

and told me and recommended an appointment for a professor in Physics. I interviewed the one that she recommended and my judgment of him was that he might be a good teacher of physics in high school but nothing beyond. When I refused to appoint him, the Dean of Columbia Teachers College called me and said "Do you think your judgment is better than mine?"

Interviewee: That wasn't Harry Carman?

Olsen: No, this was a woman; I don't remember her name. My response was only that I was responsible for the appointment and she wasn't. Anyway, I was getting lots of recommendations from all the place. One amusing one was from Buffalo where a person pleaded with me because he couldn't stand another winter of shoveling snow.

Interviewee: Well, that's a good reason to come to Long Island. What do you know about the Heald Report?

Olsen: I don't know anything about the Heald Report. The name rings a bell; if I ever knew anything about it, I've forgotten.

Interviewee: The Governor when you came was Harriman?

Olsen: Yes, that reminds me of an amusing incident. This is before the institution was opened on Long Island or very shortly thereafter, Governor Harriman apparently had written a comment regarding a television show sponsored by Encyclopedia Britannica, which was a quiz show, in which he pointed out an error in, I forget, I never did really know exactly what it was all about, but that he had pointed out an error in the judgment regarding the answer to a question on that show and in token of their appreciation, Encyclopedia Britannica presented him with a copy of the Encyclopedia Britannica; whereupon he or his public relations officer called me on Long Island and said that the Governor would like to give this as a present to the new university or the new college on Long Island. So, would I please come up to Albany and receive this as a gift from the Governor. So, I went in to the Governor's formal, ceremonial office, lots of people were around, and the Encyclopedia Britannica was sitting on the desk before the two of us and so we both came up to the desk before all the people and the cameras and what not, we both stood there and Governor Harriman turned and looked at me and said, "Well, aren't you going to say anything?" That put me on the spot, because I didn't really know what the circumstances had been because of which he had been given this encyclopedia; but I gave out with whatever could occur to me regarding his interest in education and his interest in the accuracy of information and so on. But, I think you should say just a little more just exactly what the circumstances were; and I hesitated, so he went on to give them himself. Well, then the formal presentation, he reached for them and then he handed them to me, then he wanted to take them back again and it became apparent to me that he thought that I was the representative of Encyclopedia Britannica instead of being from the College of Long Island. So, he and I had a kind of tug-of-war. Finally, he realized what was going on and he said, "Well, how are things on Long Island?" I have a picture of the two of us, each of us thinking that the other is .....; anyway Governor Harriman was the governor at that time. While I was on Long Island the ground was broken for Stony Brook for the new campus, at that time Nelson Rockefeller was Governor so he was the one that came down for the groundbreaking ceremony.

Interviewee: Do you remember the gist of what Rockefeller said?

Olsen: No.

Interviewee: That speech is not in the Governor's papers. I would be interested to find it.

Olsen: As I recall, it was very brief, so I suspect it didn't go into much detail.

Interviewee: Did you know Mr. Cole, by any chance?

Olsen: Which Cole are you speaking?

Interviewee: Robertson, in other words, the person who had given Planting Fields initially to Farmingdale.

Olsen: Well, that Cole was dead. But Bill Cole, his son, I knew; Bill Cole was on the Council of the College of Long Island, along with George Collins. But he was not active in any way.

Interviewee: What is your impression of the quality of people on the Council and the degree of their interest in what was going on, except for George Collins, of course?

Olsen: Well, Ward Melville was actively interested; although I had very little discussion with him outside Council meetings. I regularly presented the Council with detailed statements about what the activities were at the College at that time. There was always discussion of those reports, but there was never, as I can recall, any attempt on the part of any of them to take any active part in what was going on. (end of Side A)

Olsen: The nearest thing to that was after John Lee was appointed President, Ward Melville appeared at my house one day and said "I have heard words to the effect that John F. Lee has split the faculty down the middle in that there is conflict in the faculty; is that true, or isn't it?"

Interviewee: He came and asked you that?

Olsen: He came and asked me that. That put me on the spot of course, but I couldn't lie to him and I said, "Yes, it is." Whereupon he asked me no further questions, he got up and left. Other than that I never had anybody ask me any such direct questions as to the state of affairs at the college, so where they actively interested, well they always seemed interested at our Council meetings and they discussed what was going on freely, but I never had any attempt on the part of any of them to engage actively in the administration of the college. George Collins, however, I consulted, especially when I was looking for possible appointments in the sciences.

