

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

An Interview with

EDWARD HUBERMAN

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

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INTERVIEW: Edward Huberman

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GILBERT COHEN: ...1990. I am meeting with Dr. Edward Huberman, who was professor of English at Rutgers-Newark between 1947 and 1980. I'm meeting with him at his home in Maplewood. And we can start off with...we talked about the poetry readings which you were very much involved in. And when did it get started?

EDWARD HUBERMAN: The Poetry Reading Contest was started about eight years before 1947 when I first arrived at Rutgers. It was primarily the work of Professor Madison Bates, who turned it over to me as soon as I came to Rutgers. And with his help for the first few years, it developed and grew and prospered for a good many years at the university, making the University better known to high school students all over the State of New Jersey.

COHEN: How was it organized, and what was the name of it?

HUBERMAN: At first it was nominally under the auspices of the English Club, an undergraduate group of students interested in English language and literature. They worked very closely with Professor Bates and produced a little printed program each year for the contest. The contest involved high school students, one from each school that wanted to participate from any part of the State of New Jersey. They came together in Newark on a particular day, usually a Saturday morning, to read poems. Not poems that they had written, but poems of good quality from a long, long list that had been prepared at the college by Professor Bates and others and constantly changed during the years, so that many years later it was hardly recognized as the same list. But tried to keep up with what was interesting and good poetry for reading. The students read in competition. The judges were at some points members of the English Club. Later on they were principally well-known poets or professors of English from other universities, an occasional high school English teacher or an editor or a librarian or just a housewife who was very interested in poetry. The number of students participating varied from about 30 or so in 1947 to as high as a hundred some years later, until the contest itself was abandoned at Rutgers-Newark and the procedure turned over to Kean College of New Jersey.

COHEN: What year was that?

HUBERMAN: I can't recall offhand. It could have been about 1968 or seventy. It can be checked.

COHEN: I was wondering.

HUBERMAN: It can be checked. And at Kean it has received the enthusiastic attention of the English and the Drama Departments. They have generally followed the format they inherited from Rutgers-Newark, and embellished it somewhat with a variety of prizes and some sculpture

that was made for the annual trophy and so on. Changed a few details, but basically it's the same contest.

COHEN: What were the—what was the old Rector Street campus like in those days?

HUBERMAN: The old Rector Street campus still smelled of beer in the early days. The building itself had been well reorganized to serve the needs of the various departments of the college. For a while the college either rented or bought space across the street from 40 Rector Street, the old Ballantine Brewery. That space housed some faculty offices, occasionally used as classrooms, and the office of the dean of students, Dean Edwin Durand.

COHEN: What role did you and your colleagues play in the development of the new campus?

HUBERMAN: There were committees. We were interested and enthusiastic about the idea of moving, chiefly because we were desperately in need of more space, which the new campus offered and seemed to be able to provide, at least for a period. I do recall when the site of the new campus was just a kind of a torn-up vacant lot with a lot of rubbish on it. And one brisk day the cornerstone was laid for the new campus with lots of people present and much hoopla.

COHEN: Were there any alternatives that were considered at that time for the Newark site that you're aware of?

HUBERMAN: Well, I think that I had heard at that time that Newark was renting fifty-one different buildings in different parts of the city, that the college was running so many buildings. And the idea of bringing them all together was so attractive that when this site became available, I don't think it took long to agree to go after it. There were some problems. It wasn't altogether easy to acquire the site. I don't have the details. Somebody else will.

COHEN: When a new campus like this is in development, there must have been a—well, a program document drawn up, I believe there was a planning document. Did you see a new vision emerging from this development as a result of the move to a really major area of the new campus? that was to ultimately move to the main area of the new campus?

HUBERMAN: Well, we could all hope these things. But we had, I was going to say, suffered. We had lived through many years of having to be considered by Rutgers in New Brunswick as the sort of younger sister up there in Newark. That any chance we had to develop into something substantial, even if only by way of real estate, was considered welcome.

COHEN: Now, understand that there really was a second phase of development in the early seventies, maybe seventy-three, seventy-four, and during that period when Horace dePodwin was the acting provost there, he made a statement to the board of governors which received quite a bit of publicity. Do you recall that episode and what impact it had on the impetus for development?

HUBERMAN: Only vaguely, so vaguely indeed, that I really ought not to comment on that. I just don't remember enough. But I do recall that there was excitement after dePodwin's statement.

COHEN: Uh-huh. Okay. Mundane things like—well, not so mundane—what effect did parking problems and crime have on the recruitment of students and faculty during those early years?

HUBERMAN: During those early years, I never thought of crime. I would work late in my office before the new campus went up. In my office on James Street. And go to make the last train out of the Lackawanna station and think nothing of it. But as the years went by, I noticed that at first just one or two of my colleagues, later more, were quite concerned about appearing on the streets alone, and wouldn't stay late, and left during daytime hours. But that didn't bother me until very late in my career. And then it still didn't bother me, although I was mugged once on University Avenue between the college and the Lackawanna station.

COHEN: What effect did this have on the recruitment of faculty?

HUBERMAN: I would suppose that a potential faculty member would consider it as—would think of it as something to be considered. However, you're now in a period when faculty posts were not too often open, and a job was a job.

COHEN: Sixties, were talking about, seventies.

HUBERMAN: Yes, yes.

COHEN: Late sixties and seventies.

HUBERMAN: It was not the easiest thing to find a location.

COHEN: So you don't think it...or you're saying that it basically didn't affect—adversely affect—on recruitment? In your judgment.

HUBERMAN: It's hard to say. I know that no potential faculty member I ever interviewed—and I interviewed a great many during my career—ever expressed any concern about that.

COHEN: How about student recruitment?

