

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

An Interview with

IRWIN PRIMER

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

August 24, 1991

INTERVIEW: Irwin Primer

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GILBERT COHEN: This is Saturday, August 24, 1991. This is Gil Cohen, and I'm interviewing Professor Irwin Primer in his home in Maplewood, New Jersey. Professor Primer, if you could, for the record, give us a brief biographical sketch of your academic career before you came to Rutgers.

IRWIN PRIMER: I took a BA at Brooklyn College, a degree in '49. Attended Columbia University for graduate study briefly. Did not like it or succeed well there. Went off to other courses, including a summer at Indiana University. After that I arrived at Yale University in '52. Took an MA in English in '54, and a Ph.D. in 1961. I arrived as an instructor of English at the Rutgers-Newark campus in 1958, hired by Fred McGill. And was interviewed then by Louis Zocca, and Professor Alcock was already there, and Ed Huberman. And I even met a retired professor of English that they knew, "the Squire," he was called.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Dean Bates?

I. PRIMER: Bates.

COHEN: Madison Bates?

I. PRIMER: Madison Bates, right.

COHEN: I remember him well.

I. PRIMER: Oh, sure. So anything else?

COHEN: Yes. Just briefly, the committees you've served on?

I. PRIMER: I believe I was on the...I served some time on the A&P Committee, Scholastic Standing Committee, Admissions Committee, at different times. From 1958 to this point it's a fairly big list of those committees. I also was a member of the search committee headed by Malcolm Talbott to find the university librarian. I think this was sometime in the 1970's. Any other things?

COHEN: Okay I just want to stop. [Break in recording] I wanted to ask you what was it like on the old Rutgers Rector Street campus in the old days?

I. PRIMER: Well, a young instructor—or an instructor—in those days taught four courses. The meetings were three times a week, three periods a week rather than the current two. And the semester continued beyond the Christmas vacation, at least into the middle of January. And that

on the whole was a better system because students had more time over the Christmas vacation to study or to continue on and complete their terms papers. The semester was simply longer, and the length of the semester, I am convinced, has something to do with the total quantity and quality of the material transmitted in any course. So we taught four courses three times a week. That meant 12 meetings, 12 class sessions, with the students per week. Now some of the top professors, who are cut down to courses a semester, will meet four times a week or three times a week. [Laughs] And of course the theory is that this is the new schedule that most people prefer. Some students can get more of a vacation in the Christmas break, and they don't have to be back for classes until close to February. And there is even a mini-semester possible in January in some institutions. And we run some courses of a remedial nature in January. On the whole I prefer the old longer system and an increased number of sessions per week, because there is a point of diminishing returns even in the current period of an hour and 20 minutes. The 50-minute sessions were possibly more concentrated, and you had to get—you planned to get—a certain amount of material over. And if you had three of those a week, you could do, I think, a better job than the current system. This is not to say that you can't do a good job in the current system. You have to change your approach. I certainly can't lecture for an hour and 20 minutes. Well, say, you give them some busy work, announcements and so forth in the first five or eight minutes of the class. And there is of course lateness; some students wander in. And until things settle down, you may have a real hour and ten or hour and five minutes to work with. But one needs to find ways to structure that stretch of time so that you are not in one stretch simply sending material out into the students' heads and notebooks and imagine that you're doing a good job of teaching. I always like to have some free question and discussion time in each class. And I encourage as much interactive procedure in the classroom as possible—without losing sight of the fact that my basic information, what I have scheduled for that day, must be carried over in the class.

COHEN: You mentioned that today that the top professors teach two courses a week instead of....

I. PRIMER: I believe that this is what currently the professor-2 level has as their assignment. In New Brunswick all of the tenured professors, I believe, teach either two and two or two and three. Our pattern is still three and three, though if you have any special reassignment, it might be three and two or two and two.

COHEN: Is this substantially what it was back in the old Rector Street campus?

I. PRIMER: Back on the Rector Street campus? No, there was basically four and four for the instructors. And when you got to be an assistant professor, I think, then it became three and three. And of course an assistant professor felt the university's pressure or expectation that there will be publications.

COHEN: What about associate professors and full professors on the Rector Street campus?

I. PRIMER: They also were, I believe, teaching the three and three unless they had some administrative assignments. Yes, the old Rector Street operation was—I would say basically it worked. The library seemed very, well, short-stocked. It wasn't what we would call today a decent college library. But then it was growing, and the basic system did work. There was a

circulation part, there were books on reserve. You could take some reserve books out for a day or two; others were only an hour or two hours. You know that.

COHEN: Yes, I know it, know it well. [Laughs]

I. PRIMER: I remember that we got some of the noise from McCarter Highway there, which wasn't appreciated. But then in the Rector Street building, we could open windows, couldn't we? In the newer buildings, in those classrooms, I don't think it was possible: Conklin Hall.

COHEN: What buildings did you teach in?

I. PRIMER: Oh, well, after Rector, I think there were some offices, I don't know whether there were teaching rooms, on Lombardy. But I once had an office on Lombardy. Then there was another office with—I'll never forget the fancy bathroom—on Central Avenue, between Washington Street and the university. And I don't recall vividly any special teaching rooms other than what I've already mentioned—until we got to the new campus.

COHEN: When you got to the new campus, what did it do to, shall I say, your socialization with students and with colleagues?

I. PRIMER: It was odd. We did have the English Department on one or two floors that were reasonably together within the same building. But we immediately felt cut off from colleagues whom we had seen previously more of in history, philosophy, foreign languages, the other humanities. The humanities group was divided in half. And I always thought from a planning point of view, that was a great shame. With respect to the new campus and the treatment of the faculty in general, we made at various faculty meetings all kinds of pleas for movement on a usable, normal faculty dining room for lunches and possibly dinners. And at that time there was also a group of people or one person, I forget which, but there was talk of a faculty club. We don't just want the lunchroom; we want the faculty club. Well, the faculty club never materialized. And the closest we got to a faculty luncheon was kind of an ad hoc or makeshift importation of some sandwich service into the third floor lounge of Hill Hall. You could bring your brown-bag lunch, you could buy your desserts and drinks. Or you could buy salads and sandwiches there. Tables were set up. And for a while that worked. But then for reasons I can't explain, the thing dried up or fell into disuse.

COHEN: What campus was it more comfortable teaching in?

I. PRIMER: More comfortable? You're asking me to remember a long way back. I remember, of course, teaching classes on Washington Street, a long building not far from the large furniture storage warehouse and not far from Raymond Boulevard—I forget the exact number, 40 or something.

COHEN: On Washington Street?

I. PRIMER: Yes. There were classrooms on Washington Street that were used even when Professor McGill was still with us. This was part of the system of small storefronts that were

used until the new campus came up. I also taught, now that I'm remembering it, I also taught in the building across from the Newark Museum at the corner of Washington Park.

