PRESERVING MEMORY: NEWARK AND RUTGERS
IN THE 1960’S AND 1970’S

An Interview with

ERMA BROWN

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

August 14, 1991
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GILBERT COHEN: This is Gil Cohen. This is Wednesday, August 14th, and I’m meeting with Mrs. Erma Brown in her office in the Public Information Office at Rutgers in Newark. Erma, you’ve given me some information before about your years at Rutgers. You were a student in the beginning. Fill in just some of the biographical background, your student days and then your first job and what you’re doing now, if you could get the context there.

ERMA BROWN: Okay. Well, I first came to the Newark campus in 1968 as a full-time student. I had prior to that been a university—before I married—I’d been a University College student on the New Brunswick campus. And I always identify myself as one of the first older women who returned to campus. I was in my mid-thirties. My classmates were 19 and 20. And from the first, I must have been very, very chauvinistic about Rutgers and about this campus. And I think it probably goes back to those days because the students were so accepting. And I don’t know—it was the sixties. It was the time on our campus of the hippies and the flower people. And people, the students, were just very, very accepting. So I completed those two years here. I graduated in 1970 as an English major. My last semester, as a student, I had worked in the Public Information Office as a wages of labor person, which means that I wasn’t permanent, but I was not a work-study student. I did secretarial work. I did some very elementary kind of releases—a student had made the dean’s list—and did that kind of writing.

And then I was looking for a job. I thought I was going to teach. There were no jobs that year for either history or English teachers. Edith Sozio, who was a kind of an administrative assistant person and headed the Speakers Bureau here at Newark, was leaving. And Morris Roth, who was then the director of Public Information in Newark, asked me, called me and asked me if I wanted the job. And of course I said I did. I think I’ve often told Morris that I thought the reason he hired me was because I probably was going to work for a lower salary, lower than anyone else that he interviewed. But in any case, it was really a wonderful, you know, opportunity, and it’s been a career for me. I’m now 21 years later, almost 20 years later, I’m still here. I guess when I started, my job title then was as a staff writer 2. In these 20 years I was upgraded to a staff writer 1, and I’m now currently, a senior staff writer.

When I came to the university, Mason Gross was still the president of the university. I never met him personally. But I always had the sense that, from what I saw in the papers and from the stories that I heard, always had the sense that he was a true class act. And the story that I always love to tell is that at the time of the student takeovers in the late sixties, students had occupied his office in Old Queens. He did not call the police, but I guess campus police came and were going to charge the students and arrest them. And Mason Gross said, “But they didn’t occupy my office. I invited them in.” Which I thought was really, you know, a class kind of thing. At the time, if I remember I think Malcolm Talbott was the chief executive officer on campus, although I’m not sure that he was called a provost. I’m not quite sure of what the title
was. In ’72, when Dr. Bloustein came on as the new president, Malcolm Talbott was here, went to New Brunswick as a vice president for Public Affairs. And then I think before his death, he finished his career probably as a tenured faculty member in the School of Law here in Newark. And Malcolm I did know personally, and I have a couple of funny things that I remember when…we used to have fall semester convocations at the Presbyterian Church, which is located right next door to 15 Washington Street where we currently are in the Public Information Office. We’re in the new Center for Criminal Justice, and Malcolm was with Richard Schlatter who then was the vice president. On University we were walking down James Street towards the side entrance to the Presbyterian Church. And Delora Jones was on one side of them, and I was on the other side of them. We’re not quite Twiggy-like figures. And Malcolm said, “These two women are my battleships.” [Laughter] You know. As he introduced us to Dr. Schlatter.

He also…one of the things I remember about Malcolm, he was I think just very much loved on this campus. I was younger then. I’m not sure, you know, what kind of administrator he was. But I do know that people just liked him very much because he would walk into any office, and he would empty out his pockets. There was always a candy bar or something for whatever secretary he was greeting. And then one day—and again, Delora and I were together, and he said, “You should always treat secretaries with respect because they’re the people…they’re the people that you want to know on your way up. But they’re the people who are going to be kind to you on your way down.” So that was the kind of man that Malcolm was.

The other provost that I remember during my time at Rutgers-Newark, Horace DePodwin, who was the dean of what is now the Graduate School of Management, then I think called the Business School; I’m not sure because it’s gone through….

COHEN: The School of Business.

BROWN: The School of Business, yes, yes. Yes, Graduate School of Business Administration, now the Graduate School of Management. He was acting provost for a while after Malcolm. And then, as now, even though we’re Public Information and Public Relations, this office in some way or another has always been involved on some level with recruitment, campus recruitment. And Horace DePodwin had an administrative assistant over there at the grad school named Keith McLaughlin. And he had the assignment of putting together a program to recruit minority students, and particularly Hispanic students. And Delora and I were asked to work with Keith, and we were the guys who really kind of implemented this. And the thing Delora and I remember about that—and you might ask her about this—is that because we wanted to do an ethnic thing that would appeal to the students, we decided that the refreshments would be typically something that would appeal to these students. So we made calls around town. Neither one of us had a car, and were I believe on the 24 bus at the end of Newark where Broad Street, you know, leads into Route 21, McCarter Highway, lugging black beans and rice, you know, on the bus for this recruitment day. And I think it was a pretty successful recruitment, too. I think we did get some students out of that. Then after Horace, Jim Young was the provost for a very long time. And now our current provost is Norman Samuels.

COHEN: Yes. When you said this office, I mean could you just—what does this office do? I guess. What do you do? Or what have you been doing in this office?
BROWN: Okay. The nature of this office to me has—and it’s changed. I see it’s evolved, you know, in all of this time.

COHEN: It’s the Public Information Office.

BROWN: It’s the Public Information Office. When I came it was the Office of Public Relations. Some years ago the office was changed, the office’s name was changed to Office of Public Information, but we are in fact public relations. As a matter of fact, the various campuses are…I think in New Brunswick they’re called University Communications, which is kind of their umbrella title. And in New Brunswick they also have people who are doing basically what we do in this office; they’re called the Rutgers News Service. And when I came, we write releases. We write copy that we distribute to newspapers to print in electronic media. We also deal with those medias. If we get inquiries from reporters or editors who are looking for an expert…. And today it might be on something very, very topical. For instance, I had a call yesterday from a reporter who said—the public advocate. There’s been a story in the paper about the public advocate is involved in—is proposing regionalization of public schools. I’m looking for someone who wants to talk to the issue of the institutionalization of the Office of Public Advocate. So I have some calls out to people in the law school, who might have a sense of this, and I will get back to the reporter.

