

**David Sices '54**  
**Professor of French and Italian, Emeritus**

An Interview Conducted by

Daniel Daily

Hanover, NH

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INTERVIEW: David Sices  
INTERVIEWED BY: Daniel Daily  
PLACE: Hanover, New Hampshire  
DATE: April 15, 2002

DAILY: Today is April 15<sup>th</sup> 2002. I'm speaking with Mr. David Sices, Professor Emeritus of French and Italian at Dartmouth College. Mr. Sices was also Dartmouth class of '54.

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DAILY: Professor Sices, a question I'd like to start off with is what brought you to Dartmouth as an undergraduate.

SICES: Well, I have to admit that I have very little idea. I've often reflected on that. I came here for the first time as a freshman, never having set foot in the place, from Long Island, the suburbs of New York City. I had never set foot in any of the colleges that I applied to. At that time it was less common for people to make these university tours that are so normal now and which I've done with my four kids.

But I had applied to a number of good institutions: Cornell and Dartmouth, and William and Mary. And I can't recall what else. I also had applied to Yale, which was the only place that didn't accept me. And so I came here as my second choice, with absolutely no idea of what it was going to be like.

It was somewhat of a culture shock for a young man coming fresh from New York City, used to the city, for cultural events, to go to the museum. I was an opera fan and I went regularly to the opera. There certainly wasn't much opera up here at that time. As a matter of fact, Dartmouth back then was a far more isolated and provincial place than it is now.

DAILY: Given that there weren't the cultural events on campus that you were used to, what were you able to fill your time with beyond studies?

SICES: Well, I think from my experience teaching that studies represented a larger percentage of peoples' time than any other occupations. There were far fewer distractions in any case. Dartmouth wasn't coeducational, for one thing. But it just seemed to be normal -- at least to me it seemed normal to spend a good deal of your time preparing for courses.

We took more courses at a time then. We were on the semester and not the trimester system. So you actually carried five courses and that gave you a fair amount of reading and preparation to do.

I went out for student manager of the band the first year. I worked at the radio station as a classical music disc jockey. The radio station then was an internal affair broadcasting through AM over the electric system of the college. So it didn't extend, or it wasn't supposed to extend, beyond campus, although people who lived nearby said they could receive it. There was the French club. There was a concert series. For three of the four years that I was here I was classical music critic of the now defunct weekly paper, the *Hanover Gazette*.

DAILY: Okay.

SICES: That paid me free tickets to the concerts, which seemed like a pretty good deal at the time. And the concert series was quite good.

As a matter of fact, we had at least one major symphony orchestra each year, ranging from the Rochester Philharmonic to the Boston Symphony. There were pretty well known soloists. And each year -- this was the first time this was happening in America -- each year there would be a small Baroque chamber orchestra playing Baroque, mainly Italian, music.

The first year I remember a group known as I Virtuosi di Roma, which was one of the first of these groups. Then we had I Musici, we had I Solisti Veneti. They all seemed to be Italian. And they played all kinds of at that time pretty unknown music, because in the fifties Vivaldi was barely known. And people like Albinoni and Gemignani and all those people basically, even Handel was not very well known. So I got to hear some interesting groups and expand my musical horizons.

One interesting sidelight -- Leonard Bernstein's brother, Burton ['53], who later became an editor of *The New Yorker*, and did a lot of writing for *The New Yorker* as well as independently, was in the class of 1953, a year ahead of me. And because Leonard was his brother he, of course, was the music critic for The Dartmouth, the daily paper. But he didn't know anything really, or not very much, about music.

I'm reminded of the fact that I Virtuosi di Roma came here because they played a piece whose author was indicated as "autore ignoto", which is Italian for anonymous. And Burtie Bernstein, in writing his review of that concert, said that this was obviously not one of "ignoto's" better works, which gave me the opportunity, since I was writing for the weekly, to pick up his error in my column and make fun of it. That was one of the highlights of my undergraduate days. [Laughter]

DAILY: And you had strong interest in music and ended up as a French major.

SICES: Yeah.

DAILY: How did that occur?

SICES: Well, it occurred mainly because although I started as a music major, in the beginning of my junior year came back for the fall term at Dartmouth and found that the two people that I really liked in the music department had left. One because his contract had not been renewed and the other because he had taken a very good job as chair of the music department at New Jersey College for Women, which is now part of Rutgers. I was left with people in the department that I didn't like. And I just had doubts about my own abilities in any case. I wanted to be a musicologist, I think. But I was . . . I played the piano, but not very well and so I thought maybe I ought to look for something else.

I had not studied French at all as a freshman and sophomore. I had been exempt from the language requirement because I did a lot of French in high school and did quite well with it. I had taken a little Greek with some fine people at Dartmouth. But I went to the French department or the Romance Languages department, as it was then, and said I would like to become a major. Since they had so few of them they were only too happy to have me on board. And so I became a French major.

So I did a French major in my junior year. And then in my senior year I was a Senior Fellow, working on an individual project, which means that I had a pretty short and sketchy French major before going on to graduate work at Yale.

DAILY: Whom did you do your undergraduate Senior Fellowship with?

SICES: I did my fellowship with a wonderful man named Ramon Guthrie, who was a fascinating person. He had a very individual style of teaching. He had what seemed like wonderful insights into the workings of literature.

During the First World War he had been a pilot. And then after the war he had come back to the States and worked as a waterfront policeman or something like that. He was surrounded by legend, and this was very exciting for young people. He would teach his classes in a very relaxed way. And it was very, it was wonderful. And so I asked him if he would work with me on a Senior Fellowship project on the author Stendhal. I spent my senior year working on Stendhal with him, which meant that I knew a pretty good amount about Stendhal when I graduated. But there were enormous gaps in my education and my training. When I got to Yale I was made to realize that very, very acutely.

DAILY: And you entered Yale directly from—

SICES: Yes, I did. I spent two years at Yale. And then I applied for and got a Fulbright to France, Paris, which was much easier than it became later on. I spent a year in Paris just after getting married. Then that was the occasion for my returning there.

