

Please Note

This oral history transcript has been divided into two parts. The first part documents the presidency of John G. Kemeny and is open to the public. The second part documents the presidency of David T. McLaughlin and will be open to the public in June 2012.

This is part one.

John H. Copenhaver, Jr. '46
Professor of Biology Emeritus

Dartmouth College

An Interview Conducted by

Jane Carroll

Hanover, New Hampshire

June 25, 1996

Special Collections

Dartmouth College

Hanover, New Hampshire

INTERVIEW: John H. Copenhaver, Jr. '46

INTERVIEWED BY: Jane Carroll

PLACE: Baker Library
Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire

DATE: June 25, 1996

CARROLL: This is Jane Carroll. It is the 25th of June. We are in Baker Library. I am interviewing John Copenhaver who was a professor at Dartmouth, professor of biology, from 1953 to '87.

COPENHAVER: Right.

CARROLL: Quite impressive. What I'm wondering is, what was Dartmouth like when you first got here in '53?

COPENHAVER: It was all male, of course, and it was in the throes of the fifties when the students were acquiescent. And [John Sloan] Dickey ['29], President Dickey, and Dean [Donald] Morrison were in the process of rebuilding the faculty. The faculty had been largely picked in the thirties and early forties, and they were getting old, and they were quite different than what Dickey and Morrison wanted. The faculty then was not really research-minded or scholarly-minded. They did their teaching, and then played bridge and things like that. Because President [Ernest Martin] Hopkins ['01], the previous president, had maintained that teaching and research were mutually exclusive. And I was a student here in the forties--the Navy sent me here--and I realized that when I was here. [Laughter]

CARROLL: Where had you come from in the forties?

COPENHAVER: I was in the fleet, and the Navy decided they were going to try to make an officer out of me. They said they were going to send me to Dartmouth, and I objected strenuously because I'd been working--our ship had been working--under the command of the British Admiralty, and the only Dartmouth I knew was the British Naval Academy. [Laughter]

CARROLL: So you thought you were going to England?

COPENHAVER: Yes. And somebody touched me on the shoulder and said, "No, no, no, Copenhaver. Dartmouth is a country-club college somewhere up in New England." [Laughter]

CARROLL: Was he right at that time?

COPENHAVER: Yes, he was right at that time. But I had a good education. But when I came back here as a faculty, I was part of the new wave, you might say, which was bringing in some--I'll compliment myself--some bright young people. And they did a good job. But it was a male school, and it was, oh, Saturday classes--and I imagine the students would really love that now--Saturday morning classes, and quite regimented. The exams were given in a great big upstairs of the Alumni Gym where you'd sit in with hundreds of people to take exams. But it was a nice place other than that.

CARROLL: Was it mostly male faculty, too?

COPENHAVER: Oh yes, all. Oh, yes.

CARROLL: Only.

COPENHAVER: Only. I can tell you one story about that. There was a woman in the biology department--actually it was the zoology department at that time--Hannah Croasdale, who had been here since the thirties. She had built up an international reputation as a researcher studying algae. In fact she was at one time president of the International Algae Association. The administration would not put her on the faculty. I was chairman in the late fifties of the zoology department, and I fought hard. Didn't succeed until late in the sixties.

CARROLL: And the thought was that it was improper for a woman to be--?

COPENHAVER: Absolutely, absolutely.

CARROLL: When you came here, then, as a student, did this place seem isolated to you?

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes. But I'd been in the North Atlantic for three years. [Laughter]

CARROLL: Not quite as bad as that.

COPENHAVER: No, that's right. Yes, it was. Of course that was during the war years, and of course there was no transportation except for trains or buses. So we were blocked in.

CARROLL: And what had changed, then, by '52--

COPENHAVER: 'Fifty-three.

CARROLL: --'53 when you got here?

COPENHAVER: It was more open, and it was beginning to be vibrant as a faculty. And it was exciting because we knew we were going to rebuild this place, part of the team.

CARROLL: What was part of rebuilding? What did that entail?

COPENHAVER: Faculty interested in research mainly. And teaching. You know, both. Dickey never let them forget that it was teaching and research; this is what it was here. And we were really pretty-- It was a smaller faculty, of course, so we were pretty close-knit. We knew, contrary to today, we knew everyone in the physics department and the chemistry department and some of the others, being a smaller faculty and new.

CARROLL: Was it hard to recruit good faculty without a graduate program?

COPENHAVER: Yes, it was. We did a pretty good job, but it was.

CARROLL: When did the graduate program start at Dartmouth?

COPENHAVER: Well, it started sort of in the sixties, sort of department by department. What got the impetus off was the re-founding of the medical school. The med school had been going by on a shoestring. So in the early sixties they decided to either do away with it or rebuild it, and they chose the latter. So the people brought in there were all research-oriented, and this gave the stimulus to those of us who were in the undergraduate school to begin to work for graduates. We'd always had a master's program in the biology department. But the master's program isn't much good for biology or scientists. So we built on that. Gradually the various departments in the sciences, and psychology outside of the sciences, put in Ph.D. programs.

CARROLL: What was the impetus for the Dana Biomedical Library?

COPENHAVER: Well, it was the fact that the biology and the medical books were scattered all over Baker. There was in one of the back rooms at Baker, so-called, the medical library. But that wasn't big enough to contain even the medical. And then our biology books were scattered all over the floors. So they got the money to build Dana, and consolidated it all over there. Which was very good. Because people like myself, in my particular field of physiology and biochemistry, read across the fields. I mean I would read the Journal of Clinical Investigation and things like that. So it was a nice impetus.

CARROLL: What was your specialty?

COPENHAVER: Well, biochemistry, study of cell transport processes. And so I worked here in that.

CARROLL: Did that tie you then to the medical school fairly closely?

COPENHAVER: Yes. In fact quite a bit of that time I also had an appointment in the med school in the biochemistry department. But my home base was biology.

CARROLL: Did the biology department then grow during these years?

