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Publication Date

2015-03-09

UC Santa Cruz in the Mid-1970s, a Time of Transition:

Volume Two

Professor George Von der Muhll

Interviewed by Irene Reti and

Randall Jarrell

Edited by Irene Reti

Santa Cruz

University of California, Santa Cruz

University Library

2015

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Interview History

On January 23, 1976, UC Santa Cruz's second chancellor, Mark N. Christensen, resigned from office. He had served the campus from July 1974 to January 1976. This second of two oral history volumes devoted to the Christensen era, is comprised of two interviews with Professor George Von der Muhll. The first was conducted by former Regional History Project director Randall Jarrell in 1976; the second by current Project director Irene Reti in 2014. Both set Christensen's resignation within the broader context of a tumultuous and transitional moment in the campus's history and Von der Muhll's incisive reflections on UC Santa Cruz as a "noble experiment" in public higher education.

Founding Chancellor Dean McHenry had brought to fruition his singular vision for UC Santa Cruz as an innovative institution of higher education that emphasized undergraduate teaching centered in residential colleges, each with a specific intellectual theme and architectural design, within the framework of what he envisioned as a major public research university. McHenry oversaw the planning and building of UCSC from 1961 until his retirement in June 1974. In the early years, UCSC drew high caliber students and gained considerable national visibility as an innovative university. But by the mid-1970s, applications were declining and enrollments were on the verge of falling. Internally, the campus was fracturing along fault lines

created by debates over the colleges' academic role and over the relative weight to be placed on research and teaching, while UCSC struggled to weather a variety of external political and economic pressures and to hold its own as a distinctive campus within the traditional University of California.

Christensen's tenure as chancellor rather tragically ended in controversy after only eighteen months. Although most of the faculty liked Christensen as a person, they lost confidence in his ability to govern the campus. The Regional History Project never conducted an oral history with Mark Christensen, who passed away in 2003. But former director Randall Jarrell completed a series of interviews with key faculty members and administrators who had been directly involved in the Christensen case. Jarrell decided to withhold publication of these oral histories due to their sensitive political nature at the time. Now, nearly four decades later, we are able to publish these volumes as part of the Project's Institutional History of UCSC series.

Professor Von der Muhll's initial oral history was cut short by circumstance; hence we took the somewhat unusual step of conducting a much more in-depth follow-up oral history with Von der Muhll, who graciously agreed to this endeavor and devoted a great deal of time to both the interviews and to editing the transcript. George Von der Muhll is now an emeritus professor of politics at UCSC. He arrived at UC Santa Cruz in 1969 affiliated with College Five (Porter College), where he was acting provost at the time of the interview conducted by Randall Jarrell in 1976. Von der Muhll earned a BA from Oberlin College; MSc from the London School of Economics, and a PhD from Harvard University. He retired in 1994. Von der Muhll shares his thoughts, not only on the Christensen

administration, but also on the reaggregation and reorganization programs of the late 1970s, in which he played a central role. He also contemplates UC Santa Cruz as an experiment in public higher education, from the perspective of fifty years after the campus was founded. For reasons of chronology and length, we decided to dedicate this entire volume to Von Der Muhll's interview. A third oral history volume, *Daniel H. McFadden: The Chancellor Mark Christensen Era at UC Santa Cruz, 1974-1976*, also originally part of this series was published in 2012 and is available on the Regional History website.

Special thanks to my predecessor Randall Jarrell, for having the prescience to conduct these oral histories early in her own career, and to Professor Michael Cowan, who generously shared his memories and insights into this chapter of UCSC's history and who assisted with the many logistical and editorial challenges I faced in completing this project. Thanks also to Mim Eisenberg, for transcribing this interview.

Copies of this volume are on deposit in Special Collections and in the circulating stacks at the UCSC Library, as well as on the library's website. The Regional History Project is supported administratively by Elisabeth Remak-Honnef, Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian, Elizabeth Cowell.

—*Irene Reti, Director*

Regional History Project, University Library

University of California, Santa Cruz, March 2015

Coming to UC Santa Cruz

Jarrell: When did you come to UCSC?

Von der Muhll: I came in the summer of 1969. I was a faculty member at the University of Chicago, but I had spent two years in Africa [instead of on campus], and after that my wife could not stand living in a city like Chicago, which we had not lived in before going to Africa. We came out to California in the summer of 1968. She fell in love with the place and really so did I. So I was happy when I was offered a chance to come here, and I did in June of 1969.

Jarrell: Your background was in political science?

Von der Muhll: Yes, that's right.

Jarrell: And then you were appointed to UCSC in 1969?

Von der Muhll: Well, I was interviewed in the spring and my appointment came through in late spring. So I taught summer school here and then entered the fall quarter as a regular teacher.

Jarrell: And having been affiliated with more conventional or traditional institutions, what did you expect here in terms of being a faculty member? Had you heard about the college system or the experimental nature of this campus?

Von der Muhll: Oh, yes. I thought about it quite a bit. In fact, I've never come so deliberately to any institution in my life. I did some teaching at Harvard. I taught undergraduates at Swarthmore College, which was very rigorous, though not

quite conventional; it had a demanding honors program that was very special. And then I taught in both the graduate political science department and the undergraduate college of the University of Chicago and in Africa also. I'm not sure you would call Makere University in Uganda a conventional university but it had a conventional curriculum. Likewise, Haile Selassie University in Ethiopia. So I'd had a fair range of experiences with undergraduates and graduate schools. One of the things I learned at Chicago was that a graduate school could be a great asset. I missed it a bit at Swarthmore. But, on the other hand, it was not essential for a first-rate, challenging undergraduate program.

This campus, which did not have a graduate school at the time, but which probably would have one [later], seemed to me a good compromise. I was also seriously contemplating going to Stanford or to [UC] Berkeley. I had preliminary offers from both of places. But I decided that Chicago had a special kind of excellence that neither of them had, and a kind of community that they lacked. So I firmly decided against them.

But what appealed to me so enormously about Santa Cruz was the landscape, to begin with, which is so very, very beautiful. That's never been incidental to me and still isn't. Quite frankly, I'm somebody who came for the redwoods. But also, because I had gone to Oberlin College and Swarthmore, I had a very keen appreciation of the values of small colleges as against the very large kind of corporate, graduate-school dominated universities like Berkeley. So the collegiate structure appealed to me. And then, I am a dilettante and continue to be. I've taught in literature classes, in philosophy, sociology, history, and economics. I know a good deal about economics at an elementary level. So the opportunity in

Santa Cruz to try out a number of different areas—

Jarrell: On undergraduates.

Von der Muhll: —on undergraduates, which is something you cannot do in graduate school. I learned that at Chicago. Graduate students come with very fixed notions of what they want. They come to you because you are the expert in the field, or one of the experts. If you're not a prominently recognized expert in your field, they grow restless because they feel they're not getting their money's worth, or the postgraduate connections they need. So I liked the possibility in Santa Cruz of moving very freely through a variety of different fields and trying out new combinations.

Jarrell: Kind of intellectual flexibility for your own growth.

A Remarkable Design for a Campus

Von der Muhll: Yes. For my own growth. I thought that Santa Cruz would offer that, as indeed I feel it has. And I liked the organizational structure of Santa Cruz. I thought Chancellor McHenry's brochure, expositing his guiding principles for the campus, was very ingenious. I was very taken by it. I read it through very carefully before I came here for an interview. It depicted to me a remarkable design for a campus, combining the advantages of large and small institutions. One of my specialties is, or used to be, public administration and organizational theory, and the plan for UC Santa Cruz seemed to me a singularly successful working out of some very sound organizational principles, including the distributions of incentives between collegiate and board teaching. So the very

fact that it had been thought through so well and offered diversity—not ramshackle and casual diversity but very well-planned diversity—seemed to make it exciting to me in a way that the campus like Stanford and Berkeley were not. So I felt that if I were to leave as congenial a place as the University of Chicago, I would want to go to some place that was really distinctive—that was not just another Chicago somewhere to the west, but that was unique—and I felt this place was.

I'll just say one more thing that relates to my being an acting provost this year. I came here feeling that I wanted to be more than simply a scholar in a different setting, though I wanted to be that too. I liked the idea, the challenge of being part of a new university, and helping contribute to its organizational growth and definition. And therefore, I've never resented the burden of administration since coming here as much as some people have. I don't particularly like it and I would like to be more of a scholar. I do feel sometimes chewed up. But I did come here deliberately, knowing that I would have to put in time on continuing to help build an institution.

Jarrell: The growing pains required faculty energy.

Von der Muhll: That's right, that's right. It required that.

Jarrell: Can you kind of look back over your six, seven years here— you say you came here deliberately because this was a growing institution—you liked McHenry's exposition.

Von der Muhll: Yes.

Assessing UC Santa Cruz

Jarrell: Now, once you got into this place and into the mechanics of the balances of power and everything, could you tell me what you think are the most significant problems that you have seen develop over the time you've been here, how you have dealt with them, and how you see your role as a sort of facilitator as being head of a college?

Von der Muhll: I don't think the slowing of growth is a major problem. That never troubled me. When I came to the campus, I asked Chancellor McHenry within the first year why he really wanted to get as many as 28,000 people here, considering the impact on the social environment and the impact of so many students on these lovely redwoods.¹ He said, "Because only an institution of that size can be a great university." And I said, "The University of Chicago has 7,000 students, including all its graduate schools, law school, and medical school, and still is one of the leading international universities in the world. So I'm not persuaded that a campus has to be that big for excellence, though some of its features—a centralized laboratory facility and large library—clearly are necessary conditions for such excellence in the research-oriented institutions all University of California campuses are expected to be."

I said I thought the question of size in relation to excellence was an interesting empirical question, one not to be answered by the automatic assumption that there's a direct correlation between growth and stature. Given that fact, I don't regard the slowdown as disastrous. I'm not bitterly disappointed at the failure of

¹ The original plans for the UCSC campus were for 27,500 students.

graduate departments and schools to effloresce. I also think, secondly, that in the early years the graduate schools might very well have overwhelmed the collegiate idea. Probably the only reason why colleges have survived is that we could not rapidly build up large professional graduate departments.

But I think probably the single most serious problem that I had not foreseen and had not thought through is the position of junior faculty without tenure in the social sciences and humanities. Because in the natural sciences it's quite clear that even here close affiliation with the board is expected and highly professional work directly related to one's board's expectations is the way to get ahead. And if one is not successful by those terms, one has nevertheless spent one's time in ways that are recognized throughout the country. In the social sciences and humanities, however, I think many young faculty are caught between wanting to be active participants in evolving a distinctive collegiate curriculum and living up to their board's standards. And many of them have appeared to be unwise—because of their enthusiasm for coming here, enthusiasm such as I had—in spending most of their time on college teaching and on institution building. If they aren't successful in getting tenure, they then discover that they don't have the credentials needed for obtaining another academic position in the outside world.

Jarrell: To get to another job somewhere else on the outside.

Von der Muhll: Exactly. So it's the usual problem of utopian communities. They may work very well on their own terms, but as long as they're part of a larger system, and as long as there's an expectation that people will go out into that

system under some circumstances, they have to pay attention to the standards of the outside world; they have to shape their own activities to some extent with that possibility in view. The tenured faculty is in a privileged position.

Jarrell: They can play both sides, as it were.

Von der Muhll: That's right. And so the paradox is that so often it's the young people who come here with the ideals of the institutions. They come for the idea, not because they want a comfortable place in which to retire in the sunset glow, but because they really want to find a different place. But then they don't know how to organize their time and what priorities to set. Many of them are victims of that kind of confusion. And I don't think the campus has been clear in the messages it gives them.

Jarrell: Do you think that this is a built-in conflict, which stems from the college-board conflict, in terms of social science young faculty?

Von der Muhll: I think that surely is part of it. But even within the boards, nobody knows how important it is to devote time to constructing a good class. That is, there are two kinds of research, which aren't necessarily in conflict. At Chicago, it was always assumed that any research that advanced your professional understanding of the discipline in which you were working necessarily made you a better teacher. I don't think that's true. And that's known at Santa Cruz. There are many kinds of research which are very valuable for course preparation that don't have an immediate payoff in terms of publishing articles. It's not the kind of information which is at the frontiers of any particular area of knowledge. Rather it's a more synthesizing kind of knowledge that grows

out of doing work in a diversity of fields and trying to see a pattern.

Jarrell: Right, and integrating that in terms of a broader focus.

Von der Muhll: Exactly. So you can be a very active scholar, and yet not have a great deal to show for it in terms of immediate publication. I think a lot of junior faculty don't know how much time to put into that kind of scholarship.

The other kind of problem—namely, getting too involved in committees and so on—is less serious, it seems to me, because any wise person will know that in the end the university requires more for promotion than a lot of time spent on committees. People who are active on committees may cease to be active when they get tenure. It's not central to their careers; and in any case, it doesn't necessarily develop and shape one's academic competence. Research for teaching is what this campus has often seemed to encourage, and yet one of the difficulties is that when it comes to tenure decisions, peers are called in from outside, and these people look primarily for written work within their disciplines and bring fairly conventional expectations regarding its outstanding importance.

Jarrell: I didn't realize outside people are brought in.

Von der Muhll: They're always brought in on a tenure decision and their judgments may sometimes be harsh. Then, out of embarrassment, sometimes local faculty tend to go along. And I've seen repeatedly at the top levels of administration, too, that we do not have very sensitive measures of what it means to be a good teacher. To be good teacher is often taken to mean simply getting large numbers of favorable student evaluations, and these are combined

with favorable judgments of written work by outside organizations. One indication of status insecurity on a campus is when there is more emphasis on the sheer amount of publication than there should be. At the University of Chicago, which is a very self-confident, established place, the faculty and academic deans looked at the quality of your manuscripts. Nobody cared very much about how much you'd published, but they did care a lot about the quality they perceived in the work which you were engaged in. And people would read that and reach their own judgments inside the university as to the quality of one's work without deferring to outside publishers.

Jarrell: Such self-assurance.

Von der Muhll: Yes, they have self-assurance. And there's not that self-assurance on this new campus. I've seen repeatedly that people on this campus defer to the judgments of well-known scholars elsewhere. A favorable letter carries enormous weight against their own judgment. Somebody who has elicited a favorable letter from a well-known scholar at a prestige university has too much assurance of tenure here—more assurance than is warranted, I think, by a careful reading of that person's manuscript by the faculty of this campus bringing their own standards. On the other hand, this deference to outside evaluations must be viewed in the context of cronyism among certain cliques of faculty in the opening years of the campus regarding colleagues who gave themselves over entirely to institution building and who had virtually nothing in a scholarly vein to show for it during those heady years. So there are double standards operating and I think that junior faculty are caught between them sometimes. Even senior faculty who are up for promotion very often find that it's

the impact of outside letters, rather than very careful internal judgment, that carry decisive weight.

Jarrell: Do you see some solution to that in terms of this campus? Do you think we'd have to get older and more mature and that the faculty would have to develop more confidence in the validity of their own judgments? It's kind of a rough problem because you're bringing in new faculty and you've got a lot of people untenured already.

Von der Muhll: Yes. Well there're all kinds of problems and many are beyond our control. For one thing, we are getting more and more people who come here, not because they care about the distinctive features of this place, but simply because there happens to be a job here and there are very few jobs in the country. Therefore our faculty is increasingly taking on able people who simply are in search of a job, any job. Now those people, particularly if they do get tenure, may, in the long run, alter the character of the institution. That's predictable. It's the prevailing pattern throughout the country. Obviously, one thing we can do is to try to define our own ideals and then communicate them at an early stage to junior faculty who will be coming up for tenure. But to be fair, we must also clearly acknowledge from the outset the critical, sometimes decisive role of external evaluations, so that junior faculty remain aware of the criteria that may prove decisive in evaluating their use for promotion.

On this campus, recently a very popular teacher with a great deal of scholarly prestige was invited to come here. He came here with the understanding that he would be able to set up a graduate school program, a very important

consideration for someone who brought expectations from elsewhere. Then suddenly he found he was denied the resources he'd been promised and he felt betrayed. This campus was offering inducements it should not have offered to get him here. Now he will be increasingly discontented with the campus.

We've done that too often, as have many junior campuses. We have tried very hard to get people who are leaders in their fields, and sometimes we have not asked carefully enough, "Will they be happy here? Will they really contribute to this place or are they simply adding a glow?" Chancellor McHenry did that. He had a very keen sense of the necessity of establishing this place rapidly as a top-quality, prestige institution that could recruit from all over the country because of the well-known scholars already here. That made a lot of sense. But it's a dilemma because the price paid, in many cases, was getting people here who didn't really very much like the way the institution was supposed to be according to his plans, but instead were eager to change it back to the kind of graduate schools they had known. I don't know any way around that. Had we not had these distinguished scholars, this campus couldn't have attracted so many exciting young people. On the other hand, these scholars do bring their standards with them and often find it very difficult to change. And so I've found many faculty members here who object because this place isn't Berkeley, or it isn't North Carolina, or it isn't Wisconsin, or it isn't Harvard, which of course it isn't.

Chancellor Dean McHenry

Jarrell: I'd like you to assess McHenry's chancellorship—how would you rate

him as a chancellor—and then to discuss any ancillary topics.

Von der Muhll: Okay, fine. First of all, during virtually all the time I was here under Chancellor McHenry, I was a junior faculty member and had very little basis for contact with him. We had pleasant personal contact because he had a son in Tanzania and he knew that I knew about Tanzania. But that was really about the only reason we had to talk to each other, apart from the initial interview. So I'm not very well placed to talk at a close personal level about Chancellor McHenry or his operating methods. I heard many expressions of discontent in the last two or three years about secretiveness on his part—his disposition to make swift moves without really revealing until it was too late just what he was going to do—but I have no firsthand information of that sort at all.

I'm therefore very puzzled as to how to assess his chancellorship in larger terms. By and large, most of the ideals that he expressed from the beginning and that he expressed in his farewell seem to me very sound ideas. He really seems to have treasured this environment. And yet right there, there's a paradox. For example, I understand that he was very eager to locate this campus over in Almaden Valley because he thought it would have more political support in the legislature. It was located here against his wishes because of the donation of the ranch, and not because he immediately saw the potentialities of this beautiful campus. He gave too much importance simply to having good allies in the California legislature.

Again, once he got rooted here, I don't think it was his vision to locate the campus up in the forest rather than right out in the meadows with parking lots

and high buildings all over the place. I think he would have been quite happy to see another UCLA grow here, with large, impersonal structures and 28,000 people. And yet, that's what I can't understand, because in spite of this vision, it's also evident that it was he who cared enough about the setting for the campus to make sure that no trees over a quarter-foot in diameter could be cut without his consent. He had much to do, I believe, with the shape of the landscape.

Jarrell: Now we were just talking about paradoxes.

Von der Muhll: Yes. Well, I mean that's one kind.

Jarrell: Yes.

Von der Muhll: In his farewell speech he outlined a role for the colleges, which seemed excellent to me, but of course it broke down within a few years. That is to say, that the colleges would be primarily the center in which fresh first-year or second-year people would be taken in, given a general liberal arts orientation, given some basis for deciding what their special capacities and special interests were, after which they would leave it to the boards to finish—to polish the interests they had acquired.

Of course, the reverse has happened. Almost all the college core courses have broken down except in Cowell and Stevenson, a development which, to me, is personally very disappointing. One of the things I found most exciting about this campus was the prospect of large-scale, actively attended core courses. But students didn't want them and the faculty, having come from more conventional

institutions, were not that eager to put that much time into them anyway. So they were not too sorry, I think, in many colleges, when the students refused to take core courses.

And McHenry doesn't seem to have clearly understood the conflict between attracting more and more junior transfers who are impatient, already well along, who don't want to spend time in the colleges especially, who are very eager to get on with their majors, which are usually board majors. Therefore he was overtaken by events to some extent. He didn't seem to have understood the conflict between his own curriculum, on the one hand, and his aspirations to get more and more people on this campus, no matter what. So I think the campus has suffered a bit there, though partly through circumstances beyond his control.

Jarrell: Do you think it's important that the colleges have a substantial academic role as opposed to a social function?

Von der Muhll: I certainly do. That's why I came here. Harvard has its houses.

Jarrell: Right.

Von der Muhll: They have high-table and evening events, one thing or another like that. What seemed to me exciting was that here the colleges were supposed to be the locus for courses that would actively compete at the core course level for student energies, very actively compete with anything the boards could offer. And except in the case of Cowell and Stevenson, the colleges have not done that. College Five, for example, has an aesthetic studies major, which seems to me to have turned things on their head, in a way. That is to say, we offer advanced-

level college courses in student specialties, but our core courses are poorly attended and most of the faculty are not clearly aware of their existence. And many other colleges don't really have anything except a scattering of college courses. To me, that's been a real disappointment and I think the administration has never quite resolved that conflict either.

Again, I think McHenry, with all his political acumen, didn't quite see that there was a conflict between trying to build a strong college curriculum on the one hand, and on the other attracting faculty who are not deeply interested in college-course teaching. He did get some people like that, certainly. He was conscious of that. That's why he got provosts who were acquainted with the English university system, the English college system, people from Oxford and Cambridge, and Americans who'd studied there. But I don't see many people really deeply distressed at the demise of the colleges as major centers of academic interest, as against being outlets for the one course in five that a faculty member will accommodatingly teach, so that the college will have a number of courses in the catalog. I don't think the colleges are pulling their weight academically. It's a vicious circle because the less they demand of their faculty in terms of teaching, the less weight the colleges ought to be given in promotional decisions. Therefore rational faculty will invest more and more energy in disciplinary board activities precisely because that is the opinion that is better founded: it's more closely linked to their research; it demands a majority of their teaching time. As that happens, of course, there is still more withdrawal of energy from the college programs. Nobody seems to know how to break the cycle. I don't say that I do either.

Jarrell: As a provost, have you come to some kind of a reconciliation of these two directions?

Von der Muhll: It's more than any one provost can do in one year, I think. I have thought about it. Because I was dissatisfied with the quality of our leading collegiate major which gave College Five an identity—the aesthetic studies major—this year I set up a review committee to review the whole major and come up with some strong proposals on the basis of which we would have a rational basis for seeking additional resources. We needed a well-thought-out basis for the kinds of people who are really needed to strengthen that component of collegiate education.

I was also involved in what came to be called reaggregation two years back. I was chair of the Budget and Academic Planning Committee, which emerged as the group primarily responsible for reaggregation. Before that started, I sought to inspect the programs of the different colleges to see how in fact the faculty might be relocated in groups to strengthen them. But reaggregation, for reasons we may get to later on, was a failure in many respects. Now, I'm groping like everyone else, because I see no reason to ask faculty to spend a lot of time on activities—academic activities—pleasant but peripheral to their major interests, their professional interests. Except in a few cases, the colleges have not yet found a way of harnessing that kind of professional interest, so that books are being written, articles are being written, seminars are being organized on the basis of what the colleges are trying to do. We need intellectual life where we can get it, whether it's in the boards or colleges. I'm not trying to polarize boards against colleges. I'm just saying the colleges are not carrying their weight.

Jarrell: Are there any other areas of McHenry's legacy that you find especially noteworthy, or that you'd like to discuss, his appointments or the level of undergraduate education.

Von der Muhll: I think I have nothing terribly important to say. As I've said, he left a legacy that I don't fully understand. It is said that nobody could have taken over from McHenry without running into serious trouble, that McHenry centralized too much decision-making to himself, and that therefore there were too many people who were eager to take it away as soon as another chancellor came in because there was too much distrust of the top. I have no specific insights into that kind of assertion, but I think it was an important one. But it's an element I have not fully understood because I did not work with McHenry and therefore could not really understand in precisely what sense he left a vacuum.

Jarrell: Vacuum?

Von der Muhll: A kind of demoralized central leadership. I think one place where I am aware of the lack of legacy is that McHenry never really set up one institution which was clearly charged with planning the overall objectives of education on this campus.

Jarrell: Academic.

Von der Muhll: Academic education. One of the telling points is that we have, for example, an extremely conventional, essentially patronage-type breadth requirement for students. They have to take three courses in natural sciences, three in humanities, three in social science.

Jarrell: Sort of general education requirements.

Von der Muhll: That's right. But they're only patronage. There's no assurance that students will acquire special kinds of skills in moral reasoning, in empirical investigation, in testing of hypothesis and in logic through taking these courses. They can take essentially the same kind of courses in each of the three divisions. You can take the history of the sciences, you can take a history of the arts, and you can take a history of social theory, and you're doing essentially the same thing in three divisions. McHenry never saw that. I don't feel that he had, in that sense, a close, rich, and fruitful conception of precisely what an undergraduate liberal arts education would look like. The lack of a clear wisdom at the top had consequences for allocating FTE. He didn't have any kind of planning group that was really charged with formulating objectives for the transforming of undergraduates as they passed through the educational process, and for making sure that certain kinds of campus experiences were present to them, certain kinds of courses, and he didn't allocate faculty positions in relation to goals. Instead, FTE positions for faculty tended to be allocated largely in terms of ability to get to McHenry and present a specialized, persuasive case to him in relation to fairly narrow objectives. Since there were no overall criteria by which you would formulate claims—

Jarrell: The whole configuration of this vision of this undergraduate education—

Von der Muhll: That's right. Nobody knew what kind of case had to be made in order to get resources. If there were clear goals for undergraduate education, then each board or college that made claims either for material resources,

buildings, or FTE, would have known how to formulate their claims in relation to those overall objectives. Not having clearly established objectives has real, adverse consequences, for example, building the social sciences building without any consultation of the faculty, then discovering that no social scientists wanted to teach in it except for a few laboratory psychologists, because they wanted to stay in their colleges and therefore having to hastily fill it with whoever was willing to move—is a case of where physical planning was not related to educational objectives. Nobody had really thought through the conflict between a big building there on the one hand, and the expectations—

Jarrell: That everyone would flow into that from their own—

Von der Muhll: From their own college. They're going to have offices there, but at the same time they're going to be working in the college and building up the college program? That wasn't thought through. Well, that's a dramatic case of physical planning unrelated to overall campus objectives. But you have the same thing—when I became chair of the Budget and Academic Planning Committee, I found out that there were no criteria by which to appraise alternate claims on resources, no established claims. And, of course, that left McHenry all-powerful.

Jarrell: I have heard from different people on boards of studies that there was in fact never a clear-cut understanding, say by a chairperson of a board of studies, that okay, we have two FTE's we're going to get next year, that instead McHenry would kind of hold them all in a bag and dispense them as he saw fit depending on his whims.

Von der Muhll: That's right.

Jarrell: Now would you say that's overstating the case, or was that a practice?

Von der Muhll: I actually don't know because I was never chair of any board during the time he was here, so I never had to negotiate with him concerning FTE. I do believe that one of the institutional legacies he left behind him was the expectation that you describe—namely that nobody quite knew what kinds of claims would receive higher priority than other kinds of claims, so everyone had to make calculations on a fairly personal basis.

Jarrell: It was a personalized one, rather than having it objectified by saying each board can expect a certain percentage or a certain number of FTE's, so that everyone would know where they stood in terms of resources and the number of people that they could claim.

Von der Muhll: McHenry's strategy gave him a great advantage, that's right. There's a great advantage for anybody who is controlling the campus to keep fairly secret the criteria by which resources are allocated. Then that person has a great deal of room for maneuvering and nobody knows quite what to do. I think McHenry liked to operate that way. For example, it would have made a lot of difference if it had been clear that boards would not get more FTE simply because they were able to attract more students, in other words, that the faculty-student ratio was not sacred and determinative. That boards that deliberately attracted vast numbers of students through undemanding requirements and then said, "Look at the huge numbers of students we have. We need more FTE," would not necessarily get a hearing. Instead, nobody ever knew whether attracting more students was a goal and therefore whether it would provide an

effective basis for claiming more resources. Nobody knew whether there was a payoff to having a graduate program in terms of being able to claim resources. Nobody knew whether it was important for the boards to be able to document the number of prestigious graduate schools to which our undergrads were sent, as against demonstrating the more immediate vocational utility of the education they were receiving.

Jarrell: Right, as a reward for getting your people accepted into prestigious schools.

Von der Muhll: Right. Was getting their majors into the top grad schools to be the primary objective of the board? Or was it to prepare them fairly quickly for jobs when they got out of here? There was enormous confusion about all those matters and no hard decisions were ever made. Now, it's important in the early years not to get too rigid, I think.

But perhaps the most serious deficiency that McHenry had was that he wasn't really quite the person, as I understand it, to encourage others to formulate carefully long-range public objectives which could be publicly discussed and publicly agreed upon, so there could be a shared understanding of all the academic community about it. On the other hand, many of the people he brought here did that. I don't know much about the legacy of Byron Stookey but I think it had some importance. I am so impressed by the role of him and others in the early decisions that were made on this campus. Almost all of them seem to have been the right ones. The introduction of narrative evaluations in place of letter grades, after the first year or two, many of the decisions about colleges,

promotional policies—almost all of those seem very sound. Clearly, these were the kind of people that McHenry brought. I think that was his greatness. He did know how to get good people and he did respond quickly to good ideas in those early years. But it was in a larger sense, after a few years, as regards educational planning, that he continued to be too laissez-faire, and too flexible, and didn't encourage others to take on that responsibility either because he wasn't prepared to delegate it to them. The deans, for example, never received encouragement to be anything more than professors of promotional cases. The deans have not been strong curricular leaders and they've not been strong because they haven't been delegated that responsibility.

[interview transcript from 1976 ends]

Learning from Living in Germany after World War II

Reti: Today is January 16th, 2014, and this is Irene Reti. I'm here with George Von der Muhll for a follow-up interview to the interview that Randall Jarrell did in 1976 with you, George, about the Chancellor [Mark N.] Christensen era, the resignation of Christensen, and that period in UCSC history. We wanted to do some follow-up to that interview, which was quite brief. I'm very happy to be back with you so many years later. It's quite remarkable. And, George, so we wanted to start today by talking about some of your experiences before you ever came to UCSC, at other institutions that then shaped your approach to the challenges of the Christensen era.

Von der Muhll: Okay. I was born in 1935, and I say that because it means I have memories of when America was still at peace, when it went into war, and when

the war was concluded. This shaped my whole life very profoundly, because not only can I remember my father sitting in the backyard with a friend of his, listening on the radio to the fall of Paris and learning about that, but during the war I had a sense of the terrible price that all participants in that war paid and what was truly important, truly crucial, truly overwhelming on the planet.

And then after the war—somewhat less than two years after it—I went over to Berlin, which at that point was over 70 percent destroyed. For the next five years I was an American living in Germany. And that’s probably the single most important experience I’ve had in my life because it fixed a lot of how I understand the world, what kind of framework I would use to view it, and how I would distinguish what was truly terrifying from what was annoying or frustrating. And it certainly shaped the directions in which I wanted to educate myself and perhaps where I wanted to see educational institutions go.

Those five years of being an American living in Germany made me, ironically, particularly aware of what it meant to be an American, precisely because of the difference between us and the still—in some cases—Nazis, surrounding us, and of the miracles achieved by the American government in resuscitating the German economy through the Marshall Plan. I found down the road that I was talking, in many cases, to students here whose first memories of politics were of when John [F.] Kennedy was assassinated, who then saw this country fall apart and get enmeshed in the horrible mire of the Vietnam War, and who were looking for those who could share with them and talk to them about this perspective on the United States—the United States as the perpetual bully, as the country that got enmeshed where it had no business getting enmeshed, and

matters of that sort. I'm aware of a generational divide in that sense between, not only me and the students, but with many faculty who were only a few years younger than I. It was my own experience which gave me a different perspective on how to hold the world and the place of our country in that world.

Reti: What was the nature of your position in Berlin?

Von der Muhll: Seventh grade. [Chuckles.]

Reti: Oh, my goodness.

Von der Muhll: You see, my father, who was Swiss by origin and upbringing, was totally fluent in many European languages and familiar in depth with their diverse cultures. In the late 1930s he became an American citizen, but soon after Pearl Harbor he entered the American army, and two years later he was dispatched to the European Theater. Eventually, the army recognized that his European background was an asset that made him distinctively qualified to help cope with the floods of Baltic and Polish refugees who were fleeing into Germany ahead of the Soviet troops. He returned (as I vividly remember!) to America in 1945 just in time for Christmas, but four months later he was on his way back to Europe once more to join one of the civilian teams of the newly created United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Organization that was charged with helping relocate refugees who were in the camps of Occupied Germany into the societies surrounding them or to arrange their passage to the United States. But the UNRRO quickly worked itself out of a mission in those respects, and he then served as a French-English interpreter for the Four-Power Allied Control Authority in Berlin. Soon after he joined the Control Authority staff he worked

on developing fluency in Russian and made many Soviet Russian friends from among his colleagues.

My mother and I crossed the Atlantic to join him in March of 1947. I then entered seventh grade in the newly constituted American “dependents” school that was located amid the ruins of a devastated city that had once served as home to some three million inhabitants. My classmates were other Americans, drawn from all over our country, but my next-door neighbors included a slightly older English-speaking German boy (later to become Germany’s ambassador to the United States and to France, and who is still my friend) and an English-speaking semi-homeless Polish refugee my age. Through the nature of my father’s work and my mother’s volunteer activities, I was soon meeting people from France, from England, from the Baltic regions, and, above all (from my perspective), from exotic Soviet Russia. Several of my father’s Soviet friends in the Control Authority became regular visitors to our house, bringing with them unforgettable records of Russian balalaika and classical music and elegantly painted Easter eggs.

But in late June of 1948, the three Western powers concluded they could wait no longer to implement what turned out to be a stunningly successful currency reform to jump-start the German economy. The Soviets, who had suffered far too much from Nazi Germany in the Second World War to be willing to join their former allies in adopting a policy intended to promote a resurgent German economy, discovered the day after its implementation that critically needed repairs required indefinite closure of the only two land routes from the three Western zones of occupation in west and south Germany to Berlin through the

Soviet Zone that surrounded the city.

Closing these lifelines for food and fuel led to the immediate collapse of the Four-Power Council that had governed Berlin. It therefore ended my father's job as well, and we regretfully had to leave forever what I had found to be a fascinating cosmopolitan city to live in the much more homogeneous American Zone of administration for Occupied Germany. Nevertheless, my father initially took a job in Munich arranging for the transshipment to a central depot of paintings and art objects that had been stolen by the Nazis from the various countries they had occupied and had then sequestered in remote locations around scenically lovely, staunchly reactionary Catholic Bavaria; and during the summer months of 1948 he often took me with him to outposts ranging from the Duisberg automotive magnate family's country estate, seemingly untouched by the war, where we were served dinner on gold plates by liveried servants in a setting that would have impressed France's "Sun King" Louis XIV, to the black gates of Dachau, thereby providing me with glimpses of a Germany I would never have come to know had we remained continuously circumscribed in Berlin by the Soviet Zone. Soon after I had entered the ninth grade in Munich's American high school, however, my father took a job in the Office of Intelligence for the American High Commission for Germany that brought us to live first in the lovely spa town of Bad Nauheim and then in the much more animated city of Frankfurt, where I graduated from high school in 1952.

So even when I first came to college, I quickly became aware that I had brought to it a different perspective on the world and a set of experiences and memories deviating from those of most of my classmates, who had spent their teen-aged

years in more iconically American cities and towns and who had only read—if that—about places that I had lived in. So that continues to underlie much of what I tend to say in many contexts.

Reti: Yes. That's important.

Oberlin College

Von der Muhll: The second thing I want to talk about in relation to shaping forces is the impact of those colleges that I went to. I had not been initially enthralled by the prospect of attending Oberlin College—partly because of a sense of excessive familiarity induced by the fact that my grandmother, mother, aunt and uncle had all gone there, more because the flat, cold plains of northeastern Ohio and proximity to unglamorous Cleveland did not kindle my imagination. But my cunning mother induced my brilliant best friend to study comparatively the spirit and structure of its liberal arts requirements and its faculty's specialties and qualifications, and to join me in applying there. When we were both offered four-year full-tuition scholarships, the matter was settled.

On purely academic grounds, Oberlin at that time was considered probably the number two liberal arts college without a university superstructure in the country. Its well-balanced total of some 2000 students included several hundred who attended one of the highest-ranked musical conservatories in the country and who immeasurably added to the quality of student life outside the classroom during the long winter months with concerts, musicals, and theater performances of professional caliber. More strikingly and incontestably, in its liberal political milieu it was very ahead of its time. In the nineteenth century, it

had been the first educational institution of higher learning to admit women and African Americans, and it had been an important and highly active stop on the Underground Railway for escaping slaves. In the mid-twentieth century, although founded by liberal Protestant Congregationalists, it had enriched itself by readily accepting a brilliant and talented array of New York City Jewish students who had had to confront the hidden acceptance quotas that most Ivy League colleges still maintained. Both students and faculty at Oberlin remained keenly aware of the monstrosities of segregation in the 1950s, and the tenor of politically progressive student opinion resulted in highly predictable, though thoughtful, views on ethnic and racial issues, and remained notably ahead of its time in taking as axiomatic the equality of men and women in all spheres of life. A quest for “reasonable” stands could often lead to prolonged searches for consistency and resolution of paradoxes concerning the application of ethical norms to “difficult” cases, but the governing principles themselves remained within a framework that was rarely challenged. I soon found out that our campus newspaper had become, in many respects, the crucial forum for many of the most carefully thought out political and social arguments concerning national and international issues that I was to encounter in my college years. I myself learned how to forge many of my own reflections through the discipline of writing closely scrutinized interviews, columns, and editorials for that paper.

At Oberlin, it was unnecessary to contend that women were perfectly capable of holding number one positions rather than serving as obliging vice chairs. During my years at Oberlin, two of the four editors-in-chief of our campus newspaper were women. If anybody made a sexist joke, it was considered to fall into the

same category as crude racial, ethnic, or religious jokes, exhibiting a moronic bad taste. There was really no fraternity spirit at all. Oberlin had long banned fraternities; and while complaints about town regulations requiring that only “3.2” beer be served were common enough, binge drinking and its attendant consequences were pretty much unknown and not a topic of compelling student interest.

We all regarded Senator [Joseph] McCarthy as a monstrous menace and a terrible aberration, destroying the U.S. Senate through his wild charges of Communism in their midst. And the politically articulate students on our campus were very much interested in what seemed to us exhilarating—we had to learn something more about that later—the exhilarating experience of Communist China’s taking over China and restructuring its gigantic society to eliminate gigantic, preventable natural disasters and undo horrifying archaic practices like foot-binding.

In the years since I left Oberlin I have therefore had great difficulty in recognizing the characterizations I’ve seen regarding what the fifties were like. I find it nearly impossible to identify with what I am told preoccupied “Americans” in the 1950s—the TV shows, the tastes in music, the limited ambitions of women, the “lonely crowd” of men in “gray flannel suits,” the comfortable acceptance of prevailing race relations and corporate power, the lack of curiosity about political developments in foreign county outside the framework of the Cold War—in short, what students and alienated dropouts were beginning to rebel against as Americans entered the sixties.

What I'm trying to say is Oberlin students were not typical of 1950s students at all. But I also learned to appreciate the unqualified emphasis on the liberal arts: small classes, relatively small classes. It wasn't a giant, impersonal university. It was nothing like Berkeley at all. It was a place with a very strong music department. With entering classes of less than 500 students, students easily formed high-minded communities of specialized interests—we even had a Mahler-Bruckner society to promote their unjustly neglected symphonies. Close academic relations for juniors and seniors with faculty members were easily established by those who sought them. I thereby gained a deep appreciation of the benefits of a highly structured education that centered on the liberal arts.