I had not been crazy about Dartmouth. I have to admit that I was not well prepared for it. It was quite a shock for me culturally, coming from the suburbs of the city. I really felt that it was terribly isolated. I remember thinking when I graduated from Dartmouth that I was very unlikely ever to come back here again. But I have spent thirty-seven years in the faculty, plus six years in retirement, in this area.

While I was in Paris, I got a letter from Ramon Guthrie, who had been asked by the chair if I would be interested in a job here, probably a temporary job. The prospect of going back to Yale, which I was not that happy about either, which made Dartmouth look a little bit better in retrospect, made me say, "Sure."

I hadn't finished my doctorate. But the job was as an instructor with what we called an ABD [all but dissertation]. So I came back with my wife who was expecting our first child. And I've been here ever since.

DAILY: Okay. I assume you didn't take any Italian while you were at Dartmouth?

SICES: I took some Italian when I was at Dartmouth, mainly because of my interest in opera. I discovered that what little Italian I'd learned from opera was not much help in learning what the language was really like.

But I took courses in Italian with Al [Alvin L.] Pianca ['23], who was in Spanish, but because he was of Italian origin taught Italian. Although I've

since realized he taught Italian with a very strong Spanish accent. And then I took a year course in Dante with a fellow named George [Campbell] Wood, who was a very distinguished gentleman in Belles Lettres. He had a very deep and personal interest in Dante. And his course was pretty well known.

I should say, by the way, incidentally, this led me to make one of the most grievous intellectual blunders of my academic life. When I got to Yale there was a Dante course taught by Erich Auerbach who was there and was a marvelous teacher and writer. And because I had taken a year of Dante at Dartmouth I thought, "Well, I won't take Auerbach's course on Dante." So of course, I missed out on what might have been one of the great intellectual experiences of my life. I did take another course, in old French literature, with Auerbach and it was really quite revealing. But I never did take that Dante course. Then he died and it was too late.

DAILY: When did you end up finishing your Ph.D.?

SICES: I ended up actually finishing as I was teaching here. I had been here for five years before I finished it. I finished my Ph.D. in 1962. I had come here in '57. I taught for two years, then I went back to Yale for a year as a graduate student—mainly because I wanted to get some time on my Ph.D., on my thesis. But I didn't finish while I was there. I came back.

And then in '61 I was divorced from my first wife, who went down to live in Cambridge. And suddenly I found . . . I thought to myself, "I'd better get hold of myself." I finished my thesis really quite rapidly, and got my Ph.D. the year that John Kennedy gave the graduation address at Yale. It was quite an occasion as you can imagine. The one thing I remember about it is that when he was given his honorary degree he said, "Now I have the best of both worlds, a Harvard education and a Yale degree."

DAILY: [Laughter] Polite way to handle that one.

SICES: Well, you know, he got groans from the alumni. He got a good laugh also. When I had finished my thesis, then I came back. I was promoted to assistant professor, as you couldn't be that until you had your Ph.D. I went through the normal six years as assistant professor. And then I published my thesis and had another book in the works. And so I got tenure in 1966 or '67, I guess. These dates are a little bit vague in my mind. I was promoted to full professor in '71.

Now . . . And there's another interesting side light. In the year '69—'70 I had an ACLU fellowship and I went back to Paris for a year. And while I

was in Paris . . . Everything seems to come to me when I'm in Paris. But when I was in Paris I got a letter asking me if I didn't want to become chair of the department, because there were all kinds of problems. It was a very difficult department at that time because it was romance languages and that meant that it was about slightly over half French and slightly less than half Spanish. And the two groups had serious problems.

I seemed to be a kind of fairly neutral personality. There were some fairly strong personalities who were felt to be too controversial or something like that. So I said, "Yes." But it was when I came back that I said I didn't like the idea of being chair as an associate professor with people over me who would have say on my own promotion. I asked if I could be promoted and I was.

At that time that was a fairly short time for a promotion from associate. I think I was chair for seven years, which was some kind of a record. It was not a period that I'm terribly happy to recollect, I have to admit. And when I retired as chair, when I stepped down, I recommended most warmly that the two departments be split. And it was at that point that the two departments were made into French and Italian on one side, and Spanish and Portuguese on the other.

DAILY: Okay. So it was reorganized about '77 or thereabouts.

SICES: About. I'm terrible on dates.

We were talking about somebody . . . Oh yeah, that was it. We heard Anne Sophie Von Otter sing in Boston two weeks ago. And I said, "Oh yeah, remember we heard her about five years ago at the Met?" to my wife. And she said, "Oh, it must have been longer than that." I said, "Oh no. Five, maximum six years." I have a database in my computer. I looked at it and it was twelve. So I'm not too good at dates.

DAILY: That's fine. I'm interested in your perspective on the tenure process when you went through it and maybe while you were sitting on tenure reviews later on in the eighties and nineties.

SICES: Later on I saw it from two perspectives: one was the departmental one and the other was as a member of the Committee Advisory to the President [CAP], which made the decisions or the recommendations to the president. And I spent, I don't remember, I think it was four years but it may have been three. I don't know. It gives me a little bit better overall perspective on the process.

I don't know much about the process by which I became tenured. I knew that I had to produce books or research of some kind. In the humanities, as you probably are aware, it's more likely to be books, and in sciences it's more likely to be articles. I did as necessity arose. I was carrying on a fairly lively activity as a research scholar. I think that part of academic activity has become more important but not radically so. I mean I think . . .

[Sound of knocking at door. Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

DAILY: You were discussing tenure. And one of the questions that comes up is, was there more emphasis on teaching say, back in the sixties and seventies, during the tenure process, than there is now and relative to research?

