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University of California  
Berkeley, California

Norman Jacobson  
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL THEORY

Interview conducted by  
Lisa Rubens  
in 1999

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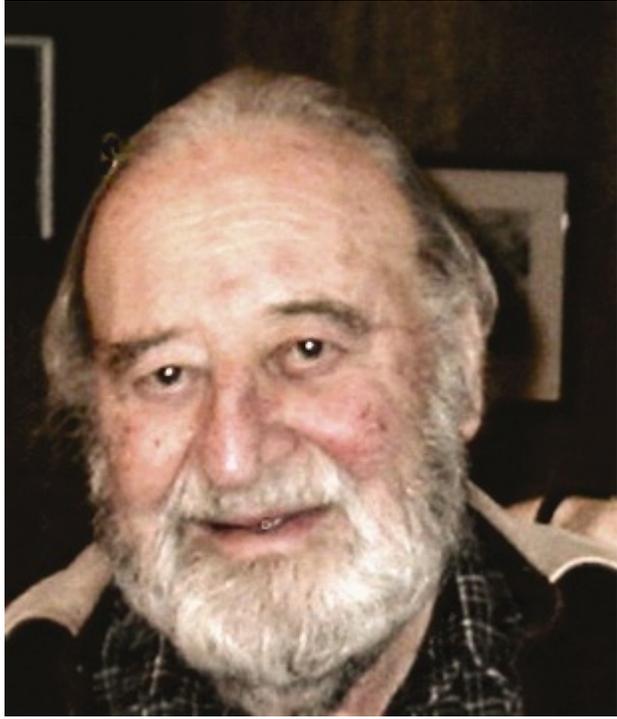
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Norman Jacobson, 1922—2007

**Interview 1: August 12, 1999 ##<sup>1</sup>**

Rubens: I am interviewing Norman Jacobson in his summer office in Barrows Hall. And we're here to talk about the Free Speech Movement.

Jacobson: Okay. What I would be particularly interested in talking about is the physical and administrative environment and the changes that had occurred between 1951, when I came here, and 1964. I have tried to press that on my colleagues. I have had several meetings over the past couple of years with Clark Kerr, who's writing his memoirs, and nobody really wants to know about that. People are more interested in who betrayed whom, why didn't people listen to me, and so forth. What interests me about it—and it did at the time, but in retrospect even more—was the fact that the University of California was undergoing enormous changes. Those changes were having their effects all over the campus and people weren't paying particular attention to them at all.

Rubens: And when you say "people"—

Jacobson: Faculty and students—reflecting what was going on in various ways—most of them in a sense of growing alienation. Let me indicate what I mean. In 1951 when I came to Berkeley, there was no chancellor at the university, there was a president—President Sproul—who, though a laughing-stock among the faculty because he was not an academic and therefore he was not our equal at all—. He had started in the administration, I believe, as an office boy and worked his way up and became president. He was a presence. He was on the campus all the time. The first time I met him, he had been briefed apparently, because he knew where I had done my graduate work—

Rubens: Which was?

Jacobson: Wisconsin. He knew my name. He knew the names of so many students, I couldn't believe it. He had lunch at the faculty club every day, and so people talked with him all the time. He had the enormous respect of the laymen and, in effect, a wannabe for faculty, so that he tended in most cases to defer to the faculty. And the faculty had for the twenty years before he became president, or fifteen years, a very strong voice through the Academic Senate—which incidentally was established and abetted by the man for whom this building is named: David Barrows, who was a general—the same kind of thing. He also was Ph.D. in political science and chairman of the political science department and president of the university for a period of time.

Well, in the fifties, this place grew enormously. I believe I was the twelfth or thirteenth member of the department in 1951. By 1964, which is our issue, there were, I believe, over forty of us, and this was reflected throughout the campus. Funds were

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<sup>1</sup> This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

available, people were being appointed right and left, departments were being established and reestablished. For example, when I came here there was no department of sociology. There was the department of sociology and social institutions—essentially an historically oriented department rather than a socialscientifically oriented department. That changed. There was a building program that—you know, you walk around here now and it's hard to imagine what this place looked like almost fifty years ago. Of course Barrows Hall was not here.

Rubens: Where were you literally?

Jacobson: And this is an important thing. We were in South Hall. Opposite the Campanile. The second oldest building on the campus, and the oldest in terms of surviving buildings. We were in that red brick ivy-covered building: political science, sociology and social institutions, economics, business administration, and journalism.

Rubens: Amazing. [chuckles]

Jacobson: Some of us had our studies in the building—I did—but the majority had their offices in Wheeler Hall. The corridors were very wide and jammed with people—students and faculty. And there was always a game going on, especially because there were so many new faculty members. People were becoming acquainted with each other and breaking down into groups.