COPENHAVER: Yes, it did. And then in '63 or '64, they decided to merge. It was botany and zoology beforehand. They decided to merge. In the process--well, I can tell you a little bit of personal history. I was at Berkeley on a year's leave, sabbatical, when--this was in '61 or '62--and they called me back here to advise them about what we were going to do. Because we were outgrowing Silsby, and they wanted to put an addition on it. And I said, "No, the only solution is a new building." And that got the ball rolling. It was other people than me, too. But that got the ball rolling. So the new building was built in--finished--in '64. That's when we moved over there. And that's when we combined the botany and zoology. And I was chairman of the biology department first time around. And it was a nice move.

CARROLL: Was it easy to merge the two?

COPENHAVER: No. There was some animosity, and it's still there. Botanists don't like zoologists. [Laughter] But it was done. It was the only way to really get a viable group together.

CARROLL: Was it a shotgun marriage?

COPENHAVER: Yes, I guess you'd call it that. Uh huh. A shotgun as far as the botanists were concerned.

CARROLL: Okay.

COPENHAVER: All right. Yes. And they looked upon the zoologists as usurpers. But we weren't just zoologists; we were cell biologists.

CARROLL: Did that change the nature of the major at all? Did you get more majors as a result of that?

COPENHAVER: I think so, yes. I'm quite sure we did. Because previously it was a botany major or a zoology major. Oh, yes. Yes, we did.

CARROLL: When did you first know John Kemeny.

COPENHAVER: Oh, about the year after he came here. Let's see, I came in '53, and he came in '55, I think.

CARROLL: 'Fifty-four, '55, I'm a little unclear which.

COPENHAVER: I am, too. Since it was part of that small new group; I got to know him then.

CARROLL: Then you were on the committee that actually elected him president.

COPENHAVER: Yes. Uh huh.

CARROLL: When you were on that, there were several other faculty—I have them sort of written down here. Do you remember who they were?

COPENHAVER: Yes, Don [Donald] Kreider in botany--I mean in mathematics. John Finch ['52] in English, Lou [Louis] Morton in history or government, I'm not sure which.

CARROLL: History.

COPENHAVER: History. And--

CARROLL: That may be the only faculty.

COPENHAVER: One, two, three, four, and me. Yes. That's right. There were five of us.

CARROLL: And how did you folks get chosen? Do you have any idea?

COPENHAVER: I was at that time chairman of the Committee on Organization and Policy. That's why I was chosen. And they were all out of that committee.

CARROLL: Oh, okay.

COPENHAVER: Yes, they were all out of that committee.

CARROLL: When you sat down, did you first draw up a list of what you were looking for?

COPENHAVER: Well, not right at first. We sat down and started talking, and we talked with the trustees. The trustees actually were the ones that made the selection, of course. And after we talked to them a time, I guess it's safe to say, we found them quite provincial. They weren't looking very far. Or they weren't looking very hard. I guess it's fair to say maybe they had made up their mind already. Either that or they were lazy. I could give you the names of them.

CARROLL: Mmmm hmmm.

COPENHAVER: Dudley Orr ['29], Charles Zimmerman ['23], Lloyd Brace ['25] who was chairman of the trustees, Ralph Lazarus--I think that's it. I may be missing one. Zimmerman-- Oh, Robert-- He was chairman of National--

CARROLL: [Inaudible]

COPENHAVER: No, R. [Robert] Oelman ['31].

CARROLL: Oelman, yes.

COPENHAVER: Yes, yes. So what we did as a faculty was begin to go out and interview people about Dartmouth. Not necessarily about the position. We told the trustees of every meeting we were going to have, but none of them ever came except to one meeting in Chicago. Ralph Lazarus came to that one. So we interviewed, you know, the provost of Yale [Charles Taylor], the provost of Cornell [Dale Corsen], the provost of Princeton--I'm just talking about the eastern ones now. Then there was at that time the dean of the law school at Harvard—Derrick Bok--who subsequently--

CARROLL: Who became president [of Harvard].

COPENHAVER: Yes. And then we decided we'd maybe want to go a little farther afield. So we did a West Coast swing. Charles Odegaard ['32] was president of the University of Washington, and he was a Dartmouth alum. And so we got an insight into him. There was a man at Stanford who was dean of the business school, also a Dartmouth alum, and I can't pull his name out. Carl Something. We interviewed him. While we were there, we talked to the provost at Stanford, which was Richard Lyman. We went over to Berkeley and talked to the provost of Berkeley, which was Roger Heyns, H-E-Y-N-S. And they all gave us a much broader view of Dartmouth than our trustees had.

CARROLL: What did they say?

COPENHAVER: Well, they said we had the potential of being a great institution here if we'd just broaden our sights. I'm distilling a lot of conversations down. Richard Lyman at Stanford also. Went down to Santa Cruz, the University of Santa Cruz, at which one of the deans of the schools there--Santa Cruz is divided into schools--was a Dartmouth graduate, whose name I can't pull out right now. And then we went to the Claremont Colleges where Louis Benezet ['36], who was a Dartmouth graduate, and also one of the deans there. So we went through a large swing. And we came back with the impression that we could do very well in terms of hiring an outstanding president.

CARROLL: Did you specifically want someone who was going to come from the faculty side as opposed to administration?

COPENHAVER: Not specifically. All the people we talked to were in administration, but they had come up from the faculty--all of

them had. That's as far as I think so. I think at that time, to be honest about it, the trustees had decided on someone else.

CARROLL: Do you know who that was?

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: Do you feel comfortable saying it? You don't have to if you don't.

COPENHAVER: Well, he's still alive and here.

CARROLL: Okay. And what made you, as a group, think this was not the right person?

COPENHAVER: Because we wanted someone with a wider perspective. And finally we ended with John Kemeny, and the trustees bought that one.

CARROLL: You had 18 months, though--

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: --of search. What took so long?

COPENHAVER: I'm not sure. What took a long time was the trustees were so busy they could never get together. [Laughter] That was part of it. Part of it-- Well, we never offered the position to anyone else, but you talk to people, and you get body signs and English signs. The one we talked to the most was Richard Lyman, who at that time was provost at Stanford. In fact unbeknownst to us, he came and visited us here. We found out afterwards. But the signs were just not quite right. He was very interested, but, well, he did the right choice. Eventually he went on to be president at Stanford, and then president of the Rockefeller Foundation after that.

CARROLL: He did all right.

COPENHAVER: Yes, he did all right. But he liked it. In fact right after we picked Kemeny, his daughter was here in the admissions office. And so he came to visit a couple times.

