Ruth Adams

Vice-President of Dartmouth College, Emerita

An Interview Conducted by

Jane Carroll

Hanover, New Hampshire

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INTERVIEW: Ruth Adams

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ADAMS: ...staff. All female activity at the institution.

CARROLL: Would you be in the center of the decision-making on this? One voice of many? How was the power to be distributed here?

ADAMS: Much of it had been done before I arrived. And I assume that you've spoken to Professor [Marysa] Navarro.

CARROLL: I will be, yes.

ADAMS: And Marilyn Baldwin Austin. And you have...Are you?

CARROLL: Yes, I will be.

ADAMS: And Lu [Lucretia] Martin. A great deal of the initial planning was before I came to Hanover, and John [Kemeny] turned to those women on his staff for both the practicalities and the spirit of the thing. They did yeoman work, though I suppose "yeoman" is the wrong noun to use.

CARROLL: Yeowomen worked.

ADAMS: Mmmm hmmm.

CARROLL: What goals did you set out for yourself when you first came to Dartmouth?

ADAMS: The first goal, I suppose, was the comfort and ease of the undergraduates. Second goal was an increase, as much as possible, in the number of women on the faculty. The third goal, which was, I suppose, thrust upon me rather than conceived--we wasted a third one--an attempt to dilute, modify, impress the social life on the campus. Physical facilities you didn't have to worry about much, although I would like to pay tribute to Seaver Peters [‘54] who had to assimilate women into the physical education and sports program. And that was not only a matter of attitude, that was a matter of construction. He had to produce locker rooms, bathrooms,

courts, the whole thing. And he was very farsighted and planned very well. And you are going to speak to Aggie [Agnes Bixler] Kurtz?

CARROLL: Absolutely.

ADAMS: Mmmm hmmm. He got Aggie to come. He couldn't get a better person to come in. His planning was impressive, and there was no reluctance about it. Well, he didn't have much option, did he? In terms of women faculty, I think the plurality of the departments were open to adding women to their staff, not all of them. And some faculty were charmingly anxious to do something for women. There was a man in the Music Department who came in absolutely bubbling. He was a pianist himself, and he wanted to do a whole series of recitals: music written by women. Mostly Clara Schumann, of course. [Laughter]

CARROLL: Of course.

ADAMS: And another problem for department chairmen and faculty was that they didn't have a network. They really didn't know, aside from writing chairmen of departments at universities that were producing Ph.D.'s, they didn't know how to get in touch with women. So it was--the accomplishments that they made were impressive, and they certainly got good people.

CARROLL: Did they try to bring in many lateral appointments?

ADAMS: No, not really. They did have a couple of senior people. Brenda Silver--are you going to speak to Brenda Silver?

CARROLL: Yes.

ADAMS: Brenda was one of them. The senior appointments came later in the plurality of the departments. I suppose at your most skeptical [level] you could say that they wanted to produce a female figure to walk around.

CARROLL: So mentoring then, for the younger women faculty, was really done by the senior male faculty.

ADAMS: What there was of it.

CARROLL: What there was. Was that a problem?

ADAMS: I think they felt lonesome. And so the mentoring, in an odd way, was across departments rather than within departments. And a good bit of mentoring was done by people like Lu Martin.

CARROLL: Mmmm hmmm. I can believe that. When you came here, did the job match up, the reality of it, to your preconceived notions before you got here?

ADAMS: Yes. I don't think anything surprised me particularly. I had been through this once before. When I was at the University of Rochester initially, there was a college for women and two miles away there was a beautiful campus and a college for men. And we got an enterprising president who said, "This is ridiculous. The students are doing nothing but ride buses, and faculty are never being able to find a place to park on the other campus." So he melded--he moved the women's college, lock, stock, and barrel, and built a big dormitory, over to the other side of town. So I knew what it was like to see the physical arrangements. The Rochester arrangement was that if you were faculty on one campus, you taught at the other campus. So I was used to having men and women in a classroom. I think I wasn't prepared for the hostility of alumni and the hostility of young men who, understandably, had contracted to go to a men's college and found that the ground rules had changed in the middle of the game.

CARROLL: Of course. Lu Martin said I should get you to tell me the tale of what happened at the Albany Alumni Club. Would you be willing to do that?