London School of Economics

In any case, my next profoundly shaping academic experience—one that ultimately affected my teaching here—occurred as a consequence of receiving a Fulbright Scholarship for graduate study at the London School of Economics. The two years I spent there proved to be the two most educated years of my life. At that time, the LSE had had an outdated reputation as a “red” school. In fact, by the late 1950s its leading faculty shared an integrated libertarian perspective regarding the relationship between economic and political regimes—precisely the topic my last two years at Oberlin had led me to wish to study in depth. I had probably taken more courses in literature and history than in political science at Oberlin, but when I came to the LSE I encountered an intellectually powerful cohort of economists and philosophers (and even the associated participation of the preeminent art historian Ernst Gombrich) who encouraged close, probing consideration of the epistemological foundations of knowledge and normative

reasoning that, in principle, held fundamental implications for the study of politics and the conclusions that could be validly drawn from such studies. At Oberlin, I had been so busy assimilating knowledge within fields ranging from architecture to zoology by way of physics, the history of political philosophy, comparative religious studies, and the historical records of Nazism and Communism that I had rarely left time—nor had I been strongly encouraged to take time—to work on developing a structured consideration of the principles guiding such inquiries and the critical tests to which such inquiries should be subjected. Now, at the LSE, I had the freedom to spend two years preceding composition of a master's thesis and a final oral examination and to use it to read books at my own pace that challenged me to think through the premises on which such investigations were conducted and their implications and to follow up the paths radiating outward from them, without having to meet the short-term deadlines for externally assigned reading and writing entailed by the necessity of meeting the requirements for specific classes, in who had explored the foundations of human knowledge and the possibility of generalizing from them, and raising fundamental questions.

The LSE, I found, was admirably suited to that purpose. At my own volition I audited the economist James Meade's exposition of the elegant architecture of international trade theory, introducing one—and only one—new variable in each class and working systematically through how it added manageable complexity to the conclusions previously reached. The political philosopher Michael Oakeshott used a similar procedure to elaborate the argument for radical libertarianism, economist Lionel Robbins undertook to identify the distinctive

premises providing coherence to the entire enterprise of economic reasoning, while the epistemological simplifier A.J. Ayer systematically employed a threefold classification of sentences to dissect and destroy pompous arguments based on illegitimate confluences of these rigorously separable categories. Most influential for the remainder of my thinking life was the justly celebrated philosopher of science Karl Popper, who taught by inviting students to bring in and read aloud a paper on literally any academic topic under the sun and then, every five sentences or so, in the context provided by the unfortunate student, invoking a clearly explicated and defended general critical rule to show how these clusters had violated one or more of such rules.

In all these classes I found questions being asked that I had not previously seen being asked so directly: How do we know what we know? Can descriptive propositions regarding economic and political orders be linked to judgments and prescriptive conclusions without violating sound canons of logic? And how do the points of view regarding such matters, or regarding how economic resources are distributed, profoundly shape the political order? Asking such questions led LSE's professors to show how notions of how to allocate economic resources and how to justify their effects on politics were grounded, consciously or not, in some major philosophical assumptions, thereby achieving an exceptional orderly fusion of insights from the three fields—politics, economics, and philosophy—that underlay them.

By the end of my two years at the LSE I found myself no longer disposed to think of myself primarily as an aspirant political scientist, but rather as a social scientist interested in the foundations of knowledge and how these implied

larger questions, again, of what do we know? How do we know the world? What's the evidence for our construction of it? What kinds of propositions organize whole fields? What are the foundational axiomatic propositions that underlie each discipline? And this seemed to me very important, very exhilarating and therefore not just interdisciplinary, but a way of grasping the world.

So because of that, when I went on to Harvard in the fall of 1958, I found the experience—at least initially—rather intellectually tame and rather disappointing. As at Oberlin, Harvard had many very fine teachers with very important perspectives, who had much to say about France or China or English literature or so on, but nobody who probed as deeply as at the LSE into what seemed to me the organizing principles of how to formulate teaching and reflection on a whole discipline, that I'd experienced at the London School of Economics. I enjoyed Harvard and respected it, but I spent quite a bit of time asking myself, why is it that Harvard graduate school—where I was privileged to have a four-year graduate honors fellowship of some kind—why was it that a place I liked and respected, nevertheless was not as challenging, not as stimulating, and in the end not as conclusive in the education it offered as my two years at the London School of Economics?

Working in Washington, D.C.

The next development that proved important to my own career, but also to thinking about how to teach my subject, occurred when I realized that I had been immersed in the theoretical studies of politics but had never yet met a single

practicing career politician. Accordingly, in the fourth year after I had entered Harvard Graduate School, having completed my field work in Plymouth, Massachusetts for a doctoral thesis on the structural implications of contemporary New England town meeting democracy, I put the writing of my thesis on hold, applied for, and received an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellowship that took me down to Washington, D.C., in November of 1962, a few days after the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the year before President John Kennedy was assassinated.

The terms of my fellowship were designed to enable me to offer my services free of charge as an intern for four months in the office of a member of the House of Representatives and then for another four in a Senatorial office. Before making the rounds of the Rayburn Building to search for a potential House office in which to work, however, I subscribed to a strategy that seemed consistent with the objective that had led me to interrupt my work on my doctoral dissertation. I had come to Washington, I told myself, not to confirm my political policy preferences and those of my circle but to learn about the mind-set, calculations, and tactics of professional politicians who were using their distinctive skills to stay or advance in office and to remain influential with those whose support was essential to moving their bills through their legislative chamber. I would probably learn more, I reasoned, from close observation of experienced and consequential members of that species whose policy choices were alien to my sheltered values than from those whose political perspectives were closest to my own. As a seaboard Roosevelt Democrat by upbringing and conviction, whose family had dissuaded him from wearing an elephant button when he was five, I

therefore resolved to work for a key Midwestern Republican in the House and then for a member of the powerful Southern segregationist wing of the Democratic Party in the Senate. These were the groups who had done the most to stymie the laws I had most wished to see enacted. It was among them, I decided, that I should start my search.

In the event, my self-disciplined project failed completed. I found that I had neglected to take into account the kinds of people I would be working with and the kinds of work they would ask me to do. Not too far along in my initial search I was interviewed by a very pleasant Republican Congressman from Grand Rapids, Michigan—not far from where my mother and I had lived for parts of World War—whom my Harvard thesis advisor Edward Banfield had met at a conference in Maine and who seemed to embody the very criteria I had laid out for myself. However, he said that I would be most valuable as an assistant to members of his staff responsible for press releases, and I found the person in charge of that section to be distinctly low-key on first impression. Meanwhile, I found myself besieged to join a team of programmatic activists by a lively, ebullient, politically sophisticated legislative assistant to Congressman William Fitts Ryan, a very Irish-Catholic Democrat who had carved out a safe seat for himself on Manhattan's West Side by endearing himself to his liberal Jewish constituency through his unrelenting attacks on the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee. So I turned down an opportunity to work in the office of Gerald Ford, who was later to become quite prominent in American politics, in order to write speeches and undertake research projects in conjunction with a thoroughly congenial staff for a politician whose

temperament delighted me and whose causes I wished to do what I could to advance. Such was the outcome of my first venture into detached political analysis!

I was no more successful in adhering to my resolution when the time came to switch to a Senate office. In my first two weeks of searching for a position I was told by gracious Southern Democrats that they would try to think of something for me to do: "I suppose we could use someone to mail hog catalogs to our constituents," one told me. I began to see they were in the Senate not primarily to advance causes of their own but rather to block legislative changes that threatened to change the lives of their white constituencies—and for that, they had no great need for an ambitious staff.

Then for some reason I was called in by Hubert [H.] Humphrey, the senator from Minnesota, at that point the Senate majority whip, before moving on in 1964 to become the vice president of the United States during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. When I showed up, he said he would very much like to put me in his office if I was willing to work for him. He told me he had founded the whole program and was thoroughly familiar with its objectives, and he had a clear idea of what kinds of experiences I would find most educative. He would give me a desk right outside his office so I could see who visited the Senate's Whip. I could write speeches for him on the (nuclear) Test Ban Treaty with Russia, developmental programs for Appalachia, and on the emerging demands for civil rights in the Deep South, but I could also go with him to watch the work of the Senate's appropriations committees, which were not open even to journalists, although the staff of the Senate members can attend. He was ready to connect me

with what was at that time a large bloc of liberal Democratic Senators from Midwestern and Mountain states. It did not take me long to say yes to his proposal. And he proved as good as his word.

Although congressional fellows were expected to put in a solid day of work for the offices that took them on, we also assembled several times a week to hear a talk by a senator, a prominent journalist, or a member of Kennedy's White House staff. On one particularly memorable such occasion we trooped in to hear a talk by the senior senator from South Carolina. I had already learned much about Strom Thurmond from the media: he embodied all that was reactionary and distasteful about the unregenerate Confederate states—he championed continued racial segregation, he aggressively promoted his archaic doctrines, he was proudly macho about having fathered children at a very advanced age. In our session, he initially conformed to that image. But then, when we were invited to ask questions, a different man emerged. Most politicians, I had found by this point, use questions as a platform for further, often repetitive, exposition of their views. Senator Thurmond actually listened carefully to the questions; he interpreted them faithfully and spoke directly and articulately to the issues they posed. At the session I attended he continued to answer those questions for three and a half hours in sweltering heat. When his staff followed the conventional Capitol Hill practice of coming in to say "Senator, there's an important phone call for you that I think you'll want to answer" he brushed them aside, saying "No, no, I can see these folks still have something to say, and I'm here for as long as they want to be."

This does have something to do with when I get to Santa Cruz. I learned that

Strom Thurmond, who was obviously at that time the most evil member of the U.S. Senate—he was very macho, he was Southern, he backed segregation, he was a bully in many respects, he was also a remarkably articulate man who answered questions. Most politicians use questions as a chance to tell you what they want to do. He listened carefully to questions, he spoke directly to the questions, and he was willing to stay there for three and a half hours answering those questions, when his staff were coming in and saying, “Senator, there’s an important phone call I think you want to get.” And he would say, “Oh, no, no. These people have something to say.”

I single him out among the many that I met because that afternoon told me that it’s very easy to classify people as reactionaries, as segregationists, as Dixiecrats, as liberal Democrats, and so on. But my experience close-up of politicians told me one can learn a great deal more if one sits back and says, “What can I learn from these people?” than if one spends one’s time formulating attitudes about them.

At any rate, my year in the halls of Congress provided a critically important complement to my years at Harvard. While there, I had held a job as a teaching assistant that taught me much about the challenges of teaching. I learned much about what criteria to use in choosing texts for undergraduates, how to play them off against one another, how to sustain a coherent analytic theme through an hour’s discussion. But my sources had necessarily been confined to words on paper. After my time in Washington, I had a far clearer sense of the complexities and ambiguities of political choice. And I was soon to learn in my subsequent teaching that, like the right picture in the much-used proverb, one anecdote

drawn from personal experience in the high-pressure world of national politics can be worth a thousand words.

Swarthmore College

And then I was pulled to Swarthmore College. When we were at Oberlin, my friends and I had suspected that there was one college in the USA that was considered within academic circles as more academically proficient than ours. The opportunity to teach at that college therefore piqued my curiosity. And when I left Washington for Swarthmore in the fall of 1963, I found that these were no idle judgments. The college did indeed have a very fine faculty, and I soon found myself teaching brilliant students who had obtained in the neighborhood of 800s on their SAT scores on both the verbal and the mathematics parts.

It's therefore somewhat of a paradox that two of the most boring years of my life were spent in that environment. Swarthmore College was a perfect dream of what students said they wanted. Faculty members were very immersed in tracking student life both in and outside the classroom. They rarely seemed to have time to discuss among themselves in any organized manner the basic ideas of their disciplines, but most kept themselves very accessible to students and very focused on their needs and attainments. And the students themselves worked incredibly hard. They would have twenty books, literally, in the honors program for the weekly seminars. And while there, I myself had to work very hard because I had hardly ever studied American politics either in college or in graduate school—literature, history, and European politics, yes, but only one

unmemorable class in American politics. And yet somehow I had to show very smart, very academically ambitious students in small seminars who were reading or skimming twenty books a week that I had the right to present myself as their instructor.

Confronting this challenge taught me a great deal about my own discipline because there's an oddity about political science. Almost all other standard disciplines within the American academic spectrum have European counterparts whose practitioners have reached a level of academic sophistication equal to their own. Natural scientists therefore freely collaborate across the ocean in terms of equality, philosophers and students of literature likewise. But American political science after the Second World War underwent a so-called behavioral revolution that transformed the whole field of study, in this country, making it more modeled on the natural sciences in its theory construction and methodology, much more devoted to systematic empirical research to get at the roots and consequences of the political choices made by very large numbers of people. American political scientists began to develop very sophisticated models for explicitly structuring their inquiries and for collecting and rigorously processing masses of data in accordance with strict statistical protocols, and success in the discipline soon began to demand mastery of methods requiring several demanding years of specialized training. Within little more than a decade, a highly visible gap was opening up between what their European counterparts called, sometimes mockingly, more often enviously, "the American science of politics" and the unchanged study of politics in Europe by "wise" people who were largely indistinguishable from contemporary historians. Apart from a few

budding research institutes in Great Britain and Scandinavia, there was nothing to match frontline American political science abroad. By the way, even in the London School of Economics this gap between what passed there for the empirical study of politics and the standards attained in leading American universities was considerably more evident, one-sided, and indisputable than in either economics or philosophy.

Inevitably, in those early years, for reasons of both focus and cost, developments in American "political science" took place largely through studies of the home country. Advances in American political science were registered largely through research projects with American politics as the field of study, and the sophisticated interpretive and methodological debates to which they gave rise were conducted largely with reference to that domain. Comparative studies in Europe, Africa, and Asia were still in their infancy. I had been brought in to Swarthmore to take over classes in American politics from two Americanists who were taking sabbatical leave, and it was presumed that the highly localized topic of my dissertation on town meeting democracy, together with my subfield at Harvard of American constitutional law and my year in Congress sufficiently qualified me for that responsibility. Since, as I've indicated, I had in fact hitherto taken only one course in American national politics, and that a very conventional one, I therefore had to plunge headlong on my own into an enormously varied set of controversies defining the frontier of political science as it had been affected by the behavioral revolution, knowing that each week I would be confronting very bright students who were priming themselves for the top graduate schools in the country. Teaching courses on politics in America obliged

me to assimilate for the first time the cutting-edge work in my own discipline that had accumulated while I was studying economics and philosophy, and such work went well beyond what I had learned from the study of “government” at Oberlin and even at Harvard. In effect, of necessity I acquired a graduate-school education at Swarthmore in the most demanding sectors of my chosen discipline, and I probably learned more from doing so than my students learned from me. For that, I remain very grateful.

Reti: And this was all years before the development of political theory by people like Sheldon [S.] Wolin.

Von der Muhll: Sheldon Wolin was my teacher at Oberlin.

Reti: Oh, my goodness!

Von der Muhll: He taught the most boring class at Oberlin.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: He wasn't able to teach the class he really wanted. He was a political theorist, but the chair of the department, a very nice and very competent elderly man—that was *his* preserve, so Sheldon had to teach American politics. And he rattled through it at a very high rate of speed, with no change of inflection, with no interesting examples, or anything else like that. He just seemed to be trying to get through those lectures. Later on, at Berkeley, he wrote a perfectly splendid book, which profoundly shaped my own understanding of the history of political thought, which was what I had studied at Oberlin. But that was later on down the line.

University of Chicago

At any rate, the trajectory of both my life and my career took a sudden and far sharper turn than I could ever have foreseen on a chilly, gray day in January of 1965. That was when I was called up by Professor Aristide Zolberg of the University of Chicago's political science department to find out whether I might be interested in joining its faculty. I was a little taken aback by the call because, although I had started my dissertation, I was only halfway through writing its first chapter. [Laughs.] Maybe, if I were wise, I would just have searched for some way of getting another fellowship—I was always very lucky with fellowships—to carry me through. But at that time, I had just seen in my discipline's flagship journal, the *American Political Science Review*, that the University of Chicago had been ranked by American political scientists as the number one political science department in the whole country, ahead of Harvard. Because of the so-called "halo effect" of Harvard's general standing as the top-ranked university in our country, academics who weren't in close continuous contact with the leading circles of American political scientists were inclined to attribute that standing to its "government" department as well; but a smaller circle of political scientists whose work had led to invitations to travel around among the top campus of the country were more impressed by the caliber of the work they could see for themselves coming out from the young political scientists at Chicago. So although not particularly wanting to live in Chicago, frankly—

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: I thought, how can I turn this invitation down without at least going out to Chicago to learn more about conditions there? So I did, and in no time, despite a snowfall up to my knees for which I was quite unprepared, I was simply exhilarated by what I found. Chicago's faculty turned out to have made its political science department the most intellectually aggressive place on the planet. Of the twenty-one members of the small department, seventeen were Jewish, and they were marvelously combative. Perhaps because of having been immersed in the Talmud, they took nothing for granted, challenged every sentence from five different points of view, and reveled in their efforts to expose the weak points in every argument.

This characteristic emerged at the very outset of my visit to the University. Because the snowfall had diverted my flight to Kansas City, I arrived three hours later than scheduled, dispensed with lunch, and was asked to save my intended presentation for another time. Instead, after a few quick words of welcome, I found myself intellectually fencing with the departmental chair, Professor Leonard Binder, an obviously brilliant, highly verbal man of whom I had known nothing—not even that he was one of the country's leading specialists in Middle Eastern politics. He immediately launched into an attempt to persuade me to adopt an epistemological position about how we know what we know. Drawing on what I'd learned from Professor Karl Popper at the LSE, I flatly declined to step over the threshold and through the doorway through which he seemed to be pushing me. I felt myself pressed as I never had anywhere before in my life, neither at Harvard nor at Oberlin or Swarthmore or anywhere else. I argued with him for an hour, and I found myself *thinking* all the time, determined not accept

the logic of his argument and feeling a sudden complete confidence in where I wanted to go and how to support my stand—

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: This experience was repeated with slightly diminished intensity in all my subsequent meetings with other departmental members until, toward the conclusion of an enlivening day, I reached an elderly, gentlemanly professor named Joe Cropsey. I had known of his work as a strongly partisan traditionalist critic of the behavioral revolution in political science through an attack on him in an *American Political Science Review* article by two professors who were later to become very well known on this campus—Professors Sheldon Wolin and John Schaar—ironically, for espousing a critique that they themselves wholeheartedly advocated by the time they came here from Berkeley in the mid-1970s—so I was rather taken aback to find Professor Cropsey to be a kindly soul who had no intention of interrogating me further but rather seemed bent on helping me to recover from what he presumed to be my harrowing ordeal. I very much appreciated his humanity, but in truth I had already reached a very different conclusion: a department of political scientists like the ones I had just met was one that promised to challenge me in ways that would make me a clearer, more proficient student of politics. And I thought, this is a place that makes people smart, because it isn't nice. Its members assumed that one's wife (as a male—by the way, the department added female faculty while I was there) was probably working in the Chicago Stock Exchange or as a journalist or something like that, so nobody spent time, as elsewhere, assuring me that my wife would be able to join a ladies' club and have tea at four o'clock.

Reti: Oh, really. Interesting.

Von der Muhll: I liked that very much. And I began to realize that living in Chicago could also be exciting, even if parochial Manhattanites derisively called it the “Second City.” To be sure, Chicago was, at that time, also the center of tense, potentially explosive relationships among all the different minority groups that were living not too happily together in the city. The politicians in Chicago were having to mediate between the Poles and the Italians, between the Hungarians and the Czechs, or the Slovaks and the Slovenes. And so learning about Chicago politics on the ground could be an education in itself in the primary elements of what politics is all about. Hyde Park itself was largely a middle-class, Jewish university community in which violence was rare; but 59th Street was possibly the single most dangerous street in the whole United States insofar as just across it were the homes of transient African Americans up from the South, who had virtually no community at all. The Blackstone Rangers were nationally notorious for their street violence, and they practiced martial arts all day long. Crime rates were very high, and I learned that a significant number of University of Chicago graduate students had been robbed and killed while riding bicycles home at night. So, the raw edge of America—an America I knew little about except in the newspapers—would be open to me as part of working at the university.

Makerere University in Uganda

However, this prospect was abruptly altered by a development I could never have foreseen in my most unrestrained fantasies before that phone call in the

early days of 1965. First on the telephone and then during my visit to Chicago I was told, "This will have no bearing on whether we offer you a job here, but we do have a political science program in Africa, and it's located at a place in Uganda called Makerere University. Might you be interested in teaching there for a year?" Now, I was in no way an Africanist. I'd never been outside the Western world except down to Mexico, which I and my wife at that time had found enthralling, when we had driven down there in 1962 preceding my year in Washington. Soon thereafter, with the idea of making me over into a regional specialist in the nascent field of Latin American political science, the Rockefeller Foundation had begun tantalizing me with the offer of fellowships to teach at the University of Belo Horizonte in Brazil until the campus was shut down by a student riot, and then at the University of Colombia in Cali, where—once more!—a student riot resulted in the closure of the campus. After these experiences, I decided that perhaps I should put aside pipe dreams of escaping from suburban Philadelphia to live and teach in exotic foreign lands about which I knew nothing of consequence and get on with my thesis on town meeting democracy in Plymouth, Massachusetts. But now the University of Chicago's political science department was asking me whether I'd like to spend a year in Uganda, an even more exotic, even more remote country about which I knew even less. And this time the proposal was solidly backed by an established program in which other members of the department had already participated.

Makerere University, I learned, had been set up by the British to prepare promising East African students for potential future leadership roles in their countries. It was to provide a liberal arts education, buttressed by standards

imposed by Cambridge University examiners in England, for the presumptive elites who would take over the government of newly independent protectorates like Uganda and Tanzania, or emancipated colonies like Kenya. It had blossomed into what was now adjudged to be the finest, best-organized, most promising college campus in sub-Saharan Africa. As independence in the East African countries moved from a distant mirage to an imminent prospect, however, the United States had become increasingly disturbed by indications that the Soviet Embassy in Sudanese Khartoum was searching for opportunities to convert Makerere's classes in history, economics, and politics into forums for Marxist indoctrination. In a moment of insufficiently common enlightenment, however, the American Embassy in Kampala (Uganda's capital city and the location of Makerere) saw clearly that attempting to ward off Soviet initiatives with an American equivalent would soon be seen for what it was and rejected as such by the Uganda government, the college, the students, and by self-respecting professional political scientists of the caliber the Embassy hoped to recruit. It was in this spirit that the State Department had sought out the political science department of the University of Chicago, which was known at the time for its relentlessly empirical and analytic value neutrality in its work. The Embassy would fund the program, but it would minimize contact with the professionals sent over by the university and would ask only that the faculty model for students scientific inquiry into political behavior and systems in which findings would be judged, not by conformity to an ideology but by the canons of scientific research and argumentation.

Such was the proposal made to me for the coming academic year. I found it

irresistible. At this point in my life I was feeling more than a little frustrated. Two of my friends had joined the Foreign Service; one was now stationed in Bolivia, the other in the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, A third was working with the Agency for International Development in Turkey and Pakistan, and then in India; another had been sent on advisory missions by President Johnson's Council of Economic Advisors to the Carolines, Indonesia, and Vietnam. After my exciting year in Washington I had become mired at an elite college in a small suburb of Philadelphia. As a boy I had scrutinized maps of Africa, and I had noticed that the equator ran through a country I now knew to be Uganda that was the source of the Nile, framed by some of Africa's largest lakes and abutted by the sixteen-thousand-foot "Mountains of the Moon" below which elephants, rhinos, and zebra grazed in meadows bounded with jungles that were home to mountain gorillas. Now I could seriously contemplate living in a country that was called "the Pearl of Africa" and which Winston Churchill had described, with reference to the railway being laid out in Kenya, as being "at the top of Jack's beanstalk."

But, for me, the proposal had another dimension. My frustration was not only a function of confined horizons. In the sixties a great moral drama was being played out in America itself. I had felt strongly about the evils of segregation, but I had made no contribution to ending it beyond writing a few speeches for Congressman Ryan and Senator Humphrey. I was still trying to write my dissertation, and my first son was born in '64. I was very much on the sidelines, watching the events unfold down in the South and admiring the people who had the courage to go down there and ride the buses, but knowing that my

responsibilities to my family and to those who had paved my academic way for me sentenced me to remaining a media observer. Suddenly it struck me that I was being offered something remotely like a Peace Corps experience. I could go abroad and bring what I could to a new nation like Uganda. And as a teacher I had something distinctive to bring to an African country that might find those skills useful.

Reti: Is this the mid 1960s?

Von der Muhll: It was, exactly. Yes, it was in 1965.

So my wife and I packed up our bags and our boy, said goodbye to our friends and colleagues in Swarthmore, and flew over to Africa in the mid-summer of 1965. In retrospect I can see that my time in Uganda changed my academic interests irreversibly and propelled me in directions I have sought to follow ever since. And yet my first days at Makerere induced in me an odd sense of familiarity. In a strange way, it took me back to my life in postwar Germany. Once again, I found myself living as part of a foreign, small, and supremely advantaged international community, many of whose members had already lived abroad in other parts of the globe. For some years, Makerere had ceased to be a predominantly British colonial outpost, although all its courses continued to be taught in English; in addition to several other Americans, its faculty now included Germans, Dutch, Danes, French, Indians, South Africans, Nigerians, Kenyans, and a growing first-generation of indigenous Ugandans. Even so, we were bonded together, as I had been with a mixed group of Americans and other nationalities in early postwar Germany, by the experience of living amid a large,

fascinating, diversified, but much poorer society. As a matter of course, such circumstances generated a continuous flow of comparative insights, which we all quickly began to share within our densely interwoven campus network.

My most immediate contact with that society was, of course, with my students. They bore little resemblance to any I had previously taught. Many of them had made an unbelievable transition from watching goats on a hillside and taking care of younger brothers in a small and not very sanitary hut, to going through demanding schools, mostly managed by European missionaries, where they acquired the linguistic and arithmetical skills that made them university material. Within a startlingly short period at Makerere they proved able to track intellectually challenging lectures delivered in English, read and correctly interpret sophisticated sociology texts and treatises in classical political theory in that language, and write fine, argumentative, essays requiring no patronizing grading. They were not studying simply themselves in cultural identity classes, as so many disadvantaged students were being encouraged to do on many American campuses; indeed, one might well ask why they were being held to account for Great Britain's fifteenth century "War of the Roses" in the external examinations they faced, and one of my early tasks after my arrival at Makerere was to devise a new class in "developmental administration" to replace one on British local government. While I was there, no student voices were raised demanding "Africanization" of the prescribed curriculum; a degree from Makerere was what they coveted, and they were ready to learn whatever was necessary to pass the exams constructed in Cambridge University in England. Thinking that I might obtain better insight into local life, I enrolled in a tutorial

on Kiswahili—the *lingua franca* of East Africa, a marvelously clear and accessible language easily pronounced and surprisingly transcribable phonetically in the Roman alphabet, with a simple and consistent grammar very different from that of any European language. Toward the end of my stay, it was to prove useful, but not at Makerere.

This engagement with African society, such as it was, nevertheless opened up to me an awareness of how little I had known about Africa before coming and how what I had known was mostly stereotypical imagery drawn from homogeneous portraits of the “Third World”: poor people, uneducated people, helpless people, colonized people. At Makerere, to the contrary, I found very bright, sometimes aggressive, thoroughly differentiated human beings with complex personalities whose outlooks were shaped by a diversity of tribal affiliations yet who wrote elegant essays in my language that were better than many I’d read at Swarthmore. It gave me a vision of what life could be if I moved out of the comfort zones of Western civilization. In time, I managed to travel over many of the most remote back roads in East Africa and I began to encounter roadside car mechanics, shepherds on hardscrabble hillsides, soldiers, school headmasters, suave civil servants, market women, and medical technicians. I went to some of their homes, often little more than mud huts, yet distinguished by having an iconic picture of John Kennedy on the wall, which made me kind of proud. At that time I wasn’t ashamed to be American, because both John Kennedy and then Lyndon [B.] Johnson, more particularly, had done so much to confront America’s unresolved problems.

Toward the end of my year at Makerere, I was asked by my department in

Chicago whether I might be willing to stay for a second year. The program I was in was running out of funds, and negotiations for maintaining it had reached a delicate stage. If I were willing to stay on for a second year, I would be helping Chicago's side of the negotiations. By that point, my department was pushing an open door. My wife and I were both enthralled by life in Uganda. Despite a massive earthquake (our first), despite a virulent civil war from which white-skinned Europeans were largely exempt, we had come to love life at Makerere. Both students and faculty on our lovely, palm-fringed campus were a constant source of stimulation such as we had never experienced before. The eternal spring of a capital city located twenty kilometers north of the equator at an altitude of some four thousand feet was a revelation to two people who, having always lived in the "temperate" zone in such states as Pennsylvania and Michigan, had thought that winter naturally entailed snow with chilling sleet and then sweltering, humid summers. The opportunity to travel to uncrowded, lovely game parks stiff with elephants, lions, leopards, cheetahs, rhinoceroses, zebras, and crocodiles contributed to our sense of what an ideal life could resemble. Most of all, however, we had learned to appreciate living among colleagues drawn from all over the globe in a country of literate, English-speaking, remarkably cheerful Africans who were building a new nation and had far more to teach us than we could ever teach them. So I unhesitatingly informed my Chicago colleagues that I was willing to endure the presumed hardships of living in Kampala for another year, instead of in Chicago.

Reti: And this was as part of the University of Chicago?

Von der Muhll: That's right.

If I had any doubts concerning the wisdom of my decision, they were resolved by my colleague, Ken Prewitt. Ken was a young, extraordinarily able, Stanford graduate who had joined the University of Chicago's political science faculty at the same time I did, but whom I had not known until he came over to Makerere on the same program at the same time as I. Down the road, he was to become a leading figure in the field of systematic public opinion studies and eventually, before transferring to Columbia, became the temporary head of the U.S. Census Bureau and designer of several major reforms in taking the census so as to avoid undercounting the poor and the homeless. At this time, however, for reasons I found incomprehensible, Ken was eager to go back to Chicago to get on with his professional life. But when he learned that I might be staying on at Makerere for a second year, he immediately set out to induce me to get involved in a project he'd set up with Rockefeller Foundation money and the enthusiastic backing of the education ministers in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania to study how educational experience might contribute along with tribal affiliation, religion, urban or rural residence, parental guidance, work experience, and other such variables to forming young Africans' fundamental orientations toward the duties of citizenship—that is, to the process known to social scientists as political socialization. Drawing on his extensive training at Stanford in the methodology of survey research as part of his PhD dissertation, he proposed to distribute questionnaires to students in their last year of primary school, the second and fourth years of secondary school, and the final year of what the British call “advanced level” schooling preceding entry into a university, in random national samples of Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, and secular state-sponsored schools throughout Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. His object was to gather data for

developing a statistically supported portrait of the political orientations of the future educational elites who (since educational opportunity appeared at that time to be the determinative ladder of upward social mobility in those countries) were seen as the presumptive future leadership groups in those three emergent nations. He hoped to identify and weight the statistically correlated differences of schooling experiences associated with different patterns of response through answers to questions about how important the students considered tribal affiliation as against religion and place of residence in characterizing their identity, whom the students trusted and whom they did not, whether governments could be trusted or not, whether political power was more important to them than money, and other such questions.

Ken didn't have much trouble in persuading me that I should join him in his project. I was introduced at that point to a third member of our project, David Koff, an advanced graduate student at Stanford who was based in Kenya and would handle the Kenya part of the survey while coaching me further in the mysteries of mass-survey techniques. It was obvious to me that such an undertaking on so large a scale had nothing whatever to do with the subject of my PhD dissertation and might become a major diversion from finishing that project (as indeed, it so proved). But the substantive intrinsic interest and potential importance for political scientists of eliciting such elementally significant political responses from some eighteen thousand students and setting up a benchmark for comparison with similar projects in Western Europe (as detailed in Sidney Verba's recently published and much-acclaimed *The Civic Culture*) was self-evident. It was also clear to me, as it was to Ken, that such a

project would be very much in the spirit of the program that had brought us over to Africa and might be seen as a neutrally scientific and yet policy-relevant payback to our host country and its neighbors for having welcomed us to Makerere. I must also confess that the prospect of driving on remote roads to schools in the back country of the three nations that might turn up in our random selection of schools and then meeting missionaries, provincial governors, and schoolmasters along the way, was exciting.

In due course, we realized all three of these goals. But a fourth proved even more important for my professional career. Although he felt an unqualified horror of apartheid and segregation, Ken Prewitt was a true political *scientist*, one whose technical skills eventually led to his becoming head of the U.S. Census Bureau during the 2000 census before moving on to the Columbia faculty. Neither at Harvard, Oberlin, nor at Swarthmore had I had contact with some one who embodied the highest ideals of that role, combining a clear sense of “positive” theory with sophisticated methodological skill of the highest order. Undertaking a project eventuating in the need to process the responses of some eighteen thousand respondents to a questionnaire—possibly still the largest sample in the history of survey research—required nothing less. So working with Ken, learning the techniques of his craft, but even more importantly, its standards, became once again a vital part of my graduate education in political science that had been radically missing up to that point.

The “computer revolution” was just beginning to attain momentum in 1967. But computers were still huge, bulky machines that filled the rooms of the wealthiest universities in the country, so my associates and I had to rely instead on punch

cards and a counter-sorter to tally and correlate the data. One virtue of the counter-sorter was, however, that it performed the physical operation of lining up punched cards before one's eyes. In the course of framing questions for our questionnaire, visiting numerous schools all over Tanzania and Uganda to distribute and collect them, giving instructions to the Sudanese students who undertook the grueling work of tallying the responses, and reading texts providing a context for understanding political socialization, Inevitably I had developed strong hunches concerning how our student respondents had answered their questionnaires and how these answers would correlate with the background variables we believed would prove causes. But when everything was ready for the counter sorter, I had for the first time in my life an experience I'd never had before that was a true scientific moment. I and my associates were going to put the questions to the counter sorter and then watch the answers stack up through a process in which all our hunches, sophisticated insights, and unrecognized biases could play no further part. We asked a question and watched the answer stack up along the counter-sorter's forks without being able to influence the outcomes. It was for me a revelation of what "objective" social science could mean—and it was thrilling to watch. I learned that night that some of my good ideas, firmly buttressed by experience and reading, could nevertheless be false. On the other hand, what had seemed to me improbable causal connections turned out in some cases to be supported by the data. It was a lesson in humility, to submit to neutrally impersonal processes that we had agreed in advance were valid. And this gave me an understanding of what I could now unabashedly call political science. It can teach you that your good ideas, plausible ideas, may nevertheless be false. It gave me an admiration for the

people who had created a science within a highly contested, highly controversial discipline, where people have very strong feelings, very strong passions and values. Obviously, the questions you ask make some difference, and how you ask them. But still, sometimes the truth is more exhilarating, to find out than confirmation of your own point of view. And that became a lifelong experience for me, which I find a lot of people in my own field, and certainly in other fields, have not had. And it made me feel different about the academic enterprise.

My second year in Uganda proved important to my subsequent career in other ways. Not all were idyllic. For a brief period, a civil war broke out between the Baganda tribe, whose territory surrounded the capital city of Kampala where we were living, and other tribes to the east and west but above all in the north, from which Uganda's President Milton Obote had come. One afternoon a Swedish friend and I drove up to a hilltop from which we watched soldiers firing at one another below. It was the first war—and mercifully, the last so far—that I had ever witnessed. Other experiences were more benign. For the first time, I began to read widely in the field of comparative politics—a field in which I have remained engaged to this day—and to teach new courses in that field that gave me a much better understanding in depth of critically important historical, religious, economic, cultural, and structural differences between the new nations of Africa and old nations with new state superstructures like Egypt, India, Indonesia, and China. Rather surprisingly, Makerere was at that time a magnet for leading political scientists from all over the globe, from Robert Scalapino of UC Berkeley, the leading authority on Japanese politics who was nevertheless astonishingly well-informed and highly articulate about Africa, to David Apter,

who pioneered the use of anthropological insights in political science, to Sweden's Dankwart Rustow, one of the first Europeans to become preeminent in the "American science of politics." It was a dazzling array of people whom I had only known as leading names in my field, and it was complemented by visits by Soviet and Yugoslav political scientists who cast a new light on my field and generated instructive conversations I remember to this day.

One afternoon another celebrated political sociologist from Israel, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, unknowingly changed my whole conception of what I most wanted to study and write about through an altogether memorable talk on the properties of political structures in both ancient and contemporary civilizations that enabled some societies to maintain an open, flexible adaptation to rapid evolutionary changes while others crumbled under pressure from revolutionary forces because of their rigidity. I thought that no question in political science could be more fascinating and more intrinsically important, though it took another full two decades before I felt confident to write the first of several articles on ancient and contemporary civilizations that now define my life as a scholar in the years of my retirement.

Makerere, I could now see clearly, was no agreeable backwater in darkest Africa; it was a major stopping point—indeed, a hub—for a worldwide scholarly community, one that made it less parochial than any campus I had resided on up to that point or have come to know since then. Paradoxically, at the same time I was insensibly transitioning from a student and lecturer on American, European, and Soviet politics, with some modest expertise in the history of political philosophy, into a political scientist who was not quite an Africanist but at least

someone familiar with many nuances not only of Uganda, but also of the African continent more generally. The spy-thriller novelist John Le Carré once observed that a second year of residence in a foreign country is by no means simply an additive repletion of the first; on the contrary, one becomes more aware of the hollowness of many easy pronouncements about the country while at the same time coming to anticipate the rhythms of life there and the cultural patterns that will condition one's day-to-day life. Certainly, that was how I began to view the fruits of my second year at Makerere, and this sense was reinforced by confidently taking my questionnaires by myself to the most remote parts of southern Tanzania—cut off from the rest of the country for nine months of every year as the rainy season turned the dirt roads into a morass. My study of Kiswahili had now become an asset in distant African villages; I indiscriminately enjoyed the hospitality of isolated Catholic and Protestant missions where there were no hotels within several hundred kilometers, and was alternately welcomed and threatened by African district commissioners; and on lovely Lake Tanganyika, where the only European I saw for many days was the captain of the ship, I sailed on the refloated German battleship for the length of lovely Lake Tanganyika that Katherine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart sank in *The African Queen* and then drove up through the exquisitely beautiful terraced hillsides and totally untouristed lakesides of Burundi and Rwanda, both sites in the previous and coming years of Africa's bloodiest genocides.

All such adventures had to end, however. It was time for my family and me to return to our home country, recently fascinated by "hippies" and the "Summer of Love" but now convulsed by the Watts and Detroit riots and the outpouring of

protests over the Vietnam War. These were all burning issues from which we had been largely sheltered during our two absorbing years in Africa. And leaving Uganda was not easy. As we stepped onto our plane, my normally tightly controlled wife suddenly burst into tears, and the large crowd of friends who had come to see us off understood perfectly what she was going through. Despite a summer of travel around Europe on the way back, we were still in somewhat of a trance when we returned to the United States and tried to share elements of our two years in Africa with half-comprehending friends and family before settling down in Chicago.