But I was telling you earlier, you know, before you started to record, that when I came, one of the things that I did was—I was the director of the Speakers Bureau. But that was a very formalized part of this office, where we not only responded to requests for speakers, usually faculty speakers although there were administrators as well, who would go out to talk to civic groups like, you know, the Lions Club and the Rotary. But also at that time we actually tried to market…. I mean we didn’t call it marketing. But we actually tried to market programs. For instance we’d be in touch with the adult schools the high schools conduct, the evening schools that high schools conduct, and say, Listen, we can give you six or eight speakers over that many weeks who could talk on famous American authors or whatever, or a series on economics, you know, what have you. And we were actually trying to market that. And it worked. And then probably, oh, I don’t know, within five or six years—and each of the campuses I think used to have a person who would do this. And then I think, you know, administration decided that maybe that wasn’t the best use of our time. So while we still respond—I mean if we still get inquiries from a group that says, Listen, I need to have a speaker. Can you get someone for me? we’ll try to provide that service. But we don’t market the way used to.

When I came, the productivity was measured almost by—we used to call it measuring copy: How many releases did you do in a day or a week? And how much of it was picked up? And at the time when the campus was smaller—and it was because I still remember I think the speech department was still down on Rector Street; I mean I think in 1968 when I came as a student, there were still some classes being held down there. We used to, every student who made the dean’s list, every student who was named to an athletic team, you know, who was picked for an athletic team, we used to do a lot of phone towners . At that time also there was something called the Rutgers Thursday Feature. And while it was distributed by the New Brunswick campus—from the news service in New Brunswick—Camden and Newark also
contributed stories. And they would be full-length, two-and-a-half-, three-page features with photographs that were distributed to every daily and weekly paper in the state, as well as to some outlets in New York and Philadelphia. And it really got good pickup. I can remember, for instance, doing stories on the first women, or among the first women, who entered the MBA program at the then School of Business Administration. Doing a story on Judith Weis out of the biological sciences department and her work with how certain toxins in the water affected, you know, marine life along, you know, between New Jersey and the Arthur Kill. You know between New Jersey and Staten Island. Again, I’m not sure, and I don’t remember dates, we don’t do very much of that anymore. We also contribute materials to Focus, which is the faculty and staff newspaper; that comes out of the New Brunswick office; to the Rutgers magazine which is published three or four times a year. Out of this office we do a faculty/staff newsletter called The Bulletin, which when it started we were doing four issues a year, two each semester. Budget cuts in the last six months to a year have taken away some of the money. So this coming fall semester—this coming academic year—we’ll be doing two, April and a spring 1992 issues, you know, version of The Bulletin.

We’re involved more now with doing placement and doing something that’s called—that are called Media Advisories. And usually—we have talked about this a little bit before—we’re looking at the newspapers, we’re listening to the electronic media: What’s topical? And we’re trying to provide, primarily it’s faculty, faculty experts. For instance one of the things that I had been trying to keep up on recently…. Well, let me back off a little bit. We placed a lot of people around the Persian Gulf, faculty, faculty experts. People like Walter Weiker of our political science department because he’s an expert on the Middle East. He knows about Israel, he knows about Turkey. And Warren Kimball out of the history department. Said Samatar also out of history. Said is an African, as you know, who’s also a Muslim. And so just people from, you know, a lot of different perspectives. My colleague Warren was able to get people out of the Grammar School of Management who could talk about, you know, the global impact and the economy of this whole thing. And many of our people were quoted in the newspapers, appeared on radio shows, provided “news bytes” for the evening news.

COHEN: Going back a bit, let’s say, to the big public event in the late sixties, in ’69 where I guess the events on this campus, the Conklin takeover. What role did this office play in getting the story out to the news?

BROWN: I can’t answer that because I wasn’t yet a part of that office. I was a student at the time.

COHEN: It was ’69.


COHEN: So you graduated in 1970, yes.

BROWN: I was a member of the Observer staff, which is… The Observer is the student newspaper. And the Observer, which then I believe was publishing twice a week, was doing—still maintained that schedule, but also did a lot of “extras.” And I did, you know, some of the
work for that. I was primarily a copy editor for the Observer. But I also, you know, remember that. I think, you know, somebody like Morris Roth or Delora could really tell you what the role of this office…I think.

COHEN: Of this office.

BROWN: Of this office. And just based on what I’ve seen in our files about that period, I think they were very much involved. I think, you know, I think they were consulting with Malcolm Talbott, who was in charge of that. And I think they probably assisted Malcolm Talbott and whoever. I don’t know the other administrators involved. I don’t know if Marvin Greenberg was involved. But I’ve seen for instance position papers, or policy papers, you know as they were responding, the students were making demands. And then, you know, the written material. So I think probably this office was involved.

COHEN: When you were on the Observer, what was your perception of the grievance at that time?

BROWN: Well, I think the Observer people were very much—I don’t know how impartial they were because I think they very much backed what the students were doing. I think they agreed. The two years that I was here as a student, the Observer editor and staff were very liberal. I’d call all of them liberals. And they supported the takeover. I think…. Although I think probably if you look at the papers, I think—I’m sure that they presented, you know, a fairly impartial reportage of what was going on.

COHEN: What do you think is, looking back, the historical significance of that event?

BROWN: Well, it resulted I think, in the statewide EOF program. It presented opportunities for minority students to come here who maybe wouldn’t have had a chance. I think probably it was positive, as I recall. I guess they—I’m not sure how many days they occupied the building.

COHEN: I think it was three.

BROWN: Yes. But I don’t think, as I recall, that there was any malicious damage to the building. And I think they made themselves heard. I think, you know, they practiced civil disobedience, but I think that what came out of it was good and positive.

COHEN: We were talking earlier about Malcolm Talbott before. What was your perception at the time of Malcolm Talbott’s role in the negotiations? Do you have any recollections of that?

BROWN: Not firsthand. Not really. But I think, I’m sure, you know, just knowing the kind of person that he was and how he supported opportunities, educational opportunities for minority students, I think maybe, you know, he was as classy as Mason Gross and said, you know, I invited them in. And I think if anybody had tried to arrest those students, I think Malcolm would have been very much upset. But I don’t know that firsthand. That was just my after-the-event perception of it.
COHEN: But you know the riots in July of ’67. Now how did that impact on you personally and on what was going on at the time? What recollections do you have about—any vivid pictures…?

BROWN: Okay. I just recall reading about it. It seemed rather distant to me at the time, I think, because at that time I—that was what? That was ’67, wasn’t it?

COHEN: ‘Sixty-seven, July of ’67, yes.

