

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

An Interview with

HENRY CHRISTIAN

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

AUGUST 20, 1991

INTERVIEW: Henry Christian

INTERVIEWER: Gilbert Cohen

DATE: August 20, 1991

GILBERT COHEN: This is Tuesday, August 20, 1991, and this is Gil Cohen. I am meeting with Professor Henry Christian in his home in Millburn, New Jersey. And we've been talking about old times and present times. And I'm asking Dr. Christian if he'd give us a brief sketch of his academic career before we launch into some of the other matters.

HENRY CHRISTIAN: Okay. I finished secondary school in New Jersey in 1948, the Peddie School. And I was an English Speaking Union Exchange Scholar to Great Britain from forty-eight to forty-nine. In fifty-three I got a bachelor's degree from Yale University, in fifty-four a master's degree. And at that time I went out to teach at the Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven, Connecticut, which is the third oldest private secondary school in the United States. That might not seem pertinent to a university archives, except for the fact that I had four solid years of experience with very, very bright students, many of them the children of Yale faculty, who were grounded very strongly in fundamentals on the secondary level. So that when I approached freshman composition later on, I knew something about younger minds, although very bright younger minds. Some of the students in that school in New Haven couldn't believe they were off the test level, you know, they were so bright.

In 1958, I won the Fulbright Traveling Teacher Award for American Studies to Denmark. And I spent the year living in Denmark teaching in various cities and traveling from schools and to the two universities teaching American culture. And that was very special because I was one of the few persons teaching on the secondary level who had a master's degree in American Studies. Most of the people who taught in the gymnasiums were high school teachers. I was also the director of American Studies at Yale University for foreign students in the summer of 1955. So that I had some experience with foreign teachers: thirty-five Fulbright teachers from France came to the United States. We had a summer program for them. And it was all tied up with Peace Corps work and so on, some of which was going on at Yale and some of which was going on at Harvard.

And then when I came back from Denmark, I went to Brown, and I was at Brown University off and on as far as the days of the week were concerned for three years. And then in 1962 I came down to home again, to New Jersey, and started at Rutgers at Newark.

COHEN: You were teaching at Brown?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, I was a teaching associate at Brown, but I was also a graduate student getting a Ph.D.

COHEN: You completed your doctorate at Brown?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, but not 'til 1967. So I was at Rutgers for five years. And that's when the interesting part starts. In those days we didn't have the AAUP [American Association of University Professors] rules and regulations, and we didn't have the up-or-out system, although there was something like that functioning, you know. But it was much more casual. There was no clear three years and three years and a seventh year and then gone. So when I came to Rutgers in Newark, I met in the old brewery building, and the head of the humanities at that time was Fred McGill. He was just giving up the directorship of the humanities to Lou Azocca [sp], who almost immediately became pretty much the first department chair of English. We were moving to chairs of the various departments at that time. In charge of the sciences was Keosian [sp]. And I'm embarrassed to say I can't remember that third person, but somewhere you probably have that breakdown, there were three units for the whole college.

COHEN: Social sciences and natural sciences and humanities?

CHRISTIAN: Yes. And I can't remember. Keosian was one, McGill. And the third name I can't remember.

COHEN: Social sciences...

CHRISTIAN: It wouldn't have been Henry Blumenthal.

COHEN: Might have been.

CHRISTIAN: I doubt it.

COHEN: I'm not sure.

CHRISTIAN: I'm not sure either. So in any case I can remember the interview. And my job was to become an instructor at Rutgers in Newark on the first step and the first range. And I made three thousand, six-hundred dollars.

COHEN: Yes, I remember those days. I remember those days, too. I was making a little less than that.

CHRISTIAN: It's astounding. And just really, really amazing. I taught four courses. And in those days we taught a system of one and two. So on one Tuesday, I taught two courses back to back of the sophomore offering, and two more courses back to back of a sophomore offering. In other words, two thirds of the week right in a row, four periods in a row.

COHEN: These are literature courses?

CHRISTIAN: Literature courses. That was when English two-fifteen and two-sixteen were required of every student in the college, the way freshman English was required, and has always been required.

COHEN: These were masterpiece courses?

CHRISTIAN: Masterpiece courses...literary masterpieces required of each student in college. So there were some very long days because when you did that.... And I think that day I even had one of my freshmen courses; we were meeting three times a week. But as I say, one and double, two, in that system. So, boy, Tuesday was murder. And I can remember the sophomore courses that were held back to back were in Washington Street, the building that's still there, that after the second floor the rest of it was furniture storage. I think that's one-fifty-one Washington Street. I think that's the number.

COHEN: Used to be the law school? Are you talking about the ex....

CHRISTIAN: No, no, no.

COHEN: Then I'm up too far.

CHRISTIAN: No, I'm back...actually you can see...it's pretty much opposite the campus now. You can see it, one-fifty-one Washington. I think that's the number.

COHEN: Okay.

CHRISTIAN: Anyway, I can remember that we had a little room we used to sit in. And Marie Collins and I both smoked, and we would go in between periods and smoke; nearly killed each other and everybody else who was trying to find a square foot to stand other than in the classroom, you know. And those were great days. Those were the days when we used for a time Military Park Hotel for classes and certainly for exams. And Hahne's got bent out of shape quite badly because they didn't want the students walking through Hahne's, you know, through one end to the other. But the faculty, of course, would sometimes stop in later and even buy. So it was a simple matter for the faculty. But the students had to go around the building. There was some little discussion between the administration.

At that time there was also talk about where the campus was going to be, you know. But it was really funny to go to the Military Park Hotel and help administer the, say, freshman exam in December for freshman composition to something like twelve, fifteen sections in the ballroom, all of which was mirrored. [Laughter] It was kind of funny to—you wanted to sing rather than give instructions. [Laughter] And so we had fun there, and we had classes in other places, too. But I remember mostly the Washington Street classrooms. And we used those for quite some time.

The office space was in the brewery building at that time. And my first office was over there. Then I remember that I had an office—I can't remember the street now. But it was close to the parking lot that's behind either the telephone company or the insurance company; I can't remember which.

COHEN: That was James Street?

CHRISTIAN: Well, James Street by the BlueCross, we went there next. I also had an office in a building that still exists exactly opposite the church on Central Avenue. There's a red-brick building just before the parking lot that is the museum parking lot. And that one that's always been on the corner of what is now University Avenue and Central Avenue. The big lot. And there's a red-brick building that's still there. We had an office there, too, on the second floor.

COHEN: And that building is still there now?

CHRISTIAN: That building is still there now. Yes, yes. Had offices on the second floor. Had offices on James Street in the building that's next to the one that the union still has. I think those two buildings still exist. But the third building was economics. Yes, it is. A union has one building.

COHEN: Oh, labor union, huh?

CHRISTIAN: A labor union, yes. The third building in that row I think went down when the parking lot there was expanded on that, that smaller parking lot on the corner. In those days I used to take the train from Millburn, and eighty-thirty classes were murder. It was always fun to be dressed up and watch everybody on the commuter train wonder why I was getting off in Newark, you know. [Laughter] Dressed like everybody going to New York. And in those days you used to walk along University Avenue, which was originally Plain Street, called Plain Street. And there were a lot more buildings there. There was a building along the street there that—quite like the one that was left by the Newark Museum, but it was a carriage house that was torn down. I have the loft hook that they used to use to put the pulley on to pull up goods in the old days, in the nineties. I got the loft hook off of that building, thanks to the man who was demolishing it, and ten dollars. And never realized that it would be so heavy. I nearly killed myself hauling it home on the train. It took me about an hour to walk to the railroad station because it's so heavy.

COHEN: A loft hook.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, it's way up on the top on the peak the way the buildings in Amsterdam have them. And it sticks out. It's a triangular shape in some design. And you put the pulley on that, and you used to pull the things up to the loft over the carriage house. Probably hay and other things like that, you know.

COHEN: This house—is this the house that's next door to the current Newark Museum or the Ballantine House?

CHRISTIAN: No, no. We're on Plain Street around the back.

COHEN: Okay. I'm sorry.

CHRISTIAN: And I think there's still one building left. But there were two carriage houses; they tore one down, yes, next to the back wall. So let's see. In those days Woodward was the dean, and we had faculty meetings all over the place. But I remember them especially in the Presbyterian Church, which is next to the library, I think, next to the public library.

COHEN: Public library. Or a couple of doors down on the corner of James Street.

CHRISTIAN: On the corner of James Street.

COHEN: On the corner of James and Washington.

CHRISTIAN: Yes. I don't remember the buildings in between, but the BlueCross building is there now. And, you know, Woodward's dream was to—I think you've probably heard this from other people—to put the whole university there in Newark in a high-rise, perhaps even the building that the provost's office is in now; that is, the current law school. He wanted everything at one time in a tall, tall building.

COHEN: One whole building.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, yes.

COHEN: That I've never heard.

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: That's the first I've heard of that.

CHRISTIAN: Yes. And there was some talk about using, as I say, the building that is now the law school for that. Or else have a taller building, you know.

COHEN: Were there any other locations that were seriously considered at the time?

CHRISTIAN: Not that I know of. Not that I know of. But that was always the kind of—it had been talked about before I came. And it was talked about off and on at the time. Faculty meetings ran pretty much the same as they do now. You know a lot of talk and a lot of debate. But I can't remember many major issues from those days. As I said, we moved from office to office to office. In the English Department I was pretty much mostly with.... Irwin Primer and I always seemed to be close to each other. Lou Azocca [sp], Gellert Allamon. Hayward Ehrlich came, and George Groman [sp] came before Hayward. We always seemed to be the unit that got moved, the core unit, from one building to another. And that was partly because—it was a personal matter, but Allamon always used to say to me, "It's amazing. Azocca is a very reserved, private man, and he asked to have you as an office mate; which is perfectly all right except that you smoke, and I don't understand how he allows you in there. He must like you a great deal." [Laughter] Because he never said please don't smoke. But Lou always had a couch. It went everywhere that he went because his back killed him sometimes. And after lunch he would like down on that couch. And you could see, even with his eyes closed, the strain on his face. It was quite a severe pain. And, you know, in those days personal things...we were just a smaller group, you know, and we knew things about each other. And he was very kind to me. Of course I always had concern about my boy. And he was always very kind and asked about it. And he let me bang around on my typewriter and do all kinds of things. But in those days, you know, the

offices were—we were in houses. So sometimes the only separation was the double doors that separated the living room, the parlor, from the dining room in whatever building it was, you know. And, God, talk about air conditioning. You were lucky to have a window unit. And usually that window unit had to combat some kind of bay window with more glass than, you know, you've ever seen in your life, with the sun shining in on it.

So we made our way around Newark from place to place teaching. And the first couple of years seemed to be tied up in several things: First of all, they were tied up in—I had a family. I had three children when I came to Newark—and I couldn't have temporary housing, however temporary my housing might actually turn out to be. I had a house in Connecticut with a lot of water company property behind me, a beautiful place. I left that to come to Newark. I couldn't put my family in an apartment; it was too big. So we came to the house right here in Millburn where we're sitting. But that's not necessary to the history, except that from 1962 to 1967 when I got my degree at Brown, I did five years as an instructor, and I was given—it was a four-year position—I was given that fifth year. And then I didn't need it because I got the—I guess the sixth year; I didn't need that sixth year, although this was not within the formal rules, as I understand them at the time. It was just that five years was all an instructor was going to be.

And you know Newark had—in the English Department as well—had a kind of reputation of taking promising people. I saw them go on to other places and achieve their degrees and have wonderful careers. I don't choose to name them, but they were kind of used up by teaching four courses as instructors in Newark in a very tough determined system, you know, where we were tough on English grammar. Remember Newark never gave up the requirement of freshman composition. Whereas New Brunswick even went to a course or two for freshman; could be literature. And they were studying sophisticated things that I don't think the New Jersey students who were chosen to go to New Brunswick were any better prepared than the ones who went to Newark as far as their grammar and their ability to write was concerned. They were still coming from the same places in New Jersey.

And so the instructor level was full of very talented people. And quite honestly to make it in Newark, to get your Ph.D. while you were teaching four courses, you know, a twelve-hour week, was tough. And some of us made it. George Groman was one, Ehrlich came with a Ph.D., I think. I was another. Charlie Rooney was another, but he didn't get tenure later on. But there were very few of us, Irwin and I and perhaps Ehrlich, began as instructors. Michael Jaye came the year after me. He was an instructor. And he got his Ph.D., I think, the year after I did. But it was tough. It was tough to have a family; tough to teach courses which were good because everybody in those days taught freshman composition, every full professor, every associate, every assistant, and every instructor.

COHEN: Is that no longer the case now?

CHRISTIAN: We tried to keep the regular faculty in it. I did while I was chair. I don't know because in the last, since 1989, I have had—I haven't paid much attention to the schedule in the English Department, and I've taught one course only for the English Department, and that was obviously an upper-level or graduate course, as is happening this fall. But the nice thing about it was when we sat down and discussed freshman English, the people with the power were in the

classroom. So when there was a debate on whether the program was good or bad, there was no hierarchy pronouncing things about something that they had nothing to do with. They had the same students, good or bad, that the instructors did. And after a while, that mass of ____ also had. And that's a very important thing, a very balancing thing. I don't know how the department runs now. I could take a look. But there are those of us who have had.... When I had a three-course schedule, I always had a freshman course. Sometimes, if I did a graduate course, I would have a sophomore, an advanced, and a graduate. They would take your freshman course away. But I've had years where I had a freshman course and a graduate course and an advanced—or a sophomore course, which I can still teach pretty much blindfolded, tongue-tied. You know it's—that was such strong stuff and so good. And it built, you know. We often thought about our sophomore course that we were going to teach later in the day or another day while we talked to our freshmen, moving them into a position to really understand something about Shakespeare, you know, and things like that. And making cross references.

COHEN: What was the strong course again? Could you go back to that?

CHRISTIAN: two-fifteen, two-sixteen.

COHEN: And that was?

CHRISTIAN: Well, it was the Greeks, the—I always did the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* because I liked to switch to the Roman and show how the approach was different, you know. How the good guys in one book were the bad guys in the other.

COHEN: These were the world classics.

CHRISTIAN: Exactly. The classics.

COHEN: Not necessarily English.