SICES: As I say, I didn't know from inside about the tenure process when I received tenure. I certainly knew that there was an expectation of publication. Now I ought to say that I'm very aware—and I don't think it can be overemphasized—that Dartmouth as it is now, as a place that places emphasis on research and publication, as well as teaching, is more than anything a result of John Sloan Dickey ['29] and his decision to transform Dartmouth from the kind of place that it was under [Ernest Martin] Hopkins ['01]—and I have to admit I don't think much of Hopkins—into a first-rate research and educational institution.

Now obviously he didn't do it by himself. He brought in some excellent people: [Donald H.] Don Morrison, as provost, and other people as well. But they went about making replacements of the faculty that was here before, which was a very mixed group. Ramon Guthrie, as I say, was a very interesting person. There were a few people who were interested in teaching but also interested in research, in the romance language department.

There was also what I referred to as the “bridge club” who were there because they were loyal to Hoppy [Ernest Martin Hopkins]. And who were neither good teachers nor researchers. This made me realize that research is part of teaching. That you can't just teach . . . at least the way Dartmouth defines things and the way places like Dartmouth define them . . . you can't separate them. People who just teach eventually go stale.

So I think that this has been a good process, which may have gone a bit too far in that I know that in the years I was on the Committee Advisory to the President [CAP], teaching was always paid lip service to, but it was never looked at in a really systematic way. And I don't know of anybody who ever got tenure on the basis of teaching, while I was on that

committee, without having done research of a good quality. I know of some people who had done research of good quality, whose teaching was not excellent, who got tenure. And if anything, that may have gone even further since then.

So I think that you have to ask, "How do you go about measuring the place of teaching in granting tenure," especially in a place like this where everyone is supposed to be part of the teaching, involved in the process of teaching, because it's essentially an undergraduate institution. I'm not sure that Dartmouth has been very good at that. If anything, under the economic pressures of recent years, I think there has been a tendency to put more and more of the teaching in the hands of people who are not full-time regular faculty.

You look at departments like French and Italian, or Spanish, or English, and there are adjunct people who handle a lot of the teaching. Of course, when you get into the higher levels you're going to have regular faculty almost entirely. But a lot of the regular faculty now are not teaching introductory courses or are trying their best to avoid that kind of course if they can. That was not the case when I was first here.

In some ways that's good. I mean, if you're going to ask people to do research, obviously you have to give them time. And if you're going to take up all of their time with introductory courses, which take a lot of just sheer time, they're going to find it very hard to do their research. So you have to try to find a balance. But I'm not sure that Dartmouth has been as good as it might be at that.

DAILY: When the French and Italian split off from the Spanish in the late seventies, did that strengthen your side of the department? Do you feel that you were able to increase the quality and maybe the number of students as well?

SICES: At that point both of those parts of the department were doing quite well. It was more a question of internal political organization. There was a great deal of suspicion. We were voting on each other's activities, including hiring and tenuring and things like that.

This produced a good deal of bad feeling. Besides which it was an extremely large department, after English the largest in the college. There were over thirty people full-time.

So it became obvious that it would be much more manageable if each of these staffs . . . And there was no overlap. Those who were in French and

Italian, with one exception that I can remember in my time, taught French and Italian. Those who were in Spanish and Portuguese taught Spanish and Portuguese. There was one member of the department, who didn't get tenure, who taught Spanish and Italian. And that was really the only exception. And he was a very nice guy. I think maybe that helped to do him in.

DAILY: Having that combination. Yeah. Wouldn't have enough allies on either side.

SICES: Exactly. He had enemies on either side. So it was a very, very awkward and unwieldy thing. That was why I recommended so strongly that they be split up. I think people pretty much agreed.

It wasn't long thereafter that the two departments were split. At that point then French remained about the same because it was over half of the department. Spanish was strengthened in numbers. They were made into a larger department.

It's interesting. At that time, despite the general trends that were already evident in American education, French was by far the most popular language at Dartmouth. Since that time Spanish has increased quite a bit, as it has all over. But it took longer at Dartmouth, because there was a tradition that French was the language to be studied. That was an older, probably rather conventional tradition. More of a social thing, I would think than anything else. I think as of now that there are more students taking Spanish for their language requirement than French. But this was not the case when I was active, in the middle of my career.

DAILY: What accounts for the strength in language departments at Dartmouth say from seventies on, late sixties on.

SICES: There were a number of things. For one thing, around that time there was talk of doing away with the language requirement. They came very close to doing it. It was strangely enough in large part, I gather, from some polling they did of alumni, that they decided not to.

Alumni were very positive about the importance of language training and they made that sentiment clear. Now I'm not sure exactly in what ways they did, but I heard from various people that this was the case. So the language requirement was not done away with at a time that a lot of schools did.

Another factor that I think was extremely important was that Dartmouth got into foreign study very early on. They started around the time that I first arrived here in 1957. I think that was the first year and they gradually built up that program.

For Dartmouth students who were pretty much . . . As I say this was a very isolated and provincial place, pretty much limited to what . . .

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

DAILY: You were speaking about the foreign study program and the opportunities it gave.

SICES: It was especially important for students at a place like Dartmouth which is so isolated. It became very popular. And then when we instituted Language Study Abroad, LSA, which permitted them to do their language requirement by studying abroad, that became tremendously popular.

Our problem during those years was essentially to try and provide enough staffing for the number of sections of programs abroad. Actually it got to the point where people were complaining about the frequency of—I mean the faculty people—the frequency of their participation. I think it was every eighteen months—

DAILY: You had to go.

SICES: You had to go abroad, and people had families and it was disruptive.

And at first the college was not as generous as it might be in terms of making sure that people were not losing money out of the proposition. I remember one year, doing a program in Strasbourg, when the exchange rate suddenly went bottom up. I found myself coming to the end of the program with absolutely no money left. I mean literally no money left.

Gradually the college started to raise the ante a bit and give better per diems and make it a little bit more attractive. But I can remember some of the people we had to deal with who would say, “well when I was in the . . .”. They were typically military people. “When I was in the service or the diplomatic corps we had to live on the economy. And I was assigned to Japan and I ate nothing but rice”—or something. [Laughter] And we looked at each other at that point . . .