I belonged to a Young Turk group which included people in psychology, sociology, and history and so on and we would meet at least once a week at the Faculty Club.

Rubens: When you said games earlier—and we can come back to this because I know we're leading up to something—did you mean, “Hi, how are you” or a pecking order?

Jacobson: No, no, much more intellectual playfulness.

Rubens: Okay.

Jacobson: Sometimes it would take me a half an hour to walk from the political science office to the front door because I'd meet people and there was always something going on. It was an amazingly exciting—

Rubens: Lively.

Jacobson:—lively atmosphere. And most of us had not established ourselves, and therefore you had this kind of bazaar of young, energetic, searching people looking for things to do and people to do it with.

Rubens: Was there some discussion of what was going on in the political world outside?

Jacobson: Always, always. And of course, I should point out that the fifties on the campus were dominated by the Cold War, the McCarthy business. On one occasion one of my

colleagues who was on a yearly contract didn't have his contract renewed by the Regents because of charges that were made against him by HUAC, and the next time I saw him he was at Ed Hunolt's bookstore selling books.

Let me say something else to indicate the kind of atmosphere. When that happened to him, he had two children in college, and now he was cut off from his income. I asked him what he was going to do and he told me—there is a Regent named Ed Heller, and Ed had a mother named Googie. Did you ever come across her?

Rubens: I knew the other—his wife Eleanor who was on the board.

Jacobson: After he died, she—

Rubens: She took his place.

Jacobson: Yes. And they had given some five million dollars to build up the political science department, in particular, and other social science departments, and that's how we all got here.

Now he told me that their mother—that this was a wealthy German Jewish family like the Haases and the Hearsts and the Zellerbachs and the other people that contributed to the university. She was supporting the kids through college. Now that's an atmosphere—it might have been paternalistic, but people were certainly in touch with each other and concerned about what was happening to others.

Rubens: And it was not just an ivory tower.

Jacobson: No, no.

Rubens: I think that's what you've communicated well.

Jacobson: With this enormous influx of faculty, and with the immanent departure of Sproul, it was thought necessary that a chancellor be appointed, and most of us were delighted that Clark Kerr was chosen. We had great respect for him, for his intelligence and his integrity. And in the fifties, actually, I on several occasions worked for him. I contributed to his inaugural address. I served as his alternate on President Eisenhower's Commission on Intergovernmental Relations in Washington in 1954-55. Then, after he became president, I served on Kerr's advisory council for the Fund for the Republic. We established the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara.

Well, Kerr was appointed, and the drive was underway—Kerr's a very ambitious person—for a truly statewide university.

Rubens: You were for this?

Jacobson: Yes, the reason that I supported Kerr so strongly was because I liked him and I respected him and because I felt that it was important to have an academic person in charge of the university. And that's what we all thought.

Rubens: So are you initiating your relationship when you helped write the address, when you served as the alternate? Are you suggesting this to him? Is it mutual, or does he come to you?

Jacobson: He comes to me. Kerr, before he became chancellor, was the director of the Institute of Industrial Relations. The associate director was a man named Lloyd Fisher. Lloyd Fisher was a close friend of mine. I came here, and Fisher, who was—his field was political theory. He had done his work at Harvard and was an extraordinary fellow, culturally accomplished, brilliant. And Kerr relied on him very heavily and thought very highly of him. And it was through Lloyd that I got into that relationship with Clark Kerr.

But that's not what's important; what's important is that the campus was building—was being rebuilt—and at least a half dozen new research institutes were established. The directors often, as in the case of the Survey Research Center, which was run by a political scientist—they were often referred to as “the shop”—brought me back to my childhood in New York City. That is, the campus was also being reconfigured by people like myself who would never have been professors, never would have gone to graduate school if it weren't for World War II. We came out of it, were given the GI Bill, and those of us who were drawn to the universities were drawn for the kind of traditional, idealistic reasons. It never occurred to us that we were reshaping the university by our presence because of our enterprise, the kind of excitement and energy we brought with us, as over against the much more staid, traditional faculty.

I might say that the faculty who was here welcomed us. They thought what we were doing was strange, but they respected us and helped us. And I would think that most of the younger faculty typically regarded the older faculty as dead weight, especially since we outnumbered them. We began to take over the various departments in terms of chairmanships and committee chairs and so on, so that this was going on. And given the sheer size now, the research units, and added to that, the drive for a statewide university, the University of California was not UCB. It was the University of California, all of the campuses. I remember one of my colleagues down at UCLA referring to Berkeley as the Vatican. [chuckles]

Rubens: Apparently even if you graduated from UCLA as late as '66, your degree was still from the University of California, it wasn't from UCLA.