COHEN: Oh, yes.

I. PRIMER: Veterans Administration Building.

COHEN: I remember that.

I. PRIMER: And we...I think Rutgers arranged to rent space there. I don't know if Rutgers ever owned the building outright.

COHEN: I don't think so.

I. PRIMER: But we had rooms there, and I don't have any special memory or dislike or irritation with that arrangement. It simply, again, one of the makeshift arrangements for class space that was in operation until the new campus came along.

COHEN: What's your perception of the mission—or the new mission—of the college when the new campus was being planned and when it finally opened up?

I. PRIMER: Well, the new mission of the college was to serve as, I suppose, a major extension of Rutgers University northward. It was supposed to serve not only the immediate Newark area and surrounding towns, but theoretically and in practice—I remember getting students from almost the New York State line and once in a while even above.

COHEN: After the new campus?

I. PRIMER: After the new campus was established. They'd come down the Garden State Parkway. And many students in Bergen County did show up on the Rutgers campus.

COHEN: Yes.

I. PRIMER: It was a time of optimism and the planning simply showed an upward graph of increasing student enrollments. But there came a year when the graph was completely demolished by reality because the path of upward enrollments simply did not continue.

COHEN: What year was that?

I. PRIMER: I can't name the exact year, but there were projections, and the projections were being fulfilled for a while. But then after 1969, I think the ups and downs pattern came in.

COHEN: Well, we'll get into that maybe a little later.

I. PRIMER: Yes.

COHEN: What I wanted to get back to again was if you could describe what the curriculum was like in the English Department and in the college generally in the pre-University Heights days.

I. PRIMER: Well, it was a more conservative kind of curriculum, adhering to decades of practice. The current multicultural interests and multiracial, multiethnic emphases were not there, or there only in theory preached as a nice ideal perhaps. But the basic curriculum, let us say in history, emphasized the European-American tradition. And Asian studies weren't yet brought in—of the faculty to teach and manage those things. The Afro-American Studies Department didn't exist. Now, what we had was a set of requirements that from one point of view might be called too restrictive and from another point of view might be called desirable insofar as they held students to a minimum expected level of accomplishment, so that the university—whoever the university is—could say that this student has acquired the necessary knowledge and skills. Now we can certify her for graduation. So you'd take the required course of Literary Masterpieces. It used to be required of everyone in the Newark College of Arts and Sciences. And in the early days, it was standard to require a term paper of each student. You couldn't take Literary Masterpieces until you passed English 101 and 102. That still holds today, but Literary Masterpieces, which includes the basic Greco-Roman and Plato and European traditions, the student can elect it today but does not specifically have to. You've got a menu of choice. And that would fulfill the literary requirement.

So what we had in the old days was much more uniformity of product. If the student arrived at the point of graduation, then we could say, well, this student should by now have some acquaintance with Homer, the Greek dramatists. They should have read about the trial and death—should have read the Platonic *Dialogues*, about the trial and death of Socrates. Selections from the Bible were included in the old course. Today an instructor who feels incompetent in handling Biblical texts at an elementary level for that particular course has the liberty to exclude it. I don't think we had that liberty in the old days because the contents of the course were set by the department and the committee that ran that course. And that's what we were expected to teach.

As for the other aspects of.... Of course there was Western Civ which all of the students had to take. Today they can...there are alternatives to Western Civilization. You don't have to take that course in particular. Foreign language was required. You couldn't graduate without taking two years of a foreign language at the college level. If the student happened to be an English major, then the requirement for the English major was an added year of the foreign language above the 200 level. So it was not only the basic year and then intermediate French or Spanish or whatever; but then a third year in which you were really reading the literature in that language. That I think is highly desirable and an admirable thing for the English major to have. But it may not be a practicable requirement in these days.

COHEN: The rest of the English Department curriculum, what was it like in those days, and how has it changed?

I. PRIMER: Well, we didn't have any remedial courses when I arrived. And the entire structure of remediation basically came in after the 1967-1969 troubles, the late sixties. And that was also a development that arose out of the changing student, the clientele. There is a perception among

some of the older people on the staff that perhaps we had a larger share of gifted students or better high school trained students in the old days than we have today. So that...well, there may be kind of a romanticizing of the past going on. But I do remember in the first ten or 15 years of my working at this university, that I had some very good students in my years as an instructor and as an assistant professor.

COHEN: You mentioned remediation in English. Wasn't remediation in English done by the Academic Foundations Department, which was the Academic Foundations Center?

I. PRIMER: Yes. That came in around just after the time of the troubles. It took a while to develop and to be funded. But I believe we...well, by remediation, I suppose I should say, or mention specifically, something we have called Intensive 101. Intensive 101—English 101—is the composition course equal in expectations to the regular or normal 101. But an added period per week is thrown in. So that weaker students are given more class time, more teacher-student contact. And this we find does help a good number of students to come through, to succeed, in English 101 which they probably would not have done, could not have done, without that extra aid. There may have been...I have a memory of a pre-101 course which we may have taught. But I think most of that work then went to the Academic Foundations.

COHEN: How did the faculty doing remedial work in the English Department relate to the faculty doing the remedial work in the Academic Foundations?

I. PRIMER: I think there was some distrust of what was going on in Academic Foundations because we weren't in control of the thing. We weren't observing the teaching and the classrooms. So it is also possible—I wasn't close to this at the time—but it's also possible that some of our freshman composition directors, directors of the freshman writing program, were having good exchanges, some interactive exchanges, with the Academic Foundations people. But there was friction. There was also friction and some pressures, I think, from Academic Foundations for us to change our approach or the content or ways of teaching. Gradually, with conferences between the two groups, any major differences I think got ironed out.

COHEN: How else did the curriculum in English change in the advanced courses in particular. You know.... [Break in recording] We're back with Professor Primer.

I. PRIMER: Yes. Okay.

COHEN: The changes in curriculum we were talking about.

I. PRIMER: Well, we added courses like Afro-American literature. We hired people, a succession of people, to teach those courses. And now we have on the staff John Williams and George Davis who teach that and other related courses regularly. We have a course in Asian literature on the books. But because of hiring limitations, we've never been able to successfully mount the course and really offer the thing. There are other courses of a multiethnic nature—third world—literature currently available, and a new or marginal discipline became legitimized. Well, at the time I arrived here, people were reading science fiction, but nobody was really teaching a course in it. And academic interest in it grew. Eventually intellectual books and

intellectual study of science fiction as a historically developing literary kind emerged, and now we have Bruce Franklin, who has written books on the subject and who teaches the course from time to time. So changes of that kind have taken place.