BROWN: Yes. And I think at that time I probably wasn’t even thinking that I would end up here in Newark. So it was a little distant. I think—I think probably at the time I thought, you don’t shoot a man for taking a television out of a broken store window…. I guess maybe that kind of reaction. Because you don’t—I don’t know. There was a lot of violence that maybe I think was unnecessary.

COHEN: A little later, when you were in this office, how did this office deal with the student activism and the anti-Vietnam War student activism?

BROWN: Well again, I was in the middle of that.

COHEN: Yes.

BROWN: You know. [Laughs] I remember the students, you know, who walked down who were going to liberate what is it now? the Rodino Building. What is that called? The Federal Building. Yes. I remember—I mean I don’t know how this office reacted to it all. But I do remember being scared that there were a lot of cops lined up from the corner of—on University Avenue from Bleeker Street to Warren Street. And that was kind of scary because…but none of the kids were violent. That was it on the—they were really mobilized. There was that period, you know, after Kent State—

COHEN: umhm.

BROWN: Yes. The kids on this campus, you know, it was the first time maybe that exams, final exams—that was the year I was graduating, and exams were optional.

COHEN: mhm.

BROWN: Yes.

COHEN: How badly split do you think the campus was then?

BROWN: I don’t know. See, I was…. I think that there was some dissention, but I don’t think a lot. I think the majority of the kids, including the kids who used to admit that they deliberately stayed in college because they weren’t going to go to Vietnam. But I think the majority were against the Vietnam War. I think there was, you know, maybe a small percentage of kids who were really conservative. And I can’t remember the group: It was Young Somebody. I’m not sure. I don’t know whether it was the Young Republicans; maybe not.
COHEN: Maybe the YAF—Young Americans for Freedom?

BROWN: Yes, Young Americans for Freedom. That was it. Thank you, Gil. Thank you. That was it. But that was a small group. So I would say probably the majority of the kids were against the, you know, the war in Vietnam.

COHEN: What perceptions do you have of the different divisions then on the faculty? Any kind of feeling for that?

BROWN: Well, there was some “radical” faculty, primarily young. The older faculty at least—and I don’t know all of the disciplines, but for instance in my discipline I think they were a little bit dismayed at what was going on. But also the English majors are…I must tell you they were exceptionally bright. So there might be an older professor who was very dismayed at this bearded hippie, you know, on campus. What could they do with a kid who, you know, who got up in class and was absolutely brilliant in an analysis of whatever, you know, he’d been reading.

COHEN: You heard about such incidents?

BROWN: Well, I witnessed it.

COHEN: Oh, you witnessed it.

BROWN: I witnessed it. I mean….

COHEN: Can you describe what would be the nature of the colloquy there?

BROWN: Well, you know, it— [Break in recording]

COHEN: We’re back with Mrs. Brown. Now, you were talking about these bright students.

BROWN: We were talking about these bright students. One of their biggest gripes was that they knew, many of them, that they were going to go on to grad school. They wouldn’t even consider applying to the graduate department in New Brunswick because they felt that they wouldn’t be accepted, that their applications wouldn’t even be looked at. I can tell you that two of these, both of them men who were friends of mine, both went on to graduate studies at NYU, New York University. Both now have Ph.D.’s. One of them has since written a novel, and the other student won the Dean’s Dissertation Award at NYU.

COHEN: Why did they think they wouldn’t be accepted to the Rutgers graduate programs?

BROWN: Because there was just a feeling that New Brunswick people are very elitist because you know then, as now—well then, more than now. Then we were strictly a commuter campus. Most of the students were people who came to Rutgers in Newark because they really couldn’t afford to go elsewhere. Many of them were the first members of their family to get a college education, and I think maybe this is still a little bit true today, and I’m not sure what the statistics
are today. And we have very fine faculty. As I say, the students were really bright, could write, could speak. I mean many of them, to be honest, many of them were smoking a lot of dope. Nobody was doing cocaine or heroin. But there was a lot of marijuana that people were smoking, but they were extremely bright students to, at least in the English department, a very fine faculty.

COHEN: This is when you were completing your bachelor’s degree.

BROWN: Yes, this was my—yes.

COHEN: Then.

BROWN: This was, you know, from, you know….

COHEN: What changes have you seen from those days, from your undergraduate days, here on this campus, what changes have you seen through the seventies and into the early eighties, in the student body as far as—aside from composition? Attitudes, social relations, sexual relations? What can you say?

BROWN: Okay. The only thing really I think that I’m aware of is that what students are choosing for their majors. [Laughs] When I was here, there were a lot of English majors, and there were a lot of students getting degrees, you know, graduating as French majors or Spanish majors or, you know, a lot of liberal arts. Now my understanding is that most of the students are business majors.

COHEN: What was motivating them then to major in humanities? I mean everybody’s hoping to get a job. But why—I don’t quite understand that.

BROWN: I’m not sure. I don’t understand it either unless it was at that time, you know, where people were living together in groups. I mean those that were…. Well, I think, you know, again, they were younger than I, and people of my generation, for instance, nobody left home until they—a woman didn’t leave home until she was going to get married. Or, you know, even if she went away to college, she came back home until she did get married. I think in the sixties was a time where it was just natural for students to move out and to—they could afford to live together in groups. There used to be four or five or six of them who’d rent apartments together. They weren’t so concerned, I don’t think, about getting the job or material things. They dressed in secondhand clothes out of the Salvation Army thrift shops. If was a time when they started to get, I think, health conscious about what they ate. And I think there was a sense that they were going to survive. You know they wanted to read, they wanted to be aware, and they were very aware of what was going on politically. I mean wasn’t it, for instance, the young people who prevented Lyndon Johnson from seeking a second term, right?

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

BROWN: Okay. So I think…. You know they knew that they were going to survive, they were going to get by, they were going to do kind of what they—they were going to take off and travel before they settled down and married and had families, if in fact they married. It was a time also
when people in heterosexual relations, you know, the people of that age, there was no problem with living together. And I can’t think of any one of those kids who came out of the college that I knew in 1970 and said, Well, you know, I’ve got a 40 or 50 or 60 thousand dollar a year a job lined up. You know they weren’t worried about going to Wall Street and getting a jump on…. You know they were writing poetry and short stories, and they were musicians. I don’t know. I’m not sure that I’ve answered your question.

COHEN: Oh, you’ve described it …and I’m sure that it was a culture critics have all sorts of explanations. But again, the question, though, I want to follow up with: Is why did the change occur? The change occurred in majors and attitudes. Why did this occur? Do you know?

BROWN: I don’t know. I don’t know. I think maybe, you know, a sociologist who’s interested in doing that kind of study could tell. But it has, I think.

COHEN: What’s changes did occur specifically that you can recall?