HUBERMAN: Well, I suppose that students from... so-called protected neighborhoods in the suburbs might have given it a second thought. Although as I recall, there were always a goodly number of suburban students at Rutgers-Newark. And the university did at one point begin to provide some protection by way of a bus that made the rounds of the railroad and bus stations and offered some assistance to those that were worried. And the police department of the university began to grow.

COHEN: When you consider it a significant development, the development of the university police?

HUBERMAN: I was a little surprised to see any police on the university campus. I hadn't been used to that. And when it happened, I thought it was a strange development. But later I saw that they seemed to have a function to perform.

COHEN: Another major campus development was all the business about Smith Hall and the...

HUBERMAN: The cancer scare?

COHEN: The cancer scare. And I wondered what, you know—what your feelings are about particularly the reports that came out.

HUBERMAN: Certainly the reports were conflicting.

COHEN: Yes.

HUBERMAN: There were some faculty members who were very vocal on the subject. When I had a class in Smith Hall, I tried to be careful. I don't say I went so far as to hold my nose when I went into the building and while I was there. But when I didn't have a class there, I made a point of not entering during the time that there were alleged problems there. I think that that was probably the feeling of a great many of my colleagues. The ones who worked in Smith Hall had a more serious problem.

COHEN: And this is a lot more—yes. Still very controversial. There's a lot more I guess we could talk about in terms of campus concerns. Do you have any sort of overall estimate of how this stacks up as an urban campus from the point of view of design and accessibility, let's say, than to other urban campuses that you've been to?

HUBERMAN: I've seen a few other urban campuses in various parts of the country. And I think that what has developed at Newark is, in relation to the others, more than adequate. It's probably better than most and not as good as some.

COHEN: Another major topic is, of course, as far the areas concerned with the Newark riots in 1967, which was a major transitional year for the campus construction. I was in the library at the time, and we moved to the new campus in July 1967, the Dana Library. What, in your estimate, what was the effect of the Newark riots on the future development of the campus?

HUBERMAN: On the what?

COHEN: On the future development of the campus—students, faculty?

HUBERMAN: Well, certainly the riots were not a plus factor and probably served to delay certain developments. When you have rock-throwing on the main street in Newark going on for several days and various kinds of violence being openly displayed, that doesn't make for any kind of stability or local happiness. It is unfortunate and difficult to understand and to cope with. I would say that the effect on overall development was on the negative side, although after a

while people began to forget some of the untoward things that happened. And the campus returned to its previous position.

COHEN: Mm-mm. Do you have recollections, vivid recollections, of the immediate impact at the time in the city?

HUBERMAN: Well, I was driving home one day on Springfield Avenue, and I had rocks thrown through the windshield of my car. That had happened to others, probably most people didn't undergo that kind of experience. But it made a big impression. However, trying to understand what the riots were all about and why people were unhappy enough to have to resort to such means.... I went back to work at the college the next day, however, and didn't miss any days on account of that.

COHEN: In faculty recruitment, did the cost of the riots ever come up in the discussion among faculty that were being recruited?

HUBERMAN: Once in a great while somebody would have heard something about it and timidly ask a question. And we tried to answer the question honestly.

COHEN: If the riots had never occurred, how do you think the campus would have felt? In a different way or the same or sort of...?

HUBERMAN: No, I have no particular feeling there. We might have had, if possible, more window space and less concrete...

[Laughter]

COHEN: That's very good. [Laughs] Yes. Okay. Of course the riots were sort of the background to the student movement—particularly the students, among the black students, on campus, the conditions in the city. And my question is, in retrospect, what conditions existed in the university to encourage such protest and militant action that was conducted in Conklin Hall by the Black Organization of Students?

HUBERMAN: I can respond to that in only a general way, saying that it wasn't only what was happening on the campus. But the entire surrounding milieu was in [unintelligible] condition. And that was reflected on the campus. The students on the campus being alert, alive, and concerned, responded accordingly.

COHEN: Everything was tied in with everything else.

HUBERMAN: Yes.

COHEN: What were the issues that you would call divided the faculty on the BOS [Black Organization of Students] demands at issue? I guess they'd be the core issue. How were the faculty philosophically divided on that, to the demands?

HUBERMAN: I don't think I can recall enough specifics to be able to help very much on that.

COHEN: Was there any recollection or any wisdom about what could have been done to avoid the Conklin Hall takeover, interference?

HUBERMAN: Well, now we're talking. It would have taken the wisdom of Merlin for the administration to know what to do previously to the outbursts. They would have had to know that such a thing was coming. And I suppose it would have been possible to talk to groups of student leaders and representatives of the rank and file students and listen to their concerns and demands. And to try to deal with them, to alleviate them and to understand what was on their minds. But it would have really called for a superhuman kind of an administration to be able to forecast that.

COHEN: Do you think that the situation, the communication, would have been expedited if Newark had been less dependent on the New Brunswick administration? What effect, if any, did this dependence on New Brunswick, do you think, had the...level of communication with the students?

HUBERMAN: That was a little bit out of my province, and it's hard to say. Newark probably had enough independence to act wisely if it knew what the wise course was. And it probably—and it might have been deterred by New Brunswick had either wielded a big stick or insisted that it was wiser.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Difficult to know. Your assessment of the historical significant of the Conklin Hall takeover. Do you have anything to say on that?

HUBERMAN: I remember chains on the doors and more than a mild malaise on the campus during that period. But otherwise, blank....

COHEN: You don't have any feelings for the long-term impact of the episode?

HUBERMAN: Well....

COHEN: On the development of, on curriculum...

HUBERMAN: It certainly was not unique in American education. Similar patterns had erupted in many parts of the country, and of course they had an impact. What the impact was only time would tell. It probably varied from college to college. But it may have been a healthy thing to get it out of your system as far as the students were concerned. And it might have been a healthy thing to encourage a wiser, more caring, more concerned administration, I mean really in the most sincere sense of those words. And that would have been all to the better for future years.

