
An Interview with

GEORGE H. SMITH

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

December 4, 1990
INTERVIEW: George H. Smith

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GILBERT COHEN: Tuesday, December the 4th, 1990. This Gil Cohen. I’m meeting with Professor George Smith in his home in Madison, New Jersey. And we’ve been talking about old times. And Professor Smith, as we were sitting in your living room, you were telling me about what the campus looked like as you returning from a trip to San Francisco. It must have been, you thought, maybe 1968. And you had a rather vivid description. I wonder if you could repeat that, what were the circumstances.

GEORGE H. SMITH: Yes. I had been in San Francisco that summer on a trip. And I think it was ’68; it doesn’t really matter. It was one of those years. And when I came down to the Newark Rutgers campus in the fall to get myself prepared for teaching, I walked across our campus. Got into it a little bit. And I was struck and amazed by what I saw there. There were a lot of students, male and female, running around, talking, sitting, standing, whatever. But the way they were dressed, the way they were made up, they were totally different from the students I had known in the spring when school closed down. They were dressed differently, the hair was different. And they were talking and gesturing. Everything was different. And I thought, my God! I’d visited Haight-Ashbury when I was in San Francisco, but that was way out on the coast. We’re back in New Jersey. And there were students who looked even more dramatic and more different, more changed. It was almost a shock to me that the change had come so quickly to our campus. The way the students looked and behaved, dressed and talked among themselves. And I thought, how can I teach these people this fall? Quite a shock.

COHEN: At that time, what did you think brought about the changes in the student body in such a short period of time?

GEORGE SMITH: I didn’t know. I just realized that there were changes in the air, and I knew that the war, the black agitation around, so many things were going on. So I wasn’t really so much surprised; I was just kind of shocked at how quickly it came, and I just had to assume it was a part of what was happening. Things were changing radically.

COHEN: Well, how did these changes affect your relationship with students, either in the class, on the campus? I mean how did it affect your work as a professor?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, the whole thing took place not immediately, but over seven months and a few years. But there was a dramatic change, at least amongst some professors. Perhaps some didn’t change so much. But I think there was a feeling that the whole way that we did things had to be looked at again. I think professors had always come to the campus wearing a tie and jacket and looking like business people. And I found myself—and I noticed some of my colleagues—were letting their hair grow a little longer. Just a simple illustration. They weren’t wearing a tie. They were looking a little more like the students, a little more relaxed in the way
we dressed. And I find myself in talking to students—they’d be sitting in my office or standing in the hallway for class to start—talking about things in a way that hadn’t been done before these changes came about. Talking about drugs. And I guess we didn’t realize then that there was such a thing as a drug problem. We knew that pot was right out there. I mean again we suspected; we weren’t sure. We could smell it in the halls.

One of my former students—it was a woman who had grown children of her own because, you know, she was a mature person—she told me one day sitting in my office, she said, “George, you know, there’s something I’ll tell you. I went to a party last night, and my son went. It was a pot party.” He said, “Mom, I’m going to a pot party.” And said, “Do you want to come along?” She said, “What was I to do? If I’d told him you can’t do this, I’ll kick you out of the house, I would have lost him. So I went.” So there was a little illustration of things that were happening, not in a massive way, but here and there you picked up things were changing. And you talked to some of the older students, and discover yes, they have pot at home. So you began to feel you were coming into another cultural tide. Not by a big sweep of history, but just by what this person’s doing, that person’s doing, what you see on television, what the papers are saying. And you realize you’re changing with it.

COHEN: Well, you say changing. How did you have to change with it, as a professor?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, as a professor.

COHEN: Of psychology.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, I found myself, in a way, in a fortunate position. My favorite course was one that I had developed years ago. I called it Senior Readings. It was open to a chosen group of seniors every year to work with me for either a semester or a whole year on a series of informal readings and discussions. We kept the course down to about 12 students. And we were not restricted to any one textbook. It wasn’t a course in history or anything like that. It was just a course in the world today as reflected in important books. It could be Gloria Steinem’s book, which we did read. It could be the O’Neills’ book on open marriage, which we read. We talked about open marriage. We said, Heck, you don’t have to stay down to one mate. You can be married and enjoy all the benefits and still have some sexual companionship on the side. Well, that was very challenging. I probably wouldn’t have thought about that book five years earlier. It wouldn’t have been around. But it came out and was appealing to a lot of people, and why shouldn’t psychology students discuss it and what it meant to human relationships? So it was a new thing, in a way, that we were getting into. And, oh, there were the books on women’s liberation. I mentioned Steinem, but there were others that came along. And some of those we read and began to evaluate. Well, have women been that discriminated against? What does it mean to men? So then there came out some books on men’s liberation. We had to read those because that was a man’s rebuttal in a way. Not rebuttal, but how do men keep up with this, how do men handle this thing? And then there was the great psychologist Carl Rogers, whose theory and practice of client-centered psychology everybody still knows, I’m sure. And he did a book and a tape on alternatives to marriage. Well, we listened to the tape and read the book and discussed what are the alternatives to marriage, and how do they work? So what I did was to
work psychological thinking and concepts into the current happenings of people as reflected in the great books dialogue. It was very exciting to me and to the students. They loved it.

COHEN: How did responding to these currents affect your relationship as a teacher to the students? I mean did it draw you closer or what? What was the quality of the relationship between teacher and student? I guess is what I’m getting at.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, to me, it drew me closer in that I was able to—probably on account of my own particular makeup—to empathize with the students pretty well, and thus many of them, a lot of them at least, were…took me into their confidence. The troubles they were having at home with their parents who couldn’t understand what was going on. I remember one dramatic incident which I’ll never forget. One of my favorite students, a nice young lady…. Well, I was sitting in my office one day—I think we were in Smith Hall by this time, yes—and she came in, rather suddenly, closed the door behind her, and threw herself down before me, across my desk. She said, “I’m pregnant! And I’ve got to go to a clinic and get an abortion.” I said, “My God! Quiet down. That’s not going to…. “I’ve got to do it. There’s no way. And why me? Why me? I only did it once, and there are girls around here who do it every day. Why did I get caught?” Anyway, she was talking to me as if I were an understanding parent. And this would never have happened in earlier times.

COHEN: Yes.

GEORGE SMITH: But things broke down. This pregnancy was …. And this student in the new atmosphere here was just simply a professor, and you could talk to him.

COHEN: Yes. How was this resolved, by the way?

GEORGE SMITH: Oh, she got the abortion.

COHEN: She was aborted.