ADAMS: I don't remember it except as something that was very unpleasant. I was useful. They could put me on the road. And I also represented to the public that Dartmouth was taking coeducation seriously to get at least a title of some consequence on the campus. The men were just nasty. Of course Dartmouth alumni was all men. And I don't really remember what words were used. But certainly the attitude was of total hostility.

CARROLL: So that their anger at the college became manifested in their anger towards you.

ADAMS: Well, logically I was, you know, <u>the</u> top woman on the campus. So let's throw all the spears at her.

CARROLL: Was this mostly from alumni? Or were there also administrators within the college who were not comfortable having a woman in power?

ADAMS: I didn't find that to be true. I found it with the alumni.

CARROLL: Well, I think sometimes alumni wish to see their institution in amber; they never wish to have it change.

ADAMS: Their minds changed considerably when their granddaughters wanted to come.

CARROLL: Now, you had some funds at your disposal that were supposed to be used, I gather, to encourage coeducation?

ADAMS: Well, it was, I think, more directed at bringing to campus women who would have to be taken seriously as speakers or as examples. I remember when we brought Althea Gibson to campus. Do you know who she was?

CARROLL: Yes.

ADAMS: She both did, you know, demonstrations and taught some courses. She was a very impressive woman and a very nice woman. And then we would get other lecturers here, there, and elsewhere. One of the interesting things about 1972 is that it was pre-feminist. And you begin to get women self-conscious about their femininity. That's the wrong word, but self-conscious about being women, later on and in the early, very early, seventies.

CARROLL: Well, some of the first women, I gather, were transfers from the Twelve College Exchange. Is that right?

ADAMS: Yes. Prior to the coming of coeducation, for two years the College had an exchange program. And then when it became coeducational, some of those young women, instead of returning to their home campus, decided to transfer to Dartmouth. It was a good thing because it did give you a very thin veneer of upper-class women.

CARROLL: That's right. Did your sister institutions take umbrage at all at this raiding of their student body?

ADAMS: There weren't that many. It was totally unlike what I went through at Wellesley when Yale announced it would open graciously its doors to young women who wanted to come. King [President Kingman] Brewster creamed off my junior and senior class, you know, Barnard's junior and senior class. Cleaned up Holyoke's junior and senior class. And we were--each lady president at one of those institutions would get on the telephone again. And he would say blandly, "But, Ruth, if they really want to come, I can't say, no."

CARROLL: A very slick character.

ADAMS: He was. A very nice character.

CARROLL: You had commented to Jere Daniell [‘55] that some women, you felt, wished that you had been more aggressive.

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: I was wondering, for what did they wish you to fight?

ADAMS: It's sort of intangible. They wanted equality, and they were being tolerated.

CARROLL: Ah! They wanted you to change minds.

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: Who among the faculty and the trustees--I'm thinking also of the administration here, too--were most favorably inclined toward coeducation?

ADAMS: Well, the trustees had voted it, so they were favorably inclined. And of course it was all John's [Kemeny] idea. Leonard Rieser [‘44] was very much in favor of things. Bill Davis. The deans of the other schools--engineering, medicine, and business--supported the idea, but didn't have to handle it themselves. [Laughter] You know. I can think of no one in administration who was at all hostile or ever voiced any suggestion of hostility. They knew they were in it. This was what it was going to be. So you make it work.

CARROLL: Okay. Who made the decision, and why did they make the decision, to admit 25 percent those first years, 25 percent of the freshmen to be women?

ADAMS: I've no idea. I suspect it was a concoction of John Kemeny and Eddie [Chamberlain ‘36]...

CARROLL: Chamberlain?

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: Okay. And then by '79 they went to sex-blind admissions, as I understand. What prompted that change?

ADAMS: Well, it was working out, and they didn't have to ration positions. It was fairer. And now, I suppose, it's hilarious when we get more women than men in an entering freshman class.

CARROLL: That happened this year.

ADAMS: Mmmm hmmm.

CARROLL: The problems that those students who came, those first women students, faced on campus, how would you describe them?

ADAMS: I think they were primarily social problems. Some of the young men were extremely nasty. Some of the faculty were hostile. Some of the faculty tsk tsk tsk--we didn't have the phrase then--there were incidents of sexual harassment.