That process proved less easy than we had imagined. When I flew to Chicago to look for an apartment in the Hyde Park area, I was overwhelmed with friendly receptions from people we had now learned to call “black” who couldn’t hear enough about my time in Africa and hoped that we would rent one of the apartments I looked at in the highest crime area of Chicago at that time. My three-year-old son desperately requested that we play over and over again the cassette tapes of African music that took him back to Kampala. For me, the transition was easier than for my wife and son. My departmental colleagues were graciously welcoming and I eagerly plunged in to rounds of the stimulating and challenging conversations that my earlier visit had led me to expect. I learned that major luminaries outside political science like the celebrated economist Milton Friedman were eager to meet new professors whom the political science department had considered worthy of hiring—a curiosity and sense of community very rare, I’ve been led to believe, in most top-ranked American universities, but one of which I was very ready to take advantage; and I

thoroughly enjoyed resurrecting what I had learned about the interconnections of political science, philosophy, and economics at the London School of Economics in preparation for teaching integrative courses on those subjects in Robert Hutchins's pioneering interdisciplinary college courses, where, I soon learned, mastery of Aristotle's treatises was expected of every teacher.

My graduate courses for my department, on the other hand, were less reassuring. Many of the graduate students had lost the spark of enthusiasm that had initially drawn them to academic life. Some had been obliged to earn money to support their families by teaching in local high schools while trying to find time on the side to make progress in their PhD dissertations. A surprising percentage had spent ten or more years that way, and the end was by no means in sight. That I was in some respects in the same situation gave me empathy, but I nevertheless found many of my graduate students over-specialized, intellectually exhausted, reluctant to pursue analytic thinking for its own sake, and in all not especially rewarding to teach. My illusion that teaching graduate students would be an inherently more challenging and rewarding experience was soon shown to be what it was. And if these were among the most selective cohorts in the country, what must it be like to teach graduate students in less competitive schools?

The following summer, I was awarded a stipend to spend the summer out in Stanford, where my associate political socialization director Ken Prewitt had spent a year before his projected return to Chicago. The journey out there was conceived of as purely for scholarly purposes—Stanford had a cadre of superior computer specialists who could help us convert out punch cards into computer data—but it was to have unexpected side effect. We drove out there with what

were now our two sons the morning after receiving the terrible news that Robert Kennedy had been shot and was dying, taking a southwestern route that brought us through Arizona and the Mojave Desert to southern California's Pacific coast (a first for my wife and me, although I had worked for a summer in far-northwestern California on the Klamath River for the U.S. Forest Service after my senior year at Oberlin preceding my two years in London). As it happened, many of the same flowering bushes we had known in Uganda were flourishing near San Diego, as well, of course, as palm trees; and suddenly, once again, my wife burst into tears on seeing those familiar plants. Then, as we made our way north through Santa Barbara, we stopped at a crosswalk to let an elderly couple make their way across. As they did so, they glanced at our license plate, saw that it was from Illinois, and came over to ask whether us folks were from Illinois. We explained that, though not natives of that state (as they turned out to be), we were now residents there. One of them then said (I think it was the woman), in words that were to have a prolonged repercussion for us, "California is such (a lovely state to live in. What's terrible is that we waited too long to come out here, and we're now too old to take advantage of all it has to offer." A bolt of lightning shot through me as I realized what her remark implied to me. An identical one struck my wife.

As it happened, during my second year at Swarthmore, I had been approached at the American Political Science Association by someone at UC Santa Barbara about joining its faculty. The location on a map looked appealing to me, but for some reason (for in general I was very unworldly about such matters) I asked, "What does it take to obtain tenure?" and was unhesitatingly told "Six articles

and a book.” When I decided to ask the same question of Chicago, I was told “We don’t let publishers decide who gets tenure. We look at any manuscript you may be working on, assess its quality to our satisfaction and then make our decision.” That self-confident, much less formulaic response seemed to me one more reason why I should accept the offer of a place like the University of Chicago. But now my conviction was being eroded by the lovely countryside through which we were driving on our way up to Stanford. And it was further weakened when later that summer we decided to drive down to Carmel to celebrate my wife’s birthday. A friend from my days at Harvard had written me about an exciting new campus that was opening up in the small coastal city of Santa Cruz, and we thought it would be interesting to take a look at it on our way. We came up the back way, took the west entrance, and drove through untilled meadows to a forest and on to a scattering of new buildings at the other end of the campus. What we had seen seemed to me rather raw, undeveloped, but then we parked, passed through Stevenson College, and stood on a terrace looking down across what was then a swimming pool

Reti: Yes, I remember it

Von der Muhll: — and a green oval playing field and beyond it to a gorgeous ensemble of trees, the blue Monterey Bay, and blue mountains rising up from the opposite shore. My wife, entranced, gazed at it for a long time and then said to me “I’d like to live in a place like this.”

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: “Not in Chicago.” [Laughter.]

Reti: Yes. I completely understand.

Von der Muhll: And I said, “So would I.” But that exchange didn’t seem have any particular pertinence at the time. It was just an ill-defined fantasy. It was strengthened, however, when, after returning to Chicago at the end of the summer, we drove east to Virginia to spend Christmas with my parents. Although my father was still working in Washington, they had bought some land in the woods a two-hour drive to the south en route to the University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville and had built a house on it where we all went for the holidays. On Christmas Eve my father and I walked up a hill from their house to his mailbox. I looked up at the sky as we reached it and I saw something I hadn’t seen for three months—stars. I realized then that I’d been living all fall in Chicago, in a densely urban environment, with smoke and city lights and endless traffic noises, and I said to my father, “I can’t keep on living in a place where one can’t see the stars.” And then, the very day after my wife and I had returned to our apartment in Chicago with our two sons in the first days of January in 1969, the phone rang, and a strange voice asked me whether I would be interested in being considered for a position at the University of California in Santa Cruz.

Perhaps you can now guess the impact that call had on me. I had found my Chicago colleagues thoroughly congenial. As I’d foreseen, I kept constantly learning from them. They were smart in so many ways. They continually challenged me. I could readily talk with them about almost any subject that interested me. But I simply had to acknowledge to myself that *where* I lived mattered, that I couldn’t go on living where I couldn’t see the stars. That was

something that really mattered to me. I understand perfectly well why my colleagues were heading in a different direction. They couldn't imagine why I would even consider coming to California. Santa Cruz? They got it confused with San Jose State University.

But in any case, when I got a phone call asking whether I'd be interested in being here, I said yes, I would be. And then strangely enough, I got the same phone calls from Berkeley and Stanford. So, suddenly California became a big agenda. And this, again, was part of a learning experience, because I went to Berkeley first. I had liked Berkeley. Sheldon Wolin was there, and I think he had something to do with the fact that I was asked. But at that time Berkeley was very deeply divided, and a lot of the questions a lot of the faculty asked me concerned my attitudes regarding Vietnam—where did I stand on that war, what did I think of the Viet Cong, would I walk through a picket line of students protesting America's involvement?

Reti: Ohh!

Von der Muhll: I had two conflicting reactions, essentially. One derived from the fact that my father happened to have been in Vietnam from '62 to '64, training Vietnamese intelligence officers. Because he was French Swiss, he was totally fluent in French—and his mission was to make full use of his fluency in training them not to resort to torture when they captured peasants, but to treat them with respect and to interrogate them in a systematic and sympathetic manner to find out what had alienated them from their government and how their alienation might be mitigated. He soon found that many of his Vietnamese counterparts

had nothing but contempt for the government officials they served, which with ample reason they regarded as Catholic elitists out of touch with their Buddhist countrymen, self-serving, and corrupt. However—and this was very important—they were also very afraid of the Communists as well. The people he worked with did not think the North Vietnamese regime and the Viet Cong were just agrarian land reformers, as many American protesters wanted to believe. These people knew all too well that the enemies of their contemptible government had often showed themselves to be even more brutal and much more efficient in their brutality. So my conversations with my father left me very much in the middle regarding an issue on which most political activists held very strong convictions about which side was right on an issue that seemed to me more complicated than was generally acknowledged. I found it unwelcome to be interrogated mainly on issues like that when at Chicago I'd been interrogated on intellectual issues related to my fields of study, and I decided that Berkeley at that time was no place for me. And besides that, Telegraph Avenue was not that impressive. [Laughs.]

And then Stanford was a fascinating place because it too taught me something important. When I was interviewed, I was told, "You won't have to teach undergraduates. We leave that to the people to whom we mistakenly gave tenure."

Reti: Whooo! [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: In two sentences, the chair of the department told me why Stanford was no place for me. At Chicago, in fact—I didn't say this, but I had

been recruited to be in the graduate political science department. I was told I would have all the privileges of a member of a graduate faculty: I could teach only graduate students if I wished, receive grants to go to professional conferences in my field, expect to receive the funds needed for major research projects. But I was also asked whether I might be interested in teaching an undergraduate course or two. Teaching undergraduates had become an important issue at the University of Chicago because many years earlier its president Robert [M.] Hutchins had decided that the undergraduate college should be entirely cut off from the graduate departments so that it could independently develop its own distinctive curriculum through a college faculty that did not have to engage in major research projects. Hutchins believed strongly that college faculty should be freed from the pressures of research-oriented graduate faculties; they should be charged only with the responsibility to teach, and to teach well. And over the years the undergraduate faculty did often teach well, and it developed an innovative set of cross-disciplinary courses that made undergraduate education at Chicago an intellectually exciting venture. One set of interdisciplinary core courses in its social science offerings blended the study of philosophy, politics, and economics in a manner very similar to what I had encountered at the London School of Economics. The prospect of part-time participation in such an undergraduate venture seemed very congenial to me.

But I also learned that Hutchins's separation of undergraduate faculties from graduate departments had revealed a serious flaw in its design. I soon found that by the time I arrived my colleagues in the college faculty had become very bitter about their exclusion from graduate departments. Faculty who had no affiliation

with a graduate department, I learned, were distinctly second-class citizens within the university. Nobody asked *them* to conferences. Publishers were not eager to publish their manuscripts. Nobody made them candidates for being president of the American Political Science Association. Hutchins's utopian separation of undergraduate from graduate faculties by giving them different missions had seemed like a brilliantly innovative idea when he first put it forward, but it was naive in not recognizing where the rewards are to be found in university life. Beyond any question, those rewards went very largely to members of graduate faculties. So Stanford's dichotomization as it was put to me seemed to signal trouble from the outset.

Reti: Very interesting.

Von der Muhll: Then I came here.

Reti: Now, who called you to come here?

Von der Muhll: Well, I think it was Karl Lamb, who was at that point the chair of the politics board. But it seems likely that my name was first raised by David Thomas, who was one of the early members of the politics faculty. As it happened, David Thomas had also gone to Oberlin.

Reti: I've interviewed David. Years ago.²

Von der Muhll: Moreover, David was my roommate in London. That was long before he came out as gay. He was a wonderful education for me. He had taken

² David Thomas was interviewed as part of *Out in the Redwoods: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender History at UC Santa Cruz, 1965 - 2003*. (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2004). See http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/oir.exhibit/david_thomas

different courses from mine at Oberlin, had a different circle of friends, and he was very much interested in poetry and art history. He stimulated or intensified my interest in many subjects I had approached quite casually at Oberlin. So we got to know each other much better in London than at Oberlin. And then it happened we both ended up at Harvard. But he stayed on at Harvard before coming here, while I had moved on to Washington, Swarthmore, Africa and the University of Chicago.

The final thing that happened at Chicago to push me here occurred when I returned from California to Chicago for my second year there. The first year there, when I came back from Africa, was marvelous. I could talk to African Americans a few blocks away from me about my experience in Africa, and they were very friendly and very excited to hear about it. I also found my colleagues intellectually and socially congenial. Everything worked fine at the graduate departmental level, and I liked the undergraduate teaching. The graduate and undergraduate deans were both extremely supportive of me. I had made very slow progress on my doctoral dissertation on town meeting democracy for Harvard because the project I'd worked on in Africa bore no relationship whatsoever to such a subject—none at all—and so I had put my thesis aside while using my time in Africa for the political socialization project I had become involved in. The two deans called me in one day and said to me, "We don't want you to worry about your thesis. Just finish it when you can. We care much more about the quality. We read it. We think it's very high quality. We know when you'll finish it'll be worth it, but don't stay awake nights about it." I knew then that the University of Chicago lived up to what I had been told about it. It was

truly a very special institution.

But in the fall of '69, a young woman in the sociology faculty, who was a Marxist—I believe she was also on the verge of coming out as a lesbian, which was still shamefully controversial in that period, though I'm not sure about that issue—did not get tenure. A large number of the social science graduate students were sure they knew exactly what had happened. They were absolutely certain that she was the victim of old-boy prejudices. Her departmental sociology colleagues might be very distinguished scholars, the students said, but they were nevertheless conservative males who retained oppressively conventional values: they didn't like Marxists, they didn't like aggressive women, they didn't care for edgy sexuality, and they weren't going to give tenure to a woman who combined all three, no matter what she wrote. I actually read some of her work, and I have to say it made a weak case for tenure. I really didn't think it was very good, certainly not by the presumably high scholarly standards of the University of Chicago. But the academic year of 1968-1969 and the months before it were rife with flashpoints, both potential and real. I had been downtown in April on the night when the distinguished black sociologist Sinclair Drake was giving a calm and sophisticated talk while furious African Americans were torching buildings a few blocks away because of Martin Luther King's assassination. Robert Kennedy had been shot in June, the turbulent Democratic presidential convention in Chicago itself was just over, and the unresolved Vietnam War was always on a highly horizon of consciousness. The University of Chicago was sitting on a powder keg waiting to explode, and in the early winter months of 1969 it did.

In no time, what had started as a denial-of-tenure case evolved into a bitter university strike of unprecedented ferocity. And in 1969 that was saying a lot. We think and now remember the sit-ins at Columbia and Cornell (where a student was killed) as where the action was in university upheavals during that period. And yet actually, far more graduate students participated in the Chicago strike, and in the end far more students—240 of them—were expelled for good from the graduate school. The students first took over the administration buildings, ripped out all the telephone wires, smeared excrement all over the walls, and commenced a sit-in. Others went into the faculty dining hall, seized food, and literally threw it in faculty members' faces. Still others even physically threatened the children of the president of the University of Chicago.

As the strike progressed, enraged graduate students broke into faculty offices, looking through files, particularly personnel files, in hopes of finding evidence that certain faculty members were on the CIA's payroll, and sometimes they *did* find at least suggestive evidence of that sort. The faculty then began to react with panic and anger. There were unending numbers of meetings, heated speeches on all sides, endless repetitions of soon familiar arguments and far too much cigarette smoke. In the midst of it all, a mildly leftist sociologist named Richard Flax who supported the young woman very moderately with carefully reasoned arguments, was sitting at his desk when he suddenly became a victim of a replay of the horrible incident in 1856, when Senator [Charles] Sumner had given a really quite vitriolic speech about slavery and pro-slavery senators. Two days after that speech, as readers of American Civil War history will recall, Senator Sumner was sitting at his desk when a man named Preston Brooks, who was a

congressman from South Carolina, came up behind him, said that Senator Sumner had libeled the South, he had libeled the Brooks family, and he was going to pay for it, whereupon Brooks beat Senator Sumner so savagely with a club that Senator Sumner was permanently paralyzed and in a wheelchair the rest of his life. This now was what happened to Richard Flax. Some self-appointed vigilante from south Chicago decided that Flax was a Marxist and defending a woman who had no business being in the university because she was a Marxist too and a lesbian, or so at least he alleged. Therefore, posing as a student, the man went to Flax's office, whipped out a cane and beat Flax savagely. Flax never fully recovered from his beating. Such was the terrible atmosphere of Chicago in those nasty winter days.

Reti: Oh! I had no idea this all happened.

Coming to the University of California, Santa Cruz

Von der Muhll: Indeed it did. As I've said, in the end, 240 graduate students were permanently barred from studying at the University of Chicago's graduate school. It was by far the biggest dismissal of its kind of striking graduate students in the United States even for that turbulent period. So my admired university had deteriorated dismayingly from the place I first had come to; it had become the very cockpit of all the tensions and rage in those violent years.

And in January of 1969, in the very middle of the strike, I came out here. I was immediately struck by its wonderful climate in that month. Students were sitting under trees. When I chatted with some of them, they kept on telling me what splendid professors they had, how exciting their courses were. They were

reading about Plato and Aristotle, instead of the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] manifestos, and they were stimulated by their interdisciplinary courses. I found the faculty very self-conscious about building a new institution filled with good educational ideas, imaginative ideas. I read Dean [E.] McHenry's pamphlet on how, with UC President Clark Kerr's full support, this college system was to be set up, with Clark Kerr. And I thought I'd never been in an institution before where there was such a self-conscious set of arrangements to produce desired outcomes in education. The design was so explicitly and so well thought through, and I was impressed by the sophistication shown in distributing incentives, so as to make people want to follow the plan, rather than simply an idyllic plan laid out without concern for who would prove willing to carry it out.

There were many, many other appeals to Santa Cruz as well. I asked about and looked at housing possibilities and other aspects of daily life here, and I kept getting answers suggesting that Santa Cruz had no rival as a place to live. Moreover, it would be an exciting utopia because it was a member of a large multicampus state university, and a very distinguished one at that. So far, I had always been in private universities with highly select student bodies, and here the challenge would be to make a state university have the qualities of the top private institutions of the country while at the same time being accountable to the demands of the taxpayers and potential students of the great state of California. And that seemed an exhilarating challenge: how to blend the best qualities of private institutions with the obligations of somebody teaching in a state institution. So I thought, this is the place for me, and I've never looked back.

I took so long to get to this point because I wanted to say, among other things, that the sheer beauty of the place made it one of a kind. There is simply no place like it. That is why for some people not getting tenure here was seen as a catastrophe. There were lots of other places where one could get a job in those days. So not getting tenure was not just the loss of a job; it was that this campus was truly one of a kind in the world. To be sure, so are Cambridge and Oxford, but here the ambience of learning seemed to me absolutely distinctive.

Frankly, I've been surprised at how few people on this campus acknowledge that that is a driving reason for being here. Later on, when I was provost of College Five, I did a quick informal survey. What, I asked, are the major attractions of being on this campus? My colleagues gave all kinds of reasons. I was the only one who said "because this campus has such a unique setting, it is such an exquisite place in which to learn, to walk through the forest, not to fear that you're going to be assailed at night if you ride a bicycle by some very angry and ruthless somebody from across 59th Avenue." Every one of the other five families in the house I lived in in Chicago's Hyde Park had been violently assailed on the streets. I was coached there on arrival always to carry at least ten dollars in one's pocket in case I was accosted by a very persuasive gentleman with a knife who did not want to go away empty-handed. Also, one should always check alleys before crossing them on a sidewalk. It was much more peaceful [in Santa Cruz], although, to be sure, four years after I came here, in 1973, *Newsweek* proclaimed on its cover that Santa Cruz had become the murder capital of the United States when we had three mass murders on the prowl in one year.

But in any case, it just struck me as the most remarkable place I'd ever been

asked to live in, and I was very much inducted into everything. So after my visit I unhesitatingly said to Stanford and Berkeley "Thank you, but this is where I want to be." As matters turned out, I unknowingly left Chicago to come to this campus just in time. Two years later, our whole political science department at Chicago had practically gone. The bitterness and divisions engendered by the strike had virtually destroyed any sense of community within the entire cohort of political science faculty who had so persuasively recruited me. At the American Political Science Association conference in Los Angeles in 1971 I ran across the woman who was still in charge of the front office for the politics department. As I listened with disbelief she told me "The only two sane people in the department left for Santa Cruz." That would be Grant McConnell, my departmental chair at Chicago, who laughed when I told him I was leaving Chicago to come here and told me that he was too [Chuckles.] "Afterwards," she said, the department went crazy. People stopped speaking to one another and asked graduate students what had been found in their colleagues' files. Every meeting became a war. And then they scattered all over the United States."

Reti: Oh, that's pretty sad.

Von der Muhll: It was indeed, and in any case, it made quite an impression on me. It made me reflect on how important human ties can be and how communal bonds can disintegrate very fast. That's what happened in Uganda when the monstrous dictator, former General Idi Amin, came to power as president and soon afterwards began to direct the mass murder of my colleagues. After my two singularly happy years there in 1965-1967, I applied for and received a Fulbright Scholarship to go back there from here in '72, and three months later Amin's

soldiers began swinging some of my colleagues against tree trunks until they were pulp. So by then I had a powerful sense of the potential fragility of institutions, and, I think, not too many illusions about it. But nevertheless, this campus seemed like a place worth trying to institutionalize and make effective the ideals embedded in the college system because they had such promise.

College Five

Reti: And how did you end up at College Five in particular?

Von der Muhll: That was simple. At Chicago I was teaching historically oriented courses in political philosophy and comparative courses about public administration. In one of my courses I looked at what political scientists knew about political socialization, and in another at their efforts to create a more scientific general theory of politics. I was also on the editorial staff of the *American Political Science Review*. In all these ways I was very much a mainstream political scientist with perhaps more interest than many in abstract theories and methodologies and with no particular claims to regional specialization. Nevertheless, my background in Africa and the fact that at Chicago I had taken over a course on African politics when it became too politically hot for one of my colleagues to handle made it seem to the politics board here that I belonged in Merrill College, and so it proposed that I go to Merrill.

The problem that emerged with that proposal was that Merrill was having one of its very typical spasms of heated political disagreements. A core element in these exchanges among Merrill faculty and between Merrill faculty and Merrill students was whether Merrill's role as a "Third World" oriented college should

mean a concentration on the non-Western regions of the globe—Asia, Africa, and Latin America—or on what students were beginning to call the “domestic Third World”—i.e., Latin, African-American, and Asian communities within the boundaries of the United States. These differences over what should be Merrill’s identity became catalyzed in the question of whether a faculty position that had been allocated to Merrill should go to a political scientist with my background and interest in Africa and Asia or to a sociologist whose work focused on cultural and racial minorities in the USA. There was no indication that this debate was going to be resolved soon

Reti: This is 1969?

Von der Muhll: This was in '69, yes. Finally the politics board said, “We want this guy to come,” and Stevenson College said, “That’s fine. We’ll accept him as a Stevenson Fellow,” and the board and Stevenson then agreed that since Stevenson by that point would have two other politics board members and Provost Glenn Willson as well among its fellows, with faculty offices pretty tight, I could then be shifted over to the west side of the campus, where a new college (College Five, now Porter College) would be opening up and would have more space. So I spent my first year here at Stevenson but then moved across the campus. Even so, I retained a special bond with Stevenson. After moving to College Five, I nevertheless taught a college course at Stevenson with a Stevenson social psychologist and a Stevenson sociologist. Later on, I was regularly invited to give a lecture on Thomas Hobbes in its core course. I was always welcomed at Stevenson’s Commons Room gatherings and was repeatedly invited to its Christmas parties.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: Even when I became provost of Merrill a decade later, I headed a winter quarter section the Stevenson core course along with one the Merrill core course. So I always had kind of a divided identity. I was never totally attached to just one college. But in any case, that's how I ended up at College Five. It was for no other reason than, quite simply, there was a position open there.

Well, there was one other reason for going to College Five, the "arts college" as it was then known. Apart from my feelings for my wife, my greatest passion in life is classical music. I am little more than a mediocre though sometimes ambitious classical pianist. Nevertheless, classical piano music matters enormously to me. And at Oberlin I probably had taken more courses in literature than anything else. So it wasn't hard for College Five to see elements of my background that went beyond my being a political scientist. But I was indeed the only political scientist there, and one of only three or four social scientists.

College Five wasn't ultimately the right place for me to be, but my stay there was very educative for me because it gave me the freedom to develop one of my favorite courses, one that led to my writing more essays more readily than on any other single topic. The college system obliged me to ask myself a question I would never have faced on a conventional, disciplinary-oriented campus: what contribution can a political scientist make to the curriculum of an arts-oriented college in which most students are presumably more responsive to the fine arts than to analytic social science? My answer to that challenge became a course I

entitled *The Use of Literature in the Study of Politics*. In that course I sought to show how one can treat certain novels and plays, not merely as works of literature that are more entertaining to read than histories or biographies, but as works that deploy the artistic license granted to fiction to explore in depth and with imagistic force some of the most fundamental dilemmas and choices confronting those who have been granted public—i.e., political—authority. I wanted to make use these works to involve students imaginatively in settings in which obtaining or maintaining political authority may require accepting constraints that go beyond simply affirming where one stands on issues—for example, to take a prominent case, the position that the [former New York governor] Mario Cuomo, a devout Catholic, felt he had to take when he said, “My church says that abortion is a sin, and that is what I myself personally believe. But I am now the governor of New York State, and my job as governor is not simply to say that because I am a communicant of my church and personally opposed to abortion, I will seek to prohibit it as governor of my state. I have to be responsible to the people of New York as governor, and my duty is to uphold its laws and to maintain the constitutionally mandated separation of church and state, whatever my personal or religiously bound preferences may be, even if that means opposing those who share my private convictions. To do otherwise would be to betray my constituents, and that too would be immoral.” Although a Protestant, President of the United States, Jimmy Carter once said something similar.

Literature, I began to realize, was singularly well-suited to creating readily accessible contexts for generating, clarifying, giving complexity to, and putting to a test fundamental but abstract moral principles in a way that gave them

compelling relevance to readers who had never thought of themselves as philosophers. In his classic, thinly disguised novel about Governor Huey Long of Louisiana in the mid-1930s, Robert Penn Warren invites readers to reflect on the possibility that in corrupt societies, politicians may have to resort to unscrupulous means to attain worthy ends but that they may also fatally lose their integrity while doing so—a painful moral paradox as old as Sophocles’s *Antigone*, as contemporary as Anouilh’s updating of the same play. Literary Communists and their fellow travelers found themselves having to struggle with those issues in particularly stark form. Arthur Koestler explored the differing moralities of personal and political choice in *Darkness at Noon*, his unforgettable novel on an Old Bolshevik caught up in Stalin’s “Treason Trials”; and the moral hero in the famous French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre’s play “Dirty Hands” turns out to be not a morally reckless young idealist who advocates unlimited sacrifice of other people’s lives to maintain the purity of an ideological cause but a seasoned veteran Communist who insists on a short-term strategy adapted to an existing unfavorable balance of forces in order to minimize the loss of Party members (a point completely missed by Broadway audiences and critics during the early Cold War years who thought Sartre was exposing the sinister pragmatism of a Communist *apparatchik!*).

I’ve gone in some depth into describing this course because I thought it illustrated how the college system, by its very nature, challenged its faculty members to reexamine self-consciously the framework and standard texts of their discipline and to look for new ways of using it to reach students who had not yet committed themselves to a particular pathway toward a major. It

provided a freedom to experiment and a legitimating forum that allowed a political scientist to make a contribution to his own discipline by teaching a course that used nothing but literary texts. And in my case I discovered that, ironically, the alternative provided by a college course could sometimes contribute to meeting the driving academic interests of students whose needs were being frustrated by a prevailing fashion within the very discipline in which they aspired to major. I made this discovery while attempting to find out why my course appeared to be a wildly successful course in the sense that the students wrote the most extravagantly positive reviews about it. "This course tells me why I came to college, and I haven't found anything like it anywhere else;" "This course is a dream I had all my life about what education could be"—and so on. I was both embarrassed and puzzled by enthusiasm of so high a pitch. I had to ask myself "What's going on here? I mean, I'm a good teacher, but I'm not a fabulous teacher. I'm just—you know, I do my job, and I think I do it pretty well, but I'm not"—[Laughs.]

So I started calling students into my office to see whether I could find out what previously unmet needs my course was meeting. And I found out that, among other considerations, it was because students who had seen themselves as potential literature majors could no longer study literature as literature, mostly because of their instructors in the field almost uniformly saw themselves as deconstructionists whose job was to uncover the social, racist, feminist, or other such cultural infrastructure of literature, the texts beneath the texts and so on, whereas at Oberlin I had been raised on Brooks and Warren's close reading of texts, guided by the proposition that, "The text is everything"—not the gender,

race, or ethnic origin and biases of the writer, not the prejudices of the times, but the structure and quality of the text itself as a work of art. So in my course, ironically, I wasn't coming to them as a political scientist, although the theme and the dilemmas were political. I was coming to the texts I'd asked students to read as somebody who said, "What is the author's argument? How are imagery, metaphors, incidents and choice of language being used to make it? How are background settings and other symbols being introduced to reinforce it? Precisely what is at issue in this dialogue? What makes this passage so powerful in its impact? How does it compare with the author's techniques we uncovered in a previous work on the same theme?" The students were telling me that my questions were repeatedly directing them back to what had attracted them to literature in the first place—the works themselves, not the cultural preconceptions and biases underlying them—and my questions were inviting them to stop passing casually through a narrative without paying close attention to *how* it was affecting them in ways that could not be summarized in straightforward prose.

In turn, I learned so much from my students. I got superb essays, the best essays I've gotten here. I kept on learning from them and really having to footnote them in every paper I subsequently wrote. Once they got where I was trying to go with them, they taught me more than I did them. It was different when I was teaching them broadly comparative course—let us say, about the distribution of political assets and systemic stresses in China and Russia, or the role of the military in Brazilian politics—frankly I knew more than they did, I could draw on a deeper well of historical and ecological facts, I knew more than they about how complex

social patterns collated or conflicted. I knew much more—at least initially—about the interplay of doctrine and practice in Islamic nations, and about the distinctive challenges of forming governments in newly independent African nations, so I felt it was up to me to be as efficient as I could be in presenting and organizing large strands of data and imagery in large countries within the confines of one hour. I wanted to listen to the members of the class, of course, and I had some great discussions with them. But basically there was an asymmetry between what I brought to such courses and what they could be expected to bring. But in a class like the one I taught on literature and politics, where we were all reading from the same text, I was the beneficiary because I had literature students who had exceptional insight and literary sensitivity. And then later, four other members of the College Five faculty—two historians, two members of the literature board who eventually helped found the American studies program, and I—were drawn together by our common interest in how literature can be used to address issues in the study of societies. So that's why my years at College Five came to mean much to me.

Reti: And that was a college course?

Von der Muhll: Yes, it was a college course then. It eventually was absorbed into the politics department from the college. But it was a college course, and it was exactly kind of freedom that would have been inconceivable in a more professional place like—oh, Chicago probably would have let me get away with it. But I mean Swarthmore, where I had to teach administrative law because *somebody had* to teach it, and the usual teacher was going on leave. The idea that I would teach a course on the use of literature in studying politics, [at] a tightly

organized, high-pressure college like Swarthmore with its long, firmly fixed tradition of conventional excellence in firmly defined fields—

That reminds me of one of the things I was going to say in relation to Swarthmore. The great sociologist David Riesman, who in the late 1950s wrote a book that was probably the most widely read social science book outside the academy in its time—it became Book of the Month called *The Lonely Crowd*.

Reti: Yes.

Von der Muhll: Riesman came to [UC] Santa Cruz for a while.

Reti: Oh, yes, I've heard that.

Von der Muhll: He was very impressed by what he saw. And he said something, which I never had thought of, and he was absolutely right. It was why I left Swarthmore without regret. He said, "What has happened in the United States is that undergraduate colleges have increasingly defined themselves, and the quality of themselves, with reference to how well their students will do in graduate school. So it's kind of a preliminary to graduate school. It is not a distinct experience."

And I suddenly saw in a flash, yes, that's it. What people were proud of at Swarthmore was that it was a superb, rigorous, very demanding undergraduate education, which left, by the way, some of the students with 800 SAT scores picking a guitar with their fingernails. They were bored or depressed. There was no room for music, no time for being seriously engaged in producing a top-quality campus newspaper with nearly professional editorials and feature stories

instead of a hastily assembled, jokey little rag, because they and particularly the faculty were proud that they were getting an education so high-powered that they could go to any place in the country—Yale, Harvard, and so on—and wait for the rest of the graduate students there to catch up with them. They were typically about two years ahead of their graduate classmates. This is what Swarthmore valued: rigorous academic work, pushing students hard, and giving them analytic training, a broad command of the relevant literature in their fields and the work habits which would put them into grad school, and get them through to a PhD. And David Riesman said, “What a waste of undergraduates—and what a pity it is that undergraduates are simply proto-graduates always oriented to their presumed future.” He thought this place was wonderful because it left room for self-discovery.

I realized that that was what Riesman prized I had learned at Oberlin, too. At the Oberlin Conservatory, I, by sheer luck, got the best piano teacher in the conservatory to give me piano lessons. Oberlin students gave Gilbert and Sullivan performances of professional caliber in summer on Long Island and elsewhere. And we had rich editorial newspaper discussions that were sometimes more probing than anything we experienced in the classroom: I have never cherished anything more than a long editorial I wrote when the Supreme Court decided in the case of *Brown v. board of [Education of the City of] Topeka* to desegregate the schools. I had chances to interview presidential candidate Adlai [E.] Stevenson and Aaron Copland, the great composer, things like that. Life was so much more than just academic performance. So I realized that Oberlin was a much more richly textured, more interesting place in which to be a student, even

though it was in northeastern Ohio, a dreary place to be in [chuckles], you know.

And that's the other thing that I also learned about Oberlin, with reference to here. I came to see that what might seem a drawback at Oberlin was paradoxically an asset. Oberlin had the richness of texture, of student interaction, and of student inquiry that I've described in part because it had a rigorously enforced no-car rule and because in the winter it was blanketed by snow and there was no place interesting to go to nearby except Cleveland. And while Cleveland had a first-rate symphony orchestra under George Szell, it was not otherwise a glittering destination—

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: In any case, Cleveland was forty miles away and could only be reached by bus because cars were not allowed. Basically, we were trapped on the Oberlin campus in winter and had no choice but to create a life for ourselves.

Reti: Students were not allowed to have cars.

Von der Muhll: No, not at all. So therefore we were stuck in a small Ohio town of about two thousand people, and that situation made the life of being a student a multi-dimensional life, with all sorts of things going on, and on weekends particularly, when students gave superbly polished performances of theatrical works and concerts. I now realize that one of the weaknesses here, in a way, is that it's so much easier for students to go off to San Francisco or Monterey or Yosemite. As you know, weekends are generally dead on this campus. Everybody gets out of town. They're on the beach or in San Francisco. They don't

have to stay here. They have cars for out-of-town excursions. That said, when I first came here, I was struck by the rich potential in these forests of living a life which was something more than a preliminary to graduate school.

Reti: Beautiful.

Von der Muhll: Anyway, it's one of the reasons that I was so taken with this place.

A Young Faculty Body

So in any case, that's what brought me here, and that's what made it so exciting in its first years. Looking back, I can see that my reaction was perhaps somewhat simplistic. One of the features of this place, which ultimately was to cause some difficulty, I think, was that it had two generations put together and nothing in between, or not very much in between. The sciences are an exception to everything. The sciences don't fit this generalization at all. But elsewhere we had, on the one hand, a group of very young, enthusiastic faculty, for most of whom teaching here was their first job. And they were very excited about being close to students and about devising all sort of things: a Narrative Evaluation System, core courses, individual tutorials, and more. And then we had a group of quite elderly, distinguished scholars. Dean McHenry understood that without them, this campus would lack the prestige that was necessary for many purposes. But most of them had done most of their good work elsewhere—though many of them were still good here—and they contributed a great deal to the kind of stability and wisdom the campus needed, but they were nevertheless often past their scholarly peak and ambitions.

What was lacking was something in between the two. As I've said, I was no older, or maybe one or two years older, than all the other colleagues in my department, except for Grant McConnell, who was considerably older than I, and he was asked to be the vice chancellor from the moment he came here. But it was still in the kind of Kennedy-Johnson years of optimism and of a stable society which could be made better through the intelligent War on Poverty and desegregation and things like that. I wasn't tremendously drawn, initially, to some of the big student demonstrations elsewhere. But I realized, also, that this experience I had had made me understand why Dean McHenry was concerned about trying to get more middle-rung people here, faculty who had been elsewhere, who still had a scholarly career ahead of them, but who had also had considerable experience, which much of the younger faculty here had not had, of being participants in other university faculties before coming here. But at the same time, that was the excitement here, because people weren't stuck in the way things were being done professionally, elsewhere. At any rate, such was the case when I came here.

Reti: Now, you actually became provost—or that was a few years later.

Von der Muhll: Well, yes, that was a little bit later. That's right. When I first came here, I had the usual attitude: administration didn't seem like anything I really wanted to do. And I still had my dissertation to finish. I was hired here with my dissertation about half done. So I did finally finish it, but I had taken longer than most faculty here—eleven years. After all, before getting around to finishing my PhD dissertation for Harvard I had taken on several other radically unrelated projects on three campuses before coming here. (By the way, I was astonished to learn in Chicago that actually I was not so unusual as I had

supposed. Only 20 percent of the University of Chicago's graduate students had finished their dissertation in less than eleven years.

Reti: Whew!

Von der Muhll: And most of them were teaching high school in Indiana and elsewhere and raising a family and trying to get on—this was a particular malaise of humanities and social sciences at that time.

But when I came here, I learned that, very much unlike Swarthmore, I had complete freedom to design my courses. I used that freedom to create five new courses unrelated to anything I had taught on the other campuses or to the dissertation I was still struggling to write. I then left this campus to return to Uganda on a Fulbright Fellowship after three years here, and that experience radically changed my whole life academically, domestically, and experientially and the perspectives I brought to bear on it. As I've said I'd reportedly been brought here to be a mainstream political scientist. I taught mainstream courses on various dimensions of American political life and was a mainstream participant on the editorial board of the *American Political Science Review*. I was managing, along with two of my colleagues—Kenneth Prewitt, whom I mentioned, and another one—a big survey of 18,000 people sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation and I was trying to learn some of the methodologically sophisticated techniques associated with that kind of enterprise. I had been teaching graduate-level courses in theories of politics at the University of Chicago. In every respect, then, I was a conventional political scientist, as that term was understood in the early 1970s.

Reti: And Dean McHenry, himself, was in your department, right? He was a political scientist.

Von der Muhll: That's right, although he didn't teach any politics courses or attend any politics board meetings when I was here. When Dean saw me, we always had the same conversation. He had something about each person, so that he could be personally involved with them on that topic, and if you expanded beyond that, it was a little bit embarrassing sometimes for him. But he knew I'd been in East Africa, and one of his sons had been to Tanzania. So every time he saw me, he talked about Tanzania. [Laughs.] Which was fine with me. I'd been all over Tanzania. I knew a lot about Tanzania, and I loved the place.

But in any case, the long and the short of it was that when I first came here, I quickly learned that coming here as late as 1969—[Isebill V.] “Ronnie” Gruhn—and I came here at the same time—that we were already second generation.³ One might think that with colleges just starting to open up —Cowell in '65, Stevenson, '66; Crown, '67, Merrill in '68—we might be thought of as part of a founding generation, but we weren't. In fact, an extraordinary array of issues had already been settled before Ronnie and I came, which is quite impressive in its way. Most of the major institution-building had already been worked out and put into practice—the Narrative Evaluation System, the definitions of college identities, the rules and rationale for course distribution requirements and the requirements for majors and so on. So those who came two or three years after a college had been set up were not in any sense founders. We were very close to

³See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Professor Isebill “Ronnie” Gruhn: Recollections of UCSC, 1969-2013*, (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013) <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/gruhn>

what had just been established a couple of years earlier, and very much part of the same dream, but we were the beneficiaries of the hard work done in those opening years by others. And they knew it; some faculty were almost patronizing, about this difference. Yet, in truth, there was a profound difference in experience and perspective between being part of a faculty group that gathered—let us say, at Stevenson in 1966—to open a college and give it its identity through creating a new college core course and joining that faculty two or three years later in a college with a firmly established identity, with nascent “traditions” already forming, and being asked to take up teaching a section of an established core course such as the one that had been tried out in Stevenson for two or three years.

Reti: Very interesting, yes. This is the divide that several people have described to me. It was very significant.