GEORGE SMITH: As far as I know. Of course I lost contact with her. But as far as I know, she came out of it alive.

COHEN: Well, well! As chairman of the Psychology Department for how many years now, from ’48 to ’67….

GEORGE SMITH: A long time.

COHEN: [Laughs] A long time. You must have seen and presided over a lot of curriculum change or development. I was wondering if you could go into that to some extent.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, I’d be glad to. I feel that some of the things that were put in place there I had a hand in. I came into the department in, my first year, it was ’48. The Psychology Department consisted of two people: one with a master’s degree; I’m not sure what the other one had, might have been a master’s degree. That’s all there were. Two people, and of course what
they were teaching was very limited, although they were quite bright. And I was really commissioned, brought in from Princeton where I was teaching at the time, to build a department at the new Rutgers campus in Newark. And with some feeling, well, okay, it would be fun, I’d like to do it. So I went to work on that. And I, while my own interests are in social psychology and not so much in the history and experimental and so on, I realized to that to have a good department, I had to have experimental psychology, animal psychology, history, psychology of—you know, the whole range of things. So I set out on a recruitment program. And one of the first people that I was able, fortunately, to get Dan Lehrman. I’m sure you know of Dan.

COHEN: Oh, yes, yes. I knew him very, very well. I miss him.

GEORGE SMITH: Yes. Well, Dan was a lucky strike for me. He was a brilliant student and could have gone anywhere. But he wanted to stay in the New York area. So I got him over to Rutgers, and we became close friends. He started the experimental courses. And that was not his main interest, but he was more than glad to do it. He was basically in animal psychology. He wanted to build his own institute of animal psychology. And he went at it, and I supported it. And he was able to get grants and get the animal institute established within a few years after he came over. And that, as you know, developed on and on, and I believe it’s still around.

COHEN: What, the institute?

GEORGE SMITH: Yes.

COHEN: Oh, yes! Very much so.

GEORGE SMITH: It’s gone into the new—

COHEN: It’s in Smith.

GEORGE SMITH: Yes.

COHEN: It’s in Smith, yes.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, that was one of the things that I feel very honored to have gotten the right person at the right time to get that going. And it’s made a tremendous contribution to the whole college, to the whole university in fact.

COHEN: Isn’t that amazing. Yes. I, by the way, interviewed Dorothy Dinnerstein about a month ago, and she sends her regards.

GEORGE SMITH: Yes. Wonderful. Oh, did she?

COHEN: I mentioned the fact that I was going to be interviewing you, and she said she sends her regards.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, she’s a wonderful lady.
COHEN: Yes.

GEORGE SMITH: Later on, when she joined us, as Dan’s wife actually, she was very instrumental in—again, I gave support—in setting up the cognitive psychology on campus, the graduate program. I don’t know where that is right now. But she was on the right track because cognitive psychology is the big thing today in our field. So again I feel very fortunate to have gotten such good people to do the things that should have been done at the time. Then I brought in a young man from Stanford University, Bill Wales, Dr. William Wales. I don’t know whether you….

COHEN: I remember the name, but I don’t remember the man.

GEORGE SMITH: Bill came in around, let’s see, oh, in the middle fifties, I guess. I was able to get him. And he was in social psychology. So I was able to expand that area, which I wanted to do. But I wanted a graduate program. And he and I were able gradually to develop a master’s level graduate program in consumer psychology. I don’t know where that stands now. I think it probably disappeared. But he could contributed a good deal to the department. And he left to go to the University of Chicago around ’58. And other people whose names—I don’t even remember all of them—are there and contributed. But I think that the group that Dan brought in and that Dorothy brought in—and I helped to bring in a few—made the department which emerged in the late sixties and into the seventies. And it was one of the most popular departments on campus.

COHEN: Oh, yes!

GEORGE SMITH: For a long, long time. One of the things that I did gradually was develop the field of aging and lifespan psychology. Now that may not have continued. But for about five or six years I did courses that were well attended in that growing field. So there were a lot of good people like Colin Bier and Ernie Hansen. There were many, many others that came and went, and some are still there. But it was a good department.

COHEN: What did you see of curriculum change generally throughout the late sixties and seventies, in addition to your own department that you can recall? How did the….

GEORGE SMITH: I don’t know. I don’t know. At that time I really don’t know what was going on in other departments. There wasn’t much talk about it among the faculty. At least I wasn’t tuned in on it.

COHEN: Going back a bit to the—since you came in 1948—for the historical record, how would you describe the old Rector Street—I call it the Rector Street campus?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, since I had always been to a university, you know, being in the city, like George Washington, had a very fine campus. It was strange, full of contradictions, in that the building we worked in was really not suitable for a major college. And yet the people who were there were so good, so outstanding, that somehow you got the feeling of real quality here. And
the students who came were excellent. When I started there in the late forties and in the fifties, we were drawing most of our students from the local area, New York and around, and they were an ethnic mix of. I would say that probably a good majority were Jewish students, whose parents were living in the general area. They were often professional people, businesspeople and so on. And maybe they sent one or two kids off to a big university somewhere. But maybe one or two more, you know, they couldn’t, and came on down to Rutgers. And we had a very high level of academic achievement and student interest in what was going on. We had a very good mix of Italian students who were excellent. And many others. But my point is the intellectual atmosphere in that college was outstanding. We had good kids who were there because they wanted to be there. And they were working to support their way through school. And they would work maybe half the night and the other half studying and go to school the next day. That’s exaggerating. But they were good. So that the old buildings, we thought, well, it’s all right. It’s pretty good. It’s home here. We kind of were loyal to it because it is home where we and our good, good students are doing a good job. And then we always had hope naturally, if we played the part right, we would get eventually into new buildings. See, it wasn’t all in the Rector Street building. We had business school in another building.

COHEN: Oh, there was the building across the street from 40 Rector, and there was a building on James Street there?

GEORGE SMITH: Yes, there were other buildings. They had one on the park, remember that one? That was the administration…

COHEN: Yes. Was that the business school?

GEORGE SMITH: Yes.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

GEORGE SMITH: And they had the quarters there. And there were good rooms for the faculty meetings and things. But we all knew and felt that things could be better. We didn’t feel like outcasts because we had these smaller buildings because we had a good faculty and good students. We did a good job teaching. The kids did not get shortchanged. Men like Dan Lehrman could entrance them you know with his brilliance. He could do it, and they thought, my God, we had a lecture today! And Blumenthal. People like that were good enough to kind of put the structure in the background.

