Ed was too temperamental he did want to create out of it a medical school of

which he was President, separate from the University, and he made the mistake of tackling Johnny. Any number of people made the mistake of attacking Johnny, they didn't know how good Johnny was. I don't think Johnny particularly liked me, but he did keep me as Dean for all those years, and I do know that he had a hell of a lot of complaints about me; I do know shortly after I became Dean a number of rather distinguished colleagues of mine went to him to try to get rid of me. He supported me. I felt that he respected in me was what I respected in him, his commitment to the University and to the students. You see, he and I shared something in common that the others did not, he left an position. I don't think any administrator at that time who was publicly educated who taught at a state supported institution and who had the commitment of a state supported institution, Alec never understood that. Bentley never really understood that. Too many of our faculty never understood that. You are, when you teach in a public institution, a civil servant or a public servant, to my mind a very hard position because you are paid by the people of the State of New York for services to them and to their children. You have to educate them; you have to bring to New York what's going on in the world to the best of your ability. It is not a place where you do your thing. And too many people came to Stony Brook to do their thing, and the unfortunate thing is their thing was not terribly good, and this is our problem. We never could overcome that. So that while the money was flowing you could replace them or put them aside and add, but when the money stopped flowing, you were stuck with them, and you couldn't hire people of consequence to replace them. I think Johnny's energy on behalf of the University were enormous; I only wish that he could have had Stony Brook at the time when John Hammer got Michigan State. When I went to Michigan State we had 4,500 students, that was in 1942. When I left we had 45,000 students with facilities to match, Hammer rode that wave. Johnny came when that wave was being depressed, but had he had that opportunity, we would be a first-rate institution. Johnny would do anything for the University; he would suffer pain literally, he would suffer humiliation. I saw him humiliated in Albany and I said to him once, how can you stand it. He said, yes,

but I got what I wanted. Well, no successor of his is ever going to do that. He got things in Albany simply by virtue of showing up. One day I overheard somebody say, oh, god, here comes Toll, give him what he wants. He didn't go to make friends; he went to get money. And when the time came to replace him, I think the Regents or the Trustees and the other three University presidents didn't want anybody looking anywhere near like him.

Dr. Hartzell: And Alec was

Dr. Weisinger: And Alec was of that, he wasn't Johnny but he was tarred with Johnny's brush, which I thought was a pretty good brush. I don't think the faculty ever knew, I'm not sure to this day they know, what a good friend they had in him. I don't know his successor, but it's not my impression that he's the kind of guy who'd go to Albany and be insulted to get what he wants. And I think Johnny is probably succeeding in Maryland but I don't keep up on him now. I'm out of it in a delightful way, but I have great respect for Johnny; we very often didn't see eye to eye

Dr. Hartzell: Everybody is to a certain extent a prisoner of their own discipline.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes. I knew Johnny was a good man in Physics. But what I liked about Johnny, he recognized quality no matter field it was, and he had that ability, and that's what he wanted. But I think he often bought more than he should have, the claims of some of his department. I thought History was not very good. I thought Sociology was a lot of talk. Psychology under Harry was superb; the second time around, it wasn't superb.

Dr. Hartzell: What about Anthropology?

Dr. Weisinger: It was never good, I had endless trouble with They didn't understand anything about what rules and regulations were; they just liked to do what they wanted to do. They individually a few good people, but

Dr. Hartzell: What about Lou Faron?

Dr. Weisinger: I never had much to do with him.

Dr. Hartzell: Wasn't he chairman when you were there?

Dr. Weisinger: I guess so, but I don't seem to remember very much of him. The chairman that I dealt most with was the Mexican

Dr. Hartzell: Carrasco?

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah, he was very difficult. He couldn't understand me, he really couldn't understand me. I thought English was good but not great, it was good.

Dr. Hartzell: When did Alfred Kazin leave?

Dr. Weisinger: After my time, I was Dean. Alfred was a very temperamental guy. He had to be stroked, and he liked to run things, though as I once pointed out to him, on the basis of his three hours a week, he was hardly in a position to say what ought to be done. And he was city oriented, very city oriented. History was a competent department with exaggerated notions of itself. Earth and Space Sciences was excellent, I liked that. Jerry Schubel's Marine Sciences was excellent.

Dr. Hartzell: Jerry is Provost.

Dr. Weisinger: I know that, yeah. I never had trouble with those two departments in terms of quality; I'm talking about quality, quality of work.

Dr. Hartzell: We were lucky, I think, to have Ollie Shaeffer of Brookhaven there, the initial chairman.

Dr. Weisinger: By the way, my successor had better chemistry with Brookhaven. Funny I just can't remember his name. He was chemist at Brookhaven and then went to Rochester, but he's head of Chemistry Department now.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I may think of him.