DAILY: So in France you drank nothing but wine.

SICES: That's right. I suppose that would be about it. You'd go to the bar and . . . But it was, it became a problem.

But, as I say, it was the flip side of prosperity. There were programs in French and Spanish, and in Italian and in German, and then later on in Russian—when they were able to arrange programs in Russia. It became a very, very popular thing.

John Rassias's coming here and his introduction of basically Peace Corps methods (what he calls the Rassias Method is basically the foreign service method) made a difference, too, and got more students involved as ATs, TAs, whatever you want to call them. So it became really one of the focal areas of Dartmouth.

My connections with the department are fairly tenuous now, but I gather now it's very, very different. Students are not nearly as interested in study abroad. They're not nearly as interested in language study. And probably if there weren't a language requirement now the enrollments, which are fairly low as they are, would plummet, at least from what I've heard.

I remember having mixed feelings about the whole business and thinking that in some ways it would be better to do away with the language requirement and have more motivated students, because you tended to have students who were there because they had to take the language. That's not an ideal situation in a classroom.

DAILY: Why have enrollments in languages, why have they dropped? Do you have any ideas on that?

SICES: Well, for one thing there is this idea that through globalization English is the international language and it's not as important to learn other languages.

A lot of Dartmouth graduates go into the world of business, banking and things like that. It used to be they thought that it was a tremendous advantage to have a real command of a foreign language. I don't think that's thought so much—or at least that's not what students think anymore. It may still be true.

You know, our point of view was not that. Our point of view was that it was just interesting in and of itself to know foreign languages and foreign cultures. So we operated on different wavelengths, I think.

The students for the most part—not all, obviously . . . But the students looked at it as something that would be very advantageous practically. We are looking at it as something that would be terribly advantageous intellectually and culturally. I have a feeling that's true of teachers in general.

DAILY: And what did the D-Plan do to the Romance Languages department?

SICES: Well, from our point of view this was a source of prosperity. We were able to take only one-third of the students' school year. That was an investment that just about any student was prepared to give, whereas a semester would have been asking for a lot more.

On the other hand—and this is true of the literature people in general, not just French and Italian; I know the English department felt very much this way— it made it very hard to do serious literary work because you didn't have enough time for the reading of novels and lengthier works of literature. Especially in the languages, when you have people reading a five hundred page French nineteenth-century novel. Well, the language itself is a slowing factor. And even our English people were complaining that students just didn't have time to read nineteenth-century English novels, for example, Victorian novels. The people who liked it best were the scientists, I gather, because their courses didn't involve lengthy reading. They could pack a lot into the amount of space. Students stopped taking five courses and only took three. So they had more concentrated time to give to their scientific work.

As a student I had semesters. My first two years teaching there were still semesters. I have to admit that from the teacher's point of view, especially since my first years here, I taught almost exclusively language courses, the teaching load and the distribution of time under the trimester, the quarter system, seemed very good.

All the more so in that the first year I was here a senior colleague of mine with whom I had taken a course became ill. And we had to take over his teaching load. So I had an additional course to teach my first year. Instead of teaching four courses I was teaching five. And it was my first year of teaching ever. It was a kind of traumatic experience. So that when the quarter system began, I felt pretty good about it. Over the years I became less sure about it.

DAILY: Okay. How so?

SICES: Well, specifically, this question of having time for reading and absorbing literary texts. I found myself reducing my reading lists. Now, all of my literary teaching was done under the quarter system. It's just that I remembered how courses were under the semester system. So I would tend to try to structure courses, especially since we'd been told that we had as much of the students' time since they were only taking three courses, very much the way I remembered my own courses being structured. Only gradually did I find myself reducing the requirements and giving less to read because I just found it frustrating that students really weren't getting the reading done. I thought, well, it was preferable to give them less and have them do it well.

Now, another factor enters into that. And that is . . . This I've heard from a number of colleagues who taught over the years: students do less and less reading. I remember in the prime of my career when a good student would be expected—well you wouldn't expect it—but a good student would read everything you asked the class to read and then some. For example, if you were doing a course—my specialty being the nineteenth century—frequently I would give them some long novels to read. I would have the really good students who would read all those things and then read some other things as well.

About ten years on you'd get . . . I remember feeling a good student would read all of the material you asked him to read. Dartmouth was still, I think, single sex. The not-so-good students wouldn't read everything. Towards the end I had the feeling that the good students were probably not reading everything I asked. Now why that is, I really can't say. I have some feelings about it.

You asked me earlier on -- I don't know whether we were recording this then -- how students spent their time when this was such an isolated place. And I said that I thought that we did a lot of studying. My sense is that students have much more expectation of what their social life is going to be, and not just on weekends. It extends through the week.

Our social life was limited to the weekend or at least certainly mine was. My first hint that this was happening came on our [study abroad] programs, because it's on your programs that you realize what students' lives are like, you know. You know there's much more contact.

Talking to the [host] families, talking to the students, we realized that. . . and the families knew that the students expected to have social life during the week. You know, have parties, go out and do things. I was amazed. I

didn't know that students did anything but study during the week, you know. I should have known better but . . .

But I remember families complaining that some faculty people actually expected their students to do homework. [Laughter] This just wasn't normal. I had thought that that was a perfectly normal expectation. So I think there has been a change in the way students view their educational lives, or this period in their lives.

DAILY: Now with the D-Plan or the D-Plan evolved out of coeducation, what were your impressions and feelings about coeducation both as a faculty member and as an alumnus?

SICES: The process was, as I recall it—and I may be wrong—but it was a more gradual one. The quarter system started before coeducation. The D-Plan then evolved because of the need to enlarge the student body without enlarging the plant. That's when the summer session became required.

That seemed like a fairly reasonable tradeoff. In retrospect, I'm not sure it was. In retrospect I think what should have been done was that the faculty should have been enlarged more and the plant should have been enlarged more, or the student body should have been reduced. I think they were trying to get the best of both worlds and I'm not sure that it worked out that way.