CARROLL: What was it about Kemeny that made him seem to be the right choice.

COPENHAVER: Well he's dynamic, he's wide-ranging in his interests, and he's willing to entertain new ideas. I think that's what we were hunting for.

CARROLL: When I look at him, I think here's somebody who's European, he's Jewish, not athletic, very intellectual, very liberal.

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: All of those things that you would think any one of them would cause him to be rejected.

COPENHAVER: Yes. [Laughter]

CARROLL: So how did it work?

COPENHAVER: Well, it came to a crisis between the faculty--and I guess I'm telling this maybe out of turn--became a crisis between the faculty and the trustees. And there was one man on the trustees that we thought was open-minded, more open-minded. So they went to him, and explained the situation. And he was actually the one that swung it. That was Ralph Lazarus. Who was not the chairman of the board. But he was the one who swung it. And you have to credit him even more than the faculty. But he did it.

CARROLL: When Kemeny was announced, were the alums pretty open to this idea? Do you remember any reaction on the part of the alums or the students?

COPENHAVER: Well, the alums, some of them objected because he wasn't a Dartmouth grad.

CARROLL: Was he the first who had not been? No.

COPENHAVER: No, but first very recently.

CARROLL: Very recently.

COPENHAVER: Yes. First since the 1800's. And I'm not sure but what there wasn't some anti-Semitism there, too. But he was-- Everyone called him Jewish, but he was baptized a Lutheran.

CARROLL: Is that true?

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: I didn't realize that.

COPENHAVER: Yes. It may have been a convenience. But he never practiced Judaism here, never. And his children were Congregational and things like that. So I don't know. The animosity was fairly short-lived because he was dynamic. And he just happened to be the right man at the right time. Because not long after he was inaugurated, that oil crisis hit.

CARROLL: That's right.

COPENHAVER: And he sat down with his computer and saved us millions of dollars. And we were one of the few Ivy League schools that wasn't in real financial trouble.

CARROLL: Because of that oil crisis.

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: How did he save--? Do you know what he did, what voodoo he did?

COPENHAVER: Well, I'm not sure what voodoo he did. But he certainly cut a lot of costs down. And we got through it--relatively speaking--well.

CARROLL: I've seen the banner of the Manchester Union--? Is it Manchester Union--?

COPENHAVER: Leader, yes.

CARROLL: That said: "Dartmouth chooses another lemon."

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes! The students, you know, as a gift, brought him a small lemon tree. And he kept it in his office for a long time.
[Laughter]

CARROLL: He had amazing style. I have to say that.

COPENHAVER: Yes. Did you know him?

CARROLL: No, I didn't. Well, we moved here right, I think, at the end of his life. We really only met him once. But reading about him.

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes.

CARROLL: What was the secret, do you think, to him being such a successful president?

COPENHAVER: I think he was willing to try new things. And of course he made a condition of his acceptance that it be coed.

CARROLL: Oh, I didn't know that.

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes. Uh huh.

CARROLL: He had been on a committee that had studied the possibility of coeducation.

COPENHAVER: Yes, yes, yes.

CARROLL: What do you think convinced him that that was necessary?

COPENHAVER: I think it would bring a better mix in the student body.

CARROLL: Did most of the faculty feel that way?

COPENHAVER: I think so. Most of the faculty who were my age or younger, anyway. Maybe even the older ones. And it did make a big difference eventually. But he was willing to try new ideas. He was willing to listen. Dickey did a wonderful job in the fifties, but he was--25 years in the job is too long.

CARROLL: Well, soon after-- You alluded to the oil crisis. But the other thing that happened right after Kemeny's inauguration was the shootings at Kent State and the Cambodian invasion, one right after the other.

COPENHAVER: Yes, yes. Uh huh. Well, it was a pretty rough time here on campus in '68 into the seventies, and like that. Dickey was part

of it, and then Kemeny was part of it. And he handled it pretty well. I don't remember any specifics, but he--

CARROLL: What I've read is that of course there was then a sit-in, so to speak. Or a moratorium on classes. Or a teach-in, I guess is what it was.

COPENHAVER: Yes, yes.

CARROLL: Whose idea was that?

COPENHAVER: I don't know. I don't know where it came from. I can't answer that now.

CARROLL: Do you remember what that was like at that time?

COPENHAVER: Well, there were no classes for a day or so. And they would have sessions about what to do about the Cambodian War and things like that. But it sort of calmed things down a bit. The occupation of the president's office, I think, was when Dickey was still chairman.

CARROLL: Over at Parkhurst?

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: Yes, that's right.

COPENHAVER: Dickey was still president, yes.

CARROLL: That had to do, as far as I can tell, with ROTC. Is that right?

COPENHAVER: That was mixed up with it. Yes. There was a big move on campus to get rid of ROTC, and it was related to the Vietnam War. That was part of it. I'm not sure, but I think the ROTC was a precipitating instant.

CARROLL: Why were the trustees so reluctant to get rid of ROTC, do you think?

COPENHAVER: Oh, several reasons, some of them valid. One was that it was the tradition here. But it wasn't a tradition. It was only established after World War II. So it wasn't a long tradition at Dartmouth. And the other was, of course, it provided

scholarships for people who ordinarily couldn't come here. And a tradition, as they saw it. They were quite adamant, but they had to do it, after all.

CARROLL: And the other big moment of protest is what I call the [William B.] Shockley Incident. Do you remember that?

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes. It was very interesting. It was quite interesting. I went to the lecture. Shockley had been invited here by the--

CARROLL: National Academy of Sciences.

COPENHAVER: Mmmm hmmm. And he was introduced by Kemeny. I can't remember whether Kemeny was president at that time or not. And there were probably a dozen blacks. And they stood up and started applauding, and they just kept applauding, and they wouldn't stop. Well, you know why. Because he said--

CARROLL: I was going to ask you that.

COPENHAVER: --intellectually blacks are inferior to whites.

CARROLL: But that was not his area of expertise, was it?

COPENHAVER: No. He invented the transistor.

CARROLL: That's what I thought.

COPENHAVER: But after he did that, he began--he got into this problem of race intelligence. And I don't know how he did it or why. But he published a large book on the fact with all the data, supposedly.