CHRISTIAN: No, no, no. And I did three Greek dramatists, usually certainly six plays if not nine plays. And then we did Swift and we did Voltaire, you know, pretty much.... The spring we went all the way from Shakespeare to Conrad, I used to. And a group of modern British and American poets. But people have argued about that curriculum, and they've argued in two ways: One, that there was no continuity. And two, it was the establishment; it was old-fashioned, you know, English literature to the detriment of other literatures. Well, I could see that, and I think the variety is there. But I really don't see that an emphasis on Third World literature and so on, without knowledge of the Greeks, can't allow you to understand that peoples have the same concerns wherever they were. It's certainly wrong to ignore literature that existed on other continents and in other places. But you can't put that in place of the Greeks because you then begin to lose the fact that the Western World, as we used to call it, had experiences that were the same as other continents. And that the concerns of people reflected in literature are basically the same concerns: life, death, and association. A love Thoreau's description, you know, of his house. And it really fits plots. And plots are what make literature. I had three chairs: One for solitude, the second for friendship, and the third for society. Well, that's the only plots you have. You're alone, you're with somebody else, or it's the rest of the world. And, you know, no

African literature says anything else. And the Greeks say the same thing. I mean Oedipus finds himself alone, you know. So we need to know who else found himself or herself alone. That's really the whole business.

COHEN: Is this an argument for teaching comparative literature?

CHRISTIAN: I think so. Exactly. Excuse me, I see the mailman.

[Break in recording]

COHEN: We were talking about the curriculum.

CHRISTIAN: Right. And in the English Department then, almost everybody knew what his or her job was: freshman composition, the sophomore requirement for the whole college, and then some upper course. Over time developed by Allamon and others, probably Azocca. But Allamon had a lot to do with it. There was a negotiation with New Brunswick, and finally the beginning of a master's program and a master of arts in teaching, those two in the English Department. And we had, beginning in 1971.... In 1967 I became...let's see. In 1967 I became an assistant professor. In 1971 I got tenure. And the graduate program under John Demeray [sp] had been running for a year or two. And I became about the second director of the graduate program for a year or two.

COHEN: You mean in English.

CHRISTIAN: In English.

COHEN: Yes. Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: Yes. And so we were off and running and teaching graduate courses. And it added that dimension to the department because, scheduling, for example, and then another problem in space. But by then, of course—you perhaps know better than I; I don't really remember—but Conklin Hall got pumped up. You know it appeared there. And that section of the city that nobody even knew one damned thing about, unless you went to NJIT for some reason, you know, all of a sudden this block became this terribly important block because there was going to be Conklin, there was going to be Boyden, there was going to be Hill Hall, there was going to be the student center and the library. And to tell you the truth, I don't remember when all those things happened. I do know we were on that block when the troubles started in the city.

COHEN: You're talking about the riots in July of 1967.

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: You know since you're on to that, what recollections do you have of that?

CHRISTIAN: Well, I remember a number of things. I remember that it was clearly impossible after you'd tried it once to drive to Newark on South Orange Avenue, which I didn't do on any regular basis anyway. But South Orange Avenue was an extension of my whole life. When I was a kid in Jersey City, I knew you went up, down, and around to South Orange Avenue to get out to where people played tennis, and where girls were that you didn't know but you wanted to, and stuff. So South Orange Avenue being dangerous and closed off to somebody whose grandparents and whose parents lived in Newark before they moved to Irvington, you know.... Because Grandfather worked in Newark all the time. And who used to go over shopping in Newark. This was really something. So that was the first thing I remember. It was always a very cautious walk from the railroad station to the campus. Always something. Then we had times when we'd be teaching classes, and there'd be people running down the halls, and they would open the doors and throw wastepaper baskets into the classrooms.

COHEN: What years are we talking about, after the sixty-seven?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, sixty-eight, sixty-nine. And in sixty-nine, seventy I won the Faculty Fellowship, which is a year off with full pay. It's not like the leave program now. It still exists. I don't know how many people win it. And so part of this went on when I was simply absent.

COHEN: You weren't there then during the takeover of Conklin Hall in February of sixty-nine?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, I think I may have been again. I'll have to look. But I do remember this. I do remember when Curvin stood with a bullhorn on top of the building that is now the nursing school.

COHEN: You mean Bob Curvin?

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: And talked. I do remember getting an alternate schedule for alternate places to teach. And I remember refusing to do that. And I think for all my career, everyone has always interpreted my refusal as sympathy for the protesters. It was quite the opposite. I felt that they had no business keeping us out of where we belonged. They should have their protest somewhere else. So I refused to carry on the business in compliance with their needs, rather than.... So that's... I don't think I've told too many people that over the years. But that's exactly what was going on. I just wouldn't do it. And so I didn't teach. Nobody ever said to me, You're teaching of you're not teaching.

[Break in recording]

COHEN: Back with Dr. Christian. So going back to Conklin Hall and some of your recollections.

CHRISTIAN: Right. And I remember.... At that time Malcolm Talbott had become the equivalent of the provost of the campus. He was like acting dean. You've probably talked to other people who remember this administratively better than I do. But there was no doubt that at this time, Malcolm Talbott ran the campus. And, you know, you can use what you want or edit what you want, but we met one.... There was a group of people who were crucial to what was going on. And for some strange reason I am one of the persons who has been with that group that was involved with something that was going on on the Newark campus all the time. We can talk about the others later. But this event, the people who met with Malcolm Talbott and did the equivalent of discussions of what the negotiations should be and so on, I happened to be with that group. Just as the removal of the two deans of the college at two different times, for one reason or another I was with that group, both of those groups. So we met one Sunday night—I wish I—at Malcolm Talbott's apartment. We all got calls: Come to Malcolm Talbott's apartment. And we worked out some kind of agreement at that meeting. And Charlie Pine was someone there. I think Warren Manspeizer may have been there. I know Charlie Rooney was there because as the negotiations went on and we talked about what would work and what wouldn't work, Charlie really took notes. And I said, "Charlie, take some notes." And so we left about one-thirty in the morning from Malcolm Talbott's apartment on a Sunday—Monday morning—to have a meeting at I guess 11 thirty or....

[Break in recording]

COHEN: Back with Dr. Christian.

CHRISTIAN: Okay. So Malcolm said, "Here are the terms." And it was unbelievable. I mean, you know, you can take out what you want. I don't think this kind of scandal...

COHEN: Well, whatever you feel...

CHRISTIAN: But this was amazing. He said, "Here are the terms we agreed to last night at a meeting." With a certain amount of mystery and a certain amount of power—it was a power statement—and he read the terms: And then he said, "If there's anybody who disagrees with this, I wish they'd come forward." And they were not exactly the terms we had agreed to the night before, about five hours before, you know. And I stood up and said, I don't remember this and this point. The specific points I can't remember at all.

COHEN: Right.

CHRISTIAN: But I do remember this: And he said, "I'm sorry, those are the points." And I said, "No!" He said, "Where do we differ?" And I said, "Charlie, go down and read them your notes." And Charlie Rooney went down and read the notes of what we did. And it caused some difficulty in the faculty meeting because I felt that Malcolm had, in the course of the morning, talking to his adversaries or whatever, mollified certain terms.

COHEN: What recollections do you have of the issues that were involved?

CHRISTIAN: To tell you the truth, I have absolutely no recollection of the issues.

COHEN: What was your recollection of the main grievance then?

CHRISTIAN: My recollection is that it had to do with what we call gentrification today. That it had to do with the university being in place, that people had been moved, that more people were being moved, that it was a very bad summer, and people got killed, and people wanted.... It was an explosion of a pressured population in Newark that had come up from the South and was not any better prepared to live in an urban situation where there was nothing for them, quite wrongfully nothing for them, but, you know.... Then a great deal of the people who came from the South, black people, to Chicago earlier in time. The same thing had happened when I was a kid in Jersey City with an influx of people. And a whole boondoggle about where their housing should be constructed, mostly having to do.... Here was a population that really had no opportunity in front of them. And I think the university was a ready place because the university is a place that listens. The university is a place that cares. And so it just exploded.

COHEN: But I mean aside from the riots, which I'm assuming you're referring to at this point....

CHRISTIAN: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: I meant to ask, what were the specific grievances of the students who took over Conklin Hall that you recall?

CHRISTIAN: I don't recall.

COHEN: You have no recollection?

CHRISTIAN: No.

COHEN: Of admissions questions, questions about admissions or anything?

CHRISTIAN: No, no. And it may be that I just perhaps wasn't tuned to what their problem was. After all, I had been educated privately since the seventh grade. I had three Ivy League degrees. I chose to teach in Newark because I thought first-generation college students were entitled to the best education they could possibly get. And I was trying to provide it in Newark. I thought the range of admissions was sufficient. I thought these were important kids. Now, it may be that ethnically the breakdown wasn't right. But I know that the kids in Newark College of Arts and Sciences in the sixties were awfully hard workers. They're still very hard workers, you know. I don't see that that changed very much.

COHEN: I want to ask: How has the student—how did the student population change in the seventies after—late sixties and through the seventies and into the early eighties, if you could give some idea of the trends?

CHRISTIAN: Well, I think the number of black students increased, but it's never been high. One of the things that a faculty member at Newark always says when he's anywhere in the world

or in the United States is simply, in answer to some remark that's made on an airplane or at lunch at a convention or something, you say, "You have quite the wrong impression. The Newark College of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey, does not teach inner-city students."

COHEN: Exclusively.

CHRISTIAN: Exclusively. And we don't have the population of black students that we'd like to have for any number of reasons. And that was how I characterized the early seventies, slowly but surely the number of Hispanic students has changed, and now we know that there are a significant number on the campus.

COHEN: How has the level of preparation changed or developed during that period? Across the board, regardless of ethnicity.

CHRISTIAN: Right. I think the level of preparation has fallen some. One of the differences is that... There used to be a saying that when one of the students came from Catholic school, they would know—he or she would know—grammar. But they often didn't have any idea of how grammar has something to do with the language that led to literature. But they had discipline, so you could easily convert them into some kind of hardworking system. The other students, there were good schools and bad schools. There still are. I've always been one that insisted very strongly on grammar, so I'm not a popular freshman teacher. I've insisted on a lot of accuracy. And so I'm not a popular teacher in a number of ways. I don't know, maybe I'm just not charming. But I remember a student saying to me, when I had an office on Central Avenue, "How can you insist upon that?" I said, "Because what you did is wrong, and what this is is what's correct." He said, "You know, damn it! This is isn't Yale." And I said, "You know, grammar doesn't belong to Yale. [laughter] It belongs here. It is your key to accurate writing, which is your key to reaching the world." You know?

And so the preparation... the preparation has changed more in the sense of they're not... students are not quite as well prepared in fundamentals. But basically they're... somehow, symptomatic of the whole nation, they're basically less convinced, however much they want a college education, they're less convinced of what we used to see on the TV as get a college education and get ahead, you know. There's no guarantee they're going to get ahead. And they now know, at this moment, as a youngster, seven years or eight years old, we all know on the street he's going to make a fortune if he sells crack. And there's no horizon for education. So when he comes through a high school system, he's got this challenge of the other world. And to go academic is a tough thing to do for first-generation college students. It's a tough thing for second-generation college students. And that's a function of society. It's not anything to do specifically with Newark or anything else.

I think the sophisticated, highly-selected kids going to Brown University right now are legitimately almost a palette in racial selection and almost a polyglot. But I'm not absolutely sure that bright as those are, because they're highly screened, that they're turning out at Brown University a terrific product right now. A product that really is going to function in the world. I'm sometimes a little bit worried about the fact that when the wall is tough enough, their

inventiveness is going to fail them, their sense of freedom, their sense of being on top, you know. And I mention this only because I just got an ad the other day. And I think about college levels, and I think about types of colleges. And it said—it has the Brown logo on a T-shirt, and across the bottom of the Brown logo in two black lines, it has the rest of the Ivy League shields. And it says on the T-shirt, “It’s tough being at the top.” And you see, state universities, which Rutgers has aspired to be in the forefront of, are as important as any other institution right now. Maybe the private schools are still funded as well. And maybe Jameson and the rest at Yale are telling us where and how we should study literature. But I think it’s a crock in some ways because it has nothing to do with the student who needs to learn literature, needs to be able to write, and needs to go out and not practice deconstruction or this or that kind of criticism, needs to work in the world.

COHEN: Yes. I wanted to ask, how has—well, let’s take it twofold. First, how has the canon changed from the past, late sixties, seventies, and into the early eighties?

CHRISTIAN: Well, it’s changed in the inclusion of more Third World material, more minority material. I’m really in an odd position. I started with an ethnic writer who wrote about ethnicity, that everybody had forgotten about and nobody still thinks he’s a very good writer except he’s a very engaging writer. So while all these battles went on, I was working on, you know, that I never taught, I’ve never taught in the classroom—although I legitimately could do wonderful things with what he’s talking about because he’s talking about what the new curriculum really is as far as the population is concerned. So I think it’s changed in that way. But I was never.... First of all, I was a product of the New Criticism. But because I was in American Studies, I could not ignore biography because history and biography were part of my work. So in the classroom I never had the narrow thing that was eventually attacked. And I think there’s nothing wrong with the new criticism. I think there’s a lot wrong with the practitioners of it. I say there’s nothing particularly wrong with deconstruction and the other new things. There’s a lot wrong with the practitioners. It’s almost as if having run out of vocabulary of criticism, the academic world had to produce a new vocabulary to retain its superiority. A superiority which I never felt myself. I never walked around as a Ph.D. in American Studies and felt myself a Ph.D. in English. But I never felt that gave me a superiority over... I know that I’m one half of one percent of the population or something. I can figure that out. But I never figured that made me something rare, like a great many of my colleagues feel, and I see in the big schools. In Newark we never had the luxury of the accomplishment of getting all those special perks, you know? We never got any big deals. It’s only lately that we have a second rank of full professor, named chairs, you know, people with named chairs and so on. And I’ll be perfectly honest, this is something that may be in the tapes, maybe it’s different.

[Break in recording]

COHEN: We are back.

CHRISTIAN: Okay. The point I’m making is that maybe you’ll hear people talk about their careers and so on. The English Department has for a long, long time had an unbelievable number of associate professors. So the scramble to become a full professor was a very difficult thing. I was probably the second—third—longest associate professor that we have. And I got promoted.