Jacobson: Well, Riverside, which had been a citrus fruit station now became a campus. Davis became a full campus. It had been the agriculture school. Later in the late sixties, Santa Cruz was established.

Rubens: A little before that, Santa Barbara.

Jacobson: Santa Barbara. Of course then Irvine was added. What had been Scripps Institute became the basis for San Diego and so on, with the result that you had now a president, chancellors, a whole battery of vice presidents, and a large bureaucracy, and vice chancellors and the chancellorial bureaucracy. And while all of this was going on, the face of the university was changing.

This building, I mentioned. We moved out of South Hall into Barrows in 1964. I think of it as moving from the commons into the metropolis, and I remember talking to some of my colleagues, especially one of them in the Africa field—two of them—I said, “You know, don’t you guys write about the politics of maladjustment all the time? About people moving from the bush into the metropolis? There’s displacement, there’s concern, there is a breaking down of relationships, and so on?” No, nobody was interested in that, as it applied to us.

If I sound a little bitter about that it’s because I am, because I felt that a more scholarly disinterested and generous view of what was going on might have mitigated what happened in this department and other departments—people not speaking to each other, hating each other. It was awful, terrible.

Rubens: And so that might be a little bit larger story also. Were you on a building committee?

Jacobson: I was on the building committee and one of my contributions to the University of California was I delayed this building for six months. What was happening was that we, taking the idea of South Hall, were going to establish department offices on different floors, but faculty would be distributed throughout the cell blocks, you know, so that the chances are, through accident, you’d meet an economist, an economist would meet a sociologist, and so on, in the hall and in the elevator. And you’d talk and then go out for coffee and so on.

Rubens: For those who aren’t here, it’s clear these are narrow halls, the offices are small, lined up along the periphery of the building some have amazing views, but there’s no common meeting place.

Jacobson: You come out of the west bank of elevators and you’re starting to your office and you see somebody seventy-five yards down the hall coming out of the other elevator, you wave at each other and you don’t even know who it is.

Rubens: Quite the opposite of South Hall.

Jacobson: Right. I served on the building committee because I was vice chairman at the time, but when I selected my office, I selected it for two reasons: one, to be close to the elevator, and secondly, I wanted a north view of the campus where I’d been before, with which I associated so many good feelings. And so I moved down the other end of the hall to an office.

Well, you had all of this shaping up. It’s like the iceberg and the Titanic. You had this shaping up and what you have going on is a political activism, which I think had been

in Berkeley for a long time but had been rejuvenated by the HUAC business and the students being fire-hosed down the stairs in San Francisco and so on. The old fight was still going on. And I don't know whether people know this, but many of the faculty tithed themselves, gave a percentage of their salaries in the fifties in order to support those people who quit because of the oath and couldn't get jobs immediately, and also to raise money to fight legally against the Regents' oath, which we won, you know, at the end of the fifties.

Rubens: Did that oath fight leave a particular sore or wound in the poli sci department itself?

Jacobson: No. There was one member of the political science department who quit because of the oath. He was an assistant professor, Harold Winkler. He was also a wealthy man, and some people believed that he had the luxury to do that and they didn't. And he didn't have tenure. So no, it didn't leave a scar.

Rubens: And I meant particularly ideologically. There weren't right-wingers who said this oath was essential and we need a purge of lefties?

Jacobson: No. No, that wasn't the case that I can recall.

Rubens: Okay.

Jacobson: Well, then there was the summer of '64 and the students who had become leaders like Mario Savio go spend the summer in the South and they come back and they begin advocacy here. Also, you know, fortuitously, there is the Republican convention at the Cow Palace.

Rubens: The building didn't open in January, then? Is that right? You had the spring of '64 here?

Jacobson: I believe so. You can look it up. I don't remember exactly. It was very recent. The move was very recent, and so that people came back being—the people who came in, the students, there were a number of them who were very sensitive to issues, especially political issues. And what happened—I'm sure you know—that that strip on Bancroft, which had been thought to belong to the city, it was now, quote, “discovered” by an assistant chancellor—who was a mischief maker, I believe—that it didn't belong to the city, but it belonged to the university. Okay, what do you do about that?

Chancellor Strong—I think it was just plain foolishness. What he did was not to recognize that it might have been a privilege granted by the university that nobody knew about, but when you take away something from people, that's what creates a quote “revolutionary” situation. It's not—if you're abject, you don't have anything; it doesn't occur to you to ask for it. But they had it, and there had been advocacy for the longest time out there on the street, and now it was taken away. And that was the formal beginning of the Free Speech Movement.

Now I think it's noteworthy that—well, Strong was not terribly competent. That's one of the problems with having such an academic empire because the president who's very able and brilliant might not necessarily, I don't know, want to court rivals all over the place. And the appointments tend to be quote "safe." The chancellor, nicknamed by a number of the faculty "Headstrong Ed Strong," responded by taking away this privilege from the students.