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah, well or Harry will, but it's certainly true that there was money at that time. But Stony Brook was gradually getting, I think, it was defeated by two things: one is it had too big an investment for the time of competent but not great people. I know, of course, that every school has lots of mediocre people, you can't help it, you can go through the catalog of Harvard and there are names there that ring absolutely no bells. So, you know, I know that, but what we need is that spark of four or five fine people, that's all, and if the rest would only do their teaching and stop pretending, it

would be great. That's one of the difficulties, you can't get them to do anything well. And the most annoying thing is in the vote, they control the vote.

Dr. Hartzell: They don't want competition

Dr. Weisinger: and the status quo, and so the sad part was that we never could quite make that leap. I don't think Albany wanted us to make that leap.

Dr. Hartzell: Yeah, all right. Let's go on down here, and then I'll ask some of the questions. Let's see, you were on 8 and 9, specific events.

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, gee. I remember the student riots, of course. And Sidney and I were often called out at 2 or 3 in the morning to help put down, students seemed to kind of relate to the two of us, that they didn't relate to Johnny, and I think we had a calming influence on them. But I never was frightened about the way people were. I didn't take the situation And it was particularly sad for two things; one is to realize that their radicalism stemmed out of the fear of being drafted; and the other thing is that the most important contribution of that period was the women's movement You know, I'm a creature of the thirties, and if you want to talk radicalism, What bothered me was the faculty who egged the students on, and when the cops came to arrest the students, these guys disappeared. I could see them go, I had no respect for them. I thought they were superannuated with students; I have nothing but contempt for them. I could almost name them for you but won't. They were protected basically, they were protected by guys like you and me; they didn't realize it. had a change radically in my time; what began as a noble thing, namely the defense of the right of teachers to be free in a class site, has by now become security I'm sorry about that, but if I had to choose how you deal with people, it's the price I had to pay.

Dr. Hartzell: You have to take the good with the bad.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, the price you have to pay. I can't really tell you what eventually pushes anybody I like dealing with everybody.

Dr. Hartzell: What about the Yeats Festival, were you in that?

Dr. Weisinger: The Yeats Festival?

Dr. Hartzell: We got some of the Yeats papers.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, those were copies of the Yeats papers. I remember that quite well. I'm not sure I had anything much to do with that. Several people in the music department I liked; I'm sorry that one of them left, Chakofsky I thought was a wonderful guy, I tried to keep him but the department said they couldn't get, which I didn't think was any criterion getting rid of anybody. But then you pay the price for sharp people; they may be a nuisance, but they have value, as I do. I like two people in the Art Department.

Dr. Hartzell: What about Terry Netter?

Dr. Weisinger: I never saw him as a great powerhouse. I didn't have anything to do with his choice; I would have preferred somebody who knew more about the field, but apparently he has since left.

Dr. Hartzell: I think he's done a good job.

Dr. Weisinger: He got on-the-job training. I've always gotten along with him. The Library turned out well. They've got most of my books, as a matter of fact.

Dr. Hartzell: Do they.

Dr. Weisinger: I think they got two truckloads of books, where they are, how they're taken care of, I don't know, but they've got them.

Dr. Hartzell: I think John Smith is good.

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, yes, we worked together well. What other departments can I think of? I never got along well with the language departments; they were the worst with exaggerated notions of themselves, particularly Spanish. I could never get them to cooperate. I told them ahead of time, I told German ahead of time, I said when Ph. D. programs come I said you know, you're not going to make it, no matter what I say or do, you aren't going to make it. And the only salvation is to join the Comparative Literature program, which means that the review will be postponed and you will have strength from the other departments that will be involved. They wouldn't do it,

and you remember what happened. The programs were taken away, the Ph. D. was taken away. And then of course Johnny starts to sink money into it, and I said it's wasted money. They didn't get any students, there was no reason for coming to Stony Brook to study Spanish or German with the faculty that they had.

Dr. Hartzell: What about Economics?

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, they were the worst of the lot. When they came to be evaluated, they put down the names of all the Nobel Laureates in Economics as their equals to evaluate them, except they wouldn't come. I invited them, they wouldn't come. They had a very bad job. I don't know who is chairman now. I know Egon was for a while, but he's now a Provost.

Dr. Hartzell: He's what they call Dean of the Social Sciences.