COHEN: The students in terms of... Well, if you could sort of, I mean start off, if you could, with a sort of profile of the students that you, if you could, that you taught in your years at Newark-Rutgers, their backgrounds and their responsiveness and their interests.

HUBERMAN: If I can go back to 1947 when I started—

COHEN: [Laughs] [Unintelligible]...country.

HUBERMAN: —to teach at Rutgers, a good many of the students were returned veterans and superior students because they were very well motivated, and they had made a choice to spend their time getting higher education. They were, of course—of course made the background of any class. They were quite well informed. They were a pleasure to teach. The youngsters who were not veterans who came in at age seventeen and eighteen, really seemed like small kids compared to the veterans that we had for a few years. As the years went by, there weren't so many veterans in the classes. Things changed. And we had a good mix of superior students, routine students, and those who were definitely in the wrong place, not really either motivated for or ready to cope with the demands of a college training or education. As the years went by up into the late seventies, I think that, as I recall, a number of very fine students who brought more maturity and more real interest to what they were doing probably increased a little bit. But over the years in general, there was always a mix. And sometimes one could trace real development in a student from his freshman year through his senior year. But we had so many students and so many classes, it wasn't always possible for one teacher to follow a student all the way through. In general, however, there was progress, and I think the quality of Rutgers-Newark improved, the quality of education that students were willing to work for.

COHEN: Improving during, what period of years are you discussing at this point?

HUBERMAN: I'm talking now about the seventies.

COHEN: Seventies, oh, yes. That's an interesting observation, yes. I'm sorry.

HUBERMAN: Go ahead.

COHEN: I asked before about, you know, differences in the faculty. But specifically do you have any sense of what the differences were on the faculty specifically on admissions standards. This seemed to be the main sticking point in negotiations, and it seems to crop up over the years.

HUBERMAN: I don't recall that I ever served on the admissions committee, but I listened to plenty of admissions committee reports in faculty meetings. And there always seemed to be the question of what shall we do with the students who really aren't ready to take on college-level courses in the first year. And out of this grew special programs to help students who came in only really partially prepared. Along with these students there were others who were fully prepared and who were exceptionally fine with excellent records in previous schooling. I think that the problem before the admissions committee was always to try to be fair and to admit students who had any chance of developing and to provide as quickly as possible the strengthening and the support that they needed to bring their work up to college level so that they could take regular courses, particularly in Math and English, for college credit.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Do you think that the—at that time do you recall any perception that you had of the demands of the Black Organization of Students for admission of students living in the



surrounding area, which would have at that point gone beyond what the university was ready to accept? There was controversy there, too.

HUBERMAN: I tried to understand why the demands were made, and I tried to analyze and be sympathetic to these demands. Now, at a vantage point many years later, I think they had an awfully good case. And I think it's a good thing for the college that there was a Black Organization of Students, and that they tried to do what they did even though they were a little truculent at times.

COHEN: Dealing with admissions and students, and you mentioned before the mediation I alluded to, and what I'd like to get into now is the role of the Academic Foundations Department... at that time, sixty-eight.... Do you recall the Urban University program which the university board of governors attempted to establish?

HUBERMAN: I remember vaguely. The term sounds familiar. And I've heard the term or something like it in connection with many other colleges around the country.

COHEN: That was the response of the university and the faculty administration which, I don't know if you recall, was not funded by the state... But do you recall when the Educational Opportunity Fund was established in 1968...?

HUBERMAN: Good old EOF.

COHEN: Yes. Okay. Which people call Equal Opportunity Fund and Economic Opportunity Fund. But I recently found out I've been calling it the Educational Opportunity Fund.

HUBERMAN: It seemed like a good thing.

COHEN: Yes.

HUBERMAN: And to make it easier, at least in one area, for students to come to college and—

[Break in recording]

have their education shrink on account of not having the economic wherewithal.

COHEN: How effectively do you think that the Academic Foundations Department... first it was a center, and then it became a department. How effective in the years you were there do you think it was?

HUBERMAN: They were always very earnest people, and I think they worked hard, they tried to do a job. And there were some individuals more productive than others. But that's the case in any department. I'm glad they were there, and I'm glad they were able to do what they did.

COHEN: Now we've been talking about students and community and environment. Actually the more I went into the material the more I realized that there's no clear-cut separation between

university and community...What was your involvement or what was your perception of community-university relations in the late sixties and the seventies? Do you have any feel for that?

HUBERMAN: Well, was this the period when there was some action beginning on buying up surrounding properties and turning them into college dormitories and buildings?

COHEN: I was thinking in terms of the community organizational work ...for instance the sort of thing that involved...going into the schools and training students to work in the health fields, something like that. And there was some community organization that Malcolm Talbott was involved in. Al Shapiro was also a community liaison, that sort of thing. Where there was outreach to various community organizations to bring them into the university and the life of the university, their services. Now, do you have any sense of that sort of period, faculty member who may have been involved...?

HUBERMAN: I should think bringing students who read poems. Of course the other endeavors are very worthwhile.

COHEN: Still, sort of communities in the sixties, the late sixties, the seventies, are the period of campus disturbances for a variety of reasons. And aside from the tenor of the times, what specific grievances did Newark students have ? Do you have any—was it just the question of Newark students being part of the whole anti-war movement, the civil rights movement, the general malaise as far as general conditions in the country were concerned?

HUBERMAN: Well....

COHEN: Is that a good question? [Laughs]

HUBERMAN: The concern was...being part of the anti-war movement was not to be held against the student; that's to his credit, in my opinion. The malaise of the country seems to be endemic. It hasn't gone away. It's prevalent. Perhaps even worse at this moment.

COHEN: What was the effect during that time of the campus disturbances in the classroom and everyday relations between the faculty, members of the faculty, between the faculties? If you can think of any specific instances that reflected in the give-and-take between people on the campus as a result of the disturbances...affect you?