As for coeducation, I think the faculty was almost unanimous in wanting it. I remember feeling that way. I knew that there were alumni who were very set against it. I didn't feel like an alumnus. I felt like a faculty member, I have to admit. I found that retrograde and troglodidic because I thought the world is just not made for this kind of education at this level of a person's life.

That being said, I have been a bit disappointed in coeducation. But I think that is probably not entirely fair. I happen to be a person who has deep prejudice against anything to do with athletics. When the women turned out to be just as much jocks as the men, that bothered me. I was expecting something else. And that's, you know, that was a misapprehension on my part.

I think kids of that age are very much into physical activities. It's normal. My prejudices are probably not normal. They're mine and I stick to them, but I realize that they're not everybody's. So I was a bit disappointed in coeducation from that point of view. Although, come to think of it, it was unreasonable for me to expect women to remain sort of the feminine

objects that they were before, when the world was changing. I have mixed feelings about my own prejudices. But you live with what you are.

On the whole, I think coeducation has been very good. I think it's been not only very good but absolutely necessary. There was no way Dartmouth could have remained all male.

DAILY: What was it like having some of the—in the early years of coeducation—having the women in the class? Did the men treat them decently, equally?

SICES: As far as the class was concerned, I thought so. There were real complaints about life in general. I think it was very difficult for the first women, especially since they were fairly few in number. Now they're somewhat over fifty percent. But in the beginning there was much resistance to coeducation. Of course, it was introduced by class, so it was only gradually that they achieved their full effect. But as far as I was aware in class, you know, you'd have to ask my students, they may not have at all the same perception, but I thought that things worked out pretty well.

DAILY: What are your recollections of John Kemeny?

SICES: When I think of John Kemeny . . . I had a neighbor at that time, before Kemeny became president, when he was chair of the math department, who was a math teacher. He invited my wife and me over for cocktails and John Kemeny was there. My memory is John Kemeny sitting in the corner in an armchair, surrounded by adoring people and holding court.

I never liked John Kemeny as a person. But I think he was one of the best presidents that Dartmouth has had. I think he was very good at what he was trying to do, which was to keep the alumni happy at the same time that he was trying to build this place intellectually on the basis of what John Dickey had done. He was seen as somewhat autocratic, but very much respected.

Now, John Dickey was a very good president, but he was in office for twenty-five years. Towards the end of his tenure as president he was really at odds with his own creation, with the faculty that he had made. It was a difficult thing. Here was a faculty that he had essentially contributed to creating, you know, a professional faculty. And they looked at him as a kind of old school guy. He was not an academic, for one thing, and that made it difficult. But he was also seen as somewhat rigid. He was a big, burly man. And somewhat off-putting, although he was very warm. He

had a very fine, rather bluff, but gregarious nature. But he had lived into a period where the college was no longer what it had been.

So then when John Kemeny came and he was one of us . . . Not only one of us but a superb example of what the faculty was. A brilliant man, a real contributor to math and philosophy and computer science with an illustrious background, and high powered. People were willing to put up with a certain autocratic nature because of the excellence of his other qualities. I never felt at all, but at all, close to him as a human being. But I had a good deal of respect for him. And I thought he did a very fine job of bringing Dartmouth along into coeducation, maintaining and increasing its academic stature. When he was named to preside over the commission that looked into Three Mile Island, everyone was very proud and thought, you know, this is really a sign of what a fine person he is and how respected he is, not only in academic circles but in scientific and political circles. At least that was the way I felt. I think, generally, that was the feeling.

Then [David T.] McLaughlin ['54] came. I think he had a fair amount of goodwill. But the circumstances of his being named president by the trustees, I didn't even realize just how controversial they were. It didn't sound like a very good idea. I thought really it would be better if Dartmouth had an academic person at its head. But I thought, well, give him a chance. I didn't know him personally, even though we were classmates.

He came to our house once. We arranged a meeting with some [Romance Language] majors and we asked him to talk with them about the future of language education and Dartmouth in general. It was very nice. I think that was about the only social contact we ever had, as a matter of fact. He invited us, you know, for the general receptions. But there wasn't much contact of any kind, actually.

Then gradually there was an increasing feeling on the part of the faculty that he was trying to run the college as one runs a business enterprise. There was a feeling among a lot of faculty people that that model had nothing to do with an academic institution.

Now I get the feeling, from what I'm reading in the AAUP Bulletin and publications like that and talking with people at other institutions, that what was happening here was not unique. It was happening elsewhere. There were unique circumstances surrounding his particular presidency and his relationship with the place. But it was a process that was going on, that universities were being pushed more and more in the direction of a

corporate realm. But when you're in a place like this, and I have to admit my outside contacts were not all that great, I was aware of it mainly as a local phenomenon.

But more and more there was a feeling that decisions were being made without proper consultation. So that question of the ROTC was just one more. I don't think it was in and of itself a decisive thing in my view. You know, I told you when you first came that it was only when I reviewed my materials that I remembered that that was the immediate cause of the naming of the Committee on Governance. Which I guess says something about the real origins of it.

Now, looking at my report, I found that there was the ROTC thing. There was the computer science decision to get an IBM mainframe. And there were a number of other lesser decisions that had been taken in what the faculty viewed as an irregular way by the trustees and the president. So this Committee on Governance was named, and I was asked to be chair of it. In retrospect, I think I should have turned it down.

DAILY: Why were you asked? Do you have any thoughts on that?

SICES: I had been involved in a number of committees like that. I had chaired an earlier committee on the deanship of Leonard [M.] Rieser ['44].

Now, at the time that that committee was formed, Leonard Rieser was both Dean of the Faculty and Provost. People were very upset because they said that Leonard was a person who tended to be very slow in making decisions anyway. But sitting on both of those, nothing . . . You'd make a proposal to him and it would just disappear into a black hole. You never knew when, if ever, it would come out.