So that's one part of it. But the other part was I did not understand until that promotion how the rest of the campus and other faculty members perceive a full professor. And therefore I suddenly understood why some people I thought over a period of time had really acted out and gotten selfish and made deals for themselves and so on. Once I had the equivalent of the top rank, it was amazing. I could feel the difference in the people around me that I'd been with for twenty-nine years.

COHEN: What's the difference?

CHRISTIAN: I was allowed to be curt, impolite, nasty, whatever I wanted, and it was okay. They weren't going to say anything. It's just a perception because, you know, I have spent a lot of time being angry in Newark at what was going on.

COHEN: You mean anybody you talked to or administrators or—

CHRISTIAN: All around, juniors, seniors, everybody, students, just unbelievable the change. So, as I said, I find all of this kind of...well, I found two things. Here's another change that I think faculty had to feel over a period of time. Just after I started in Newark, the attention to research became a factor. And the attention to research got more and more, and publish or perish became part of the system.

COHEN: And your research was on Louis Adamic.

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: The author you mentioned before. The author you're writing....

CHRISTIAN: That's right. And I continued to publish. As a chair, I think probably if I was chair, elected chair, for twelve semesters, I'll bet I gave ten conference papers in those twelve semesters. Because I believe the chair should be an example for everybody else. But that emphasis on scholarship is one of the changes that took place over a period of time, and the pressure started to shift. Newark was always a place—and the English Department especially; go back to that freshman English—freshman English requires, sophomore English required. When I started there, it was a college in which you felt I have some stake in the administration. I have some stake in teaching. And because I came from a fine institution, I had some stake in research. When I get promoted a year ago and David called me up, he was very nice. And I said, "You know I want to tell you something, David. When I came to Newark, I thought you were supposed to do these three things. And if I did pretty well in each of the three things, pretty much even, rather than being a super Pulitzer Prize winner or something, you know, I think I've done what Newark needed. And there are people around who probably did over the years what Newark needed, you know?"

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Charlie Pine is the kind of person who did what Newark needed. And if you look at his distinctions, you know, and his awards and so on and everything, he was doing what

Newark needed, and he got those things because people recognized the value of what he was doing. And so at a certain point when, I think it was when Richard Rowe came. As a new dean, he wanted to make scholarship important. He of course had a mandate. Of course, you know, the president makes the appointment, he chooses... a dean knows pretty much what New Brunswick wants. That's what's interesting now. Newark has its own position, it has its own destiny, it has a provost who's had a long track record in Newark. And so Norman knows what to go after. Norman knows how to handle things. And this is different. I mean Newark has an identity. For years I felt Newark was much better than anybody would allow, especially New Brunswick would allow, you know?

COHEN: Is that right? You feel that they had...?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, yes. I think New Brunswick was nervous always about the real distinctions, you know. There are some programs, for example, in chemistry which were probably better than certain things that were going on in New Brunswick. We have some distinguished people here and there and everywhere. And we have a very good education going on, a kind of hard-rock education. But over a period of time, the emphasis on publications became more important.

COHEN: What was its effect on the teaching then? How would you characterize that?

CHRISTIAN: I think it was tough. I think we had people in Newark who really believed in being in the classroom. So they got hurt because they worked terribly hard in the classroom, certainly in the English Department, and then they had to do this production, this writing, as well. For all the talk about a major research university, it made everybody very nervous, and there were some of us who had to keep a certain sense of calm and just go on, do it. I have a statement, this kind of theory: A lousy book on Melville would have gotten me a lot further a lot faster than sticking to what I wanted to do. But my research was fun.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Now how did you get onto Louis Adamic by the way?

CHRISTIAN: Well, that's a simple story. I went to Princeton looking for a dissertation, and out Adamic comes before Adams in the file drawer.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. [Laughs]

CHRISTIAN: Three drawers of Adams, one—two—cards of Adamic. It said the literary contents of the author's house. I asked for them; they said nobody can use them. I persisted. I read everything. A year later I got permission, and I became basically the curator of that part of the collection until a federal grant allowed it to be computerized. But I was the link. I still am the link between everybody in Yugoslavia and now everybody in Japan who works with Adamic. They still go through me.

COHEN: And you hadn't read Adamic before that or knew about him?

CHRISTIAN: I'd read an essay that he'd written on being an American, and that's all. And I remember his obituary. When I read his obituary in *Time Magazine*, when I started this research,

I closed my eyes and could see myself reading that *Time Magazine* at Yale University in my chair with my feet up on the desk. And I remember every word of the obituary. Because I was, during the war, kind of a fan of Tito's. You have to understand, my father was in the army for six and a half years. And I lived on a military base for a while. I lived in an amputation hospital in the summers when I was a boy. Everybody in there who wasn't on the staff and myself were the only people who had all four limbs. Everybody in the hospital was missing one or more limbs.

COHEN: You're talking World War Two ?

CHRISTIAN: World War Two . I lived with my father for a week or two every once in a while, so I could get to see. And so I was...I know World War Two inside and out. So I was kind of a fan of—but I remember that. Anyway, I was having this fun. And I was doing American Studies.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Well, I felt a debt to my graduate school. They trained me in a certain way. God, they trained me in colonial history, though. It drove me crazy. Brown is noted for that. And my dissertation director said, "I always thought you'd work in the nineteenth century." I said, "I want to work in the twentieth century." So I was doing all of this. Meanwhile, during that time, the seventies, I had been working.... First of all, remember I was an instructor. There was a Yale graduate, Bill Maneer [sp], who was chairman of the English Department for a while, who taught the American literature courses; he was—to put it bluntly, although we were friends—in my way, you understand. If Bill or Fred McGill didn't want to teach something in American literature, it might be possible for Henry to get a course once in a while. But there wasn't much promise until everybody left. There was never any question about whether I was capable, you know. It just was that kind of department, that size and everything else. So I had written to Azocca a long time before about American Studies. So I simply went and proposed American Studies as a major. And I worked it through...I saw it through Trenton and everything else, and we finally got it as a major.

COHEN: How does a department of that size and with its variety of interests, from periods, perspectives, ideology, left, right, in-between, from the Renaissance to Third World, Vietnam, I mean the whole...how does it manage to function? [Laughs]

CHRISTIAN: Well, it gets together when it has to. I'm going to make a statement; you can keep this in or take it out when you do it. The two times I was chair, I was chair in very controversial times. I was chair when Bruce came. That was a controversial time, when Bruce Franklin came. I used the power of the chair to keep order, not to pay debts back. And everybody knew that no matter who they were no matter I argued with them, I was going to be fair. And there were some crucial times. You walked down the hall, and this is the way I feel about it. You said at the beginning of this that it was not to be the good time I had at Newark. I didn't have a good time at Newark; this is my working career.

COHEN: It's livelihood.

CHRISTIAN: When I walk down that hall, there are seven or eight people whose tenure—they earned it because you can't get it without being the person yourself. But I saw their tenure through the process. And somebody said to me one day, "You know whatever the hell happens here, this is really—you built this department into whatever it is." And in a sense.... There was one person who was very ill, very vulnerable in the promotion process. I took that person through without that person's participation. And some people didn't want that tenure. I believed there was a distinguished record there. There's still a distinguished record going on. I brought that person through twice, the second time he got it. I brought another through a grievance—I feel very strongly about loyalties in the department. So we get together when it's necessary. One thing that bothers me is that when we're looking for people, and we'll be looking for people. The English Department is now filled with people close to retirement.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Well, a lot of people fifty-nine or sixty years old are already in the department. And as we look for people and as the emphasis on publications has arisen and as the narrowness of things like deconstruction, you know.... You sometimes go to convention, and I have colleagues who say, I listen for about a half hour, and they're talking to themselves. You know they're not talking—they're not telling me anything, you know. So as that happens, we have to be very careful with the young people that we bring up because.... Here's a typical example: It's around and about, but it works. When I started to teach in the graduate program in Newark, say, 1971, contemporary American literature was the last twenty years—the last ten years—of.... So from 1900 to 1950, the twentieth century, my period, was easy; it was fifty years. It's now 1990. Contemporary literature...it's seventy years. And people come up and say, "I want to do American literature in the twentieth century." Sometimes I've had them as students, sometimes I haven't. And want to do it as a major or as a minor. And I say, "Well, what are you going to do?" And they say, "Well...." And then you look at the course offerings, and dammit they don't know the twentieth century in American literature.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: They know the Marxist interpretation of literature and the books that lend themselves to that, from the thirties. And I work a lot in the thirties. They know Third World and they know Liberal Studies that I direct now. Has Bruce teaching Third World. I'm supporting the course this semester because my people like that wonderful course. Film, the Third World, you know. And this is what Liberal Studies people do.... Bruce can examine a student like that. But that student tells me, "He hasn't worked through Hemingway books." There's something about the twentieth century. I don't care whether those were white males or whatever we want to call them right now. That's the literature. And when there's no literary history, Gil, there's no literary knowledge. You know literary history is bad because it's an appreciation. Literary history is a fact that you need to work on the rest. Nobody can tell me that a person who lends themselves to an author to a deconstruction situation, you know, and study is not a person who sat down and said: I want to be a writer. Now who the hell do I have to beat in order to get into the word world writer. I'm now a writer. They know me. My name is established here. It's like Mailer. Mailer sat down to write the Great American Novel. And he wrote *The Naked and the Dead*. And three

or four times in that book, he actually goes for Hemingway's throat, saying, if anybody publishes this, I've gotta show him that I was as good if not better.

So when you get these people that everybody says are modern. And I think of John Williams, who would be the first to admit black writers all of a sudden got in vogue in the publishing business. And now they're out of vogue. And so why is somebody with John's talent, you know, struggling? Why—he gets his books published. But there are other black writers; it's not the thing that the publishing world wants to do now. Does that mean we don't have black writers anymore? It means we have no young people of talent? You know? What the hell is this? So the Establishment is really something to attack in its own way because publishing wants—I mean, God, you get the romance novel. I mean that's where they make their money now.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: You know. And they want to spend big bucks for writers. So what sells is what gets big bucks and big advances. Anyway, go back to it. Those people right know damned well. You take anybody who wants to be a writer, I took daily things at Yale. Five hundred words a day, five days a week, in the box by nine o'clock in the morning where the box, the mailbox, was empty, a lockbox. If your essay wasn't there, you flunked.

COHEN: You wrote essays as a student.

CHRISTIAN: I wrote fiction as an undergraduate.

COHEN: As an undergraduate.

CHRISTIAN: Five hundred words a day, in the mailbox by—for five days a week for eight weeks. If that was not there at nine o'clock when they took that out, they sent you a note saying don't come to class.

[End of Tape #1]

COHEN: We're back. Okay.

CHRISTIAN: When I came in 1962, Mason Gross was the president. And he had a reception for new faculty members. So I went to New Brunswick and met him. Unbelievable to think of it now, you know. [Laughs] That that would happen, you know. Although the new president may actually reach that kind of dimension eventually. But it's actually a much more complicated place.

COHEN: Just one second.

[Break in recording]

CHRISTIAN: ...knew what the hell he had to beat. There was a sophistication to the reader even if he left college like so many men I used to meet on the train that'd say to me, "Gee, it's wonderful that you're going to college. I was going to college in the Depression. Then we ran

into some difficulties. I had to give up and go to work, and I've been a salesman all my life." I felt lucky.... But these writers, they know their stuff. They know their literary heritage. What are we doing with students who are so specialized that they don't know. The feminist movement finally has come around to understanding that Hemingway wrote in a range of things. You know they took a beating with the macho images. You read him carefully, you know, and you read wonderful things about the way life is. I don't mean for macho guys. I mean for not necessarily being prepared to lose, but not being terribly surprised when you do. Things like that. That's not a male message, you know? That's a message for everybodythings like that. So I'm upset about graduate students now who are in such small categories that they really don't know the literary history of the twentieth century. And yet they want to be examined in it. So I'm on the phone negotiating an examination area with them. And we've been talking about this lately. And I think this is partly the result of.... It's no secret that for about a decade Rutgers in Newark, as well as the rest of the world, has been making a statement. I won't tell you whose statement this is, but it's very much from the top. Hire somebody you could tenure tomorrow, but don't tenure them for six years.

COHEN: Mmm. Hmm.

CHRISTIAN: So you come with your books, you come with your publications, you know. And this is what you've done. When I published an article in the first year in graduate school, when that article was read aloud to the class at the request of Hiatt Wagner, my graduate professor, the rest of the graduate students had been at Brown three or four years, took me out to celebrate and said, this doesn't happen. The other person who read a paper, and the only ones read that year, is now the so-and-so professor of the University of North Carolina, Margaret Dickey, another contemporary of mine. She's an outstanding professor. So these things. The specialization and the publication! And, Jesus! If Harold Bloom runs the critical world, you mean to tell me that some graduate student is going to stand up and become a literary Forrest McDonald? I'll explain the remark for the tape. But he's going to stand up and say, Bloom is full of crap? It ought to be done this way. Now we're getting that kind of reflection from scholars, you know, writing books and so on, saying, hey, this is as narrow and as wrong as the other criticism was narrow and wrong. So they publish, they come with books, they're tenurable. We're looking for bright young people that we can invest in, keep for a long time, build their reputation. And if the public—if the critical world is as narrow as it is at the moment, the undergraduate is getting none of that of value in the classroom. He doesn't or she doesn't care about deconstruction.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

CHRISTIAN: We had to battle with the accounting majors and business for so damned long. So what we give them in literature is some narrow approach to it? And yet, you know, I'll go to Anne Watson, say. Anne, listen to this, and I'll read her, a critical statement of seven or eight sentences, and I'll say, "I think it means the reader doesn't know how to interpret the vocabulary of the writer." And she'll say, "That's absolutely right, Henry." And I'll say, "Why the hell didn't they write that?" [Laughter] See? That's my approach to it. But that's because.... You can imagine how popular I've become in the last five or six months because Yugoslavia is in the *New York Times* three days a week.

COHEN: Hmm, yeah.