BROWN: You’re asking, you know…. That’s one that I see. I think—okay. Another thing that I see that’s happening, and I think this is disturbing, I think the bigotry…. I see like—and again, you know, I don’t know enough social history. So that I don’t know if things go in cycles of 20 years or 30 years or what have you.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Right.

BROWN: But, you know, we’re seeing like, today, incidents of bigotry, of racial bigotry, and of bigotry against gays. It really didn’t exist, you know. Yes, the composition of the student body, for instance, is much more diversified now, I think. You know, yes, there are a greater number of blacks and Hispanics and Asian students. There were, for instance, at that time I….perhaps the Asian and Oriental students, there might have been a handful. Okay? But the thing is there were blacks and there were gays at that time, and there were no incidents. I mean—and I don’t know. I mean I don’t know why that.

COHEN: No instances when?

BROWN: Again, no, you know, homophobic incidents, you know. I think…. I wonder if for instance—and I don’t know. Today on television or in the news media you see ugly, ugly incidents taking place in Canarsie, where if blacks are doing a street parade, there are whites on the sideline, you know, making ugly remarks and vice versa. As I recall at the time of the Conklin takeover, I don’t think that happened. You know if—what is that group? The Young Americans for Freedom, if some of them, you know, were on the sidelines, I mean they just weren’t that ugly, I don’t think.

COHEN: Yes.

BROWN: If they in fact did protest. I’m not sure they did, you know. I don’t know.
COHEN: What’s your sense then of the progression in the area of race relations on the campus through the seventies into the eighties? Do you have any kind of sense of that?

BROWN: You know not among students, I think, are…. For instance they’re—actually my black colleagues are going to disagree with me on this. But I think that there are more, you know, affirmative action, and that’s law, right? So I think there are…you know we’re a more integrated workforce today, staff. I think that’s so. Perhaps not on faculty, but that may be because, you know, if they’re looking for a minority faculty in a certain discipline, maybe you just can’t recruit one. I don’t know. I don’t know that.

COHEN: Well, how—talking about affirmative action, which is one of the areas of interest—how has it impacted on the hiring and promotion of women that you see?

BROWN: Yes. I think it’s been positive. I think there are…. Within the university I think it’s worked. I think that there are more women administrators. I’m not sure…. Well, yes, I was going to say we still have not had a female provost on any of the campuses. But we’ve had a few that have been associate provosts; at least we’ve had on this campus. I don’t think there are any right now. But we have had them. I think within the central administration, there are a number, I think now, currently, there have been a number of female vice presidents. So I see women who are chairs of departments on the School of Arts and Sciences faculty. I’m not sure; I haven’t counted. But I think there’s a good share of female chairs. I think affirmative action has mandated that, there be at least one female associate dean; there has been for the last few years. Yes.

COHEN: With all the changes that have occurred in the university here in Newark, how has the public perception changed? …public perception.

BROWN: Well, I think the public perception of the university—public perception—has always been good, has always been positive. And more so out of the State of New Jersey. I think, you know, 20 years ago people outside of the State of New Jersey thought that we were an Ivy League university; they really didn’t know. Again, a little anecdote: One of the young women whom I was a student with, Joan, went out to one of the Dakotas because she’d just married and her husband was in ROTC, and he was stationed—He’d been in ROTC and was in the Air Force and was stationed out there. She applied to graduate school. And when she came home and she was talking to me, she said, “I can’t believe the way the instructor defers to me. Every time you know he’s got some question, he turns to me, and identifies me as a Rutgers grad.” And that’s interesting because they weren’t asking you whether you were a graduate of Rutgers in Camden, New Brunswick, or Newark. And yet, you know, when I told you earlier about the students who really believe that—who wouldn’t apply to grad school in New Brunswick because they didn’t think they would get in. And I think, you know, the way Dr. Bloustein, you know, when he was here he used to call us a coo-coo state because our best students went out of the state. But I think you know, I think that’s changing. I think now people…. Because I’m talking to people, you know, the guy on the street, who says—and these are people in high schools—who say, “I have students that can’t get into Rutgers. Why can’t they get into Rutgers?” We know Rutgers is a better place than for instance Jersey City or Montclair. We’d prefer our kids—well, I don’t know if I can answer that, I don’t know, you know—whether it’s the SIT—SAT, excuse me—the SAT
scores or what. But I think people, yes. I think the perception is is that we are a fine university. And I think, you know, of course we in all the visions of Public Information are promoting that. I mean the administration is promoting that. A year or so ago Rutgers was accepted into the American Association of American Universities, whatever, this very prestigious association of some 50 or so universities. So, you know, we do pat ourselves on the back. But also, you know, we’re getting some publicity where *U.S. News & World Report* picked this campus, for instance, as one of the upcoming, better—best—you know for our size in the country.

COHEN: Is that the current—

BROWN: That was a year ago.

COHEN: A year ago?

BROWN: I think that was for 1990, their school edition. But I think…. I’ll tell you what I have a gripe about, and it’s I think…. This is a gripe about our own staff. I personally get very perturbed. I think, you know, if we didn’t have the students, we wouldn’t have jobs. And so it’s I want everybody who’s answering a phone when somebody calls in to be as courteous as they can be. And I get dismayed when I get some person, he’ll say, I want— And I’ll say, “This is not the office.” I said, you know, I’ll say, “And they’ll say, “Look, I have talked to four or five places. Nobody—“ I say, “Well, no problem. I may not have the answer. If I can’t tell you, if I can’t find a name or telephone number for you, then I’m going to take your name and telephone number and try to get that information for you.” So I don’t know what the perception of some our staff is, I guess is what I’m trying to say. It should be better. It should be as good as, you know….

COHEN: Is that a question of training and—

BROWN: I think so.

COHEN: Well, what has been done internally?

BROWN: And I think there has been—you know there has been internal training on that. Of course we’ve had some cutbacks so that we don’t have some of our trainers and personnel. But I think it’s, you know, I understand. Everybody’s got bad days. But, you know, I just don’t understand why people don’t understand that it takes as much energy to be nice as it does to be ugly, you know.

COHEN: What has been the nature of the relationship between staff as affirmative action has been working and bringing people into the workforce who may not have been hired because of… may not have been in the workforce in these jobs, let’s say, 15, 20 years ago. How has that worked out? How has that impacted on working conditions?

BROWN: For me, fine. For people who are bigots and don’t hide it well, maybe not so fine. I’ve seen people who have been hired who’ve been qualified. And, you know, I don’t care—I don’t know, Gil. I mean I just think, you know, if you’re a bigot, you’re going to have a problem with it. If you’re not a bigot, you’re not going to have a problem with it, but you’re going to deal with
people who are competent, you know, regardless of whether they’re women or people of color. That’s my sense.