So I had been asked . . . again, I don't know exactly why. I'd been on a number of committees, some of which ceased to exist not long afterwards. There was the COP, Committee on Organization and Policy, the CEP, Committee on Educational Planning, and some others. So I had done my service. And I was asked to chair the committee on Leonard Rieser's deanship.

Our principal recommendation was that the two jobs had to be split up. There were some people who thought the job of Provost ought to be eliminated completely. But we thought that it was just too much for one person to deal with. I guess it was because of that committee that I was asked to be chair of this other one [Committee on Governance].

But, as I say, in retrospect I think I shouldn't have accepted it. For one thing, being a classmate. It may have been thought that since I was a classmate I would be very politic. I don't know. I'm just making a supposition. I think I was, and I think the committee was. As a matter of fact, the committee made a report that on the whole I continue to feel was generous, not as harsh as it might have been.

DAILY: I think it was about April 1985 when twenty or so faculty members brought a resolution that the governance needed to be reviewed. It seems like it would have been hard for David McLaughlin to sit through that particular faculty meeting. Do you have recollections of that?

SICES: I don't. But one thing that comes to mind in connection with it is that our committee asked the trustees to have a meeting without his presence. He insisted on being there. We held a meeting at the Ritz Carlton in Boston, which was very nice. There were a group of four of us, I think, from the committee. As I say, he insisted on being there, which we were very unhappy about.

We tried our best to tell the trustees what our feelings were and also at that point we were fairly well on in the process of preparing our report. We had done a poll of the faculty. We did an opinion poll. We had a fair idea of what some of the problems were with his presidency. So we wanted to discuss that with a representative group from the board of trustees.

I remember . . . I'm pretty sure [Norman E.] Sandy McCulloch ['50] was there. The only other person that I recall specifically was the former chancellor of the University of California who then became the head of the Smithsonian. What's his name?

DAILY: [Ira] Michael ["Mike"] Heyman ['51].

SICES: Michael Heyman. Yeah. There were, I think, maybe two other trustees present. There was a committee of the trustees. And so the fact that Dave insisted on being there for that meeting makes me wonder what his feelings might have been at the faculty meeting at which this was brought up . . .

**[End of Tape 1, Side B – Beginning of Tape 2, Side A]**

DAILY: You were speaking about David McLaughlin's presidency and the Committee on Governance.

SICES: Yes. One thing I would say. You asked me about the faculty meeting over which he presided and at which this committee was formed. My recollection was that he handled it very well, that he remained calm and objective and it was, I think, a very difficult situation to be in. I have no memory of his having done anything but the right thing there.

DAILY: One of my questions, although we've kind of touched upon this, is what was the perception of David's presidency outside of Dartmouth?

SICES: I can't really answer that. I don't know. I think I remember thinking at that time that it made Dartmouth seem like a very provincial, inbred place. That having somebody like him who was not part of the academic world and who came from inside essentially was not up to the dignity of an institution that prided itself on being on the level of major academic institutions. I think I remember thinking that then.

And I think I feel that way now. Going to somebody like [James O.] Jim Freedman as a successor, I think, is an indication that, you know -- it's the old show business maxim that you never follow a banjo act with another banjo act. I think they were trying to demonstrate that they were in the major leagues. I believe his [Freedman's] presidency was not as satisfactory as might have been hoped. But it was really hoped that he would restore the academic credibility of the place.

DAILY: With David McLaughlin I guess there's a couple of things I want to pick up here. One is, did faculty feel the trustees were able to objectively judge David McLaughlin's presidency in those early years before things kind of reached . . .

SICES: I think there was a feeling that the trustees were not as aware as they should have been of the problems, partly because he had been chairman of the board. He was one of them himself. And partly because the faculty just didn't know the trustees particularly well. I don't think the trustees made much of an effort to be known particularly well. I may be wrong about that. But I'm not aware of any very aggressive attempt on their part to solve this difficulty.

I think there was a feeling on the part of the faculty that the trustees had very little sympathy for them. And that there was not going to be . . . In fact there was essentially an adversarial relationship more than anything else. I remember feeling this myself. The fact that aside from Mike Heyman there were no academics on the board. And my experience with Mike Heyman was that his sympathies were not with the faculty in any case.

I had one meeting with him individually. But he was also at this meeting with David McLaughlin. I didn't get the sense that he was one of us.

[Text deleted at narrator's request.]

DAILY: The meeting at the Ritz Carlton, I'm curious about what the dynamics were. Now the board of trustees had the report at that point, is that correct?

SICES: No. We were working on the report.

DAILY: Okay. You were still working.

SICES: Yeah.

DAILY: Okay. And you were gathering information.

SICES: We were gathering information. But a number of members of my committee thought that we really had to talk to the trustees both to indicate what seemed to be the major issues that were coming up in our investigation and to hear from them what their point of view was.

So a group of us drove down to Boston, and we had dinner with them. We had a private room. David McLaughlin was there with, as I said, maybe four, maybe five trustees. We talked with them about the problems that we were aware of. I don't recall them giving us very much of an indication of what their feelings were. But that may be my memory. I don't want to say that they didn't.

DAILY: Okay. What was David McLaughlin saying at that meeting?

SICES: He participated. But my recollection is that he didn't say an awful lot. He was there. He certainly was a presence.

As far as we were concerned, in terms of saying what we felt, the mere fact of his being there presented a problem. I don't think he tried to defend himself particularly or anything like that. I think he let the discussion go on around him.

DAILY: And back to sequence, this was '85. And then from what I understand is that David said he would come straight, try to work on his leadership style or work more in a kind of academic process manner. Then things really reached a peak late '85, early '86. And there was a call for a vote of no

confidence. And you were showing me the newspaper article. And that was January '86. What are your recollections around that meeting?

SICES: Very vague, very, very vague. You know, in re-reading our report . . . the only copy I have of it is a draft with editorial comments by [William W.] Bill Cook. I don't even have our final report. All I know is there was a great deal of tension there.