Mainstream was Condemnation

Von der Muhll: On the other hand, because I had been a faculty member at several other quite different institutions before I came here, I could see that my perspectives were somewhat different from those of politics board members for whom teaching here was a first job. Its chairs were about my age, about thirty, thirty-two, thirty-three, something like that, and for them too, their job as a faculty member here was their first. Grant McConnell would, of course, have been older and more experienced but, as I’ve already said, he was pretty much a full-time vice chancellor for the whole campus at that point, rather than an active member of our board. Glenn Willson was also nominally a member but, again,

he was also the full-time provost of Stevenson and never came to our board meetings so far as I can recall.

In my first years here our politics board was very young in that sense, and its relative youthfulness, not only because the campus was new, but because nearly all its members were holding faculty positions for the first time, gave our board an edge and a sense of excitement, a freedom from the bonds of established traditions, and a disposition to entertain experiments that was quite different from anything I had experienced on other campuses. However, within a few years of my arrival, the center of gravity in the age of our board in both a literal and an experiential sense began to shift upwards. In 1970, Jack Schaar came down here from Berkeley, and he was soon followed by his Berkeley colleague, close friend, and Sierra hiking partner, Sheldon Wolin, after Jack had reported to Sheldon on what an exciting place UC Santa Cruz had turned out to be, for him. And so, quite suddenly, we had some senior, very nationally prominent people on our board, who gave notable luster not only to our board, but to our campus as a whole. The arrival of John Marcum a year later consolidated the age balance on our board.

But at least on my board, there was, at the time, a paradoxical fear about getting really prominent people here. For example, my colleague at the University of Chicago, David Easton, whom I regard as one of the most imaginative, profound, instructive people in the whole field, was a brilliant man who had written some superb books on the basic analytical foundations of political science. When he heard I was coming here, he told me, "If there's an opening, let me know. I would love to come."

So I told my colleagues, “We have a chance to add to our board one of the most prominent political scientists in the United States, an author of several outstanding books who has served as president of the American Political Science Association, a very important thinker from a prestigious university who is not caught up in statistical techniques at all but who has elaborated some very imaginative and lucid models drawn from biology and elsewhere in prize-winning books, who wrote a definitive, classic review of the shortcomings of the dominant paradigmatic theories in our field, and who is a very nice human being who seems very ready to be considered for a position here if asked.” No interest. No interest. My fellow board members were very skeptical of considering any candidate for board membership who could be classified as part of “mainstream” political science, a term which in those turbulent years seemed to be a damning adjective in all the social sciences except economics and, to some extent psychology, as it also was to some extent in the humanities. Labeling a scholar as “mainstream” was an often-fatal condemnation.

Reti: At UCSC.

Von der Muhll: At UCSC, yeah. If you had achieved and gone far in the mainstream, you were probably already sucked into the paradigms and the corporate grants that UC Santa Cruz had been set up to avoid. Even I was deliberately brought here, I learned later on, as in some sense a foil. I was perceived to be a thoroughly professionalized “mainstream” political scientist, one who was prepared to call our discipline—or at least aspire to have our discipline qualify as—a science. This image would reassure our Dean and critical outside observers that the board was maintaining a proper professional balance

by bringing in someone who was immersed in projects demanding “mainstream” explanatory theories and methodologies and a command of “mainstream” political science literature, while my still modest professional stature provided assurance that the board would not be channeled in directions it did not wish to go. On the other hand, one dedicated political scientist like me was quite enough.

Nevertheless, the fact was that the board had correctly assessed my chosen methodologies and my goals, and most of my politics board colleagues had come here precisely because they did not share my perspective on political science. Even so, as I have already remarked, my fellow board members were nice people. We got on well, and I cannot recall any points of serious friction. But once I had come here, and their flank had been properly covered, [chuckles], their subsequent appointments suggested a different trend. Sheldon Wolin’s appointment certainly suggested as much. He was by then an outspoken rebel against the “scientism” of mainstream American political science. He had recently written some very powerful, persuasive critiques directed at showing what he thought to be wrong with the aspiration to have a value-neutral approach to the study of politics modeled on the natural sciences. He was passionately on one side of that issue. And Jack Schaar, in his own way, shared Sheldon’s view.

Despite my own fascination with economical, explanatory theories and models of politics, it was exhilarating to have a colleague like Jack Schaar. He was truly a great teacher who went far beyond simply deploying the skills of a political scientist. Both by precept and by example he persuaded me to join him in teaching a course based on texts—novels, biographies, communal narratives—

that were not overtly concerned with political analysis but that nevertheless could very effectively engage students in reflections on political matters. He proposed using a memoir in our course by Apsley Cherry-Garrard on being part of the team led by Robert Scott that went down to Antarctica in a fatal bid to be first to reach the South Pole. Now who on earth would associate that enterprise with political science? Jack did. He was strongly drawn to first-hand narratives featuring facing the elements and suddenly being alone, really alone, and what it means to be on the frontiers of experience, such as people probably were probably in the Ice Age, rather than being enmeshed in parliamentary maneuvers in London. He wanted them to read about Eskimo life in northeastern Canada and a William Faulkner novel centering on bear hunting, and he was delighted when I brought up the possibility of using books on the emergent formation of political leadership in the Manzanar concentration camp and the tribal governance of rainforest pygmies in the Congo.

Jack spent hours persuading me that a book didn't have to contain a single word referring to politics in order to be a superb teaching tool for the study of politics. I had never had any explicit, serious, sustained discussion of pedagogy with any fellow political scientist at any stage in my education until I came here, and I was very happy to learn what Jack wanted to teach and why he wanted to do as he did. I guess the fancy term for his approach is "hermeneutics," but I will simply say, "learning to interpret texts."

Reti: I always forget what that word means.

Von der Muhll: Yeah, well I do, too, you know? It's one of those words

academics love to use. [Laughter.] But at any rate, Jack was a great believer in having students read about raw life experiences and then learn how to discern the political dimensions embedded in those experience. It had an important effect on my understanding of how to use literature in the study of politics in the course I was just beginning to work out for College Five. And that was some achievement on his part as I had come to this campus as a “political scientist” who responded with excitement to pathbreaking generalizable models of abstract theory. In fact, I ran into a dispute with Sheldon Wolin because I liked rational choice theory, or “game theory” as it is often called, which was developed by John von Neumann, a mathematician, and essentially is what economists do when they postulate, “Let’s see what kind of theory we can build if we assume that people have certain properties and only those properties, and we then develop the logical implications of these axioms to see how well they help to explain political choices and transactions under certain specified conditions.” I thought this approach could be very productive in the study of politics, giving it the elegant clarity, consistency, and predictive power that should be expected of a “science of politics” while often leading to unexpected conclusions.

So when our politics board began inviting suggestions for possible books for discussion by members of our board that would be of presumed interest to all politics faculty members, I suggested reading a recent book by the prominent economist Albert Hirschman, well known for his imaginative approaches to issues of joint interest to economists and political scientists. He postulated that it would be instructive to view producers of goods and services in economic

markets and policy “producers” in political “markets as being held accountable to consumers or citizens and enforcing change in light of consumer or citizen preferences through two (and only two) mechanisms—“exit” (when consumers shift their monetary expenditures that producers need as resources for continuing production to a competitor and voters their votes to a competing party) or “voice” (informing producers of what’s wrong with their products and needs changing to retain consumer support, and informing policy-makers through petitions, demonstrations, and the like of the changes needed to retain support and head off discontent). I thought that this way of looking at these two simple models neatly classified a wide range of choices and behaviors in both economics and the study of politics and could be used as the base for systematically developing propositions about the strength and drawbacks of the two mechanisms under specified circumstances. However, when our politics board reassembled to discuss this book, Sheldon immediately said, “Why should we be reading something like this? This is just mechanistic mainstream analysis.” Other than myself, no member of our board wished to be thought of as taking “mechanistic mainstream” analysis seriously, and so the possibility of discussion was ended.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: It therefore took less than five minutes to bring to a close any consideration, whether positive or critical, of one of the most innovative, imaginative, simplifying, integrative, and therefore potentially significant explanatory texts in American social science, one that had attracted widespread attention throughout the country by both economists and political scientists for

its neat formulation of core procedures in economic and political arenas and that, if further developed and given more quantitative character, was likely to be seen in graduate schools as in some ways at the cutting edge of the whole discipline.

The reason I go in such depth into this single episode is that it illustrated for me some of the potential costs I had begun to notice on this campus of substituting labeling for critical analysis. It also put our students at potential risk when entering graduate school because they might never encounter—let alone master or critically dissect—approaches and theories in the discipline that were assumed to be part of the education of all serious graduate-school candidates in their chosen discipline. You might be one of the most prominent members of your field, but if you were perceived to be enmeshed in the notion of what was cutting edge, conventional theory, you weren't what was wanted here, which was quite different from every place I'd been before, where your standing within the field was an important consideration rather than something you had to expunge as best you could. [Chuckles.]

Reti: So was that frustrating for you?

Von der Muhll: A bit. I might as well admit, however, that in some respects I found the invitation to cut loose from conventional hierarchies of prestige in my discipline rather refreshing, because I'm a dilettante. I learned eventually that I really didn't want to spend the rest of my life learning the skills required to do some of the top-quality work in statistical theories and mathematical models that were backed up by meticulous research and run through computer programs. This had an impact on the fate of the 18,000-respondent study of political

socialization in East Africa in which I had once participated so eagerly. My former colleagues and I began to make use of various correlations in our data to write several articles that were instantly accepted by whatever professional journal to which we submitted them. For me, nevertheless, they became among the least fulfilling articles I've ever written or participated in writing. I felt very different about some early ones I wrote that came out of my field experiences in East Africa in which I described and discussed going out to the various schools in the most remote parts of Tanzania and what I learned from those experiences.

But I understood what my colleagues were saying, although I was troubled. Yes, I was troubled a bit, and I felt that in the long run we would pay the price if we remained so contemptuous of a whole discipline which has set this country apart, as I say, from Europe and elsewhere in the world, and which really is an exhilarating frontier of explorations despite its "mainstream qualities. Ironically, however, this rejection of "scientism" in the study of politics itself became "mainstream." It came right at the time when throughout the country, and particularly in my discipline more than any of the other social sciences, many of the most prominent writers about politics were young rebels who said that efforts to create a value-neutral "science" of politics were a way of not having to look closely at the evils of our society. Such; a science was only interested in identifying and explaining abstract patterns when it should be naming names and identifying corporations and showing how there were vested interests in pulling us into a war like Vietnam in their quest for tungsten. A value-free science was not what was needed in a time that called for revolution, commitment, and passion. And politics as taught at UCSC was out in front of

this groundswell.

In many respects, these critics had a point. Some political scientists had indeed become too comfortable about their connections with the government. On the other side, given my own background, I was disappointed because actually the critics managed to discredit some of the most promising and exciting developments in the conceptualization of social movements, politics, governments, and systemic collapses that I had found exhilarating.

I later wrote a book, which I called *Political Science and the Quest for a Unifying Paradigm*—a paradigm comparable to the paradigms used by natural scientists to bring findings from specialized research projects into a common framework that would reveals their significance for all who shared the paradigm. I think it's a sign of the times that my manuscript was accepted by the editorial staff of the University of California Press, and drew favorable notices from all the outside readers, but was then vetoed by the marketing division on the ground that its concern for macro-cultural models and for abstract scientific and philosophical issues in the study of politics was inconsistent with the marketing profile the press was seeking to establish. In a handwritten note of apology, the editor-in-chief] told me that "Everyone who read your manuscript thought it was an exceedingly valuable contribution to your field, but I can't override the marketing division." Since I knew that marketing divisions of university presses must pay close attention to contemporary currents of academic fashion, I found the experience instructive.

Changing Times: UCSC Faces the Late 1960s

The early sixties, before the UC Santa Cruz campus opened, was a period wide open to exhilarating opportunities. Jobs were easily available. Students were eager to study. Resources were pouring in. Faculty were ready to work together, and the campus was harmonious. But by the time it opened to students, we had moved very quickly from the early Johnson years to the late Johnson years, in which people were extremely angry, in which a moral anger on all sides reached a culminating peak, in which all across the United States there were demonstrations. And suddenly drugs came on the scene, and that had its own impetus.

These developments all came together. They made the world a very different place. The late sixties and early sixties have remarkably little in common except that activists in both periods recognized the evils of the 1950s, the segregation of African Americans and the oppression of women and things like that. But other than that, there was a radical break at the midpoint of the decade.

I came fully of age in the first half of that movement, and I continued to be interested in such issues as how to incorporate emergent cybernetic and biological systems theories into the study of politics. But the quest for such abstract, even abstruse theories died in my own discipline, and I found thereafter that I was learning more from reading scientific journals about such topics as whole-system analyses than from my own discipline, which veered off in a very different direction.

At any rate, while my own case as a political scientist may seem idiosyncratic, I

believe its particularities reflect the sharp change of course that the Santa Cruz campus as a whole experienced within a very few years in a period of exceptionally rapid cultural change. During their discussions in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Dean McHenry and Clark Kerr envisioned the founding of a campus that would offset the increasingly visible shortcomings of “multiversities” by restoring the unifying primacy of the classical liberal arts curriculum through a succession of imaginatively designed interdisciplinary courses that all students of a college would be expected to take during their first two years on this campus. Instead, by the late 1960s, they found that this lofty academic vision was being passionately opposed by students who refused to accept that they should be told by their professors what was worth studying and what they therefore *should* study, and who demanded instead the right to design their own independent studies and majors. These demands accompanied and were linked to a quest for courses that would offer a sophisticated focus on the evils of contemporary American society and their roots in history and economic interests. They no longer showed much interest in what graduate schools had been demanding of their best students. These clashing visions of what university education should be about undermined within a very few years the comprehensive, integrated, mandated college courses that had been intended and expected to give UCSC its distinctive place among the multiversities of the University of California system.

Assessment of the College System

That, at any rate, was the internal tension on this campus that was beginning to emerge when I came here. But I began to develop some concerns of my own about what I thought were the most interesting parts of the whole experiment—

the college courses. I was very grateful to be able to teach a course on the use of literature in studying politics. I thought that the colleges were the home to several other very interesting core courses. Cowell's *Western Civilization* drew in scientists. Conversely, the colleges invited scientists to create courses for students with neither the aptitude nor the ambition to become scientists. This was an invitation I understood very well. One of the most stimulating courses I had taken at Oberlin was entitled *Physics for Non-Physicists*. Despite its title, it was not taught as an escape route for students who feared to take standard courses in physics. Nor was it simply an easier form of an elementary course designed to prepare students for the challenges of an intermediate course in physics one step higher on the ladder to a physics major. Instead, it was intended to enroll student interest—proto-scientists, future humanities majors, prospective social sciences alike—in seeking answers to questions that could be presumed to interest any well-educated person: Why had rigorous, quantitative, precisely predictive science pulled so much farther ahead in the West than in Medieval Arab Islam or Imperial China? What social conditions and cultural traditions assisted the advance of such sciences in the West, while retarding their growth elsewhere? What kinds of problems led scientists to formulate their questions in new ways and to develop new techniques for measuring and comparing their results? Such a course, as developed most notably by James B. Conant at Harvard shortly after the Second World War was over, was less concerned with telling students what scientists now believe they know than with examining how scientists through the ages had set up the problems and tests that had produced those answers. And courses that fostered this kind of extra-disciplinary approach to the cumulative finding of a discipline were ones that the colleges seemed well suited to host. I

quickly concluded that I wanted to be part of this enterprise.

In College Five I began to see other ways in which the college system could be put to use in providing a productive outlet for surplus intellectual energy. Among the scientists at the college we had one who had been spending most of his days working at the linear accelerator up near Palo Alto—

Reti: The linear accelerator?

Von der Muhll: Yes. The linear accelerator was a very expensive device—only the wealthiest universities could afford one—for accelerating the speed of atoms and studying the consequences of doing so. But this classically rigorous physicist had somewhere along the line picked up a deep interest in the civilization of the Mayas. So membership in College Five gave him the freedom as well as the obligation to teach a course that allowed him to pursue this interest, instead of teaching yet another variant of a course within the domain of his specialized field of physics. At first he had to spend most of his time preparing for that course through reading what archaeologists had to say about the Maya, but he soon began to see that nobody in the field appeared to be asking the questions or checking out correlations and interactions among variables in the ways that seemed natural to him as a mathematically oriented physicist. Whether he could come up with findings that could withstand the scrutiny of a full-time professional in Mayan studies seemed to me less important than the fresh perspectives and enthusiasm he brought to the course and the example he set of using mathematical models to translate vague verbal hypotheses into testable quantitative propositions.

Applying the highly developed techniques of one academic field to a subject as distant as particle physics might seem from Mayan studies was only one way of exploiting the new opportunities opened up by the college system. Soon several different kinds of courses began to blossom in the college catalogs. Some grew from the exigencies of the college system itself. Anomalously isolated in Crown College, the “science” college, from the natural affiliations of a political philosopher with a strong interest in Hellenic culture, and facing the necessity of addressing the concerns of aspirant science majors, my politics board colleague Peter Euben devised a highly successful Crown College core course that invited students to explore philosophical perspectives on the relationships of technology with society. In some cases college courses reflected the revival of an early interest now filtered through years of experience in mastering another discipline. In other cases they represented a broadening out of an approach that had served well within the discipline to encompass new materials conventionally treated as beyond its boundaries. Some novel college courses came about through collaboration of faculty bringing their disciplinary perspectives from several different disciplines: a Cowell course on the phenomenon of “Death” taught by a biologist, an anthropologist, and a philosopher was an especially notable instance of its kind. Sometimes it was hard to see any linkage whatsoever between the college course and the board affiliation of a faculty member, as in the case in which a College Five economist and a culture anthropologist collaborated in designing a course on the architecture of animal bodies. The one safe generalization I could see making about college courses is that the books assigned for purchase for them made the holdings of the campus bookstore unlike any other of its kind that I had ever entered.

Many of the connections drawn in these courses were fascinating. Other seemed to me to mark fruitful variants of the familiar. But increasingly there were college courses for which “soft” became the only appropriate adjective. One such was a well-meaning effort by Cowell College to accommodate juniors and seniors who had continually put off meeting their distribution requirement in the natural sciences, whether from heavy involvement in other activities or from a reluctance to confront the presumed rigors of scientific reasoning. Whatever the motives, the course became well known throughout the campus for enabling students to meet the requirement without having to take on the challenges of learning how scientists actually think about their subjects and how they translate their thoughts and observations into structured theories. Such courses therefore became a way of bypassing the objectives of a liberal arts curriculum.

What was true of many students was becoming true of the faculty as well. After the bloom had worn off the initial excitement of designing and teaching college courses outside a perhaps overly familiar disciplinary curriculum, many faculty began meeting their college teaching requirement (as I demonstrated in a detailed memo I once sent out) by teaching courses that differed from courses they taught under board auspices in name only. Many of these courses were perfectly good courses by any name, but one problem with enveloping a board course in a college name and number was that college courses in general were typically less subject to knowledgeable scrutiny and accountability than those offered under a board label. And in some cases, more accountability was urgently needed. In one particularly notorious case—I shall name no names here—a natural sciences faculty member met his teaching obligations to his

college by taking his students on a bike ride past some of the attractive buildings on Walnut Avenue. He'd point out, "This house was built in 1890" or "Notice how this pergola frames a private alleyway." And then they'd all go to have coffee at the Café Pergolesi. And that was called a college course for five credits out of fifteen!

Reti: Whoa!

Von der Muhll: Such flamboyantly scandalous "courses" obviously did much to damage the reputation of college courses. What was perhaps a more seriously erosive problem with them was less blatant. College courses were seldom incorporated as parts of a systematically organized curriculum. This led to several problems. One was that there were no clear curricular criteria for evaluating the contribution a college course was making or would make to the overall education of students. Faculty members were left pretty much to themselves in deciding what kind of course to put together. While that could sometimes lead to the impressive innovations I have already noted, it could also mean that students had no guidance as to what courses to take to build on what they had learned in the course. It also made appraising the relative value of the course and its demands on faculty time very difficult to assess.

Only one college—College Five—had a college major. But the aesthetics studies major was simply an agglomeration of courses that purported to give the college its identity as an "arts" college. It had no underlying rationale as to which courses should be taken in what order. It provided no basis for claiming what skills were developed through its instruction, and no indication of what graduate

program or career it might lead to. "What Next?" was an open question for every major. Unsurprisingly, very few students ever actually enrolled in it.

I personally never saw college courses as simply an easy escape from the challenges of intellectual activity. I saw them as a different way of holding ideas and an invitation to explore ideas, not simply as a way to avoid being held accountable for what one was doing. In 1973, by the way, I drafted a memo which was circulated rather widely around campus in which I put forward a critique of the college courses and the fact that there had been too little thought as to how they would add up into anything in particular.

I wrote the memo because I felt very strongly that the college courses were a valuable innovation, but one that needed to have a rationale and a level of accountability that could stand up to critiques from outside. As chair of the Budget and Academic Planning Committee in 1974 I went to "intersegmental" meetings of the whole University of California. There and elsewhere I kept on encountering the same lines: other UC faculty and administrators were already beginning already to say, "UC Santa Cruz is a lovely place. I plan to send my children there because the teaching is really very good and it has a friendly administration. But, at the same time, it's really operating like a state college, not like a University of California research institution."

Those people could be pretty patronizing. "You guys are getting away with not having to teach really demanding courses," I was told. Now, that couldn't be fairly said of our scientists. It really could not. But it perhaps could be said, to some extent, of the other two divisions, and it could all too clearly be said of

many college courses. I wanted us to be seen as different in an exhilarating and challenging and intellectually thought through sense, and not simply different because it was sort of fun to be here and easier to be here than in the more demanding campuses, because in the long run, that could do us tremendous damage.

Reti: I think that's a great place to stop for today.

Von der Muhll: Yes.

Reti: I'll look forward to devoting another session to what you have to say—

Reflections on UC Santa Cruz as an Experiment in Public Higher Education

Reti: Today is Wednesday, January 22nd, 2014, and this is Irene Reti. I am back with George Von der Muhll for our second interview on the [Mark N.] Christensen era, the era of reaggregation, and the early part of the campus's history. Let's start today, George, by talking about the success of the early campus and what conditions and ingredients went into that success, and perhaps how that played out later in the Christensen era.

Von der Muhll: All right. It strikes me that the year 1974 was extremely pivotal to the whole destiny of the campus, and that was because it was at the end of the second of two phases that had preceded it. The first one started before the campus opened, when its institutions were being designed by faculty members, among others, like my politics board chair Karl Lamb, who came here before Cowell College opened up, and it lasted, I think, through the founding of the first two colleges. It was a period in which all the participants were fully engaged,

even excited so far as one could make out in retrospect, by the vision of UCSC's distinctive goals and its break with the conventions that had dominated the first eight UC campuses. Inevitably, some disillusionment set in. I never met one person whose name repeatedly bobs up as a founder in this period, Byron Stookey, who had long since gone by the time I arrived four years after the campus opened. So likewise, Charles Page, the first provost of Stevenson [college] in 1966, but no more than a memory by 1969. So there were some very important figures who apparently were not drawn in by the unfolding implications of the Kerr-McHenry plans for the campus, or who were disappointed by its opening years. Even so, virtually every faculty member with whom I talked during my recruitment visit, and then during at least the first year after my arrival, seemed imbued with a sense of mission I quickly came to share.

I had, of course, no basis in my first year here for anticipating how much was about to change. I think the second phase quite clearly began in the early 1970s with the abandonment of its college core courses by Cowell—the first and in many ways the founding college on this campus, the college that had opened with a level of exhilaration reflected in a collaborative student-faculty history entitled *Solomon's House*, and which had been steered by Provost Page Smith, who had promoted the iconic image of the campus as a visionary legatee of the pioneering New England settlers' "City on a Hill," who had given UC Santa Cruz its motto as the place where education was conceived of as "the pursuit of truth in the company of friends," and who was instrumental in introducing the narrative evaluation alternative to letter grades that had come to attract more attention—or notoriety—in the outside world than any other single feature of the

campus, but who resigned his position and withdrew from the UCSC faculty in 1973 in protest at the direction he sensed it was heading.

Meanwhile, developments in the third college on campus, Crown College, were revealing fundamental limitations in a college system that had not been made evident in the founding of Cowell, with its predominately humanities faculty, and Stevenson, with its axis of orientation toward the social sciences. The natural scientists who provided the intended core of Crown's faculty began to indicate quite early on that they wanted offices next to their primary and demanding worksites and principal sites for interactions with their colleagues and student majors—the laboratories located within the two large new natural sciences buildings a good ten-minute up and downhill walk from the hilltop buildings of the college with which they were nominally affiliated. Their demands were understandable, but the consequences were predictable: Crown College became somewhat of a ghost structure whose hallways were populated more by recently recruited social scientists and humanities faculty members, who could not be accommodated in the first two colleges, than by members of those divisions with a shared interest in interdisciplinary collaborative relationships with natural scientists. Creating core courses for Crown students under these circumstances was not easy and was soon abandoned altogether. And, as I've already indicated, the challenges to natural scientists of developing distinctive college courses outside the firmer paradigms of the natural sciences was a challenge not easily met, especially by younger scientists who had yet to make their mark in their field and whose future would be more critically determined by whether they did.

These were problems that had not been worked out in the original plan for

college-centered courses in the first two years, and they were never to be worked out. All too early it became evident that they were self-fueling. Because scientists spent most of their time in their laboratories, and because these worksites provided the primary base for significant interactions with colleagues and students, the social bondings became ever more intense in those venues even as they diminished in Crown itself. The Commons-Room gatherings and dinners that played a critical role in giving the first two colleges a strong sense of community therefore took place for scientists outside the venues of Crown, thereby diminishing an authentic sense of loyalty to the life of the college and to its corollary obligations. The lessening of college-based teaching in turn reduced collaborative bonds derived from common membership in the college, and insofar as college-based participation in such ventures fell to the non-science faculty members, the outcomes deviated ever further from an intended identity grounded in the natural sciences, thereby diminishing still further the incentives for active participation by natural scientists in the life of the college. Not even the skills and respect enjoyed by Provost Kenneth Thimann, himself a distinguished scientist, could significantly offset these catalytic dynamics. The latent instability of the Crown community became manifest during the tenure of Thimann's successor, a prominent philosopher of science who might have seemed ideally suited to Crown's original identity and mission but who lasted one year before departing for another campus.

These problems were not invariantly rooted in the needs of the natural scientists. A spectacular exception to that supposition was Frank Andrews, who early in his life produced a textbook in chemistry that was so successful that essentially he

didn't have to worry about either obtaining a full professorship or about having a substantial income.⁴ Frank became one of the most loyal, ardent members of Merrill College, very ready to take on being an academic preceptor there and doing much to shape its course while working out a budding interest in courses on human relationships and achievements. He was indeed a central figure in Merrill's early years.

But Frank was an exception in many ways. More typical were scientists who felt themselves to be outsiders to the collegiate enterprise and for whom Frank's degree of freedom was not so clearly available. And the issue for them was not simply whether they could create liberal arts courses of interest to students outside their field, as many of them could; it was whether they could convincingly relate these interests to the nominal identity of their college in a way inviting upward movement for students within a coherent academic structure that maintained that identity. If one was a chemist, one really had to strain to design one or more courses that drew on one's professional skills and concerns while strengthening the proclaimed identity of a college focusing on the fine arts or on the Third World. And it's worth recalling in this context that colleges were originally expected to claim two-quarter courses out of the five per year that constituted a "normal" load, and that it paid 50 percent of each faculty member's salary as well.

The internal stresses that first became fully apparent in Crown were compounded as more colleges were added to the campus. Whatever the

⁴ See Sarah Rabkin, Interviewer and Editor, *A Dual Teaching Career: An Oral History with UC Santa Cruz Professor Frank Andrews* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2014). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/andrews>

imaginative titular themes proclaimed for the first three colleges, they roughly corresponded to the conventional threefold division of university curricula elsewhere—namely, humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. These general divisions at least left ample space for disciplinary or shared-interest subgroups to form within at least the most heavily represented faculty cohort in each college without compromising its identity, even if the partitioning potentially left faculty members of the other two divisions feeling somewhat marginalized within the collegiate enterprise in ways I've already discussed.

With that possibility exhausted, however, Merrill sought to give itself a more explicitly thematic cast in 1968 through self-description as a college focusing on the "Third World"—a title that, as we've already seen, immediately became an object of divisive controversy over the geographical implications of the term.

From its foundation, College Five, with a donor still being sought to give it a name and potential theme, faced two additional problems in constructing and maintaining its identity. It was, to begin with, the first college to be located on the west side of the campus, a brisk fifteen-minute walk from the campus facilities—the bookstore, the field house, the swimming pool, and several close-by cafés—that provided shared external benefits for the students and faculty of the first four more neighborly colleges on the east side. This inherent disadvantage was then compounded by the determination of its founding provost, a published novelist, that College Five, the "arts college," should distinguish itself from Cowell by interpreting the term more narrowly to mean a college of the "performing" or "studio" arts—painting, sculpture, musical composition, dance.

This decision, which ultimately led to the creation of a fourth campuswide division of the arts, had three more immediate consequences. In the first place, it left academic historians, philosophers, and instructors of literature and linguistics as marginalized in relation to the central theme of the college as the social and natural scientists. Secondly, in its emphasis on contemporary creative activity it left no role for college courses on art, musical, or cinematic history—a dissociation that spoke congenially in the late 1960s to the belief that creators and connoisseurs of the arts should be freed from the “bondage” of tradition but that had long-term implications for the place of what had once been regarded as extracurricular activities within the academic liberal arts curriculum—a development that critics of the campus were quick to note. And thirdly, College Five soon faced the paradoxes of Crown College—natural scientists had their laboratories, studio arts instructors had their studios, and in parallel with the scientists the central venue for faculty-student and faculty-faculty interaction in the studio arts became the studios, while the marginalized humanities and social science faculty members were the prime occupants of College Five faculty offices and became the most visible, frequent, and persistent actors participating in the institutional life of the college.

The founding of Kresge College added two further issues to a lengthening agenda of unremedied and perhaps irremediable defects in the college design. At the behest of its founders, this west side college was deliberately located at the end of a road far off in the northwest corner of the campus so as to intensify—or so the founders hoped—internal bonding among students who would not be subjected to gravitational pull toward other campus institutions; and secondly,

these internally communitarian and isolationist elements were reinforced when its founding provost, Robert Edgar, a distinguished biologist who brought with him to Kresge strong and highly controversial pedagogical convictions and who immediately transformed Kresge from its original designation as a college emphasizing the study of natural ecologies into its opposite as one that would undertake experimental human-relations forms of bonding among students, “continuously open-door” faculty, and administrators.

Oakes College, under Provost Herman Blake, then skillfully added a radically new but likewise controversial element to the college idea by defining the mission of his college less in curricular terms than in an emphasis on recruiting sympathetic faculty and staff to ease the entry and transition of students from academically “non-traditional” families—African Americans, Latinos, and Asians—into campus life and its expectations while emphasizing remedial skills that would enable such students to participate fully in an unlimited quest for the highest challenges and rewards that academic instruction could offer.

Whether College Eight was truly a “college” in the original sense was to some extent in question: its early mission as legatee of Kresge’s founding but displaced identity as a college emphasizing the study of natural ecologies became likewise displaced by recognition that transfer students in particular wished for a collegiate ambience, even though not living in college dormitories or eating in its dining halls. By the time Colleges Nine and Ten reached the drawing boards, it had become evident that a “college” could no longer be expected to mean more than a locale for certain faculty and administrative offices and a small number of classrooms for general usage.

I think it is fair to say that, in retrospect, the trajectory I've described at some length in the conception and discovery of limitations in what a "college" could hope and expect to be was launched, as I suggested, in the early 1970s, not too long after I came here. What is certain is that the stresses at the beginning of what I have called this second phase called forth a flurry of photocopied memos among faculty members during the winter months of 1974. What became particularly clear from these exchanges was that the frustrations expressed in these memos were unlikely to be eased by a change of college provosts or a reduction of college workloads. The problems were not problems of individuals but of systems—more specifically, of the college system.

What had brought on this outpouring? I think this displacement of messianic fervor by disillusionment reflected a conjunction of changes at three levels in the context in which the campus had evolved since its opening days. First off were changes of goals, resources, and expectations in the outer world beyond the control of any one university campus. Secondly were the inherent, predictable consequences of expanding the size of the campus, while a third set of forces derived from problems attributable to specific decisions that were made in the course of designing and institutionalizing a new campus. In trying to understand what was happening to UC Santa Cruz between 1965 and 1974, I think it is useful first to identify separately the changes that occurred at these three levels and then to chart their congruence.

The shifts of aspirations and forces in the outer world are perhaps the easiest ones to note. In retrospect, I think it's clear that the terms on which this campus was founded were predicated, perhaps more than anybody realized, on the

continuation of the rapid economic growth American society—and, more particularly, California—had experienced throughout most of the fifties and again, after a limited interval, in much of the 1960s. I myself can vividly recall how, as a graduate student at Harvard, I went to hear a talk by a man I'd never heard of, Governor Edmund "Pat" Brown, who opened up for his audience a dazzlingly optimistic, exuberant, unlimited vista of more freeways, more dams, more parks, more city planning, more education for everyone that could hardly have contrasted more with the cramped, parochial infighting of Massachusetts politicians over a sharply limited turf. In such an expansive view of non-zero-sum politics even the most utopian dreams could be made to seem fiscally realistic. California itself was indeed an unfettered dream. Legislative support was readily obtained for ambitious projects—the bigger, the better—and very little seemed out of reach, certainly not an innovative, experimental campus in the redwoods. The challenge was how best to use funds that could be readily mobilized, not how to overcome hard questions about whether they should be used at all.

In such an atmosphere, it was easy to conclude that setting up a new campus meant making sure it had the funds needed, not asking hard questions about the degree to which the aspirations of the campus outran anything that anybody would want to pay for or whether students would be able to use their training to obtain a job. Californian society was not being ripped apart by a battle over desegregation, as in the South, and the Vietnam War was still well below most people's horizon so the challenge of building consensus for new undertakings was eased.

Here is perhaps a good point for mentioning a particular comparative advantage that UC Santa Cruz specifically seemed initially to have. Unlike the University of California at San Diego, it did not have to adapt to the constraints of building on top of an existing institution like the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, nor did it have to cope with transforming a teachers college into a university, as in Santa Barbara did. UCSC had a clear field—both literally and figuratively—for implementing its planners’ designs, whatever these might be, so it could dream large and dream radically and yet entertain hopes of maintaining consensus for those dreams.

But California was about to change in the mid-sixties, just as Cowell was opening the doors of its trailer park. On the one hand, the 1964 “Free Speech” movement in Berkeley, Rock and Roll festivals, drugs, a “Summer of Love” in 1967, and growing anger over the human costs of the Vietnam War transformed the student landscape, so that a gentle quest for an innovatively liberal education was bound to be overtaken by a fierce determination not to allow “hierarchies” to dictate the kind of education students were to receive. At the same time, voters in California moved in the opposite direction, unexpectedly installing Ronald Reagan, who had come out of nowhere after his speech at the Republican Convention of 1964, as governor of California in 1966. And Reagan gave very different answers to questions from the ones UCSC’s planners had thought to be self evident. “We shouldn’t be subsidizing intellectual curiosity” became an applause line, as did, “there are certain intellectual luxuries that perhaps we should do without.” These hostile sentiments gained more traction as the economy entered a period of “stagflation” and soaring costs were no

accompanied by soaring revenues and multiplying jobs.

Meanwhile, by the early seventies students and large numbers of faculty began to be much less concerned about building the institutions on this campus and profiting from an innovatively designed liberal arts curriculum and much more concerned about whether this campus was living up to the responsibilities of any civic organization in addressing the emergent problems of American society: the Vietnam War; whether the campus was sufficiently multiethnic; whether it was recruiting disadvantaged students; whether it was doing its job finding out what was going on in the fields near the campus and in the Soledad prison. So the dialogues that had been expected to occur about how best to present the materials in courses on the Hellenic bequest to Western Europe, science and society, psychology and the self, and what Westerners might learn from India, China, and Japan began to lose steam as it became apparent that the challenges of instituting a utopian liberal arts institution severed from the pragmatic pressures of society and the corporate interests of the multiversity became displaced by a growing sense that the ideas that had been worked out in the early sixties by the founders did not align very well with increasingly urgent student concerns about remaking the foundations of a society they had grown to fear and detest.

Reti: So are you saying that the original campus did not have this kind of interest in social change, even in a [Lyndon B.] Johnson kind of sense, the Great Society? Was there a kind of interest in the outside world, in reform? I don't even mean radicalism, but a more liberal kind of agenda.

Von der Muhll: I think there was no opposition, certainly, to being concerned about the outside world, but I think for the first two years or so what excited people were the instituting of narrative evaluations in place of letter grades, the kinds of interdisciplinary and experimental courses they were taking, and the rules regarding dormitories and unisex bathrooms—things like that. They did not feel themselves to be deeply responsible for improving the nation as a whole. They were not asking, “Why are there so few poor African Americans from Oakland on this campus?”

I think this relative insulation from society was quite strong in the early years, and it made it easier to work on the innovations of the campus without having to be constantly aligning with one side or the other on what role the United States was playing in Vietnam and in Latin America. And so the tone of the campus changed, I think, very swiftly and very deeply at the end of the sixties, although sometimes in unexpected ways. Of course certain flare-ups spilled over into the campus before then. As I noted, [UC] Berkeley’s enormous [Free Speech] rallies in Sproul [Hall], broke out just one year before the campus opened, although its inflammatory speeches and acts of vandalism were not duplicated down here. And Governor Ronald Reagan had to contend with an exceedingly unfriendly reception when he came here to speak to the first graduating class. But I think it was really only with the shooting of student protestors against the war in Vietnam at Kent State in May of 1970 that the turbulence of the outside world began to seem more significant to students, than the City on a Hill that they thought they had been building here.

Even so, one of the things that I think made this campus different—and I became

a witness to this change just as it began to peak—was that the students decided on the occasion of the Kent State shooting to put into practice some of their rhetoric about people-to-people conversations, rather than mass rallies and shouting. How they did so stunned downtown Santa Cruz, which had become increasingly dubious about the campus community. It was governed by a coalition of real estate interests, insurance people, and Boardwalk entrepreneurs, and most of these people had for some time held very right-wing points of view. Hard as it now is to believe, at that time Santa Cruz was represented in Congress by one of its most fiercely rightwing Republican members, and he enjoyed such unquestioning support, verging on 98 percent, that he had run unopposed in the 1968 election before I came here.

Reti: And who was that?

Von der Muhll: His name was Burt [L.] Talcott. And he wasn't merely on the right; he was aggressively so. He once took a visiting delegation of women in Washington by the shoulders and propelled them out of his office when they came to try to talk to him about his lack of concern over the toll of the Vietnam War. So there was quite a split, and it was a carryover from something that has often been forgotten, that Santa Cruz before the Second World War was on the FBI's list, not because it was filled with radicals but, on the contrary, because there was so much sympathy for [Adolf] Hitler and [Benito] Mussolini that the FBI was worried about that and had it on its watch list for that, not for loyalty to the Soviet Union. And it's worth remembering in this context that at this time students were not allowed to register to vote outside the communities they had resided in and that the 26th Amendment that lowered the voting age from

twenty-one to eighteen was only passed in 1971.

Reti: Fascinating.

Von der Muhll: And these right-wing views definitely carried over into local residents' views of the campus community. By this point, they had had to give up their initial expectation that the campus would sponsor large-scale competitive sports like football that would attract a crowd of free-spending enthusiasts and alumni. I had a brief experience in my first year here, which may be pertinent. The mayor of this city stereotyped UC Santa Cruz faculty and students; he saw them all as engaged in drugs, extramarital sex, and far-left politics. Like most stereotypes, this one had some grains of truth amid a pile of prejudices. And then some student in one of the off-campus residences hung up a Vietnamese flag in the window, and the mayor announced to everybody who would listen that he was going to go there personally and rip it down and have that student expelled from the room.