Now in 1954, ten years earlier, the rules of the university were clear—I mean the Regent's rules—that there's to be no political advocacy on the campus. In 1954, Adlai Stephenson came here to make an address and he couldn't come onto campus, but people were used to that. There were thousands of us that lined the hill of West Gate on Oxford and Adlai Stephenson was driven up on a flatbed truck and he got up to speak and accompanying him—and that's why there was such crowd I think—were Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, who were his great supporters. And he gave a talk. He couldn't come on the campus unless there was an advocate for the other side. Okay. Now we're at '64.

Rubens: And you were literally on that grass where people stand and—

Jacobson: Yes.

Rubens: And bear witness to anti-nuclear—. Okay, yes, the students could be there. Stephenson is on a flatbed truck on the street.

Jacobson: On the street, right. Introduced by the Mayor of Berkeley. [laughs] Mayor Cross, who was a Unitarian minister.

Well, in 1964 there are social issues such as race, equality, and so forth. There are political issues because of what's going on in the Republican Party. The protestors included Republican students who were for Rockefeller.

Rubens: The whole spectrum.

Jacobson: Yes, the whole spectrum was there. And Chancellor Strong made this mistake. Where was Clark Kerr? Clark Kerr, I believe, was tending to business in Africa. He was trying to establish a relationship with a sister university for the University of California, so he wasn't here. And I think that that is typical of what happened. He came back, it was pretty much out of hand. Perhaps he could have done something dramatic. But that old order of entrepreneurship, personal paternalism like that of Robert Gordon Sproul was over, and so committees would negotiate secretly with students and the administration was distant from what was going on.

Kerr came back, but things had moved very quickly—the police car incident and so on—and so he was always running behind. And then under, great pressure—as he pointed out, and I'm sure he will in his book—he was not the one who called in the police. That was Governor Pat Brown, who didn't want to call them in either.

Rubens: Right, someone was out to get one of them, or both.

Jacobson: Right, yes. If you look at the student complaints at the time, they don't talk about what's happened bureaucratically to the university, but they do in the substance of what they're saying: that they're products of this big machine, that they're turned out by a factory. Faculty now are so engrossed in research and research units that teaching gets the least attention and so forth. They remind me of the anti-Federalists arguing against the Constitution on the grounds of the destruction of classical Republicanism, of participation, of face-to-face relations, of primary relations with people. They're now part of the big machine and they're going to be swallowed up and so on.

Rubens: So the whole metaphor about bush to the metropolis or for the federalist/anti-federalist, the agrarian-minded versus the commercial minded: I had never thought of that parallel. You lay out those issues well. Face-to-face relationships.

Jacobson: Well, it was in the period that I began—. I wrote a piece on this. I returned to the anti-federalists and I began writing about the adoption of the Constitution because I had some feel for the parallel, the shift that was expected of loyalty from this place—these spaces, these buildings, this lawn, these rocks, this creek—to something that was an abstraction—the “Statewide University.”

Rubens: I'd love to plug you in right at this point so we get what *you* were doing. You are teaching in '64?

Jacobson: I'm teaching in '64.

Rubens: Political theory, or American—?

Jacobson: I'm teaching political theory. European and American political theory. The political theory classes are enormous.

Rubens: The undergraduate?

Jacobson: Undergraduate classes. I think on one occasion I taught over 600 students in an elective course. People coming not only from political science, but from history, philosophy, sociology, and so on.

Rubens: And then your graduate students?

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Rubens: Who were the theory people?

Jacobson: Sheldon Wolin, John [Jack] Schaar, and myself. And a young person who recently arrived from Chicago, Michael Rogin.

Rubens: Did he just come in '64?

Jacobson: Yes. That was his year.

Rubens: At that time, was not what he became, right? When he came in he was a more classic kind of poli sci person?

Jacobson: Yes. Well, voting behavior and his interest had been in the labor movement.

Rubens: Yes, yes.

Jacobson: There was a program at the time called American Studies and we contributed Schaar to that program: one political scientist, one historian, one literature person. And Schaar was in that and Schaar and I had split the American political theory teaching, so we worked Rogin in and he became one of us. He became a political theorist. [laughter]

Rubens: And in terms of your graduate students, I just want to focus a little on that. Obviously had you had graduate students since '51, or pretty soon after your arrival?

Jacobson: Yes, yes. But of course, given the growth of the department, the numbers of graduate students mushroomed.

Rubens: Right.

Jacobson: And the political theory program was a particularly good draw, so that we had a lot of students, some of whom—well, you mentioned Jeff Lustig. He was Schaar's student.

Rubens: Carey McWilliams said he was—

Jacobson: Carey.