CARROLL: Oh. That's the phrase I was going to get to eventually. Did you have to handle that when it came up?

ADAMS: I never handled it directly because I didn't think that was appropriate. But if a girl came in and talked to me about somebody who was pawing her, I then went to the department chairman because that is the proper source of discipline for department members.

CARROLL: I've been told of an incident in 1973 by a then undergraduate where an obscene letter was slipped under the door of each coed in Woodward Hall. Is that an unusual occurrence, or were incidents like that more frequent?

ADAMS: They were more frequent, yes. Posters, songs, that sort of thing.

CARROLL: And this must have alarmed the administration to a certain degree.

ADAMS: I don't know that alarm is the right word. It was a major concern. And you can only attack something like that by talking to young people. If you have an anonymous letter, you can't discipline the anonymous letter-writer.

CARROLL: Did Kemeny address this problem at all, in what I gather were almost weekly radio broadcasts that he did out of the student radio station, WDCR?

ADAMS: He did from time to time. I'll give you an instance from the very beginning that I remember. We had our first fall convocation of coeducation, and John began it by saying: "Women and men of Dartmouth...." And the place broke into an uproar. He was also--John knew about symbols--concerned about the alma mater, which is all about men of Dartmouth with the granite in their brains. And he tried to enliven, resuscitate, bring into use, that other Dartmouth song [Dartmouth Undying], which is a long and dreary thing, but nobody liked that. But the convocation was to close with that new, suggested alma mater. And there was a group of fraternity young men up in the gallery who the minute that began, at the top of their lungs begin to sing, "Men of Dartmouth."

CARROLL: Oh, my heavens! Did they drown out everyone? Or were they a refrain in the background?

ADAMS: No. It was a marvelous sort of Bachian counterpoint.

CARROLL: [Laughter] When Dartmouth announced they were going to go coed, Edward Chamberlain says that they were flooded with applications from women. And what I'm wondering is, what were the criteria that developed for admitting women?

ADAMS: You'd have to ask Eddie that.

CARROLL: Okay. I will do so. I was just curious if that had developed in consultation with you.

ADAMS: No.

CARROLL: Before you came, they had talked about establishing an associated school for women, across the river sometime it was supposed to be. Was that still in the air as a viable alternative?

ADAMS: No.

CARROLL: No. They shelved that.

ADAMS: They shelved that.

CARROLL: Did the curriculum change at all when more women came on the campus?

ADAMS: In the first years, no. But then when feminist impulses began, yes, of course there were changes. But there were also changes with respect to Afro-American students, Latinos of whom we have very few. And with the

interests of some of the new, younger faculty who wanted to do their specialty.

CARROLL: The change in curriculum, perhaps, came more from the female faculty rather than the students?

ADAMS: I think so.

CARROLL: Okay. What was the impact on social life of coeducation?

ADAMS: Well, of course, the fraternities are the core of social life. And the men, of course, still--as they still do--prefer dates with off-campus.

CARROLL: Imported.

ADAMS: Imports. Or road trips. Yes. The social life for women, I felt, was not very good because it was fraternity-centered. It worked better in sports. Because there women could have a cadre, a group, with a common interest, and get a feeling of companionship and team and so on and so forth. There were futile attempts to have dormitory social life. But the dormitories were constructed so that there were no rooms in which you could have any social life. I think one of the best things that has happened around here is Collis [Center], because it gave an alternative, an informal alternative, to going over to the dining hall all the time. That was one thing that changed. Menus got lighter.

CARROLL: Oh, really!

ADAMS: Oh, sure.

CARROLL: And the fundraising. I know initially they said there were problems. How long did that last after coeducation was established?

ADAMS: Well, I think they still get letters saying, "I'm never going to give another dollar to Dartmouth with all those women." But that's from the troglodytes back in the old ages. Oh, I think a decade perhaps. This had to be eroded. And, as I said before, when the first granddaughter applied, it disappeared from that family.

CARROLL: Did the curriculum change because of the women into a year round plan [Dartmouth Plan], or was that already established?

ADAMS: That was already in John's mind. Because he didn't want to build another dormitory. He wanted to increase the size of the undergraduate body. He

wanted to have women. That year-round plan was something he and his colleagues had blocked out easily a year before coeducation.