CHRISTIAN: Henry's real. Henry's 60 years old. And he wasn't doing something stupid. [Laughter] So this is my worry. This is what I worry about the preparation of the student. And the bottom line is I'll go to a graduate class, and I'll say, even to an undergraduate class: We have before us fourteen books, twelve books, nine books, whatever it is. Usually never less than nine for the undergraduates. And I say, "If we study intensely three books for a semester, what the hell do you know about literature?" And under the old rules, you used to take twentieth-century American literature this semester, and twentieth-century French literature in translation that semester to fulfill your literature requirement.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: You go to a cocktail party and say, "I know something about twentieth-century American literature," you might as well have been reading dime novels.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

CHRISTIAN: So you have to have some background. And you have to take this approach. These books were once brand new. *The Great Gatsby* was for sale as a new book; it came out last week. You pick it up, you read it. We have to learn to read it that way. There's nothing sacred about it because I give you nine to twelve books to read. I can give you nine to twelve other ones that are just as important. What you're doing is expanding your ability to deal with the literature. Learning something about these, but you'd learn the same specifics about another nine or twelve books. But what you need to do is take out of this course some specific knowledge, but mostly experience. So that the new book that comes next that's for sale, you read and say, That's good. That has meaning. It's not that I lose myself in it. But that is good literature. And you only know that the way you know good food, good driving, good landscape, good acts, by experience. By trading off, saying that hurt; I felt that inside. That hurt me. And that I don't want to have again. Or this is like something where there was joy or sadness in my life or someone else's. That's what you take out of the classroom. And that's why I had such a vicious dislike of the interpretation of the new criticism into a kind of pro-Christianity. I was born a Catholic. I've never brought religion very strongly into my life or into the classroom. And I resented the conversion of a technique which I violated almost from the beginning because of being in American Studies, as a way of looking at things into something, a way of life. I don't think deconstruction is a way of life. I don't think Jameson has anything to say to me about how to conduct myself.

COHEN: You're talking about Fredric Jameson?

CHRISTIAN: Fredric Jameson. That's why I'm so offended by Marxist criticism, you see, which ties itself into feminism or vice versa and becomes a way of dealing with things. I'll be perfectly honest, it was with some astonishment, I think, for a lot of the faculty that an event took place a couple of years ago on the floor of the faculty. First of all, I was on the committee to interview for the director of freshman writing program because I was acting chair. But I was also

on the committee to choose the director of Women's Studies. So while we were doing that, the major in Women's Studies came up to the floor of the faculty.

COHEN: Oh. Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: And David wanted to push it off to the side. Not because he was for or against it. But making the statement that the director of Women's Studies was being selected. And when she came, then the major because she would make changes.

COHEN: Yes. I think I remember that, yes.

CHRISTIAN: And I said— David looked at me, and that was funny because when he selects me, he usually expects something. Okay. I'll go back to another story about David in something that was pertinent. I stood up and said, "The new director of Women's Studies will have a lot better chance to change things in the major, even if she has to bring them before the faculty—if she's got a major to change." Than starting over. Because you're talking about a total stranger who doesn't understand how this place works all the way to Trenton. [Laughter] And David looked at me as if to say, Oh, God, you did it. And so we passed things. So Fran came with a major to do something with.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

CHRISTIAN: And I think the women were astonished that Henry had made this—pulled this ploy for them, you know? Because the point is I never thought they were the women. I think they thought Henry was one of the men, see. You know? Because I've worked with women all my life. The first job I had, I had Estelle Carver and Helen Barton. Helen Barton was a graduate of Mount Holyoke. They taught me how to handle English grammar. I was not grammatically incorrect. But I didn't know the rules of anything.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

CHRISTIAN: They sat me down, and they taught me, and I worked under those two women as a twenty-two year-old male. And never flinched once. They never—I never felt threatened. I was appalled when I found out that my female colleagues at Rutgers were really getting less money for the time in rank and so on than the men were, when that study came out. And I was partial to it—a party to that knowledge because having begun at the first step in the first range, people are hired ahead of me financially, people who are behind me. So that when they started to correct the women's salaries, there was one case discussed by the board that was not a woman, it was a man, and it was Henry Christian who was making less money. So three times I've had my salary changed on the basis of not only my accomplishment, but on the fact that I was way below everybody else. Now I think I'm competitive. Now my salary, my merit awards and so on, have been on accomplishment.

COHEN: As far as affirmative action for women is concerned, I mean how did the university justify the inequity as long as it lasted?

CHRISTIAN: By just having a bunch of old systems. They had a system which said if you were chair, you got a twelve-month salary. When you were no longer chair, you kept the twelve-month salary. So there are some people on the faculty—I won't name them—who have had twelve-month salaries ever since they were the chair. When I became the chair, it was announced that that system wouldn't be continued. So I went back to a ten-month salary as soon as I gave up the chair. In the same way, there are some salaries that I'm sure have always been privately negotiated.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: And with that system, no matter how strong the AAUP or anything was, it just went on until the break came. And then there was the big study. I mean there were charts, and there were ranges: men, women, breakdowns and so on.

COHEN: Which study was that?

CHRISTIAN: I think the one that led to the equivalent of a merit-award Category A, Category B, a salary adjustment, because of the inequity in time in rank.

COHEN: Was that about the time—I understand there was a class action suit?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, that may have taken place, too. Yes.

COHEN: Do you recall the people who were the leaders of that at that time?

CHRISTIAN: No, I don't. No, no. But when the knowledge came forward, I mean I was really appalled to see the difference. See, you don't know what your colleagues make 'til you're the chair when you get that printout. And then it's really astounding to see what, you know....

COHEN: Again on the question of affirmative action as far as hiring of women and minority faculty members, how was that done in the seventies and early eighties?

CHRISTIAN: Well, I can remember.... All the time that I was chair, letters poured in because there were still jobs. And basically a chair would screen the letters into pertinent or not pertinent to the positions, to the openings. And sometimes there was a third category of somebody that was really looked wonderful, that maybe we ought to try to make room for. And then the tenured faculty would go over those letters. And then we would start to negotiate or call people for interviews and see. And in those days, at the beginning we could call without worrying whether we had the money to hire because there was usually the money to hire.

COHEN: Right.

CHRISTIAN: Now you have to get permission from the dean to even make a search.

COHEN: An affirmative action search?

CHRISTIAN: No, the affirmative action comes in. That's now a given. But it goes before a committee. And I can remember going before the committee. And I can remember astounding things before the affirmative action committee. I could name names, but let's not. But here we had a distinguished minority candidate and a distinguished faculty member arguing for the hiring before the affirmative action committee of that faculty member. And the distinguished faculty member saying, "Well, Jesus! If we didn't look at anybody else in the world, this is the person we should hire." And Lincoln Lawrence saying, "It may be a minority candidate, and it may be a distinguished person. But when you make that statement, you don't have the slightest concept of what affirmative action is." This person has to be seen in the context of everybody, you see. So sometimes the persons who are most adamant about equal opportunity and so on actually did what you hear Bush saying things. And I don't trust Bush any more than, you know.... He's from where I came from, you know the CIA began at Yale, remember, when I was there, you know. So a lot of things about Yale that are flaky. And I mean to have a distinguished minority faculty member is what you're after. But you can't do it to the exclusion of a screening process, which gives everybody the equal rights, you see. So Lincoln was wonderful heading that committee for a long time when I got with it.

COHEN: Well, how were the minority candidates, how were they pursued and identified? What was the mechanism?

CHRISTIAN: Well, you had to do it kind of by osmosis because even before it was a rule, it was difficult sometimes. You just tried to tell from the letter that the person was identifying himself or herself without purposely doing it, but letting you know who they were. You know? And of course for a long time, as far as black candidates were concerned, they all offered to literature, they offered Afro-American literature, you know? And a great many white candidates, who could teach Afro-American literature in those days, didn't say a word about it. They just didn't mention it because there was this strong feeling that if you weren't a black person, you couldn't teach Afro-American literature. My God! It's a little bit like saying, you know, you can't pitch unless you're Puerto Rican or something? [Laughter] I mean who the hell? You know. And there was a strong feeling. And the black student groups, as well as now the Hispanic student groups, who are not so into this, but there was a strong feeling that you couldn't—you wouldn't teach Afro-American if you weren't black. And you shouldn't. And that was said outwardly. There is something that bothers me now. We've had examples of it nationally. There is in all of this political correctness and so on, there's a certain amount of bigotry coming in, and there's a bigotry that's been going on.

There's an old argument between blacks and Jews that comes around and around and around, and it circles around. And it's showing up on campuses. It's showing up...it's showing up quite honestly a little bit in Newark. It's always been disturbing to me, and it can't exist—it can't exist!—in Newark because we really have done our best. I mean we've accommodated all kinds of things. I am not a strong believer in many of Bruce's principles, but I can work with Bruce. You know? I work with Bruce. That's all there is to it. Bruce has his positions, I have my positions. I suppose mine are as political in one way as his are, although I don't have the politics behind my position. It's just that not having his position, it becomes a political position as well. And I'm worried about things like this, and I think it creeps in when the specialized faculty

member comes along. We have distinguished people in certain fields. And when you start saying a field is no longer relevant, it's like saying you're not going to have oak trees anymore.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: There going to be there. They were there. What happened to the oak trees? You know what happened to Hemingway? What happened to Faulkner? What happened to the people—to go back to my original statement that these people, not the faculty so much as the new writers said I have to beat. Not because they get published, but because I can tell this is good writing. I once said to Malcolm Talbott, "I have a story in mind that's almost like...you know it turns out to be a lot like *Hills Like White Elephants*. What do you do about that, Mr. Cowley?" And he turned, and we were on a train from New Haven to New York. I worked with him for about eight, ten weeks. And he was always my friend. Every time I called him on the phone or asked him for something, he responded beautifully for years. And he said to me, "If you can't do better than *Hills Like White Elephants*, forget it." So that's what the new writer does. That's what the writer who finds himself or herself participating as the author in the book who says, "I killed off that character. But the other characters came to me and wanted that character to live again." They know they've got to be better than what their ancestors were.

COHEN: Could you explain that reference?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, Forrest McDonald. Forrest McDonald. A graduate student is going to stand up to Harold Bloom right now needs full faculty support from the established people who don't have—who are not threatened by their positions. Or anybody else's position. Forrest McDonald took the Charles and Mary Beard economic history—economic interpretation—of American history theory that said: The constitution was ratified on economic grounds. And rode around to the original thirteen colonies and investigated all the people at the Continental Congresses who ratified the constitution, and studied their property holdings, and proved that the Beard Hypothesis was wrong because some people who stood to lose a lot by ratifying the constitution ratified it anyway. Voted for it because they believed in the formation of the nation. [Laughs] And all it took was a really hard labor, long-term study of the available records. And he just destroyed a hypothesis.

COHEN: I guess my question was *Hills Like White Elephants*?

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: What is the link there?

CHRISTIAN: Well, that's a Hemingway story.

COHEN: Yes. Okay.

CHRISTIAN: And, you know, you want to do it better, says Cowley to me. But you don't do it at all. Well, all our new writers who want to write the new way, know they have to be better. It's my Mailer remark.

COHEN: Okay, okay.

CHRISTIAN: I've got to be as good if not better than Ernest Hemingway or I'm not going to get published.

COHEN: Yes. Okay.

CHRISTIAN: The same with Faulkner. And so you know what— And also when you're trying to beat them, male or female, you learn how they do it. James Jones used to sit down at night and copy out by hand passages of writers he thought were very good. When you put word by word in your own hand somebody else's word, you see the sentence form. I've done this, sometimes typing out a passage for an examination of Faulkner. And halfway through I've stopped and said, Jesus! I never really understood that before, putting the words down on my own typewriter, you know. So you've got to beat them. And if you work in a position which says there is no meaning to literature, you automatically gave meaning to it by saying, there is no meaning to it. In other words, I can't stand under the tree. It doesn't provide shade. But I'm in a shadow. Now what do I do about that?

COHEN: Now I want to ask really two questions. One is what do you do when there's no longer any demand in this market academic community that we're living in. Like the old days, what do you do when the demand isn't there for the out of fashion course, period, genre or whatever? And you've got this tenure professor who...How do you handle that?

CHRISTIAN: Well, first of all, you can go into a kind of anthropological approach to it, that they ought to know something about it anyway. But second, I think if you make any subject matter live for the student, you can make it profitable for the student. You've got to make it profitable for the student. You've got to make it an experience in which the student says: I am a better reader, writer, thinker for having been in this classroom than I was when I came in. And in that way, it doesn't make any difference whether there's a demand for the course or not. You put it before the student and say, I've got to arrange my class—my course—offerings as a department chair so that a certain number have to fall into this trap, which will provide something positive for them. See, it's a department's role not only to be modeled, but to preserve. After all, we're in an electronic age where so much information that a human cannot absorb is stored that we're liable to lose the ability to think sufficiently to want to know what information we need, to look for.

COHEN: Yes. But what does the department do when the enrollment in a course—a course gets so low that it become un-economic? How does one deal with that at an administrative level?

CHRISTIAN: You try to talk to the faculty member to make some revisions, some changes, or make some combinations.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: I would, for example, think it might not be bad to bring two faculty members together, as we sometimes do in a course, and provide some modern viable basis for this mini-course to join this mini-course of old, forgotten stuff, to bring it some vitality, to bring some vitality. And multidisciplinary approaches is the way to do this, see. I never had much trouble because I can think in a historical context. No student of mine who has ever taken *Sister Carrie* with me has ever, if they've attended classes, not seen on the board this H's, multiple H's, which is really the way I'm describing a chalk drawing of the skeletal steel structure which allows you to have a skyscraper. Carrie enters Chicago at the time that modern merchandising and new methods of construction join to produce the stately building that is the Palace of Commerce. And Louis Sullivan starts to... And it's because fireproof terra cotta is there, and the skeletal steel structure which will stand all the way. You know you can have the World Trade Center, as tall as it is, without any floors, without anything but the steel structure. It's there first. It's that are bearing wall walls, and my students learn that, because Carrie walks into such buildings that are dedicated. The Carson Pirie Scott store, eventually, is a Sullivan creation. And she walks into this new world, this twentieth-century world. The same way that that industry, that's so important, leads to the sweatshop which she cannot bear with worlds that she figures even as a farm girl, a lower-class that she is because she's only slightly corrupted herself so far. And then of course it turns into the... you know she's a total feminist. She ends up the winner in the book and so on and so on. Those things. So I mean I just turn to the class and say, Stay with me now. You're going to think I'm crazy for the next five minutes. But you need to know this because Dreiser is talking about that thing that's growing up.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: You bring that multidisciplinary approach to material, and it makes all the difference.

COHEN: Can you give me an example of courses which have been, shall we say, constructed this way? I mean taking this multidisciplinary approach.