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah, okay, same thing. Academic life, like business has its terrible deception, self-deception that if you change the name of something, you thereby improve it. All you've done is change the name. We have a grocer down here that changed it's name to Florida Choice. I asked the people if that's going to improve the quality of the food, they think I'm crazy asking. Again, they had individual people, but they also had terribly exaggerated notions of themselves. I don't understand economics altogether; it's the only discipline I know of whose errors are publicly displayed daily and who demand high salaries as a consequence. The other trouble with economics, like sociology, they became mathematicians more than And you know, you don't play in that field unless you really know what you're doing. I had great respect for the Math Department; I always liked Math, they were first-rate. And I knew enough people in Math outside that I made at the Institute for Advanced Studies that I kept up with who were first-rate.

Dr. Hartzell: Institute, was that at Princeton?

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, I was a member there for years.

Dr. Hartzell: Is that right. I didn't know that.

Dr. Weisinger: That's where I picked up my taste for science. At one point there were nine Nobel Laureates in residence.

Dr. Hartzell: Did you know Bengt Strongrem when he came.

Dr. Weisinger: No.

Dr. Hartzell: No, this was earlier, he had Einstein's study at the Institute and then went back.

Dr. Weisinger: See, when I was there, Einstein was still there.

Dr. Hartzell: I see. He came after Einstein's death.

Dr. Weisinger: See I was at the Institute in 1949-50.

Dr. Hartzell: We're getting to the end. I think I will just stop here and put you on the other side.

[End of Tape 1]

Dr. Hartzell: This is the second side of the interview with Herbert Weisinger.

Dr. Weisinger: Number 10, I think I told you why I thought I was appointed. Eleven, I had the expectations all of us did, that we would become a top flight graduate and research center and a comprehensive state university, and I think the answer to that is only partway. The expectations worked out wonderfully well for me. I enjoyed every minute of it. I have to confess I enjoyed the politics, I enjoyed the building, I enjoyed meeting people. I can't complain, I personally. Thirteen, I think I've answered that, because I was all over the place, Albany and Washington. What do you feel I've accomplished at Stony Brook by 1971? I survived. I think I've named individuals, I should mention Sidney, who had a marvelous ability, how shall I put it, to make people relate to each other.

Dr. Hartzell: He was a good catalyst.

Dr. Weisinger: He was an excellent catalyst, great pacifier and compromiser. I wish he had sometimes been more forceful, but that was not his way. On the other hand, I have to say I'm eternally thankful to him because I have no doubt, he never said a word to me, and more than once people said get rid of me. You know I reported directly to Sidney. I can also truthfully say he never once told me what to do, nor did Johnny. If I made a mistake, they wouldn't stop me, and let me suffer the consequences. I'd

sometimes deliberately make a mistake, but I always knew that they would back me up. And I guess, if I try to examine why, they backed me up, I guess, because they recognized that I was committed, devoted to the ideal of what we were talking about. I had no other ambitions. I had, by the time I got to be Dean, I had acquired whatever reputation as a scholar I would get, I felt secure in that area. I wasn't the greatest scholar, I knew that. I had published enough and done enough to be recognized. In fact, a number of people who wrote letters of recommendation for me, asked me why I wanted to give up faculty scholarly career.

Dr. Hartzell: You have to if you're going into it.

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, I knew that. But it's something I wanted to try. But, it was wonderful. I honestly was never once told not to do something. Indeed, I was never once told to do something. Such freedom is unbelievable. I was a very fortunate man to have gotten paid for doing what I wanted to do and to have had the freedom I had. So I'm eternally grateful.

Dr. Hartzell: I remember I had been on the job about two or three weeks when a faculty member, a full professor, came in

[interruption in interview]

Here are some of the questions that I have thought of. You have handled these in part. First question was, the quality of graduate work when you came, scientists, social scientists, humanities

Dr. Weisinger: Well, there were very few graduate programs when I came. I think most of the graduate programs we have now were instituted while I was Dean. The outstanding department when I came was Physics. Chemistry was highly regarded, but as I said before, I don't Chemistry has ever been on the level of Physics. They had the same opportunity but I think they didn't have quite the flair that Physics was able to show.

Dr. Hartzell: Was the leadership not quite

Dr. Weisinger: Not quite as imaginative, not quite as daring in appointments. Those were the two major departments when I came.

Dr. Hartzell: Do you have any feel for Engineering?

Dr. Weisinger: It fell under my purview. Isn't that funny, I never did much with Engineering. Again, from what I could gather, this got pretty far afield, I think the departments were pretty even. Except, my great problem with Engineering from the point of view of administration was the excessive number of foreign students. And you got into quite a lot of trouble, and Johnny was not happy when I published the breakdown of the origins of graduate students. But I had blacks and women. You know, we were under compulsion in those days. For all I know, they may still be. And women and foreign students and native students, and the proportions were terrible from the point of view of public relations, not to mention from the point of view of the Legislature. I had that experience in other places I was in, thinking I just had to cut it back, and they didn't thank me for that. I think Johnny was very happy about it. But I kept pretty good statistics on departments. For example, I knew how many applications each department received. I knew how many offers were made. I knew how many students accepted the offers, and I knew how many actually came. on a department that way. You know, somebody in the humanities is not supposed to know those things. I also knew how many NSF Fellows were coming to Stony Brook. I knew the general criteria besides the local one. You have to distinguish always between what people told you and what the situation actually was.