CARROLL: Did they implement it simultaneously with coeducation? Is that why it's become linked in people's minds?

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: Oh, that's it. Okay. Now, I want to turn just for a minute...I wanted to ask about the fraternities, and then I'm going to turn to the women faculty. Was there ever any talk of eliminating the fraternities?

ADAMS: No.

CARROLL: Never?

ADAMS: No. But then there was the creation of a couple of weak little female sororities.

CARROLL: Ah, yes. The alternative. What I'm wondering about is when you read the newspaper from those initial days of coeducation, the letters to the editor from the women tend to be very anti-fraternity. Did the fraternities feel assaulted in any way or endangered by this?

ADAMS: No.

CARROLL: No?

ADAMS: No. They were top dog, you see. The women, of course, resented them because they were contemptuous, patronizing, insulting, and harassing. I mean when you have--In the old days they used to have snow sculptures. And when a fraternity puts mounds of snow on its front lawn in the form of women's breasts, you don't particularly like it.

CARROLL: Do you think it's gotten better over the years?

ADAMS: I think so.

CARROLL: A lot of the fraternities now are coed.

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: Which I think must have helped to some degree.

ADAMS: Mmmm hmmm.

CARROLL: I want to turn now to the women faculty, to a certain degree. Were their classes well attended when they came?

ADAMS: Oh, sure.

CARROLL: There was never a feeling among the student body of avoiding them?

ADAMS: No, no.

CARROLL: I've heard Marysa Navarro speak of...

ADAMS: She's marvelous!

CARROLL: Isn't she! Speak specifically about her feeling when she first got here that her voice did not carry authority because it was not male. And that she had more problems with her male students. Did anyone else ever complain about that?

ADAMS: Not that I heard. Marysa was picked on. There is no doubt about that, more than any other woman on the faculty. Of course she comes across strong.

CARROLL: Yes.

ADAMS: You could hear her voice, I think, down to West Lebanon. Marysa is not a modest violet. And she put a good case for her own studies, she put a good case for women. And she also taught her subject matter in a proper scholarly way.

CARROLL: There was in 1970 a big discussion among the newspapers and magazines that faculty were leaving Dartmouth because their salaries were the lowest in the Ivy. What I'm wondering is, was that being addressed when you came here?

ADAMS: No. No, I never heard any faculty salary discussions. Except in the normal way that every faculty in every institution is never satisfied in fact.

CARROLL: This is true. Did they make any attempt to raise the salaries at all; do you know, to promote upstanding young women faculty?

ADAMS: No. And I don't think it would have been a good thing. Because if you want the war of the sexes, just try that one. “She's getting more than I am because she's a woman?” Mmm mmm. No. They had enough sense.

CARROLL: Was there any pressure to quickly promote the younger women faculty?

ADAMS: No, because there are faculty rules. You have to have certain qualifications. You have to have a certain period in a rank. No, there were no exceptions.

CARROLL: Now, there are always difficult tenure cases. This is the nature of the beast. The one that comes up and everyone mentions is Joan Smith. Is this the case from 1978?

ADAMS: No.

CARROLL: She was a professor of sociology who sued Dartmouth for professional discrimination in tenure. Was that typical or atypical? And how did the community react to her case?

ADAMS: You mean typical at Dartmouth?

CARROLL: For women who did not get tenure, was it typical for them then to file suit against the College?

ADAMS: No.

CARROLL: She was unusual then.

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: Was there support for her among the other women faculty for this?

ADAMS: Some. Not universal. No. I have to say a horrible thing, and you'll delete this from the tape. She wasn't very good.

CARROLL: And so there was not a sense of being demoralized on the part of the female faculty because of the Joan Smith case?

ADAMS: No. They were angry, because as a person she was very likable, and people enjoyed Joan. She had support from a great many of the women. But it was a department decision and a tenure committee decision. It may have been the wrong one; I don't know.

CARROLL: There's also then what came to be known as the spouse problem. It was described to me by Leonard Rieser as the fact that the younger faculty came with spouses equally well educated to an area with very few employment possibilities. When did this first become a problem here?

ADAMS: I don't know that I can put a time on it. And it's not an exclusively Dartmouth problem, except for the location. I'm trying to think of an instance of that.

CARROLL: The name that came up to me was Brunetta Wolfman. Is that who you're thinking of?