Interviewee: Was he helpful?

Olsen: Yes, he was morally helpful if not a source of, the only name I can remember his giving me at the moment is that of Clifford Swartz. This conversation is confidential, isn't it?

Interviewee: It doesn't go anywhere else, except into the archives at this point.

Olsen: I don't know then how to say about what he told me about Clifford Swartz; it isn't really relevant, is it?

Interviewee: If it's relevant, fine; if it isn't relevant.

Olsen: Well, I think all I would want to say is he told me that he thought that Clifford Swartz would be a good teacher in an undergraduate program in physics.

Interviewee: He has subsequently published at least one textbook and he has received the Orested Medal, which is for physics teaching, it's a distinguished medal in the discipline; he just received it a couple of years ago.

Olsen: I am not quite sure whether I got the name of Francis Bonner from George; I'm a little.

Interviewee: He was at Yale, wasn't he?

Olsen: Francis Bonner was at the Arthur D. Little Company and to my knowledge he had not had a faculty appointment prior to his faculty appointment on Long Island.

Interviewee: I think now at this point we should go into, you can take whatever order you want, a discussion of the differences in points of view with regard to the curriculum or you can talk about the circumstances leading up to the appointment of Lee, which should come first? Where you aware that there were two different points of view with regard to the curriculum or perhaps more?

Olsen: Well; I would say. Let me answer that question correctly. My conception of the institution from the start was of a liberal arts institution. Although I knew that was not what the mandate called for, the mandate, I reported to you, was a very restricted one, but there had been a subsequent approval of a more generalized institution providing basic work, particularly in mathematics and the sciences, with the inclusion of the humanities and social sciences as well. Altogether this constituted in my conception a liberal arts institution, but at that time the only degree that had been approved by the Board of Trustees was a B. S. degree. Subsequently, about the time of the appointment of John F. Lee, I was pushing hard, as hard as I could, for the addition of an A. B. degree.

Interviewee: When did you get it?

Olsen: There was a meeting of the Board of Trustees I would guess about '60 or '61.

Interviewee: There was a Master Plan as of '60, I think.

Olsen: You're talking about the Master Plan at the instigation of John F. Lee?

Interviewee: Not that I know of; I didn't know he instigated.

Olsen: Well, when he first came on the scene, he asked us to draw up a faculty list for a full-scale university with all of the departments and all of the positions that would be required in each of the departments and with appropriate salaries and so on. That I would not call a master plan. That was simply a kind of.

Interviewee: That was after the Heald Report too, I think the Heald Report was '59.

Olsen: I don't really know.

Interviewee: One of Rockefeller's first appointments was to have this committee headed by Henry Heald, who was president of the Ford Foundation.

Olsen: You're talking about a plan then for the whole State University system. Perhaps as a result of which four basic areas were designated as centers of the University.

Interviewee: Comprehensive university centers.

Olsen: Yes, Long Island was made one of them. The one I was referring to.

Interviewee: You got a mandate for a 4-year liberal arts institution before that, I think.

Olsen: Well, we didn't get a mandate. I was in the New York offices of the State University of New York on the day the Board of Trustees was to meet. I had previously talked with John F. Lee about the utmost importance of the broadening of the degree powers to an A. B. degree in order to hold faculty members in areas other than the sciences. But John F. Lee had done nothing about it. I didn't discover this until I had a chance to talk with Tom Hamilton just before the Board meeting and I asked Hamilton about it and he said it was not even on the agenda. So I talked with Tom for as much time as I had before the Board meeting started and succeeded in impressing him with the what I considered to be the utmost importance of broadening it to include the A. B. degree; and he said that he would try to get it on the agenda and he did and it was approved at that meeting.

Interviewee: All right, can you give the date of that meeting?

Olsen: That's my problem, I can't. All I can say it was subsequent to the decision to appoint John F. Lee as President; whether he actually was appointed president, he was not on Long Island at that time, he was still in Raleigh, at N. C. State. But whether or not he had been formally appointed, I can't remember but I would roughly indicate the time of this Board meeting I'm talking about. Anyway, that indicates my conception of what the character of the institution should be. If I had had from the beginning, as I told you, I served on the. (break in recording)

Interviewee: You were talking about the Smith Report.