COHEN: I wanted to shift to the area of administration and your perception of various administrations who have been here. You know, when you—Oh, that must have occurred when you were here. Well, you were not here, I believe, I don’t believe, when Herbert Woodward was dean of the college.

BROWN: No, I’m not sure…I think Blumenthal, Henry Blumenthal I believe was the dean when I came on.

COHEN: What’s your perception of his administration and his effectiveness and all-around performance as a dean?

BROWN: My perception of him was that he was, you know, a real scholar, a bit autocratic. I sat in on a couple of faculty meetings where he really ran that show. I think he was effective, but I don’t know how well loved he was by his faculty. I really, you know, I really can’t say.

COHEN: Yes. After Blumenthal was Gilbert Panson the acting dean for a year ’71-’72. Do you have any sense there of his administration?

BROWN: Yes. Not really. I’m trying to think, you know. Unless it was something, you know…. I’m not sure that—unless there was something that was really well known, you know, publicly well known. And I’m really not sure. I don’t know that the faculty ever rebelled against any of the deans. Maybe they had a little bit of a problem at one time with Richard Robey, but I really don’t know.

COHEN: Yes.

BROWN: Yes.

COHEN: What was that about perception of his of his administration?

BROWN: I don’t know what it was. You see I’m not sure what…. I don’t know whether he was trying to make changes that higher administration had asked him to do. I’m not sure what that was all about. You know I’m really not qualified to speak on, you know, the administrations of the deans.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. We were talking before about Malcolm Talbott and your experiences with him as the—he was then vice president from ’65 to ’73, I guess, ’72, ’73.

BROWN: Yes.

COHEN: What was your perception of his administration? Well, actually as vice president of the Newark campus and as acting dean for the college before Blumenthal.
BROWN: Okay, so that…. The deanship would have been, I think, a little bit before. My perception of Malcolm is that he was totally and completely chauvinistic about this campus and about the City of Newark.

COHEN: How did… Could you expand on that?

BROWN: Well, I think, you know, I don’t think he was a man who kept his mouth shut. And I think, you know, he was promoted upward when he went down to New Brunswick. And that may have been because he was, you know, such a Newark person. I mean and that’s…. You know that’s a superficial, you know, kind of statement. But it’s just like my perception because again, you know, I don’t know…I really don’t deal with people on that level. But that was my…. I mean I think, you know, Malcolm at all times fought for Newark as part of this university system. Yes.

COHEN: Marvin Greenberg was—I forget the exact total of the position—but certainly Malcolm’s right-hand man at that time. Do you have any…?

BROWN: He went to New Brunswick right after I came into this office, I think. And I’m not sure whether if he went before Bloustein came on or right after. But I can remember being here just a very short time, and I really, you know, didn’t know Mr. Greenberg.

COHEN: Alice Shapiro was in the position of administrative assistant?

BROWN: Yes, yes. I remember that.

COHEN: Any sense of her work in the—how competent she was?

BROWN: Yes, she was—yes. She really was out there in the community. I know that there was a brochure that I know Alice was actively involved in that had to do with the community—with the campus in Newark and how it impacted, how it worked within the community. Yes. Right.

COHEN: What can you say about notable faculty members that you have known in your career here?

BROWN: Probably the best…. There was an English prof that never got tenure; his name was Dominick Grundig [sp], who really was one of Rutgers….

COHEN: Grundig.

BROWN: Yes. Wonderful, wonderful teacher. Leonard Wang who was very patient with someone who didn’t know her French grammar as well as she should have. And he was just a lovely, lovely. I’m trying to….

COHEN: What was there about these people that stands out?
BROWN: I just think they’re fine teachers. And some that I don’t want to talk about that I don’t think were such fine teachers and who kind of made my life miserable. There was a wonderful gentleman, truly, in the English Department. I’m sorry I just can’t think of his name. Alcott. Alcott? Alcott.

COHEN: Richard Alcott?

BROWN: Yes. Wonderful, wonderful man. In fact we did Wadsworth with him, and he just read beautifully, and he was just a gentle-man. And I’m trying to think of who else. Oh, I don’t know. [Laughs] I don’t know.

COHEN: How about outstanding students? Notable students that you ran into or remember?

BROWN: Well, Vickie Donaldson, I remember. Vickie is still around, and she was one of the leaders of the Conklin takeover. She then went on to graduate from our law school. Is now in private practice. Was attorney to the Newark Board of Education for a while. Of course from my time as a student, Michael Immerso who was the leader of the Free People. I haven’t seen Michael in years. But—

COHEN: The Free what?

BROWN: The Free People were just…they were an unorganized, not formal group. They were “the hippies were called the free people.” But Michael was one of the leading activists on campus. I’m not sure that he wasn’t head of the Student Government Association at one time. I really don’t remember. But he was one of the people who protested—one of the leaders who protested over Kent State, who protested, always against the war in Vietnam, who sided with the Conklin takeover. Michael today—the last time I spoke to him, perhaps four or five years ago—last I knew he’s still an activist. He’s working with the same group. So Michael is memorable. I don’t know.

COHEN: Notable staff members?

BROWN: Notable staff members. Oh, God, they should jump out at me, right? Horace DePodwin was impressive. I mean Horace, just his way. When he came to us to do any project, whether it was writing, as I once did, copy that was going to be presented at a congressional meeting of some sort, he never gave you any room to believe that you couldn’t do it. Which was an incredible—I mean he just.… It was intimidating in a way, but it was I need to have this. And there was no sense…. [End of Tape #1]

COHEN: Okay, we’re back with Erma Brown. And you were talking about an assignment that Horace DePodwin gave you.

BROWN: It was— And I don’t know whether it was—it was testimony that someone was going to present. It might not have been he himself. But it was something to do with the Small Business Development Group…the Rutgers Minority Small Business Development Corporation or something like that. And of course while he read everything one wrote with a blue pencil…. But
he was just the kind of a person who just—he never gave you the impression that you were going to fail. On the one hand it was very intimidating. But it also gave one a great deal of confidence. And I mean he just had such a manner. I even—I referred to the recruitment program we did. It was like you women can do this. [Laughs] You know. And so that was very good. In a way that was very good for one’s ego because then you’re really…. I mean here was a provost, and you’re a staff writer here, and he’s got some kind of confidence that he hasn’t hired an outside PR firm to do this kind of thing. Yes. I like Norman Samuel very much because I think…. Norman is—I probably shouldn’t say this. But I think Norman is very much for this campus. And I think that’s good. I like this campus. I worked one time for—I was assigned for some—I don’t know whether it was a month, two or three months to the office in New Brunswick. And while it was very nice, it wasn’t as nice as being here. Even though our campus has grown, there is still a greater sense of collegiality on this campus, I feel, among the entire staff and faculty. I mean I don’t know some of the new faculty. But we all seem to be on a first-name basis on this campus. We’re not as formal as people tend to be, I think, in New Brunswick. And of course I don’t know if that’s changing. There’s now a new administration.