Rubens: Schaar's, I think, formally, but he spent a lot of time with you.

Jacobson: Yes, I was the second member of the committee.

Rubens: Okay.

Jacobson: And we spent a lot of time together. Yes, SLATE.

Rubens: Griel Marcus.

Jacobson: Griel Marcus was a TA for me in my large political theory course. Well, as a matter of fact, [laughs] there was Griel Marcus, an undergraduate in the course—a kid named Winner.

Rubens: Who did *Rolling Stone*.

Jacobson: Well, that's Wenner, Jan Wenner. He was there, too. As a matter of fact, the whole *Rolling Stone* crowd was in that class. And Jan Wenner's mother, Sim—her name was Simon—was a very wealthy woman, who had established the first diaper service. And

she had been a graduate student of mine for a term, and she gave Wenner the money to establish *Rolling Stone*. People—I'm trying to think of whether Barry Melton was in that class, from Country Joe and the Fish.

There was a lot of ferment, a lot of things going on. Tremendous excitement among the students. The leadership was supplied by these people coming back from the Freedom Summer and, you know, others drawn in. And I think, as I see it, the coming together of the enormous, rapid, undigested growth of the university; the abstractness as compared to the face-to-faceness of it previously; and therefore the willingness of students to be drawn into the situation. They all came together.

Rubens: I think that's incredibly astute and then I'm now physically thinking about the dispersal of the department here, and ideologically and maybe pedagogically also dispersal between behaviorists, theorists, which may have been reflected in who were for FSM and against FSM. So I'm wondering if—I assume you didn't know who Mario Savio was until he emerged as a leader.

Jacobson: Right.

Rubens: How did you—just any quick memories that you have about noticing there's this brouhaha taking place? Of course, first over the strip of land, four students are dismissed; and then the demonstrations start a little bit later.

Jacobson: It was with the demonstrations in front of Sproul and wanting to know what was going on. And then getting reports from undergraduate and graduate students who would indicate what they thought was at stake, a lot of people lobbying the faculty. Paying attention to the reaction among both students and faculty to what was going on.

And the whole—you know, it was very complex. There were conservatives who were opposed to it. There were also people who were very worried who had been kind of classical European, particularly émigré German intellectuals, whose—the specter that was conjured up for them, especially when things got violent on the street, Krystallnacht and the smashing of the windows, the fear of a mob. So there was that—

Rubens: Potential for fascism.

Jacobson: Yes, yes. So there was that kind of—. The Academic Senate meetings were enormously dramatic because you had a whole range of statements like that. And people that you didn't know before, you got to know pretty quickly in that context.

Rubens: Was there, to your memory, any early convening of political science faculty to discuss this? They refer to you as the troika, but I'm wondering if beyond that—I don't have statements from you until around December. That's when you wrote your letter to—

Jacobson: Right. I think, you know, it becomes a blur. There were meetings in the political science department. There were some people who—they thought of themselves as

prudent; others thought of them as paranoid—insisted on getting the locks changed for the downstairs office. Policing who had access to the mailboxes and so on.

But as I recall, that was sort of typical of that period—there was an issue of SLATE that came out and on the cover of SLATE—I don't remember if it was the back cover or the front cover, maybe the back cover—there was a quote from our then chairman, Robert Scalapino in the *New York Times*. I don't even remember what the quote was about, but it was awful, an awful political quote. Scalapino called me and said, "Do you know that the *New York Times* has misquoted me and that they have a correction. But I never said what they said I said. Since you know some of these guys—" well, the way he put it, "Since you have influence with them, would you see if you could get it removed?" I checked into it and he was right.

Rubens: Really?

Jacobson: Yes. And I felt that this was a disservice and so—I can't remember who I talked to—one of the editors of SLATE. I pointed this out. He said, "Oops." And he said, "We'll do something about it." Well, it turned out that they had printed most of them already, so what they did was to black out that quotation, which only highlighted it, because you could see right through it to the words. Scalapino for the next ten years didn't talk to me. Somehow or other I was responsible for that.

Rubens: Betrayed him.

Jacobson: Yes. And things like that, by—

Rubens: But by then, that's playing on intellectual and political divisions that are going to evolve. You were speaking about how this was the beginning of—and so I imagine certainly we know by the next three years the war in Vietnam is going to really divide—?

Jacobson: Right.

Rubens: So, okay, but what is interesting to me is that you're saying the department is not that divided at the beginning.

Jacobson: At the very beginning I would say that the majority of people didn't pay any attention to it.

Rubens: Okay.

Jacobson: You know.

Rubens: We've now got more of our specialties—whether it's behaviorist theory, Africanist—. The building is alienating.