Another thing that in a sense has opened up the curriculum is the placement within our list of course offerings of what we call container courses. One container course might— Well, here's an example of something that I'm offering: It's a course called Literary Genres, literary types. And a different teacher can volunteer the content for a full semester. And if the department thinks it's worthwhile, that would be the literary type or one of two, say, for that semester. Those who are interested in the epic might do advanced readings, studies, in the epic. I'm offering a course for the first time this fall under Literary Genres called the Evolution of the English Essay. It's never been done in our department, and the essay as a genre is generally a second-class kind of citizen. It doesn't have the stature of Shakespearean tragedy or comedy or the epic or lyric poetry, and it doesn't compete with, in general, drama and the more popular well-known kinds of literature. But there it is. It has a history of its own, and it's become a very popular literary form in the 20th century. It was of course practiced very seriously in the 19th century, and it has its own history. So this is the way in which the curriculum expands.

Now in the expansion, one of the things that has happened is that certain older, traditional courses stopped being offered. One course that was offered quite regularly—it was taught by Professor Huberman and sometimes by other people, but I think mainly by him—was Non-Shakespearean Elizabethan Drama. That would be the drama of the 16th century well on into the earlier 17th century, maybe as far as the closing of the theaters in 1642. And if you take the period from about the 1560's to 1642, there's an enormous quantity of drama, not written by Shakespeare, that is worth reading and that used to be taught regularly. But it simply has not been offered, possibly because of limitation of available faculty. But also because of student preferences. So that's one of the things that is noticeable. We still regularly offer courses in Milton, in Shakespeare every year, in Chaucer, and once in a while somebody might want to teach a course in—a more specialized course—in modernist poetry including William Butler Yeats and Eliot. But that is only a portion of the current offerings. The newer kinds of courses have come into competition with the old ones.

COHEN: Yes, how have—when you say student preferences, how have they changed over the years? Late sixties through the seventies and into the early eighties.

I. PRIMER: Well, I would say that it's not so much a matter of student preferences as the direction of national culture and large academic movement and changes. When I arrived, there was no evidence of any sort that movies, the history of movies, cinema, could be an academic subject. And in the last 20 or 25 years the subject opened up and film courses are a very normal event and very normal occurrence on every campus. We hired about two or three people, one after another, to take care of the demand for film courses in the English Department. And this would mean interrelations of film and literature; the two are closely related. So by now, of course, it is quite normal for, say, a film course on Hitchcock to be offered without any apology.

COHEN: By the English Department.

I. PRIMER: Yes.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

I. PRIMER: Previously you might be limited to examining those films which were made from novels: *Tobacco Road*, *Moby Dick* [laughs]; and you would compare the written, printed word with the film version.

COHEN: Yes, yes. You mentioned, oh, national developments, currents. During that period, of course, much was happening in the late sixties, and one, of course, major event were the riots in Newark in July of 1967. What impact did that event, oh, generally have on the campus?

I. PRIMER: Well, it was unsettling. It was threatening. The faculty on the whole wanted it to be over as quickly as possible. And also attend to the causes and sources of this and not turn on our backs on it. But take note of the cultural and social causes behind it, and see what in the existing educational system needed to be changed in order to rectify any of the perceived inadequacies.

COHEN: We're talking about the faculty was addressing the issues behind the Newark riots in 1967?

I. PRIMER: Oh, they couldn't help but be interested in those things. I guess I would say that after the '67 riots and the '69 building takeover, there came into the course planning and the course offering process an intensified awareness of the needs of the existing students, then the existing environment, as if to say, if you've been teaching from an idealistic, Old World—or whatever—standpoint, changes were in order. And this is simply what happened in those departments that don't at least with word culture. I don't know what changes would take place in the sports area or in the Music Department, possibly in the Art Department. But in history and English and sociology and economics, new courses with relevance to contemporary conditions, even contemporary ideologies, specific group outlooks, simply came into existence.

COHEN: In '69 after the takeover.... Well, before the takeover, what in your perception was the main grievance or grievances of the students who took over Conklin Hall?

I. PRIMER: I would begin by saying that one of the factors behind the takeover of Conklin Hall is the fact, one of them, is the fact that this was an imitated action. It was a wave of behavior that swept across the country. The first explosion appeared on the Columbia University campus with Mark Rudd. Then various other campuses had their uprisings. And the whole thing should be seen in a national perspective as our expressing a strong not only sense of class dissatisfaction, but—how will I put it?—age-group dissatisfaction as well. The young were specifically telling us that we are rebelling and are not going to go along with the old restrictions and perceived inadequacy and inequalities of the educational system. Academic authority was one of the things that was being attacked. The usefulness of certain academic disciplines was being attacked. And if you take all of these together, then you begin to have some kind of explanation of why the thing took place. The students did, of course, have a list of things that needed attention and needed to be corrected. The students certainly wanted to have a role in determining the future

direction of the college. And after the riots, they were regularly included in faculty meetings, student representatives.

COHEN: You mean after Conklin Hall.

I. PRIMER: Yes, after Conklin Hall.

COHEN: Right, right, yes.

I. PRIMER: And then on certain committees students were invited to sit and participate. Some of this may still continue, but I'm not at all sure. But I've seen those student representatives in recent faculty meetings.

COHEN: You were on an ad hoc committee that was formed to attempt to deal with the problems after Conklin Hall?

I. PRIMER: Dean Blumenthal was then in charge, and the committee met rather frequently to deal with issues that came up that the dean had to face. We served as an advisory body or group. I think Helen Strausser was on it, Chester Smith. I'm trying to remember some of the other names, but it gets vague.

COHEN: Was this committee actually involved in negotiations with the students from the Black Organization of Students? Or other students for that matter.

I. PRIMER: I don't recall that we were face to face involved. We were apprised, we were informed of the demands, of the issues of the crisis as they arose. And our input, whatever it was, I hope was helpful to the dean and the administration.

COHEN: Did this committee issue any written report?

I. PRIMER: I believe it did. But I don't think I saved any of my files.

COHEN: Do you recollect anything of the content of the report?

I. PRIMER: I'm afraid to say that I don't. [Laughter]

COHEN: Long time ago.

I. PRIMER: Yes. We also have a way of forgetting some parts of the past.

COHEN: Do you remember the names—do you remember the chief negotiators during the takeover and immediately afterwards, on the faculty side?

I. PRIMER: I draw a blank there.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Do you have any recollection of any perception of...

I. PRIMER: Well, of course, Charlie Pine was very concerned, and he was one of the chief persons under the dean who was very actively involved in trying to just better the entire situation.

COHEN: Do you have any recollections of Malcolm Talbott's role?