COHEN: But going back to Horace DePodwin: Remember when he was acting provost, he made a public statement concerning the development of the campus? Do you have any recollection of the public impact of that statement?

BROWN: Well, I know there were two things—there were a couple of things that happened, and I’m not sure if I’ve got my facts straight on this one. I think it was during his tenure as acting provost that either something at the gym didn’t get done. Moneys were taken from that, as well as, I think at Dana Library. And I’m not quite sure what that was. But also I don’t think the Engelhard Hall got to be as high as it was supposed to be because I think that there weren’t enough moneys at the time. So I think that people generally were unhappy about that.

COHEN: Do you have any recollections of his remarks about the development there on the campus?

BROWN: No. No, I don’t. Has someone talked about this?

COHEN: Well, it was covered in the press about the remarks that he made which, I guess, created some comment about the utilization of a plan, I think, for this campus. And I was wondering if you could tell me….

BROWN: No, no, I don’t recollect that. No.

COHEN: Or of the press, the public impact of that. Well, the other question is under notable people, I’d like to address notable support staff, people in all walks of life, people in the general workforce that you recall? Like secretaries, janitor, the support, physical plant, clerical, any?

BROWN: Yes, I think people on the—like Dottie Boglione, who I think one and all loved, you know, as the queen of the campus. You know she was a custodian who—I’m really not sure. Dottie is retired now. But I guess she was over at the Campus Center. And she was just a wonderful, wonderful person. Then, of course, Dottie Boglione, who was loved by everyone over
at—she was the operations manager at the Campus Center. And the students loved her, you know. She was a wonderful person. And I think today one of—David May, who has replaced her, is a wonderful person to work with. I mean he’s just so accommodating for what anyone is doing, a conference or anything, at the center. David will just bend over backwards to try to make everything easier. And I think David’s been lucky because he’s had a wonderful, wonderful staff. Some of it student staff that just really, you know—good people. I don’t know. A lot of the people that were here when I first started are no longer here. Steve Senko, who was retired, the athletics director. Tom Quinn who was the purchasing agent; Tom’s dead now. I don’t know. My memory’s gone dead on me.

COHEN: What are the most notable events that you’ve covered out of this office in this position?

BROWN: Okay. Probably one that I was directly involved with the publicity of was the 50th anniversary of the Newark College of Arts and Sciences, which we did a two- or three-day program, where Henry Winkler, who’d been vice president of the university, came back as a speaker. And because we got a lot of publicity out—

COHEN: What year was that was that…?

BROWN: Well, it would it have been ’81 or…?

COHEN: From Dana College that’s probably what…

BROWN: Well, Dana College was before. But when they merged Dana College with what then was the two-year program, the prelaw program, remember?

COHEN: University of Newark.

BROWN: Newark, right.

COHEN: Yes. So the thirties.

BROWN: Yes, the thirties.

COHEN: So, 50—okay. Alright. Okay. And you were involved in—

BROWN: Well, we were involved in the publicity. Some of the other things that I remember.… Well, we’ve had really some memorable conferences on this campus.

COHEN: Yea…

BROWN: Yes. And one of them…and I was just reading recently—let me look at everything—Literature and the Urban Experience. And just let me grab this because I need…. Michael Jaye and Ed Watts are English Department. They are editors of these essays on the city and literature. And the literary people that we have here, I just don’t know how anybody managed to do this.
People like Carol Oates and Toni Morrison and Stephen Spender and Alfred Casson and Leslie Fiedler and James Baldwin and Amiri Baraka and Marge Piercy and Bruno Bettelheim. And it was just absolutely…. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the San Francisco poet. It was just one of the most marvelous…. Robert Penn Warren was part of that conference. And a funny thing, a very personal kind of thing. There was a dinner. And I don’t know whether it was the closing dinner. And Delora Jones and I were there, and we had photographs, many of the publicity photographs and programs. And we went around asking people for autographs, people that we might not ever see again. And of course there were people there who thought we were rather gauche [laughs] asking for autographs. Until it was all over, and then people were saying: Wouldn’t you like to contribute those autographs and those photographs to the archives? Now I think I still have mine. I don’t know what Delora’s done with hers, but mine I think I still have somewhere. Probably someday, they’ll probably—mine probably will go to Dana Library. Probably one of the most memorable things for me personally that I remember: The year that Leo Troy was president of the campus chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, he brought as the speaker…. 

COHEN: What year was that, do you think?

BROWN: Oh, wow!

COHEN: Approximately.

BROWN: It’s got to be a good ten years.

COHEN: Okay.

BROWN: The speaker—and it was before Isaac Singer received his Nobel Prize. So it was a couple of years before that. Isaac Singer just died this year.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

BROWN: He was the speaker.

COHEN: Oh, he was the speaker.

BROWN: He was the speaker on—

COHEN: On this campus?

BROWN: Well, the luncheon that year was held at the Manor, a restaurant which is in I think South Orange. I was invited because I had done the publicity. And it was the most wonderful thing because Isaac Singer came and read one of his then-unpublished short stories. So, you know, that’s the kind of thing for, you know, a literary freak. You know it kind of gives you goose bumps. As was this conference on Literature and the Urban Experience, you know.

COHEN: Did you meet Singer?
BROWN: Yes.

COHEN: Yes.

BROWN: Actually one—I had to call…. The most amazing thing for me, and I’ve told Leo this story, was that I had to call to get some publicity information, maybe a bio. Isaac Singer himself answered the telephone. [Laughs] And I remember he was an old man then. I mean he was 83, I guess, when he got it. And he was an old man then with a black suit, I think, and white socks—what looked like white, you know, athletic socks. But just a wonderful, wonderful man. So you know a couple of years later when he got the Nobel Prize, you know, we were all thrilled.

Some of the—I can’t remember some of the things or don’t know about some of the things that you asked. But I’d like to tell you about, you know, in connection with my job, some memorable things for me. And I think for me but also for this campus. At one point for a couple of years, one of my assignments was to do sports information. I had a director who shall be nameless. But who didn’t give me a lot of work to do. So I went over and talked to Steve Sanko and said, “You don’t have a sports information director. I am looking to do some work because the university’s paying me. Let me do the sports information because I’m a spectator.” And he said fine. And it was during the time….