Reti: Have the student expelled from the campus?

Von der Muhll: From the room he was living in.

Reti: Oh, he was going to evict him from his own house.

Von der Muhll: He was going to have the student evicted. He was told by his own attorney, "Don't do it. What you want to do is against the First Amendment." But the mayor didn't care; he was accustomed to having his way and he was confident that the community he knew best would back him. He said, "I don't care. I am going to do it because I'm a loyal American, unlike the students." So

he went up to the house and tore the flag down. And I wrote a letter to the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* simply saying that, in fact, many of our—this is when I was still a teacher of constitutional law, one of my twelve subfields that I actually taught. [Chuckles.] I just wrote a letter to the [*Santa Cruz*] *Sentinel*, which said that many of our most important liberties came from the actions of people whom many would find quite annoying or obnoxious people. The Jehovah's Witnesses had annoyed large numbers of people by knocking on doors and trying to convert them. But the Supreme Court, in a succession of decisions upholding the Jehovah's Witnesses' right to try to disseminate their views, actually produced some of the most valuable protections for all citizens, including minorities, and the community should keep that in mind.

I got a call from the mayor that evening. He was extremely angry at me. And so were several other of the members of the City Council for my having written that letter. Conversely, I got a call from a member of the local County Democratic Committee, asking if I would join the committee. [Chuckles.]

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: And I did. And that gave more insight into the community because we then ran a schoolteacher as a candidate against Burt Talcott, just to show that he didn't speak for everybody here. Brian Riordan didn't succeed, of course, given the nature of the voting constituency he had to appeal to. But it showed me what a big gap there was between town and campus and how many misperceptions there were of the students at that time.

In any case—well, they wanted me to run for office, too, but I decided I didn't

want to do that. [Chuckles.] But I did have some useful experiences to share from my time in various Congressional offices in Washington, and I still had many ties there. In any case, everything changed with the adoption of Talcott's position became hopeless and he disappeared forever from the scene while Santa Cruz has provided crucial and unwavering support ever since for candidates like Leon [E.] Panetta, Sam Farr, Fred Keeley and Bill Monning, and a strong environmental coalition at the local level in every election.

But to go back to students, the Vietnam War, and the campus community—when President Nixon ordered the bombing of Cambodia and other actions indicating his intuition to escalate the war, one might have expected the students here to join together to demonstrate in large, noisy protest rallies, as students were doing elsewhere. There were some of those rallies here as well, but also something quite different. Several groups of students decided that, if they were men, they would cut their long hair and shave, everybody would put on nice clothes instead of jeans with holes, and they would then go downtown and try to find people to whom they could say, “Would you call in a group of your neighbors for tea? We’d like to try to explain to them why we feel so strongly about the Vietnam War.”

Reti: Oh, really?

Von der Muhll: It was to some extent the non-violent legacy of Martin [Luther] King [Jr.]. And the townspeople were stunned. This was not [UC] Berkeley on the Cowell Ranch. This was a very different approach. The students were seeking person-to-person, neighbor-to-neighbor respectful conversations with people.

And it drained away a great deal of the tension that existed between town and campus. I myself was very impressed.

Reti: Was this effort coming from the students?

Von der Muhll: Yes.

Reti: Or was this part of a particular board, like politics, or community studies, or—

Von der Muhll: Well, not particularly politics. Many faculty were certainly leaders also. Much of that occurred just after I came, so I didn't know many of the organizers, although I myself did go on a few of those visits because I did know something about Vietnam. But in any case, it was a movement that was respectful of difference, rather than one using polarizing rhetoric to generate excitement.

So in those early years, that was a stable external environment, which then began to change in various ways, particularly the first years of fear, when the students became powerful voters, and many of the local people saw the loss of their former political leaders. But I think, more fundamentally, what wasn't realized at the time was that the kind of people who were initially recruited to the campus were not necessarily outstanding, glittering scholars at the very peak of their careers; they were people who were inspired by the vision of Santa Cruz. And the young people who came had yet to make their mark professionally.

Reti: The young faculty.

Von der Muhll: The young faculty were eager to take part in what was going on here. They were drawn by the special features of the educational system. And those who came first were a small group as well. Cowell College had—I don't know exactly how many faculty, but it was a limited number, so there were large numbers of personal ties. I think what had not been fully appreciated was what would happen when this cadre was replaced in various ways, first of all by the growth in size of the campus, so that it was harder and harder to know all the faculty and to feel that you were a part of a joint mission to create the city on the hill that was going to be different from the other campuses. And another significant consequence of growth was that many college dormitories were not sufficient to hold all their students, and so the social communities that had supported the college system day in and day out in the dorms and dining halls began to splinter as more students lived in isolated groups around the town. While some of the movement off campus was motivated simply by the temporarily lower rents in town aft that time, it reflected not only effect but cause insofar as it was an indicator—for a time, at least—for the growing desire of students to enjoy individual lifestyles without continuous surveillance by college monitors and continuous pressure to join in college-sponsored activities.

Another factor was an ironic outcome of the early success of the Santa Cruz experiment. While at first UC Santa Cruz was hardly known outside of California, it soon began to get a great deal of publicity in national magazines.⁵

⁵ For coverage on the planning and early years of the UC Santa Cruz campus see: "Out of the Turmoil at Berkeley: Cozy Campus Created at Santa Cruz, January 25, 1965, *Los Angeles Times*, p. A1; "UC at Santa Cruz Offers New Hope on Scholastic Dilemmas," April 25, 1965 *Los Angeles Times*, p. A1; "UC Santa Cruz Emerges as the 'Place to Go', January 16, 1966, *Los Angeles Times*, p. B1.

This unsolicited but welcome publicity in turn made it much easier to attract many prominent scholars, a development which Dean [E.] McHenry rightly understood would add to the solidity and stability of this campus, make an impression on the legislature, and make an impression on the other eight campuses that constituted the University of California. McHenry clearly understood that adding such faculty to the campus roster would be very helpful in all these ways. But those people were not necessarily as committed as some of the early senior appointments—many of whom had been familiar with parallel collegiate structures in Cambridge and Oxford Universities—that Dean had picked out to help him in building this specific vision of this campus, nor were they necessarily as drawn to the Kerr-McHenry mission as those of the younger faculty who had come here to be a part of a utopian experiment. They saw it as an attractive place in which to retire; in what proportions that sentiment derived from setting, climate, housing, ties to other campuses of the prestigious University of California, and the specific elements of the educational mission as conceived of by its founders a decade earlier was another matter.

Reti: So what would be an example of one of those scholars?

Von der Muhll: We had two on the politics board. And I'm sure they wouldn't object to my naming them. One was Grant McConnell, who came here with me from the University of Ch[icago]. The problem was that Grant understood pretty well the aims of this campus, but before he had had any opportunity to experience it he was drafted as the vice chancellor of the campus by McHenry, and he found himself heavily involved in a great deal of administrative work that he didn't want to be involved in. The second was Sheldon [S.] Wolin, who

came here probably more because he didn't like the strong support for the war in Vietnam by a significant majority of the Berkeley faculty, he did like the growing student and faculty radicalism here, and he did like the vision of a liberal education, which he had experienced himself at Oberlin [College] before he taught at Berkeley. He liked those features of it, but he wasn't particularly interested in the college system as either a social or an educational unit, or in interdisciplinary courses as such, and it seems that he grew more disenchanted the more he was asked to become an active participant in its institutionalization. So one day Bruce Larkin, by then the chair of our department, got a phone call from some member of the local press, saying, "Is it true that Professor Wolin has left for Princeton [University]?" And the answer that the chair gave was, "So far as I know, that's not true." But when he asked Sheldon, he found that it was.

Reti: [Laughs.] Oh, wow!

Von der Muhll: I have to say that Wolin apparently told Jack Schaar on at least five occasions, "I want to get out of Princeton. It lacks the intellectual enthusiasm I experienced at UCSC. I'd like to come back," but apparently, always at the last moment, he got cold feet and backed off the arrangements for doing so that Jack was setting up. But nevertheless, this was a case where one of the absolute leaders of the profession gave the campus such a luster that the number of applicants—I know it was true in politics—soared. "We are available. We have data. Will travel" is the phrase I heard a lot in those days—

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Von der Muhll: —So of course, such prominent appointments produced a great

surge in interest, but it meant a surge which was not necessarily grounded in an understanding of what Santa Cruz was trying to achieve as an utopian educational institution. It had to do with being on a campus which was attractive, was part of the University of California, and that had on its small faculty some of the leading figures in the country. So I think that was an important change when the second round of hirings came. There were many instances of that in other departments as well, widening the field of choice but not necessarily of commitment to the original order.

Then I think another factor was, indeed, curricular. The first time round, Cowell was trying to build a theme of Western civilization that was sufficiently capacious to assure that almost everybody except a very rigorous and perhaps not unduly pedagogically imaginative natural scientist could always find some way of relating to that general theme. And that's pretty easy.

Stevenson is illustrative because it also was a successful community. There was still that utopian sense of gathering and talk in the Commons Room among its members about how to put together a core course consistent with Stevenson's self-definition as a college oriented toward the theme of Self and Society. But Stevenson became increasingly a center for literature and the social sciences, and rather less so for the natural scientist, because Self and Society [as a college theme] might attract one or two biologists knowing something about brains and how brains affect the mechanism, the brain as an organ and how it could be related to the self. But other than that, translating the motto into courses and incorporating natural scientists into teaching within the college curriculum wasn't quite so easy.

And the founding of Crown College, as I have already said, was when it became very evident that there was something that simply had not been thought through: how to keep the natural scientists deeply engaged in a college when their work, their office, their prospects for promotion, everything else was essentially located over in the Thimann Labs, rather than in Crown College. And very soon, some of the really innovative work in producing a course at Crown was displaced by increasing faculty resolutions: No core course—for that matter, no college course. Do not spend any money on supporting college courses, because this has nothing to do with where *we* are and where we expect to be ten years from now, or where we're going to be. That was an instance of what had not been thought through. And so, putting those things together signaled that there was growing unease about the colleges.

I think that in some respects the single most important problem that arose in those years derived from McHenry's wish to anchor faculty in the colleges, to give them a strong reason to be active participants in the college. Collegiate obligations meant, among other things, that all faculty would be expected to teach close to half of their courses as college courses. At that time, faculty were still expected to teach five courses in three quarters, so that meant at least two in the college, perhaps three, certainly not merely one, let alone none. The college would pay 50 percent of their salaries, and that was intended to assure a more than purely formal arrangement or a purely accounting arrangement; it would justify giving the colleges a major say in the promotion process. Colleges would have their own personnel committees that would write their own letters in all promotional actions. The college provost would write his or her own letter as

well to be put in the dossier, and these college letters were to be counted 50:50 with letters contributed by the divisional dean or by the curious entities known as boards of studies that were just beginning to emerge.

This caused very serious personnel problems on both sides. There were some early promotions, both to tenure and full professor, of faculty who had published one or two books reviews and not much more, and these actions began to give to the outside world and to the other campuses of the University of California the impression that Santa Cruz was academically less rigorous and was perhaps not sharply to be distinguished from the state colleges, all the more because at that time many of the disciplines had not yet established graduate programs and therefore resembled the state colleges at that time in not having the authority to grant doctoral degrees.

Conversely, many of the faculty found participation on college committees burdensome because the prevailing dual college-board structure of the campus required faculty of any given size to fill twice as many committees as on other campuses. Both colleges and boards of studies needed faculty members to fill their personnel, curriculum, recruitment, and student honors committees; colleges were fertile institutions for generating additional committees for planning facilities and social events, and of course the campus Academic Senate had its own claims on faculty to staff campuswide senate academic personnel committees, course approval committees, educational policy committees, and the like. Sometimes faculty members would find themselves serving on both college and board curriculum or personnel committees; in other cases, membership on one meant rigorously exclusion from a parallel committee for the other

institution. The one constant was that by design faculty members had to pay attention to each of these multiple claims on their time since each institution had incentives and sanctions for participation or non-compliance.

But overwhelming demands on faculty time and responsibilities were only one of the problems inherent in the dual structure of the campus. Uncertain or conflicting standards, the appropriate uses of them by the different institutions, and the weight to be given to them almost certainly raised more consequential issues. Lacking specialized knowledge of a discipline often inhibited committee members—a sculptor passing judgment on a physicist or linguist, a sociologist assessing the aesthetic sensibilities of a medieval art historian—from exercising independent judgment regarding claims for a merit increase and arguing for deferment to the candidate's board of studies. Alternatively, such members might fall back on unduly simplistic criteria—number of articles published, or total deference to an outside letter from a minor or highly controversial authority in the candidate's disciplinary field, which then left little guidance for evaluating potentially major works in progress. Sociability—or its lack—all too often played a disproportionate role in such evaluations in filling a void of ignorance and set the stage for sustained and bitter conflicts between board and college.

Over time, stereotypes began to harden in such proceedings to the disadvantage of the colleges. Although colleges continued to pay 50 percent of a faculty member's salary, their evaluations of faculty members' contributions to the campus and to scholarship, whether positive or negative, became heavily discounted on grounds of insufficient professional competence or excessive weighting of fellowship, even while demands for institution-building remained a

critical and demanding part of life on campus. Such rates of discount became self-confirming as faculty members in their college role became negligent or cynical in performing their duties while knowing how little their judgments would ultimately matter. Analogous problems arose in building a college curriculum that could effectively compete with board offerings for serious students.

Similar tensions began to build up in the recruitment of faculty. Financially well-endowed colleges could use their resources to bring in distinguished visitors or low-cost part-time instructors, but such appointments in most cases lasted for only a year or two. Recruitments for regular ladder faculty positions with the prospect of tenure were governed, on the other hand, by the rule that although a college might be consulted, the right to initiate the recruitment process for individual candidates lay exclusively with the disciplinary boards of study on the basis of the annual allocation of FTE [full-time equivalent] positions. Board needs were paramount in this process; college membership was much more a function of available office space than of any notable congruence between the candidates' interests and aptitudes with college orientations and programmatic needs. The boards would then bring their candidates to the campus, where, after interviews with board members, they would be coached in what to say, what parts of their resumes to highlight, what one course they might wish to teach if they were to become a member of the college, and they were then dropped off at their prospective college for a brisk one to two hour interview with various members of the college before being taken over to the chancellor's office for yet another interview. A politics candidate who had learned to play guitar at some

point and who had spent two weeks on a beach in Palma Majorca after graduation from high school was told not to forget to emphasize his deep interest in Spanish culture during his hour at Porter College —

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: —and to make a big point of the fact that his primary recreation was playing the guitar. [Chuckles.] If one happened to be an amateur painter, make sure that's not overlooked in talking to the Cowell faculty about why your dream is to be located in Cowell, which has a vacancy for you, and so on down the line. It became increasing inauthentic.

So the personnel process was being increasingly burdensome, while at the same time becoming increasingly questionable. And to the extent that it was made clearer that academic work and accomplishment was determinative as a basis of recruitment, that took it away from the colleges and steered it to the boards. It gave a tilt that McHenry had been trying to avoid, toward making one's relation with one's colleagues on the board far more important than relationships in the college. If a college was unimpressed by a board candidate, or unable to see how the candidate might contribute to college courses, it could exercise a quasi-veto for that candidate, and the board would have to look around for another college that was more amenable to taking that candidate. But the obverse was never the case; a college could not come up with a favored candidate in a discipline and impose its choice on an unwilling board.

Reti: I've always tried to understand how it was that Dean McHenry could have possibly thought that *wouldn't* happen, given that he came from UCLA and

Berkeley.

Von der Muhll: Exactly. And they were trying to break the hold of that—I mean, their vision, in some sense, was that people—it was I think not too different from what I mentioned last time, Robert [M.] Hutchins' view that if you free those who teach undergraduate courses from the incessant pressure to publish and to show how many times your articles have been cited by other members of your field, they will give more to their teaching and more thought to what is it that students need in order to obtain a liberal education. But unfortunately that was in conflict with, as you say, something that he knew.

Reti: It's a University of California campus.

Von der Muhll: Exactly, yeah.

Reti: This wasn't a small liberal arts college, where you could make up the rules, to some extent.

Von der Muhll: No. Exactly.

Reti: Assuming those faculty stay here for their entire career, which is a whole other issue.

Von der Muhll: Yes.

Reti: There's a contradiction there.

Von der Muhll: I've never understood how he could overlook it. And I can cast no light on it, because it seems to me so obvious that this problem would come

up. And the changing character of the faculty, again, was one of the things that autonomously began to change within the context of a changing society. Initially, of course, a primary question confronting the founders had been whom to bring to this campus to help define its distinctive character and to carry out its founders' mission; but by the early 1970s, faculty members who had been hired during the opening years of the campus had now spent six or seven years in the system, University of California rules were requiring that they be reviewed for tenure, and several of the younger faculty who had immersed themselves in institution-building found themselves now at risk of not getting it, all the more insofar as considerations for tenure necessarily demanded incorporating the judgments of off-campus professional peer. S

o the emphasis in academic personnel proceedings inevitably tilted from questions of whether prospective candidates for a faculty position had shown themselves to be intellectually interesting, dynamic, well read in several fields, and a probable good fit with the thematic orientations of colleges with openings to the problems of making a case for granting permanent tenure within the University of California for faculty more advanced in years who had proved themselves to be popular teachers, who had put a great deal of imaginative energy into building the colleges, but whose dossier of written work was really pretty thin in comparison with those of their outside professional peers.

So both the external environment and the internal character of the campus were beginning to change in the early seventies under all these forces, even before UCSC, like university campuses across the country, had to confront the constraints on spending that came with the "stagflation" of the American

economy in the mid-to late seventies that we should take into account later. And as these changes began to occur, they began to raise some fundamental questions about the viability of the original conception underlying the college system, as it was currently constituted. In response to this growing unease, a number of faculty now began to circulate, with no obvious external prompting, several proposals for strengthening the college system by making various changes at various levels in that system in light of indications that certain of its features that had once seemed to work so well no longer did.

These were issues in which, for the first time, I became directly involved. After my tumultuous year as a Fulbright Scholar in Africa, followed by nearly three months of traveling on my own for the first time across a broad band of spectacular Asian countries, I learned on my arrival in Santa Cruz in late September of 1973 that I had been placed on the Academic Senate's Budget and Academic Planning Committee, of which, a year later, I became the chair. And it was this committee that soon became the focal point for most of the memos expressing their author's opinions regarding needed changes in the college system; and as we began to assume this role, we soon found ourselves having to deal with repercussions from memos that had reached the local press.

One such incident that I have reason to recall with particular clarity the revered figure of Page Smith, who was very important in the founding of Cowell College and giving a sense of fellowship to the college. It was Page, as those of us who were here at the time will still recall, who backed and may have broached the proposal to use narrative evaluations in place of letter grades to assess and record student performance in courses (a procedure which, as one of its strongest

advocates, I cannot stress enough *is* grading in an appropriately multi-dimensional format).

By this point, Page had become properly recognized as a central contributor to the more utopian qualities of this campus. And it was in further exercising this very influential role that he sent out a memo taking note of the unease reflected in the various memos on the college system that were being circulated, and he contended that such major indications of stress required a major clear-cut solution. He therefore proposed that UC Santa Cruz should tell all non-tenured incoming faculty at their point of entry that they did not need to let themselves get caught up in the “silly” conflict between institution-building and good teaching, on the one hand, and research and publication on the other as so often reflected in divergent judgments between colleges and boards regarding faculty promotion. They should accordingly be told that, “We will back you to the hilt. You won’t have to worry about getting tenure so long as you show yourself engaged in making substantial contributions to the institutional and academic life of your college.” [Not an exact quote.] And that, he said, would take off the “silly” pressures that were quite obviously distracting faculty from remaining good citizens of their college. And it would also remove any excuse for not teaching as many as six or seven courses a year—a load that, as many legislators, journalists, and taxpayers had been claiming, any competent faculty member should be easily capable of carrying.

Reti: Was McHenry backing this policy?

Von der Muhll: I don’t know what McHenry thought of Page’s proposal. I

suspect he didn't agree with them, but I really don't know. What I do know is that Page invited comment by faculty members, and I found myself moved to take up the challenge. I didn't know him nearly as well as many of the faculty across the three divisions, but I did feel some institutional responsibility as a member of my Budget and Academic Planning Committee. I therefore sent him a private message saying that I thought that circulating so widely a series of proposals of this nature from so emblematic a campus founder was ill-advised and ill-timed. For one thing, many newspapers and state legislators had just been asking in the name of California's taxpayers why UCSC's faculty were permitted to carry "so light" a teaching load, and now here was an eminent campus founder and scholar saying that they were right to do so and that adding a sixth or seventh course to the "normal" load was a load that could be lightly born—ironically—were pressing for the faculty to do more teaching, and Page Smith suggested also perhaps adding a sixth course or seventh course, a heavy emphasis on teaching. Conversely, other University of California campuses and the president's office as a whole had been remarking that teaching and institution-building at Santa Cruz seemed already to be displacing the standards expected of a member of the research tier of the California higher-education system, and his memo could be taken as further confirmation of that suspicion while advocating even more measures separating it from those expectation. The net effect seemed likely to prove fuel to those fires while intensifying conflicting mandates to incoming faculty.

So I said I thought it was unwise, under present circumstances, to confirm simultaneously in one memo what influential critics from both directions had

been saying about our innovative and unconventional campus. But I also thought that he seemed to have neglected the fact that many faculty members, unlike him, had still to make their mark in their field. Recalling my college colleagues at the University of Chicago, I contended that not every young scholar could hope to be as productive as he but that their aspiration to enjoy eminence in their fields of specialization was not an unworthy motive and yet likely to be thwarted if collegiate activities were given such heavy weighting at the expense of recognized scholarly research and publication. They might be very eager to do their part in supporting their college and to support other innovative projects that were floating around the campus, but at some point they were likely either to retreat from such demands or to grow embittered—as my Chicago college colleagues had become—as the years passed with little or no professional recognition of their accomplishments in their previously chosen disciplinary roles.

And thirdly, and most importantly, I noted that Page's proposals, if fully followed through, risked making younger faculty hostages to this campus. If they didn't get tenure here under the special dispensations described by Page Smith or, alternatively, if they wanted to leave for another campus for any reason—whether because their spouse had obtained a job elsewhere or simply because they had learned in the course of their career that another campus was doing exactly what they wanted to do in their professional field—if, for whatever reason, they wanted to leave, they would nevertheless be held in feudal dependency to this campus, because if they wanted to go or had to go into the outer world, they would pay a high price for having failed to meet the

conventional expectations for an assistant professor who was coming up for tenure or for an associate professor who wanted to be promoted. So I suggested that the impact on faculty of instituting his proposals needed to be rethought.

Page was furious. He sent out a memo to the whole faculty, saying, "I have received only five responses to my important proposal for change. Four are understanding, sympathetic and supportive, and one is one of the most foolish arguments I've ever read in my life." And he then sent me a personal message, saying that if it were a different period and he was younger, he would invite me to a duel.

Reti: Oh, my God! [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: Now I've resurrected this minor and long-forgotten exchange because, when I look back at it, it now seems to me to summarize rather well the issues both of the continued viability of a college-centered campus and the potential costs to faculty of maintaining it, while suggesting how passionate some of the differences were over where the colleges were to go and what demands or assurances they could properly make regarding the UCSC faculty.

Reti: Now, we're talking about, what, 19—

Von der Muhll: In the winter of 1974, I think.

Reti: Okay.

Von der Muhll: Yeah, winter quarter of '74. But what our committee became very aware of was that there certainly was a growing *dissensus* about the role of

the colleges, even among people who believed very much in what McHenry and Clark Kerr had been trying to achieve. They could recognize the case for removing inappropriate pressures that had made many other campuses not a very pleasant place to be, either as a student or as a faculty member. On the other hand, many faculty were beginning to feel that the colleges must bring the rhetoric of the college system in line with the reality of the colleges as academic—and sometimes even social—entities. And one of the most conspicuous ways that could be achieved was by taking a hard look at the terms on which membership in colleges was determined. There were many changes that I could mention that couldn't be implemented because they were intrinsic to the system. But the issue of why the membership of a college was constituted as it was became a particularly egregious case of the dissociation of rhetoric from reality because the supposition was, in the rhetoric, that every college would have a theme and that membership in the college faithfully reflected that theme.

Now there was a reason for that. And it was not an arbitrary one. It was a rather interesting one, which I haven't seen sufficiently stated. In the end, a critical model for this campus was Oxbridge, basically, Oxford and Cambridge, which were perceived as very successful models of universities that seemed to remain small while growing big—as in Clark Kerr's celebrated phrase—and certainly have been very successful in terms of the impact they've made on the outside world over many centuries, and are obviously quite successful enterprises. However, those universities and their colleges grew slowly, organically and, crucially, through the donations given to them. The demands they made on fellows were above all to show up at High Table, to drink sherry in the common

room beforehand, and to do some tutoring of individual students in the colleges. Through an assertion of these social traditions they acquired their profiles, their shared understanding of what it meant in Oxford to be a fellow of a particular college and how it made a distinct difference to be a fellow at Magdalen, of Balliol, or of New College. Each of these colleges was thought to have its carefully nourished tradition, its style, in short, its personality. Something quite definite was conveyed by the phrase “a Balliol Man” or that the famous Cambridge economist John Maynard Keynes remained a “King’s College Man” at heart throughout his life.

Reti: Each college at Oxford.

Von der Muhll: Each college at Oxford and at Cambridge had its personality, but the personality was founded on centuries of tradition, together with bequests, together with a certain style of individual tutoring. [The UCSC] campus didn’t have any of those possibilities. Even so, it had to bring on a new college on line every year and to create some basis for cohesion of the college. Obviously, no college could hope to do so by making much of having been founded in 1560 rather than in 1685, or for supposedly cultivating the kinds of social graces and comfortably commanding attitude thought desirable for later membership in the overseas colonial service. On the other hand, the founders clearly hoped that students’ first or second choice of college would be based on something more than the possibility of a better view from a dorm window or a sister’s date’s chance assertion that the cooking for the Merrill dining hall had left something to be desired. They therefore came up with the idea that each college should seek to develop and project an academic profile that would suggest to entering students

that if they were hoping to meet other students and sympathetically interested faculty who shared their passion for Renaissance art they were more likely to find extensive shared support for that passion in Cowell than in Crown, whereas if they had long since been curious about what could be learned from the ways of life of people living across oceans they had never crossed, then Merrill might be a particularly fortunate choice. It was suggested to incoming faculty that such congruences of interests might make their assignment to a particular college a particularly suitable decision. Therefore, the attempt to institute an academic theme was at once an expedient effort to give each new college a distinct, cohesive “personality” and a quite defensible, indeed commendable effort to give, in a university setting, this axis of orientation a more rational academic foundation than its English counterparts could claim.

Some time ago I noted the challenges of mastering the delicate balance required to find themes for each new college that would not seem drily bureaucratic while nevertheless serving inclusivity over exclusionary images. But the difficulty in advancing beyond thematic proclamations to enrolling the energies required to give them authenticity was that this enterprise presupposed that a fully predominant majority of the faculty and a similar proportion of the students were already aligned from the outset with such themes or could be made to align themselves with them

I have already touched on several reasons why the supposition of a seamless congruence between the proclaimed orientation of the colleges and the interests and capabilities of their faculties was improbable, implausible, and ultimately mythic. Except, perhaps, in the very early days, new faculty were neither hired to

fill identified gaps in the college curricula, nor invited to exercise an informed choice of the college best aligned with their interests and ambitions. Instead, once a board of studies had made its choice among the candidates under consideration for executing its programs of study, it would cast about for a college with a vacancy to fill and then do what it could to make such a connection seem appropriate. This procedure in itself inevitably made the matter of a match between a faculty member's skills and interest and the needs of the colleges much more a matter of good fortune than of design. And we have already discussed how the more rigorous paradigms of the natural sciences and the distinctive workplace needs of both the laboratory sciences and the studio arts made such a coincidence of individual aspirations and collegiate needs less likely.

Reti: Yes.

But these tensions were severely compounded by two rules that Chancellor McHenry established before the opening of the first college that were to have an unforeseen but profound impact on the fate of the colleges as a distinctive centerpiece for the education of students. The first was that every college should have at least one faculty member from every discipline as a member for making representative contributions to the college curriculum and so that the students in the college could be assured of having a faculty advisor to turn to as an advisor as they began their search for a major in which to concentrate during their junior and senior years. McHenry presented this rule as a logical implication of the campus's original idealistic liberal arts vision of *liberating* students from the accidents of up-bring and conclusions drawn from high school courses and from

tentative vocational ambitions through a succession of college core courses in their first two years at UC Santa Cruz. He hoped and believed that such courses would expose incoming students from high school to the rich diversity of human knowledge and human experience, thereby unlocking latent curiosity and perhaps a discovery of previously unsuspected aptitudes and then encouraging such students down the road to reappraise what future to pursue through making a better-informed choice of what subject to major in.

This argument obviously rested on the supposition that all—or at least, most—UCSC students would be four-year rather than transfer students, and that the allocation of faculty resources among the colleges should be controlled by this consideration. Perhaps we can come back to the impact of this and other such presuppositions, as this campus found itself having to accept increasing numbers of two-year transfer students to meet its intake quota. But I'd like to underline here a less obvious but more directly consequential effect of McHenry's rule that I remarked on before but that became a central issue as the Academic Planning and Budgeting Committee began its deliberations in the 1973-1974 academic Year: namely, that carrying out the nominal academic "theme" of each college implied creating a disproportionate concentration of faculty positions in those disciplines most self-evidently close to its thematic center of gravity, while the McHenry rule assured the presence in each college (at least in the case of small boards or for those that were still far from reaching their full complement) of numerous single representatives of their disciplines, with potentially serious consequences of such isolation both for their continued engagement in their fields of academic specialization and—as I have previously noted—for their

promotional prospects as their cases came up before other members of their board, who had had few occasions up to that point to observe their performance as nominal disciplinary colleagues.

McHenry then followed up this rule with a second that was intended to stabilize the pattern created by the first. Once assigned to a college, a faculty member would have to specify “personal hardship” in writing—presumably intractable personal conflict with the college provost or with other members of the college—in order to obtain his authorization to transfer to another college. Once again, this rule reflected the tensions induced by the commitment to creating and maintaining a distinct academically based profile for each college. Many of the faculty who had been enthusiastic at first about teaching a course outside their discipline that was consonant with their college’s axis of orientation nevertheless began to feel, after a few years, that they were growing tired of teaching such courses and that they were ready to go back to a more disciplinary-centered curriculum. They were graduates, after all, of other more conventional universities; they were not products of the University of California, Santa Cruz campus. And they therefore not only had professional aspirations regarding their personal careers but even intellectual feelings that it had been fun to participate initially in a core course for all students in the college by giving a few lectures in one’s field, yet quite another matter to keep doing that as one of one’s principal teaching obligations, one that often superseded trying to ignite student interest in the discipline that they had once chosen to specialize in and the issues within which they still cared about.

The resultant stress from such developments pervaded the memos flowing in to

the Academic Planning and Budgeting Committee. And it soon became associated with demands for the freedom to relocate to colleges with larger cohorts of faculty that shared one's disciplinary interests or at least a common academic "language." It wasn't hard for me to understand the basis for such proposals. Hypothetically, I could have learned much in College Five had its membership included a specialist in the iconography of Chinese painting, a Middle Eastern historian, and a biologist who could have disentangled systemic relations in complex organisms for me. But in sober reality, my College Five office was flanked by the offices of an earth scientist and of an instructor in modern dance; and while their nominal occupants were both pleasant people, they spent most of their time respectively in their laboratory and their studio, and their educational commitments and interests did not obviously overlap with mine as to philosophical and stylistic issues in the more theoretical sciences and in classical piano music, let alone relieving me from having to go far afield to find anyone who could help me refine a critique of a controversial article I had just read in a journal of political economy.

Such, then, were the issues being raised during what one might be classified as the second generation of collegiate life. But McHenry's rule of non-transferability among colleges stood squarely in the way of seeking a remedy through relocation of faculty among them, and to the end of his tenure as chancellor of UC Santa Cruz he stood firmly behind it. His reasoning was by no means frivolous. He strongly believed—perhaps on an analogy with Major League baseball into the 1950s—that the success of the college system as a whole depended crucially on the loyalty of its faculty members to the individual

colleges to which they had been assigned and that this loyalty would be subverted if they could freely shop around among the colleges until they found one that maximized their individual preference curves. If they knew from the outset that they would be confined to one college, they would put much more energy into improving it by bringing it into accord with their preferences instead of searching around to discover what benefits they might derive for themselves from moving elsewhere. As a political scientist, he was also a shrewd enough student of human nature to foresee (as subsequent events were to prove) that without this rule faculty would be tying up his time with continual requests for relocation that the more adept would phrase in terms of academic complementarity. That said, McHenry's rule seemed to discount too readily and heavily the demoralizing consequences of feeling marginalized, isolated, and trapped throughout one's time in Santa Cruz while knowing that by an accidental process other faculty members had happily found their place within a circle of mutually supportive colleagues from ancillary academic fields in a high-morale college with a vibrant social life.

So during these years both faculty and students were becoming acutely aware of a growing dissociation between the vision of the college system as it was projected to the outside world and the reality of its inner life. But one further fact that neither group seems at first to have fully taken into account was how much the expectation that colleges could become and remain centers for independent study by students had been dependent on a very favorable faculty-to-student ration. As the campus was getting under way, the UC system permitted it to get along with one faculty member for every twelve students. Faculty typically

taught small classes featuring intimate exploration of complex topics through highly participatory discussions. They could get to know their students personally, chair their discussion sections themselves, and write their own narrative evaluations instead of having TAs do it for them. Independent study for credit came close to being perceived as a right that all students should enjoy, not a hard-won privilege restricted to those who had already demonstrated a capacity and self-discipline for undertaking necessarily loosely supervised research. With such a ratio, students could be permitted—even encouraged—to design their own majors under faculty supervision—a freedom from hierarchically structured requirements very consonant with the anti-authoritarian spirit of the late 1960s. A student would come in, sit down in your office, and the two of you would spend an hour discussing the books the student had read, the field work accomplished, and what they had learned from this conjuncture.

Such experiences made many students, both while here and later as alumni, regard UC Santa Cruz as a very special, much cherished campus. But while many of those virtues were real enough, they were in significant measure not so much virtues of a system as of a ratio. And as we came under pressure to bring the ratio more in line with the eighteen-to-one student to faculty ratios prevailing on other UC campuses, some of these qualities were lost. Yet expectations adjusted only slowly to these changes. Many students and some faculty expected to keep the character of the education offered here in much the way it had been when Cowell College was first opened. Hence the adjustments forced by necessity by the time College Five came on line inevitably provoked

disappointment.

So in all these ways, the colleges were undergoing stress. And the problem of evaluating college courses, apart from participation in the core course, which was demanded of everybody, was causing its own problems because there was no firm institutionalization of standards for evaluating such courses. They were expected to be “innovative,” “interdisciplinary,” and in some sense “reflective of the character of the college.” That was presumably why they were not supported by the boards of studies as part of their more conventional curricula. But just how does one operationalize such terminology? And what academic qualifications were appropriate for evaluating such interdisciplinary innovations? Essentially, such matters were resolved by the proponent—it was his or her business as much as the college’s. If it looked like an addition to the college curriculum, then one could teach one’s course without very much scrutiny or examination of student reactions to it. And so, many of the courses were either simply board courses under another name, or they were courses which were rather casually put together and in which less energy was put into, or they were openly opportunities to evade some of the requirements that students might otherwise have to face in fulfilling a breadth requirement of some kind.

And so, in all these ways, they became the province of the amateur—in the less favorable connotations of that term, not simply as a description of somebody who was doing something one loved and not necessarily for a reward within their professional career. Some were superbly designed, quite deeply self-fulfilling, highly popular with students, and eventually leading to articles, books,

and works of art that would never have come to light if not for the opportunity the colleges provided. But too often there was no objective or at least widely accepted basis for systematically distinguishing such courses from those that appeared to be taught primarily because they demanded less intellectual energy, less quality of production, and more obviously an expedient for lightening one's load so that one could put more time into board courses. So all of these began to raise serious concerns among those who did believe in the college system and wanted to restore its integrity.

The final problem was internal to the colleges, and this was particularly acute in the later colleges. I've already mentioned how the Crown faculty essentially declared, largely at the behest of the harder-line scientists, that there would be no further demands for core courses at Crown and no spending of money on college courses. Merrill had a very contentious situation in which many of the faculty really wanted to use their experiences abroad and their research in teaching their college courses. Some wanted to teach courses in Hindu philosophy and its manifestations in art; others might wish to share their love of Chinese landscape painting, or they wanted to talk about their life in Africa, whereas the students were increasingly demanding that if the faculty wanted to get credit for teaching courses for Merrill under the Merrill rubric, these courses should be about the "domestic Third World," as they called it, in order to maintain the appropriate central focus of Merrill college. Thus the obligation to teach college courses assured caused conflict with students who were saying that we need not to be talking about Africa, we need to be talking about African Americans and their experience inside the United States and the oppressions that *they* are

experiencing, rather than having interesting anthropological insights into differences between Africa and the United States—no more evasion of the hard truths about our society. Some of the Merrill faculty were very responsive to student demands and felt the students were basically right and that the courses should preferably proceed from a more general, one might say, leftist or populist, perspective, leaving others to feel increasingly marginalized in their wish to use their membership in the college to share formerly wholehearted engagement with overseas cultures.

College Five

The founding and first years of College Five [now Porter College] raised a very different set of emergent problems in the college system from those I have just alluded to. At the risk of seeming merely to repeat what I said earlier about the problems confronting the first college to commit itself thematically to a specific subdivision of one of the three standard divisions of academic knowledge—that is, to the “performing arts”—I would like to pursue a more extended analysis at this point, in part because I have now established a general context for exploring and learning from this case insofar as it reveals some problems faced by the college system as a whole, in part because, as one of the participants in confronting these issues, I feel more confident about some of the conclusions to which such an analysis might lead and the facts on which they are based.

As it first opened its doors in the fall months of 1969, College Five became immediately notable as the first college that would not even attempt to create and offer a core course for its students. Its founding provost, James [B.] Hall,

announced that no such course would be offered, let alone required, thereby avoiding the divisive thematic struggles at Crown and Merrill I have just discussed. Instead, Hall announced, the college would give academic identity to itself through developing an optional aesthetic studies major for juniors and seniors. Such a major would likewise be the first of its kind on campus.

Hall's announcement carried with it more radical implications than it sounded. For the first time, a college was openly abandoning at the outset what had up till then been the central rationale for the college system—namely, that it would create an academic community for entering students such as no disciplinary or divisional course could ever be expected to do. Rejecting a core course at the outset meant also abandoning any effort to pull together the faculty of the college in a communal academic enterprise. And since the college did not propose to take on the “liberating” function of a core course, the necessity for adhering to McHenry's insistence on incorporating a full disciplinary spectrum of potential advisors in the college to assist students in working out the implications of their voyage of self-discovery through the core courses for their choice of major was not clear, thereby further marginalizing the mandatory single “representatives” of smaller disciplinary cohorts in the college.