COHEN: When you say people, do you have any recollections of other people who’ve impressed you in that fashion on the faculty?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, of course, I never went to other people’s lectures. Perhaps I should have. So I’m not going to try to, you know…. But people that I know from what students said, and my impression of these people that I met at lunches and things is that they were all good people. They were excellent.
COHEN: You mentioned before the student body, and that’s one of the things I wanted to get into. How did the student body change—evolve—in the late sixties and through the seventies? Demographics and scholastics.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, I think, as I said, the people we had when we started out there in the early fifties, I feel belonged there because there was an intellectual climate and it was close to home and it was inexpensive. They were getting pretty good buy, you know. So the bright kids had no hesitation in coming here. If they couldn’t get away to somewhere else, well, you’ve got a good school right down the street, not expensive. The facilities aren’t very great, but I think it’s got a good faculty and good labs. And good reason to go there. Okay. So we had almost an elite attitude to ourselves. And it may sound strange to you, but we did. We knew we were good as Rutgers people. Well, I think what changed after things kind of settled down after the late sixties and seventies, is that for reasons that I don’t know, but I can only guess, a good many of the Jewish students seemed to—they had to be replaced by other ethnic bodies. Now, those were equally good students, but in some cases hadn’t had in their homes or in their schools, high schools, the preparation that we had been accustomed to. So in that respect we had a more—a wider spread of intellectual preparation for the rigorous programs that we gave. And so it meant that the…. There was a little dilution, and certainly we had to spare ourselves a little bit to take into account the diversity of ethnic groups that we were now getting, particularly as black students came in. Now, you see before the change in the late eighties, we had almost no black students.

COHEN: In the late eighties or—

GEORGE SMITH: I’m sorry, the late sixties.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

GEORGE SMITH: I’m sorry about that. We had…I remember so well talking to one very fine, bright black male student back in, I don’t know, probably the early sixties. And we just laughed about it. But he said, “I don’t know. I don’t like it here too much.” “What’s the matter?” “Well, you know, I’m the only one.” I said, “Well, that’s all right.” ….Where do your colleagues go? “Oh, they go down South to a black college.” So that was the feeling, see, that we were kind of elite. We didn’t ask for that. We would have taken any good black student. But they began to feel—Oh, was it registration day? I only see white faces there. They don’t want me, you know. The black students. So what happened was that we had this elitist, small urban college which we didn’t plan that way, but the black students felt they didn’t belong. And probably, for all I know, Hispanics and others may have felt the same way. It was strictly white, you know, the whole pattern.

COHEN: Do you think there were any other conditions? I mean what we’re sort of leading into, I guess, is the big event of 1969, the takeover of Conklin Hall. Do you think there were any other—was it just this one area that you felt led to the takeover of Conklin Hall? What other conditions do you think existed, either locally or nationally, which would have led to—do you have any feelings about that, any perceptions about that, something as drastic as the occupation of a building?
GEORGE SMITH: Well, again, I’d have to say that I’m maybe not too perceptive because I didn’t anticipate it, you know. I was very immersed in my own teaching and consulting and stuff. And when it happened…and my office was in Conklin, so I was there…

COHEN: Oh, it was?

GEORGE SMITH: Oh, yes. The first building on the campus.

COHEN: Yes, as you’re coming from downtown, the building on the right is Conklin, yes. Right.

GEORGE SMITH: That first building. I had my office was in there. And I think it came to me personally as a shock. I knew that there were things in the air. I knew that the black people in Newark were “burning the town.” And there was a certain amount of tension about the situation. But I guess I didn’t realize we were that close to just a complete radical move like taking over a college building. This was a shock, you know. A college building?! You know. And anger. I couldn’t get to my books, couldn’t get to my notes. I’d been violated. Professors don’t have that kind of thing; you know students don’t do that to professors. So much as I might have been in sympathy with the black action approach, no, I wasn’t sympathetic to having a building taken over. And I had to make do and give my lectures and things in the meantime. Now, I felt that the reason that the administration didn’t reclaim the building in some way was two things: There might have been major destruction to the things in the building if the blacks had been challenged, forced to come out or something like that. But I felt that this was almost a test case; that if we made a stand there or pushed the black students out in some way, it might have led to a black takeover of the university in Newark. In other words, it might have sparked a total outpouring in the city to take over this elitist white university in their midst.

COHEN: When you say takeover, takeover in what respect?

GEORGE SMITH: Could have marched on the college.

COHEN: Oh, in terms of actual occupation.

GEORGE SMITH: Oh, yes. Oh, I think it could have happened.

COHEN: Yes.

GEORGE SMITH: I still do. I think the anger in Newark…. We were, again, we had what? A beautiful white campus in the middle of downtown Newark. Hardly a black student. I guess there were no black faculty, no black librarians, you know. We were there. What the hell, to be there. So some of our students took over one of their buildings. And they were kicked out and punished. Let’s get ‘em. You know? Now maybe I’m all wrong, but that was the way I looked at it, one way of looking at the possibilities.
COHEN: No, that’s, I think, a very important perception. Do you think that this perception was—to what extent do you think it was shared by your colleagues, either in the department or just throughout the faculty?

GEORGE SMITH: I don’t know.

COHEN: The question of admissions standards, of course, was central to the whole controversy around the occupation of Conklin Hall. And I was wondering how did you see the differences among the faculty on making adjustments, the advisability of adjusting admissions standards and the advisability of conceding to the demands of the black students for really much and very quick increases in the number of black students in the school? Do you recall that discussion?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, not too well. I guess my general feeling was then that we ought not to lower our standards. But somehow we had to accommodate to reality. I think that’s how it was done. How it was almost an administrative problem, you know. I didn’t feel that we should just have ethnic faces on campus just to fill some kind of quota. And I believe today that feeling has becoming more and more standard. I don’t remember too much about discussing this with the administration people. It sort of took place, you know. Much like grading papers. Should you make any concessions to the fact that this student had one background rather than another? I think you really shouldn’t. But sometimes you get caught in a position where you feel, well—it’s a hard one.

COHEN: It is. Very hard. I was wondering, what was your assessment of the… [Break in recording] Okay. We’re back, and we were talking about the remedial, the effectiveness of the remedial program. I was wondering if you had any feeling for that.

GEORGE SMITH: I really don’t. I know it was going on. But I don’t recall specifically the pros and cons of what it did, how successful it was or not.