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: I don't know that story. Leonard just mentioned that in passing.

ADAMS: Well, she didn't stay very long because Brunetta went off to Boston.

CARROLL: Was there a perception on the part of the college that they were perhaps losing some of their faculty because spouses were discontent up here?

ADAMS: I never heard it articulated. The only case I can think of was a couple who were living together without benefit of marriage and in the same department. And she was let go, and he had the option to stay. And after a year he went, too.

[End Tape 1, Side A - Begin Tape 1, Side B]

CARROLL: The college never had what they call a spouse policy where they give some preference to spouses who are isolated up here. Did that come up during your time?

ADAMS: No. That's later.

CARROLL: Okay. Then you helped to found what's called the Women's Affairs Committee?

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: What was that?

ADAMS: If a woman had a concern, she could come to this group, which met with considerable regularity. Sometimes initiated its own concerns and sometimes responded to ones from students. It was a safety valve for the women who had concerns. They knew that there was someplace they could go for that specific audience to hear it. I don't think that it molded and shaped anything in particular. But it was a safety valve.

CARROLL: Who was on it?

ADAMS: Oh, Lord! I don't remember. You'd have to look that up.

CARROLL: Was it faculty or administration or students?

ADAMS: Both. All.

CARROLL: All of those. Uh huh. And they undertook to--? When there was a problem, did they undertake to smooth it over?

ADAMS: Or to get to the bottom of it. And they had the contacts that perhaps an individual wouldn't have. So they could go around and do the talking to the people who should be taking care of it anyhow.

CARROLL: Does anything come to mind as its most successful moment?

ADAMS: Pardon?

CARROLL: Does anything come to mind, an event, as a successful moment for the Women's Affairs Committee?

ADAMS: I'm afraid not.

CARROLL: Okay. What happened to it?

ADAMS: It melted.

CARROLL: Because?

ADAMS: I suppose because it no longer really was functioning in any kind of consequential way.

CARROLL: Did the women's studies concentration, and then later the department--how did that get founded?

ADAMS: I think you'd have to talk to Marysa and Marilyn Austin, who were the sparkplugs of that particular thing.

CARROLL: Okay.

ADAMS: That's just a program and not a department.

CARROLL: Did the women's studies concentration have a specific role on campus for promoting an agenda?

ADAMS: No, it just wanted women's studies.

CARROLL: [Laughter] That's an agenda of a kind.

ADAMS: [Laughter] That's big enough.

CARROLL: That's right. Was there any resistance to that?

ADAMS: Oh, some people thought it was silly, but not resistance. It was just sort of an all right, girls, if you want to go ahead and do that, go ahead and do it. I myself find it a dubious discipline.

CARROLL: Was it the path breaker? Or was it the same time that the African-American studies was founded?

ADAMS: About the same time.

CARROLL: And the Native American studies as well?

ADAMS: Had been earlier.

CARROLL: Had been earlier, okay. With all of those catering to a very specific segment of the Dartmouth population, was there ever any resentment among alumni at their existence or the funding that they would draw?

ADAMS: Yes. But it wasn't as vociferous or strident as the resistance that coeducation per se had been.

CARROLL: Did the alumni have a similar negative attitude towards the introduction--increasing introduction--of Native Americans and blacks?

ADAMS: Native Americans, no. Blacks, perhaps to a degree.

CARROLL: There had been of course before the ABC Program, A Better Chance Program, here.

ADAMS: Yes. Mmmm hmmm.

CARROLL: When did that--when was the demise of that program? Do you know?

ADAMS: Must have been about '73 or '74, early on.

CARROLL: And what brought about the demise of that program?

ADAMS: That you'd have to ask somebody in the central office because I really don't know. I think--I conjecture--that Dartmouth may have felt it was doing everything it could with these changes in population--Indians, blacks, women, those few little Latinos around--and didn't need it anymore. But I'm not sure about that.

CARROLL: I read a statistic once that said that the female minority students had a much greater percentage of success here at Dartmouth than the male students. Do you have any idea why that would be?

ADAMS: Natural superiority of women.

CARROLL: [Laughter] That's an answer I'm certainly willing to accept. I guess what I'm really questioning is whether there was an equal resistance on the part of white males on campus to black males as there was against women?