Dr. Hartzell: That's one of my questions, the yardstick, the difference in standards and comparisons that I ran into, and I was wondering whether you did. When I came they were thinking in New York terms, in Ivy League terms. And Harry Porter would tell me how much progress they had made from where they had been to where they were now, within the state of New York. But I was trying to think in terms of comparable institutions.

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, yeah, they were not thinking that way. I would say one of the reasons why SUNY never really quite made it was the quality of the top leadership within Albany.

Dr. Hartzell: How about Rockefeller?

Dr. Weisinger: He didn't have the right people. I don't know about Gould. Are you going to interview him?

Dr. Hartzell: I am. Monday morning.

Dr. Weisinger: Monday morning. I think he tried very well to think of it in national terms, but I don't think people under him had that same sense. You know, one of the consequences of these doctoral evaluations that I sat through for so many years is the tremendous respect for Cornell. Cornell was virtually first-rate in any department. Columbia was much more uneven, interestingly enough, much more uneven -- more reputation than performance. But Cornell, excellent. Just a pleasure to evaluate their programs. But one of the pleasures is reading dossiers of people in Physics and Math compared to reading to dossiers of social scientists. Dossiers in Physics and Math are superb. A man writing a letter of recommendation for a mathematician would say, he is as good as so-and-so, he is not as good as so-and-so, but he's better than so-and-so, and he's worked on the following problems, and these problems are of this, that or the other importance. When you got through reading, you knew exactly what you got here. The social sciences though is all rhetoric.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I have the feeling that we have suffered in a reverse sense from the leadership of the scientists in that they do not understand how the social sciences as disciplines are organized. They do not know where to go either for the top people or for people who will tell them where the top people are. In other words the capacity to recruit is not as strong or as intelligent.

Dr. Weisinger: Well, I think it's their own fault.

Dr. Hartzell: It's their own fault; but did they

Dr. Weisinger: See, the trouble is, basically, I used to fight a lot with them about it; I'd say, what is your subject matter. The scientists always have that reference outside themselves, and you judge against that reference. The social sciences have a rather ill-defined subject matter, and therefore the research they do cannot achieve quite the same

kind of confirmation, unless they go into But I think a lot of what they do, frankly, is a lot of half-assed mathematics. See, some of my best friends are mathematicians, and I reflect their attitude. But that's their own fault. I think (a) is owing to the subject matter and the discipline *per se*. See when Harry was working in a particular aspect of psychology, which was conformable to experiment and verification, and brought people of that quality, it was fine; as soon as they moved away from that, it broke down. And I never regarded, anyhow, psychology as a social science, at least the way Harry was practicing it.

Dr. Hartzell: No, it wasn't the way Harry was

Dr. Weisinger: It's a behavioral science. In other words, it described human behavior. And I thought that's what sociology was supposed to do in the large sense.

Dr. Hartzell: Another question, which you certainly have gone into, what were your priorities in building on the base you found in place?

Dr. Weisinger: Well, getting it as good as I could possibly get it to be.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, I was thinking in terms of balance, an even balance, a level of excellence across the board.

Dr. Weisinger: I wanted excellence across the board, and a few departments to be super-excellent. But I didn't want anybody to fall below a certain level. You cannot have a graduate school on that basis. I don't think we achieved that. We had some excellent peaks, but some of the valleys were a little dismal, you know, one has to say that. I don't worry about the future. I don't know what's going to happen.

Dr. Hartzell: The future of Stony Brook or the future of graduate education?

Dr. Weisinger: No, no, I'm not worried about the future of graduate education. The need to be at the cutting edge will always be there. If we don't do it, somebody else will. I meant the future of the state system in general, but particularly Stony Brook; I don't much care about the state system really. In effect, there's nothing I can do. But I am worried about Stony Brook. Whether you will ever achieve the potential which is there. For a moment I think we came this much at grasping it, and then we fell back. And I

blame, if I blame Albany, I should also blame our faculty. When the chips were down, they didn't want to make that push. They chose comfort.

Dr. Hartzell: Security.

Dr. Weisinger: They felt they didn't want to do any more than that, and I had that strong sense in the years after I retired, and what it is now, I don't know, of course.