Jacobson: Right. Well, what happens is you can't escape it. Certainly by the 7<sup>th</sup> of December, you have to take a position. And that's when politicking within the department began, when phone calls from people trying to convince other people, and so on. That's when people stopped talking to people. And by the spring of 1965, the department was wracked.

Yes, there was that behavioral/anti-behavioral split, but what's interesting is that the person who first drew up the time, place, and manner rules was Herb McCloskey, who was the head of the Survey Research Center and a political behaviorist. And he and Sheldon Wolin worked closely on it at that time. Of course McCloskey was an old radical who had given up that faith for a new one in science, and he was astute in such matters, but there was that division between behaviorists and theorists. And also there was one based I think on age, as well. The younger faculty tended to be at least sympathetic to the position of the students and the older faculty were disconcerted. Of course all of those things were going on.

There were invasions of classes, and that caused a great division within the department that—

Rubens: Scalapino is chair? And is he admonishing when people like yourself cancelled class in support of the strikers?

Jacobson: Oh, yes. Yes. Of course he also—it's difficult for me at this point to pinpoint the time spectrum because when the Vietnam War comes into the picture, Scalapino has ties to the federal government here. And one of the things that was interesting is that then he was replaced, I mean, his chairmanship was over and Aaron Wildavsky became chairman and Aaron was at the teach-in. He supported the Vietnam policy and then the Johnson Administration made a mistake and they rewarded him, in effect, by sending him to Vietnam so he could observe first hand. He came back an opponent of the war!

Rubens: I don't remember that. Really?

Jacobson: Yes, yes. [laughs]

Rubens: That's amazing. Schaar and Wolin seemed to have been part of a group that met in the history department with Sellers and Levine and were hammering out the Committee of Two Hundred statement.

Jacobson: Right.

Rubens: I don't see your name on that. I would just assume that you supported it and were in that line—

Jacobson: Yes.

Rubens: Are you more of a private person? I'm not asking you to explain yourself.

Jacobson: For one thing, Wolin and I were quite competitive, and rarely cooperated on things.

Rubens: Really? Competitive meant also just in publications, regard in the—

Jacobson: Publications, regard in the department. Right.

Rubens: Profession and number of students?

Jacobson: Right, reputation. And prestige among our junior colleagues, particularly Schaar.

Rubens: I think these are the things that are more telling than whether you're in the Party or not.

Jacobson: [chuckles] In 1965, Wolin and Schaar started a drive for a separate department of political theory, or of political and social theory, in which the political theory people would be joined by some from history and some from sociology.

Rubens: '65?

Jacobson: I believe this was—yes, this was '65.

Rubens: After, as a repercussion of all this, yes.

Jacobson: Yes, because in '65 I went to the University of Chicago—and incidentally, that's where I saw—I can't remember whether it was Arthur or Jackie Goldberg.

Rubens: Jackie. She transferred.

Jacobson: Jackie. When I got there, there was a sit-in. I was with Hanna Arendt at the time and the two of us walked over to see what was going on. [laughs] And I saw more than one face that I knew.

Rubens: I bet. Yes.

Jacobson: And I said to some of the striking students, "Yes, I'd like to go in and talk to these people." And they said, "You can't go in. You know, you can't go and hear what's going on." And you know, just on a kind of bluff, I said, "I'm from Berkeley." They said, "Oh, come on in," and so I went in. And I asked them what was on their minds, what were they doing. You know, it had to do with the slum lord business, University of Chicago and the South Side, and so forth.

But I gave a public lecture at Chicago, and then when I came back, the dean of letters and science was concerned that I might leave because I told him that Chicago was establishing a new college and they wanted to know whether I was interested in being dean. And so I talked with him and he said—

Rubens: Of this newly conceived political and social theory department? That's what you're being—

Jacobson: No, it became a kind of college—it became like our experimental college which we established here.

Rubens: Okay.

Jacobson: And so then—

Rubens: I just want to get this clear—you're talking about at Chicago? Are you talking at Chicago about starting up a program there and being a dean?

Jacobson: Yes, but it had nothing to do with political theory itself.

Rubens: I understand.

Jacobson: When I came back, the dean here was concerned that I might leave. I was not going to leave. I would not go and subject my family to Chicago—or myself. But what happened was that I took the occasion and said, “But you know, I've really been impressed at Chicago with their Committee on Social Thought. And I would be—you know, I think if you're concerned about losing people, I think it would be useful to think about that kind of organization which would could include—” I pointed out to him that we had no place to go. That is, the philosophers, theoreticians, and so on—if you're in an area, you've got an Institute, if you're in behavior, you have a “shop” to go to. We have no such common meeting place.

Rubens: Right.

Jacobson: That if the university would establish something like the Committee on Social Thought, then faculty with theoretical interests might not desert Berkeley for other places.