ADAMS: No, no.

CARROLL: Okay.

ADAMS: There wasn't.

CARROLL: In 1974 there was a Native American Council that was established. What prompted that?

ADAMS: Again, perfectly understandable need for young people of a defined type to talk to each other. This is absolutely human nature. You want to have a group where you can feel comfortable and at ease and talk your own shorthand. Again, this is diverging madly, I lived for a year in England at a women's residence hall, Crosby Hall, and I got so sick and tired of rotten English breakfasts on a tray with toast carefully chilled, that sort of thing. There were four Canadians also living there. And every Sunday we had the North American Council, and we had hot toast that we made over the

gas fire, we had real coffee and eggs, like that. We wanted a familiar cultural ambience. And that's the same thing with your Native Americans, blacks. They want a natural cultural ambience, a familiar cultural ambience.

CARROLL: Did you tell that story of you and the toast to the alumni groups when they questioned about the founding of the Native American groups?

ADAMS: Probably not.

CARROLL: I think it's a wonderful analogy because it's one we can all understand. It was about this time, too, that the Indian symbol came into question.

ADAMS: Oh, yes.

CARROLL: Was this prompted by the Native Americans or by a wider group of students in the student body?

ADAMS: Native American students initially, but then a wider group of students, then with total hostility from the fraternities.

CARROLL: I have been told, only in brief shorthand, that there was an incident in Thompson Arena during a hockey game. Do you know what they were talking about because I haven't been able to find anything about it?

ADAMS: No.

CARROLL: Okay. How did the protest against the Indian symbol--was this all verbal, or did this...?

ADAMS: Verbal mostly.

CARROLL: Mostly verbal, okay. There was... This is sort of shifting gears. I want to talk a bit about the larger affirmative action plan. Dartmouth filed an affirmative action plan with HEW [U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare] in 1972.

ADAMS: That's right.

CARROLL: Which was then the first among the New England colleges to file one. What were the specifics of that thing? What were their goals with it?

ADAMS: Oh, you'd have to look it up.

CARROLL: I just wondered if you were familiar with some of the specifications for women.

ADAMS: No. You can get that from the archives.

CARROLL: Absolutely. I was just curious to know if there was a story you wanted to tell or a read on it. There came, then, the great fuel crunch in 1974, when prices soared. And Business Manager Richard Olmsted said there was a crisis in the budget. Do you remember that at all? Or how they tried to cope with it?

ADAMS: I don't remember how they tried to cope with it except to wail and ululate. We used to have an administrative committee--administrators' committee. It met once a week in Rod [Rodney] Morgan's office. And every week we got a new price on oil, and that was the big concern. It was costly.

CARROLL: Well, at some point I have seen Olmsted's report, where he goes--he had budgeted only half of what it ended up that he needed, and it had to come from somewhere. Was there any, then, hue and cry to cut this or that from the budget?

ADAMS: No, no. Dartmouth has sufficient penny banks here, there, and elsewhere that you don't have to go into capital. But there's always a little fund here, there, or elsewhere.

CARROLL: Okay. During your time at the College the Dartmouth Review was also founded.

ADAMS: Oh, yes. That rag.

CARROLL: And I wondered, what do you think its impact has been?

ADAMS: It was divisive. Some of my colleagues and coworkers used to have apoplexy every time the thing came out. I thought that in a nasty way it was quite clever. It was a bunch of bright kids who were doing this. And I, since I knew that this, too, will pass, I found it a source more of amusement than irritation. Oh, they were nasty little brats, but they were clever nasty little brats. And of course we now have Dinesh D'Souza wandering all over the territory and getting, thank heaven, bad reviews for his book.

CARROLL: That's right.

ADAMS: It was a very lively phenomenon. And I don't think the College was really the worse for it in any way. But that was if you, like me, took it as amusing

rather than menacing. Everybody read it. Its following, I don't think, was very great.

CARROLL: So that its influence was minimal in the long run.

ADAMS: Mmmm hmmm.

CARROLL: Now you were also here when David McLaughlin was elected to be president.

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: Was that a surprise to you?

ADAMS: Well, it was rather, that the Board of Trustees should choose one of their own.

CARROLL: As president.

ADAMS: As president.

CARROLL: Their chair.