CARROLL: Now, I was reading at the time in the D, when it was reported, it said that both Kemeny and Leonard Rieser tried to calm the students down but were not able to.

COPENHAVER: No, that's right. Very polite. They didn't do anything but just stand there and clap. [Laughter] Quite effective, you know.

CARROLL: Exactly.

COPENHAVER: And, as I say, maybe a dozen blacks.

CARROLL: When did blacks begin to be a presence on campus? Was that under the Kemeny years, or is that already under Dickey?

COPENHAVER: It was already beginning under Dickey. Yes, that's right. Because there was one very radical black, whose last name was Ford, here. You'd think he had come out of the ghetto, but he came out of the middle class. And that was before. But Kemeny, of course, insisted that we start recruiting the Native Americans. That was another one of his ploys. And a very good idea. And tried to increase the blacks. And then women-- women, Native Americans and blacks.

CARROLL: How did the alumni take to the idea of so much diversification?

COPENHAVER: I'm not sure I can answer that truthfully. My impression is that they didn't like it. Maybe I'm prejudiced. I mean this was a WASP institution for years.

CARROLL: Were the faculty fairly supportive of this, though?

COPENHAVER: Yes. Yes, I don't think there was much objection from the faculty. They looked upon it as a widening of student body.

CARROLL: Did you see this in the sciences, as well? Did these people come and major in the sciences?

COPENHAVER: No. Not very often. They tended to stay in the social sciences and the humanities. I remember very few blacks who were microbiology majors, and no Native Americans.

CARROLL: Did you ever have any desire to recruit faculty who were either black or Native American? Are they hard to come by?

COPENHAVER: They were very hard to come by, particularly in the sciences. They were almost impossible. As you know, we have one here now--very, very good man. Wonderful. Did you see the PBS--?

CARROLL: Yes, I did. That was pretty impressive.

COPENHAVER: Beautiful job.

CARROLL: And women. When did you begin to try to recruit women in the sciences?

COPENHAVER: Oh, not long after coeducation came. We had a couple of women come in the early seventies.

CARROLL: How important is it to have mentoring of--same-sex mentoring?

COPENHAVER: Oh, I think it's quite important. I think it is. In the beginning the women students felt quite out of place here.

CARROLL: I'm sure.

COPENHAVER: And I must say, kind of candidly, the admissions office was admitting jocks as women.

CARROLL: Truly?

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: Thinking that would help them fit in?

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: Do you think it worked?

COPENHAVER: No. [Laughter] And very early the women wouldn't speak up in class. But that changed gradually.

CARROLL: And what do you think made the change?

COPENHAVER: More of them.

CARROLL: Uh huh. Sort of a mass.

COPENHAVER: Yes. More of them. And you know the admissions office--the faculty has always fought with the admissions office. Always. And sometimes the admissions office listens. But Dickey always made it clear that the admissions policy was under the control of the board of trustees. The faculty had nothing to do with it.

CARROLL: Oh, really!

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: Is that still the case?

COPENHAVER: No. There is a faculty group that reads a number of the admissions things. But the vote is always in the admissions office. And of course eventually the trustees, but the admissions office. What the admissions office was doing in the fifties that upset us quite a bit--and there was a group of us Young Turks tried to get some input in there--is we always said that the class should be a billiard ball, and they thought individuals should be a billiard ball. No rough edges. I mean that was our shorthand analysis of it.

CARROLL: That's interesting.

COPENHAVER: And that eventually changed. I don't know how we did it, but we eventually got it changed.

CARROLL: I was reading that only in '58 was it required that incoming students take an SAT exam.

COPENHAVER: Is that right?

CARROLL: I thought that was interesting.

COPENHAVER: I'll be damned! I didn't know that.

CARROLL: It must have changed to a certain extent.

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes. Yes, it did. No, I didn't know that.

CARROLL: Well, you've seen the student body, really, since '53 all the way to '87. What's changed? What do you notice as changes?

COPENHAVER: Oh, I think they're more vibrant, and they're more scholarly, and they're more interesting. The classes in the early fifties, '55, '56, '57, were the dull classes. All they wanted to do was to be able to regurgitate. And that's difficult to teach.

CARROLL: Uh huh. It is.

COPENHAVER: You have to get them to think. While on the other hand, all the rioting going on in the sixties, late sixties, and seventies, those kids were good. Because I mean they wouldn't let you get away with a bit of crap.

CARROLL: I can see that.

COPENHAVER: And it put the faculty on their toes.

CARROLL: Well, it gets you in the habit of challenging authority.

COPENHAVER: That's right. That's right.

CARROLL: When you look at the campus today, and you see the diversity that's there, is this the logical outcome, then, of Kemeny? Or is this inevitable for all institutions? In other words, what role did he play?

COPENHAVER: I think without Kemeny it wouldn't have started.

[End of Tape 1, Side A – Beginning of Tape 1, Side B]

CARROLL: We were talking about what's changed, and you were saying you think it really has to do with Kemeny to a large degree.

COPENHAVER: I think he was the stimulus, the catalyst, that got it going. I don't think it would have happened without him. Or it wouldn't have happened then. It may have happened later. So that was my feeling.

CARROLL: What was his leadership style if you had to characterize it? Does any story come to mind or any moment where you could sort of say this is the way he governed?

COPENHAVER: He always tried to get consensus. But if he couldn't, and he'd decided it had to be done, he'd do it. Dickey was afraid of the faculty, honestly. But Kemeny, of course, wasn't.

CARROLL: He'd been one.

COPENHAVER: Yes. He'd been one, and he knew how to operate in such situations. So he would build consensus. But he made some mistakes, a few of them.

CARROLL: What were the mistakes?

COPENHAVER: Well, one--and I was right in the middle of it; I got caught right in the middle of it--he'd decided the first thing he was going to do was reorganize the faculty governance. So he set me up, the

duck, to establish a committee. We studied the organization of the faculty and came up with a proposition which was sort of like a senate instead of the full faculty. And he telegraphed what he wanted to the faculty. And of course the faculty didn't like that thing, because it was delegating authority to a smaller body. They loved to wrangle in the faculty meetings. So that got shot down.

CARROLL: Did anything come of it?