COHEN: As the…. Well, let’s say—sort of a wrap-up on the Conklin Hall takeover, do you have any sense of the historical significance of the takeover of Conklin Hall long term?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, to be honest, reminiscing about it, as I think back, I think it made a difference and dramatized the problem. I mean we all knew there was a problem in Newark and a problem in Rutgers. But we didn’t know really much about how to change these things. I think that dramatized—nobody could turn away and say, well, it’s not a real problem. We have a problem. From that time on I think we’ve all, one way or another, you know, have adjusted to the thing.

COHEN: The background to that, to the Conklin Hall takeover, of course, was the Newark riots in July 1967. And if you could go back a bit, how did that affect your work and your perception of the whole scene?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, the burning of Newark, as it was called, and so on…. Again, I was commuting in by car most of the time—or some of the time—during that period. And was aware of the burning and the destruction on some of the streets that I was driving on. I was shocked by
it. But I think that we took this in—I took this in—as part of the wider context of the Vietnam War, and the world was changing. You know it was a traumatic time.

COHEN: Yes.

GEORGE SMITH: A dreadful time. We had the war on there in the living room in the evening on the television. And we knew from newspapers and what people said, that Newark was being torn apart. There was a revolution on the streets there. And there was this feeling that things were just out of control almost. And the students were—well, they were changing, and, as I say, we’d change with them in a way, by the way we dressed and the way we talked. And our easy attitude with the students. Some professors and students became friends in a way it hadn’t been done before. And then there was the women’s movement, the gay rights movement, Third World. Everything was happening so fast in every corner, that you couldn’t let it overwhelm you. You built kind of a world you could accept and live in while all this was going on around you. There were good times and bad times. It was exciting, but it was upsetting, too, because we’d never experienced anything like this before.

COHEN: How did you feel then about, within this situation, about the teaching of psychology, its significance, its importance, in the overall scheme of higher education?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, as I said, I made my peace with it by developing this—having this—one undergraduate seminar, senior seminar, which dealt face to face with this stuff. You know if a book came out on, oh, homosexuals in college or something—I don’t think that kind of book ever came out—but if something like that came out, I might read the book and say, Hey, let’s go over this in class and see what the author says and maybe we’ll do a little interpreting here. See what Freud had, Carl Rogers had, give it the context of psychology. So I did that, and it made me feel pretty good I was up to date more or less. Now, other professors that I talked with were more angry and kind of stunned by the thing and tried to teach their courses the way they’d always taught them, you see.

COHEN: Oh.

GEORGE SMITH: And it wasn’t necessarily the most popular thing that you could do. So I think it became probably an individual thing. I know that Dorothy was sensing the changes and was developing some of her courses in that direction—Dorothy Dinnerstein.

COHEN: Yes.

GEORGE SMITH: And Lillian Rogers [sp] probably was to a rather large degree. But there were some others who seemed to get stuck: Well, what’s going on? How do you talk to these students? But trying to give a course pretty much as they’d always given.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

GEORGE SMITH: So I think that was the thing I remember most clearly.
COHEN: And you remember very well. [Laughter]

GEORGE SMITH: It must have been true in our department as well. History I can imagine, and literature.

COHEN: How did this situation affect faculty recruitment? And when I say situation, I’m saying the—going back to my original question about the riots in Newark and the whole perception of disorder and the perception of crime and so on. How did it affect the—when you interviewed? As chairman of the department, you interviewed people. How did it affect your recruiting efforts?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, fortunately for me, I suppose, by the time that became an issue, I had resigned in ’68.

COHEN: Oh, yes.

GEORGE SMITH: However, I can tell you an anecdote or two about it which will make a case. A new faculty member was brought into the department, the Psychology Department. This was a woman. She was black, and had a Ph.D. And she was a lovely lady. We became friends. I don’t know where she is now. And one day she laughingly said, “Well, George, they got three in one from me. They got a woman, black, and a Ph.D. Gee, it was cheap.” And we laughed. But she was telling the truth, you know. So I think I began to see the appearance of a minority group of professors on the campus. And I assume—I was not recruiting in those days—but I assume this is what more or less had to be done to adapt to life as it is. And then I remember talking to one of my students. This was in the early seventies. Nice young man who had worked hard and… at Rutgers. But he couldn’t get into a graduate program where he wanted to go; NYU I think he was trying and another place or two. And he finally said, “You know, if I were black, I could get in. There’d be no problem.”

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

GEORGE SMITH: “When I tell them I’m white, ah!” You know. So it began to kind of get around in the air that something bad is happening. That students somehow feel it, and it’s a sensitive point among faculty, although they laugh at it. The woman who was a Ph.D., black, and well… she was laughing. But she was aware. And my student who was angry, he was aware. And others like that. So it trickled down in this kind of thing. That things were changing. Whether we could leave it or whether we felt that years of discrimination should be made up, kind of the reverse of things now, it became an issue in our minds. And if I had been interviewing two qualified people, a black and a white candidate, for a job, thank God I didn’t have to face that. I don’t know what I would have done.

COHEN: Yes, because you were out of the chairmanship. Again, did the perception of disorder in the city have any negative effect on recruiting faculty?

GEORGE SMITH: I don’t think so.
COHEN: You don’t think so.

GEORGE SMITH: No. They were so close to New York City that it was a desirable place to be in that respect, that I don’t think people would shy away from it.

COHEN: Did it ever come up in discussion, that you recall, that this was a problem?

GEORGE SMITH: No…no.

COHEN: A hypothetical question: If the riots had never occurred, how do you think the campus would have grown?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, if our particular riots hadn’t occurred, we would have changed, I think, but more slowly. Because, you see, I think all American universities have changed, in the last couple of decades now, dramatically. So I think we would have changed. It would have been slower and…. [Break in recording]

COHEN: We’re back. We were talking about—I had a hypothetical question, if you recall, how the campus, do you think, would have evolved if the Newark riots had never occurred. And I believe you were saying that you thought it would have changed more slowly. My follow-up question to that is, even if it had changed more slowly, how do you think it would have changed? You mentioned that change was occurring in universities across the country. I wonder if you could describe specifically what changes you were thinking of.

GEORGE SMITH: Oh, of course, I have not been back at universities for some time. So I don’t know what the outcome of this has been. So I can only give you my impression of what I felt at the time, and maybe now, a little bit. I think that the university or college is part of a larger culture, and that you couldn’t have had the university, Newark College of Arts and Sciences, just sitting there when the colleges in New York and everywhere were undergoing big changes. So I think we would have changed. I think what the riots did—I think what the takeover did, and our being in Newark—may have helped sensitize us to just how real this is, how close it is. And made us scramble a little bit faster. But I don’t think we could have avoided it, the overall—I mean the whole American social climate was changing. We were part of that.