I. PRIMER: Oh, well, yes. Talbott was very strongly involved then. Was he the provost?

COHEN: Well, at the time, if I remember correctly, he was provost and acting dean at that time. Until left, and then Henry Blumenthal....

I. PRIMER: Blumenthal came in. That is correct. I remember that he had that position and had all the pressure on him. But I am a bit vague as to which groups actually met and what documents were produced.

COHEN: What's your assessment of the long-term effect on the college of the takeover of Conklin Hall?

I. PRIMER: The long-term effect was for the college, was possibly a turning away from certain potential students. Talking about the kinds of people who might be interested in Rutgers-Newark and apply for admission and so forth. Seeing this kind of thing going on would deter many a student from filling out an admission form for this particular place. There certainly was later on in the suburb. We lived in Newark ourselves, and we moved to the suburbs only in 1968. We gradually came to realize that there were people around us who thought that Rutgers-Newark was almost completely a black college. And we dispelled that error, that misperception. But there was easily perceivable a general kind of suspicion and prejudice against the place. And one might hear, I would never send my son there in a thousand years. Or something like that. So these were some of the comments. And gradually, I think, the community came to realize that Rutgers-Newark was surviving and new disciplines were emerging in it. The science and the business departments were very strong. So that if you want the careers in those areas, or if you want even premed, it's still a very good place to go.

COHEN: Yes.

I. PRIMER: I guess that's how I would assess it, yes.

COHEN: Yes. How did the level of preparation of the student body change over the years? Let's say from going again let's start with the sixties to go through the crisis period, and into the early eighties. How would you trace that?

I. PRIMER: I think that I would simply say in any large generalization that there was a perceived decline, something that you could really almost document, in the kind of high school preparation that was brought by the students. Until a certain point, I would guess it was in the eighties, where there might have been a turnaround. As we got into the eighties, I thought that...I began to see a certain proportion of the students were better prepared than others. But one of the

things that in all of this that we have to take into account is the difference between the student who applies and enters as a freshman and other students who apply after having put in two years in a community college. There is the Morris Community College, there's Essex County, Union County, Bergen, and so on. These places send students to us, and one of the things that we began to see as more of the transfer students came, is that not all of them were well prepared, that is up to the two-year mark in college.

COHEN: Yes.

I. PRIMER: And some were simply disastrous. So that if you ask about the quality of the students, you also have to ask from which channel is the student coming? If the student was good enough to get into, to be admitted as a freshman, then he or she—

COHEN: Oh, I see.

I. PRIMER: —probably could be expected to survive and do reasonably well. But we had a good deal of trouble with—not with all—but with some of the students who were admitted in mid-career; that is, from community college into Rutgers. The transfer student became a problem. I would be teaching an advanced course, say, at the junior or senior level, and I learned eventually to ask them, to ask the student, to give me an outline of your educational career and tell what you were interested in, what schools you attended, anything that you think is significant about your past learning. And I did this in order to see whether I could find any difference between the community college, the two-year college, students and our own. It wasn't at all scientific, but I think it just in a rough way verified my perception that the students whom we were able to teach in English 101-102, who took our course in Literary Masterpieces, the ones that we trained, in general turned out to be better students, better performers than the ones who came from the two-year colleges. Not in all cases, but that was the general rule of thumb.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. And you're saying—you did say that these changes began to occur in the early eighties?

I. PRIMER: Well, I think eventually the message got through to the community colleges, that they had better be more careful in quality control or something would have to be done.

COHEN: Yes.

I. PRIMER: And I suppose what I'm saying is that at a certain point, we were having some rough times with students who shouldn't have been admitted in any case, into college.

COHEN: Also during those years, especially the early years, into the early seventies, there was a good deal of student activism around the Vietnam War. And the question is, how did that affect your work in the classroom—or the work of your colleagues?

I. PRIMER: Yes, there were teach-ins. Students asked to be excused for one demonstration or another. I never personally cancelled a class in order to engage in any of the political demonstrations. But I would not come down on a student, would not penalize a student, who

chose to do so. There was only a limited amount of such activity going on, and it didn't disrupt any particular semester in a serious way.

COHEN: Were you able to relate what was happening in the war, on the campus, in the country to course content in any way? Or did you want to?

I. PRIMER: It would be hard to do that for the kind of course I teach. I'm an 18th-century specialist. And if I'm teaching a course in Restoration drama, I might look for some ideological signs in the course content. But that is almost squeezing the sponge hard in order to try to get some political message out of it. The politics of those day were a very different kind of thing. Before the Industrial Age, before the massive slavery movement of the 19th century, there was a great deal of social evil to complain of and about at the time. But the forces, the powers in charge of governments then were very strong and kept the lower classes down.

COHEN: You mentioned ideology. To what extent was ideology—or had ideology been—a factor in faculty relations, let's say: hiring, firing, sit-ins?

I. PRIMER: There was a well-known split in the politics of members of the English Department, and there were very vocal members of the department and the college who objected to the hiring of Bruce Franklin. And later on that same.... [End of Tape #1]

COHEN: We're back to Dr. Primer, and we were talking about ideology in the hiring of Barbara Foley, I think.

I. PRIMER: Yes, Barbara Foley. But both were hired. And of course Bruce Franklin went on to do brilliant work and many books and is a distinguished name—he has a named professorship. So the wisdom of hiring him, I think, has been demonstrated. And he was hired at a time when I was the chairperson. So these ideological differences do exist, and on such occasions they seem to surface. But most of the time when ordinary departmental business is carried forward, there doesn't seem to be any strong sense of bitterness or opposition or bickering or quarreling of any sort. The split was most evident around the time that Bruce Franklin was hired in in some subsequent years afterwards. But basically it seems to have simmered down, calmed down.

COHEN: I wanted to ask how Bruce Franklin was recruited to the faculty.

I. PRIMER: Well, we placed an ad in the usual place, the MLA job listing. And had an opening for somebody to teach, among other things, science fiction, maybe Third World literature. We listed a group of areas or specialties in the hope that we'd get a person with more than just one talent—more than just a specialist in ...[?]Shaw, or more than just a specialist in Chaucer or something like that. So I forget what the number was; there may have been at the time 40 or 60 or whatever responses, people who wanted the job. It's very easy to simply brush aside the persons who hadn't yet completed their Ph.D.'s. If you want to hire at a certain level, you want the best qualified person to come in for that position. I didn't know before that time who Bruce Franklin was or anything that he had written about. He sent the letter from Yale University where he had a one-year position as visiting or as a research person. And he also had good recommendations from some people at Yale. I had no inclination to that person specifically—not

knowing who he was. And I tried to be as objective as possible before I would say yes in giving my voice in the selection process.