COPENHAVER: I don't think so. [Laughter]

CARROLL: A lot of work.

COPENHAVER: Yes, a lot of work. A lot of work.

CARROLL: Why did Kemeny want this smaller body?

COPENHAVER: Easier to govern. Easier to manipulate maybe. [Laughter]

CARROLL: What was the relationship between the faculty and the administration during the Kemeny years?

COPENHAVER: I think it was quite good. I mean he knew how the faculty operated. Dickey never really understood it. He tried. He was a good man. I don't want to knock him too much. And he did a signal job here when he was here. But Kemeny knew the faculty, and I think the relationship was quite good. Because actually one of their own was there. Now, not everybody liked Kemeny, but they recognized that he was brilliant. And knew how to do things.

CARROLL: Do you remember Jean Kemeny's presence on campus? What was her role?

COPENHAVER: Rather minor. Not like it should be, you see. But it was a lot different than Christina Dickey because she never came out of her shell at all. And Jean, as you know, is quite a dynamic individual. But in terms of the college as a whole, it wasn't too significant. You know, the usual president's wife job. But that was about it.

CARROLL: When you look at the Kemeny years and the fact that he was working so hard to modernize the institution; and then he stops

in the middle of it, and goes off, and he heads the Three Mile Island investigation for Carter. What happened on campus during the time that he was away?

COPENHAVER: Not much difference. It wasn't really-- He wasn't gone all the time, you see. But he had things pretty well in order.

CARROLL: Yes.

COPENHAVER: And he did that.

CARROLL: Was there a sort of pride on the part of the campus to have him--?

COPENHAVER: Probably. I think so. Yes.

CARROLL: Well, I've heard he came back, and he gave his report to the campus. Were you there?

COPENHAVER: If I was, I don't remember. Oh, I probably was, yes.

CARROLL: Were you surprised when he decided to retire?

COPENHAVER: Yes, I was hoping he'd stay a few more years. But, you know, you get to do so much, and then it's time to move on. And he went back into the faculty, you know. He went back to teaching. In fact he taught most of the time he was in the presidency, one course a year.

CARROLL: Was that successful for him to go back into the faculty?

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes, yes. I think so.

CARROLL: I just wonder what it would be like to be the next president.

COPENHAVER: And I think John was quite good in keeping out of the way. I don't think he ever went to a faculty meeting after that.

CARROLL: That was smart.

COPENHAVER: Yes, yes. He was smart.

CARROLL: There was a time, I guess, during the Kemeny years when the job of provost and dean of the college were one in the same, and then they got split apart. Do you know why that happened?

COPENHAVER: Well, because the provost by definition is supposed to be over the various schools. And if you have the dean of the faculty and the provost, one man wearing two hats--it's hard for him to be dean of the faculty, which really in his eyes is his first priority and also over the associated schools. So it was split, and it was wise. So now the provost is independent of the dean of the faculty but over him.

CARROLL: And then at this time, too, under Kemeny, there's a big expansion in the number of graduate programs, and the professional schools get a shot in the arm. How did that change the nature or the tenor of the campus? Or the teaching even?

COPENHAVER: Well, I think it improved the teaching as far as the undergraduate campus is concerned. The associate schools, as far as the eyes of the faculty of Arts & Sciences is concerned, have always been poor sisters. There was quite a bit of hassle in the faculty when the med school was expanded and re-funded. This would be under Dickey, of course. And about the worry of taking money out of the kitty. They finally were assured that that was not the case. And it wasn't really, not any significant amount.

CARROLL: But to have new graduate programs I would imagine you'd need to teach different kinds of classes.

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: And teach more?

COPENHAVER: And teach more.

CARROLL: Well, how did they accommodate that?

COPENHAVER: Well, we just taught more. [Laughter]

CARROLL: Did you get other slots?

COPENHAVER: Yes, we got some more faculty, but not enough. Not enough.

CARROLL: And then did one have to change strategies for library acquisitions or that kind of thing?

COPENHAVER: Not library acquisitions. We'd always been pretty good at that. No, we just had to provide some more space and effort. Because it takes effort to train graduate students. But it's rewarding because they are your progeny.

CARROLL: Did they ever teach, the graduate students?

COPENHAVER: We had them teaching in labs, and that's all. We've been very stern about that. We feel that Dartmouth students warrant the teachers. Sometimes the undergraduates were better than the teachers. I mean sometimes the grad students were better than the teachers. But, no. They only taught labs.

CARROLL: In 1974 the trustees voted to implement what they called Flexible Retirement Options for faculty from 50 to 62. Why did they decide to do that? Do you know what prompted that?

COPENHAVER: Yes. They wanted to get rid of some of the dead wood.

CARROLL: Did it work?

COPENHAVER: Uh huh.

CARROLL: Really?

COPENHAVER: Yes. I took it.

CARROLL: Oh no. You're not dead wood.

COPENHAVER: It worked. It gave them openings amongst-- What they found out was, much to their chagrin, that it cost as much to hire an assistant professor as they had paid the professor who was retiring early.

CARROLL: What I also wonder is if you don't lose the people who see it as an opportunity to do the research they've always wanted to do. So you don't lose the dead wood. You lose the active researchers.

COPENHAVER: Well, yes. I guess there's something to that. Well, dead wood maybe. But I think it's another way of rebuilding the faculty.

CARROLL: And it was successful, then, you think?

COPENHAVER: Well, I think so. There were some men who wouldn't quit until they were 70. But the two or three I knew were good teachers and good researchers. You have to remember by this time the faculty was so large that we didn't have any intimate contact with the department of government, for instance, other than through our social friends and things like that.

CARROLL: For years you served on the COP, the Committee on Policy and...

COPENHAVER: Organization.

CARROLL: What does that committee actually do? What is their mandate?

COPENHAVER: It's to see about the governance of the faculty, about rules and regulations for the governance of the faculty. That is, if they want to change something, the way the faculty is governed. It's to--for many cases, not all, but many cases--to nominate members to the other committees. And to pick the chairmen of the other committees.

CARROLL: So you have to have a good understanding of your colleagues.

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: What do you think the most significant thing that you did on the COP?

COPENHAVER: Kemeny, by far. Well, and we did-- You know you're taxing my memory for things I don't really hang onto.