Dr. Hartzell: I think Jerry Schubel as Provost is a pusher.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, I know he is. You know I wanted him as my successor as Dean.

Dr. Hartzell: Oh, did you.

Dr. Weisinger: But no one asked me. It was very interesting. Neither Johnny, nor Alec, nor Sidney allowed me to enter the search for my successor. I guess they had had enough of me.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I just don't understand these things. As long as Johnny was there, I felt that I could make suggestions any time I wanted.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, he was good at that.

Dr. Hartzell: But since then, no.

Dr. Weisinger: I don't know what the, I forget what his name, Marburger, by all accounts he seems to be a very decent man, he doesn't strike me as being on fire.

Dr. Hartzell: No, no. Well, let's see, I have major appointments and principal achievements. I think you've handled that.

Dr. Weisinger: Well, once I became Dean, I was not responsible for individual appointments, of course; but I did participate in all hiring and promotion and tenure decisions. I wrote my recommendations. I took that part of my job very seriously. For one thing, I knew more about people than they thought I did. I could get a good fix on a department, relatively simple criteria that you could track down for each person. Really, what I was looking for, this being a large University, I didn't expect anybody to be a distinguished research scholar; but I wanted everybody to make some kind of contribution, what I hated most were guys who were unidentifiable for anything. I very often wanted people promoted because they were good teachers. Now that may seem like

a contradiction for the Dean of the Graduate School, but we did have a strong undergraduate component. Indeed, I don't think we could really have a good graduate school without good undergraduate work. So, if a guy couldn't publish, in many cases it was just as well that people didn't publish.

Dr. Hartzell: What about support from the administration, did you get good support?

Dr. Weisinger: Naturally, like anybody else, I always wanted more, but I was always fighting for more assistantships. At first I got large numbers of them, I would have preferred to have gotten the overhead money to plow back into the departments, but that was kept for long reasons, siphoned off for administrative emergencies by Johnny and Alec, because I knew that at other institutions that kind of money was siphoned back to departments, both the departments that generated it, and to departments that didn't generate it.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, I think part of the reason was the Central Office was taking funds that were generated by Stony Brook and distributing that around.

Dr. Weisinger: I don't doubt it. But for a while the Vice President for Business had control of that, and he used that to prop up his operation. I could have gotten that early on, but you remember that, when I became Dean, there was someone in charge of research who reported to Johnny's office. And he was kicked out; they caught him with hands in the till. And then when I got hold of his budget, I noticed that it was supporting all kinds of things that I wished not to support, and didn't want to be identified with, I wouldn't take it. And I guess maybe that was a mistake, I should have taken it but I was too new at the job to do that. I don't know what the situation is now, it's the OR5 I'm talking about, what it's called now but naturally I never got enough assistantships.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, they had a freeing up of the use of moneys.

Dr. Weisinger: I understand.

Dr. Hartzell: As a result of a commission appointed by Wharton, a very high level commission, it made a very forceful report. And the Legislature reacted to it, probably not as fully as it should have been. But it's given them on the local level freedom that they didn't have before.

Dr. Weisinger: That requires all the more strong administrative and knowing where you want to go. And you can't placate, you shouldn't placate everybody. I never much worried about consistency. But you gave him, but, yes, he's not you. You have to do that. I long ago decided that the only I could make the job tolerable for myself was to be honest about it and say what I thought but act on it. I think lots of people disliked me. In fact that so many people attended my farewell dinner. I think the reason, they all wanted to make sure I was going.

Dr. Hartzell: Support at the central level, central administration.

Dr. Weisinger: Muddy, central administration could never make up its mind how committed it was to the university center concept, and it played politics with the four-year colleges endlessly. I understand the political and economic imperative behind that. There were many towns in New York that would go broke if it weren't the four-year colleges located there; I understand that. But they didn't have to give them as much as they did on any basis of academic merit.

Dr. Hartzell: There's an egalitarianism throughout and a suspicion and envy.

Dr. Weisinger: When SUNY's talking about a distinguished professor at comparable to a distinguished professor at Stony Brook, it may be that our distinguished professor may not have been the greatest shucks, but I'm willing to bet that he was a greater shuck than the one there. I never really got much sense of strong leadership in Albany.

Dr. Hartzell: Where you there when Wharton came?

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, I left Michigan State before he came.

Dr. Hartzell: To Michigan State.

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah. So I didn't know him at all at Michigan State. Who was his predecessor?

Dr. Hartzell: At Michigan State?

Dr. Weisinger: No, in New York.

Dr. Hartzell: In New York, it was Ernie Boyer.