ADAMS: Dave, as a trustee, was always concerned with the physical and social well-being of undergraduates. Very seriously concerned. He must have indicated to his fellow trustees that he'd be willing to take on the job. I don't think he...This again is to be deleted. Dave had made a mess of Toro and was being fired, and he needed a job.

CARROLL: And they took pity on him and said, “Here, have Dartmouth?”

ADAMS: I have no idea what they said.

CARROLL: What had prompted John Kemeny to retire at that point?

ADAMS: He had said that he'd do just that period of time, and he had made up his mind. And the tenure of college presidents being as brief as it is these days, it was just that John had said--what was it, ten years?--and stayed the 11, and that was it.

CARROLL: Did he wish to go back to teaching?

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: Which he did do, then.

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: I've always wondered. Do you know, was that satisfying to him after having been president?

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: Well, that's lovely to hear. You always worry that it is nostalgia that lures you back to the classroom. For you, was it as gratifying to go back?

ADAMS: I never stopped being in the classroom because when I was at Rochester, Rutgers, Wellesley, and Dartmouth, I taught one course perhaps.

CARROLL: John Kemeny did that as well, didn't he?

ADAMS: Yes. John and I agreed on this, that when you are presidential or administrative, the students who come to your office are either apple-polishers, terribly distinguished presidents of student government and fraternities, or in bad trouble. [Laughter] And if you want normal students, you go into the classroom.

CARROLL: And is that one reason why you decided to continue teaching?

ADAMS: Sure.

CARROLL: Do you feel it gives you a better understanding of the students?

ADAMS: Yes.

CARROLL: In what way?

ADAMS: Well, you're dealing with them as perfectly normal people. They don't have anything more than the problems of a term paper. They don't have disciplinary problems. They are in the appropriate relationship between young and older in a college or university. After all, the place exists to teach.

CARROLL: What was your field?

ADAMS: English lit.

CARROLL: Which part?

ADAMS: Victorian. That's why that wall over there. [A collection of Victorian caricatures.]

CARROLL: That's the wall, yes. This is going back now to David McLaughlin. We got a little off track there. How would you assess his time in office?

ADAMS: Colorless.

CARROLL: Do you feel that...?

ADAMS: He did no wrong. And I would be hard put to point to a great achievement of his tenure. He was a nice man.

CARROLL: When you talk to so many of the faculty, who were clearly very resistant to him, which may have doomed him…

ADAMS: That's right.

CARROLL: Why do you think that was?

ADAMS: Because David had not spent a life in academia. He brought to the position, understandably, some of the patterns of decision-making that a CEO of a big company has--which do not always involve multiple discussions, endless, interminable meetings before a decision is arrived at.

CARROLL: Yes.

ADAMS: There was a feeling in one particular instance that he was much too arbitrary.

CARROLL: Would you feel comfortable talking about that instance?

ADAMS: He fired Rod Morgan, who was the business manager, even before he was installed as President. Now, I take it very personally because Rod was a very good friend of mine. Other people might not have seen it that way. But there was, on the part of many administrators who had worked with Mr. Morgan, resentment almost to the point of fury that this should have been done.

CARROLL: What I'm curious about is that he had basically alienated the faculty, as I see it, before he got here by not having an academic background. It

sounds to me as if firing Rod Morgan may have alienated some of the administration. Did the trustees support him?

ADAMS: I don't know. They kept him around for what was it, five years?

CARROLL: Yes.

ADAMS: The whole appointment is to me a great mystery. Why they chose him instead of having a search, I don't know.

CARROLL: Okay. And then I have just two last questions for you. This will, we hope, wrap up questions. What would you have done differently if you could during your time at Dartmouth?

ADAMS: Been more aggressive.

CARROLL: Really? That's interesting. In what way?

ADAMS: I think I had more weight that I didn't throw around enough. [Laughter]

CARROLL: I see. And what was your most satisfying moment on the job here at Dartmouth?

ADAMS: Teaching.

CARROLL: That's a lovely answer. Well, I thank you. I think we've gone through...Is there anything that you'd like to add or any final...?

ADAMS: No. If I do, I'll call you. Is that all right?

CARROLL: That sounds lovely.

ADAMS: Leave a message there?

CARROLL: Absolutely.

[End of Interview]