Well, as I looked at the letters of recommendation coming in—at the letters of application coming in—he had a larger list of publications and of works in progress and a better selection of recommendation letters than any person who was applying at the time. I was not about to start to exclude him simply because I knew that his politics were on the extreme left, you might say. My reasoning was that I'm part of a hiring process. And that if the university administration found any reason of a political nature or of a moral nature to exclude him from the job, they would certainly prevent us from hiring him. Now, as it happened, President Bloustein, seeing this particular action taken by the department, went along with it and in a sense rubberstamped the thing. There was very vociferous, strong, heated action on the part of some members of our department who—and some members outside the department—who said that this shouldn't be allowed to happen at all. And I listened to what they had to say. But it seemed to me that excluding the person on political grounds was not very different from excluding the person on religious grounds or grounds of race or grounds of membership in any other kind of group. It seemed to me that here was an intellectual record of achievement and a great deal of promise that would be beneficial for the department and the college. If there had been a more accomplished applicant at the time, then the entire difficulty, the entire mess, could have been avoided. But there wasn't. And that was it.

COHEN: What kind of pressures, do you recall, came from the community? I recall there was at least....

I. PRIMER: Oh, there were letters from the outside by means of certain connections that I believe one member of the—at least one member of—my department had. A letter came directly to me as chair of the department which was basically opening up the evil career and evil political actions. It was like a political dossier collective by some agency, and it came from the Hoover Institution. And this was supposed to be damaging evidence against him. That is something for the university to determine. I think as an English chair, it was not specifically my job to exclude a person because of a known political position. We did frankly in the interview tell Franklin that we have heard of your past activities on the Stanford University campus, and we're very concerned about what might happen here. Can we expect more revolutionary activity if any such thing happened in the past? And his reply was in the negative. And with that understanding, we went ahead with the hiring process.

COHEN: Was there any further fallout from your decision to stick with the hiring?

I. PRIMER: Every now and then somebody, who doesn't like that fact, will tell me that we made a great mistake. [Laughter] But if we made a great mistake, why is he the Charles Dana Professor—

COHEN: John Cotton Dana.

I. PRIMER: John Cotton, not Charles Dana. John Cotton Dana Professor of Literature. So maybe the university is making a mistake. But it's a matter of expressing one's political slant of

public opposition. I don't think I was eager to express a political position when I was doing the hiring.

COHEN: Sure. During the sixties and through the seventies, how would you assess the, shall I say, the success of the college in Newark in recruiting faculty?

I. PRIMER: During the sixties and seventies?

COHEN: Into the early eighties if you want.

I. PRIMER: That's hard for me to speak about. I think if individual instances were brought up, I might comment on them. But I assume that many good people were hired. One of the things that happened as job openings diminished, dwindled, almost dried up, as the job market became very fierce, what began to happen in the seventies was a real glut of new Ph.D.'s, many of whom could not get jobs. There is one age group, I think, in the Ph.D. crop beyond the sixties—maybe it was the decade of the seventies—where they called themselves the Lost Generation. I remember this when I had to interview for one or two openings at one of the MLA conferences. There were ABD's, persons who did not quite have the—All But the Degree. I think persons who were near it or who were just receiving the degree, they were even happy to have the opportunity to be interviewed once. And there were some who attended one of those, I think early seventies, MLA conferences who couldn't be interviewed at all. It was a horrible situation, and that corresponded with the time when full line openings tended to become more and more diverted into coadjutant positions. They were sliced up, broken up, and universities began to take on the corporate model. They became very money conscious. And it's interesting, I think, that as this was happening, there was a corresponding expansion in the number of full-time administrators who came to be hired as the years went by and in the various universities. So I think a real imitative corporate model set in. The bottom line was the real driver behind the whole thing. And if you can save money, if you don't have to pay health benefits and insurance and other such things to full-time teacher, maybe we can get the same or even more teaching power from persons who are hired part time.

COHEN: This was true of the English Department, too, what you were saying?

I. PRIMER: Well, it affected most if not all of the departments in the university like ours. Lines became very hard to get. That's when we began to ask that newly hired persons be prepared to teach in more than one area of their specialization. Gabriel Miller was hired to do a film course. He also was expected to do a course in modern drama. And in addition, he has a specialty in Jewish-American fiction or some part of the modern novel. And he has published strongly in at least two of these areas.

COHEN: How successful was the English Department in tenure actions during the whole period we're talking about?

I. PRIMER: We lost some and gained some. I'd have to sit down with the record to see actually who didn't make it.

COHEN: How effective was AAUP in defending faculty in grievances?

I. PRIMER: I think, it's my perception that the AAUP was less successful in the 1970's than they became in the 1980's. Their machinery—meaning their personnel for handling these cases and aiding the persons who were grieving—gradually came to have some better direction and support. Became more refined. And this was partially the result of a closer attention to the bargaining that went on in successive contracts and the refining of the language. But one of the things that happened, as the AAUP was improving its act, is that the administration hired specialists to follow what the AAUP was doing and to deal with much concentrated AAUP attention to the grievances.

COHEN: Yes. To what extent did the administration's increasing insistence upon research and publication affect the quality of teaching?

I. PRIMER: As the ante rose, in other words as the process of being promoted became more difficult, as more was required of each individual, I think that—well, I've heard in at least one case, I don't know whether it's apocryphal, false or true, a chair told a recently hired person: Never mind what goes on in the classroom. If you want to move up, the only way you'll ever do it is to publish your way to tenure. This may have been told on the Newark campus, but it's a national phenomenon. And I have no doubt that in some cases teaching has suffered because of this.

COHEN: What can you say about the charge that's made every once in a while that because facilities, library facilities, laboratory, whatever, on the Newark campus are reportedly weaker than in New Brunswick, that the requirements for promotion of the Newark faculty should be different from the requirements for promotion for New Brunswick faculty?

I. PRIMER: Well, I really don't know what to say about that, because I was—on the whole I approved of the old system. We had the section, the department section. All of the foreign language people across—on the different campuses, Camden, Newark, and New Brunswick—would meet to consider the tenure case of a person in Camden or a person in Newark. But now the section no longer exists, and the promotion process takes place on one campus or on another without consultation across all the campuses. The old system was a kind of rubberstamp on the quality of the individual because the promotion packet was examined theoretically by all of the tenured members across the campuses. But in practice that rarely did happen. But the sections still met and voted. And in some cases they supported the Newark or the Camden department, and in other cases they did not. But we were at least able to hear what the objections were, and we might possibly be persuaded that there was the best after all. And then there were some situations where we were outraged or violently differed from the judgment that they rendered. And it was all part of the one system. Now that the promotion decisions take place on the individual campuses, I suppose that the inequalities should be taken into account, inequalities in lab space and equipment and things like that; but there should be at least establishing that the person who is being promoted has intellectually and in terms of his or her own productivity really met an all-Rutgers University standard. We shouldn't lose sight of that; because if we start making special dispensations for persons who face specific defects of office space or lab space, things like that, then it may be that this would become part of the reputation of Rutgers in

Newark. Their faculty get through with easier.... I don't know. It's a very difficult kind of question to answer.