HUBERMAN: I can't say that I can respond with any specific evidence on that. Classes in which I was an instructor over the years, they had students, and they had teachers, and we had work to do and things to learn and attitudes and emotions to deal with. And we tried. We tried when there was more malaise, and we tried when there was less malaise.

COHEN: For instance, specific to the war in Vietnam, was this part of this whole background or was there anything specifically about the war in Vietnam which had a specific effect on the school, either working relations?

HUBERMAN: Students generally were violently opposed to the war in Vietnam, and they expressed themselves accordingly. What difference did it make in a literature class or a math class? Well, the students would tie it in when they could. When they couldn't, they didn't.

COHEN: What role did you think was appropriate for the faculty...?

HUBERMAN: To conduct an honest discussion when it was pertinent and if the students cared to have it. And whenever it applied in any way to the educational material under discussion, to welcome it freely. The university is a place where ideas are looked for and encouraged. In bedlam times, and any times.

COHEN: How often did such discussion crop up in discussions in literature, for instance?

HUBERMAN: Well, if you're dealing with a Shakespeare play having to do with war, it's a natural... And no matter... in the field of imaginative literature, what's going on in the world outside at the moment in which you're studying imaginative literature, imaginative literature can be very pertinent.

COHEN: Did the war affect the, let's say, the works under discussion that you selected for study by the students? Did the war affect the canon, so to speak?

HUBERMAN: Maybe very mildly, but not really.

COHEN: Did the war in any way steer the discussion often or not in certain directions? I mean was there that kind of focus?

HUBERMAN: Depends on the class, on the nature of the individuals in that particular class and depends on opportunities that arose. I wouldn't call it a major movement.

COHEN: Was there any major impact as a result of the killing of the students at Kent State in 1970? Was it just part of the whole sort of seamless web there or did it introduce a new element into the discussion?

HUBERMAN: As I recall, there was a considerable reaction at Rutgers-Newark when the Kent State students were murdered.

COHEN: But as far as its effect on protest—

HUBERMAN: Protest meetings and marches and much talk and concern.

COHEN: Well what I'm driving at is we want to see the relationship between such conditions and the business of teaching, to what effect it influences that? I'm particularly interested in.

HUBERMAN: Well, the Kent State murders are still remembered. And not many students get out of college without having heard of and trying to understand just what was going on there.

COHEN: Talking about teaching brings me into the next general topic, which is curriculum reform. And based upon the record that I studied, there was quite a bit going on in the seventies, in terms of change in the curriculum. Not to mention the most recent development a couple of years ago, with the new curriculum for the nineties, which was I guess passed in 1988. But what were the main influences on curriculum reform during, well, during the late sixties and in the seventies, that time period, do you recall?

HUBERMAN: I'm not too familiar with the general curriculum. But, in the department in which I served there were some changes. There would be occasional new courses introduced to meet the particular needs or stated interests on the part of a number of students. And we did what we could to keep up and to refresh where desirable. The content of all courses that were basically changed in the pattern or presentation.

COHEN: Well, what were the outside influences..to what degree were they responsible for curriculum changes? In the culture, in politics and so on in the country at the time.

HUBERMAN: I suppose that one can't get away from this, but to how great an extent is a question. Certainly any college would find some of its presentations, curricular presentations, influenced by outside events. That's been going on since Harvard was started and in the medieval universities as well. But...changes are very slow to take place. They need to be—they apparently have to be discussed for many years before action will be taken. And you have to get almost unanimous consent. This isn't always easy. And, well, one can...I can recall some courses that I introduced, taught for the first time, that might not go today. I gave a seminar in Hemingway whose fortune nowadays has suffered a little bit. I doubt that we have or would now offer a seminar in Hemingway. One does what one can with regard to curriculum. One does what appears to be needed and desirable. Those are generalizations.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Sure, sure.

HUBERMAN: They speak in a way to your questions.

COHEN: This might be too specific, but I often wonder how distribution requirements are arrived at. When a faculty gets together and they start saying, well, you have to have this, this, this, and this.

HUBERMAN: ...By argument, discussion, violent wrangling [Laughter]...and something like the budget development process that the federal government in various branches has been undergoing for the last few days. It's just a matter of fighting it out as well as thinking about it.

COHEN: To what extent does the interplay between philosophical differences, politics, turf enter into these discussions?

HUBERMAN: Well, probably all of those are quite important. The matter of turf, for example, has forced certain courses in certain colleges to go on forever or until the incumbent dies, even though the rest of his colleagues know that it's outdated and not necessary anymore. 'Til the incumbent dies or until the students stop registering for it.

COHEN: How do they generally justify lightly enrolled courses? I know this came up in discussions.

HUBERMAN: Well, in these days of cash flow shortage and money crunch and so on, administrations are getting tougher and tougher with regard to the minimum number of registrants to make a course run. This is understandable, the administrators have their job to do, and they have to make whatever money they have go as far as it can and still keep the standards up.

COHEN: What did meaningful and relevant mean in those days, the terms that were thrown around?

HUBERMAN: They're highly-charged, weak words and probably each speaker had his own definition.

COHEN: Do you recall what was the main impetus behind the separation of the business program from the Economics Department? That was in...I forget the exact date.

HUBERMAN: Yes. I don't know too much about that. But I can see that it might have been the desire to set up courses that the students were going to grab for because in those days a business major was getting to be something that students perceived as having a real cash value, and they liked that. It's not quite the same as getting a liberal education, and to be regretted in some ways. But it's awfully hard for students sometimes to remember that there is a difference between vocational training and a liberal education.

COHEN: What do you think was the perceived benefit for separating them?

HUBERMAN: Economics in the student perception was, well, that's theory; I want the practical. I want to be able to get out and make a buck with my business courses.

COHEN: Yes, yes, yes. As sort of a wrap-up to the curriculum thing, how, in your view, did the demands for diversity, freedom of choice square with the idea of a liberal education, general education seem to be? Sort of a tension there too.