COHEN: We were talking before about how different people in different branches of the psychology discipline were able to cope with the changes that were going on. And I’m wondering if you could just deal with it from the point of view of the discipline specialties, how different people in the specialties, based upon the specialties, how the specialty would influence a person’s, a faculty member’s, ability to deal with this in the classroom situation.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, I think that is a good question, and I’ve thought about it, and maybe I’m a little biased of what I would say. But my feeling is this: That the people who are in social psychology are—in those days anyway—tended to be interested in what’s happening in society. The discipline’s very name—our form of psychology. In my own case, for example, before coming to Rutgers, I had been for several years at Princeton, where I had been working with the famous Hadley Cantril, who was working with a student of Gordon Allport at Harvard. And
Cantril was deeply involved in the psychology of social issues. He had a book on that, as a matter of fact, which I read with great admiration. And he studied the Father Divine movement, the Oxford movement, the Townsend movement. Of course the Nazi movement. Things like that which were going on in the fifties, sixties. And that sensitized me to social movements, to change in society. In fact before we had the big changes in Newark, I had taken my students to a Father Divine meeting or two, simply to observe what goes on with a dissident group of people; and Father Divine was a very important man to push for change. Of course the way he did it might be criticized, but… We studied him. Whereas I think if we look at the other side of the thing, I was a social psychologist, background in that field, and worked with Cantril and George Gallup and others. And I was ready to look at the social movements that I saw going on around me. Now, some people in my field might have been, for example, working with animals, which is an excellent place to learn about behavior. But they would be concentrating more on the animal experiments and that end of things, and would be a little bit not tuned in as quickly on the broader social movements. But that’s my judgment.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

GEORGE SMITH: And I think that someone who is teaching, oh, learning theory or perception theory might be more involved in the laboratory and in the generalized individual than in the behavior of masses of people in and around Newark, you know. So I think that the discipline—and you can take this to other departments. I think probably in sociology you find more tuning in on the social movements than would be perhaps true in physics or something like that. So I think, yes, I think the university faculty is not a homogeneous bunch of people. They’re a lot of bright people working in different areas, some of which are kind of close to what’s going on over there; others more close to what’s going on here in this experiment, in the laboratory. Yes.

COHEN: A real heterogeneous community.

GEORGE SMITH: [Laughs] Yes.

COHEN: I want to go back again to some of the student questions. There was a decline in student enrollment, if I recall, in the early seventies. Do you have any sense of that and why?

GEORGE SMITH: Was there a decline?

COHEN: Yes, yes. I was wondering if you could get into various causes of enrollments declining. New enrollments, I don’t know if you…. Do you have any sense of that?

GEORGE SMITH: Did you know anything about who felt it was? Was it the white kids who were not coming in as much? That may have been.

COHEN: It may have been. I thought that maybe you had an opinion on this, because it’s something that…

GEORGE SMITH: No. I know we had more black students. I think that probably I did notice this in that the Jewish students that we had depended on so many years did begin to be fewer and
fewer. That is true. Whether that affected the whole total enrollment, I don’t really know. I don’t know.

COHEN: Yes. Perhaps was a result of the local demographics, people moving into the city.

GEORGE SMITH: Oh, yes. A lot of it was. And some of it could have been that they felt that the education wasn’t still there. I’m not sure. But I know they did disappear to a degree.

COHEN: Again on students, what recollections do you have of some of your outstanding students?

GEORGE SMITH: At any time?

COHEN: Well, let’s say, you know, at any time. More interested probably in the sixties and in the seventies—or before that if you’ve got something interesting.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, one of the best students that I guess ever came through was a woman who I kept up with. I have kept up through letters and stuff. It was in the seventies, yes, the early seventies—the middle. But so terribly bright that it was incredible. Now, she took my senior seminar, and it was simply a joy to have her there. She would have been a brilliant student anywhere at any time, you know, under any conditions. And her parents lived out in Mendham, I think, and she commuted in. She got an offer at a Canadian college—I forget the one right off the top of my head—and went there for master’s work. And then—maybe this has no connection, no relevance—but the fact is that she became pregnant, and this didn’t interrupt her education particularly. But she did not get married at the time. She’s not married now, the last Christmas card I got. She reported on her son and what they’re doing and what she’s doing. I guess that she represents the interesting coming together of two things: a brilliant kind of student that in former years probably would have gone on directly to a Ph.D. program and so on and so on and never gotten derailed; but because she was a student in the seventies, she was more restless. Went to Canada rather than to somewhere in this country, but could have gotten in anywhere. Got herself pregnant. That was typical of some kind of revolutionary-type students in her time. Now she’s still there, she’s still going strong, doing all right. But it’s a different career than if she had been coming through in the fifties or early sixties.

COHEN: Yes.

GEORGE SMITH: Would you agree? I mean, she had everything going, and we said, Gee, she’s going to be a professor at Harvard within ten years. But, no, she’s still kind of floundering around—okay, but floundering in Canada with her boy.

COHEN: Well, if I may ask—this is rather interesting. How did the times, do you feel, influenced her to make these moves, to go to Canada, not to go to graduate school, not to go on for a Ph.D. with such brilliance?
GEORGE SMITH: Well, sort of a romanticism for one thing, going off to a strange new world. And why did she get herself pregnant? Well, she had enough sense not to. But again, I feel it was a kind of a fling into the mad new world that was created.

COHEN: [Laughter] What are some of the great teaching experiences you can recall? You know sometimes you have these little revelations in class, something really—an epiphany or something. Maybe that’s overstating the case. Do you recall anything like that?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, you’ve gotten me off guard. I don’t—they were more, I think, in the sense of interacting with students, and they’re more apt to be in small seminar-type things than elsewhere. I don’t know how good a lecturer I was. I think I was all right, but I never got a medal for Outstanding Teacher of the Year, which Henry Blumenthal did, I’m sure.

COHEN: But that’s beside the point.

GEORGE SMITH: Yes. But for me the top moments of my teaching came in the senior seminars where we were—ten, 11 of us—interacted as a group and in the talking of current issues that the students were involved in, in the context of books we were reading. I felt one of them, and we were laughing and talking like a family. And there was a very fine feeling which everybody shared. One girl I remember had talked about her husband several times. Finally about the next time that he came up, she said, “Well, you know he’s black.” I said, “No, I didn’t know that. You didn’t tell us before.” She’d talked about their lovemaking and many things. No, that was the context of the times. But finally she admitted to us he was black, and we all accepted it. And it was like a family.