COHEN: Yes. There has been talk and maybe even movements toward autonomy in Newark. Was that ever a consideration in your perception?

I. PRIMER: Yes, from time to time. I remember in Malcolm Talbott's time there was a question of whether all of the university operations in Newark should possibly become a University of Newark. And should we merge with New Jersey Institute of Technology? There is some connection with the medical school. But we're still separate entities. One of the strangest things, of course, in all of this is that you have so many separate library units functioning for each of these places. But if you were organizing a real University of Newark, you would consider making one massive, really powerful centralized library that could better serve the entire place.

COHEN: That would include all the institutions in Newark, is that what you're saying?

I. PRIMER: Oh, yes. Sure.

COHEN: I've...dreamt of that. I wanted to get back again to faculty, a particular aspect of it; namely, the affirmative action efforts to recruit faculty either to the department or to the college as a whole. How has that been done? How successful has the college been?

I. PRIMER: I don't know if I can speak with any authority about that. If I were asked about—it's hard to generalize. If I were asked about specific cases, I might have an opinion to the effect that as a result of the affirmative action procedures, this was a very good person to apply it. Or I might have an objection in the negative. But I don't know how to generalize about that.

COHEN: Did affirmative action principles in any way influence hiring, in the seventies and early eighties, in the English Department that you were aware of in the college as a whole?

I. PRIMER: I think it must have had a certain amount of influence. I distinctly remember that when I was chair and engaged in such hiring activity, I had to fill out an affirmative action sheet which not only listed the color or the race of the individual whom we wished to hire, but I had to put down the numbers for all the others who were interviewed for the same job. So some would be listed, I think, as Asian. I forget whether it was white or Caucasian or what the exact language was. But they wanted the distribution. And they also wanted to know, I think, what the current makeup of the department was. If you had no black members, then the balance of your department wasn't satisfactory. At least the perception I remember having at a certain time.

COHEN: As far as affirmative action for women faculty is concerned, how did the movement for equality for women faculty in the seventies emerge, and who were the chief players?

I. PRIMER: I think I remember that Helen Strausser was one of the chief women. Probably Lillian Robins. And maybe in time Virginia Tiger and who was it in psychology? I'm having trouble remembering names.

COHEN: In psychology? Probably Dorothy Dinnerstein?

I. PRIMER: Dorothy Dinnerstein, yes. And they did all that they could to try to improve the hiring process and procedures that would lead to more women faculty members. In the English Department, the thing certainly worked because from no women—well, that's not exactly true. There were a few women. Blossom was hired non-tenured of course—my wife—in 1959. Women were hired from time to time. But the question was when would one of them become a tenured faculty member?

COHEN: Yes.

I. PRIMER: And eventually that happened. And now we have quite a handful of tenured women members in the department. So the balance has been much better—is much better today as a result of that activity. [Break in recording]

COHEN: Okay. I wanted to go into the area of the administrations, starting from the top down. How would you compare the administrations as presidents of Mason Gross and Edward Bloustein?

I. PRIMER: Well, Edward Bloustein tried to move the college in certain directions. What does the public remember of his activities? He put a lot of emphasis on the sports program, football and so on. But he selectively supported a great expansion in New Brunswick and helped us out in Newark. It's hard for me to, since I have not studied his career closely—follow it in the sense of trying to assess finally what he accomplished—I can't make a good generalization about that. Some of the things that he supported seemed good. Every now and then we would disagree with them locally because he refused to accept our desires for the department—that is the promotions. So seen from the departmental point of view, when he didn't interfere with us, [laughs] he was good. When he did, he was not so good. [Laughter] As for the general leading of the university, he seemed to me to be on the whole a very competent person.

COHEN: On the Newark campus, how would you assess Malcolm Talbott's role and his contributions as vice president of the campus and as acting dean?

I. PRIMER: It's so far back that I'm having difficulty in producing the generalization. I think I had an initial distrust of him because he was from the law school. I didn't know him. He seemed like—he was very glib. He had an excellent speaking talent and good audience control and so on. I came to appreciate his good qualities when I saw him in action in that committee that he headed for that librarian search. As for his handling of the Newark crisis, I don't know whether any other person could have done a better job, because there was a certain amount of damage that had to be dealt with. And the fact that the college didn't crumble and was able to continue under his leadership speaks well for him.

COHEN: Why do you think he did not get the job of provost?

I. PRIMER: I'm a blank on that.

COHEN: Okay.

I. PRIMER: The politics of two decades ago are not...

COHEN: Following his vice presidency, James Young was the first provost from '73, I guess, until '82. And any assessment of his tenure that you could produce?

I. PRIMER: He was simply carrying the college, that is the Newark campus, along, I think. My impression is that he was really a kind of main administrator, that is the New Brunswick administration, a supervisor in Newark. I can't remember any special initiative that he had for the particular benefit of the Newark campus in an unusual way. He didn't seem to be an especially outstanding administrator. I remember a competent person.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. The deans. Herbert Woodward in the early sixties?

I. PRIMER: I never had much to do with Woodward, though I did hear stories from other faculty members to the effect that he was possibly more involved with and more interested in his geological concerns than with some pressing or some details or business connected with the deanship. He was a nice man. And I never heard an unkind word from him. I simply never had much to do with him.

COHEN: His successor was another geologist, William Gilliland. What can you say there?

I. PRIMER: Yes. Gilliland was brought in from I think the University of Nebraska. And he created a good deal of dissatisfaction among the faculty, and eventually there was strong sentiment to have him removed or step down.

COHEN: What was the nature of the dissatisfaction?

I. PRIMER: I would have to get back into my papers.

COHEN: Into your papers?

I. PRIMER: To really draw that out. It didn't stick with me in a vivid and strong way then possibly I wasn't very much moved by the entire thing. But there was a certain amount of incompetence or perhaps difficulty in dealing with individuals and groups that he displayed. And that certainly must have been part of the problem.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Malcolm Talbott, of course, was acting dean following Gilliland. And then the next appointment of dean was Henry Blumenthal. And I wonder if you could comment on his tenure.

I. PRIMER: Blumenthal was one of the best of the deans, though by virtue of his being the dean, he had only just so much power. His vision and his academic ideals extended far beyond what he was able to accomplish. He was a great humanistic scholar and an excellent historian. And of the deans that I have known, perhaps the most—well, upright is not precisely the word—but the

most reliable. If he gave his word on something, then he made his decision, and you could expect him to go along with it. He didn't turn hot and cold, didn't shilly-shally. He was a man who knew his mind, and he carried out his actions in a completely reliable and admirable manner because of that.