HUBERMAN: Well, there has to be a good balance to make a liberal education, a good group from which to choose. It does not have to be a monstrously large group. Many a small college with a small group of offerings can offer just as fine a liberal education as the largest university which has hundreds, sometimes thousands of different courses from which to choose. A student can take only a limited number of courses during each of his years in college, no matter how great the choice was. And if he can find what he wants and needs from a small group, it serves him just as well as if he had chosen from a larger group of possibilities.

COHEN: Do you see any conflict between diversity, freedom of choice, on the one hand, and the whole concept of liberal education, the core? Does one defeat the other?

HUBERMAN: Well, the purpose of the core is usually said to be to make sure that the student will not leave college without at least having tasted certain elements of what we consider—the things that make you into a well-rounded, decent human being. Definitions of the contents will vary from place to place. But it's probably a good idea to insist on some small number of requirements for all students, and then follow that up with concentration and a major. Every now and then at Harvard they change the system. The most recent was the introduction of a not very well conceived core curriculum that many other colleges have tried to imitate since then, with room for exceptions and room for the individual gifted or talented student to waive all of the rules and work out his own curriculum.

COHEN: To what extent do you think that the Rutgers-Newark approach to liberal education was more moderate, more conservative?

HUBERMAN: Well, if you mean now, I'm not really part of the...

COHEN: Well, how it changed in the seventies.

HUBERMAN: Yes.

COHEN: Was Rutgers-Newark more prone to the change in the seventies?

HUBERMAN: In the seventies I think that Rutgers offered a good mix, and it was possible for a student to obtain a first-class education at Rutgers-Newark. In the seventies, what with the basic requirements and the major requirements—and there are always, and still are, I hope, chances for an unusually talented student to get the most that he can out of college by having considerable freedom to set up his own curriculum.

COHEN: That leads me to the graduate school. What was the thinking among—not thinking, the events—that led up to the establishment of the graduate school?

HUBERMAN: Well, the establishment of the graduate school was in response to the fact that other graduate schools were being established around, Rutgers-Newark was not the first one in the area. And, that there was a need for people who had already attained a baccalaureate degree who had wanted to further their education, to have a place to go. And Rutgers-Newark was able to manage it with limited financial resources and squeezing the blood out of some faculty members to do double, triple duty. But managed to offer graduate programs in a good number of fields and attracted qualified students. And it was a good thing. Although, it didn't go all the way to the Ph.D. level in every field. That wasn't necessary.

COHEN: What effect did it have on the English Department?

HUBERMAN: Well, occasionally there would be a little tightening of the number of courses available to undergraduates when a teacher out doing something for the graduate faculty was withdrawn from all of his undergraduate work. However, I don't think it was ever really serious. There was no great damage. I do not know what the current situation is.

COHEN: I seemed to sense some differences in opinion among faculty on campus, planning, long-range planning, as far as graduate education is concerned versus undergraduate education, and what was your sense of that in the seventies of the presumed conflict? The conflict between those who placed greater emphasis on the development of graduate programs and research on the one hand, and undergraduate education on the other hand.

HUBERMAN: As in most collections of faculty members in a university or even a segment of a university like Rutgers-Newark, there are some who are heavily research-oriented and would love to spend all of their time on research and publication. There are others who are classroom-oriented and would love to spend all of their time preparing and giving their classes to undergraduates. It's a good thing I've found to have people of different desires and maybe abilities. The tendency around the country now—and for some years past—has been to stress the fact that the undergraduate education is the most important function at the university. At the same time, the demand for graduate education, especially in the larger universities, and the demand for training people for research rather than for teaching, is also great. There's a kind of conflict in administrative approaches because some top administrators, indeed presidents and other top officers of many universities, are talking two ways: They praise their graduate schools and the research that comes out of them, and they also sing the glories of their undergraduate program and tell about how important it is that every student receive careful close attention from his teachers on the undergraduate level. In order to keep it all going, the employment of graduate students or young Ph.D.s to teach elementary courses around the country is indulged in. It saves money on the administrative budget, but it doesn't always do the best service for the student. The expansion of graduate programs is of course not altogether natural and normal. By this I mean there is an enormous amount of pressure placed upon the universities by large sums of money forthcoming from corporative interests and companies with special programs that they want to pursue. And they provide large sums to many colleges and do not always give the college complete control over those funds. They demand a quid pro quo which is sometimes damaging to pure education.

COHEN: Well, this is a good segue into our next general area, and that's faculty. And specifically the issue of tenure policy. Why did the issue of tenure policy emerge so prominently in the seventies? It seems to have cropped up again and again.

HUBERMAN: You mean making it harder for tenure to be acquired?

COHEN: Yes. And what is required for the....

HUBERMAN: Well, it was the fear that the university or the college would become heavily over-tenured, as has happened in the past in so many small colleges and universities around the country where eighty percent of the faculty or more might be fully tenured and fairly young as well. Thus, limiting the mobility of or the possibilities for mobility and change and improvement.

COHEN: You think that was the main reason for the greater emphasis on publication at that time, insistence that aside from teaching that....

HUBERMAN: Well, this was an administrative notion that the more publication, the more recognition the university gains, and the more grant money—a recent development in education—would be available to the university. Grant money covers a wide, wide area because money comes without strings attached and with a great many strings attached...

COHEN: At that time the.... Well, why was support for AAUP [American Association of University Professors] so strong in 1969 when the vote was first put? Do you recall that?

HUBERMAN: At that time probably teachers felt they needed protection, that they were being perhaps pushed around a little too much, and that their natural rights were not always being adhered to. And they felt, as union members did in that heyday of unionism, that there was strength in union, and they could approach administrations with a much more powerful voice than if they were to go one by one and be turned down one by one.