Dr. Weisinger: Ernie Boyer, yeah, Boyer went on to bigger, better things. Again, I never had the sense that Boyer was a very forceful guy, but I see that both he and Wharton were raised to the next highest level of incompetence.

Dr. Hartzell: Carnegie Endowment and TIAA; well, that takes Wharton out of the active educational

Dr. Weisinger: On the other hand, it's of greater concern to me that TIAA that he was the Chancellor because my annuity is tied up with his decisions, I have personal reasons to be concerned.

Dr. Hartzell: What about unfinished business when you left, what remained to be done?

Dr. Weisinger: Everything. It was too soon. We hadn't reached any kind of stability. Stony Brook started off with trouble, that damn drug raid got Stony Brook off balance for a long time. I'm not even sure an institution that had been a business a long time could have absorbed that; but really knocked us askew.

Dr. Hartzell: In what sense.

Dr. Weisinger: Well, it got students and administrators and administration at loggerheads from the very beginning and younger faculty. And we never were able to pull it all together again. We never had a concept of institutional loyalty where the students know faculty. There was departmental loyalty, there was discipline loyalty, but there never was Stony Brook loyalty.

Dr. Hartzell: What about the concept of a college, the undergraduate college that you have at Harvard, for instance, or Yale.

Dr. Weisinger: We never saw that at Stony Brook.

Dr. Hartzell: Because that is essentially, at Harvard, that is the basis of their financial strength. People give to Harvard College.

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, yes. But we don't have that kind of alumni. Brooklyn College doesn't have that kind of alumni. But I'm afraid that's out of the question. Michigan has that kind of alumni. We have to get our money the hard way. That's all right but Stony Brook never developed a style. You know you go to the big stuff institutions, there's a kind of aura about the place that says we've been doing this a long time, doing it this way and it's our way. Stony Brook was never known for *politesse*.

Dr. Hartzell: What about offices looking better?

Dr. Weisinger: That was Johnny's touch we had a style, but it was not a style that brought people together, but that's all right. Actually style is something that faculty ought to do. But it's typical that we could never maintain a faculty club, people wouldn't pay their bills, it was as simple as that.

Dr. Hartzell: So the give and take among faculty, the trade of ideas and the sense of cohesion

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah, we never had that.

Dr. Hartzell: That still remains to be done.

Dr. Weisinger: Never had that.

Dr. Hartzell: And it's institutional construction, not physical construction.

Dr. Weisinger: No, of course. I never expected of Johnny, he was too busy building the place. But I expected it of Marburger, who was much more suave, by everything I understand.

Dr. Hartzell: But he and his wife, I guess I shouldn't say it but I guess I won't.

Dr. Weisinger: You can say, it wouldn't hurt to try.

Dr. Hartzell: At the present time, the humanities are scattered. English is in the old Humanities Building, the languages are in the Library, Philosophy is in Old Physics, Religion has been moved from Old Physics now to Old Chemistry.

Dr. Weisinger: Music has its own facilities with Art.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, Music and the Arts have

Dr. Weisinger: Those are the performing arts, they a legitimate right to be together.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes. But the others are scattered.

Dr. Weisinger: Well, that was one of Johnny's designs, having a Humanities Building. In fact did he not at one time want a Humanities Tower?

Dr. Hartzell: I think so. But I think if you're going to try to bring the humanities together in some physical location anywhere near the Library, you're going to have to go up.

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah I think it's a mistake to have offices in the Library. I think a Library should be a Library.

Dr. Hartzell: They are going to have to get the languages out of there because they will need the space within four or five years.

Dr. Weisinger: They are very isolated there, and they thrive in isolation obviously.

Dr. Hartzell: I think something has got to be done within a period of four or five years.

Dr. Weisinger: Well, you could renovate one of the old buildings, and put them all together.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, I suppose so.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes, it's interesting that is something Johnny wanted but never could get far with that. He might have in time.

Dr. Hartzell: What about the quality of student life?

Dr. Weisinger: I can't speak for the undergraduates, but frankly when I went back to teaching, I didn't go back to graduate teaching, I had been away too long. It would be foolish of me to try to teach a graduate course. Graduate students would have run right all over me, I hadn't kept up. But I have to confess to my sorrow that I had difficulty relating to the undergraduates; we simply didn't speak each other's language. But while I was Dean, the quality of graduate students was pretty damn good. I kept track of that. We didn't require the GRE's for extensions but I required it as a condition of application.