CHRISTIAN: Well, when I do the Novel in America, I do three things: I usually try to choose—I choose four sets of books. I'll do men, women, the city, and maybe style. Or men, women, sometimes children. And before you know it, the student is saying, These three books have to do with men, but there are women in it. And you know. And this had to do with the city, but these people are in the city. And they learn to think in multiple ways. Instead of saying what you hear so often as an adult. You go to a party and somebody says, What do you do? You say, Oh, I'm a teacher at Rutgers University. Oh, what do you teach? English. Oh, it was always my worst subject, literature. I couldn't get it. [Laughs] And the best example I can give you is once a kid said to another kid outside of class, "You know, you're a real dingdong." They stepped into the class. I called on the one who said... Would you explain metaphoric to the rest of this class? And he said, "Sorry, I haven't done my assignment for today." And I said, "Did you just call Mr. So- [Laughter] See language does it. The student needs to know that the car he or she drives....

[Break in recording]

COHEN: Okay, we're back with Dr. Christian, and we've been talking about the courses, how do we deal with courses which are under-enrolled.

CHRISTIAN: There's a kind of thing that strikes me about the problem of courses and the problem of curriculum. Now that I direct graduate Liberal Studies, I have some really accomplished people who come back for a master's degree that they don't need. Some of them have master's degrees. Some of them have law degrees, advanced degrees of various kinds. But they're in some part of their life where they—it's not that they like to study. It's that they want to study, that they need to study. And they'd like to put some formal structure to some of their interests. Now that sounds like a plug for liberal studies. But I'm thinking of the undergraduate who leaves the university with a degree and says, "I'm an educated person." The first thing that the undergraduate learns, as a graduate, is that they're not terribly educated. There's a whole lot more to know, a whole lot more to learn. So all of a sudden they're liable to be going along in life, and they will run into something and say, If I'm educated, why don't I know about this? And it's not because they find somebody else knows about it, but it'll be the equivalent of an experience like they'll pick up something to read, and they will understand the wonder of this particular piece of literature, the beauty. They'll listen to the symphony and understand the power of it. They'll look at a landscape. So since it's impossible to impart to an undergraduate student everything that there is, it's also impossible not to imagine that you have an obligation to preserve some things for them. But vogue currency, a word that was so popular a decade ago, relevance.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Is not the only thing they need. And so faculties have to sit down and sometimes make a very hard decision to preserve something. And it's tough when these contemporary battles are going on, you know? I think it's criminal to allow anybody to believe that English literature is the only literature in the world. However, I'm not convinced that a ninth-grader, who is told this is the literature of England, doesn't say to himself, and Africa, I suppose there's a literature of Africa. In other words, teaching English literature to the exclusion of everything else doesn't until a certain point tell everybody this is the only literature. There's got to be other literature, you know. It's like a kid eating in a house saying, I think the people next door must have food, even though you probably don't know who they are. So somewhere along the battle carried on a little bit artificially by the faculties and by the intellectuals. And the students are suffering in the middle of it. I think a multicultural approach is the only way. Because first of all, the student is not stupid even if he or she is too poor to be able to travel. They've got CNN. They've got news, they've got newspapers. They've got—they can go to New York and see that the world is made up of other people. Well, they must be doing the same thing we're doing. So it's a multicultural world before they ever get to the classroom.

COHEN: What's been happening to the English major during this period, late sixties, seventies?

CHRISTIAN: Well, it's been suffering. As I said, some people have wanted to abolish things like medieval courses and so on. And we've managed to prevent that from happening. But as I say, it's very easy to go current. Now, when we had this curriculum that was supposed to combine history and literature, that turned into a terrific battle. What are you going to do African

literature and African history? And how did that fit? And too many people in the argument had territory that they were worried about losing their territory or wanted more territory. That was a faculty argument. That left the student out in the cold again. Say, the student doesn't know this. The student doesn't care about this. The student wants to get a degree. Somewhere in the process of getting a college degree, you hope the student says, hey, this is not high school. This is living. This is feeling knowledge. Because I don't think they do that very often in high school. I think they feel I've got to do my four years like a prison term.

COHEN: Where do you see the study of literature in the overall curriculum on the Newark campus? Let's say its present situation.

CHRISTIAN: I think there is no writing without grammar; there is no reason for grammar without writing. And so we're talking about literature.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Therefore I think the role of literature is to keep the communication of the individual open. I know that the individual can talk to his or her computer and find out everything in the world that the computer can possibly deliver. But that's not what makes communication between people that leads to society, that leads to peace among peoples. And one of the things I always stress, and I think that no matter what the subject matter is, this is what we have to be presenting, is we are improving your ability to reach other people and to have other people reach you. And you can have a computer language. But computer language which means compassion, if there's a symbol or a word. Until you understand what compassion is, that vocabulary is as dead as the vocabulary which spells compassion in letters that we know. If we don't have these concepts, humanitarian concepts, it won't make any difference whether the computer can spell compassion by symbols. If you don't know what it's talking about, it's dead.

COHEN: What do you say to the proposal, sort of proposal which was put forth, I forget the author's name, in *The Death of Literature*? I think it's a proposal anyway to change English departments to departments of communication? That apparently is what to the business is, according to them.

CHRISTIAN: Communication is a technique. It's not a knowledge.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: It's the same reason why working as closely with Alan Walper [sp] as I have—we've battled for years and years and years—to keep the journalism program as far away from the word communications as possible. Because in some places there are schools of communication where journalism is a part, and it's death! It's death in the journalistic profession because they don't want communicators. They want reporters. But communication is the ability to write, the ability to speak, the ability to choose the word. And again, it gets back to.... Okay, let's argue over whether faith is a concept that can be understood, a viable vocabulary word. Alright. Maybe faith is a word that has failed us. But belief, that the individual undergoes in

something, is going to be a capability of the individual no matter what we call it. And that's what we have to keep working.

You know I was interviewed a couple of years ago. It was a very funny story. I say it to Ray Caprio all the time, "Hey, Ray, remember when you asked me to be interviewed by Ado Bado [sp]?" And the first program he said to me, "Henry, it would really help me out because we have to do this on Tuesday, and it happens to be a Jewish holiday. So a lot of faculty members won't be around." So I said—I went out. I came on a day I didn't have to, although it was not my holiday; it was my day off. Tuesday I didn't work. And got interviewed in the sun, and he turned to me and said, "You're terrific, you know. You just—have you done this?" I said, "Well when the TV camera rolls I know how to handle because I've spent some time watching. And Peter was involved with Right to Know with Alan, you know, down in Avenell in TV3.

COHEN: Peter—

CHRISTIAN: Peter, my son, Peter.

COHEN: Oh, oh! Yes.

CHRISTIAN: And I said—and then he never used it. And so when they won the ACE Award, I said that about her. I said, "You know you interviewed me and never used it. And I know why. Because when you put people in front of TV screens and give them coffee breaks and air conditioning, it's still working in a sweatshop when you don't let them think. [Laughs] That's why: You didn't like the term. It messed up—it made your program untidy. It sounded like a radical remark. But it's absolutely true. You call up on the telephone, she says, "Wait a minute. I'll bring it up on the screen." He says, "Wait a moment, I'll bring it up on the screen." Unless you're talking about your airline reservations, you can't go beyond there because he said, "Listen..." So he said, "All I have is what's in front of me." And they're not involved in the process from A to B to C which leads to D, which is what's on the screen. There's nobody to talk to. Now when the old-fashioned scribe used to keep the books, you know, that may have been slow, but you had somebody who said, Oh, I see where we dropped a thousand dollars, a million dollars, a billion dollars, lost an airplane, forgot a ship. Lost forty thousand freight cars, you know. Somebody has to understand it. The CEO doesn't understand it. If the computer doesn't have a program that understands it, it's all gone.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: It's way too complicated for the individual to understand. But the individual knows why he or she hurts at the end of the day. And if you go home and you smash your husband or your wife with something loose in the house, you haven't got a society. You just have people who have brains better than animals, but should live as animals because even animals don't attack each other except by the instincts that they're entitled to. They don't procreate except at set times; they haven't got choices in the matter. We have the right to proliferate children all over the world to make poverty, to make messes, to make wars and so on. That's I think something that...it's humanities, the humanities, whatever the vehicle that the English Department is really responsible for.

COHEN: How do you explain the change in the interests of the students from the late sixties—the changes in the interests of the students in the late sixties to the late seventies and into the eighties, from humanities, social sciences, to business and other, shall we say, vocational majors? What’s happened in your perception?

CHRISTIAN: Two things. One, it’s the big sell that education will get you something, only it has to be bottom-line education. It has to be the balance-sheet education. It’s the success of the Industrial Revolution, and it’s the failure of personal finance, it’s the success of corporate finance. If you start a small company, you want to be bought out. You’re ready to retire. They buy you out for enough money, you give it to your investment counselor, you’re finished. You don’t own the product, you don’t owe anybody your product, you don’t have a family business, you don’t have a reputation, you don’t have anything if you’re willing to sell it out. You give up— You don’t have the thing you’ve built. There’s more.... The integrity of business is not in the product; it’s in finance. We’re beyond products; we’re in finance. And finance is carried on in the computer without any real money showing, without any, you know, the balance sheet at the end of the day. It’s just that upper-level sophistication which most of the industrialized world doesn’t even really even understand. But we’re all living at that level. That’s why the scandals in corporate life are so outrageous.

COHEN: Yes. But why the changes in the students...?

CHRISTIAN: They’re buying the hard sell. They’re buying the hard sell. They’re looking for the good life. Looking for the good life. One of the jokes I have in classes: When Dido says to her sister, build a fire, and the sister doesn’t figure out that Dido’s going to kill herself and throw herself in that fire because Aeneas has left, I always said, “You know folks, there’s a rock-and-roll song. It’s way before your time. But it’s called ‘Big Girls Don’t Cry.’” And I said, “Dido’s an old-fashioned girl.” She betrayed herself. She promised never to love again, and the gods made her love. But let’s say that Virgil’s, you know, a half a human and half in the gods. He’s half Greek, and he’s half Roman. And he’s got this part in the book about feeling guilty about waging war against inferior peoples, you know. And he doesn’t like the gates of war opened. So I said, “Let’s try to think of her as a woman.” She promised never to love, to build a city, and she betrayed herself. So now she’s killing herself. I said, “Well, you know, the modern world says you don’t do that anymore.” I said, “Voltaire understood. He said you come to Kunigunde, and he says, ‘I thought you were ravished by the Bulgarian army, disemboweled and thrown in the ditch, dead. And wonder of wonders, I see it’s not true.’ And she said, ‘Every word of it’s true, but one does not always die of such things.’” So I said that’s the world, our accommodation world. Our accommodation world. We had the breakdown... I said, not that I’m a fundamental Christian, not that I’m an economic determinist or anything. But as a matter of fact, you’ve got to have some belief. And that’s where we lack it.

[Break in recording]

COHEN: We’re back. You were saying that literature was really—or were you saying?—a form of knowledge, belief, was the term?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, yes. And a way of recognizing qualities in the human being that neither finance nor machinery, nor industry, nor the computer, whatever, those are mechanical things. And what is not animal and what is not mechanical in man is going to be there. There's this old term, this old drug term, "a monkey on your back." But there are lots of monkeys. One of them is.... I always say to students, "One of the things you have to watch out for is when guilt arrives. There's something that doesn't sit right with you, you're unsettled about it, or your guilty about it." And I said let's take it out of a religious context. This is just a feeling you have. You know that you did something or that there's something going on that is not right for you. The machines and the animals don't know that. They don't care. But you are going to be constituted with an emotional base as a human being. Literature is one of the few things—or I should say the humanities, music and so on, art. I mean you see people who don't know beans about art dumbstruck by a painting. You know it gets to them. That's what it is, and they respond. You can't teach that. You can't program that. And the best responses are those which are natural. I mean why do people, why are they moved by music? Why do people who can't tell a symphony orchestra from a band cry sometimes when they hear the music, you know? That happens. That's because they're responsive. That's the role, that's what has to be preserved. And that's what literature, humanities will do.

COHEN: I wanted to go back to talking about the campus, specifically the campus activism around the—at the time of the war in Vietnam, the antiwar movement. How did it affect—specifically how did it affect teaching?

CHRISTIAN: Well, it didn't affect my teaching at all. I just went on doing what I did. I think that I have an attitude that people are entitled to their opinions. I thought the war was a bad thing. I could certainly tell the difference between that. But I had seen World War II, I'd seen Korea. I also knew what the Dien Vien was before anybody paid any attention to it. Also remember that this was the result of something like... I remember John Kennedy talking once, using the phrase, "brushfire wars." And that's what this looked like, a brushfire war at the beginning. But I mean I had the attitude that what you could do something about, you could do something about. I was not a protester. I was not for or against the war. I taught my classes. I remember—and this because.... I was sitting in Abel's on Broad Street where we used to eat. It was a nice restaurant, Vic Abel and the waitresses. I can remember that's where I learned all the terminology about fast foods and stuff. It was good food. And I remember Bert Sweet and I were on a committee together. What committee doesn't matter. And I said to Bert—he sat down to eat. And he was two persons away, but he was at the el in the counter. And I said, "Bert, I'm going to leave now. I'll see you at the meeting." And he said, "I'm not going to the meeting." I said, "You're not going to the meeting?" And he said, "No, I'm not going to the meeting. I'm not doing anything at the university anymore until they stop this goddamn war." And I said, "Bert, this meeting isn't going to start or stop this war." And he said, "Well, you don't have enough sentiment about it." I said, "Bert, I have a wonderful sentiment. If I tell you that the Nazis were terrible but I thought World War II was a mistake also, you'll tell me that I'm fascist."