COHEN: There seems to be a decline, at least that I've seen in the degree of acceptance on the part of the administration, the prestige of the AAUP on the campus, particularly in the eighties; I'm not sure about the seventies. Do you have any sense of that having occurred?

HUBERMAN: I can't answer that because I retired in eighty. And I know that when the AARP[AAUP] first started in the early days, I was the local president in the Rutgers-Newark of the AARP[AAUP]. It had a goodly amount of support which then increased until finally it became *the* support, and became a powerful voice vis-à-vis the administration. But I cannot speak about the last ten years.

COHEN: Well, when you said AARP, I assume that you misspoke and meant AAUP.

HUBERMAN: AAUP.

COHEN: For the record. [Laughter] Okay. Very good. Oh, yes. Why was there a big controversy in the Botany Department over tenure with some faculty members?

HUBERMAN: In the Botany Department?

COHEN: In the Botany Department. It hit the newspapers.

HUBERMAN: It was in the newspapers?

COHEN: In the Observer...

HUBERMAN: Possibly a matter of personalities purely. I don't really know too much about it.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

[End of Tape #1]



COHEN: ...on this, the twenty-fifth of October. We were on the subject of faculty and promotion and tenure and so on. And a common complaint was that the application of uniform standards for promotion was not really fair because of the lack of research facilities in Newark. What is your judgment about this charge that seems to crop up?

HUBERMAN: In the English Department that could hardly be sustained because although the research facilities, that means library facilities, visual aids and so on, may not all have been physically present in Newark, it was easy enough to get access to the resources of the library at Rutgers in New Brunswick and to any library through interlibrary loan and other means. So I have found that my work required materials that weren't available and I could get them within a day or two...at the most within a few days. Time after time in the natural sciences, where there might have been a complaint about we don't have all the new technology that we need, that's probably another matter. Although, I suppose that an ingenious researcher could have worked out ways of finding access to equipment that he required. In general, the question, as asked, doesn't really refer too directly to a department in the humanities.

COHEN: To what extent—since you're on the subject of library resources—to what extent could the limitations of the collection in the Dana Library affect humanistic research on the campus?

HUBERMAN: It might have delayed a little bit, but it didn't prevent a researcher who knew how to go about getting—acquiring—what he needed was able to do it.

COHEN: And, on the other side of it, as far as teaching was concerned, the whole question of student evaluations that came up in the seventies. There seemed to be differences of opinion there. What were the differences of opinion based on?

HUBERMAN: That's been a controversial point for many, many years. And now in retrospect, I'd be inclined to say that if there are student evaluations, they might as well be looked at. But I would not weight them too heavily in important decisions concerning the quality of the work of a particular teacher.

COHEN: How did the English Department determine the quality of the particular work, especially with teaching ability?

HUBERMAN: Well, we had student evaluations. And we had occasional peer evaluation through visitation. And that was occasional and probably on the request of the teacher being evaluated. Also, we met frequently. We knew each other. And in discussions we rapidly recognized people who were on the cutting edge of our discipline. And we had some of them. We had others whose blades were pretty damned dull.

COHEN: Administrations are always major topics of discussion, do you have any idea as to how we could compare the contributions of university presidents like Mason Gross and Edward Bloustein?

HUBERMAN: Well, they seemed to serve different functions in their time. I had the very highest regard for the opinions and decisions of Mason Gross. I thought he was an ideal college president. And I thought the university really prospered under his guidance. I didn't know so much about President Bloustein's effect, although I knew he was active in a variety of ways in fundraising as well as in solving knotty problems when we came to where the buck wouldn't go any further. Like other teachers during his time, I can remember decisions that I deplored, though—

COHEN: Like what?

HUBERMAN: Well, on some personnel decisions where it had to go to the very top. The wrong decision was made. That's still a question of opinion. I deplored it. But he thought he was doing the right thing...I don't recall any actions of President Gross like that, that went against my grain at least.

COHEN: Yes. Deans, how would you assess the deanship of Herbert Woodward?

HUBERMAN: Well, Dean Woodward was conscientious. He was interested in—kept his interest in geology as much as in deaning. He could often be found in the backroom working on geological charts. [Laughs] Though, he was there when decisions needed to be made. He was fair in his approaches. And for the time in which he served, he was a first-class dean.

COHEN: William Gilliland?

HUBERMAN: He doesn't get such high grades. A little spasmodic and idiosyncratic.

COHEN: Was that the main reason for his short deanship or short term?

HUBERMAN: Possibly. He had some personal problems that made it difficult for him to assume a full deanship role.

COHEN: Malcolm Talbott was acting dean.

HUBERMAN: Malcolm Talbott was the cream of the crop. A first-class man and human being. Caring, energetic, ingenious, and generous.

COHEN: You were applying that to his deanship plus--

HUBERMAN: Yes.

COHEN: —his term as vice president.

HUBERMAN: Right.

COHEN: I'll get back to Malcolm Talbott in a minute. But on the deans again, Henry Blumenthal.

HUBERMAN: Henry Blumenthal was a hardworking, concerned, fine dean. No complaints.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. Richard Robey?

HUBERMAN: Again, somewhat idiosyncratic. Had a way of—though he never ruffled my feathers—had a way of antagonizing some people who really didn't need to be antagonized.

COHEN: What were the issues?

HUBERMAN: Oh, personnel and distribution of funds and so on.

COHEN: Norman Samuels as dean?

HUBERMAN: Norman Samuels made an excellent dean. With Norman Samuels came a big change in the whole approach to the deanship job, Norman was really ahead of the job at the time. And he was destined to rise further in the administration.

COHEN: What kind of changes did Norman Samuels bring about?

HUBERMAN: Well, he introduced new blood into the deanship...he reorganized the department with a set of associate and assistant deans. And he was probably one of the most brilliant of all the deans and very wise. Very wise and talented for that kind of work. I remember Norman with considerable warmth. When I was struggling to get an honors program established at the college and Norman was on the committee, he did a good deal of work towards preparing the way for an overwhelming vote of confidence by the faculty upon the introduction of a college-wide honors program.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. And this was effective. This was passed.