But the radical implications for the college system of Provost Hall's decision were not limited to its communitarian repercussions. College Five would have no core courses, but there would then be fewer, not more, other college courses in those early years because of the “nonproliferation” policy that had been institutionalized on this campus. This policy was rooted in an attempt to support the development of the boards' and colleges' core curriculums by assuring their

prior claim on faculty time. The Committee on Undergraduate Courses was therefore disposed to withhold approval of a proposal for an individually taught and narrowly specialized course until it was satisfied that these needs had been met. Thus when Cowell College opened, it had made clear to its faculty members that they should all expect to take part in not only the first but also in the second year of the collaborative core courses that had been intended to give the college system its rationale, and that these obligations would take precedence over any college sponsorship of an individually designed and taught course.

Consistent with these considerations, the Committee on Courses had established what it had called its “nonproliferation” policy. The first questions proponents of a new college course would be expected to answer were, “Why is this particular course being proposed? What clear needs will it meet that are not already being met by other courses in your college? Are you proposing it as an alternative to full participation in your college’s core courses? If so, how can we scale what you will contribute through this course to other contributions you might be making collaboratively?” Obviously, the subsequent temporary collapse of Cowell’s own core courses made answering such questions in its case more difficult until the core course had been restored with a different format. So did the inability of the Crown faculty to come up with a core course of any staying power. But now, for the first time, a college had openly declared that it was renouncing the obligation to attempt to create a core course. What, then, would take its place? How were the College Five faculty to make academic contributions to the institution that was paying 50 percent of their salaries? How were they to skirt the nonproliferation policy when their college had no center?

Provost Hall's opening statement of mission implied that his college would shift its educational focus from entering students to those in their final years through an aesthetic studies major that had yet to be designed. But this declaration raised more questions than it answered. UCSC had been designed at the outset with a clear division of labor between the colleges and the boards of studies: the colleges were to provide a sound basis in the opening years for the selection of a major, the boards were to see that this decision was pursued in a structured manner in preparation for graduate study or a job. College core courses were to address the needs of many hundred entering students, the boards were to give more rigorous and sustained attention to a much smaller subset of students who had chosen to follow a pathway marked out for the specific discipline to which they had committed themselves. Conceivably, an aesthetic studies major might offer a limited number of students an interesting synthesis of aesthetic philosophy and practical studio experience. In no way, however, could it be expected to address—let alone meet—the needs of the far larger fraction of students for whom the college would be no more than a dormitory and a dining hall. And the question was left dangling of why an entire college was needed to provide sponsorship of a small major no more assured of academic excellence than alternative sponsorship by a board might offer.

In the event, the aesthetic studies major never came close to giving College Five a distinctive identity. It had no clearly planned point of entry. It had no imaginatively integrated seminars at the other end, and the courses in between had no relationship among themselves, not even on paper. In effect, it had no structure beyond what could be given to it by providing it with a title in the

catalog and then drawing a ring enclosing whatever courses happened to be offered that year in the studio arts. Very few arts students bothered to enroll in it; most seemed to prefer an unpretentious title for their major like “theater arts” or “dance” that at least informed the outside world what skills they were actually refining. But by this point—that is to say, by 1974, five years after the opening of the college—such issues of terminology and structure scarcely mattered. College Five, still without a donor to give it a name, was suffering in extreme form a malaise that was symptomatic of the more general problems of the college system—it had not only lost its mission as a college but also the requisite faculty and student loyalties to support one.

I have already referred to some of the sources of this development. Briefly recapitulated, they stemmed from tying the entire identity of the college to one quarter of the faculty—the one quarter engaged in instruction of students in the performing arts in studio worksites some distance removed from the college itself. At least another third of the remaining faculty were natural scientists whose attachment to their laboratories created divided loyalties paralleling those that had presented so severe a challenge to the formation of a viable collegiate academic identity in Crown. But the performing arts presented a special challenge to its formation that perhaps could not be surmounted but which was never even acknowledged by Provost Hall. Natural scientists had at least been an active element in university life since the Middle Ages, whereas the skills cultivated in the performing arts had virtually never been transmitted in a university setting until very recently and still, as arts refined through imitation, performance, and critical supervision, bore an uneasy relationship to symbolic

instruction through lectures, discussion, and systematic research procedures.

In my conversations with Provost Hall I raised the question of why an arts college had no courses that might have created such a linkage through stylistic courses in art and musical history or in analyses of Shakespeare's plays. But Provost Hall dismissed such courses as attempts to force the "dead hands" of tradition on contemporary creativity. By focusing on the great masterpieces of the past they induced passivity. Incorporating such courses into the College Five curriculum—courses such as a study of High Renaissance art or of the stylistic evolution of classical music from Bach to Brahms—confined innovation. What "we" want, he said, are students who are not burdened by tradition. Now, that certainly *is* different from the art of the Renaissance. [Laughs.] There was no question then was that tradition was what you learned in the workshop of a master and then modified when you went out on your own if you were a Leonardo da Vinci or a Michelangelo. Admittedly, however, in thinking in this manner Provost Hall was speaking quite in line with the cultural rebellion of the late sixties and early seventies—one that held that what could be called *innovatory*, which meant free from traditional perspectives, was inherently good, and anything that was suspected of being traditional was not.

Whether he was right in this conviction, however, matters less than the stark fact that without such traditional university enterprises, the challenge of integrating instruction in the individual and sharply differentiated performing arts into a more inclusive network of instruction and academic conversation precluded the kinds of large-scale collaborative college-centered enterprises that Kerr and McHenry had envisioned in their design for this campus. I myself certainly

found that the insights I could gain from exchanges with economists, psychologists, anthropologists, biologists, historians, and instructors in linguistics and literature were of an entirely different order from attempts to bridge the academic gulf between me and a faculty member devoted to the creation of industrial metal sculptures. And this absence of a bridge had nothing to do with the personality of such practitioners; it was inherent in the nature of their work.

But perhaps the most serious problem of an exclusivist emphasis on the studio arts was that it raised many of the same issues as the natural sciences. That is to say, the action really lay in the studios. Dancers, the painters, the sculptors of metal were deeply involved in the projects carried out within their particular studios. They had no particular reason to spend much time within the college buildings once they could move into the studios that were being built for them. Nor did the college become a systematic showcase for exhibitions of their work or for presentation in College Nights. On the other hand, the college, as such, had very few roles to offer the remainder of its faculty, except participation in the aesthetics studies major, which hadn't been thought through very well and was rather undemanding, or devising in isolation their own college courses, which in some cases I think were really quite successful. But despite having no clear programmatic roles within the college, they were nevertheless the ones who filled the college precincts most continuously and who interacted among themselves most frequently. So the irony was that the people who really cared about the collective fellowship of the college, who participated most regularly on its committees and who devised most of the distinctively college courses, became

disproportionately used in the work of the college, whereas both the natural scientists and the people from the studio arts were often invisible within the college itself—and this when the provost of the college was announcing to the outer world that the theme of College Five was, above all, the performing arts.

The paradox I am trying to convey can be illustrated by the case of a member of the college who should properly remain anonymous. Over my years as a member of College Five, I had come to know all but one of its other members, but he was simply a name on a roster for me, and I became curious as to who he might be. It turned out that he was a young biologist who had launched a promising study of cell structure. He never came to college meetings, he never served on college committees, he never taught a college course under that label, and I was told that he never showed up at College Nights. I soon learned that I was far from alone in having no idea what he looked like or why he had been located in College Five. But the scientific world was soon to answer such questions; his research had a successful conclusion, he quickly received tenure, and he went on to pursue a distinguished career in his field. The point is, of course, that he had correctly calculated the “right” choices. He ignored all the nominal requirements of college membership; knowing what really mattered in pursuit of tenure, he reserved his academic energies and time for his disciplinary work; he decisively demonstrated his competence within his chosen field. By making these choices and showing that they were costless for those who did well in their field, he helped to establish that, whatever the rhetoric concerning the centrality of the colleges to the campus, its rewards lay elsewhere.

What this situation led to was, therefore, that the people who were most fully

engaged in the college as a college were feeling increasingly not part of the college. As College Five entered its fifth year, its more activist faculty cohorts began calling several meetings to give voice to these concerns. As it became clear that the provost was unresponsive to them, these meetings began to take on a sharper tone. I myself tried to give a sharper analytic thrust to some of those observations; and somewhat to my surprise, I found that what I was saying seemed to voice something profoundly felt in large numbers of other faculty who came to me and were very eager to have me take part in a major dialogue around where the college was going. And the ones who came to me, though young, were already becoming recognized as substantial scholars—people like Dane Archer and Elliot Aronson in psychology, Don Wittman in political economy, Forrest Robinson and Paul Skenazy in literature, Jon Beecher in history.

The sentiments captured in these meetings were more consequential than their forum might suggest. As I have just said, in 1973-1974 College Five was entering its fifth year, and Dean McHenry had instituted a five-year review of college provosts for those who were willing to continue in office. I found myself appointed as chair of a committee to conduct that review in the case of College Five's founding provost. But I must pause at this moment because I was also a member of the Budget and Academic Planning Committee, and I had just been named its chair for the coming year. And the committee of which I had assumed the chairpersonship was on the point of launching the most ambitious attempt in the short history of the campus to remedy the revealed defects of its distinctive college system before it collapsed of its own weight. This effort was soon to be known as "reaggregation."

Reaggregation

Soon after the opening of the UC campus, its Academic Senate established a Budget and Academic Planning Committee. Sophisticates understood from the outset that the crucially important work of the committee lay in the first part of its title; as a much-quoted apothegm attributed to many different political observers had long held, "Show me your budget and I'll tell you your true priorities." In normal years, "academic planning" was little more than a grace note that had been added to the committee's core agenda of supervising the terms on which campus resources were being allocated among the agencies executing its various missions. But the academic year of 1973-1974 was no normal year. As the influx of memos to the committee were making plain, discontented and influential faculty members were no longer to be satisfied with a reallocation of resources within an existing structure; they were demanding a hard, imaginative, even radical look at the structure itself within which these allocations were being made. In short, they were asking for new directions in academic planning.

On my return from a turbulent year in Africa and a life-changing traverse across Southern and East Asia in the fall quarter of 1973, I found that the other four members of the five-person committee to which I had found myself appointed were seasoned, reflective, and influential faculty members who, during the year in which I had been gone, had been watching with growing concern the fragmentation of the college system. By this point they had become well disposed toward taking the second half of our committee's title more seriously than in the past. The influx of critical memos from around the campus soon

reinforced their disposition to reconsider the plans on which it had been founded. The struggles the newer colleges were experiencing as they abandoned their expected collegiate missions or did not even attempt to conform to them from the outset had become all too apparent. The timing, too, seemed propitious for such reconsideration. Many of the founding college provosts were resigning their posts, up for evaluation in the course of the academic year, or leaving the faculty altogether. And in the midst of these upheavals we learned that Chancellor McHenry, the founding chancellor of our campus, was stepping down and that the President's Office of the University of California already had plans for replacing him. The field was therefore being cleared for introducing a radical reshaping of the college system in the hope that it could therefore be made more viable.

With all these considerations in mind, the Budget and Academic Planning Committee quickly agreed during the fall quarter that our first task must be to clear our agenda of other concerns in order to focus on the principles that should guide proposals for reform. Achieving consensus on what this framework should be proved remarkably easy. All members of the committee agreed that the college system was worth attempting to save. We all also agreed, however, that it *would* only be worth saving and *could* only be saved if we could bring the character of the membership in the colleges in line with their proclaimed axes of orientation in such a way as to make it possible for all members of each college to feel an authentic connection with the teaching and other activities demanded of them. Whatever could be done to bring about consonance between the disciplinary interests and ambitions of the members and the college environment

in which they found themselves should therefore be done. Special efforts should also be made to avoid isolating individual faculty within a college from their disciplinary peers and the marginalization of whole blocs of faculty from the proclaimed grounds on which the college was to cultivate its distinctive thematic “personality.”

These objectives and concerns covered familiar ground I have already traversed. Since they provided the immediate background for the reforms our committee began to advocate, however, their recapitulation might prove useful. First and foremost, the members of our committee were able to agree that we should try to preserve in some fashion the interdisciplinary perspectives of the colleges, the supposition that faculty members could and would work together across disciplinary or even divisional boundaries on serious academic topics not primarily because their college obligations obliged them to do so but rather because they were developing affinities that would make such contacts and collaborative initiatives congenial.

Reti: In terms of interdisciplinarity—

Von der Muhll: Yes, that’s right. But at the same time, our committee took a hard look at some of the casual assumptions that had too often lain beneath that vision. So far as we could see, there was no evidence that simply being an economist whose neighbor to the right was engaged in metal sculpture, and whose person to the left was studying elements of Medieval French grammar necessarily generated serendipitous effects. For a philosopher with a professional interest in aesthetics, for example, such proximity might generate intriguingly

original insights as to the common elements in such undertakings, but for a social scientist, uncovering any such commonality would seem simply a stretch. Now, a certain number of personal friendships had developed on this campus out of such improbable pairings, which was nice, and they sometimes *did* result in very interesting courses, like the College Five course on the structure of animals and the structure of buildings and whether there were some general principles of structure that could be found in both—a college course that emerged out of the joint insights of an economist and an anthropologist. Those were really exciting courses. But such outcomes would seem attributable more to a succession of fortunate accidents than to the inherent or predictable consequence of campuswide design.

But still, that course wasn't as much of a stretch as expecting an economist to gain professionally productive insights from a sculptor in metals. And what our committee really had to worry about were the far more common situations created for those faculty members who were the sole representatives of their disciplines in a college while remaining seriously isolated from their disciplinary colleagues on the board. Under such circumstances, their college might register a large claim on their time whereas the college-centered system might assure meetings with other members of their boards of studies only when its members came together at the end of the year to decide on which students had met the requisites for the major in the field, or, at intervals, for meeting and appraising candidates for positions within their disciplines. In the early years of the campus, faculty members in, let us say, the social sciences or the humanities would be much less visible to their disciplinary colleagues than if they were in Stevenson.

So our committee keenly felt the need to find a better balance within and between the colleges that would preserve their interdisciplinary ambience without losing sight of the claims of their disciplinary careers.

Reti: And that certainly was *your* situation.

Von der Muhll: It was my situation. In my case, it didn't matter quite so much, for a variety of reasons, because, first of all, I was granted tenure a few years after my arrival, so I was less concerned about no board members knowing who I was. Secondly, my first year at Stevenson did give me some continuing ties within a predominantly social sciences college. And thirdly, despite my preceding ties with my discipline through my years on its flagship editorial board and the nature of my participation in a large-scale social research project, I was beginning to go in new directions and became preoccupied with working out on my own a new approach for teaching systematically analytic comparative courses on political change in Russia, Japan, China and India, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, so that my lack of contacts with experts on the iconography of Chinese landscape painting or the role of Islamic doctrines in inducing instability in Middle Eastern Arab governments seemed more consequential to me than continuous contact with specialists on the role of corporate interest groups in American politics. It was serendipitous too, in a way, that at College Five I first developed a very strong interest in the use of literature in the study of politics and then found that I was located among a group of historians and future American studies members of the literature board who shared an interest in working out the ties connecting literature with society. This discovery soon led me to a major sustaining collaborative undertaking. But in

other cases of faculty coming up for tenure, a degree of isolation from disciplinary colleagues such as I experienced was a risky position to be in.

Meanwhile, my fellow committee members on the Budget and Academic Planning Committee and I soon concluded that if the college system was to survive, the campus could no longer be content to assign newly hired faculty to a college simply because it had a vacant office to offer and then invent factitious justifications for doing so. All parties to determining college assignments should also recognize that faculty members could find their academic interests evolving in new directions over time, and accordingly, that faculty members should not be involuntarily frozen into membership in the same college throughout their time on campus. The McHenry rule of no transfer except on grounds of “personal incompatibility” with key figures within their college should therefore be repealed, and with it McHenry’s insistence on the representation of the full spectrum of disciplines in every college. These rules, it seemed to our committee, had been responsible in large measure for the increasing inauthenticity of college themes, the alienation of faculty from the fellowship dimensions that had occurred in all but the first two colleges, and the anxiety of faculty members who had no day-to-day contact with other members of their boards of study. Such prices seemed far too high to pay as a means of providing students with ready access to a “representative” disciplinary advisor within the confines of a single college, all the more when the core courses to which such advising was complementary had vanished for lack of cohesion within the faculty.

But how was an appropriate reconstitution of faculty membership in the colleges in light of these goals to be brought about? Michael Cowan, who was one of the

most active members of a high-participatory and instinctively collaborative committee, suggested what seemed like a simple mechanism, on paper at least: polling all members of the campus on their academic projects as they saw them for the next half dozen years and asking them to compose a list of the half dozen members on campus, not necessarily of the same board of studies, whose interests, skills, and aptitudes made association with them seem particularly promising for carrying out such projects. Such “sociograms,” as he called them, could then be used by our committee to construct complementary clusters of faculty in close proximity within a college, integrating its iconic identity with the perceived interests and projects of similarly minded faculty members for whatever program of studies the college might seek to support. And the effects of housing such clusters of faculty within a single college, we thought, could preserve the incentives and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration while giving the college-centered structure of our campus an academic rationale that had been severely declining since its opening days

Following several weeks of discussion, our committee concluded that, as the by now prospective chair of the Budget and Academic Planning Committee for the 1974-1975 academic year, I should draft a document to back our request at the final spring quarter meeting of the Academic Senate for endorsement of our proposals for reaggregation. In the document I subsequently wrote to support this proposal I addressed as squarely as I could the problems that experience had revealed in the existing college system and I then made a case for authorizing a redistribution of the faculty among the colleges on grounds other than personal incompatibility. Authorizing reaggregation, I contended, would relieve the

problems of isolation the McHenry rule of full representation of all the disciplines at each college had unintentionally created, and I explained why the sociograms we wished to create were intended as an encouragement to reflect on our academic aspirations and on the kinds of faculty interactions that seemed most likely to support them.

The Senate passed affirmed our committee's proposal with—if I recall correctly—one dissenting vote. To all appearances, our proposal was very well received.

As the fall quarter of 1974 got under way, Michael Cowan and I set to work on the questions to ask the faculty to generate the information needed to identify academic clusters and potential complementarities.

Reti: To have this sociogram.

Von der Muhll: Yes, exactly, to develop the sociogram and have it a basis for transfers, so that people would be able to move to places where they did not feel isolated, unknown, and not very productive in the contacts they were having. We started out with questions concerning each faculty member's academic vision and the corollaries of it for the projects that member was engaged in or hoped to become engaged in. We made it as clear as we could that we were not asking for assessments of other faculty members' competence; rather, we were inviting each member to identify potential similarities of interest and complementarities of skills, theoretical perspectives, and experience. We did what we could to keep the focus on academic compatibilities, not on circles of friendship. In all these respects I found my earlier experiences in constructing questionnaires in East

Africa helpful.

Reti: What was Dean McHenry's reaction to this?

Von der Muhll: Opposed. He felt very strongly that it would open the floodgates to transfers based on grounds other than academic grounds, and he felt, for reasons I never fully understood, very strongly that people should be essentially compelled to relate to their college theme and it would be an escape route from that responsibility for them if they could move to another college. And he felt very strongly, finally—I never fully understood this part—that it was absolutely crucial for advising to have at least one representative of each discipline in the college. In any case, Dean McHenry felt very strongly that without having one member at least from each discipline, students wouldn't be given the advising they urgently needed. Our committee's own experience was that students would seek out their advisers on multiple grounds, only one of which was that the adviser was in the same college. For those reasons, he was not a supporter of reaggregation. But the Academic Senate's endorsement of reaggregation came just three days before he gave his farewell talk. By that point, his opposition was no longer consequential.

Reti: Do you think it actually influenced his decision to resign?

Von der Muhll: No, because it had already been arranged that he would leave and that a new chancellor would come in, Mark [N.] Christensen. But he had indicated earlier on, when we had talked with him about the possibility of moving forward on this program—he expressed his warning and his opposition to it. He would not endorse it.

Christensen, on the other hand, was an unknown. He was an earth scientist, but no one seemed to know much his work in the UC President's office in Berkeley. When he accepted the Budget and Academic Planning Committee's invitation to meet with us to discuss reaggregation, he seemed to all appearances to be a pleasant person, a well-educated scientist, an administrator with broad views, and we had no reason to think he would oppose it. In the end, we just didn't really know what to make of him. But as we had received firm support from the Senate, we began to move forward with confidence.

Our first task was to send out the questionnaires and to collate the results. These turned out to be both intellectually exciting and rewarding. Constructing sociograms out of replies to the questionnaires, clusters out of the sociograms, and college faculties out of mutually reinforcing clusters was great fun on paper, and for the first and only time in my thirty years of active membership in the UCSC community I could claim to know something of consequence about the academic orientations and interests of quite literally every faculty member on this campus. I give Michael Cowan much credit also for some of the questions that he had proposed for using to construct the sociograms. I was the one who was ultimately responsible for it, and from my previous experience with research involving eighteen thousand people, I knew something about survey research. But he and I worked very well together. The other members of the committee were very supportive as well, and we were soon able to locate large numbers of clusters of interest, which were intrinsically exciting, we thought, and also indicated how and where to locate them within specific colleges. So we were very much looking forward to what seemed like a very promising measure,

which would not deal with all the problems of the colleges—after all, I had mentioned several others in addition to the academic isolation of individuals in the colleges and the inauthenticity of the rhetoric—but we felt this would give a strong push to the notion that the colleges really *are* places where exciting communications can occur across disciplinary lines or, in some cases, more focused disciplinary lines could be drawn. By the way, I, in particular, often found occasion to say, “I don’t regard all interdisciplinary work as intrinsically superior to all disciplinary work”—

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: I think you could have very exciting perspectives within a discipline as well as across. That’s why I didn’t want reaggregation to be totally tied to the label “interdisciplinary”—but whether disciplinarily or inter disciplinarily based, our committee remained confident that it would reduce the sense of isolation and the vulnerability of the pressures to contribute to a college one wasn’t really associated with intellectually, although one might enjoy some of the friendships that developed out of the college. But the terms on which reaggregation would be implemented would be give the colleges a more substantial academic basis than the accidents of friendship and the presence or absence of communal activities—the College Nights and things like that, which had been strikingly absent in College Five and in many of the other colleges.

Reti: Really? They didn’t have College Nights at College Five?

Von der Muhll: We had a few. But very few. Most of those institutions had died. Stevenson and Cowell were the important exceptions. Their members had, from

the outset, a strong sense of being joint participants in founding their colleges, and their provosts, even with turnover—their provosts really did understand the idea that a college's strength ultimately depends not only on academic notions, academic themes and things like that; it depends also on people feeling: This is an organization I want to belong to. I value being here. I meet my friends on occasions that I wouldn't otherwise have in a more competitive, isolated, fragmented, large multiversities. I'll meet a genuine cluster of people with shared interests who are worth knowing and from whom I can learn something in informal settings, as well as in taking part in planning courses and actually pressuring people to participate in core courses. The Stevenson and Cowell provosts understood that very well.

Succeeding provosts at other colleges did not give the same emphasis to these institutions—in fact, they spoke slightly of them as a holdover of old British traditions. To them and to many of their faculty, such institutions seemed too much like Oxford, like Cambridge. Sherry on Friday afternoons and frequent High Tables at College Nights were certainly, to some extent, grounded in elitism. When I proposed to Provost Hall that we might organize something like a Commons Room gathering, he said, “We don't have to do what Cowell does just because those anglophiles like to drink.” He had nothing but contempt for the idea of establishing a Commons Room where faculty could gather over a glass of wine to talk about what excited us, what we liked on the campus, what we were interested in, what we were doing, what we had learned through our most recent trip abroad, and the like. And Provost Hall was not alone in this view. There was a kind of a stern Puritan emphasis among many of the faculty in

some of the later colleges, a determination not to waste time on that kind of old-fashioned leftover, which might be appropriate perhaps for England but certainly not for the United States.

And, of course, there were a fair number of students who were prepared to say “Hey, you know, there are people starving out there while you guys are having sherry on Friday.” And so, such students weren’t particularly eager to be part of a college with such institutions—[Laughter.]—because the society was changing. Once again, I think McHenry and Kerr really had planned for a more stable society, where these kinds of attitudes didn’t boil up and become the driving force of a campus but, instead, were simply one of the reactions to be found in every institution and that are important and that one deserves to hear respectfully, but which were not displacing everything else. So it was an uphill struggle to maintain the outward aspects of communality in the colleges.

But in any case, our committee had become excited by the prospects for reaggregation, and when Mark Christensen came in, we explained to him what it was intended to achieve, and he seemed to think, yeah, that sounds like a good idea. But we learned very quickly, first of all, the cynical folk wisdom of Dean McHenry. Some of the colleges—most particularly Cowell and Stevenson—said, “We worked hard to create the bonds of fellowship here and we’re determined to hold on to it. Faculty members as human beings count for more than the academic orientations and skills they have acquired along the way. And therefore, we will create fake programs and collaborations that no one will take seriously but that can provide justification for their staying on.” It had nothing to do with what they actually intended to do, but had everything to do with

meeting the criteria for reaggregation, so that they didn't have to give up certain friends who were in the college or certain offices to which they had become attached. Or, conversely, it was used to say, "Let us create something which leaves out certain members who have been a pain as colleagues in the college, and whom we would like to see transfer elsewhere." So these considerations became the driving concerns of several of the colleges, frankly, rather than our vision that they would be creating fellowship on a new basis, an intellectual fellowship that was authentic and not merely proclaimed, or assumed, or anything like that. So that was probably one of the driving forces against reaggregation.

But another serious obstacle to promoting reaggregation arose from the inevitability that some clusters were a little hard to justify, while others would have too many members. In some cases, strict adherence to the sociograms would have resulted in an overwhelming number of people in the same college with the same orientations. And we did want to maintain the diversity among the colleges. We did not want a college to be coterminous with one or two departments of the college. Large boards of studies like literature, biology, and psychology, above all, posed that threat.

Reti: Which kind of happened later.

Von der Muhll: Which happened later, yeah. Exactly, which happened later. So there were difficulties of that sort. But the biggest difficulty that beclouded reaggregation was in enforcing the notion, and the rules to back up the notion, that the transfers would be made on grounds of academic clusters, not simply

because people said they wanted to move from one college to another college.

Christensen had no sense of that at all. He was, to some extent, deflected by other matters. As I'll note a bit later, the resources for the campus were drying up fairly fast. But he never conceptually seemed to grasp the objectives and requirements for reaggregation and the problems that had given rise to the proposal, and he showed no particular interest in it. He did not back it up. He did not veto those provosts who were rather egregiously engaging in the fraternity rush that I have already described. They paid no penalties; they got no talking to; they got no ruling that, "This is not the purpose for which reaggregation is to occur. Reaggregation is to occur because of such-and-such a document has been produced, showing through the sociogram and showing through the statement of academic collegiality and complementarity why certain people should be together."

The objectives for reaggregation were probably too rarified, frankly. Looking back on it, I can see how they were almost inevitably displaced by more concrete human motivations. An office with a window that looks out over the Monterey Bay is not something one gives up lightly. The prospect of moving across campus to a distant college that has never had a College Night can be hard to accept. But as administrative relationships became a jumble, our committee found itself unable to maintain any kind of control over the process it had inaugurated. Neither could our chancellor. Christensen was, in a way, perhaps too nice a man, or too ready to yield to the provosts. Reaggregation was the biggest proposal that had come along for saving the colleges, and yet one of the reasons why Christensen was soon to be perceived a failure as chancellor was

that he had no clear hierarchy in mind for the relationship of the colleges to the campus. At a time when central leadership was much needed, it was nowhere to be found.

Many provosts found that if they wanted to talk with Christensen, they could not arrange a meeting for less than three weeks down the road. But any student with an idea could often just walk right into his office and chat with him for ten minutes. He didn't seem to understand that the provosts, according to the charter of the campus, stood immediately below the chancellor and vice chancellor, and actually above the deans. That was McHenry's and Kerr's insistence. The provosts were the single most important positions outside of the one office, the chancelloral office that was to unify the whole campus. And the deans, who at that time had no clear position within the governing body for the campus, were nevertheless people of some consequence, but they too found themselves passed over regarding matters clearly within their province. In any case, Christensen should have known that. But he apparently did not.

In the midst of all this confusion, my own life was changing rapidly as well. Just as McHenry was leaving his chancellors' office in June of 1974, it was turned inside out as without any prior warning my first wife told me she wanted a divorce. I had to move out of our house near the campus in late August and into a surprisingly pleasant apartment near Twin Lakes beach, leaving my two young sons behind. Then, barely ten days later, the incredible happened: the love of my life suddenly reentered it after twenty years of no communication, eventually becoming my wife, as she still is. I had first known her when I was seventeen and she was eighteen, in the American High School in Frankfurt, Germany, but she

had been prohibited by her military parents from having any contact through any medium with me two years later, after we stayed out all night in Washington D.C.'s Rock, before she returned to Wellesley.

At just this time, too, I taught my last courses on various dimensions of American politics and put them aside for good in order to move on to filling in a comparative vision of the world that I had encountered while traveling for three months from Ethiopia across Southern Asia to Japan. I did so by teaching about the politics and economic development of the non-Western "Third World," as I continued to do from then on until the end of my teaching career.

Meanwhile, my college, College Five, underwent an abrupt transformation. Following a distinctly lukewarm appraisal of its founding provost's tenure during its first five years, he stepped down at the end of its sixth, and Pavel Machotka had been elected to succeed him. Pavel, however, had already been awarded a full year fellowship off campus and had accepted it. So one afternoon in May of 1975 Chancellor Christensen called me into his office and surprised me by asking whether I would be interested in serving for a year as College Five's interim provost. My head said, no, but my severely contracted pocketbook said yes, and the pocketbook won out.

Reti: So you became the acting provost.

Von der Muhll: I could not stand for office at all because I had had to write the report on why College Five was in serious trouble, and apparently it was a very influential report. I was told that Dean McHenry liked it very much. He felt it was a thorough assessment that he could not just set aside. And I got that

response from various people. So on the one hand, I couldn't first kill the king and then take over the position.

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Von der Muhll: But what I could do is serve as interim provost for one year. In simple truth I was well-prepared for that job. My two years on the Budget and Academic Planning Committee had familiarized me with the severe challenges the colleges were facing, and my service as chair of the provostial review committee had further acquainted me with some of the problems distinct to College Five. I had somehow emerged as spokesperson for many of the most acute dissatisfactions of the College Five faculty with the problems internal to the college, and I had a network of loyal and thoughtful friends and supporters through our shared interest in developing a "Literature and Society" program, who were eager to help me. I knew well, trusted, and admired John Solomon, at that point the chief staff officer of College Five, and I even had a few ideas of my own concerning where I would like to see the college go.

So I felt I was ready to use my year to advantage, and by the fall quarter we were able to schedule College Nights on a regular basis while Buchanan Sharp was of great help in building up a broad sense of fellowship through seeing to it that Friday Commons Room gatherings were well supplied with beer, port, and peanuts while I was establishing new links with previously absent studio arts faculty and biologists through slide shows of South Indian, Javanese, and Japanese temples, wildlife in Sri Lanka, and Balinese cremation ceremonies, at a time when I was still one of only a half dozen Europeans in Ubud, along with a

seven person Australian television crew.

Other groups took a critical look at the reforms needed to make the aesthetic studies major an academically serious enterprise, and the staff helped me set in motion plans for a fountain and a pergola that Pavel brought to a handsome conclusion once the money started to come in through the Porter Foundation. I even managed to form connections in a very odd way with the students of the college through regular and surprisingly long-remembered readings of *Winnie the Pooh* to a steadily enlarging fireside circle, sometimes in Latin. Another somewhat unconventional set of ties built up through my rediscovered sweetheart, who was very pretty, at thirty-nine looked much as she had at nineteen, and had an unmistakably soft voice. Our wedding, soon after I ceased to be provost, became a truly communal event incorporating virtually the entire College Five faculty. Parents brought their children to witness what they seriously believed in those times might be the last such event the children would ever witness. [Both chuckle.]

So we had a lot of events like that, and College Five swiftly came together, as a community, not particularly because of me but because I was embedded in a group of people whose energies and disposition towards collectivity showed what a college could be when people were feeling that they had a serious academic mission complemented by a serious communitarian social—not socialist, but social—unity. By the time I left it for a year in New Zealand the following year, I left for the first time with the conviction that there was no other college on our campus of which I would rather be a member, and the ties that bound us together I still count among the strongest in all my years on campus.

The college system really *could* work if faculty could be given reason to give their best on its behalf.

The Resignation of UCSC's Second Chancellor, Mark Christensen

Von der Muhll: Before I ceased to be College Five's interim provost in June of 1976, however, I was caught up in a crisis of far wider dimensions. After only one year in office, Mark Christensen's performance had begun to raise major questions among key figures on our campus about his continued suitability as our chancellor.

These questions arose in multiple contexts, not all of which were immediately visible to me. I had witnessed for myself, of course, how he had allowed reaggregation to slip away from a purposive redistribution of faculty among the colleges in accordance with an academic plan, into an unabashed fraternity rush and extrusion. But other high-placed faculty and administrators had become as—if not more—troubled by his chaotic appointments calendar, his unpredictable responsiveness to proposals and pressures, his haphazard directives to campus staff, and a more general inability to articulate clear and firm guidelines on policy issues. Above all, he appeared to numerous close observers, to be an uncertain trumpeter in making the case within the larger University of California system for urgently needed financial assistance to make up for the parsimony of Chancellor McHenry's last years—an issue I'll get to later.

In an effort to stem this mounting tide of discontent, Chancellor Christensen invited the eight college provosts (myself included), the three divisional deans, the chairs of various key Academic Senate committees, and a selection of his top

administrative aids to a conference on the delightful grounds of Pacific Grove's Asilomar Lodge for three golden October days in the 1975 fall quarter. On the surface, the conference proceeded smoothly. Chancellor Christensen outlined his perspectives on the exciting new opportunities and challenges the campus confronted. He reported on his conversations with other University of California officials and warned us that funding was now tighter than it had been in past years but assured us that he hoped to make headway in increasing UCSC's allotment. His audience, in turn, asked numerous respectful questions that he answered with seeming aplomb. The conference schedule left time for pleasant walks along the beaches and numerous conversations—many of them usefully introductory in my case, at least—before we boarded our two buses for the trip home.

So far as I could see, Chancellor Christensen had reason to think his long-weekend conference had achieved its objective. In fact, as I soon learned, it had proved an unmitigated personal disaster for him. Within a few days of our return to Santa Cruz, I was asked to attend a meeting of the seven other college provosts and the three deans. A first go-around of impressions of the conference and the conclusions drawn from it revealed that everyone else in the room had thought that Chancellor Christensen's presentation and his answers to their questions confirmed their worst fears as to his weakness in representing UC Santa Cruz's urgent needs to the outside world. An unqualified inference followed: we must immediately ask for his resignation and stick to that demand until we had obtained it.

The absolute quality of that determination, the swiftness with which other

parties had reached it, and the unanimity of everyone else in the room caught me completely off guard. I had thought before I entered it that at most, after some discussion, various participants would indicate their intention to take up their particular concerns with the chancellor in light of what he had said at Asilomar. Instead, I found myself in the midst of a full-scale palace revolt, and I was not yet prepared to join it. In all, I had found myself in an awkward position. Though unimpressed by Christensen's handling of reaggregation, I knew that McHenry had flatly opposed it, and its incipient failure seemed to me to stem from more causes than lack of whole-hearted, clear, adept, and firm leadership by the new chancellor. I liked him personally, and I had not been a witness to his alleged mishandling of negotiations with external UC budget officials. As everyone in the room knew, as well as various Peeping-Tom students, the chancellor's house had become the scene of domestic discord, unexpungeably spilling over into a violent and prolonged flicking on and off of lights at a large public reception his wife felt had gone on too long, and while divorce proceedings had become almost laughably commonplace among provosts and faculties in those years and no adequate excuse for failing to honor key responsibilities, I thought they might at least provide a context in which to judge an abstracted approach to some lesser chancellorial tasks. Moreover, I had to consider my own position; even if, as many administrators had observed, I would more accurately be titled an "interim" provost than an "acting" deputy for a temporarily absent provost if UC nomenclature had allowed for such a term, I felt I should exercise a certain appropriate caution in claiming to speak and make agreements on behalf of my duly-elected successor.

Somehow, Chancellor Christensen picked up the ambivalence to which these thoughts were leading me. I soon received a phone call from him proposing a walk through the forests surrounding the campus. I agreed to join him. It turned out to be a perfectly pleasant walk. He said nothing about the cabal of provosts and deans opposing him and neither did I. Instead, displaying a political astuteness for which no one had previously given him credit, he noticed my interest in the dried-out water course we crossed, and he began to talk about how, if he remained chancellor, he was certain as a professional geologist that he could arrange to convert those water courses into year-round streams, perhaps even to dam one or two to produce a pond big enough for boating. Whether he knew it or not, he was hitting me squarely in my imaginative solar plexus; with Oxford's "Mesopotamia," the "Backs" of Cambridge, and Princeton's Lake Carnegie and Delaware-Raritan Canal still vividly among my most enchanted recollections, I had felt from the day of my arrival here that the one thing this beautiful campus lacked to make it paradise was such bodies of water, and we engaged in a long conversation of how and where such additions could be made. As I returned to my campus apartment in the forest downhill from Merrill's college buildings, I thought again what an agreeable person Mark Christiansen was.

But I was not permitted such dalliance for long. A supermajority of provosts was not enough for the other seven; they wanted me on board. John Marcum, one of the most decent and honorable human beings I have ever known, took me privately aside after one of our meetings and urged me to overcome my misgivings if only, for nothing else, to provide flanking protection for my fellow

provosts in the high-risk stance they had taken. John's words persuaded me that I had no honorable choice but to join the others; they had had more experience in dealing with Christensen than I, they were deeply concerned about the fate of this campus while I had undoubtedly let myself become immersed in trying to build a better College Five, and we needed to hang visibly together amid early indications from the UC President's office that the cabal's demands were unacceptable. So I agreed to maintain solidarity with the other provosts, come what might, since I really did respect their experience and their judgments.

My shift came none too soon. Christensen maintained his civil demeanor when confronted by a united front that now included Vice Chancellor Eugene-Cota-Robles, who, in a notable act of courage, had thrown his lot with us. But UC's President, David Saxon, a man of moderation and good sense in most matters, was outraged at his inability to head off what he called a "French Revolution." Whatever side one might take in judging that historic upheaval, I thought the analogy itself was weak; as I had told Congressional office friends in Washington the previous year regarding the growing pressure on Richard Nixon to step down, I thought the deposition of King Richard II of England was a more apt analogy than the eventual execution of Louis XVI. But such hyperbole became the order of the day as the UC President's office and the heads of certain other campuses began to suggest that UC Santa Cruz had shown itself to be ungovernable from the outset, a venue for unendingly unsuccessful experimentation, a place immersed in self-love with its exceptionalism. More ominously, we began to hear that if Christensen went, so also went our chances of gaining a sympathetic hearing for the claims we had been making for urgently

needed funding. On the other hand, I was surprised at the number of faculty on this campus whom I had hardly known who came up to give me undeserved thanks for persisting in the demand that Christensen should go. If there were still faculty on this campus who supported him, I never heard their voices.

In the end, after our group declared several proposed compromises to keep Christensen in office were declared unacceptable, President Saxon had to acknowledge that Chancellor Christensen could not function as chancellor if he had to continue confronting an unbending vote of “no confidence” from a united body of all the highest-rank officers of this campus. With no fanfare, Christensen conceded as much, stepped down, and soon left the campus. Every one of us knew, as Vice Chancellor Cota-Robles remarked, that from that point on we were “marked people.” “I don’t advise any of you to put yourselves on line for another major office here for some time,” he said, and he followed his own advice by leaving the campus for good. But what was ultimately more worrisome in the emerging future we faced was that the UC Santa Cruz campus itself was likewise “marked.”