CARROLL: I understand.

COPENHAVER: But there were two or three times when we did do some significant changes in the faculty rules and regulations. But mainly it was, you know, routine.

CARROLL: Were you on the COP when they had to reexamine the measures taken to censure faculty after some of the faculty were kicked off because of their participation in the Parkhurst takeover?

COPENHAVER: No, I wasn't.

CARROLL: Okay, that was later. Okay. And did the process for tenure ever come up for review when you were on the COP?

COPENHAVER: No. That may have been--if it did, it may have been done with the Committee of Advisors to the President [Committee Advisory to the President].

CARROLL: Okay.

COPENHAVER: I was on that once. I was on there for four years, but it wasn't done then. So I think that would have been the place that it would have been done, the Committee of Advisors to the President.

CARROLL: I was wondering-- I guess what changed was, talking about the nature of the judiciary, was the Committee on Standing and Conduct. Which was a sort of subcommittee, as I understand it, that Don Kreider was head of. Do you remember any of their conclusions on conduct?

COPENHAVER: Well, they put out that proposal--I mean that thing about fair play and things like that. No, I don't remember any of it, much of it. It was very busy at the time. [Laughter]

CARROLL: Yes, it was. I want to get back to the sort of diversification of the faculty. When they were hiring African-American professors-- and some of them they really went out to get--

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: How did they sell to the alums that this was a good idea? Do you remember?

COPENHAVER: I don't know. I don't have an answer to that. I think the alums, probably a lot of them objected. But that didn't make that much difference.

CARROLL: The faculty, were they behind this idea of aggressive recruitment?

COPENHAVER: As long as they were qualified.

CARROLL: Ah ha!

COPENHAVER: That's always the-- And in fact we did have one man in the music department who--

CARROLL: Bill [William] Cole?

COPENHAVER: No. Yes! Bill Cole. Who was borderline.

CARROLL: But did not stay.

COPENHAVER: That's right. Well, I think-- But, you know--who's the man in the English department, so good.

CARROLL: Bill [William] Cook.

COPENHAVER: Bill Cook. Tremendous. And Ray in sociology.

CARROLL: [Raymond] Hall.

COPENHAVER: Hall, Ray Hall. But, you see, it's awfully hard to keep the blacks here on this isolated New England campus because they don't have any group to relate to.

CARROLL: It is. I can see that. And was it a little bit hard to keep women, too, initially, when they came up here?

COPENHAVER: Yes. Uh huh. Yes, it was. Particularly if they were single. And if they were married, it was almost impossible because-- We had a nepotism rule at this place for a long time.

CARROLL: Oh, really!

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes. And it not only applied within departments, it applied across campus. And they had to get rid of that, of course.

CARROLL: There's nothing else up here.

COPENHAVER: That's right. So, you know, they had to look to hire the husband and the wife. No, they had a nepotism rule. In fact when I was chairman of the biology department--chairman of the zoology department, in fact--we hired a man named Mel Spiegel as our embryologist, and his wife, Evelyn, was a very well-known

embryologist, cell cytologist. And we couldn't get her an appointment except as a research associate. We finally got her an appointment as a research professor, but that was quite a bit later.

CARROLL: Do you think you lost people because of that, because of those limited possibilities?

COPENHAVER: Yes. I think so. Probably still are losing people that way. You see if you go to Boston and you hire the husband at Tufts, the wife can get a job at Brandeis or Harvard or, you know. You can't do that here.

CARROLL: There's not much else.

COPENHAVER: Although one of my neighbors, he has an appointment here, and his wife has an appointment at the University of Colorado.

CARROLL: That's long-distance commuting.

COPENHAVER: That's right.

CARROLL: When the women began to be hired in great numbers in teaching--I've spoken to Marysa Navarro, and Marysa swears that it was hard to get the male students to listen to the female voice. Have you ever heard that before?

COPENHAVER: I'm not surprised. I haven't heard it, but I'm not surprised. I think that's right. It was. I mean I wouldn't doubt it at all. Marysa knows.

CARROLL: I wouldn't contradict her.

COPENHAVER: Oh, no. Not very easily. No, I think that's probably true, in that respect. And it happened in class, too, at the beginning. When a woman did speak up, she wasn't regarded well. It happened the first few years.

CARROLL: Did you have to wait until the-- I'm wondering, you have a student body, when you initially started coeducation, who came and accepted--or admitted themselves--to this institution thinking it was going to be all male, were they at all resentful?

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes. Mmmm hmmm. Yes. It just took a generation. By that I mean four years.

CARROLL: Yes, right.

COPENHAVER: To get that weeded out. But we didn't have nearly as much trouble as Yale and Princeton, not nearly as much.

CARROLL: I wonder why.

COPENHAVER: Princeton because of the clubs, I think.

CARROLL: Mmmm hmmm. The eating clubs?

COPENHAVER: Yes, the eating clubs. And Yale, I'm not sure. I don't know. But we had not nearly as much trouble. Of course Pembroke and Brown and Radcliffe and Harvard were naturals, so that they were already mixing in classes. So they had that advantage. But we had trouble with the Dartmouth haunt.

CARROLL: Well, there's also the fraternity problem that keeps cropping up again and again in women's complaints. Was anything ever done to try to curb the fraternities in some way?

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes. But I'm not really too familiar with it. I mean they switched their pledge time around several times during these last ten or 15 years. Freshman spring, sophomore fall. But I don't know about-- You know, it's been hard. The fraternities are kind of--think they're self-sufficient.

CARROLL: What role do you think the fraternities play in the campus life?

COPENHAVER: Well, it's a social center. But it's also self-fulfilling, I mean the groups. I think we'd be better off without them. But we'd have to have something to replace them. I mean there's a natural inclination to group together. And you just have to think of something.

CARROLL: What role does alcohol play, do you think, in the social life?

COPENHAVER: Quite a bit. Not as much as Animal House, but quite a bit. And I'm not sure but what it's better now than it used to be. One of my sons who went here was in a fraternity here, Psi U, I guess, it was. It's the white one behind Dick's House. And halfway

through senior year he moved home because he just got sick of it.

CARROLL: That's a refreshing thought. You had a son who went here. What year was he?