HUBERMAN: Yes.

COHEN: Yes, sure. It's still in effect. Because that's one of the honor programs in effect. Yes. Getting back to Malcolm Talbott, why was he not appointed Newark provost. I'm assuming that he wanted the job.

HUBERMAN: I have no idea. That was an area way out of my reach. I don't know what the answer was.

COHEN: Was there any, that you sensed, any general faculty feeling against him or for him or any discussions?

HUBERMAN: I suppose they had some. There were some on the faculty who might have been against him. But that certainly wasn't my feeling. And I think the majority of the faculty thought highly of him.

COHEN: Yes. Okay. We're assessing administrations, the administration of Provost James Young.

HUBERMAN: I never knew him very well. He seemed to remind me of a local politician in town—or in a county. He was there not too long, as I recall. Was he?

COHEN: Seventy-three until eighty-two about. Norman Samuels took over in eighty-two. So we're talking about a nine-year stretch now.

HUBERMAN: Well, I didn't have much to do with him.

COHEN: Yeah, sometimes you have a sense and sometimes not. Do you remember the 1969 faculty report, that is the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Report, on reorganization of the Newark College of Arts and Sciences?

HUBERMAN: I knew there was one, but I don't remember what it was about.

COHEN: The question of—I don't know what the term is, not autonomy; there's another term. Spinning off is a term they've use, amalgamation with the other institutions in Newark has come up frequently in connection with the relations of Rutgers University in Newark with the other institutions of higher education in Newark. What sense do you have about the wisdom of Rutgers in Newark actually spinning off and becoming its own institution in the seventies?

HUBERMAN: Spinning off from New Brunswick?

COHEN: Yes, and becoming a separate university?

HUBERMAN: Well, that's where it came from in the first place.

COHEN: Yes.

HUBERMAN: It spun off and then came back to Rutgers in 1946, and came into Rutgers in forty-six. I suppose.... I don't recall too much. But I think I might have continued to favor relations with New Brunswick. I think the connection with New Brunswick was an aid to Rutgers-Newark, rather than a hindrance,

COHEN: An aid how? You mean in terms of identity...?

HUBERMAN: Well, in terms of availability of legislative funds. When the university spoke for all the parts of the university, they might do a better job and get better results than if each unit trying to present its own tin cup. And also because of the real advantages like the library and other services and the availability of the entire range of curriculum in New Brunswick being available really to our students if they needed it.

COHEN: Students....

HUBERMAN: Yes, a student could take a course in New Brunswick.

COHEN: So, there could be course cross-registration...

HUBERMAN: Sure, it was possible to arrange it..

COHEN: You mentioned libraries, and my next heading is the Dana Library. What was, in your view, the strongest feature of the Dana Library before the move to the new campus?

HUBERMAN: Well, there wasn't too much strong at that time. It was very small, at my first acquaintance with it up on the fourth floor of forty Rector Street, the librarian was a kind of schoolmarm type. And you had the feeling more that you were in a high school library than anything else, although I suppose that what you needed could have been acquired from somewhere; but it was a rather thin place.

COHEN: Over the next decade or so with the move to the new campus, what were the main changes that you saw?

HUBERMAN: Well, sufficient space for the holdings and room to spare at that time. And the introduction of various kinds of library services that weren't really stressed—if indeed they existed before. An expansion of the staff and generally the high quality of the staff.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. What services in particular were you thinking of?

HUBERMAN: Well, audio-visual and probably an expanded interlibrary system. And it exuded more of the confidence of a good library than had ever been seen before.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

HUBERMAN: My experiences with the Dana Library have really been wonderful over the years.

COHEN: Its main weaknesses in that period, the seventies?

HUBERMAN: You mean before it came to the new campus?

COHEN: Yes. No, no, I'm sorry. In the seventies, yes.

HUBERMAN: There were still always a lot of books that the library didn't have.

COHEN: Amen.

HUBERMAN: And that was a problem. But lots of libraries have that problem.

COHEN: Yes.

HUBERMAN: And occasionally there might be a newer, only partially-trained staff member who needed a little while to get adjusted. But that applies to any college library.

COHEN: Okay, now. I'm trying to see if there are any topics which I haven't touched on much, that you'd like to touch on, you mentioned before something about some of the questions. Is there anything that I'm missing the boat on? [Laughs]

HUBERMAN: Well, why don't you turn it off....

[Break in recording]

COHEN: I was asking topics which I may have missed in my questions, and you...

HUBERMAN: I was very pleased to see the development of facilities for students, a kind of student union building with rooms for the offices of student organizations and offices of the student newspaper, with large meeting halls, with facilities for student groups, as well as an art gallery and an information center. These are all incorporated in the very useful student facilities in the Robeson Center on the Newark campus. The development of eating facilities was also a very welcome, although the quality of the fare served in those facilities varied depending on who had the concession. The food service people were interested in making all the money they could. The students were interested in getting some decent food for a reasonable price. And sometimes these coincided; those were the happiest times. The college bookstore was placed across the street in another building, was still generally pretty well handled. And was able to serve the needs of students and faculty quite well. Compared well with many college bookstores in schools about the size of Rutgers-Newark. These were plus values serving to make the place a little more [unintelligible]. The gradual introduction of dormitories came after 1980 I guess.

COHEN: Yes, nineteen...

HUBERMAN: Well, anyway, they made it possible for students to be around in the evening because it was kind of a problem to get big meetings going or big musical or artistic events in the evening because of certain fears about being in Newark late, especially for commuters. In general—I'd like to say one word about the faculty as a whole in Rutgers-Newark. When I joined in 1947, I found a very high-grade faculty, a group of people who were dedicated, concerned, and already doing the things that first-class faculty people were supposed to do in addition to teaching their classes and embellishing their teaching with the required term papers and other papers and the other paraphernalia of our semester classroom teaching, they were also delving into their respective disciplines and producing publications, often of highest quality. And as the university developed in Newark, the quality of the faculty never dropped. And an enormous percentage of our faculty had earned doctorates. And those who don't, don't need them because they have what it takes.