Well, our intercollegiate teams are all Division III except for men’s volleyball. And it was at a time for a couple of years we had this wonderful men’s volleyball team that went—in the years that I was doing sports information—went to the NCAA finals some three or four times because—at least four times during the time that I had that assignment because I went to Los Angeles twice when the finals were held at UCLA; to Ohio State one year; to Muncie, Indiana, where Ball State is at. And I’m not sure that we didn’t participate in the finals at Penn State as well. But because I was doing sports information, I did get, you know, to go to these places. I don’t think in those years we ever finished better than fourth. But one of the things that we did, too, we sponsored, usually in February and March in those years—and we still do—the Golden Dome Volleyball Tournament. And at the time when the California teams were coming out for our tournament, we did see in our Golden Dome gymnasium such players as Tim Hovland and Karch Kiraly. And Karch Kiraly was on the US Olympics Team that won the men’s volleyball tournament, you know. The years that the men’s, the USA men’s team won, Karch was on those teams. Of course today, you know, he’s like one of the best beach volleyball players. But there are people, you know, from USC, from UCLA who did play right here in Newark at our tournaments.

COHEN: How did the volleyball team get started here?

BROWN: Well, it got started with…. Taras Hunczak, who is a professor of history and political science, who was born in the Ukraine, who played volleyball in England as a displaced person during the Second World War and then came here, Taras was teaching here—he was active with Ukrainian community groups, and volleyball was one of the things that they play. And at the time, there must have been a dozen or so Ukrainian students on this campus, including one or two of Taras’s nephews. So he started the team, I believe, as a club team. And at that time we weren’t even…this campus I don’t believe had membership in the NCAA. I think they were
NAIA was the athletic association that they belonged to. And Taras was their first coach. And that one year when the team was a varsity team rather than just a club team, he took them out to this NAIA final, and the Rutgers-Newark team, you know, won it. And then after that, I guess some moneys were found to really make it part of the athletic program of the intercollegiate program. And then shortly after that, I think, you know, all of the teams, all of our athletic program, the entire athletic program went into NC-double A. Or NCAA—yes. And then—I’m trying to think of some of the coaches. Samariah Trevitch [sp] and Alec Propovich and Eric Paval. And the current team is quite good, too. I think they went to the finals a year or so ago with Coach Bob Brertucci [sp]. But it was Taras.

COHEN: What year was that?

BROWN: Yes. That really had to be in the early eighties, late seventies, early eighties.

COHEN: Late 70s…Early 80s!?

BROWN: Yes, yes.

COHEN: Yea, well it seemed so fresh in my memory…

BROWN: Yes. Late seventies, early eighties. Because I haven’t done sports information since—and Steve has retired, and I guess John Adams has been on for about five years. So it was before that.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

BROWN: Yes. Lots of other things, but I’m sure I’m just not remembering.

COHEN: yea yea, well is…?

BROWN: Well, the other thing, not as vivid because I didn’t know all of the authors, but another literary conference—and this was Asela Laguna out of the Classic and Modern Languages and Literature Department. She ran a conference with people out of the Dominican Republic were here. And I think, I’m not sure, but I think Seton Hall University. People out of their languages department, their Spanish probably—their Spanish department—where they brought in a lot of really well-known authors, but primarily Spanish-writing authors. And as I recall, that was, you know, quite a success as well.

COHEN: Specifically what would the role of this office and you in this various conferences, how would you—what was your job? Other than going around and getting autographs.

BROWN: No. Yes, other than getting the autographs. Well, really primarily to do advanced publicity, to let the world know that this conference was happening. And as a result of which, to try to generate coverage of that event. And probably—and I don’t recall, you know—often when we’re doing, when we do advanced publicity but then if we do expect press coverage, we’ll put together press kits for reporters who might come, which would include biographical materials,
photographs if they’re available, that kind of thing. We also—you were asking earlier…I want to talk again a little bit about the kind of work that we do. A year ago I think we did something that was quite successful; and that was the jazz exhibition.

COHEN: Oh!

BROWN: That was a cooperative effort between the Newark Public Library and the Institute of Jazz Studies, which of course is a division of Dana Library. And that, while it was a cooperative effort, I offered to do the bulk of the publicity, which, you know, was writing the major advance release. And then people from WBJO, which was also involved, provided some information on their operation. The library provided information; that Newark Public Library, that is, provided information. I researched whatever, you know, the materials on our end of it: the Institute of Jazz Study, what its function is, its history, etc. And included that on the release. And as a result of that, we had very, very good coverage, which is the thing that this office is looking for. I mean that’s what our function is.

COHEN: Yes.

BROWN: You know.

COHEN: You mentioned the Dana Library, I think its close to the wind up, but…What’s been your experience of the Dana Library’s, well, let’s say collections? Let’s start with that.

BROWN: Okay. I confess…yes, as user. As a student it was wonderful. As a student, it had everything and more than I…

COHEN: Did you…?

BROWN: Yes. As a student, when I was a student. Because—and I don’t know; I confess that at this point I don’t use it as much as I did, but that’s only because I’m not reading as much because I have all these books at home that I haven’t read. [Laughs]

COHEN: Tell me.

BROWN: That I haven’t read. But there were, in addition to the study areas—what do you call them?

COHEN: Carrels?

BROWN: The carrels, okay. In addition to those, which were used, there were also rooms upstairs that if one was doing a project with a group of people or, you know, whatever, where you needed to talk to people, it was just absolutely wonderful. You could ask for one of those rooms or if they were empty. At that time you could just go in and use them. And that was really great. Today, as a staff person, what I used once or twice, but plan to use more of, is the computer room in the basement of the library.
COHEN: The Development Center.

BROWN: Yes, exactly. Yes.

COHEN: In the Library but not of the Library…

BROWN: Over at the library, yes. But it’s there. But I think Dana is a good library. Of course I’m no longer a student, so I don’t know. Students complain that—I know you don’t have enough room. I don’t think the library is big enough. But I see the library—just as this office has evolved, I see the library evolving as well. I think in recent years the library has been the site of, for instance, exhibits. And I know that—I think, you know, because she has said, Lynn Mullins, the director, has said that she wants the library to be part of the city, not just of the campus. Wants people in the community to know it’s there.

COHEN: Yes.

BROWN: And is part of the—I think that’s good. I think that’s a tradition of some of the other people, you know, of the Malcolm Talbott, of the Norman Samuels. And I think that’s really good. But, for instance, you are computerized now. They want to get us in, and I admit I don’t know how to look. I mean I know how to go into the card catalog [laughs] there to look up for something that I want. I would need a little help to use the computerized facilities.