COHEN: That’s perfect. [Laughter]

GEORGE SMITH: Well, to me it made life worthwhile.

COHEN: That’s what I was looking for, if you will.

GEORGE SMITH: Okay.

COHEN: Okay.

GEORGE SMITH: You’re making me remember things that I haven’t thought about.

COHEN: Okay. How are we doing?

GEORGE SMITH: Oh, it’s pushing twelve, twenty of twelve. How are we doing?

COHEN: As far as I’m concerned, we’re doing great. Do you have any feeling for, or were in any way involved, in community work, either locally in Newark or where you live or anything like that, in your capacity?

GEORGE SMITH: At that time?
COHEN: Yes, at that time, late sixties, seventies. In your capacity as a professor of psychology.

GEORGE SMITH: At that time I didn’t because I was not only teaching, but I was doing consulting work that I love, which kept me in New York quite a bit and traveling quite a bit. The university understood that. I fed back to my classes the information I was getting. I taught a course in consumer psychology. If I hadn’t done it myself, I wouldn’t have known what I was doing when it came to the university. But that kept me pretty busy. And I had bought this home in Madison. And I married late and had young children when…you know. So I was very, very busy and didn’t get into community work until I retired.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Oh!

GEORGE SMITH: Since then I’ve been volunteering at nursing homes and places and giving quite a bit. But at the time I didn’t.

COHEN: Was there any community worked involvement on the part of your colleagues that you were aware of? Did you have any sense of that?

GEORGE SMITH: I don’t know. It was not a thing that we talked about. I think—oh, we did some lectures and, well, I mean nothing like being part-time volunteers at the hospital or something. No, I don’t recall it being discussed. If you mean into environmental problems and peace movements and so on.…

COHEN: Well, not necessarily, but it could be.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, I think some of the professors were in that. I think in psychology, yes, there were a couple. Dorothy may have been. I think probably she was at least in part. There were some, yes. But I was not one of them.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. I want to go back again to the question of curriculum reform. Since one of your specialties was consumer psychology, do you have any sense of the reasons for the creation of the Department of Business in the College of Arts and Sciences at the time, out of the Economics Department?

GEORGE SMITH: That came in the undergraduate program, didn’t it? Or was it a master’s program?

COHEN: It was an undergraduate program, as I recall.

GEORGE SMITH: Yes. I’m pretty vague on that. Was Leo Troy the chair at the time?

COHEN: He may have been chairing economics.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, didn’t the Business Department come out of the Economics Department?
COHEN: Yes, yes. Well, I was wondering in the deliberations of the faculty if you had any sense of why this was done.

GEORGE SMITH: The only memory I have of it…I don’t remember the deliberations. I remember that when I was giving my consumer course, it became a required course, I believe, for the new Business Department.

COHEN: Oh! Mm-hmm.

GEORGE SMITH: As to why that got started, I don’t know. I think it was done partly to prep students for the business administration master’s program, I suspect.

COHEN: Another development during that period in the seventies—’72—was the establishment of the graduate school with its dean, under Gilbert Panson.

GEORGE SMITH: Oh, yes.

COHEN: And do you have any sense of the why at that time the graduate school was established?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, that’s when the Ph.D. program came into it, is that correct?

COHEN: Well, I think there were Ph.D.’s on campus before the graduate school. But….

GEORGE SMITH: I know that we had gotten permission to give a master’s-level degree in consumer psychology back, I don’t know, ’65, ’66—somewhere in there. And then we got permission to give a Ph.D. in psychology around ’67, ’68. Now you’re speaking of….

COHEN: ‘Seventy-two the graduate school itself was established.

GEORGE SMITH: I don’t have anything much to add to that. By that time my graduate program…consumers had been dropped.

COHEN: Maybe you can respond to this question, again, connected with the graduate school: How did the establishment of the graduate school and the graduate programs affect—if it did affect—the undergraduate curriculum? The teaching in the Psychology Department obviously you would be closest to. But did it have any effect on faculty lines on who taught what and what was taught at that particular time? Was there anything there, any indications that….

GEORGE SMITH: In what way?

COHEN: When the graduate school was established….

GEORGE SMITH: Yes.
COHEN: When they had more of a program. You already had, I believe, a Ph.D. in psychology. Or maybe I should reword that. Maybe what I’m driving at, is there any conflict between the graduate program…did the undergraduate program in any way suffer as a result of graduate programs in terms of faculty lines and courses and things like that?

GEORGE SMITH: I really don’t know. I guess in setting up the cognitive psychology Ph.D., it was a big leap forward, which Dorothy, well, Dorothy and Dan and I—I went to Harvard with Danny to recruit the man who was kind of head of that program. I think—it’s very hard. I think it had some effect on undergraduate teaching. But I don’t know. That’s a very hard one to picture because the idea was that the people who taught in the graduate program were also to teach in the undergraduate program. Now I’m not sure all that was done as well as I would like to see. The tendency was, after they got there, to spend most of their time in the graduate program. And I think that probably, if I had to individually set it up, I would have had a commitment to spend half the time for the undergraduates and half for the graduate students. I think we didn’t quite make that distinctly, as close as it could have been. So, you know, I believe that Kristin, for example…. Men like Hadley Cantril—he taught for the undergraduate program. I’m not sure enough of that is done today at the college. But this is kind of a judgment I’m not too sure of because I can’t remember all… It’s just a little bit of an impression.

COHEN: Because there have been, you know, frequent discussions about that, a perceived conflict between the two.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, there was some. But if it had worked out the way it should have, it would have been an asset to the undergraduates because they would have gotten top-level professors. I think we didn’t get quite enough of those to-level professors time with the undergraduates.

COHEN: I’d like to move on to impressions of faculty, generally what comes up in the seventies—at least it seems to come up more in the minutes of the faculty—that tenure becomes, the whole question of tenure becomes a major issue of discussion. Why during that period rather than earlier—or perhaps I’m misreading the record? Was it more of an issue then?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, I can say this: That when World War II ended…. [End of Tape #1] One reason I came to Newark was that I realized that psychology was a boom area, and it was. Somehow during World War II psychology and psychiatry became known in the armed services. People were recruiting and giving commissions to masters in psychology and so on. And at the same time in the field of consumer psychology, George Gallup and other people had made inroads. And people in business began to feel, hey, we’ve got to have a psychologist around to take a poll and tell us what people think or psychoanalyze the public, you know. That sort of thing was coming in, and it was kind of the business of the military who all agreed, Hey, psychologists—you’ve got to have a psychiatrist around. So we were the Golden Boy of that time. If you had a Ph.D. in psychology, where do you want to teach? You had no trouble in getting a job. So that I’d say during the fifties and sixties, it was very easy to get tenure in psychology. There was a need, crying need for it all the way along. Now somewhere then that began to change a bit. And whether that was in the early seventies or later, I’m not sure. But I think there was a kind of feeling that we were stacked up, that we had done our…. That’s only
by one department. I don’t know what’s happening in other departments as much. But I think we, from being the department that everybody wanted to major in and you could hardly get enough good professors to take care of the demand. We began gradually to just become a little bit less important and fewer people were choosing to major in our field. So that’s the reason you get tenure and so on. Yes, that was happening. I don’t know what was happening in sociology, history, and elsewhere.