COPENHAVER: 'Seventy-seven--no, '76 [Eric C. Copenhaver '76]. My daughter was '77 [Lisa C. Copenhaver '77]. And I had a son who was '71 or '72 [John H. Copenhaver III '72 TU '75]. I forget. He--

CARROLL: You have a son who was here when it was all male, and you have a son who was here when it was coed. Did they compare notes?

COPENHAVER: Oh, I don't think so. I'm sure my son who was coed liked it better that way. And my daughter was coed, too, at that time.

CARROLL: Did she ever talk to you about problems that she faced as a woman on campus?

COPENHAVER: Not too much. She's the kind of woman who really can roll with it and does--handles things quite well. Oh yes, she talked about it a little bit, but there was nothing serious with her. Of course she was a townie, so she knew the campus. It wasn't something new to her.

CARROLL: There were no surprises.

COPENHAVER: No surprises. No. Although she was very upset when they assigned her to Wigwam. [Laughter] But she got to love it. She was just in tears. She wanted to be on campus. Because Wigwam wasn't on campus.

CARROLL: It's far away.

COPENHAVER: But she loved it.

CARROLL: Did any of your children consider another institution, or were they all for Dartmouth?

COPENHAVER: Well, our oldest son, he was quite immature when he graduated from high school. So we wouldn't let him apply here. He applied to several, and he got into Colorado College. And then he wasn't doing anything, so he went in the Army. And when he

came back from the Army, he applied here and was accepted. So he didn't come here directly. Our two middle daughters weren't able to come here.

CARROLL: That's quite a family.

COPENHAVER: Five, yes.

CARROLL: Do you think they got a good education?

COPENHAVER: Yes, I think so. None of them were stellar stars, but-

CARROLL: Not everyone can be.

COPENHAVER: No. But the girl has gone on to get her master's in labor and industrial relations and her law degree. The oldest boy went here in Tuck and is in international banking. They got a good education. They weren't Phi Betes, but....

CARROLL: Do you think that the education that the students receive today, how does it differ from the education that you got when you were here?

COPENHAVER: Oh, it couldn't hold a candle to it. When I was a student here, the education wasn't very good. I did most of it myself. When I came back here on the faculty, it was better. And we've made it better. In the seventies it was much better. You can always find lemons. What we did do over the period of retirements, in time, we got rid of the gut courses. But we had to wait. I don't know if there are any guts now. You'll have to ask the students.

CARROLL: That's right. I'm sure there must be one or two. They always find them.

COPENHAVER: Yes, that's right.

CARROLL: There was a time, as I understand it, in the sixties--or maybe it was the seventies--when there were no requirements across campus. And then there seems to have been--

COPENHAVER: No requirements as far as--?

CARROLL: Distributional requirements. I met somebody who told me they never took a science course their whole time here at Dartmouth in the seventies because they didn't have to. They regretted it.

COPENHAVER: You know that's news to me. I don't remember that, if it did happen.

CARROLL: I just wondered because now, of course, there are distributionals.

COPENHAVER: Yes, yes. Oh, yes. We went through that rigmarole several times. Well, if...

CARROLL: It could be just that this person's recollection is faulty.

COPENHAVER: I don't remember that. I think I would have. Maybe they got around it somehow.

CARROLL: Well, I'm sure you know that the sciences now are very, very popular on campus.

COPENHAVER: Yes, I know it.

CARROLL: What do you think has caused that?

COPENHAVER: I don't have any idea. The biology department has the largest number of majors it ever had, and they're not all premed. I mean previously we would always have, you know, substantial--40 majors--and 80 to 90 percent of them were premed. But now I take it it's not-- Still a lot of premeds, but not that heavy. And I don't understand it. Well, the fact of this gene manipulation and things like that has trickled down into the schools, and they're excited about it. And they know a lot more. I mean I remember I couldn't teach now the biochemistry I taught in the fifties. It just wouldn't go; it would be too far behind times.

CARROLL: Do you remember when computers began to arrive in the offices? When was that?

COPENHAVER: Oh, early sixties. I remember one particular story of computers. The kids were conversant with them, and I wasn't yet. So I had a class in biochemistry--a lab in biochemistry--where they had to figure out certain things. And they'd bring their computer

program to me and ask me what was wrong with it, and I looked at it, and I couldn't read it. So I get my slide rule out, and I say, "Here's the answer." They couldn't read the slide rule.
[Laughter]

CARROLL: It was the clash of the times.

COPENHAVER: That's right. Of course now you never see a slide rule.

CARROLL: That's right. That's right. Yes, that's true. Do you think that the teaching has changed in the sciences over these years?

COPENHAVER: Well, if you go over the long span, yes. Because there's just more of the science information there. And the students are brighter--or at least they're farther along in sciences when they come here. You've got to give some credit to the private and public schools in this respect. So I think that's better. And, you know, we know more.

CARROLL: And does one teach differently with these new fields?

COPENHAVER: Yes. Oh, yes. More and more of the information that we have goes down into the introductory courses. And I think we're teaching here at Dartmouth at the upper-undergraduate level courses that you would get in graduate programs elsewhere. The students are well trained. At least I know in the biology department they are.

CARROLL: Now, Dartmouth was one of the first places to really use the computer extensively. Did that affect the sciences at all?

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes. It lets you gather information better and quicker. And keep track of more things instead of putting it up here and up there and forget about it.

CARROLL: Do they teach with computer models now?

COPENHAVER: I don't know. You know I've been out of it for ten years. At that time I was leaving computers were just coming into the laboratory, student laboratories, as teaching models. So I can't answer that question. I don't know.

CARROLL: Sounds good. Were the sciences affected at all by the year-round plan that was implemented?

COPENHAVER: Yes, adversely. Because particularly the field scientists used the summer for their research. Didn't make much difference to the laboratory scientists like myself. But it was hard on the field scientists. And we didn't offer many field courses in the summer, which was the ideal time to do it because it was probably the only time these men--people--could do their research. I think we've rectified that now--I'm not really sure of it--since we require the sophomore class to be here in the summer.

CARROLL: Right.

COPENHAVER: But that came later on.

CARROLL: The idea of taking a 14-week class, and making it a nine-week class was able to be accommodated by the sciences?