Then I made the mistake of proposing this to Wolin and Schaar and Hanna Pitkin, who was a very young professor then. And Rogin, that—no, I'm not sure about Michael. In hindsight, I would have been much better off to have talked with Sheldon and let him come to this idea of a Committee on Social Thought and then say, “I'll talk to the dean.” But I think he regarded my proposal as an effort to blow up his program—you know, to disrupt or to deflect it. And after that, there were meetings that they had to which I was not invited.

So in '65, I did two things. One is I was invited by the chairman of the department of psychiatry at Cowell Hospital to join the staff there part-time, which I did. And I worked as a therapist for five years from '65 to '70. Part of that was because I couldn't take the atmosphere in the department. It was too much. I was afraid that I would leave for someplace which would be a mistake for me and for my family. But I just couldn't take it anymore.

Rubens: So for purposes of this oral history right here, how would you characterize that atmosphere—'65 to '70?

Jacobson: One of constant—the feeling of cabals all around, of late night quarrels, all of that stuff. And I just couldn't stomach it.

Rubens: What was at stake?

Jacobson: God knows what's at stake. I would think, from the standpoint of those people who opposed student activism in the department, what was at stake would be getting rid of us. That would be part of it. And they managed to do that.

Rubens: You, the quote "subversives" who are aiding and abetting this radicalism.

Jacobson: Yes. Right. Schaar quit and went to Santa Cruz.

Rubens: When did he do that?

Jacobson: I think probably '69.

Rubens: Okay.

Jacobson: Wolin followed the next year.

Rubens: Oh, really?

Jacobson: He went down to Santa Cruz, stayed a couple of years and then went to Princeton. I went first half-time to the department of psychiatry and then along with Joe Tussman and three other faculty members, established the Experimental College.

Rubens: I think that's got to be a—

Jacobson: In effect, I was out of this, too—out of the department.

Rubens: Yes, that's a story in itself that has to be done. If you don't mind—let me stop you for a minute.

[tape interruption]

Rubens: I had suggested that we talk about the character of student leaders and your observation of the nature of their political behavior.

Jacobson: The first time I had a conversation with Mario Savio was when he called me and asked whether he could be a teaching assistant for my course. He was a philosophy student and no, he couldn't meet the requirements and so forth, but we did talk.

Rubens: Had you observed him particularly?

Jacobson: I observed him and he was somebody I recognized, also a New Yorker. And when I first became acquainted with him, following that conversation, he told me where he was from in New York, where he'd gone to high school. He told me about his father who was a shoemaker, and so you know, [I had] these pictures in my own mind. I also understood later why he had to grin and bear rock and roll when he preferred listening to opera. He had grown up in his father's shop listening to opera.

Rubens: Is your memory that he called you to be the TA for that spring of '65?

Jacobson: I don't really remember. I might be wrong. In the spring of '65 a faculty member named Pete Stephens—he was Lincoln Stephens' son—in journalism

Rubens: Yes!

Jacobson: He got the idea of having a meeting at his house between the old and the new Left. And he invited three or four faculty members—I was one of them—Harry Bridges and a couple of his guys from the Longshoremen, and Mario Savio, Michael Rossman—who else, I don't remember. And it was a disaster.

Rubens: Faculty would be Stephens, you—anyone else that you can think of, particularly?

Jacobson: I can't remember.

Rubens: Okay.

Jacobson: But I remember—

Rubens: Why was it a disaster?

Jacobson: Aside from Bridges' contingent, I was the oldest person in the room, and that was in 1965, I was forty-two years old.

Rubens: Oh, my gosh.

Jacobson: Well, they didn't talk to each other. Bridges regarded them as snot-noses, wouldn't talk to them. [He] got me—because I was the oldest person there—in a corner and harangued me for an hour about these kids, you know, and their butting in where they don't belong and so on, and then regaling me with stories with tears in his eyes of building dams in China—you know, of taking back the land and so forth. It was a mess. It was embarrassing.

I did speak then briefly with Savio, privately, and as people might have told you, he was quite fascinating. Here's this facile orator with a stutter in a one on one situation. We found each other sympathetic. The following fall, I believe it was, some organization on the campus sponsored a retreat in La Honda, and I was one of the faculty members. Mario Savio was there and we got to talk some more on that

occasion. The last time I saw him, except seeing him once, saying good-bye to the students on Sproul Hall, was when they were making that movie.

Rubens: Yes, *Berkeley in the Sixties*?

Jacobson: Yes. They were having a preview at the Faculty Club and I walked into the Faculty Club. Before the show I went in the men's room and I walk in and there is Mario and at an adjoining urinal. We looked at each other and we both cracked up and I said, "Here we go again." I think it was typical of Mario Savio—my judgement of him, his character and personality—that he does not appear in that movie. He refused to be interviewed. He was a very private person who was thrust onto the stage. And I think part of the thrust came from his father. I mean, what he made of—his father was an old fashioned Italian Socialist.