COHEN: How did the… What role did the AAUP play during this—well, since then? And the first conflict I believe was in 1970. Do you have any perception of that?

GEORGE SMITH: No, not really.

COHEN: Another issue that came up in that period was the use of student evaluations in faculty promotions. Could you comment on that, well, I guess controversy?

GEORGE SMITH: No, I really can’t. I wasn’t chair and didn’t get into that. I just don’t remember its being a big issue.

COHEN: No, not a big issue as far as you know. Another, again a concern with faculty and with promotions. One of the complaints that was made, because of the lack of—the poor facilities, the perceived poor facilities on the Rutgers campus—either laboratories, libraries, other support—that having uniform requirements for promotion for Newark faculty was not really fair compared to the faculty in New Brunswick where they’re superior. Do you think that this was a fair—that the complaint had some merit?

GEORGE SMITH: We had poorer facilities and therefore a promotion…. You mean like in physics or somebody was up for promotion from associate to full professor?

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

GEORGE SMITH: It might be a negative if he was in Newark.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. Or the other fields for that matter…either the sciences or the humanities or the social sciences.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, it’s hard to say. The fact that we were in Newark is a negative to begin with. That is in the seventies and even before, I guess, if you tell somebody, oh, I teach in Newark, ignoring me. You know it’s kind of a stun, what are you doing down there? And I think that negative image of Rutgers in Newark was of the city and not based on a fair evaluation of what we had there. I really feel that. And my own feeling is that in the science departments they have very fine labs for the people there. I know they did in psychology. So that was the perception, which I think was unfounded. I feel that the people that were on the faculty at Newark, I mean so many of them, are very fine people, well trained, they had good equipment. So, like I say, I mean I think it was sort of a prejudice, and it was just that.
COHEN: So you don’t think that there was…do you think there was any validity in the complaint that there was some imbalance there, some unfairness in the situation as far as facilities and library facilities, that there was equity between the two campuses?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, of course we didn’t have all the facilities that they had in New Brunswick. I think that the library is obviously there. And they had more buildings. Things like that. But I’m talking about getting down to the reality in a particular department and what those people were doing, I think we were doing extremely well. I think that biology and physics and chemistry were doing as well as any other good-level college of somewhat the same size. I think if we had not been in Newark, it would have been more visible. You know we were not competing with Princeton or Rutgers in New Brunswick. We’re generating good quality with our lab; it’s a good lab. It’s more than adequate for teaching needs. And, you know, I think this is a confused thing. If you have a college in the middle of Greenwich Village, some have an attitude toward it that wouldn’t be if it’s in some other more, you know, a town like Madison where Drew and Fairleigh-Dickinson are.

COHEN: The reason why I raise it is because many times you would hear complaints from faculty members.

GEORGE SMITH: In Newark?

COHEN: That we don’t think it’s fair that they require—that there are the same requirements for promotion for us as there is for them down there. That’s the reason why I raise that.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, complaints come from the faculty in Newark that they’re discriminated against.

COHEN: Yes, yes. Right. And we were wondering, you know, if….

GEORGE SMITH: Well, that well may be. Because I think that the people in New Brunswick rarely ever came to Newark to look at the lab, you know. So they would indeed…. I’m sure it probably did work that way.

COHEN: Yes.

GEORGE SMITH: I was talking from the point of view of what I regard as the reality because I was back and forth to New Brunswick a lot; I mean I was the chairperson. I knew the people down there. And I felt that our group was easily on a par with them. But you may be right—you probably are—that people came down from other campuses looking at a little place in Trenton, a little place in Newark: Oh, what the hell have they got to offer? Rarely if ever came up to look us over, spend a day. Probably never did. So I feel that kind of problem in the workplace to a degree. And yet, as a matter of fact, though, I went down as chair to get people promoted. Certainly with the psychology group down there, I found the people friendly and understanding. And I went down for social reasons as well as business. I didn’t feel like there was any problem. The dean and others were congenial. I remember one time when, let’s see, oh, getting Dan promoted to full professor. They were accommodating me toward that. And later on when we
wanted to get Dorothy appointed to a full-time position on the tenure track, it was amazing how understanding they were, you know. And Bill Wales, when I got him promoted to full professor, again there was the feeling that if you guys think he’s good enough to vote for him, gee, you’ve got a lot of us going with it. I didn’t personally find the kind of prejudice that may have been true in some departments is what I’m saying. We were friends with the guys down there. They knew us, they knew me, they knew Dan, they knew other people. Okay, buddy, you’ve got someone you want to get promoted? Let’s hear about it. If he’s good, we’ll go with it.

COHEN: Very interesting, yes. Okay, the next big category here is administration. And what I’m going to be doing is asking for your assessment of various administrators—mostly past. Such as—well, here’s my first question: How would you compare the contributions of university presidents Mason Gross and Edward Bloustein?

GEORGE SMITH: Very, very difficult to say. I knew Mason Gross, and I didn’t know Bloustein. That makes a difference.

COHEN: Well, whatever you can say.

GEORGE SMITH: No, I really have no comment on that. I just can’t do it.

COHEN: Okay. How would you assess the deanship of Herbert Woodward?

GEORGE SMITH: Going way back to the beginning of my time here for me. Well, he was a good dean. I don’t know how to compare, how to assess. Again, you know, it was a small college, and we worked together as a team. And Woodward was good. I can’t compare him with somebody else.

COHEN: Well, let’s say on his own, how were his contributions to faculty development, to the college generally and the move onto the new campus? I mean I’m sure he presided over that. His relations with faculty, students? Anything that you can think of that.

GEORGE SMITH: Well, they were always amicable from my point of view. And of course we had a division arrangement, you remember.