COPENHAVER: It was hard. It was hard because, you know, it takes two weeks for a fruit fly to hatch. [Laughter]

CARROLL: You're a few generations short by the end.

COPENHAVER: That's right. It was hard, but we accomplished it. It wasn't easy.

CARROLL: I wondered, because the professors in the humanities and the social sciences do and still complain.

COPENHAVER: Yes. Well, of course, there is a legitimate complaint, but I think it was worth it. I mean after all, a student takes a while to digest and integrate the information. So it does take time. But I think it worked out for the best. The advantage was they only had three courses instead of four or five.

CARROLL: That's true. They could concentrate a bit more on them.

COPENHAVER: Mmmm hmmm. But it was concentrated. But I think it's been all well and good.

CARROLL: So many of this most recent building in the last 20 years has been buildings for the sciences in one way or another. Is that inevitable when you're trying to keep up in a rapidly changing field?

COPENHAVER: Yes, it's an equipment-intensive field--fields. I mean it's more than a library. Because you have to have teaching labs and research labs.

CARROLL: Which do you think is the most successful building for the sciences here on campus?

COPENHAVER: Well, I really don't know the chemistry building well enough, but it looks like it.

CARROLL: Oh, you think so.

COPENHAVER: Yes. We were very successful, too. Because I tell you what happened there. I was chairman of the department at that time, and we had a committee of three faculty members who had to okay every single blueprint before it could go in.

CARROLL: So it was a building built for the scientists.

COPENHAVER: Yes. And by them in a lot of respects. We had the final say on where every electric outlet was, down to that. The architect didn't like it, but it made a difference, we think. So for its time--which is now 20-, 30-some years ago--we did a good job. But I think the chemistry building looks like a good building, too.

CARROLL: It certainly has a state of the art...

COPENHAVER: Yes. Mmmm hmmm.

CARROLL: Did the rise of interdisciplinary majors affect the sciences at all? This is something you read about in the seventies and into the eighties.

COPENHAVER: I don't think so. I don't think so.

CARROLL: You didn't get people coming through asking to combine--?

COPENHAVER: Oh, we always had that. But we always had people who had, say, combined biology and psych majors or biology and chemistry or things like that. But not biology and English, but, you know.... I don't think it really affected them very much.

CARROLL: I just realized we already talked about coeducation. When you look around the campus today, it really is striking how many minorities there are.

COPENHAVER: Mmmm hmmm.

CARROLL: And I wonder how you think that's changed the campus.

COPENHAVER: I wish the African-Americans weren't so exclusive. But it has changed the campus, and to the better. But I do regret that.

CARROLL: Were there any problems when these, especially African-Americans, began to come to campus? I'm thinking of surrounding areas.

COPENHAVER: No.

CARROLL: You never read anything about it?

COPENHAVER: No, no. In fact there were some good problems. There was a heroin distributor in town at one time a few years ago, and a group of the African-Americans went down and visited him, and he never came back. [Laughter]

CARROLL: I see. There was also-- Assistant professor of anthropology, Hoyt Alverson, came up with a report in 1970 where he said that urban--the children from urban areas--were under-represented on campus. Was anything ever done about that?

COPENHAVER: Well, you remember--I don't know; you've probably done a lot of research--but you remember we had an ABC Program in Jersey City.

CARROLL: A Better Chance.

COPENHAVER: Yes. And we had an ABC Program here on campus--or in a house down on East Wheelock. And through that, from the inner city, we filled in some people in here.

CARROLL: Do you want to just talk a little bit about what the ABC Program was and what its goals were?

COPENHAVER: Well, as near as I could figure out, it was to get some young people who were--and I guess it was all males for a long time--who were--

[End of Tape 1, side B -- Beginning of Tape 2, side A]

CARROLL: Okay. You were talking about the ABC Program and how it worked.

COPENHAVER: So they would identify in the inner cities--and that mechanism I do not know--and bring them in Jersey City to this special training school of education, where they lived, I think. I know they had a house there. And they lived there, and then they had tutorial work from the high school. And then the students would go on to other schools.

CARROLL: Undergraduate institutions or to high schools?

COPENHAVER: Well, I'm not sure but what they didn't have prep schools as an intermediate.

CARROLL: Okay.

COPENHAVER: Maybe some of them did. Maybe some of them came right-- Depends probably where they got them when they were young. But they were tied into prep schools, I know, and some of them came here. But I'm not really conversant as to whether they came here via prep schools or directly out of Jersey City. I know some came from Jersey City, but what their route was, I don't know.

CARROLL: Yes. And then that was one way to bring inner-city kids up to the level of prep school kids.

COPENHAVER: Yes.

CARROLL: And then what was the Bridge Program? Do you remember that?

COPENHAVER: Vaguely, vaguely. Wasn't it a summer here before the students were officially admitted? Yes.

CARROLL: That didn't seem to last as long as the ABC Program.

COPENHAVER: No, I know that. And I don't know why. I don't know why. Maybe it wasn't effective.

CARROLL: About the time, the very end of the Kemeny years, the Dartmouth Review was founded. I'm wondering, what do you think promoted its founding? Do you know any of the background?

COPENHAVER: No, not much.

CARROLL: What was the effect of it?

COPENHAVER: Oh, most people thought it was a radical rag. And, you know, outside money on it. Which it was--is. Of course [Dinesh] D'Souza went on to be on The Wall Street Journal, which is a nice place for him. It created quite a ruckus.

CARROLL: What do you think the effect has been on campus?

COPENHAVER: The effect has been greater on the alumni than it has on the campus.

CARROLL: Oh, you think so?

COPENHAVER: Oh, yes. It's the alumni who subscribe to it.

CARROLL: And see it as gospel?

COPENHAVER: See it as something they like. I don't know how much effect it had on campus. A lot of students are upset. But some of them just were indifferent. It did have quite an effect when they went after [President James O.] Freedman. You know, had this Mein Kampf. Students objected to that.

CARROLL: What do you think it reflects on the campus?

COPENHAVER: Well, the campus has always been--the students have always been--more conservative than the faculty. Just where they came from. So the student body is by their background. I mean many of them are still lost.

CARROLL: Or perhaps aspiring.

COPENHAVER: Yes. All right. Yes.

End of Part One