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: But I said, "Bert, I don't believe in killing at all. So all wars are bad for me. I can't bring that position to anybody. I'm going to go to the committee because I can vote on this

committee today.” For whatever the hell this was that we were going to vote on. “That’s as far as I can go today.” I can throw myself in front of a railroad train, but to continue my other conversation, there aren’t any Dido’s anymore. And I’ve also learned something else. I learned it in a very funny way. There are faculty members on the campus who will say, “Henry Christian is a strange person—or a different kind of person.” But I learned that your enemies are often asleep while you’re up fretting. My biggest enemy was the inability of the human body to be formed sufficiently for my son to have a life like everybody else. And it was no good fighting that. So occasionally I think, even today, I start to worry about something, and then I say, Jesus! Look at what you’ve been through. Why lose sleep over this? You’re capabilities are here, here in your range. You do what your conscience tells you. So in the classroom I thought I was teaching conscience and freedom.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: So I didn’t have things to say about the war to my students. There were plenty of people to talk about the war to them. I wanted to talk about what they needed once we are in 1990, and they’re thirty-five, forty years old—forty-five years old. I mean it’s extremely interesting how.... Somebody said to me the other day, “I can’t understand your attention to popular music.” I said I like popular music. I didn’t get old as far as music was concerned, you know? And while my family was here, I mean we knew every rock band and all the new people. And I still listen to the stations, although I don’t remember the names very well, you know. But I like music, all kinds of music. So I’m very much in tune with what the students are. I have to explain to my contemporaries that my life since I was nineteen years old, twenty years old—actually twenty-two let’s say—has consisted every year of starting over with a group of eighteen-year-olds who are going to become twenty-two four years later.

COHEN: That’s right. [Laughs]

CHRISTIAN: And the next year another group of eighteen-year-olds. So when I sit— And, you know, people will say, “Well, he’s a loner, too, you know.” I’m in the cafeteria a lot. I sit with the kids, and I hear them talk. I’ve heard them go through—and the girls—through everything from running away to wanting the most outrageous Princess Caroline Kennedy wedding. You know? I feel sorry for the guys year after year, who don’t know what to do as the groom and that stuff. So I like to be with them. I don’t think they’re silly. I think they’re twenty years old. You know? And I tell you, I get to be.... You know I was—for example, in my own private life, I was with one person forty-one years, married to her thirty-seven years. And it ended very tragically. And I’m out in the world again, and I find that it’s absolutely amazing. The only thing I know is that I’m as vulnerable as I was at eighteen years old. You know I have to make all the same mistakes over again and think of them. And so I think these kids have all this. But they’re not going to get to be fifty years old ‘til they’re fifty. You’re going to make the same mistakes, you know. And the little bit that I can tell them.

And one of the things that’s important, I signed up for a new aspect. We have dormitories, and I signed up to be one of the faculty members that’ll speak once in a while if that happens this fall. Didn’t work out last year. One, because they had one meeting, and I had to be in Europe. And then they didn’t follow through. But they asked me if I would continue. Because in my own life

has turned out that I have some knowledge of what kind of suffering it is when there's addiction involved in life. And I can say something to these kids who may be living lives of terror in their families and stuff. Or with their siblings or whatever. Or maybe themselves. You know I was teaching a class this year, and there was a young woman who sat in front, and I said a couple of things. And then I said something once. And she turned to me and said, after class, "You said this about young people. Do you spend time with young people?" I said, "No, not right now. But I do know something about rejection, and I know about when you're very young and gifted and so on. And she said, "I thought so. Because," she said, "you know I'm a recovering alcoholic." I said, "That's wonderful." I said, "You are the most amazing kind of person in the world, because this is a challenge..." And I think I have something to say. Totally new. Totally new. Only in the last two years have I had this capability of being able to have something so.... I don't go looking for them. I'm there if anybody wants to talk. It's the one thing I can offer for addiction and so on. And I had a tough training. I don't mean my family. I mean I went to save my life, Gil.

COHEN: Mmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: And I would like to help the students. I don't know whether you were not present, I'm sure. There was a psychodrama in the student center a year ago.

COHEN: No, I didn't attend.

CHRISTIAN: And AL-ANON (Alcoholics Anonymous) and a NAR-ANON (Narcotics Anonymous) group came. And they were absolutely marvelous. And some of them were acting, and some of them were real. But I'm sure the mother who cried telling her story was a real mother with a child who's an addict, you know. I've spent time, usually twice a week, with people where it's nothing for any of us to cry openly and to tell the absolute truth about their most awful circumstances. And we get stronger every week by it, you know. And this is something I can bring to the students. But it's not anything that wasn't there in me somewhere along the way.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

CHRISTIAN: And I think sometimes I have qualities that.... I think people who want to teach who keep on and go on and on as long as I did, and persevere, that they have qualities that the students can profit from. It's not that I feel like I'm some kind of saint. I just think, this is what I do. There's something nobody—now very few people know: I was once working at Merrill Lynch. And at that time every broker that I worked for—I was like the office boy in the home office—every broker that I worked for said, "When you finish Yale, come back. You of course will come back." My father was the doctor for Merrill Lynch at that time. His major patient was Charles Merrill, the head of the company, who used to call him up and say, "Come up and talk to me." I could have had a major position at Merrill Lynch if I'd been a babbling idiot, which I'm not obviously. So I turned all that down. I also turned down a job at BBD&O in the advertising business. And went back and fought my way into the Yale Graduate School. See, I've never been brilliant. No, I've never been really highly intelligent and gotten all the awards and everything,

classed as brilliant by all the measuring standards. I am just, quite honestly, Gil, my own kind of genius, you know?

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: And I did it my way, followed things out. And I have a certain satisfaction in knowing. And now that I'm this age, it's kind of interesting to know that you know and to have that enough. It's really quite interesting. And I think I delivered that to the students. I mean dealing with these adults is really, really wonderful. I mean Baker—I graduated fourteen in Liberal Studies. One of them had a party. They invited me, you know. Just terrific stuff.

COHEN: You have a really long view of the history of the campus.

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: In Newark. Not only long, but very rounded and very deep. And a lot has happened there that's very important and that you've contributed to. I was wondering, to wind this up, if you could offer your perceptions of the various administrations of the university in Newark and the university as a whole, for the record. I think this is important because I think these administrations have had—obviously have had a profound impact on how we work, and its effect on the student population in the whole institution. To sort of relate that level with our level, so to speak. If you can perhaps deal with that. Just to start you off, I'm going to go back again into the—

[End of Tape #2]

Okay. There was a brief error on the other tape, the covering of the other tape. I guess the question was, again, dealing with...if you could give me your assessment of various administrations of the university. And starting with Mason Gross.

CHRISTIAN: Well, as I said, when I joined, Mason Gross was the president of the university, and I was invited down to meet him as a new faculty member; which, because of the complexity of the university today, I don't think it's liable to happen, although the new president may do that. He seems a very nice guy. I've met him lots of time already, which is almost amazing, you know, for the time he's been here. It was in Newark a somewhat small operation that had a lot of quality. And somewhere after the first couple of years, there began to creep, as expansion started, not necessarily even when Ed Bloustein came, maybe even before, there was always a suspicion on my part that once that nice arrangement with Mason Gross began to end, Newark was always vulnerable. As New Brunswick tried to find out what it was supposed to be, document after document had passed before my eyes, always had phrasing in it that seemed that if push came to shove, the undergraduate college at Newark could be abolished.

COHEN: Hmm!

CHRISTIAN: When I was elected to the University Senate and elected by the senate to be the senate representative to the board of trustees, I sat with the trustees and the president once every

two weeks or so. And one of the things the trustees did was buy property. So we're buying a lot of property in Camden at the time, and it was just reported out. But looking at the maps and the charts, and looking at the overall plans, it all seemed to me that New Brunswick had to come first, which is, I think, a fairly—it sounds like a psychotic problem of Newark faculty. But I mean there was language which seemed to say: We can shift things in Newark while we do this. Well, some of the decisions that came along are really important. First of all, I think, the strength of... Well, I can be honest. Jim Young seemed to me just an appointment of a provost that was convenient to New Brunswick. There are people who argue with Norman, who think Norman is distant. Norman certainly knows how to do what the provost's business is with New Brunswick. And you can't expect the provost to be your old faculty chum. Norman moved over to the provost's office and said to me, "Henry, come over and see me." And I never have felt inclined to go over and see him. On one case I would have on the grievance with Gabe Miller, but I didn't. I made my speech before the faculty instead. And got them to vote unanimously the time I spoke, and that's the most I would do. I would not speak to Norman about the grievance. I didn't want it to be on a personal level.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Because I knew he had gone to a position where I wasn't going to go up and say, Norman, you're wrong. Or, the whole thing's wrong. Fix it. Because Norman wasn't in a position to do that, no matter where he was, on Gabe Miller. But I think Norman has enough know-how and savvy and enough desire for himself, his sense of a career, to do what's good for Newark. And some of the decisions have been important. For example, the School of Nursing is a Ph.D. school now, and it's in Newark. Okay? Business is firmly established in Newark. But the time any of this comes out, it'll be okay. You know Norman said last year, "New Brunswick voted very strongly for this advisory committee to the provost. And if they have one, we'd better have one." So he called some of us, and he said bluntly, "I've called you here because I know you all, and you're all people I trust." And so he set up this advisory committee, and I guess I've been elected to it now. Although the president has made some moves that make it probably not necessary to have such a committee as far as the president is concerned. But I think Newark needs it. Because I think if I were on that committee and someone says to me, Henry, it's time Norman hears, then I will say, Norman, it's time you hear. See. But I think we have—you always have a stake in the provost, and I'll be blunt. We have a much bigger stake because of time and history and because of the ability or involvement, we have a much bigger stake with Norman Samuels that we did ever with Jim Young.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: He was a nice guy and everything. Personally, I remember.... First of all, I remember saying—and this all has to do with this, you know, we've undergone so many changes. Remember the study of the promotion process which told us we had the most complicated promotion process in the world?

COHEN: Oh, yes. Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: Okay?

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Quite credible people, too.

COHEN: You mean Rutgers as a whole.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, Rutgers as a whole. Right. So I came home with an award from Yugoslavia, and it's right there in that cabinet, this bronze disc. And I brought it to Jim Young, and I showed it to him. And he said, "That's wonderful, Henry. Now," he said, "you'd better change the nature of your research." [Laughter] And I looked at him, and I didn't say, you know, you're a ceramic engineer, what business, how do you have any right as my ultimate superior, short of the president of the university, to make that statement to me? You don't know beans about what I do. You know? So Norman is the kind who would say, "You want to persist in this Henry, it's a hard road." There are easier ways to get where you're trying to go. Well, I had so much at stake, I wasn't going to do it. And as I said, that goes back to my remark that another lousy book about Melville, and I mean of all the ones in the world, probably would have advanced me faster. But I didn't want to write one of those. See? So we have a lot more at stake. And we've had a very troubled, very troubled administration over the years.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Because we had this odd structure, you know. First of all, even getting departments when I started was a problem, you know. We got departments. Then we had finally the first real kind of symbol was Malcolm Talbott. Then we had this and that. And we've had deans; we've had trouble with deans. Well, I didn't pay much attention to Gilliland I was very fond of him in a way, and I had real rapport with his wife, you know. She was in the antique business, and I used to love her stuff at shows. I mean this is an old part of my life, you know, antiques and stuff. But when somebody said to me, you know—they had to say to him, you know, can you name the departments of the college? And he couldn't do it. I said, well, okay. And, you know, I sat there and said to him, to Blumenthal, "Professor Blumenthal, I'm on Committee Two. Committee Two is supposed to have the academic rationale to back up Committee One, which is supposed to remove the dean. Do you understand I'm an assistant professor. What am I doing here"?

COHEN: Committee Two was what?

CHRISTIAN: Committee Two was the rationale, the academic rationale, the philosophy to back up Committee One, which was the committee that acted to remove the dean.

COHEN: And that was an ad hoc committee, Committee One?

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: Set up. What was the main problem with the Gilliland?

CHRISTIAN: He wasn't running the place.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: And I felt sorry because he had just come in from a full professorship somewhere else out in wherever it was. And he had a divorce and, you know.

COHEN: I see.

CHRISTIAN: It was a hard thing. Personally, I hardly knew the man. And I said to Henry, "Henry, you know.." I did not call him Professor Blumenthal at this time. And I said, "If you want me to do that, be on this committee, I will do it because I believe in you. And I believe in doing things that are right. But," I said— And he said, "You know what your problem is. You're absolutely right, you're totally vulnerable." When I complained to him once that I hadn't gotten my tenure, he said, "Patience." That's all he said. And when I got the tenure, he wrote me a note saying, Wasn't it worth waiting for so you got it your way? Now you owe nobody anything. And that's the way Henry Blumenthal was. So it came to another time, and Richard Robey wanted the best for the college and wanted the best for himself. And the phone rang, and I recognized the voice on the other end. And the voice on the other end of the phone said, "One day..." I was chair of English. Richard was a full professor in my department as well as dean.

COHEN: Hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: I recognized the voice on the other end. I don't choose to tell you, but I will. And this voice said, "Henry?" And I said, "Yes." And the other voice said, "Henry, we need you." And I said, "Blank, I did this once before. I don't want to do it again."

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: And he said, "Henry, you have to do it again." Well, I think probably—you can leave this on the tape or take it off sometime.

COHEN: Well, it's up to you.

CHRISTIAN: It's not a secret.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Here's the way it went: When Richard Robey came, Schleter [sp] came up from New Brunswick and introduced him. And passed a document around that was Richard Robey, the first time we saw him. I looked at this document and looked out at the man down there, and said, "My God! That's my bursary boy at Yale!"

COHEN: That's your—

CHRISTIAN: Bursary boy, my scholarship student at Yale.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: Who while I worked for a professor at Yale, grading a course; although I was not a graduate student at Yale, he wanted me because I was a teacher outside of the system. Because he said, “Graduate students do their graduate work first and grade papers second. You’re a professional teacher. I want you to grade this large American Studies course.” Richard Robey was a scholarship student, and I used to leave him notes in the office. And he would go to the library and bring me books.

COHEN: Right.

CHRISTIAN: When he was recommended for the grant to take administrative study as a faculty member to go into university administration, it was my friend who recommended him for that. He went to Columbia. He did the Columbia up against the wall. He communicated between the students and the faculty as an assistant dean. And that’s where he got his stature. But, Gil, he didn’t have any publications to speak of. And he was a full professor in the department. So I said, “Well he’s the dean. So he’s the dean.” So we had a chat once or twice. And then Richard and I really had our tough outs where we didn’t agree on a number of things, and it got worse and worse. So when this voice said, “We need you again, Henry,” I was in a terrible position because, you know, I had accepted Richard. I didn’t accept what he did once he was there for a while. So bottom line—and this is probably a kind of history you’ll have to know—one day there was a meeting of this committee. I know it was in Conklin Hall.

COHEN: This was Committee One?