COHEN: Yes, the Social Sciences…

GEORGE SMITH: And psychology was in the Division of the Social Sciences, I believe. And we had a division director. Oh, dear, I can’t say his name right now. But I worked so much with the division director that he and I saw things pretty much the way, you know, together. And I felt that Dean Woodward was always fair and supportive of whatever we wanted to do. I think he was a good dean. It’s so hard to compare deans, you know. But for the time and place, he gave a lot, and I think he was very active in trying to get us moving ahead.

COHEN: How would you assess his successor, William Gilligan?

GEORGE SMITH: William Gilligan. I don’t remember. How long was he in place?
COHEN: Oh, about a year or so. You don’t recall? Well, Malcolm…. [Break in recording] We were talking about deans, and I guess I’m up to Henry Blumenthal.

GEORGE SMITH: Oh, yes. Well, Blumenthal is a very fine man, one of my favorite people. And he gave so much of himself during his deanship that he’s a hard man to compare anybody to.

COHEN: Yes. And his successor was Richard Robey.

GEORGE SMITH: Don’t remember him very well.

COHEN: Norman Samuels, the present provost?

GEORGE SMITH: A good man, very supportive. Yes, I think he was more than qualified. See, I didn’t have too much really of ongoing relationships. They were men on campus. But Blumenthal I happened to know personally and admired. And know he did a great job.

COHEN: Malcolm Talbott was the vice president for Newark and also served as acting dean. And how would you assess his contribution to Newark? He also was a key player in the negotiations around the takeover of Conklin Hall in February of 1969. How would you assess his contributions to the development of the campus?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, again, I was not that closely related with him. But his reputation was very, very good on campus. I can’t …

COHEN: There was frequently talk about—it comes up, oh, fairly often—about the possibility of and advisability of Rutgers-Newark spinning off from New Brunswick. And I was wondering if you had any feeling for that discussion, the advisability or inadvisability, either on your own or feeling among faculty.

GEORGE SMITH: I don’t really…. It hadn’t come up much when I was there. I would think—you know they’ve got to have great financial support. I don’t know where it would come from. If it would be a state college, maybe it would be okay. But I think to spin off and be a private place in Newark, I mean….

COHEN: Well, I think they were thinking more of a spin off and remaining a state university but not being part of Rutgers. That seems to be what comes up from time to time. And I was wondering if you had any feeling for that perception.

GEORGE SMITH: I would have to explore more in order to evaluate. I have no idea what the financial status is and what it normally is. I just don’t know, you see.

COHEN: You weren’t involved in any discussions at the time when these things came up?

GEORGE SMITH: No.
COHEN: It doesn’t come up seriously now—I mean that I know of.

GEORGE SMITH: Oh, I guess we felt from time to time that it would be nice to be independent. And we got more and more of that with our own dean and our own graduate programs. No, I don’t think I was ever really concerned … the matter was discussed or not. Nothing serious about that.

COHEN: Well, let’s move on to my bailiwick, the Dana Library. What do you view as its main strengths in the seventies?

GEORGE SMITH: Main strengths?

COHEN: Yes.

GEORGE SMITH: I don’t know how to answer that. I used it a good deal. It had journals and books that I like. One thing I liked very much is that it had several good journals on investing, like … and others at the time I was using that field. I don’t know. I found it a good library that I enjoyed going to.

COHEN: What could you say about the—well, I’ll divide it into two things. Number one, the collection. How well did it serve your needs and the needs of your students and colleagues? Books, journals?

GEORGE SMITH: I didn’t really test it out in the sense of…. But I didn’t assign too much library work. So for me it did an adequate job. I don’t really want to pursue it because I didn’t make a serious enough study of it.

COHEN: Did you avail yourself of services, either borrowing or interlibrary loan or reference services? Could you say anything about that? Your experiences dealing with the library, with support staff come into library services?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, again, I tried, this is a little vague. I know I was in the library a good deal. And I remember the staff was helpful in getting material from other libraries that I needed at the time. I’m not too clear what I was digging for. But I don’t want to pursue this too far because at that stage, most of the reading that we did were books that the students borrowed. And I didn’t make as much use for it as I might have at one time. So it was there. It was a good library. And I didn’t too many uses of it.

COHEN: I asked about its strengths. Could you point out its weaknesses that you perceived then?

GEORGE SMITH: No, I don’t want to try that.

COHEN: Okay.
GEORGE SMITH: Yes, I wasn’t publishing at that time. I wasn’t doing my own research. And as a teacher, I didn’t send the students to the library a couple of days to do so-and-so.

COHEN: [Laughs] Okay. Just sort of wrap-up questions. Are there any topics we haven’t touched on that you’d like to touch on?

GEORGE SMITH: Well, as we were saying jokingly when you came in, a retired professor gets lost, and I wish we had something at Rutgers in Newark in which you’d reach out a little bit and, you know, bring a retired professor in for an occasional luncheon or a reminiscing lecture or something. It would be pleasant. And I know that’s asking a lot, too much of the college. But I do think as we get more and more retired personnel in good health, it might be a good thing for students to see some of us come back and give a little guest lecture of 15 minutes or something. Or just show up on the campus at a little get-together. I think there would be real virtue in that.

COHEN: Yes. Wonderful idea. And I guess my final question is, is there anything we talked about that you’d like to go back to, maybe expand on, footnote, gloss?

GEORGE SMITH: I think that, again, we were talking informally on this about the life of an institution. And it seems to me as you’re talking, and we’re talking about those years in the sixties and seventies, that was just a heartbeat of the life of an institution. You know?

COHEN: A heartbeat.

GEORGE SMITH: A heartbeat. Just one—I mean it was just a little phase in the life of an institution.

COHEN: Oh, you mean in terms of the incidents in the….

GEORGE SMITH: Yes, things that happened—

COHEN: In the sixties and seventies.

GEORGE SMITH: Yes. That span of about ten years.

COHEN: Okay.

GEORGE SMITH: It came in, you know. It changed things. But the institution goes on, always defining itself in new ways every year, every semester. New deans, new faculty, new chairs, new students. So I don’t worry about happened in those days, and I don’t try to remember them too much because I feel that…it’s an amazing thing to me to think about a church, a university, a state, a city, how they go on through the decades and centuries. And how we play our parts in them, come and go like actors on a stage. That to me is almost a religious experience that I took part in that, in the life of an institution. A big part. A limited one, which is now forgotten as far as I’m concerned, but some of the effects are still in the department.

COHEN: Dr. Smith, thank you very, very much. [End of Tape #2]
[End of Interview]

Edited by Gideon Thompson