Rubens: That part I didn't know.

Jacobson: And I think that Mario Savio was a good boy. He was a good boy at school, he went to a good Catholic high school, he was a good boy in college, and a good boy in the sense of living up to his father's ideals. And I remember at that retreat, when the students—when it was pot time for them and music and everything, Savio disappeared. I think that one of the things that worried him was that, exactly—was drugs and music deactivating people. I think it was Mario Savio—it might have been someone else—who said to me that if he were the police chief on this campus he would encourage the use of drugs because it takes them right out of the political picture. So he was rather straight-laced, culturally conservative in that way. If you look at the pictures of him—

Rubens: Oh, sure.

Jacobson: —he's got a jacket on.

Rubens: Many of them. Even Goldberg.

Jacobson: Yes. I haven't thought of these things for years.

Rubens: This is wonderful. Speaking of the distinction between old Left, New Left, what's such a hallmark of FSM as almost a departure from the civil rights movement and then a harbinger of what will come—no real organizational structure.

Jacobson: Right.

Rubens: Attempt at consensus, recreating itself continually, Mario stepping down, and the FSU—Free Speech Union—being created without him in it, and then the Free Speech Movement is gone. And then it's all these other crazy things. I'm going to get a tape just while you just observe that, if you can.

You know, Clark Kerr says—I think his memoirs are going to be fascinating. People are going to hate them. They're going to say that he's covering himself, but one of the things—

Jacobson: Right. Brad Cleaveland told me when I ran into him the other day that he is one of Clark Kerr's informants on his memoirs.

Rubens: Yes, I wanted to ask you—was Brad particularly a student of yours?

Jacobson: Yes, he was a student of mine.

Rubens: And of course he was—he was one of the first people I interviewed, and he's just remarkably articulate and almost erudite.

Jacobson: Yes.

Rubens: I mean, he really is learned and was very interested in educational reform.

Jacobson: Yes.

Rubens: But he was not a part of FSM, and he feels he was aced out of it.

Jacobson: By whom?

Rubens: He says, Michel Rossman. And he says the Jews.

Jacobson: That's right. "The Jews did it." [chuckles]

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]##

Rubens: Well, when you look statistically, there is a pretty high percentage.

Jacobson: Sure.

Rubens: LA and New York. I asked the Goldbergs about that. I was surprised, while they're not religious Jews, they were well-trained: he had a bar mitzvah, she had a bat mitzvah, which really wasn't done in those days.

Jacobson: Extraordinary for that time, yes.

Rubens: Right, she was in a Jewish sorority so she can meet guys. She says that. Her mother wants her here there. And then there's Michael Lerner, who I will interview later because he's [laughs] you know, he's someone who really wants to get in, and he does get in as whatever his title is—it's crazy. But in fact, my understanding is he was at Berkeley just for that one year in '64 before he was going to go back to Hebrew Union and

become a rabbi. He always had quite that tradition and then it gets caught up in the movement, so there is an issue of cultural style.

One other person, Kate Coleman. I said to Kate Coleman, “Were you Jewish?” She said, “Sure, I was Jewish, but I learned how to be Jewish in the FSM. I copied people’s mannerisms.”

Jacobson: Well, who else? I’m trying to think—

Rubens: Cleveland’s wrong in that sense. I think of him as being older, of having graduated—

Jacobson: He was older, and also he grew up in Washington D.C. His father was an official, you know, in the New Deal.

Rubens: Right.

Jacobson: And he came with a kind of fully shaped view of the world, which these kids didn’t have at all. They worked it out as they went along, so they were much more pragmatic than he was. I think that he did feel an outsider, and part of that is because of the way he spoke to them. He spoke to them like a professor talking to students and they respected him but they didn’t buy it. And I think he alienated them and he had to give it some name, and that’s what it was.

Rubens: And so the fact that the movement was non-organizational—you almost, I think, characterized it by saying these kids were working it out as they went.

Jacobson: Yes.

Rubens: And I don’t think their real focus wasn’t on the reform of the university. I think those were people who stayed longer and—

Jacobson: Yes. The SLATE people.

Rubens: Yes.

Jacobson: No, they were not—

Rubens: SLATE was almost dead, and that may be one of the reasons there wasn’t a real organizational form.

Jacobson: But I remember talking with the supporters of the FSM in the political science department—mostly graduate students, including Bob Price who is the current chairman. He often mentions it.

Rubens: Is he the chair?

Jacobson: Yes, he's been chair for about four or five years now. What I had said was that if this was the revolution, are they planning for the constitutional convention? If you're really interested in educational reform, and reform of the university, I haven't seen it.

[End of Interview]