CHRISTIAN: Well, there was only Committee One this time; there was no Committee Two this time. There was a Committee One. Some of the people...I can tell you some of the people on it. They were important people: Norman Washburn was one of the persons. Norman’s dead now. There were other people there, people that are long term there. I think Charlie Pine was there. Charlie Pine was there both times. Charlie and I were.... We’re not proud of this, but I think Charlie feels the same way I did. You know Charlie. He’d say, “It had to be done.”

COHEN: This was the committee constituted for removal of the dean.

CHRISTIAN: Right. That’s right. And I got a phone call to go to the dean’s office. And Richard was sitting in the dean’s office, and he said to me, “Henry, you’re going to a meeting in Conklin Hall.” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Ask them what accommodation is necessary.” So now here, you understand this is the youngster a couple of years behind me at Yale, that used to do errands for me because it was part of his job. I didn’t think I was his boss.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: This is what his job was.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: So I went over to the committee, and I didn't say anything until they finished their discussion that was going on, and I entered into it. And at the end, I said, "Richard called me into the office before I came here. And I waited 'til we had this discussion because I didn't want to influence the discussion. But Richard said, 'What accommodation is there?'" And they said, "No." And I went back, and I went into the office, and I walked right past Sally I suppose at that time, or whoever was there, and went in and just looked at him, and said, "They say there is no accommodation possible, Richard."

COHEN: What was the main complaint with Robey? What was the problem?

CHRISTIAN: Shifting faculty moneys from here to there, advancing people who people didn't think should be advanced, some underhanded stuff. And a little bit of coziness with some faculty, personal coziness, that turned out to be enemy of other faculty members.

COHEN: I see.

CHRISTIAN: Okay? So there was a real breakdown. There was some bad feeling: somewhere along the line...I can't speak for my department, but I know in the college there was some bad feeling about Bruce. I wrote a letter to Bruce saying—

COHEN: About hiring of Bruce?

CHRISTIAN: About the hiring. Professor Franklin has a checkered career. The way you are carrying this forward can only add to that. He doesn't deserve another problem. That letter might exist somewhere in the faculty files, in the dean's office files. That's what I said to Richard Robey. You're appointment of him is not orderly, and it's not going to wash in the long run. There are people who are going to be angry about it forever. And it seems the university went on justifying—I mean Jim Young looked like a fool in the newspaper. Never put Jim Young against Bruce. Because Jim said, "I think Professor Franklin's learned his lesson." Bruce said, "I didn't learn any lesson. There's no lesson to learn. I'm right." You know. And so things like that, you see. Now Richard was in the middle of this. Okay. So Richard gets removed as dean. And this is something you have to know because this is something nobody else will tell you. They may not remember in these details. Richard then said, "According to the university regulations, I'm a full professor. But I've never been approved by the section, the English Section." So the English Section met in New Brunswick in their regular time in December. And Richard appeared. I can remember Dan Howard saying, "Professor Robey has a statement to make to the room. You need this for history; it's not going to ever surface again. And Richard addressed them and said, "I'm a full professor by the fact that I was dean of the college. I'm no longer dean, but I've never been except—I've never been voted into the section as a professor of English."

COHEN: Richard's saying.

CHRISTIAN: Richard's saying this.

COHEN: About himself.

CHRISTIAN: “I’d like to be—“

COHEN: About himself.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, yes. “I’d like to be accepted.” And he said, “I’d like to be accepted in the English Section. My degree is in American Studies from Yale University. But after all, the chair of the English Department at this moment doesn’t have a Ph.D. in English.” And there was this icy wind that just drifted through that room, in which everybody, even my enemies in New Brunswick—I didn’t know how many friends I had for a long time—said, “He can make any statement he wants. But he just attacked the chairman of the English Department in Newark, whose tenure we voted, and he’s asking for the same vote.” And he had to.... And whatever they knew in New Brunswick, it almost was as if Richard—he took a step too far. And he said, “I’ll leave the room now, and you can vote.” He left the room, and we had a paper ballot, and Richard was not voted tenure by the English Section on New Brunswick.

COHEN: On the English Section.

CHRISTIAN: So he came back in the room again. Howard looked at him and said, “Professor Robey, we have not—we have voted. We have not voted your membership. You did not get a majority of votes.”

COHEN: Oh, I thought he had.

CHRISTIAN: He had tenure, but he didn’t have it in the English Section, you see.

COHEN: Mmm. He had tenure in the university.

CHRISTIAN: Yes. So that was the ploy. He was trying to get accepted.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Now we have this problem: He’s a full professor, not accepted by the section, and has to enter the English Department to teach a course in the department that I am the chair of.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Okay? So anyway, he said.... He went to the administration and said, “I want American Studies.” And they said, “Henry developed it, Henry saw it through New Brunswick, Henry has been running it while he is chair of the English Department. It’s too much for him to do. But you’re asking to take away Henry’s creation.” And they said, “You can have it.” So Richard became the head of American Studies in Newark, which was my baby. From that moment on, Gil, I hardly ever touched it. That’s why Hayward has run it ever since because I had other duties and stuff. But Richard came to me in my office on the fifth floor, and said, “I’d like to speak to you.” I said, “Sit down.” And he said, “You know this is going on. I’m going to be here. We’re going to be in this position.” I said, “Richard, what happened is over. Between us

there is nothing. You do your work, I'll do mine." And he said, "I'm very grateful for that." And I said, "I can understand why you didn't want to work under me. I understand it. So let it go." And that's exactly what happened; that's the whole story. And then Richard was dead soon after that. But that's exactly what happened. And American Studies might have.... You know it should be flourishing now with all this interdisciplinary attention and stuff. Hayward's into computers. I left it alone. I figured you guys, Richard needed something. I smarted a little bit. But I had this big department to run. And as I say, over the course of time, eight or nine of those tenures on the floor I saw through, sometimes more than once. Stuart Hershberg went up three times and had a grievance as well. We got him through.

COHEN: Oh.

CHRISTIAN: So that's it. And Stuart—I was responsible for the grievance. Norman knows that I wrote a letter saying if I'm asked to testify, I will have to say that I asked the faculty of the department to make a decision without a significant letter being present in the file. That's the truth. And Norman knew I'd tell the truth. The grievance went right down the drain at that point because they knew that, you know, Henry is not going to lie. He's not going to lie for anybody. So that's it.

COHEN: Going back a bit, remarks about Henry Blumenthal...

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: ...the tenure as dean,,,

CHRISTIAN: Yes, yes. He was a great man. He was a great man. He's like everybody else though. He was the beginning of that mystique of the History Department, which even when they're wrong, nobody says they're wrong. [Laughter] Nobody believes they're wrong. You know what they did? They had so much infighting that they said, We're destroying ourselves like the English Department. So let's shut up and tell everybody we're magnificent. And they are. Now Warren is good, Taris is good, they're all good, you know. But they're no better in the long run than the rest of us. But they've got this PR going that they are *the* superior department. And they keep their linen in the washing machine. Nobody sees the laundry over there. I know because I used to go over, and they'd sit and laugh and say, "Henry, what the hell are you doing over there with those nuts? You belong with the History Department." You're more a historian than you are anything else. Now, I don't know that they ever really would have taken me. But, I mean, when Jonathan Loory [sp] was there and everything... See, I could talk to them about interdisciplinary approaches and history, you see. Whereas my colleagues didn't often talk to them. So there was a whole world over there. So that's number one. Number two.... Go back. What was your question?

COHEN: Well, just your assessment of Henry Blumenthal tenure...

CHRISTIAN: Yes. Okay, okay. So he started that, and they knew how to take care of themselves, the History Department and so on. Another department that got taken care of very nicely was Gil Panson's ...

COHEN: He was Henry Blumenthal's successor.

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: He was the acting dean for a year.

CHRISTIAN: Right. Okay. He sought to— He sought to his people. And I could fault Gil a little. He could have fought harder about the impropriety of Bruce's appointment. He could have made it right. But... And of course I went public, you know. I went public in the *Observer*. And then I got slapped on the wrist by—who became president of Cincinnati?

COHEN: Winkler?

CHRISTIAN: Henry Winkler.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Winkler and I sat together lots of times with the president and the board of trustees and stuff, you know. But Henry wrote me a nasty letter and said I was not collegial. And I said to him, "Henry, I'm talking about the facts." I also wrote a letter, you have to know this, I wrote a letter to Bloustein complaining about the whole thing once Bruce was appointed. Which started probably trouble that I shouldn't have started. Because Bruce came to me and said, "You know, I looked forward to this appointment. And now I find out it's not at all pleasant." And I said, "You're here. You know you've heard the last of it." But Bruce got under my skin a couple of times. And we had some real battles over points. I mean where... Bruce is a very talented person. That does not allow him to lie. When Bruce wants something, he doesn't stop. And he cuts a lot of corners. And he can't do that. Nobody can if you're running the show because the people who know corners are being cut then come to you and want corners cut for them, you know, or there's bad feeling. You've got to stop it. And I can remember we were having a meeting. A graduate course was coming up. I said, "I am so agitated we're going to take a half hour, and this meeting's going to continue." And I sent the secretary down to tell my graduate class it wasn't going to meet that day. And we met interminably until we got it straightened out.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: And now we have, you know, people are going to call me up, Gil, and say we need a chair for the English Department, and I've learned to say no. I have another life now. I have other projects.

COHEN: Oh, that's not settled for this coming year?

CHRISTIAN: No, because Virginia left and became associate dean. And the latest letter I got yesterday says, Gabe will be acting chair until December, when an election will be held. I don't know why Gabe is acting chair 'til December. I mean I have nothing against Gabe, but he hasn't got a lot of experience in running things, you know. And he's just come off, oh, this terrible—

how that man survived, I don't know. Except that people like me kept saying, you know, you've got to hang in there because I believe in you.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: See, Gabe's a Brown graduate. Gabe's one of my people, you know.

COHEN: Let me see, your chairmanship, the last chairmanship, ended again in—

CHRISTIAN: When I took Pat's place, eighty-seven to eighty-eight.

COHEN: Eighty-eight. And then Virginia took over.

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: That's right.

CHRISTIAN: You know what happened? I agreed to be chair for Pat in June. And my son Peter died in July. Nobody thought I was going to make it, you know. And it saved my life because I had something to do.

COHEN: Had something to do, yes, yes.

CHRISTIAN: I had just enough pressure to take my mind off of it all.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: And I've had this uncanny thing, you know. When the dean, when Don Stein was leaving me messages every couple of hours about heading the Liberal Studies—to give you on other little tidbit—I finally went to Charles Russell and said, “Charles, I've known you a long time. Go to Don Stein and say, look, it's very simple. Henry's wife is an alcoholic. She's dying in the hospital. He can't answer you until this is over. And he doesn't want to answer you in the emotional situation.” So Don waited. Don waited because whatever happened about Nina, I was on a committee which said to Don, Nina's resigned. Whatever happened, happened. We think it's harsh, some of your treatment of her, but we're meeting with you to say she's resigned, so she can't be head anymore. You will never bring this up again. This is over now. Nina's career is whitewashed, just stopped right there. This never happened. And you'll never refer to it again. And we committee members.... And Yale Ferguson said, “There's one person in this room who can do this job.” There were more, but Yale meant me. Don needed me because he needed somebody that the faculty trusted. Because having gotten rid of Nina, he had to have somebody. He was responsible for her leaving. So if this program flopped, it was going to be his fault. And he needed somebody that the faculty knew, that the faculty trusted. So I saved his neck, I think, in that way.

COHEN: So you were Nina's successor.

CHRISTIAN: Yes.

COHEN: In the MLS program, Master of Liberal Studies.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, yes. But I mean it gives me freedom, it gives me work, it lets me deal with students that are wildly interdisciplinary, thinking of all kinds of things and bringing all kinds of backgrounds. I mean you heard me say on the phone earlier, I mean I can't imagine that this woman that I was dealing with takes her laptop computer to France and tells the people building the damned tunnel why they ran out of money in this segment or that. Couldn't believe... And she does this for, you know, like a World Trade Center and stuff. And she's just this charming little woman, you know, who's happy and gay and talking about the Japanese internment. And all of a sudden she's dealing with these gigantic construction projects. I mean you can't imagine her in a hardhat. She says, "I have an old car because I go a lot of places where crap is falling all over."

COHEN: She's a student in one of these courses?

CHRISTIAN: She's finished. She just got her degree in Liberal Studies.

COHEN: Right. Yes, yes.

CHRISTIAN: Just terrific. And she started this kind of—this business of her own when such businesses didn't really exist. Now it's a big deal. But she's in there, you know. She makes a fortune.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: So this has been absolutely wonderful. So that's really basically the story. There are a couple of others. But—

[Break in recording]

COHEN: We're back.

CHRISTIAN: Okay. Winkler did finally make his statement in answer to my letter to Bloustein. There were evidently rules of the university that were relatively new, that not all of the administrators thoroughly understood. That means the rules were broken. But it was okay to break them. So, you see, it wasn't so much Bruce. It's that if you break the rules for one person, everybody.... And, you know, I have this feeling grievances were going to start to be fairly common. Because dealing with the system, you knew how many loopholes.

COHEN: You mean breaking the rules in what way did you mean?

CHRISTIAN: I mean if you didn't understand how to prepare a promotion package, then you were giving even a person who didn't deserve promotion a chance.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Michael Jaye. You can talk to Michael if you want to. Michael Jaye's grievance is a very interesting one. There was manipulation of the packages, purposeful manipulation. That's what he wanted. That's not saying Michael isn't talented. But just saying that the procedural impropriety is no way to decide that you want this person.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: An interesting thing, also in— You'll hear people talk about the department. Sometimes other people being interviewed will talk about the English Department. It's certainly clear that it's very strange that the English Department consists of people who have had grievances and lost. I had two grievances; I lost both of them. That's because I ran them myself. A lot of the department's responsible to me. Michael had a grievance. Several people in the department won grievances. Pat Gartenburg [sp] won a grievance. The department is made up of staunch people who believe in doing their job despite all the crap around. And one of the grievances.... And Gabe is the last example. You've got to know that when you go through as much as Gabe, but even one grievance, you have to be a dedicated person to keep doing your job, but you've got to have an administration that really can be trusted in so many different ways because you don't trust anybody. What an interesting department, that most of them had to fight their way and wanted to. And it isn't because when you look at their publications, they couldn't have jobs elsewhere. Well, there are reasons to stay. But this is extremely interesting. It's a tough department in that way, very tough. Very tough.