Olsen: The Smith Report, in which the chief criticism of the State University of New York was that it lacked and it lagged the essential characteristics which would constitute a full scale university. And it was my hope that a full scale university could be developed on Long Island, which would satisfy the lag which I saw in the State University otherwise; in short, it would have full scale Ph. D. programs in mathematics, physics, chemistry, philosophy, the humanities generally, and social sciences. Now, then insofar as the difficulties within the faculty, there was constantly a kind of pressure on the part of the physical sciences, on the part of those in chemistry and physics and mathematics to increase the amount of time which they could command of the students' time working for a degree at the institution. I had to try to protect the time allocated to the social sciences and the humanities, knowing that, unless I could do so, I would lose the faculty in those areas and would be unsuccessful in recruiting new faculty for them. So, I had to adopt a fairly rigid stance saying that beyond a certain point the sciences could not go in taking the students' time. I argued with them that they did not want to become a technical institution but that they themselves wanted to be members of a faculty at a university and after we had a kind of extensive discussion at that very point, I at least heard no more objection from them. But there was a kind of tension which one can understand; always trying to increase the amount of time for laboratory work and so on in order to do the kind of job which they thought would be the best kind of job in their fields.

Interviewee: That's on the level of teaching, what about their own research and their conception of the place of research in the institution?

Olsen: As far as my recollection goes, there was never any discussion of that. At that stage, we began as we had to begin largely by pressure of circumstance, we began not by having a full scale university with undergraduate and graduate departments, but rather we began by having a freshman class and then freshman and sophomore class and so on until the last year I was there, there was a graduating class. So the teaching at that point was all at the undergraduate level, the teaching loads were as light as the budget would permit. I forget exactly what they were.

Interviewee: And I don't know; twelve hours?

Olsen: I don't think they were that heavy. My recollection is that they were nine.

Interviewee: Two preparations or three?

Olsen: Well, that would vary depending on the particular assignment.

Interviewee: Now, you left in '61?

Olsen: I left in '61. After John F. Lee was appointed president, I was there as Dean of Faculty for some time.

Interviewee: This was in '61? He was appointed president in '61.

Olsen: He was appointed president in '61 and I stayed on as Dean of Faculty; his initial statement to me was that I should continue just as I had before he came and that his concern would be largely with the external organizations of the institution. But it became apparent before very long that his concern was with all aspects of the institution and it wasn't very long then before he appointed himself Dean of Arts and Sciences, as well as president of the college. Which left me in no-man's land, with really no responsibility at all. He, about this time, for reasons which were never really very clear to me, became completely disaffected with me and thought that I was working against his best interests, whereas we had had adjoining offices, he moved me to an office far removed in what had been the servants' quarters of the institution and

subsequently sent my secretary along with me to have her desk in the same office. About this time it became apparent to Albany, both to Hamilton and to Slocum, that the relationship between John F. Lee and me were impossible and I was withdrawn from Long Island as it were and appointed to the staff in Albany but still left on the campus at Long Island. About the time I was asked by the Deputy, I forget what his exact title was, of the Ford Foundation to act as a consultant to the King of Jordan in a consideration of establishing a university in Jordan and so I got a leave of absence from the State University of New York to assume those duties and I never returned to Long Island.

Interviewee: I read your letter of resignation, which was in the file there. I have interviewed Lee out in La Mesa.

Olsen: What's he doing?

Interviewee: I think he's retired. He's with one of his daughters. I think he's living with one of his daughters, who has just graduated from University of San Diego. What were the circumstances leading up to his appointment?

Olsen: You may recall that I reported to you the problem about the establishment of an engineering school on Long Island. Where the action had initiated, I don't know, whether it was with the State Legislature, it might well have been. With the necessity for having an engineering school on Long Island, or at least having another engineering school in the State of New York under the State University system, of course there hadn't been any. So, John Slocum and the Executive Dean who was responsible for community colleges were appointed a committee of two to get it started, whatever that might be. And they were allocated the magnificent sum of \$10,000 to do this. Sometime later John Slocum called me and said, and he gave the name of the other dean, and I have traveled all over the country talking to members of faculty of engineering schools and we're no more near getting an engineering school started than we were when we began and he said "Len, how would you like to take it over?" Not knowing anything about engineering, I, of course, was reluctant, but finally I decided that if anybody was going to do, I'd rather do it myself than have somebody else do it, because I could see right away that I would want it to be the kind of engineering school that would be appropriate for the kind of university I had in mind. So, then I went all over the country talking with people.

Interviewee: Where specifically did you go?