Chancellor Angus Taylor

To replace Chancellor Christensen, the UC Office of the President reluctantly sent down one of its own, an elderly, semi-retired mathematician named Angus Taylor. The first reaction here was one of dismay; once again, we were being asked to accept one of the president’s men, an unimaginative person set in his ways who gave no indication of being especially sympathetic to our utopian projects, and would prove to be nothing more than a routine and rigid

bureaucrat. His one virtue, many said, was that he was so well into the retirement age that he would not be here for long.

That part of campus assessment turned out to be true. But in other respects, Angus Taylor proved much better than our words. He was thoroughly old-school, not a huge scholar, and very much of a central administrator. But he was also a wise human being, caring, quite ready to listen, and with no self-inflated expectations of transforming this campus in accordance with any particular model or bringing it to heel. He was disciplined and accessible, on the right terms. He had a sense of how to recreate stability. He did a really fine job here and called into question the validity of a number of stereotypes at UCSC about the kind of person to be found in the UC president's office. He was very much a University of California man (if I may use that term), indeed, a thorough gentleman. He was all these things. But he was also a person who could support us in the transition to wherever we needed to go and he earned the respect of people on this campus by respecting the kind of campus we had wished to create. We owe him a great debt.

Nevertheless, by this point there were larger forces at work that could not be resolved by getting the right chancellor for our campus, by the model of successful reform in one college, or even by the successful reform of the college system itself. These forces extended well beyond any one campus's control, although they had a differential impact on UC Santa Cruz in particular.

To begin with, reaggregation itself soon lost its centrality as a means of fixing the revealed deficiencies of the colleges. When my wife and I left for New Zealand in

the summer of 1977 in the last faculty exchange sponsored by UCSC's South Pacific Studies Center before it folded, purposive faculty exchanges among colleges on this campus according to any plan were clearly losing steam. By the time I returned for the 1978 fall quarter, to all intents and purposes they were over. Many of the colleges, most notably Cowell and Stevenson, were not unhappy with that fact, or at least many of their provosts were not unhappy. And by the time Angus Taylor left, he enjoyed widespread approval on campus for not pushing for fundamental changes in the colleges but for focusing instead on how to get through the next year or two without too much external—

Reti: So reaggregation was implemented to some extent.

Von der Muhll: To some extent.

Reti: I know when we talked a few months ago before our interviews began, you were saying that had reaggregation been successful, the reorganization—

Von der Muhll: Might not have been necessary. That's right, yeah, because it was the bid to tell both the outside world, and those in the colleges, themselves, that the colleges were authentic. They weren't simply labels for dormitories. They weren't simply a way of drinking sherry or whatever—not that many people drank sherry; more drank port. [Laughter.] But nevertheless, those of us who promoted reaggregation, certainly including Michael Cowan, and I'm sure the other members of our Budget and Academic Planning Committee, initially felt it was truly an exciting opportunity to undertake needed reforms. We had tried to make controlled changes in the founders' organizing principles to save their system because we still valued their goals but had learned that they were

based on images of American society, its aspirations and its ambitions, that were no longer applicable, while several of them had proved internally self-contradictory. One can hardly blame either McHenry or Kerr for not having foreseen everything and having worked out a solution to every problem, or for not knowing that the society was going to go in very different directions—

Reti: True.

Von der Muhll: —from the directions foreseen in the early planning. So I'm certainly not, in any sense, suggesting that I feel that their vision was not an exceptionally important potential contribution to the university scene in this country. What had become increasingly clear, however, was that the colleges, as initially organized, simply could not hold the loyalty of their members or maintain themselves in a competitive environment in their intended form. Whatever its utopian aspirations, the campus remained part of the University of California system, and its faculty would have to heed the terms on which faculty on other campuses entered and left that system. Nor could students in the late seventies afford to remain as free as the first cadres from major worries about vocational preparation. In those heady opening years, most of them had thought they could put such concerns aside in order to explore and seek interconnections among Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, and Immanuel Kant, canvas world literatures, immerse themselves in the wonders of Hellenic culture, and qualify themselves to uncover the codes embedded in the double helix. But amid the stagflation and rising unemployment of the late 1970s they had to turn their attention to quite different matters. So obviously we had to make a correction of course. And if we didn't accept the need to make it, the rocks ahead would do

the job.

Reti: I know there were rumors that systemwide was considering closing UCSC.

Von der Muhll: That's right.

Reti: Do you think there was any truth to those rumors?

Von der Muhll: I heard them too. I do not dismiss them. Berkeley's chancellor in the late seventies openly argued that it was preposterous to continue pumping money into a campus to its south with a shrinking enrollment, when his campus was turning away a flood of qualified applicants for lack of the resources required to accommodate them. The logic of his argument was not hard to understand.

So by this point, critical attention on this campus was becoming focused, not so much on how to improve the colleges through restructuring them, as on how to keep them viable by responding to the startling fact that UC Santa Cruz as a whole was steadily losing students at both ends—in applications and through drop-outs. These losses had many causes. Students weren't coming here in the first place because they were wrongly being told by their high school advisers that, "there are no grades at Santa Cruz, so you can't get into graduate school."

But beyond that, the campus appeared to be in a state of confusion. The college curricula were splintering. Half-hearted reaggregation had put them in a continuously transitional mode. The startlingly high attrition rate of student dropouts from Santa Cruz seemed linked to their complaints about an insufficiency of close tracking and systematic advising. College and board

courses competed for the same turf with too few guidelines to adjudicate such conflicts. But what was most unpleasant of all was that prospective resources were becoming severely diminished not only because of the overall decline in the growth rate of the state economy but even more because of a growing conviction by other UC campuses and the central administration that our application rates were declining for good reason. Urgent experimentation and administrative chaos were perceived to be the order of the day at UC Santa Cruz. And UC Berkeley's complaint was echoing through the UC system.

Such perceptions were in danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the opening years of this campus, we had been turning four student applicants out of five away. Even though they were qualified to come here as part of the top 12.5 percent of the California student body, we had been sending them to places like Berkeley and Davis. Those we accepted seemed generally and genuinely attracted by the distinctive qualities of this campus. But now we were urgently searching for the students whom Berkeley, UCLA, and UC San Diego could not accommodate, and we were having to undergo the unfamiliar and unwelcome experience of having to adapt to the needs and preferences of more conventionally minded students, who had not wanted to come here in the first place—a demoralizing experience sufficiently palpable to have an independently adverse effect on the students themselves.

Reti: In a very few short years we went from being one of the most prestigious campuses in the country—

Von der Muhll: To being one of the ones that was frantically scrambling to

attract students. And that is why we became so ready to accept transfer students. But transfer students came at a cost. UC Santa Cruz, as I noted earlier, had been originally planned as a campus for four-year students who would spend their first two years taking college courses inside their colleges before selecting a discipline to major in. Transfer students, on the other hand, had no reason to take any particular interest in college themes, college core courses, or anything like that. They came here to spend two years taking courses in their disciplinary major to prepare themselves for the outside world and its demands. In fact, some of them rather resented four-year students with a thematic attachment to a particular college because they were left to feel a bit that they were outsiders with no real home except for the courses they took, whereas some of the other students, who had been here from the outset of their undergraduate years, had lived on campus longer and had developed friendships growing out of those years. To overcome that sentiment was one reason why College Eight shifted in its late planning stage from being primarily an environmental studies college to one with few dormitories and no college courses or theme that would give particular emphasis to serving as a home base for the transfer students. I think it's fair to say that, though not immediately recognized at the time, that UCSC's growing dependence on transfer students signaled the end of the original Kerr-McHenry vision for this campus.

What seemed most to worry the faculty during these years, however, was the prospect of having no resources commensurate with the original ambitions for this campus. So far as I know, very few shared Chancellor McHenry's original anticipation and aspiration of housing a campus the size of the UCLA student

body, faculty, and staff amid its redwoods. Nevertheless, many faculty harbored an awareness of major holes in their staffing—the politics board, for example, was acutely aware that most traditional political science departments had at least one faculty member who had specialized in constitutional or international law, and one who had the skills required to construct and test statistically formulated models for students who wanted to undertake research requiring them—but they had always assumed and had been assured that these gaps in their offerings would be remedied within a few years as the campus grew steadily in size.

Reti: So there is no comprehensive academic planning going on up until this point—

Von der Muhll: That’s right. And when these plans for a future curriculum had been drawn up, suddenly the resources were shrinking. But while all college and university faculties have their wish list of unfilled positions, UC Santa Cruz also had a peculiar problem that was exacerbated by a sudden contraction of future resources. The campus, with its unparalleled woodland setting and sweeping views, its glades and meadows on which cows grazed and its elegant architect-designed college buildings with fountains and pergolas, didn’t fit a conventional image of a taxpayer-supported state university; it looked as if it housed a supremely privileged group of people living in wonderful natural surroundings in lovingly designed buildings, and the regents were hearing variants of the question, “Is UC Santa Cruz a country club, and is it costing the taxpayers disproportionately more money than the other UC campuses?” To head off such awkward questions, Dean McHenry made a startling pledge: his campus, he promised, would be run at a lower per capita cost than any other campus of the

UC system. What is even more startling—he actually succeeded in fully honoring his pledge.

Chancellor McHenry's novel pledge was politically astute. The media regarded its successful implementation as further evidence of the remarkable qualities of the campus itself and its leader. But the consequence was that at a time when resources were floating about in great quantities, Dean McHenry felt obliged by his pledge to refrain from taking advantage of the steadily increasing pot of money offered the University of California by its state legislature, all the more when we had a twelve-to-one faculty-student ratio.

Reti: So we became an impoverished country club.

Von der Muhll: We became an impoverished country club with big holes in our curriculum. There were many plans for departments that had not been brought into fruition because they would cost too much. However, such budgetary restrictions on the boards of study faculty had been regularly softened by promises that the holes would be filled in due course. Then suddenly there was no money to fill the holes on any campus, and UC Santa Cruz was left particularly short-handed.

Reti: There was no down the road. Down the road came, and there was no money.

Von der Muhll: Precisely so.

UCSC in the Doldrums: 1975-1978

The complete failure, in most respects, of reaggregation meant that the college system continued to drift along and that the early problems became more and more acute. As these problems intensified, attention began to shift within and among the colleges from what kinds of innovative curricula to have our campus to ever more fractious college-board struggles. These struggles displaced all other concerns as virtually everything became related to it: whether it was the start of the hiring process or the decisions about promotion and tenure at the other end of that process; whether it was how resources should be allocated or whether the colleges should provide the core curriculum for meeting breadth requirements; which agency should be responsible for providing the institutions and methods for monitoring courses, or what theme should be chosen for the new colleges. Wearied by these interminable frictions that never seemed to end in consensus, many faculty came to contend that new colleges should be like College Nine and Ten, merely places housing academic offices but not residential quarters, and with no serious claims on students' loyalty to any identity in particular.

These were only a few of the questions being raised, yet they soon began displacing what I would have called the comparative advantage of this community, that is to say, its insulation from the larger currents of society, and its freedom to innovate and to bridge fragmentation and isolation. I felt increasingly that this development was not being fully appreciated by many of the faculty, not only in the sciences, but in many locales. I repeatedly encountered a growing impatience among the faculty with the burdens of

membership that the original college system had entailed.

But what was true of the faculty was likewise becoming true of the students. Those who were now being recruited to this campus seemed now less concerned about differences among the core courses of the few colleges that still sponsored them than about the desirability of establishing variants of ethnic and gender studies on this campus. I myself thought that a campus so close to Watsonville had much reason to give much thought to the first. Yet it was not evident to me that this campus should have, as its primary mission, being sure that it fully represented all the disadvantaged groups of society, even though for them it would mean moving far away from their homes and adding to the expenses of trying to live in one of the most expensive communities in the United States. I thought that Berkeley and UCLA enjoyed immense comparative advantages for people with limited incomes who could commute to campus, that in many respects those campuses could offer an education to such groups at least the equal of what we could provide, and that therefore for us to make as our primary mission—not *a* mission but our primary mission—establishing various departments which would focus on an appreciation of what was wrong with the structure of American society and replace it by different visions of that society—was to pass over what were the distinctive advantages of our campus in favor of competing with campuses that enjoyed an inherent comparative advantage over us. Women's studies did not raise the same issues in the same way, inasmuch as it was not obvious how this campus would experience a comparative disadvantage in its location and ambience in seeking to give emphasis to such programs.

But certainly the interest in what this campus was distinctive for was being called into question, because the students seemed less and less interested in what it had once seemed to offer. They appeared to have a different agenda, one which was morally worthy in its own way, beyond any doubt, but not self-evidently related to what this campus had once distinctively had to offer. And an increasing number of faculty, as well, were losing interest in the signature liberal arts core courses that had once seemed to set this campus apart from the others within the university—ironically, at the very time when such courses were beginning to enjoy a revival at Harvard and at Stanford. At the same time, our once-prized Cistercian isolation from the busy world of corporate commerce and synthetic entertainment was now coming to be perceived as a shortcoming insulating us from a society in need of transformation, a huge disadvantage rather than a comparative advantage. In short, the campus was becoming disvalued both for failing in its mission and for having chosen that mission in the first place.

The paradox of this condition was not lost on three of my visiting friends whom I had once come to know amid the swirl of politics in the halls of Congress. All had been among the leading activists for social transformation over many years, one as an organizer of protest marches in conjunction with Martin Luther King Jr.'s appearances in Washington; a second as a legislative assistant who helped steer President Lyndon Johnson's 1964 Civil Rights bill through the Senate; a third who had dedicated many years of his life to opposing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Yet despite the diversity of their engagements, all three were awed by the peaceful beauty of this outlier of the University of California. When

I told them that just that quality had become a source of irritation to many students, they all had essentially the same reaction. Why on earth, they wanted to know, were students demanding a tighter interface with our fractured and dismal society? Surely they must realize that they had been given a special privilege in coming here—namely, four years of being exempt from the constant pressures and worries of the day, of being able to immerse themselves in studying the theories that organize the sciences, in having a chance to read and think through Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, in being left in peace to work out the argument in John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*. They would be out in the world soon enough, out in the world where the opportunity to sift arguments that everyone around them was using was neither granted nor respected. They would soon have to spend time meeting mortgages, they would have to learn how to negotiate with other corporate lawyers and find common ground with union leaders—they would get all that soon enough. But here, they're offered a chance to explore paths they might never again have time or the incentive to explore later on. So they felt pity for students whose whole focus was on internships and field studies to gain contact with the "real" world, who suffered from feeling, "We're trapped here in this forest and meadow, cut off from the realities of life and our campus doesn't reflect those realities."

I understood both sides of the argument, but I was intrigued by the fact that one of those sides was being put to me by major activists in Washington, D.C., rather than by somebody who had, himself- or herself—been able to study literature at Princeton before coming here. It wasn't the reaction of people who—

Reti: Were these white people?

Von der Muhll: Yes, all three were white, though one was Jewish, and many careful statistically based studies have shown that even now many Jews do not think and behave politically like other members of their income and educational levels because their embedded traditions and—at least until recently—experiences of discrimination have obliged them to retain a certain tie of conscience to underdogs in all sorts of areas. As a consequence, until quite recently statistical studies of voting choice have shown them to be among the most reliable voters for the Democratic Party, which sets them aside from the fact that income and high-cost education are otherwise some of the best predictors of who will vote Democratic.

But, in any case, I just thought that these reactions offered an interesting perspective that I had not been hearing around here for some time, although it was the original idea of McHenry and Kerr that its detached physical isolation might provide a better setting for developing a different educational vision from that of the corporate multiversities that had become tied to expensive research projects dependent on big donors.

Physical setting aside, another factor in the differentiation of the Santa Cruz campus from other UC campuses was that most of them had already built up very powerful graduate departments. We haven't spoken of that.

Reti: Right.

Von der Muhll: Throughout all of the USA, with the notable exception of independent liberal arts colleges like Oberlin, Swarthmore, Dartmouth, Williams, and Bryn Mawr, the reputation of an educational institution rests heavily on the

reputation of its graduate departments. Here in California, it's notable that the state colleges are eager to start up PhD programs so that they can call themselves "universities" instead of "colleges." But at UC Santa Cruz, the prospect of graduate programs evoked surprisingly mixed feelings that even Kerr and McHenry shared to some extent. Kerr understood very well that the malaise experienced in many of the undergraduate colleges within university campuses derived from a top-heavy graduate-school structure in which the money and prestige flowed to the specialized graduate-school programs, even though most of the teaching was done in the large undergraduate classes. McHenry understood that we needed to have graduate programs pretty soon, if we were to gain the recognition typically accruing to graduate programs. As I've already noted, when I went to intersegmental meetings, I encountered repeated comments based on the supposition that, whatever the quality of the undergraduate program, a campus worthy of being part of a California university system must have conspicuous graduate programs. Without them, a campus masquerading as part of the University of California was "just" a state college.

But there was another side to that issue, and it was one to which my politics board was particularly sensitive. Graduate schools thrive on a degree of specialization that is often productive of highly concentrated, intensive, heavily funded research at the frontiers of knowledge; but this kind of work is not necessarily well suited to designing courses introducing undergraduates to the interconnections among the subfields that make up a discipline. At Harvard and Yale, some professors in the graduate schools do a fine job of teaching

undergraduate courses that are open to both undergraduates and graduates, with expectations that graduate students will write longer, more sophisticated, more substantively weighty papers to justify receiving credit in a course attended by undergraduate students, but that arrangement is somewhat exceptional. The politics board adhered to the notion that its undergraduate courses in the early days would become unadventurous, less open to experimentation and the use of insights drawn from other disciplines, if it allowed its undergraduate curriculum to be set by the needs of a graduate politics program and viewed as only a service agency for that purpose. And beyond that, the politics board, as I've said earlier, didn't want a small, mediocre graduate program, simply to have a graduate program. We were both alert to the ways in which a graduate program could be too big and too powerful and too prestigious for the good of the undergraduates, but ironically—and maybe this is contradictory—we also felt that, with Stanford and Berkeley having absolutely first-class graduate programs that attract the best students, we didn't simply want to attract any graduate student we could get in order to have a graduate department.

The politics board, by the way, was one of the very last to have a graduate program. We were the final custodians of the notion that our comparative advantage lay in first-class undergraduate education and preparation for the first-class graduate programs elsewhere in the country, which had different orientations. So we were the holdouts. I was chair in the early nineties of a committee to formulate what turned out to be—the politics board was very happy with it—a small graduate program, which wouldn't make everybody look

and say, "This could be done ten times better at Berkeley than is being done here."

But in any case, what that meant was that, with everything else put aside, McHenry was feeling that without a school of engineering, without something like that, we would be vulnerable to criticisms that we were trying to be simply another Swarthmore, or another Oberlin, or another Williams [College], attracting lower-income students from the state of California. Moreover, he felt that the presence of professional schools of engineering, medicine, or law would have a "stabilizing" influence in a period in which undergraduate political irruptions had become common. Meanwhile, the natural sciences were pressing ahead with their graduate programs and were beginning to earn nationwide attention for the quality of their research.

The result was a stasis that continued after McHenry retired as chancellor. The colleges showed no prospect of establishing distinctive thematic profiles based on their college courses. The first two colleges, Cowell and Stevenson, had revived their core courses in less ambitious formats, but only Merrill somewhat half-heartedly followed their example. The colleges had not proved sites for solid graduate programs, but neither had the boards outside of the natural sciences, and the comparative history graduate program of the history board was quietly abandoned. College-board conflict continued on the same terms without reaching any equilibrium. Lick Observatory gave important dimensions to the campus's reputation in astronomy, but its South Pacific Studies Center, largely a haven for knowledgeable retired diplomats and a small cadre of anthropologists, was shut down after a critical review in a time of constrained finances. UCSC had survived its first decade and was entering its second. But outside observers

could no longer clearly discern what made it special beyond the beauty of its setting and a systemwide reputation for engaged, imaginative undergraduate courses.

Chairing the Committee on Educational Policy During Reorganization

Now I would like to talk about “reorganization,” as it became known on this campus, between 1978 and 1980. I have quite a bit to say about it—perhaps too much—because it happened that I was the chair of the Committee on Educational Policy during this period, and it plunged our committee into all the central conflicts of its implementation.

For those who did not live through this period on our campus, “reorganization,” in retrospect, is easy to confuse with “reaggregation.” Such confusion is understandable. The two abstract, multi-syllabic, latinate nouns beginning with “R” refer to one or the other of the two most complex, ambitiously comprehensive reform efforts of the college system on this campus, and the launching of the two of them occurred within a single five-year period in the second half of the 1970s in the context of a campus crisis. However, their similarity stops there. “Reaggregation” was a project proposed by an Academic Senate committee, the Budget and Academic Planning Committee. It looked to the UCSC chancellor and the college provosts for its implementation. “Reorganization” was proposed by a new chancellor, but its execution required collaboration with the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). Reaggregation was intended to save the college system by making changes to correct deficiencies revealed through experience. Reorganization was the

outcome of a chancellor's conclusion that the college system was at the heart of the campus's problems, that it was beyond hope of effective reform, and that it should be entirely displaced from its role within the campus's educational system. Perhaps most importantly, reaggregation was a failure as the means to its ends were appropriated for other purposes. Reorganization decisively removed the colleges from faculty promotional procedures and limited their sponsorship of courses to voluntary core courses with sections frequently taught by graduate students. In large measure, reorganization institutionalized the crucial procedures and responsibilities that have prevailed on this campus to this day.

In any case, when I returned to this campus from a year in New Zealand and a subsequent encircling of the globe in order to resume my faculty responsibilities here in the fall quarter of 1978, I found that in my absence I'd been appointed Chair of the Committee on Educational Policy (commonly referred to as the "CEP").

Reti: [Laughs.]

Von der Muhll: I was happy about that, because I felt very strongly that we needed to have a more critical examination of what kind of liberal arts programs we really were offering students. Essentially, it had now come down to a mechanistically bureaucratic requirement of any three courses in each of the three divisions. It appeared that no significant thought had been given to identifying the outcomes to expect from meeting these requirements—the grounds for mandatory exposure to their presumptively differentiating subject

matters and standards of excellence, the skills imparted, the styles of research, and the hoped-for stimulation of curiosity about and appreciation for differing forms of human intellectual and artistic achievement. Serving as chair of the CEP promised to offer me the opportunity to probe, and perhaps to strengthen, the rationale for breadth requirements. Once again, however, I was to learn that ambitious curricular reforms would have to be sidetracked in order to address more immediate crises of greater concern to more faculty.

Reti: Are we talking about 1978 here?

Von der Muhll: We're talking about '78, '79.

Reti: [Chancellor Robert L.] Sinsheimer had arrived in '77.

Von der Muhll: Sinsheimer came in '77. I was away in New Zealand when he came.

Reti: Okay. So you came back to a very different campus.

Von der Muhll: Not so far as I could see at first. Like Angus Taylor before him, in his first year here while I was gone Chancellor-elect Robert Sinsheimer had apparently showed himself disposed to allow the campus to be propelled in whatever direction its internal forces and external constraints sent it. But all that changed within a few weeks of my return. On the day before his formal inauguration as chancellor, he used the occasion to outline a fundamental restructuring of the campus that he proposed to initiate. It was a restructuring that he proposed to call "reorganization."

Chancellor Sinsheimer's proposal for reorganization was radical indeed. In his first months on campus, he told his audience, he had attempted to restate Chancellor Christensen's case for more funding for the campus in more forceful terms. In these appeals, he had attempted to underline that UCSC was paying too high a price for continuation of Chancellor McHenry's pledge to keep this campus the lowest per-capita cost campus in the UC. But these appeals, he said, had proved unpersuasive. The president's office had said, in effect, "Tough. You guys are losing students. You can't hold them. You're not attracting enough new students, and your campus is seen by the outside world as one where nobody can fail and where everybody is smoking pot under the trees. Why should we respond to your appeal?"

So Sinsheimer's next response was, "We've got to make some changes, and we've got to make them fast." If we did not, we faced the prospect of a stepped-up transfer of resources to campuses with much higher qualified applicant-to-acceptance ratios than our own. UC Berkeley had been one of these, and though its new chancellor had shown himself to be sympathetic to our problems, we should not rely on such sympathy's continuing indefinitely. He therefore intended to initiate changes that would be directly addressed to what he had concluded to be at the heart of our problems: UCSC's college system.

In essence, he announced his intention to bring to an end college sponsorship of courses. Existing college courses would be assimilated into the various boards of studies and retitled as board courses, or they would be dropped altogether. The colleges would henceforth cease to pay 50 percent of faculty members' salaries, and their role in personnel promotional proceedings would be correspondingly

eliminated. Furthermore, he intended to arrange to redistribute the faculty among the colleges in accordance with their divisional affiliations. Boards of studies would be housed in no more than two or three colleges, and the colleges would acquire authentic identities through the preponderance of the intra-divisional boards they housed.

Chancellor Sinsheimer's announced transformations were breathtaking in their radical foundations, their scope, and their direct implications for the future of the UCSC faculty. They clearly spelled the end of the college-centered system on which the campus had been founded and the innovative interdisciplinary courses they had engendered, and they eliminated the grounds for the continued conflict between colleges and boards that had polarized and paralyzed the campus. What was equally surprising was how little resistance our new chancellor encountered to his proclaimed "reorganization." By this point, a large, if hitherto largely silent majority, had lost the enthusiasm its members had once shown for the opportunities the college system had opened up. By now they seemed ready to side with the chancellor in wishing to jettison the "soft" courses, the duplicative courses, and the inauthentic majors the college system had spawned. They were no longer willing to bear the burden of dual college-board committees, the dubious criteria employed in college personnel proceedings, the strained efforts to give the colleges a nominal thematic identity, and the resultant marginalization and isolation many faculty felt they had experienced as a consequence. Many shared Chancellor Sinsheimer's view that the colleges had not demonstrated that their promotion of interdisciplinary contact had stimulated more imaginative, more widely received, more well-received research.

Most of all, perhaps, a substantial majority of the faculty now appeared increasingly eager to get on with the teaching and research projects for which their graduate schools had prepared them. For them, the experimental college system had run its course.

In the early stages of reorganization, Chancellor Sinsheimer did not fully articulate all these arguments, nor did he always express them in language assuring their unqualified acceptance. Perhaps inevitably, pockets of resistance [remained] to their uncritical and full-scale implementation. Here I felt fortunate in the make-up of the committee I had been asked to chair; it included not only Michael Cowan and John Marcum, two greatly respected former college provosts whom I knew well, but also Gary Lease and David Kliger⁶, both well on their way to deanships of their respective humanities and natural sciences divisions, for good reasons that became quickly apparent to me. Despite their individuality, outspoken convictions and pertinent experience in the variety of positions they had held or were about to hold, they readily worked with me to form a solid and externally influential team that held together under pressure, and these traits were soon shown to be needed as we found ourselves having to serve as loyal collaborators with Chancellor Sinsheimer in implementing his needed reforms, while acting as a counterweight when we felt his zeal was beginning to endanger the distinctive and enduring values of our campus.

Our members fully understood the experiences and the conclusions drawn from the experiences that led to apparent acquiescence throughout the campus to the

⁶ See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Campus Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor, David Kliger* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2011). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/ucsc/campus-provostexecutive-vice-chancellor-david-kliger>

wholesale dismantling of the Kerr-McHenry project. Nevertheless, we wanted to be sure that we did not lose the more innovative and defensible courses that had come into being under college sponsorship. Michael Cowan proved notably adept in relocating college courses that seemed well worth saving in hospitable boards where they could continue to thrive under a new label. To take just one example with which I happened to be intimately familiar, the politics board readily incorporated my "Literature and Politics" course into its offerings with a new politics course number. On the other hand, we euthanized certain college courses that appeared to have been taught with steadily diminishing enthusiasm in order simply to meet the obligations of collegiate membership.

After prolonged discussion with Chancellor Sinsheimer, I managed to convince him that he had underestimated the potential value of college core courses, such as the ones revived at Cowell and Stevenson and maintained in Merrill in creating a shared academic community for entry-level students. But another issue did not evolve so smoothly. Chancellor Sinsheimer based his case for abolishing the academic roles of the colleges on the proposition that their inappropriately large role in sponsoring courses accounted for the disturbing drop in student applicants to this campus. Our CEP Committee member had seen no evidence whatever to support the belief that students were deterred from applying to Santa Cruz by its college-centered curriculum, whatever the role of the colleges had been internally in the debilitating board-college conflicts that I have already noted at some length. On the other hand, we had all encountered the proposition, fanned over the past year by Bay Area journalists who had not troubled to do any homework, that because "Santa Cruz does not give [letter]

grades,” and most particularly the grade of “F,” it is “impossible to fail at Santa Cruz,” with the consequence that the currency of a Santa Cruz diploma was correspondingly less than certificates of graduation from any other campus in the UC system. This careless conflation of misleading half-truths with outright falsehoods might have no standing among on-campus faculty, but that mattered little; what mattered was that California’s high school academic counselors had believed it and had passed their belief, however flawed, onto their students advisees.

This situation placed our committee in a difficult position. On the one hand, all five of us agreed that the multidimensional character of the narrative evaluation—its potentially independent assessment of regular attendance, fulfillment of course requirements, demonstrated mastery of subject matter, compositional skills, indications of imaginative and sustained research capacity, and upward or downward trajectories through the quarter—not only gave a far more valid, more precise, more useful assessment of student performance in a course than the conflation of information and arbitrary averaging out contained in a single letter grade; it was also far more appreciated by students, even when harshly indicative of need for improvement in some areas of the students’ work. We were also keenly aware, as external critics seemed not to be, that in adopting the Narrative Evaluation System the Santa Cruz campus had agreed to hold students to a higher standard than any other campus in the UC system. To be given credit for a course, students had to produce work of unambiguously satisfactory quality—work that was conventionally assigned a “C” or above—in order to maintain the rate of course credit designated as “normal progress”

toward a degree; narrative evaluations implying work below that standard—i.e., work conventionally designated with a “C-” or below for which the student was nevertheless given course credit was returned to the writer with a note drawing attention to the lack of consonance between the decision to give the student course credit and a narrative evaluation indicating that the student’s work had fallen below the standard of “clearly passing.” Students on the eight other campuses of that period could therefore obtain course credit despite letter grades ranging from C- to D; students at Santa Cruz could not; and failure to maintain “normal progress” toward a degree at Santa Cruz had precisely the same consequences as a letter grade elsewhere of “F.” It followed that “Students can’t fail at UC Santa Cruz” was, quite simply, a flat falsehood.

Another less-controversial special requirement imposed uniquely on the Santa Cruz campus by UC as part of the price of being allowed to use narrative evaluations in place of letter grades was that all majors must include passing a final oral or written comprehensive examination, or its equivalent in the major, as a condition for graduation. But what was true or false was not what mattered by now in the crisis that Santa Cruz was facing; it was what the outside world believed to be the case. And, as I’ve said, our committee believed that unless the outer world of high school counselors, journalists, other campuses and worried parents could be made to believe that students could obtain the supposedly “hard” data conveyed by letter grades, the dangerously low number of student applications to UC Santa Cruz were not going to be changed for the better by reorganization of the college system, no matter how drastically that undertaking was performed.

Our committee therefore decided to seek to rectify the problem UCSC was facing by addressing directly yet another little-noticed anomalous requirement imposed on this campus as a condition for making use of narrative evaluations—namely, that while students in the humanities and social sciences divisions could only receive narrative evaluations of their coursework, students taking courses in the natural sciences division could request a letter grade for their performance in the course if they formally petitioned to receive one, the belief being that graduate and professional schools with programs in the natural sciences would only consider applications providing a numerical grade-point average—an average impossible to derive from narrative evaluations alone. (Ironically, medical schools, initially the sharpest critics of narrative evaluations, had by this time become their strongest supporters: since virtually all applicants to the most competitive schools offered undifferentiated transcripts of 4.0 grade point averages, these schools had come to prize transcripts accompanied by thirty-six unsolicited letters of evaluation providing assessments of commitment to improved performance, ethical sensitivity, independent research proficiency, ethnic disadvantages overcome, aptitudes not measured in standardized tests, etc. in deciding how to allocate admissions and scholarships among applicants with nominally equal grade-point records.) To remove all grounds for continuing the controversy over the currency of narrative evaluations, our committee therefore proposed that students taking courses in the social sciences and humanities should be given the same rights for requesting letter grades as those enrolled in courses in the natural sciences. To offset fears about destroying the use of narrative evaluations, our committee took note of the fact that for the preceding fifteen years, the percent of students requesting narrative evaluations

in the natural science courses had held steady at slightly above 10 percent of total enrollees in the classes. Since courses in the natural sciences were typically more quantitatively based and were thought to attract students disposed toward quantitative ratings, it seemed to our committee that extending this right to students in social science courses—let alone in the humanities—would have hardly any impact on the system.

I took these considerations and arguments to the Academic Senate and received a ringing endorsement—virtually 100 percent—for the CEP's proposal. That promised to settle the matter. But we had failed to take into account student reaction. Far from regarding our extension of the right to a letter grade as a welcome privilege, the students almost instantly locked into the notion that the CEP and the Academic Senate had between them destroyed the Narrative Evaluation System. They were joined by a relatively small group of faculty centered in Cowell College, and in short order the most apocalyptic scenarios became commonplace. All that was of value in UC Santa Cruz, all that had given it its identity, had now been placed in jeopardy. Students who were willing to consider coming to UCSC because it had made letter grades available to non-scientists would subvert and corrupt the system. If the campus might be closed without this expedient stratagem, so be it. UCSC was indissolubly linked to denying students in the social sciences and the humanities access to letter grades.

To prove their point in a quantitative manner, students circulated a petition that within forty-eight hours obtained—if I remember rightly—an impressive 3,000 plus signatures from a student body at that time approaching 3.3 thousand. Chancellor Sinsheimer, although an advocate of abolishing narrative evaluations,

remained prudently invisible throughout the uproar (it seemed that urgent business up in Berkeley kept demanding his attention), leaving me to defend the folly brought on by our successful proposal to the Academic Senate. I spoke at several student rallies and bored myself with repetitive arguments, but to no avail; the students remained polite and nonthreatening, but obdurate, and the media loved the show.

It was at this juncture that former Vice Chancellor Brewster Smith, a distinguished social psychologist who, like me, had transferred from the University of Chicago to UC Santa Cruz in 1969, invited himself to my house for breakfast. With great tact, he suggested that whatever the merits the CEP's proposal had once had as a means of addressing the factor most directly threatening our campus, these were now overshadowed by the made-for-media demonstrations of a genuinely united student body. Could we really afford much more of such negative publicity in a time of crisis? Recalling Henry IV of France's remark that Paris was worth a mass, I had to acknowledge that his question was rhetorical. That afternoon I went back to an Academic Senate meeting to propose that the Senate repudiate the very proposal I had asked it to endorse. It did, and by almost the same margin.

With the letter grade option out of the way, the remainder of reorganization proceeded apace. Our CEP continued to view Chancellor Sinsheimer's reorganization as an unnecessarily comprehensive jettisoning of all the institutions that had once given UC Santa Cruz its distinctive place in the history of utopian university educational experiments. We managed to preserve college-based introductory core courses, departmental relocations paid some heed in

certain cases to the previous traditions of the host colleges, and narrative evaluations had proved themselves to be at least temporarily untouchable.

But these were all marginal retentions in what was otherwise a termination of the founders' vision. And perhaps that's as it should be; perhaps Chancellor Sinsheimer was right to close down institutions that had outworn their inspirational vision. At one time those institutions had given this campus a comparative advantage consonant with its idyllic setting and its place within the largest and most distinguished public university in the world. In later years, these comparative advantages had turned into disadvantages. But which they were or might prove to be in the long run had by now become a moot point. Reorganization had seen to that.

More Reflections on UCSC as an Experiment in College Education

Reti: Today is Tuesday, January 28th, 2014. This is Irene Reti, and I am here for my third interview with George Von der Muhll. I wanted to start, George, by reading a quote from an article that was published in an anthology in 1984, which was a little bit after this period that we've been talking about.⁷

Von der Muhll: The book was about experiments in college education: different campuses, different programs that had been tried out. And there was a hope that, by matching those, one could reach some conclusions about workable strategies

⁷ Jones, Richard M, and Smith, Barbara Leigh, eds., *Against the Current: Reform and Experiment in Higher Education* (Schenkman Publishing Co, Cambridge, MA, 1984). Collection of essays from a 1980 conference at Evergreen State College. Includes George Von der Muhll, "The University of California at Santa Cruz: Institutionalizing Eden in a Changing World" (pp. 61-92).

for institutionalizing nonconventional, nontraditional forms of college education. The conference out of which this paper emerged was held up in Washington State at Evergreen College, which was founded by Dan Evans, the former governor of that state. He was a politically powerful patron, very protective of it and very committed to trying to make it different from the University of Washington. And the conference drew on that tradition, which was still thriving up there.

Reti: And it was a public university, Evergreen?

Von der Muhll: It was public, yes. So in many respects it could appropriately be seen as comparable to UC Santa Cruz, and the other participants in the conference were therefore shocked that my article—or rather, my talk, which became the article—was not encouraging about the attempt to maintain a very distinctive kind of academic program in a beautiful woodland setting on the shores of a Puget Sound or a Monterey Bay, well removed from the pressures of cities and other competing graduate and professional institutes. To be sure, Evergreen had been started a bit later than UC Santa Cruz, it had no graduate programs nor was it under any immediate pressure to have ones, its ties with the University of Washington were appreciably looser than those of UCSC as a campus within the University of California system, and it had as its head someone who had towered over the Washington political landscape for a decade or more and who had deployed his unrivaled political skills and connections in a way that McHenry (who, as you'll remember, had initially wanted to locate this campus in the Almaden Valley in San Jose so as to benefit from the protective support of five Assembly representatives) could only envy. Dan Evans was

indeed a very popular governor, and his personal commitment to the college he subsequently headed was extremely important. But the experimental nature of Evergreen College was not simply something on a former governor's agenda in his retirement years; it expressed his own highly personal determination to make sure that Evergreen and its utopian ventures didn't get derailed through being a subcampus of the University of Washington.

Reti: How did you end up being at this conference and presenting?

Von der Muhll: I don't know. I can no longer remember. I think I probably heard about it through something that arrived in the mail at a time when campus organization was very much on my mind as the chair of the CEP. I had never heard about Evergreen until then, but I could see at once that the two campuses had many significant parallels. Neither one was designed to be a small college with high tuitions, nor were they expected to reflect the religious values—Quaker, Congregational, Methodist—that so often inspired the founding of such colleges. Yet each campus had been founded by a particular individual—in Evergreen's case not as the political program of a governor of a state, but rather as the project of someone who held a vision similar to Kerr's and McHenry's—that is, who wished to recapture undergraduate education from the corporate multiversity model and demonstrate that a public educational institution could offer its students a liberal arts education that would resemble the superb standard established at America's best small private colleges.

So each of the utopian campuses discussed in the chapters of *Against the Current* differed in some significant ways from the experiment at Santa Cruz. Evergreen

provided the closest parallel; most of the other campuses seemed to be the somewhat quirky projects of a rich private donor. There have in fact been attempts to create a small liberal arts college in the midst of a large university on that same campus. I learned about one such case in the late 1960s when I was offered a job at the University of Michigan in the 1960s in a liberal arts college for some of the entry students admitted to the University of Michigan, but it was completely surrounded by a campus that was and remains one of the most high-powered and very professional, graduate-oriented campuses in the country. And, of course, various Ivy League universities started out as colleges before their increasing size and the German university model overtook them in the late nineteenth century, and, as I mentioned earlier, some of their best university faculty members do lecture in undergraduate classes as well. But these campuses did not and do not provide the same kind of autonomous environment for independent experimentation that Santa Cruz enjoyed in its early days as an isolated, individual campus with only a small graduate superstructure.