So looking at it, a very checkered career, but some of the decisions lately have put Newark in place. One of the things about management and school business and so on, and changing over, moving here and there, it begins to bring up the old symbol that the professional schools in Newark are okay. But if we have to get rid of something, what about the undergraduate college, you know? Okay? And, see, that lends itself, in its way, to a question I know you're going to ask me about the library.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: There are two things about the library as far as I'm concerned. One, I did not use the library in Newark after I was there a couple of years because all of my work was at Princeton, and I had access to everything that Princeton had. And I was at Princeton twice a week. I hardly had a lot of time for library work the rest of the week. You know what I mean? So most of it went on there. When I started to use the library, I always found it extremely interesting, interesting collections. I came home from Yugoslavia in 1981 with a statement from a person who was just saying goodbye to me: That that stuff you worked on that was a translation of Cardell's *Communist Student Torture Story*, tortured by King Alexander, I think you ought to take a look. I think Adamic also brought back as a model this text that was printed in German and cited some of the earlier Yugoslav communists who were tortured. I had a title. I gave it to the library. Two and a half weeks later, from Duke University, from their Rare Book Department, came a Xerox of every page of that book. I didn't even have to be able to read German to page through and just look at the captions and the pictures to know that what I was

dealing with was what you call a standard communist torture story with names inserted according to where it was fit. And this is, of course, the article for which I won the prize and all the rest of the university was named after. Speaking of that, they just unnamed the university. They took Cardell's name off of it because he's the leading theoretician—he was—of Yugoslav communism, and they're not communists anymore. Talk about rewriting history! Christ, by the minute they rewrite history. And I just gave them a festschrift article which slapped their wrists, which said, you know, you can make believe you didn't live the last twenty-five years, but you did.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: And I said, "You know what you're doing? You're taking your younger scholars and now you're going to pick on them for being caught in midstream? Don't destroy them because they've got Western methods, and they're the only thing that's going to save you, you know." I think they'll publish it. My reputation is strong enough that they'll publish that festschrift if they're getting anywhere.

COHEN: Again with the library, what experiences have you had with services in the library, interlibrary loan, references, circulation?

CHRISTIAN: I think it's all been fine for me. Fine for me. I'm not the best faculty member about returning books and so on. But I feel guilty about that. I think I ought to get punished for it. But the library has never.... As I say, using Princeton all the time, the library in Newark has not failed me. I don't have a major gripe of any kind.

COHEN: I just have a couple of wind-up questions.

[Break in recording]

Okay. Just as a wrap-up question, I would like to...is there anything that we have talked about that you'd like to go back to, elaborate on, footnote, comment?

CHRISTIAN: No, I think it's all one piece. But in talking about looking over the years and so on, it reminds me that about two years ago, I was on the committee in New Brunswick to determine the nature of the Rutgers University undergraduate in the year 2010.

COHEN: Hmm! That's interesting.

CHRISTIAN: And this was a proposal of Ed Bloustein's. And the report was filed and so on. McCormick was the head of the committee—the young McCormick, who's now, I guess, dean of the college down there, isn't he?

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: Yes. Whatever. Anyway. And so I don't know what will happen to this report, but it was extremely interesting. There was— We had deans. Amy what's-her-name, who's the head

of the University College in New Brunswick, was on the committee. And several others. It was a high-powered committee. And it was clear that there was a move or a desire to have at least a part of the university very elitist. But that was understandable because we needed to have outstanding students and needed to recruit outstanding students, you know, to... But a lot of us were a little suspicious of the fact that there seemed to be a kind of spillover from the attitude that graduate education was so terribly important. Now, the new president has of course said something very positive about undergraduate education. But I could understand honors courses and getting the good students, because we're not getting the best students in New Jersey. They're going to Harvard and stuff. They're going to, you know, UCLA, Stanford, Ohio State. They're so desperate to get out of the state, most of them, you know.

But it's very clear that another thing was going on at the same time. And that was that there was a mission for Newark which Newark was not going to give up, and that was that they would always be seeking students who needed some upgrading, and they would always be seeking, you know, to have a representation in Newark of the students who needed the chance to go to college. In other words, the way Newark always was, you know. And the way Newark was when people used to talk about it in glorified terms about nothing but hardworking immigrant children, you know. Going to college with sound families behind them. You used to hear a lot about that in the very early days of Newark, even before I came, you know, the Newark that was there. But there's some mission from Newark which is unique and as good as anything that's going on in New Brunswick. And we have those things.

The other thing that was interesting was we talked about the nature of the student body in Newark being a working student body. And we had this neat little thing that happened, you know. When the English Department combined with University College into one faculty, some of us promised automatically to teach at University College, teach those night courses. And some people who have done it were unhappy. They didn't like University College student body. They didn't think it was sound, you know. I didn't have the slightest concern because I knew that the students were way smarter than the faculty. I knew that the minute the undergraduate day student understood that he could take his English courses at six-thirty or at seven-thirty or five-thirty, and in some of his other courses he might switch his work to morning and go in the afternoon and evening. But this gave the students... And of course that's exactly what happened. The students started changing the registration pattern. It had nothing to do with the faculty. That was another thing that I said, and it was quite true: The New Brunswick people said you're probably right. I said, "You're projecting a student body that is going to be closer to the student body that Newark has had for years than you can imagine right now. You're not going to have with husband and wife, families, both working, and the costs of education. We're going to have a lot of people who are going to be working part time.

COHEN: Sure.

CHRISTIAN: You have a student body right now that's working part time, and you probably don't know how many in New Brunswick.

COHEN: In New Brunswick, yes.

CHRISTIAN: So you're going to be more like Newark has been and will continue to be, as we turn over in this century. And you'll have to make all these accommodations. And you'll have to understand. And you'll have to be presenting not the ideal campus, but the place where the working person finds a reason to be educated as well.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: In addition to. And that goes back to what I said earlier about the hard sell of the Industrial Revolution coming up to finance capitalism. We're all finance capitalists now. We don't even care what the hell the product is. No matter whether we worked for it or it's our product, we're all on the upper level. We're all aiming toward to Boesky computer screen, you know, where I've got it all working, and I just push the buttons, and none of it turns into greenbacks. We never see them. We just buy and sell. Best example of this is the home shopping club. You know, a woman who sits at home—a man, too, as well, but we're liable to think of the woman more doing the home shopping club than the man—who sits there and says, Gee, I always wanted one of those. And sees it with the hard sell. When you go into the shop where one of those is for sale all the time, whether it be the department store or something, and you stand among the other customers, the woman or man who can't afford it, looks at the other customers and says, I can't afford that. You know I really know I can't afford that. These people can afford it, but I can't. But in the isolation of that television screen, the world is yours.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: There's not the peer pressure of those that you know have more money than you at the moment, who are buying the nightgown, the washing machine, or something. This goes all the way back to something that I wrote which I got praised for terrifically but they never published it. For Harper's Magazine I wrote an article in 1957 called "Television and the Money Tree." And it was about the game shows in which you won the prize by guessing the price: The Price Is Right and things like that. You know those?

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: And I said—I said this—people who can't afford the things sit at home and watch other people that are no brighter than they, and they say, I know that washing machine costs so-and-so. And they get it right on the dime, you know. And you say, Why can't I be on the program and win it?

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: I should be on the program. He's no— They should.... And this kind of productivity, this kind of other kind of advertising, you know, is extremely dangerous. And so we have this hard sell, the Industrial Revolution. And there's got to be a reason to go to school. And we have to maintain by faculty decision and department decision the right to keep screaming at the student: There's something in you called your mind, your soul, your emotional base. And you need us. You can't be deluded by what is racked up on the screen.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

CHRISTIAN: And you know it's a funny thing. You go around Europe—I've been a long time in Europe. I was in England we ate cold beets and cabbage every day, seven days a week for seven months during the austerity program of '48. And I remember going back in '58 and saying, "My God! There's so many automobiles."

COHEN: You studied in England?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, before I went to Yale. I was at the King's School in Peterborough and the Lee School in Cambridge. I can remember going to Denmark. And I can remember going back to Denmark and saying—and I can remember Carrie, my daughter, coming home from London where she's going to live, two days ago and saying to me, "My God! Daddy, they're so Americanized." Once she got into the business of looking for a house with her husband and the children to live in and schools for the kids to go to, and she has an international experience. She lived in a foreign country with the whole family. We all know that people who speak other languages go to the bathroom, buy food, that their money's real, you know. [Laughter] Their airplanes fly. Sometimes you watch travelers the first time in Europe. You can't imagine it. They can't believe it. In Paris that's real people, you know? Well, we have to be very careful that this ultimate not manipulation of goods, but manipulation of money isn't the final hard sell that brings us completely away from being human beings.

COHEN: Okay. Finally—

CHRISTIAN: Excuse me. What the hell? Just leave it.

[Break in recording]

COHEN: One final general question then that's it. Is there anything we haven't touched on which you would like to address?

CHRISTIAN: Well, I think it's a lot better school than everybody thinks. And I think we've put up with an awful lot of lack of facilities that we deserve. And that sounds like sour grapes. But it's certainly true. I think it's partly—at the beginning people in Newark fought for their principles and for their rights to give the students an education. I told you I eat in the student cafeteria, where the students eat. But we should have had a faculty dining room a long time ago—where we could have—where some of the very brightest of us could have exchanged ideas and maybe changed the nature of that campus and the thinking that was going on there. Where, you know—there was not that. It's not that I want a campus school.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: I don't need a campus school. The same reason I gave up secondary education. Somebody said to me one day, "You know, Henry, the way you're going..." Although typically I had an argument with my headmaster in which he was glad to see me go finally. But they said, "The way you're going, two, three more years, you'll have your own school." [Laughter] And I

thought, that's exactly what I need. Sunday afternoons with the parents, my wife pouring tea. You know I said, my God! I can't do that. I've got to get out of here. And also bright as those kids were, I knew that there was something missing in me, and that was research. I was writing fiction like crazy at the time during my free periods because I needed to keep—to dig deeper. And it wasn't that the students weren't bright. It's just that certain levels you couldn't go to even with them, you know? Because they needed basics, at first. I mean, you know, Maynard Mack, one of the most famous Yale professors of Shakespeare—his son was in my class...his son teaches somewhere. But then I've had a lot of them. I had a funny class. I had classmates, you know, Fred Graham, the Supreme Court reporter for CBS. He's a classmate of mine. Dick Verleriani [sp], is a classmate of mine. Jonathan Bush, the president's brother who does everything though you never see him or hear about him, is a classmate of mine.

COHEN: Is that right!

CHRISTIAN: He's the Bush that nobody discovers. Lufton Generette Donaldson, the upstart years ago on the market in New York, brokerage house, yes, another of my classmates. Tom Enders, the ambassador. They're all my classmates. Lowell Weicker's my classmate. Mack Ruckley [sp] of North Carolina is my classmate. Yes, I've got a distinguished class. Wonderful guys. And I'm slowly able to cycle back and be with the Ivy League people.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CHRISTIAN: You know I spent my life, comments like this, as Michael Jaye would say, Every time you come down the hall, it looks like it's 1953. And people say, God, you're an awful nice person for being an Ivy Leaguer. [Laughter] Except the Ivy Leaguers, who always said, "I didn't know you were from the Ivy League." Because I wasn't like that. And then that the student who said, "Well, Mr. Christian, this isn't the Ivy League."

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CHRISTIAN: I said but your writing can be as good as theirs.

COHEN: Of course.

CHRISTIAN: There's nothing wrong with you. You're just not there. I'm here. And I think that's what's important. So we might have had a better campus faster. And I think probably the battle will go on. But I think we're in much better shape now.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: After Norman, who knows? After some of these changes. Once you emphasize the undergraduate college again all over the state, three campuses, then there's going to be a question about what do we do with the resources? Undergraduate college in Newark needs resources. Undergraduate college in Camden needs resources. Lawrence is going to sit there and say, Hell, I've not the resources for three undergraduate campuses—equally at least or by proportion, you know. Somebody's going to get it. Funny, you know, I started on the campus

walking along the street saying in Newark, “Hi, Marvin.” And then all of a sudden Marvin ended up running my life. Marvin Greenberg. Somebody said at a meeting about that undergraduate— Well, of course, we’ll have to see. And we’re going to hear from Marvin Greenberg. And I said, “Let’s not hear from Marvin. Let’s tell Marvin.” I’m tired of hearing from Marvin. I’m tired of planning and saying, This is good education. This is good pedagogically. This is important for the student. And then having Marvin come in and tell us we can’t do it. Let’s tell Marvin he’s got to move his money somewhere else, in a different way.” Well, of course, with the new president and everything, I mean that’s all...Marvin’s gone, everybody’s gone, you know. And I don’t know whether that’s good or bad actually.

But you need a sense of history. You can start over with new things, but you know there’s a... Here’s a story: In Jersey City my parents were registered Democrats because it was much easier to be a registered Democrat than anything else since nobody bothered you. And every time an election came, the ward leader came around and rang the bell, and said, “You know there’s an election coming up.” And my father or my mother would say, “Yes. And don’t worry. We’re going to vote as we always have.” And that’s fine, you know. And they voted Republican. [Laughter] My grandfather was a Republican, my Italian immigrant grandfather was a Republican. Talk about an aristocrat, a poor aristocrat, you know. So in that way, you know, you can’t really tell much about it. But there’s inertia to overcome. All those people that made decisions that may have been hard to change to meet Lawrence’s agreements. Fine. But we’re not gone. I’m not gone. I know what Lawrence doesn’t know. I know when Lawrence wants this, whether in my gut it’s going to work or not, with what you call the stuff we still have to clean up. The gutters that have to be emptied so the rain will come down the downspout instead of over the edge where the leaves are still collected. With the kind of history.... This is not to knock. I think it’s fine. I think it’s necessary to make these changes. But you don’t change everything.

COHEN: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: You don’t change in government the Civil Service. And they’re the ones who have the bad habits. You change parties, you change the presidency to a different party. The Civil Service stays. And if a civil servant is not a civil servant first, then you’ve got problems.

COHEN: Dr. Christian, thank you very, very much.

[End of Tape #3]

-----[End of Interview]-----

Reviewed and edited by Catherine Carey 11/27/2012