COHEN: In his autobiography he mentions the difficult time of his tenure as dean. And I was wondering...he was dean, I believe, for two years and then left the position. Why did he resign, do you think?

I. PRIMER: I think he'd had enough of the political infighting and the kind of behavior that pulls a dean in so many different directions. I think he was basically trying to do as much good for the faculty and students as he possibly could. I wasn't completely in his confidence. He never discussed any of the negotiations that he would have in New Brunswick or he never discussed personalities, did not share with me. But I would imagine that he had as much as he could take of the way the system simply runs, what it demands of a dean. And because of that, he simply said goodbye to the position.

COHEN: His successor who was acting dean for a year was Gilbert Panson. And I was wondering if you could assess his role?

I. PRIMER: I think Gil, to the best of his ability, carried the college forward. He of course the side interest uppermost; one can only believe that of him. But I don't think the college suffered under Panson's tenure as dean. And I don't remember anything bad about Gil Panson.

COHEN: He was, as I understand, largely responsible for the establishment of the graduate school. He was the first dean of the graduate school.

I. PRIMER: Mm-hmm. That I remember.

COHEN: What impact did the establishment of the graduate school have on the programs of the campus?

I. PRIMER: Well, in terms of outside perception, the gradual growth of the graduate school has to be seen as a general improvement of the stature of Rutgers in Newark. Any university without strong graduate operations isn't regarded very highly at the present time. This is not to say that all such graduate operations, graduate offerings, are absolutely vital or necessary for the educational welfare of the country. It may be that some graduate programs shouldn't exist. I recall some sentiments in our meetings with the New Brunswick English people to the effect that, well, why do we need any graduate work on the Newark campus? The people in New Brunswick can attend as well to all of the Rutgers English graduate business. And wouldn't this save the university money, etc.? But it's much more complicated than that. And the fact remains that the graduate program is a vital part of any campus operation that tries to be Rutgers University. So the establishment of the graduate school was good in itself. But what it probably did in some areas was to deprive the undergraduate department of a certain amount of expert teaching power. The English Department had to establish its graduate program without essentially any increase in the number of lines. So this meant that a reapportionment of, or a

rebalancing of, the number of undergraduate courses in relation to graduate offerings. But the variety is an improvement. The present of graduate students and of TA's is, on the whole, an improvement.

COHEN: Then following Gil Panson's tenure, Richard Robey was the next dean. And what can you say about his administration?

I. PRIMER: He was a very controversial dean. Some people think that he was a disaster at Rutgers-Newark when he arrived. He had some directions or programs in mind. I viewed his case as something on the tragic side. He died young. And I think he created a scene of divisiveness. You were either for him or against him. It was hard to be neutral. And I think the longer he stayed with us, the more uncomfortable we became with him.

COHEN: Specifically, what did Robey do wrong that alienated the faculty as much as it did?

I. PRIMER: I don't know that I can fish that out of the memory for you. I simply have the distinct recollection that he was behaving sometimes in a rather highhanded manner, stepping on people's toes, not consulting sufficiently with the faculty, not trying to get, as he should, a sense of, an awareness of faculty opinion and desires and certain current issues and cases. And that was part of his downfall you might say.

COHEN: Were there any programmatic differences which were involved?

I. PRIMER: There were, but I can't recall the details. [Laughter]

COHEN: Okay. Memory, memory. And Richard Robey—do you recall the manner in which he was eased out? I don't know if eased is the word.

I. PRIMER: Well, there was a faculty action, you might say. And a sufficient number of faculty were simply voicing their negative opinion. I don't know that I feel like bringing up names.

COHEN: Yes. No, that's all right. And then he came back into the English Department, and he taught courses? What courses did he teach?

I. PRIMER: I think he was in American literature.

COHEN: American literature.

I. PRIMER: But that didn't last long.

COHEN: Yes, yes. Tragically. And Richard Robey's successor was Norman Samuels, who is now the present provost. What can you say there—as dean, his deanship I should say?

I. PRIMER: He's been doing his best to move the entire campus forward. But when the faculty at a certain point cast its vote for Samuels as the new provost—that was part of the procedure, I believe, the hope was that one of our own people, instead of an outsider, who knows our needs

and would be very supportive, one of our own people would be much better for us. There has been divided opinion on whether that has ultimately in fact worked for the best. Some persons who are around don't particularly care for what Samuels does or leaves undone.

COHEN: You mean as provost?

I. PRIMER: Yes. They have their case against him. I in certain promotions procedures, I have certainly disagreed with him. But there are larger considerations in the managing of a whole campus that go beyond the needs of a single department. And it may be that his decisions are always modified by a holistic perception. You may disapprove of the advancement of one person possibly because another part of the university is in dire need of that line. And this, I suspect, is a part of the life of a provost. So I guess that's how I would speak about him.

COHEN: How would you compare his deanship to the other deanships?

I. PRIMER: It was competent. Certainly a big improvement over Robey and over Gilliland. He did the job well enough. I can't recall any specific accomplishments of the deanship that would strongly be praised. But it's hard for a dean to pull off such a thing. There are so many restrictions on the office. Just a middleman between students, faculty, administration. And you're a kind of juggler that has to keep the different groups in harmony, and you have to be oiling the system to get all of the things done. The dean is in charge of the whole promotion, set of promotion processes for his unit. But that's all of a dean's job. There are many more details involved. So if the dean does not generate a great deal of dismay, this like opposition, I would have to imagine that at the very least he's doing his job competently.

COHEN: [Laughs] Okay. I want to return to, I guess, a topic very close to what I do, namely the Dana Library. And if you could go back, first I'd like to divide the question into two: If you could assess the growth of its collections over the years, how would you look at that from your perspective?

I. PRIMER: Of course I don't know how the collection has grown in the individual areas. I think from what I simply see about me, I think the science collection has especially mushroomed: all kinds of abstracts and scientific literature now available. The humanities collection has grown maybe disproportionately: Some humanities areas are well represented; others may be less so. The English area certainly has been good. Our needs have been met, though as an English professor, I have always kinds of wishes for acquisitions that may not be feasible. There are some expensive books that maybe a whole university collection should own one of. And New Brunswick would be the repository. But in the matter of books that relate directly to our courses, I think the library has been very good in meeting our needs. One of the things that could be praised, of course, is the sudden—almost sudden—explosion of the electronic media that came into the library.

COHEN: Yes.