Reti: Okay. Well, why don't I read this quote from your article? And then we'll talk about it, and I'd like to hear also how your talk was received at the conference, itself. So you wrote, "Did Santa Cruz suffer from a loss of vision and loss of nerve by its leaders? Was that vision perhaps initially flawed and internally contradictory to begin with, or were the prospects of utopian reconstruction on a single campus, however ingeniously designed and unstintingly supported, always limited by its external environment more severely than its founders were willing to acknowledge?"

Von der Muhll: There's no question that if I had to choose just one of those three

explanatory alternatives, I would choose the last. Clearly there were some failures of leadership, certainly so by Mark Christensen. I have no doubt that his shortcomings, whatever his good intentions, proved critical at a time when the campus was heading toward a crisis. Who knows what might have happened under different circumstances? Similarly, the ways in which many faculty members failed to draw continuing inspiration from the initial vision for this campus or lost their nerve when there was talk of shutting down the most idiosyncratic campus of the University of California system became increasingly important factors. And I also feel that perhaps there were some internal contradictions in the vision—I shouldn't say, "perhaps there were"; there *were* some internal contradictions. The principles and design for this campus expressed great hopes that, I think, would have proved exceedingly difficult to realize even in a more supportive environment than Santa Cruz enjoyed by the late seventies. So I'm saying that I think that even with the best of leadership, there would have been serious problems that could not be ultimately overcome. The sustained tensions between the missions and demands of the colleges and boards of study, for example, were no accident of personality; they would have manifested themselves between and within any imaginable subsets of faculty and were therefore predictable.

But the fact that the early years of the campus were so successful had much to do with some very special circumstances that could not be expected to last indefinitely and that revealed how dependent the campus was on being able to occupy a very special environmental niche that could not be expected to last indefinitely. I've already talked about this point before, but I'd like to revert to it

once again.

Reti: Yes, please

Von der Muhll: One thing that I should say at the outset in getting into that topic is that one of the reasons I wanted to write this article was not simply that I wanted to review and record my own experiences here. What interested me more, at that point, was that I had become quite deeply immersed in the search for ways in which the development of a quasi-biological systemic analysis could be adapted to the generic study of social systems. As a political scientist, I was naturally disposed to be interested in the productive potential of such models for the study of political systems and the conditions and processes that can be predicted to lead to their disintegration. But as I began to identify the patterns underlying the design of this campus and how to construct systematic explanations for their final disintegration through Sinsheimer's reorganization, I began to think about what could be learned from telling the story in those terms. Since I have continued to draw on this model, modestly modified, in these interviews, it may be useful to restate, clarify, and make more explicit the model I used.

What I set out to show in my analysis was that the college-centered campus plan designed by Kerr and McHenry depended on maintaining certain conditions for its continuation. Some of those conditions were at least partly under their control, others were not, and in between the two were conditions dependent on obtaining and maintaining commitments by the chief participants in the life of the campus. My task as analyst was to identify the controlling patterns in the prescriptions of

the founders and then describe the interplay between the motives of the campus actors and the rules of the game the founders had prescribed for the campus that determined which strategies would enhance the chances of survival in that game and which would lead over time to the exit of actors who did not adhere to them, meanwhile giving due attention to the impact of a changing environment on the rules themselves.

This became, for me, the organizing theme throughout the entire article. It led me to focus on the challenges to campus participants of having to confront from the outset an environment that consisted, it seemed, of three parts. The first was the immediate, tangible environment for its individual members—the other members of the campus community as organized by the founders' institutional rules, physically and symbolically isolated and insulated by its encircling forests and meadows; then, in a wider circle, town-gown relations between the “city on a hill” and the relatively small mercantile and retirement community below.

Secondly came a more abstract environmental layer created by the network of rules and relations between UC Santa Cruz and the other campuses and central administration of the University of California. And finally, I needed to make conceptually shorthand references to the residual environment of economic, political, social, cultural, and ecological entities, bonds, and forces—the “outside world” of economic resources, fashions, theatrical imagery, beliefs, and transformations of nature—continuously influencing, creating opportunities for, and setting constraining conditions on the lives of campus members—in short, the encompassing society from which its members came and into which they would predictably, repeatedly return.

This depiction of three environments encircling individual members of UC Santa Cruz is, of course, purely schematic; it is neither true nor false, but only more or less useful in discussing the history of the campus in its early years. And I should probably note immediately an inherent ambiguity in the scheme: for individual faculty members and students, the remaining members of the campus and the institutional rules that governed it constituted a first environmental layer, whereas I often found reason in what I've been saying to treat the campus as a whole as a single entity confronting other units of the University of California system and the interpenetrating society "outside" them both. Even so, for certain purposes I have wanted to maintain a clear distinction between the transient individuals who have participated in the life of the campus and the institutions that gave UC Santa Cruz its form. After all, it is at the individual level that calculations and choices are initially made, and to speak otherwise, as I have repeatedly pointed out, is to impute a false unity to the campus as a whole and to ignore the many circumstances in which individual faculty, student, and even administrators' interests, ambitions, and strategies proved to be at odds with the demands being made on them by the chancellors, provosts, divisional deans, and board chairs in the hope of instituting and maintaining the collective institutional loyalties that were intended to give UCSC its distinctive aura.

I have already discussed at some length the growing disjunction between institutional rhetoric and individual choice at Santa Cruz. But what I have called for purposes of analysis the second environmental layer—one created for UC Santa Cruz as a whole through its membership in the University of California system—perhaps still deserves some emphasis. The significance of this

relationship may seem self-evident—its very title suggests as much, and the relationship can readily be sketched on one sheet of paper—and yet it seems to have been obscured when Chancellor McHenry’s former roommate Clark Kerr was president of the University of California and an enthusiastic co-participant with McHenry in drawing the outlines of a campus they had discussed as graduate students at Stanford that would retain the virtues of Swarthmore while growing to the size of UCLA. In retrospect, there would seem to be more ambiguity in Kerr’s celebrated formula—seeming small while growing big—than was allowed for in the early planning, and even beyond. To the end of his years as chancellor, McHenry spoke offhandedly about foreseeing a growth of this campus to some 27,000 students and expressed disappointment about its slow progress toward that figure—a vision so wildly at odds with that of anyone else on this campus, whether faculty member or student, as to make crediting it to him a difficult task. Even before he left, with a campus of barely 3,000 students, virtually all of them declared themselves ready to lie down in front of bulldozers or survive in trees in order to prevent cutting sacred glades of redwoods. And as newly enfranchised students and other ecologically sensitive voters became the mainstay of any successful campaign for local offices in Santa Cruz, the City Council began to ask hard questions about the massive traffic jams, increasingly expensive rentals, and demands for water that were already straining campus-city relations. And soon enough Chancellor Sinsheimer plunged himself into a fiery controversy with both townspeople and students by proposing to bring to campus certain high-powered research institutes unrelated to campus teaching programs that would inevitably increase pressure on space, water, and traffic.

These countercurrents soon placed subsequent chancellors in a dilemma that seemed impossible to resolve. On the one hand, most faculty and all students, strongly supported by city decision-makers, had grown accustomed to the happy equilibrium of a campus that seemed small because it *was* small. On the other, McHenry clearly understood that the legitimacy of a University of California campus in the eyes of both taxpayers and other University of California faculties and staffs depended on two core elements inconsistent with that vision—accommodation of the rapidly increasing number of students seeking an affordable education on a University of California campus, and the prestige of campuses with large graduate superstructures and research facilities. The UC President's Office took due note of the fact that McHenry's plans from the start had projected expansion within a decade or two to a size commensurate with the other campuses of the system; there had been no implication of a special exemption to remain small, whatever the impact of growth on the environment and on the intimacy of college-centered education. These pressures were all the more difficult to resist, whatever the grounds for doing so, inasmuch as state statutes gave the University of California the legal authority to override local resistance to the ecological consequences of an expanding student body.

Other UC campuses, as I've already noted, were disposed to contend that UC Santa Cruz's elite status was more a matter of internal perception than of international reputation of its graduate faculties' publicly recognized achievements. And the continuing upheavals at UCSC over leadership, reaggregation, reorganization, and a student lifestyle emphasizing radical liberal values and protests, combined with slow growth, quite evidently added to

external perceptions of UC Santa Cruz as one of the weakest links in the University of California chain.

Such attitudes could initially be shrugged off as reflecting conventionality, pettiness, impatience, perhaps even envy. To treat them so indefinitely, however, was risky. At some point, UCSC had to come to terms with the implications of being part of the University of California system, which, in spite of the student upheavals of the sixties, continued to enjoy its reputation as being, if not incontestably *the* leading publicly-supported university in the country, certainly one of two or three, along with, possibly, Michigan and North Carolina. This cherished reputation meant that its other members were not disposed to make radical changes in the standards of its university system as a whole to accommodate an innovatively bent new campus. They were willing to give it some leeway, but UCSC's experimental initiatives were inevitably constrained and judged within that environment, as were its decisions concerning tenure. I think that in the long run it was quite predictable that there was going to be a sustained divergence between the original dreams of Clark Kerr and Dean E. McHenry, on the one hand, and the long-run prospects of being a unit in the University of California system. Too often it was being said within influential circles that the high praise given to the University of California system as a whole was really a ranking concerning Berkeley. Santa Cruz, it was said, had some responsibility for demonstrating that such statements were unwarranted.

And then, finally, any analysis of the fate of the UCSC experiment has to take into account the impact of larger national currents within what I have called the outer layer of the environment. I think it was very clear that both Clark Kerr and

Dean McHenry had a truly utopian vision, a really quite magnificent vision in some respects. They wanted to offer students—students who qualified for a publicly-supported university with no tuition at that time— a demanding, very high-quality, richly integrative collegiate education such as was offered elsewhere in the country only in private institutions: the Swarthmores, the Oberlins, the Harvards and the Princetons—not to mention Oxford and Cambridge, to some extent. This is what they really wanted to do. They didn't simply want to make use of a blueprint that had been worked out on other campuses and reinstitute it here, simply with minor adjustments for geographical location and maybe one or two other features. They really had the hope that they could break with what seemed to be the channels elsewhere in the UC system that had been very firmly established and were still flowing in spite of the protests.

And that vision, I think, came, by the time the campus actually opened, in conflict with larger currents of American society. One of these was the war in Vietnam, which intensely politicized students and made them much less interested—even here, and certainly elsewhere—in rigorously classic academic objectives and much more eager to change American society as a whole or to react and rebel against it. It set the agenda for them much more powerfully than did the possibility of enjoying the privilege of attending a campus which offered them a curriculum similar to the curricula of places like Harvard and Yale and Princeton.

Coping with those external developments was obviously beyond the control of any one leader. What is certain, however, is that, in that environment, they put

stress almost immediately on a design embodying the vision of Kerr and McHenry before it had had time to become firmly institutionalized. All too clearly, their design had been drawn up in the context provided by the fifties and the very early sixties to rectify their academic and human-scale shortcomings yet was being implemented at a time when, for most students, studying Aristotle or the *Aeneid* might be interesting for a year or two, but only insofar as such studies could be shown to speak to the swiftly evolving subculture generated by rock music and drugs of various kinds, or, alternatively, as a critique of an evil societal environment dominated by corporations that needed to be defied. Moreover, middle-class white students from Los Angeles and San Jose quickly came to sense missing or that they were very much aware of missing cadres within the student body of their new campus. Where were the African Americans? Where were the children of the field hands around here? What courses spoke to the pressing concerns of women?

Those seemed, to rapidly increasing numbers of students at UCSC, to be the most the most salient issues in their environment, and they soon set an agenda that had had no clear place in the founding plans for this campus. That agenda has persisted to this day, but it was soon joined by concerns growing out of the other major change that occurred in the national environment in the mid-seventies. When jobs were no longer assured, students had to begin asking hard questions: what can we learn on this campus which will make it likely that we can find some kind of paying job in the institutions that understand what we had learned, and what skills we could offer, as distinct from what kinds of exposure did we have to the liberal arts?

There are always some firms that recognize that a liberal arts education can be very useful, but they're relatively rare. I do recall that the son of a landlord of mine at Harvard was a philosophy major, but he needed a job. So he went to Wall Street for interviews, and he was asked in one of them, "Where's your economics degree? That's what we expect on Wall Street." He replied, "Have you ever had a philosopher in your organization?" "No, that's interesting. What might we learn from that?" And he made a persuasive case to the effect that maybe somebody who had a broad education in philosophy could learn the techniques and some of the mathematical formulae of Wall Street but frame them in the larger issues of where social and intellectual currents were taking the entire society.

But such incidents were rare, and students, without necessarily being materialist at all or wanting to get ahead in those terms, really did have to worry about the changing economic climate. It was no longer one in which anyone could say to them, "Don't worry. When you're through being an undergraduate here, you can go on to a graduate university, or you can go out and travel around the world for a couple of years, and then you can look around for some jobs in which you can apply the perspectives you acquired from the liberal arts degree you earned at UCSC." So when high school counselors and others told them, "Go to Santa Cruz and you'll go to a place which is in outer space" (Laughter) "that doesn't give grades and just see what happens when people find out that you can't fail there." "What," you'll be asked, "do you actually know how to do besides playing computer games?"

So those were the three environmental layers encircling students and faculty at

UCSC. The first—*isolation in an idyllic glade*—initially encouraged attachment to all that seemed excitingly distinctive and different at this campus. This attachment, in turn, became problematic because, for all the initially stimulating invitations to teach outside one's field and enjoy the interdisciplinary interchanges within a college setting, this campus remained a subsystem unit within the University of California and could not afford to ignore indefinitely the inter-systemic implications of that fact. But the third, outer layer of that environment—the macro-systemic societal environment that enveloped all of the University of California—had a particularly ominous significance for UC Santa Cruz because of the inflexibility of the attachments to specific elements of its design—*colleges, narrative evaluations*—that have typically made it much harder for utopian institutions to adjust their form to take on new missions when adverse data signal the need for change.

My other proposition was that the model of rational choice that economists rely on to analyze economic transactions can also help to explain the transformation of Santa Cruz to meet the new conditions for survival. Rational-choice analysts have warned for some time against the common mistake of inferring the goals of members of an organization from the nominal goals of the organization of which they are members. It follows that analysts should not expect to predict correctly the choices that members of an organization will make and the strategies they will pursue by identifying what choices and strategies will most efficaciously and efficiently advance the proclaimed objectives of the organization of which they are members; rather, they should focus on identifying the goals and strategies they should make if they wish to survive—that is, remain—within the

organization, or, alternatively what strategies they should pursue if they wish to exit from the organization at some point on maximally advantageous terms for themselves. The art of successful organizational management for chief executives who do identify the success of the organization with their own success therefore consists of arranging organizational incentives and disincentives within their organization, so that its members, in pursuing their own goals, will likewise maximally advance the goals of the organization of which they are a part.

Chancellor McHenry showed considerable insight into this mode of thinking as he laid out the principles by which this campus was to be governed. He did not make the mistake of laying down the rules by which the campus institutions he wished to promote would be governed, then relying on justifying his objectives in speeches and exhorting a miscellaneous pool of faculty to devote their time and energy to attaining them. Instead, he started by recruiting, as we have seen, three very special types of faculty. He first sought out senior scholars—rather often, British—who no longer had as their overriding goal in life making a name for themselves through a continuing stream of publications in their discipline but who were experienced in institution-building and institutional management and who had showed a flair and enthusiasm for it on terms compatible with his vision. He then turned his search to the opposite end of the scholarly spectrum by seeking to recruit young scholars who appeared to be more in search of an exciting new educational venture than in climbing the well-marked ladder of career advancement in their discipline. Finally, as I've already noted, he sought to entice notable scholars to this campus whose major works were a thing of the past, but whose reputations would add luster to the campus and facilitate further

recruitment. What these three types had in common was the absence of indications that they would place personal advancement of their careers or relentless pursuit of a research objective above responsiveness to the organizational signals of a new and utopian campus.

Within this context he had some reason to hope that the institutional incentives over which he had some control would achieve their desired end. He therefore took great care in how incentives to elicit commitments consonant with his design were distributed—most notably, through giving colleges control over 50 percent of faculty salaries, the right to demand two quarter courses from each faculty member that would create a dossier for promotional decisions in which both a college committee and the provost would have a say, and a willingness in early such decisions to give heavy weight to a record of contributions to institution-building. As we have seen, none of these incentives sufficed to maintain faculty loyalty to the college system. On the contrary, the resultant heavy demands on faculty time and the duplicative processes leading to built-in conflicts with the boards of studies became prime factors behind faculty support for abandoning the college-centered system altogether through Chancellor Sinsheimer's reorganization.

An important question to ask is why the careful, self-conscious, sophisticated planning that went into the design of the UC Santa Cruz campus did not prove sufficient to maintain its viability. A general answer to this question might be that the founders' design for the campus depended heavily on the continuance of numerous favorable conditions over which the founders had little or no control, and that this dependence rendered their design more vulnerable than they had

realized or—arguably—*could* have realized. In essence, its success depended heavily on faculty members who were not primarily concerned about attaining a reputation in the larger world through a stream of publications of recognized significance within their fields, and on students who continued to be enchanted by the vision of getting an education very different from the one that other people they knew were getting in Berkeley and elsewhere. These conditions, in turn, were linked to an economy that generated sufficient revenue to avoid zero-sum competition among UC campuses for a shrinking pot and that freed students from concern over heavy educational debt burdens and future employability. And to a greater degree than Kerr and McHenry were willing to admit, the prospects for continued acceptance of their college-centered design appear to have depended on maintaining a relatively small total size to the campus—a proposition of great importance in light of predictable and ultimately irresistible pressures for enlarging its base.

If looked at in those terms, I think it becomes fairly clear that reliance on an unchangingly supportive environment was a highly contingent proposition. It depended upon both students' and faculty's being disconnected from the pressures that were routine in almost all academic institutions even in the mid-sixties and, I think, predictable in their effect. Most of the people who were drawn here came from campuses that had a very different orientation from Santa Cruz. Many of them found it initially stimulating to be here and to be offered options that they were not offered anywhere else. But in the long run, they were, to an important extent, products of those other institutions. Therefore it was predictable over time that they would grow restive about the special demands

placed on them.

Any sustained chronological review of the history of the UC campus points strongly to the dilemma of creating a framework within which faculty and students were to operate that was designed for an expanding campus and yet would be undermined by that expansion, that was dependent for its success on an unchangingly favorable environment while predictably altering that environment. UC Santa Cruz *had* to expand. No publicly supported institution, no campus within the University of California system, could decline to grow. No campus that was a member of the top research university system in the world could continuously discourage its faculty from pursuing excellence along these lines in order to secure their services in constructing and maintaining collegiate institutions. No such campus could continue putting Aristotle, Alexander, and Aristophanes at the core of its curriculum when the ratio of qualified literature teachers to paid positions in high schools and community colleges exceeded 100/1. The Kerr-McHenry dream of the 1950s had now become the victim of its own success.

J. Herman Blake

In these interviews, I have persistently focused on the revealed shortcomings of the college-centered system that was the centerpiece of Dean McHenry's founding plan for this campus. In fairness, to restore some needed balance to this theme, I should bring up one case in which the college system provided an indispensable vehicle for attaining the campus goal of facilitating the secure and successful entry of students from "nontraditional" families into unfamiliar

academic precincts. I shall do so through a brief look at the strategies and achievements of former Provost Herman Blake of Oakes College.⁸

I'm a great admirer of Herman Blake. I know he was a difficult person. He asked for exemption from a lot of the constraints that affected other colleges and other faculty members, and he got his way, in part, because nobody really wanted to stand in the way of a very prominent and rhetorically magnificent African American, so he got away with a fair amount.

But, all said, Herman was a true marvel, I thought, in making all of us understand that if we really wanted to bring students from nontraditional families to campuses, we couldn't just plunk down the students in front of the kinds of courses that most state universities demand and leave them to sink or swim. He didn't at all suggest steering such students to "soft" courses—quite the contrary. What he did want to do was to provide a sensitive, safe, and supportive social environment for students who had never set foot on a college campus before and who felt as unsettled as any of us would in traversing a wholly unfamiliar environment with no guideposts to what other students would take for granted. The challenge, as Herman understood it, was to find new ways of connecting students to tough, demanding courses that would provide students with the skills needed to take on highly competitive courses when their high school experience, in many cases, had included peddling drugs in their corridors, or not peddling drugs and being endangered by the police who were sweeping in to get the drug peddlers, and always being housed in shabby schools amid

⁸ See Cameron Vanderscoff, Interviewer and Editor, *Look'n M' Face and Hear M' Story": An Oral History with Professor J. Herman Blake* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2014). Available in full text and audio at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/blake>

second-rate materials. He gave a great deal of thought to that, and he concluded that transition courses were crucial to that end. I thought that's where the college system could really function well, because there's nothing about a departmental structure that assures that there will be an imaginative outreach to students who come from families where the father is often not in the house, and where the mother, if she's there at all, will nevertheless be having to work all day long to support three children and won't have time to read to them or for helping them with the "New Math" she has never had the opportunity to learn. So the college became a very natural unit for creating that kind of introductory course.

Reti: Doubling back to what we talked about at the end of the last interview, since you were involved in reorganization, and I know that Oakes College was an exception to the reorganization.

Von der Muhll: That's right. Well, Herman Blake was very clear in articulating a full vision of what Oakes College could perform that no other college on campus was equipped to perform and that it had a very distinctive constituency. It had a constituency which needed to be challenged by the demands of the college course curriculum, but it needed an unusually heavy component of staff assistance because of the many, many ways in which students were not prepared by their previous school experience and home life for a college program.

And they had to handle also—and here, I thought he was very astute. One notion for dealing with students from various non-traditional backgrounds was to teach them in their own field—Mexican Americans should go to a Latin American studies program. Herman really wanted to resist that. He wanted to get them to

the point of having the freedom of choice to say, "I have learned that I am just as competent as any white in mathematics, and so I'm going to major in math." Or "I can do serious research in physics. There's no reason why I have to spend four years here learning about the injustices inflicted on us. I know plenty about that already."

There certainly is a reason, on the other hand, why a staff is needed that can be a highly sensitive to those issues. For instance, when African-American students suddenly disappeared without warning, Herman and his staff would go up to Oakland and haul people back to campus had become discouraged, or who had been under too much pressure from their families to channel all their scholarship money to their family. He would go in and fetch them and bring them back again and say, "Don't quit! I've too much faith in the talent you've shown around Oakes to let you just slip away," which I thought was marvelous. The collegiate design of this campus seemed to me, very well suited to dealing with the human problems of helping students to decide who they were and what they could do.

The converse of that was, on the other hand, I felt that the special advantages of this campus probably were more readily directed to people who were in the fields right outside in Watsonville, who could easily be brought here, who could live at home, even, and study here. A heavy emphasis on where Herman was coming from, namely Oakland, raised the question: Why doesn't [UC] Berkeley do it? Because students could conceivably live in their homes in Oakland and study in Berkeley.

And coming here, they saw a country club. The biggest problem of racism on this

campus was really not the crazy monsters who occasionally scrawl some insulting thing on a bathroom wall about Blacks and so on. Rather, it came, according to Herman himself, from wealthy whites from Los Angeles just being themselves. Such problems came about simply from day-to-day life in the dormitories, where people were talking about the hot new stereo set they bought, and a student from a poor home in Oakland couldn't help but think, "I couldn't possibly buy one like that, so I'm different from this person. This person has no real understanding of what it means not to have enough money to buy the latest stereo set." Or now, no doubt, it would be some new product from Apple, and so on down the line, although a lot of things have changed since those days.

But it struck me that departments are not set up to say to students, "You do belong on this campus. You may come from a home where nobody has any idea of what goes on in college, let alone which course to pick in college or the importance of doing systematic homework when it isn't a simple assignment in school that you bring in tomorrow, but to get to work on a thesis which requires ten weeks to work on." The students I taught at Makerere College in Africa had the same problem of trying to explain to their parents why they couldn't be expected to spend all their time at home looking after younger children or a heard of goats, but nearly all had the same problems, whereas here the gap in affordable lifestyles could be overpowering. So a college staff sensitive to these stresses could prove far more helpful in keeping disadvantaged students from pulling out in despair than any academic board of studies.

So I think Herman was properly exempted from some of the changes we made [during reorganization]. I'm less convinced, as I said, that in the long run the

distinctive curricula of this campus ought to have been controlled by the desire to bring in large numbers of nontraditional students. It was swimming up river, in the sense that it was so isolated from the communities from which so many non-traditional students had come

But there's another side to these problems as well. One of the most disheartening episodes I ever witnessed on this campus was given rise to by its sometimes excessive focus, not on the whole student, but the student as a categorical victim. It occurred when—I will not mention [the] name here—I watched how a college provost dealt with a group of students from “nontraditional” families in Oakland who had been brought here by the UC Santa Cruz outreach program and were being shown around our campus by a very lively, yet thoughtful young staff assistant in the hope of getting them to consider the possibility of studying here.

The students were excited and bubbling over about what they'd seen. They were quite obviously and audibly thrilled by the beauty of the campus and the warmth of the reception they had received here. But then this provost met with them and he told them repeatedly, “This campus may look pretty to you, but it's stiff with racism. It's racist at every turn. You have to expect that you will encounter students and faculty who have no interest in you and no understanding of your background or anything like that. I myself am a leading example of someone who has victimized because of my ethnic background,” (a surprising statement since it came from someone who had seemed to many observers to be a primary beneficiary of it). At that point, I just saw—if you have ever seen a balloon deflate—I saw something like that in their faces. Suddenly what they were hearing was not, “This is a place for you, and you can find

unknown strengths in yourself here through experiences that will be different from staying in Oakland and commuting to Berkeley.” Instead, they were being told, “It’s going to be more of the same, and you should learn to live with. ”The young man who had been leading them around came up to me afterwards and said, “Who is that guy? “We have spent two years working to bring these students here, and in fifteen minutes he has destroyed everything.” He was furious, and I understood why he was.

My purpose is not to revive old anecdotes or grievances, but to say that there was and perhaps still is a real challenge in bringing students here, and I’m not sure that our comparative advantage lay in bringing highly urban students to this pastoral campus. I think reaching out to Watsonville is [an] entirely different issue. I’m speaking of other groups from more urban communities.

Originally the whole idea of Kerr and McHenry was indeed to give students an isolated environment in which they would be engaged in the privilege of getting the kind of education you can get at the Ivy League colleges from the outset. But later we had to deal, and very appropriately had to deal, as well with the changed expectations of the University of California as a whole, that assigned much greater importance to finding ways of incorporating groups that had previously been systematically discouraged from seeking a college education. This campus might have been a great Princeton in its a first years, but shifting to becoming the leading campus of the University of California for dealing with the many different disadvantaged ethnicities and races raised different kinds of challenges to the extent that coming here involved becoming so cut off so sharply from more familiar communities. But Oakes College shows what could be done,

at its best, I think.

Reti: It's quite remarkable.

Von der Muhll: But it was swimming upstream.

Reti: It took the vision of someone as strong, as brilliant, and charismatic and visionary as Herman Blake to pull that off.

Von der Muhll: That's right. I went to his family in South Carolina, in Charleston, and I saw there a father who had been a taxi driver in New York City, who had saved his money and then moved to South Carolina, a state with one of the lowest costs of living in the country, knowing well the overt racism he would encounter, but deciding that he could learn to withstand it in order to assist and insist that all his children get graduate degrees. And he did. Every one of the six children of that taxi driver got graduate degrees. I met them all one morning, and they took me around downtown Charleston. It was rather amusing to me when they cheerfully said, "Let us show you this city. Our family's ancestors were among its oldest inhabitants, though not voluntarily so." And they showed me Charleston wasn't merely a city of handsome old houses that I had seen on a previous trip but also a city of slave market and Confederate armories dedicated to preserving that way of life.

But what mattered most to me was finding out that Herman Blake had a father who said, "Don't simply focus on your grievances or the implications of being Black. Aspire to get graduate degrees that will free you to be a fully participant member of any part of American society you want to be in." I thought that

Herman really understood the wisdom and full meaning of his father's injunction in a way that few others could—certainly not I, who had a college professor of French literature for a father and a “bluestocking” mother who was a PhD candidate at the University of Chicago in an era when such women were very rare, and for whom attending college had seemed predestined from the time of my earliest years in Princeton. Herman's family was remarkable indeed.

Colleges and Universities

Oakes was special. But the other colleges were not based on the special characteristics of their student clientele. This difference leads to an important question: Why, despite all the early enthusiasm for core courses in Cowell, Stevenson, and Merrill, were they dropped so quickly? Why cut them from two years to one quarter?

Reti: Why? Because of student pressure?

Von der Muhll: A combination of student pressure and diminished interest by some faculty. Because we have to get finally to what Kerr and McHenry could not ultimately deal with, which is not only that faculty members were thoroughly socialized before they came here by the outside academic world, but there was a reason why they chose physics rather than biology. There was a reason why they chose to be economists rather than anthropologists. And those reasons began to resurface after they had some experience of making contributions to a vision of an experimental curriculum and an experimental community.

At some point, many of them felt a pull back to what they wanted. And if they didn't feel a pull-back, then, as I've said many times in different settings, they would face the outside world. I think neither Kerr nor McHenry adequately faced the question of what to do if faculty members come up for tenure and they have been spending their time building institutions and relating to other faculty members in very different disciplines, hardly seeing the other members of their own discipline, and an off-campus University of California committee member or two then comes in to sit on a committee evaluating the faculty member's claim for tenure in the University of California system.

There was, in fact, no way around that problem, except the suggestion by Page Smith that we try to guarantee tenure at the outset and isolate ourselves from the rest of the University of California. That was not a workable proposal, and any younger faculty member who took that seriously was going to be placed in significant jeopardy.

Both Kerr and McHenry were worldly people, and they certainly knew what the criteria were for holding one's job, as distinct from those for entering such jobs. How could they ever have hoped or wished to set aside the standards for tenure that being a member of the University of California system implied?

Reti: That is the \$64,000 question that sometimes preoccupies me.

Von der Muhll: I had no answer for that. I do not know how they could have—

But this question leads to larger questions. Any traverse of the history of the campus brings one up against a series of dilemmas introduced by the founders'

rules and institutions. I have already noted several of them. Parallel personnel committees were essential to maintaining some hold over college members but split faculty loyalties while doubling their workload. Developing graduate programs was essential for campus prestige but also threatened to reintroduce excessive dominance of undergraduate curricula and faculty loyalties. Rapid expansion was essential to meet taxpayer expectations and external criteria for success but heightened conflict between the campus and the city as well as with its own students. In the United States of America, institutional vitality is typically measured by actual expansion of an institution's size or the number of qualified applicants it passes over and turns away; on UCSC's campus, student satisfaction was a function of the size of classes.

Over time, these dilemmas could be seen as subordinate elements of a larger issue: was UCSC to be known primarily to the outside world as an excellent and innovative set of colleges, or as a respectable but middle-rank university. In principle, Kerr and McHenry had contended that such issues posited a false dichotomy: UCSC would grow big but still seem small because of its colleges. But over time that saying began to lose credibility. Visibility was very much part of the ranking game. I don't think it's a particularly good game. But the point is not whether it's a good game or a bad game, but whether it is an entrenched game, or one for which one can somehow alter the rules. When I told my colleagues that I was planning to leave Chicago for the University of California, Santa Cruz, several of them said, "Why do you want to go the University of Santa Clara?" Most of us academics don't want to be asked such questions too often.

The University of California said that, as one of its campuses, UCSC was a university and that its standards for tenure, its rate of expansion and the national and international attention given to its research findings should be determinative of its character. On the other hand, the institutional innovations, that seemed to the outside world to give UCSC its character, seemed to say that it was aspiring to be a Swarthmore in the woods. The campus was therefore beginning to run the risk of being perceived as neither fish nor fowl. When I was at Oberlin College, it was clearly understood that most of its faculty were there to teach students. They lived in nice houses off campus, nice big houses and so on. But their lives centered on their students.

Reti: It's not a research university.

Von der Muhll: It's not a research university, exactly. And a lot of the people who came here—for example, my own politics department—a lot of us were graduates of Oberlin and Swarthmore. We could easily relate to what McHenry and Kerr said. It was very easy to grow excited by the vision that I certainly was pulled in by, but it really is different from the demands of a[n] educational institution, which is differentiated from the other layers of the educational system of the public universities and colleges that we're in. A research university has definite implications for the careers one follows, the quality or at least the number of publications one is expected to produce, the degree of time to be put into research for innovative teaching, as against for the publications and the documentation of findings and so on in one's field.

I don't see how they could have hoped to break the hold of these conflicting

expectations. It's one thing to say there is a potential for too much deference to external perceptions in such judgments and that's what was alienating students, and they were right there. It's another thing to say that one can hope, in the long run, to keep the system going without acknowledging that there are certain demands that have to be met somehow, and if they aren't met, either people will leave the campus, or the campus itself will be in jeopardy. I think we have something to offer in transitions, as I mentioned. I think there still is a lingering sense that our courses will be more imaginative and that there'll be the generation of new attempts to create interdisciplinary disciplines like American studies, which I think was quite a natural evolution. The world is not designed so as to guarantee that any one strategy will consistently work. But continued ambiguity as to its character is not an ambiguity that UC Santa Cruz can afford to tolerate indefinitely.

A Noble Experiment

In this long series of interviews I set myself the challenge of accounting for the transformation of this campus from one that had been launched, a few short years before I arrived, with vaulting aspirations and glittering external reviews, into one that was obliged but also saw fit to shed its most noteworthy institutions in order to survive. Over the next several decades UC Santa Cruz has established itself as a respectable and respected campus of the University of California, blessed with its unmatched sylvan setting and to this day a most agreeable place in which to pursue teaching and research of high quality. Despite occasional protest demonstrations incited by the high costs of a college education even at a publicly supported university, its students seem generally appreciative of their

surroundings and their classes, and the administrative staffs have maintained from its earliest days intangible qualities of personal concern and responsiveness that mark them off from the disgruntled placeholders of large and impersonal corporate bodies.

Taken together, these are qualities that provide daily reminders of the potential privileges of membership in an American academic community. But the founders of this campus brought with them a more ambitious agenda. They presented UC Santa Cruz to the world as an antidote to the desiccation and fragmentation of university education throughout this country and abroad, and the world listened. Journalists, novelists, and philosophers came to observe the regeneration of the human spirit not only in its classrooms, but in its ancillary farm gardens and arboretum, its rejection of big time commercial sports in favor of lifelong athletic skills, its celebration of continuous innovation and experimentation in its college-centered communities and search for truth in the company of friends. Santa Cruz asked to be judged less by its immediate achievements, than by its self-presentation as a model that challenged even such conventionally successful and prestigious institutions as Berkeley, Stanford, and Harvard.

That is a role that UCSC can no longer plausibly claim, nor does it seek to do so. I have sought to chart some of the crucial decisions and critical turning points that removed it from consideration in this light. But seeking to account for this trajectory by spotlighting the internal dilemmas of its design and its vulnerability to external pressures tends to raise, perhaps too forcefully, the question of why such worldly and experienced figures as Clark Kerr and Dean McHenry had ever

embarked on a venture so likely to fail, and even more, why they should have thought that its distinguishing features could last amid the turbulent currents of American society. These questions acquire additional edge insofar as a major factor in the derailment of UCSC's more striking institutional innovations can be traced to the constraining and conflicting implications of its membership within the University of California, an entity intimately familiar to both men. Educational innovation in America has most often occurred either as a projection in small private colleges of a wealthy founder's dream, or in well-endowed, luminous universities like Harvard, anchored by over three hundred years of tradition. UC Santa in 1965 and subsequently, was neither of these.

Questions of this nature are not easily answered, and I am not confident that they have an answer. Nevertheless, it seems to me that UC Santa Cruz, as conceived by Kerr and McHenry, was a truly noble experiment, very much worth undertaking, and its failure in these terms has elements of nobility as well. Its college system was an affirmation of the right and potential capability of creative specialists to try out established approaches in new fields and to recover enthusiasm for proceeding along roads not taken in their highly pressured past. It fostered collaboration in new ventures without necessarily any sacrifice of professional growth in the disciplines to which they still hoped to make important contributions. Colleges provided a venue for possibly serendipitous contacts and, in any case, a challenge to an American work ethic that held fellowship to be incompatible with achievement and affected to despise as sentimental the Platonic advocacy of pursuing truth in the company of friends. Their search for thematic identity invited reflections transcending catalog

classifications and the quest for a donor. The Narrative Evaluation System exposed how much information was lost in using a single symbol convey to an outside world the multidimensional qualities of a student's performance.

This list could as clearly be critiqued, as it could be extended. At this point I shall not attempt to do either. I wish only to suggest that when impeccable intentions and imaginative restructuring nevertheless lead to failure, the pathway to that conclusion may often instruct us as much as identification of causal elements in an acknowledged success.

Hindsight, as has often been remarked, embodies twenty-twenty vision. I think we can be grateful that Kerr and McHenry lacked a clear understanding of just how much of a risky experiment their long-held dream of a campus really was, and how many of the crucial factors in the demise of their model were simply beyond the control of the founders, whether it be membership in the university, or the change in society, and what happens at that point when one is still establishing the ways in which Santa Cruz is special without being able to draw, as Harvard can, on its three hundred years as a university and a halo effect on all members of its faculty that permits it to go right on teaching the liberal arts to students who are not terribly worried about whether they will be sacrificing the chance to get a job if they go to Harvard.

At any rate, that's why I somewhat sadly conclude that this campus isn't what the founders really wanted it to be. But it certainly is not a place that I myself have ever regretted coming to. And I should think that for many people it gave them a degree of freedom which they could never have found on another

campus. Certainly in my case, I found that I could remake my whole—I've taught in every one of the twelve segments of political science. I'd started out, before I went abroad to study—mainly in the history of political philosophy. Then I became a specialist in Europe after the war and before the war, the events leading up to the war, the politics of Europe. After working in Congress, I specialized in American politics. I taught constitutional law and public administration. And I came to this campus and found that what truly interested me was the use of literature in the study of politics and the non-Western world, the whole non-Western world, which I taught myself, and so on.

Where else in the United States could somebody have the freedom to move and have an institution that didn't ask hard questions as long as one came out with some publications and they were of high quality? For some rare people, of which I was, it was an immense privilege to be here. But one cannot construct a large organization based on the fact that some special, peculiar kinds of people can find a thoroughly enjoyable niche and be delighted to be here. [Laughter.] One really has to constitute it with some reference to what a group of people are likely to do and likely to want, not in the first and founding years but ten, twenty, thirty years later.

Reti: What year did you retire, George?

Von der Muhll: I was part of the famous VERIP [voluntary early retirement] in the early 1990s. I just qualified. I continued to teach here for another five or six years. But I took formally retirement in 1994. I timed my birth just right. I qualified by three months for all the special privileges that were rained down on

those who retired early.

Reti: Okay. Well, is there anything else you want to talk about?

Von der Muhll: I think I have covered most things, unless you have further questions.

Reti: No. This was an in-depth, fascinating, and perceptive analysis of that time period, and I think it will be very useful to researchers. I really appreciate your coming back to talk with us again after [laughter] thirty-five years!

Von der Muhll: Yeah. [Laughter.]

Reti: It's quite something.

Von der Muhll: Yeah. [Laughs.] It is strange to look back that far.