Olsen: Well, I went to MIT, I went to Cal Tech, I went to there's one in New York City in Brooklyn, Brooklyn Poly. I talked with members of the faculty at all of these places, and in the course of my talking with them, I did encounter the name of John F. Lee from time to time as somebody who knew quite a bit about engineering. I forget how they identified his particular field, it was thermodynamics or something like that. Anyway, then I found myself in the same fix that John F. Lee and his colleague had been in, that it was all right to talk with all these people but none of them was interested in taking time off actually to get an engineering school started. So I was really nowhere. I could not get an appropriate amount of funds more than that initial \$10,000 unless they had a program. And, I could not get a program, since I did not have anybody to draw up the program and I obviously was incapable of doing it myself. So, finally I went to see Clarence Linder who was Vice President for Research for General Electric.

Interviewee: In Schenectady?

Olsen: I suppose he had an office in Schenectady, but I saw him in his office in New York, in Manhattan, and after I had talked to him for a while, he became deeply interested in the project and called up engineers all over the country and assembled a committee. I told him that if they would help us draft a program of study for an engineering school, that I would see that it was presented to the Board, but I could not assure them that it would be approved or that anything would happen as a result of it. Anything more than what I had just said. But, that was sufficient to satisfy him; he was obviously interested if there was going to be an engineering school that it be the kind of engineering school that GE would be interested in. And I was pretty sure that the kind of engineering school that GE would be interested in would be the kind of engineering school that I would be interested in. There were quite a few who had been trying to persuade me to establish an engineering school for highway engineering and so on, and it didn't seem to be the kinds of thing we ought to have. Anyway, so they set up this committee and they worked with our faculty and finally came up with a set of about 150 clothbound volumes of a program for an engineering school, 150 copies of a clothbound volume.

Interviewee: Tom Irvine, was he with you then?

Olsen: No, you see there wasn't anybody, nobody in engineering.

Interviewee: This was what year?

Olsen: This was before, this must have been 1960. Before Lee came, nobody had come, I was still certainly the only person; there was nobody in engineering. Nobody, not in Albany, not any place.

Interviewee: You sure it wasn't '59.

Olsen: Oh no, it couldn't have been '59. '60. Anyway, so the program for an engineering school as drawn up by engineers from GE and members of the faculty of the college of Long Island.

Interviewee: Who were some of those members who were involved, they must have been physicists and chemists?

Olsen: And social scientists and humanists; Harold Zyskind was involved, Bill Lister was involved, Jay Williams, who is in social sciences, and Francis Bonner and I think probably Cliff Swartz. So they all met, the members of the staff at

GE were impressed with the faculty members at Long Island that they had to work with in drawing up this program. The program was then submitted to the Board and approved and that provided the go-ahead for authorization for us to hire a dean for engineering. And again I consulted with people that I had gotten to know in engineering around the country and I particularly got an enthusiastic recommendation from a Professor Engineering at UCLA, whose name I am sorry I can't remember, and that was enough for me to call up John Lee and suggest that we talk.

Interviewee: This man at UCLA recommended John Lee?

Olsen: That's right. And so I went to Raleigh and interviewed John Lee. Now wait a minute. John Lee came to Manhattan and I interviewed him in Manhattan and then I made a recommendation to Hamilton in Albany for the appointment of John Lee as Dean of Engineering.

Interviewee: Did you check back on the Raleigh campus to see what the opinion about John Lee was from different points of view?

Olsen: No. In retrospect I realized acutely that I should have; in retrospect I remember being very puzzled at the time I came down to Raleigh to meet with John F. Lee after I had this initial interview that I spoke of in Manhattan, I came to see him, I forget why, I came into his office, his outer office which was a fairly large office with university secretaries and so on, and in retrospect I remember an atmosphere of hostility such as I have never encountered in an office before or since.

Interviewee: Hostility to you?

Olsen: Just tension. Nobody seemed able to be affable with me, nobody seemed to be able to carry on a conversation with me, there was a kind of stony silence as I waited until Lee was available from whatever it was he was busy with in his office. That should have told me something, but at the time I was so desperate for trying to get this load of getting an engineering school off my back, since my chief interest was not in engineering, I was doing it only because I had to. Anyway, that was the first indication I had of what it was like being with John Lee.

Interviewee: The sciences are departmentally organized rather than divisionally and top quality individuals are interested in their research because that is the avenue for promotion of course, so you have an ideological and to some extent an administrative difference of opinion, difference between them as a body and humanities and the social sciences.