COHEN: What can you say about that help that has been available over the years in the library, let’s say through the seventies and early eighties? I mean the circulation department, reference department, interlibrary loan. What’s your sense of the kind of services…?

BROWN: For me personally?

COHEN: Yes.

BROWN: For me personally, always wonderful. I mean there hasn’t been a time, including you, Gil Cohen, when I haven’t, if I called whomever I called at the reference, and I’ve said, Hey, listen, I really—Could you guys help me? I don’t know where to look. Give me a lead. Whether it’s been by telephone or my going over in person, I’ve just, you know, everyone has always just been very good about helping. I’m thinking of, oh, well, my memory’s going bad. But who was in reference? Jim—not Jim Dole.

COHEN: Jim Merritt.

BROWN: Jim Merritt.

COHEN: He retired.

BROWN: He retired, yes, yes. And he was in reference.

COHEN: Yes.
BROWN: And very, very helpful. So you know it—yes, yes. So my association with Dana Library has always been…. I don’t know. You know personally there isn’t any department on campus that I’ve ever had a problem with. I’ve had—forgive me for repeating—problems with anonymous staff members who aren’t courteous to people on the outside that’s been, and to the point…. One little incident really bothered me. Someone wrote—printed it in black and white to this office, and perhaps it was directed to me, saying: You are not to tell people calling from the outside that this office does this and this and this. And my initial reaction was to call up and say, Now, look here, you know, you ought to be thankful that people are calling because you have a job. But then I just thought, no, I just won’t do anything [laughs] about it, won’t even report it to anybody. But that kind of thing bothers me.

COHEN: This was a complaint internally?

BROWN: Yes, yes! In fact they….You see what happens, this office, and we may very well be listed in the Bell Telephone directories as information.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

BROWN: So we get all kinds of calls.

COHEN: For information.

BROWN: For information. And all of the people in this office really— You know it’s something often, 60, 80 percent of the time, it’s out of our domain completely, you see.

COHEN: You’ve really no information a number on this campus.

BROWN: Exactly, campus. So we get those calls.

COHEN: You get those calls. So it’s either this office or the operators who get queries, I see..

BROWN: And also the operators don’t know if, you know, they’re temporary or not permanent people.

COHEN: Yes.

BROWN: And so we get the calls. And we don’t mind dealing with that. I think, you know, this office really deals well with them. So it upsets me when other people don’t, you know…. Because it’s gratifying, you know, when somebody said, “Thank you. You really—you’ve been so courteous.” You know. Even though you don’t know, you’ve tried to help.

COHEN: Any topics I haven’t touched on that you’d like to….?

BROWN: Oh, Gil, I don’t know. I’m sure that after you remember more. I am one person, you know, who’s…what can I tell you? I love this campus. I’m a graduate of this campus. I’m I
think, you know, everyone who wants to go on to school should come to Rutgers. I do that. I mean I’m always promoting Rutgers. I try to get people to come here. I work in the local community. I’m a volunteer down in the Ironbound, which is the Portuguese-American community. I tell my people down there that if they’re coming on, this is the place that they should be coming to. I think it’s good. I think we have good…. You know we have wonderful programs. I know that they’re changing, but I think…. Although it’s changing. I mean there are topnotch people coming in. For instance, Dan Murnick, who was at Bell Labs, is now the head of our Physics Department. And there are some very fine people over there. We’re getting ready to open up the Aidekman Research Center. And while they haven’t—they don’t have the complete faculty there, I think that the work that Ann Crease [sp] and Paula Tolara are going to be doing, particularly her work with children is really—

COHEN: Oh, with children!

BROWN: Yes. You know I don’t quite have it down pat. But I think with—it’s neuroscience, of course, and it’s like I think with children with certain neurological—like hearing and….

COHEN: Oh, I didn’t realize that that was going to be a specialty…

BROWN: Yes, yes, I think that’s exciting. I know that there are some departments where their losing students. I mean—and I said this earlier; I forget when I’m repeating myself. I don’t think there are many kids, students, today who are majoring in languages. My oldest son, who’s a graduate of this campus, a geology major, I don’t think there are as many geology majors anymore. There used to be a botany department; there no longer is. I mean there are botany courses taught. But it’s not a biological sciences department. And I’ve seen, you know, some changes there. There’s a new, wonderful, oh what is it called? It’s out of the biological sciences. I think it’s molecular—

COHEN: Labs?

BROWN: Labs.

COHEN: It’s the Biotechnology Department.

BROWN: That’s it, the Biotechnology Lab. Yes, yes. The one final thing that I want to say I think a fine support office. And again, this is all based on personal experience, working with them, is the Television and Radio Media Center.

COHEN: Oh, that. Yes.

BROWN: That Dirk Van Zandt runs. And Dirk has a wonderful studio there that I just tell people: His shop is a commercial-quality shop. And I don’t, you know, I’ve done some videotapes with him, and that’s wonderful. And of course one of the other things that this campus needs to be proud of is the Institute of Jazz Studies. It’s a unique archive. And it’s not open, you know, to the general public. But it is open to people who make appointments, who are doing research. And it’s wonderful, their holdings, you know. So there are just a lot of wonderful
things. I mean when I came to this campus, there were no residence facilities. Now we have Talbott Apartments for graduate students and Woodward Dormitory for undergraduates. So that’s a change. I mean I hope during my stay here, but maybe after I’m gone, we’re getting ready now to do an addition to the gym, to Campus Center, to the library.

COHEN: Yes.

BROWN: Within the next, you know, few years. A lot of new buildings, you know, since I’ve come to work here. So… But still I think…I told somebody because now we have a wonderful director, and I really like my colleagues in this office. And I’m as excited about working here as I was, you know, 20 years ago. You know when I came. Because when you first come to a job, you’re really…it’s new, you’re excited about what you’re going to learn and do. And again, the nature of our work here has evolved. And it’s really exciting. Some of the recent things that I personally: For instance, when I was telling you that we do different kinds of things, and I was talking about the Persian Gulf thing, and then I changed. Leo Troy, as you know, is really internationally known as an expert on the labor movement in this country and unions. Well, it’s Labor Day. So we have sent out an advisory to the print and electronic media saying: Hey, you know, you want to know how unionism is changing? Here’s Leo Troy and he’s this and this, and he can talk about how the changes and its history, etc., etc. So those kinds of things. And, you know, it’s exciting work here.

COHEN: Erma thank you very, very much.

BROWN: Okay?

[End of Interview]

Edited by Gideon Thompson