I got around that. Several departments did require it as a condition. I left that as a matter for departments to decide. It was kind of curious, even though I was on the GRE Board, I didn't make it an absolute requirement. But I did want it for my own purposes. I wanted to know how we compared with the other institutions. We did pretty well. We didn't get the best, we got very few NSF Fellows, which I used as a kind of a whip. But the quality was pretty high. I didn't feel there was any deterioration of that; I don't know what it's like now. But, of course, we ran into the problem after a while, the terrible problem of placement when things went bad. We destroyed our country; we destroyed a whole generation of young people.

Dr. Hartzell: In what way?

Dr. Weisinger: Well, we had a whole generation who came through with Ph. D.'s and no placement. And I think things have improved now, but who's going to hire somebody who is ten years past his Ph. D., when you can get a bright young guy, fresh out of school, on top of his field. It's rather sad.

Dr. Hartzell: What about the reputation of the institution?

Dr. Weisinger: The reputation of the institution outside of Stony Brook is pretty damn good, it is remarkably good considering what I know about it. But I was always very pleased to see Stony Brook highly regarded. There are always distinctions between Stony Brook and the other institutions in the New York system and that even includes Buffalo, but we had an excellent reputation in the outside world of academia. That was very nice.

Dr. Hartzell: I think that's about everything that I had.

Dr. Weisinger: There are a lot of anecdotes that one could tell, but you know the guy who really knows them all is Sidney.

Dr. Hartzell: Sidney?

Dr. Weisinger: Yeah, Sidney has a verbal memory, he can almost repeat conversations that happened twenty years ago.

Dr. Hartzell: This letter I drafted, all the questions I drafted after talking with the four of them, Sidney, Palmer, Bonner and Cliff Swartz. And Francis Bonner, I got them together at my house, and we reminisced about Oyster Bay, which I knew nothing about when I first came.

Dr. Weisinger: Neither did I.

Dr. Hartzell: And when we got through, they said if ever one were to write the history of Stony Brook, nobody would believe it.

Dr. Weisinger: Have you interviewed Bentley.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, I did.

Dr. Weisinger: Bentley played a very important role in, a dual role. Bentley's reputation was, there were three names that were associated with Stony Brook from the very beginning: one was Alfred, one was Bentley, and the other was Frank Yang. And Bentley's reputation was exceedingly helpful; he was a woeful administrator.

Dr. Hartzell: In what sense.

Dr. Weisinger: For one thing, he kept no files, he kept no records, he didn't consult anybody. We always used to dread when we'd go on a plane trip because we didn't know who he would, say, meet at the airport, and say, do you want to come to Stony Brook. And I never had any sense of priority with him. He was very susceptible to flattery. But basically I never had any sense he grasped what was going on. It was very difficult to deal with him when I was chairman. Well, I wasn't the only one who said that. He liked to confer on you your budget, and it was really not a question of controlling as a personal, it was a question of priority. So in that sense I saw him as very difficult. He wasn't high pressured. It wasn't very long after I became that Sidney, he retired at that time.

Dr. Hartzell: That was 1971.

Dr. Weisinger: Was it '71 as Dean and Vice President.

Dr. Hartzell: Yes.

Dr. Weisinger: He retired as Vice President.

Dr. Hartzell: As Vice President in '71.

Dr. Weisinger: I don't remember. I became Dean in '68. No, but he wasn't Vice President, that's what I meant, because I was on the search committee that chose Sidney. At that time the choice of Sidney was inevitable because the one thing none of us wanted was the University to go through the agony of a protracted search for a person in such a queer, crucial position. Remember this was 1968. We didn't want to stretch anything out, if he wanted decisions right away. Then I think everybody agreed.

Dr. Hartzell: You mean you were looking in '68 for somebody to take Bentley's place in '71.

Dr. Weisinger: I don't think Bentley is Vice President in 1971. I simply can't remember that.

Dr. Hartzell: He and I are the same age to the day.

Dr. Weisinger: But I don't remember ever reporting to Bentley as Dean for very long. I can't believe it would be three years. I may have forgotten all of that, it's not impossible. I do remember getting but not for three years running, unless it's all coalesced in my memory. But whatever it was, okay, if it was '71 it was particularly important to have a, it's hard for me to think of Sidney, as a matter of fact Alec wasn't Executive Vice President; he was appointed after I was appointed Dean. Do you have the date on that?

Dr. Hartzell: Johnny left in '78.

Dr. Weisinger: No, no, Executive Vice President.

Dr. Hartzell: Oh, he was appointed Executive Vice President I think in either '66 or '67.

Dr. Weisinger: Acting, he was Acting. He became the Vice President in '69.

Dr. Hartzell: I remember Johnny asking me if I thought that Alec would make a good Vice President.