Olsen: Well, I am not sure I see that as a difference, that is, I think that people in the humanities and social sciences in a university are interested in doing research and publishing in order to achieve their promotions as well as those in the sciences.

Interviewee: That's true, that's true. But there seems to be an easier give and take across disciplinary lines.

Olsen: Yes, in the social sciences and humanities than there is, that's right there is; I don't know, you may be pointing to a problem that I had in starting the institution. I started it with division. It is not surprising that that thought occurred to me since I came from a university which is still organized on a divisional basis. There are four divisions in Chicago and those divisions are both graduate undergraduate. And so an appointment at the graduate level in most cases at the university is an appointment also in the college; so there is not a dean of arts and sciences in Chicago, there is a dean of humanities and a dean of social sciences and so on and then there is a dean of the college. So, in establishing the institution at Long Island, since I was interested in promoting interdisciplinary activities, I started with divisions, with the expectation that in the future there would be departments established within the division, but initially with only fifteen members in the faculty, there didn't seem to be any need for departments.

Interviewee: Now, you looked to Chicago and you looked to Columbia and Yale, what about Princeton and Harvard or Stamford or Berkeley?

Olsen: I didn't know anybody at Harvard, I didn't know anybody currently with whom I might correspond regarding appointments to the faculty; the same thing was true of Princeton. Although I welcomed suggestions and of course Leonard Eisenbud came from Princeton; I guess there's nothing more that I can say.

Interviewee: You were under the gun to get on with the job fast.

Olsen: Yes, that reminds me of a rather interesting problem I had. In the very beginning my concern was chiefly with getting in a faculty assembled to teach the students who would appear at the doors in September of 1957. Since I started in the spring of 1957, it didn't leave me much time. So I was frantically assembling a faculty and the newspaper announcement of the opening of the institution in the fall of '57 had simply given the Albany to reach the office as the office to which to apply for admission to this new institution on Long Island. Well, my secretary was receiving all of the letters that came in regarding admission to this new institution. I kept checking with her to see how the applications were going and she kept giving me these numbers that kept going up and up and up and, good heavens, I have got to work harder at getting a faculty together for all of these students until finally one day I said, "I think maybe I had better look over all these applications from students to see what they look like." I looked over all of them and there wasn't a single complete application among them; they were all requests for information and not much more; and at that point what we had was not a single student, so I faced a rather appalling situation that a public institution was to open with fifteen members of the faculty and no students. So I immediately turned to the only source with which I was familiar, which was the office of the dean of

students at the University of Chicago and got them to recommend somebody who was one of their top men, namely Al Austill, and persuaded him to come and serve as dean of students and start getting busy in the matter of recruiting students, which he did, and was successful in doing so.

Interviewee: How much do you know, let's see, Dr. Lee left after you did?

Olsen: Yes, yes, I severed my connections with the State University of New York formally in order to accept the appointment as Assistant to the Provost of the University of Chicago.

Interviewee: I see; remember the date?

Olsen: I'd have to check my files.

Interviewee: Your letter of resignation would probably be the date roughly.

Olsen: Yes.

Interviewee: We have that.

Olsen: Edward Levy was Provost of the University asked me to accept that appointment, I said that I would not do say without first informing Tom Hamilton, giving him an opportunity to say anything that he might want to say before I accepted the appointment. So, I did not accept it immediately, but upon coming back to New York and talking with Tom Hamilton, I then called Edward Levy and accepted the appointment.

Interviewee: Did you at any time have the idea that you would have liked to be president of the Long Island institution?

Olsen: I don't think I ever thought I would in any unqualified sense because I never felt fully committed to the life of an administrator. I envied the members of the faculty who could devote themselves to their studies and their teaching, that's what I wanted to do. When I came to the University of Chicago after leaving Long Island, I did so only on the understanding that I could be teaching as well as being engaged in my administrative work; this Edward Levy agreed to. So, well, but I understood all along that although my appointment as dean was not acting, my appointment as chief administrative officer was acting and that it was pending the appointment of someone whose special field was engineering or science. So I always understood, knew that any time somebody might be appointed over my head. So I was not surprised when I recommended the appointment of John F. Lee as dean of engineering that I got a call from Albany saying this man looks pretty good, how about considering him as president? And I knew of no reason, at least at that time, I knew of no reason to hesitate and I said, "Yes, I thought he would be a reasonable candidate." I forget, I was either talking with Hamilton or with John Slocum, I am not sure which, "Would you arrange to have him meet the faculty," and so I did.