I think that the shanty business would have been a problem for anyone. Kemeny had had his problems in that line as well. I don't think that would have been sufficient to cause the kind of tensions that came.

I think the real feeling was that McLaughlin just did not understand how faculty decision-making worked. The real feeling was that he did not have much sympathy for the faculty.

Now it's interesting, talking with people who were here then, since you sent me those questions. One of them reminded me of something that faculty people were talking about, if not then, certainly later. Hans Penner was dean of the faculty then and he spent some time traveling with McLaughlin. It was said that McLaughlin, when they would take a limousine together somewhere, would not bother to talk to him. That he did not think it was worth his while or he didn't have any sympathy, and this bothered people.

On the other hand, the Provost at that time was Ag [Agnar] Pytte who later became president of Case Western Reserve. The feeling was that Dave McLaughlin and Ag Pytte got along too well.

DAILY: Really?

SICES: Yeah. That they were both . . . It's odd because Agnar Pytte chaired the committee on the COP when I was a member of it. And he was a very ardent proponent of faculty interests, defender. The feeling was that once he went into administration, his sentiments changed completely and he became identified with administrative points of view. So when he was Provost and David McLaughlin was President at the same time, there was the feeling that there wasn't enough balance there, that a strong proponent of the faculty in the office of Provost could have balanced McLaughlin, who was not a faculty person. And that the institution was administrative heavy, with Hans Penner not being able to exercise much in the way of a balance of that . . .

DAILY: Because?

SICES: Because McLaughlin was viewed as not being very sympathetic to his point of view or to his person.

One of the things that came out and that troubled our committee during the time we were doing our investigation was the circumstances under which McLaughlin had become president. It was not just that he was a member of the board and then chair of the Board of Trustees, which in itself should have eliminated him, from the point of view of a lot of people, and I think objectively speaking it should have.

But it turned out the committee that had been named, the search committee had made—according to the information we were given—had made a final recommendation of three candidates, the short list. He was not one of them. Then the trustees named him and not one of the three people.

There was bad feeling about that. Feeling that the recommendation of the search committee, which was not just faculty, it was faculty, trustees and students, I think, and the people that they recommended I gather were academic administrative people, who must have been attractive candidates, was disregarded and McLaughlin's presidency came out of the blue. So that, I think, increased the feeling that what was probably not a good idea in the first place also was under a shadow.

DAILY: So David was not doing well with handling or interacting with his faculty. In your study what were you turning up in terms of how he dealt with his own administration?

SICES: Not much. I guess the most related to that . . . Again this is partly my, my, my memory, which is not very good. The computer decision would be the clearest example, I think, of a problem in the way the administration worked. We were, you know, we were not specifically looking at that. We were looking at his relationship with the faculty, as a faculty committee.

But, you know, in thinking about this, I found in this draft there were a lot of people who were close to the decision to get the IBM mainframe computer, despite recommendations of the Council on Computers. But this was based on personal business connections and not on academic factors. That it was done in the way that decisions like this tend to be made between people and corporations. And that the decision as such was not in the best interest of the people who needed it.

Now I see that this sounds like it's related to the question you've asked me because what it means is that even at the level of sheer administration, decisions were being made that had something to do more with the way business works than the way academic institutions work.

I'm not even taking into account faculty decision making. No, faculty are aware as anybody just how cumbersome and tedious and counterproductive faculty decision making can be. It's terrible.

On the departmental level I remember feeling that we were making decisions that we had taken maybe three or four years before, and that we were taking the same decisions. It just went on and on. Even when you finally did make a decision it didn't get into operation, somehow.

So, you know, I think certainly people are aware of the frustrations involved in dealing with an academic body. At the same time they feel very strongly that, you know, these are things that you just have to accept. You have to accept that it can't be helped.

So, coming from a corporation, where decisions are made from the top down, I think he must have felt very, very frustrated, very impatient sometimes. I don't think that corporate administrative experience, executive experience is very good preparation.

There are some faculty people who catch on to administration and go into it and sometimes forget about the faculty status. In some ways I guess Agnar Pytte is the model of that. But there are people . . . I think Jim [James E.] Wright is an example, who are very good at retaining their sense of what academics are about at the same time that they're involved in the kinds of things that administrators have to do.

People are always amazed that Kemeny was able to keep up with things in his field when he was president. And it was, it was really remarkable that he was because people are aware that when you're involved in the administration it's very time consuming. And when you're in academic faculty life that's everything. Your profession is your life. You can't take time out. You have to keep in touch with it so that if you go from that to administration you're almost by definition getting out of the faculty stream. Kemeny did it very well.

I think Jim Wright has done it well. I don't know about Freedman. I think David McLaughlin didn't have a clue. Couldn't.

DAILY: Did it surprise you at all when he resigned or . . .

SICES: Yes.

DAILY: Did it? Okay.

SICES: Oh yeah. No, I thought . . . He said that he was going to try to change his way of dealing with things. This [*Boston*] *Globe* article that I showed you has a few statements by me, which I hadn't remembered, in which I said that I thought he had handled it very well. I said polite things. But it was pretty obvious to me reading that, now, that I was startled. I didn't know what to say. He certainly hadn't spoken to me about any intention to resign. Since that dinner at our house we've had fairly little contact, I'd have to say. And we certainly haven't had any since, or much, since he resigned.

DAILY: So the faculty didn't have any inkling do you think of the resignation? Did you have any . . . ?

SICES: I don't think so. I think it came as a bolt out of the blue. You know, I don't . . . I don't trust my recollections of that time. So many things were happening. But I don't think it was anticipated that he was going to resign at that point.

DAILY: A couple of things that you'd pointed to as positive aspects of his presidency; one, all the buildings that were going up and the planning for buildings and stuff. As a faculty member what was your reaction to that kind of investment.

SICES: Faculty have traditionally had mixed feelings about the whole question of building.