Dr. Weisinger: Alec was a good Executive Vice President, but for one thing, he had his order of priorities reversed. Alec worried more about the details of administration. I

used to like to say to him, you don't have to count the toilet paper rolls, you've got people to do that. You run the University internally, and let Johnny be Mr. Outside, he and Sidney. But Alec took every task. He was the clean-up man, and I think that was a mistake. He didn't have any perspective on the University as a whole. We got along very well, we were friends, but I think he wasted his time. And one of the reasons why he didn't make president, among other reasons, was that he never showed any sense of what I would call academic imagination. He was always cleaning up after people. And he also had a number of terrible people working for him, so that his credibility was always at stake.

Dr. Hartzell: I'm surprised he would put up with them.

Dr. Weisinger: Well, that's an interesting thing. He was very loyal to the people, but he was badly served by these people.

Dr. Hartzell: Can you think of anybody in particular?

Dr. Weisinger: No, no. Anyhow it's all water over the dam.

Dr. Hartzell: It certainly is.

Dr. Weisinger: But Alec, you see, is still cleaning up for the President at Rutgers. And Alec will get over being anything but an executive officer. And Alec had marvelous loyalty.

Dr. Hartzell: He was, I think he was instrumental in Johnny's coming.

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, yes, I know that. Oh, yes. I think he was a better chairman than central administrator. Because there he had taste. You know, the physicists always use the word taste and mathematicians. And he had a genuine taste for first-rate, when he went to the higher levels in choosing the faculty, he was much more provincial and he didn't get out in the big world You know and I knew the background from which he came. But Johnny had him as chairman of the department

Dr. Hartzell: He built it.

Dr. Weisinger: He built that department. It may not be the best department, but it's big. Johnny did have an imagination. You'll never see his like again. But I'll be brutally

frank, I always felt that the appointment of Marburger sent a signal that Stony Brook was not going to be what we wanted it to be; I'll put it as simply as that. You know, I heard the discussions, I knew what was going on But you know, you pick up things. The other three institutions hated Stony Brook, and they were going to do their damndest to keep it down. Interestingly enough, a place like Cornell, for example, when we wanted a Ph. D. program in Music, we consulted with the other, you know we had to consult, or the central administration consulted, Cornell was very generous -- why, of course, they said. Columbia and NYU wasn't; of course NYU didn't have much of a Ph. D. program, but Columbia did; so they fought it. They were always bitter. Several times I was on an evaluation committee and banged away at some of their programs, several of them were put on hold; they weren't extremely sharp anyway. But Cornell was magnanimous, they never had any opposition.

Dr. Hartzell: Well, they didn't, I guess, feel the competition, they were at some distance from Long Island.

Dr. Weisinger: I know but good students go to good And of course why should Columbia worry, they had New York. We had to ship ours to the city, right then and there. But we had somebody like Charles Rosen who did pretty well. But I understand that Treitler is leaving.

Dr. Hartzell: Is he?

Dr. Weisinger: That's a bad break.

Dr. Hartzell: Where's he going.

Dr. Weisinger: City College.

Dr. Hartzell: He's going to City College.

Dr. Weisinger: That's what Dick Levine told me.

Dr. Hartzell: When is he leaving.

Dr. Weisinger: I don't know. I think also that a number of people in the sciences are leaving. I hope an exodus doesn't become a hemorrhage.

Dr. Hartzell: I hope not too. Andy Jackson, I think, he's on sabbatical now in Denmark at the There is a vacancy over there in Copenhagen

Dr. Weisinger: At the Neils Bohr

Dr. Hartzell: Yes, I think he may be in line for that. I think he would like to take it. What is your view of why Alec did not get the presidency.

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, I think there is no question that he was so identified with Johnny, under no circumstance was it going to happen with Albany. I have no idea how he affected them personally, whether they saw him in a presidential role. But I simply think he was not, he was simply out of it because he was so close to Johnny. And given what I said before, they weren't going to have another Johnny, they weren't going to take any more chances.

Dr. Hartzell: Now, was this the Trustees or was this the central administration.

Dr. Weisinger: Oh, I think they were together.

Dr. Hartzell: Both together.

Dr. Weisinger: I think as far as I could figure out what was going on. But I know the local Board accepted him.

Dr. Hartzell: I think the business people were behind him.

Dr. Weisinger: Yes. I don't think he would have made a great President, but I think he would have made a good President. Things would have gone well, and he did know, he did have a great respect for what he called the academic heavyweights, by which he meant Sidney and myself. But I thought he should have had the opportunity, but it's just that he was so identified with Johnny. We had that recently in an election with Carter; Carter and Mondale, remember, the identification was not good for him. You don't see him at all, do you, Alec?

Dr. Hartzell: I haven't seen him since he went to New Jersey.

Dr. Weisinger: Too bad

[end of tape and interview]