COHEN: Isn't it eight-five percent I think is the latest figure?

HUBERMAN: Yes. I'm not sure.

COHEN: Anything else which I haven't touched on?

HUBERMAN: I'll probably think of lots of things after you leave.

COHEN: Okay. My final question is, is there anything we've talked about that you'd like to go back to?

HUBERMAN: Not at the moment, no.

COHEN: Thank you very much.

[Break in recording]

We are back with Dr. Edward Huberman. We have a postscript on the poetry reading contest, and he's got some interesting things to say, which I'd like to catch.

HUBERMAN: One of the interesting features of the contest was the participation of poets around the world in the prize department. When a student won the poetry reading contest, he was entitled to ask for a volume of the collected poems of any of his favorite poets. Anticipating this, we had written to scores of poets around the world asking them if they would be willing to autograph and to write a little statement in a volume of their collected poems, if the student winning the contest should ask for the works of a particular poet. We had answers from scores of poets who all agreed. Nobody turned us down. And virtually every well-known poet of the time is on the roster. There exists in the university, a collection of affirmative responses by all of these poets which is very interesting. It includes, of course, T.S. Eliot and Robert Frost, Edward Lee Masters, innumerable others. We wrote also to Ezra Pound who responded with a postcard. And in answer to the question, will you be willing to cooperate, all that he said was: "Okay." And he signed it E.P., in characteristic fashion. The other responses are also quite something to see and wonder at. And we do have a little library of statements and signatures of the chief poets in the world during the early 1940s.

COHEN: Now how did this work? The volumes contributed by the poets, you're saying?

HUBERMAN: No, we had—we got up a little fund one way or another. Sometimes it was out of somebody's pocket. But we bought the book. And if the student said, "I want the poems of Robert Frost." So we bought the volume of collected poems, sent it to Robert Frost with materials for a safe return, and asked him to write something to that student in the book. This he did. Frost was asked for several times. Many other poets were listed, were requested also by other winners in other years. The winning student was determined by the use of a series of heats; that is, first, let us say, there were fifty, as there frequently were—students. We'd divide them into five groups of ten readers in each group. There would be two judges for each group. And then in the five groups, those who came out first and second in the evaluations, would go into either the semifinals or the finals, depending on how many students were involved. The final would take place a week after the original contest, usually on a Saturday morning. And all of the rooms would be filled with all of the parents and friends and a cheering squad for each of the readers. And some of the readers who had not won the week before would come back because

they were so interested in hearing how these students—some of whom they'd heard in the sections in which they had participated. And it was a real gala occasion.

And ultimately we had winner of first place, second place, third place, and also three honorable mentions. There were book prizes for all of the winners and the honorable mentions, but only the number one winner got the autographed volume by a poet of his choice. Otherwise we gave away as prizes a good many other volumes of collected poetry, anthologies, which were generally happily received by the participants. We also had a loving cup which had a portable collar around its base, so that we could use it for many years. It was a beautiful gold-looking loving cup inscribed with the name of the contest and the college and so on. And when a reader from a particular school won it, we would have engraved the date, the name of the winner, and the name of the school on the removable collar of the loving cup. So each one of those would last for about ten or 15 years. And then when that happened, we would get a new collar to continue the process. But the same loving cup went to the school to be held for a year, and then was returned the following year to be up for competition again.

COHEN: And the autographed volume went to the winner and became the property of the winner.

HUBERMAN: Yes. Oh, yes. The winner held the prize, and I'm sure some of those young people, now very old people, treasure the book as a memento of a day of glory.

COHEN: Was there a place and a show, second place, third place?

HUBERMAN: Yes, second place and third place....

[Break in recording]

COHEN: Okay. We were talking about second and third place.

HUBERMAN: And the three honorable mentions also received books. We were very generous with those books, and everybody appeared to be quite pleased. At the twenty-fifth anniversary of the contest, we changed the rules a little bit to allow two students from each high school to participate. So we had an enormous number of contestants. Had to set up an enormous number of preliminary sections. But the reading was beautiful. The students really read quite professionally. They had been carefully—most of them had been carefully trained by their teachers in high school. And when they got to Newark, they were in prime form.

COHEN: What schools were represented?

HUBERMAN: Well, schools from all over the state, including way down in South Jersey. Of course most of the schools were nearby. The Newark high schools participated. The schools in the nearby suburbs, like Belleville and Nutley, Millburn, Short Hills, and Summit were well represented. Morristown High School. Schools up in the Skylands of New Jersey from Boonton and other areas in Sussex County. And we went down into New Brunswick High School and Princeton High School. Not only the high schools, but a number of private schools sent



representatives to this contest. And a sizeable number of parochial schools. They came from all over. Generally they were high school juniors or seniors. But occasionally we had a high school sophomore who'd win the first prize, an unusually talented young person.

COHEN: Okay. Maybe there's one thing I had forgotten to ask you before. In addition to your teaching, of course you were involved in research and publication. Do you want to just recount some of the publications?

HUBERMAN: Well, during this period that I published in a number of journals, including the CEA, *College English Association Critic*, *College English Association Forum*, and the transactions of the Oxford Bibliographical Society, a journal called *The Library*. And I was also doing a good deal of translation. I was translating from the Spanish and French a number of plays and stories and novels. This was one of my constant concerns. Usually it was literary material. And all of it was published in one place...all the translations were published in one place or another over the years.

COHEN: Okay. Anything else, post-postscript?

HUBERMAN: Not at the moment....

COHEN: Okay. Thanks again. [End of Tape #2]

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

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