When I was on my earlier committee under [Leonard] Rieser I remember reading . . . I felt I ought to get in better touch with the history of the college so I read some books. And one was by a—a history of the college—by Professor [Leon Burr] Richardson. Reading that book there was . . . A sentence kept coming up where he said, "Once again the college failed to provide proper facilities for the Chemistry department". And I thought, "Gee, that's odd that this keeps coming back." Then I spoke to somebody in the Chemistry department and discovered that Richardson was a professor of Chemistry. So, you know, everyone wants a building for himself but I think on the whole there's suspicion.

I have the feeling, for example, all of what's going on now, has a lot of faculty people a little bit skeptical because there is the feeling, I think, that

the trustees are much more interested in the plant than they are in faculty. They're more willing to invest money in that. I don't know whether that's justified or not.

Certainly there was a sense that Dartmouth really needed to renew its facilities. It's a rather old campus. But I don't think that's the kind of thing that would have made McLaughlin particularly popular. I don't think that would be a factor that would create warm, fuzzy feelings on the part of faculty people.

Basically, faculty people are concerned about well, classroom facilities, yes. Research facilities, the library, computing laboratories, faculty salaries, these are things that obviously, you know, are of a major concern to the faculty. The building program, I would think, was not something that would get them excited.

DAILY: So even though that was a positive side it really didn't help him at all.

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

DAILY: Later on in his presidency he instituted kind of like a long range planning process. Do you recall that?

SICES: I recall it very dimly. I can't say that I had, you know . . . Again, it's something that in and of itself is probably good and would be seen as a good. If he had been on better terms with the faculty it would have been a positive thing. But it certainly wasn't enough to change the faculty's viewpoint about him as a president.

The situation is basically, I think, that if he had been seen as somebody with a strong feeling for dealing with faculty and doing things with the faculty and with a high regard for the faculty, then a whole lot of other things would have helped tip the balance in the other direction. But since the basic thing was not there, there was no way that anything he could do, it seems to me, would have been very favorably viewed by the faculty.

You know I have to admit I have certain prejudices again. My background is in French literature. My sphere of influence is Europe. I'm very historically minded. There is a European tradition, which probably is not as strong as it used to be, that the university is essentially its faculty. As a matter of fact, it's interesting, the word faculty, which here means, you know, a bunch of teachers, in Europe, in French, means the school. And the school basically is the people who teach there. So I'm not entirely objective about this whole question.

I am very faculty oriented. I think that the place basically ought to be run by its faculty. On the other hand, the faculty itself is guilty of making it less so. It's not entirely the faculty's fault. But during the time that Dartmouth was building its professional credibility and expecting more and more in the way of research of its faculty, it was basically leaving less and less time for things like committees and administration.

I was on a number of faculty committees right from the get go. And it was considered very important, you know. We handled most of the business of the college, or we thought we did. As more and more demands were made on faculty time for other things, I think the thing that suffered the most was committee service.

All the more so—and this goes back to your question about tenure—in that nobody ever got tenure for serving on committees. You barely got tenure for teaching. Research was where it was at. When your professional future depends on a decision like that you do the main thing. So the faculty tended more and more to resent committee assignments and committee time and things like that. So more and more the decision making and the actual running of the place went into the hands of administrators.

And the administration grew tremendously during the time I was on this faculty, from 1957 through '95. The administration grew exponentially with deans and assistant deans and vice presidents and you name it; whereas a lot of that was handled by faculty people before.

So, you know, as I said, what happened under McLaughlin was still part of what was happening here and elsewhere at the same time. When you have administration, you have management. The faculty is less and less responsible for the general running of the place. That creates resentments, which are partly due to the faculty people themselves. You know, a vicious circle.

DAILY: I like that perspective on it. When you were active with the faculty do you think the younger faculty were coming in with, with an expectation that they were going to have some kind of voice in governance and leadership? Or did they really . . .

SICES: I don't know. Yes and no. Yes, I think they felt they should be listened to more. No, I think they realized they were much more professionalized, that this was not something that was going to count much for their career. And so, although they wanted to have a say, they didn't want to have that

much of their time taken and, you know, that means . . . Sometimes that means spontaneous demonstrations or showing solidarity with causes more than just taking part in the ongoing running, decision making. Of course, there's always a generational split. On the other hand, partly because the place had become more professional, expectations were higher.

When I first came, I remember thinking, "Oh God, I have a long way ahead of me before anybody will pay any attention whatsoever to what I think. I hope I survive." That's about it. I think as . . . Especially in the sixties, people had higher expectations of what kind of influence they were going to have over policies and decisions.

DAILY: Anything else you wanted to speak on today?

SICES: Well, as I said, I never expected to spend my whole life here when I graduated. It is a very different place from the one that I studied at. I've generally felt that just about every change has been for the better.

It's odd to be both an alumnus and a faculty member. It gives you a very split perspective. But on the whole, as I think I said earlier, I felt much more a faculty member than an alumnus. And alumni tend to be very nostalgic about the past, whereas if you're involved in the place in an ongoing way you appreciate the kinds of things that are happening all the more. You may take part in the decision-making that leads there, like coeducation, for example.

**[End of Tape 2, Side A – Beginning of Tape 2, Side B]**

DAILY: We're back on.

SICES: So on the whole I think this is a much better institution than it was when I was a student. It's much less provincial. It's much more intellectually and professionally vibrant. It's more connected with the world. It has, on the whole, a far better faculty than it had, although there were exceptions even then. And the major changes that have taken place have been for the better.

Now I wouldn't be an elderly curmudgeon if I didn't say that the world is not as good a place as it used to be and therefore, if there are problems with the college it's because the world is not as good as it used to be. I can't help feeling that way. But all in all I think that I've been happy to take part in this ongoing enterprise.

I think the alumni have come to realize that that has been a good thing, too. You know, there have been voices against, but for the most part they've come to see that Dartmouth has had to change and the changes have been good for it.

DAILY: Well, thank you. This was fun.

**End of Interview**