I. PRIMER: The ability for the faculty or the student to search bibliographically is on the whole a good thing. The staff, I've never encountered or had a bad reaction with anybody in the library

staff. But sometimes the service has simply been service—sometimes it's been extraordinarily useful and helpful. The space situation in the library used to be difficult. But that improved, and we're getting an addition. So it will improve even more. The one thing that I was sometimes disappointed about was with not having certain periodicals that we simply hoped would be available. But what made up for that was the ease of getting the material on interlibrary loan. If you really need an article that exists in an accessible journal, the library will get it for us. That seems almost like a luxury, but there it is; it is available. Of course it's obvious that with the multiplication of journals, it became clear that one couldn't possibly keep up, not even New Brunswick. So that any major university library, unless you're Harvard or Yale or University of California—and I wonder if even they get every journal that's ever published.

COHEN: No.

I. PRIMER: Probably not. So librarians, those responsible for the collection of the journals, are always in a ticklish position having to make crucial decisions about the value of the journal and even trying to know whether faculty members on a certain campus or in the system will really use what is ordered. Because there's no point in just ordering a journal just to have it.

COHEN: Now you appear to be describing the current situation. I was wondering if you could go back—it's difficult, I know—over your perception of the library through, let's say, the latter part of the seventies into the early eighties.

I. PRIMER: The collection was once on the impoverished side. I think I could describe it that way when I arrived. I had been doing work at Sterling Library of Yale University. And if you know the riches in a place like that and you arrive at Rutgers in Newark, you realize that this isn't the library for serious scholarship.

COHEN: Yes.

I. PRIMER: More serious scholarship is now possible there as a result of its current collection. The availability of outside information sources, including bibliographical resources through Arven [sp] that didn't exist for us in the sixties so far as I know. So that kind of thing has multiplied. But once thing that has to be said in relationship to the resources of the Newark Public Library, I always tell my students that the materials available to you are whatever you find in the Newark Dana Library and the huge, million plus collection of the.... [End of Tape#2]

COHEN: We were talking about the Newark Public Library.

I. PRIMER: Yes, the Newark Public Library is the kind of support branch or connected resource that our students have used from time to time. And I try to make them conscious and aware of the availability of that collection because they have many books in the humanities that we don't have in our collection.

COHEN: You mentioned before that things got better in Dana. If you possibly can put an approximate date on when things began to turn around...if you could just think about that.

I. PRIMER: I think that things didn't begin to turn around until sometime in the mid- or late seventies, when there was a perception at a certain time that this library was seriously deficient. And it may have been in Bloustein's tenure of office, possibly earlier. But I distinctly—I don't very clearly remember it. But at a certain time, maybe more recent than that, but at a certain time there were specific allocations made to vastly improve the collection of the library. Since I'm not on the library staff, it doesn't register. But the perception I have. I remember that we were getting more journals. More of the books that we had—of slips that we handed in—were actually turning up on the shelves. And things seemed to have opened up in a good direction. And then fiscal difficulties seemed to slow that down a bit very recently.

COHEN: I wanted to— Yes?

I. PRIMER: Can you tell me, since you would know better, what was that time of turnaround?

COHEN: Well, we started getting some more money around about in the early eighties.

I. PRIMER: Early eighties!

COHEN: Early eighties. The grants started coming through. It was in the late seventies and about '79, '80. There was a time, I specifically remember, when we actually had a moratorium on book buying because 95 percent of the book budget and the materials budget went into serials. And we simply did not buy any books.

I. PRIMER: Right.

COHEN: And I don't know how many ...

I. PRIMER: Corrections.

COHEN: Right. And then later on we then tried to go—to make up for that. And we've still been trying to make up for that.

I. PRIMER: Yes.

COHEN: But I'm interested in your perception at least Mr. Primer. Two more general questions: One, is there anything that we've discussed that you'd like to go back to and elaborate on?

I. PRIMER: Well, students, faculty, politics. The one thing that I would add to what I have said has to do with the general treatment of the faculty. In all of the years that I've been at Rutgers—and this hope was especially high when we moved to the new campus, Conklin and Hill Hall and all of that—there should have been a facility available where any and all of the faculty members could meet, congregate, exchange any kind of opinions, ideas. But until the Stonesby Commons came into existence, that didn't at all seem possible. You have to go into the student center, into the noisy food area. And Stonesby itself is very noisy also. New Brunswick has had the advantage always, so far as I can say from my perspective, has had the advantage always of having that faculty dining room next to the Brower Commons, where you could go for lunch,

dinner. And there are probably other places like that that would be places for faculty congregation. But we have never had a decent lounge area for congregating and meeting and simply socializing. A university that doesn't rank the way Rutgers does, Drew University, has a fine, a fantastically fine, faculty dining facility. And why can't we have that kind of thing in Newark? Well, maybe Stonesby will more and more function that way. But never have we been given that kind of advantage.

COHEN: Is there anything that we haven't touched on at all that you would like to address?

I. PRIMER: Not that I know of. I mean this is for the record; and if there are topics that I'm asked about, I would or would not be able to answer them. If you tell me at least the subject that something you haven't raised.

COHEN: Well, ...I'm just saying, I tried to touch on, whatever, I was thinking about general areas. But perhaps there's something, perhaps a question I haven't asked or perhaps a subject that I haven't addressed that you have in your own mind.

I. PRIMER: Well, how do you ask interviewees in general about safety on the campus?

COHEN: Oh!

I. PRIMER: How safe is Rutgers-Newark?

COHEN: What's your perception of that?

I. PRIMER: My perception is that Rutgers-Newark is at least as safe as the New Brunswick campus. There are many more people on the New Brunswick campus; it's larger. Statistically there are more rapes on the New Brunswick campus, right?

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

I. PRIMER: That may be related to its size, its being spread out, and greater opportunities for crimes to be committed. But that kind of thing has happened right inside our buildings. What can we do about that? Just be eternally conscious of the fact that the old civility of American society has been changed. Are we to blame this on anything connected with 1967 or '69? I don't know. It's much more a larger urban problem, and it has always been with us.

COHEN: Yes.

I. PRIMER: But one thing that can be said, of course, is that the Rutgers police force has grown. They're more visible. And I think that it's impossible to avoid some kinds of crime on a campus such as ours. The English Department has periodically been raided by thieves. We have lost tape recorders, we lost a CD player, and various pieces of equipment, that are simply removed from our lockers and closets. If it's possible to— And I think they found that once or twice these were inside jobs. People who were connected with the staff who had keys. This is a separate area in itself, and it demands—requires—the attention of the experts in criminal behavior.

COHEN: Anything else that you'd like to bring up that we haven't touched on?

I. PRIMER: I can't think of any at the moment.

COHEN: Okay. Dr. Primer, thank you very, very much. [End of Tape #3]

[End of Interview]

Edited by Gideon Thompson