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Spring 6-10-2020

### Albert W. Brown Interview #2

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#### Repository Citation

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Speaker 1 0:00

Lake Chautauqua the date is November 16. Year 2000. This is the second interview with Dr. Albert W. Brown regarding the years of his presidency at SUNY College at Brockport. Okay, Dr. Brown. Let's follow up on the Peace Corps program. You mentioned before that the idea came over informal cranks with Jack Vaughn. I believe you said in Washington. How had the two of you met before that? And I guess the other question we had was was this program copied anywhere else, or was it unique.

Albert W. Brown 0:37

Okay, as I remember, we'd been involved with talks in international education International Service for a long time. And there was a leading international education at planting fields it wasn't in Washington Jack Vaughn of course was in Washington for the Peace Corps but he was at a meeting at planting fields in Long Island and And that the theme of that would have been international education. For some time, I had felt that International Service should follow domestic service as one of the things that colleges should prepare their students for. And the Peace Corps at that time was at first going great guns but there was a lot of questions as to how well the people were prepared for it. And of course, the original intent was these would be highly motivated people that have simply run into the Peace Corps and somehow or other have the talent that would allow them to be successful. Jack Vaughn, I knew from several other meetings that we had had also he was out of the Marine Corps, and there's a certain camaraderie that takes place among those people. And we were having lunch actually at Pushed or Bay is a restaurant up towards Oyster Bay. And I did mentioned I think we had three Bloody Marys before because we were Trying to become congenial.

Speaker 1 2:02

I wasn't counting.

Albert W. Brown 2:04

But anyway, that was a that was not the important thing but it was a friend of give and take. And I took the position then that if we could afford to produce second lieutenants and ensigns in Naval ROTC and regular ROTC, we ought to be able to take highly motivated undergraduate students at about the sophomore level and prepare them as well for International Service, as you would expect to prepare a person for military service as we're doing those officer training programs. And this would involve language proficiency, it would involve a field exercise in what would become the host country and it would involve (unintelligible) competence in whatever field they were expected to project in the Peace Corps. And jack was one who took an idea like that quickly and would say, right on or something of that nature. Whatever was current at that time, and he was very enthusiastic over it. And so we took that and rolled with it with the idea

that we would set up a model program, basically Naval ROTC for International Service. In other words, they got a laundry allowance, they got all the things that naval people would. Yeah. and came back and of course, the rest is history at Brockport. With the tremendous leadership and Jack Candall came to it and development. And its evolution through I believe, what seven years or it was the program existed. It was rather interesting that at least twice since that program stopped. There have been notices that institutions have created a wonderful new idea of having a college degree program that would have a Peace Corps component in it. And, in fact, I think in the literature, you'll find that Jack replied to some of that, and I replied to some of them, some smaller college created a brand new idea, problem with the peace corps as with all of those agencies, is that they, they turn over their directors and they have no great institutional memory. So, whenever that comes up, it would be a new idea, even though that we had run what I consider to be a very successful program for a number of years. And as you know, from the Peace Corps, people who have gathered for reunions and who have published Jack's memoirs and so forth, that they have a loyalty to the program and considered it was very, very helpful in their, what was then their professional involvement with international institutions.

Speaker 1 4:53

And as I recall, The program ended in the early 70s when the Nixon administration cut the funding

Albert W. Brown 5:05

Nixon administration cut the budget out from under us, yes. Which There's that question as a matter of priorities it would seem to me that international service should be a major American priority. So I think we were rather disappointed that that was not recognized on the Washington scene as being something that should be enlarged and the strengths expanded and what have you rather than cut?

Speaker 1 5:33

What was the relationship at SUNY central about the program? They, I would imagine that they would have been enthusiastic seeing as it as

Albert W. Brown 5:41

basically they were very enthusiastic. I don't let's see that would have been what year

Speaker 1 5:47

Albert W. Brown 5:48

73. by them SUNY was having its own problems having had its budget problems in 72. Ernie had come in as Chancellor and I think the problems of SUNY central were probably great enough by that time so that he couldn't give the hands on support which he might have otherwise.

Speaker 1 6:12

Right. But we were speaking of the international program, one of as we look at the college, one of the hallmarks of this particular small public college, relatively small public college is it's very large international education program. And this basically seems to appear specifically during your administration and with Don Myers as the central administrator. Could you talk a little bit about your vision for international education and how that fit?

Albert W. Brown 6:48

Remember that My background, basically, I majored at the doctoral level in the geography department at Syracuse University. And the reason for that was that I felt that We knew frightfully little about the world. And certainly what we thought we knew was often erroneous in one way or another. And you have to remember too, that I spent the better part of four years with the marine corps including trips to exotic places and I had relationships with the Pacific Rim and all the other things about which 1941 42 we knew absolutely nothing. It seemed to me that the world shrunk in size and having come out of world war two and everything, the the need to understand the rest of the world with hands on experience was very, very important. So it was not accidental. I mean, this has been one of the components that I would feel would have to be a serious part of the education of anybody who called themselves college graduates certainly baccalaureate or any other level. I can recall that of course elements of the cold war that were going on at that time. And I remember in the New York Times there was a map of the world in Mercator projection that showed why Spain was so important to the United States because if you drew a line from Moscow to the East Coast it went over Spain, and I felt compelled to remind them that Mercator projection does not give you the great circle route. And that actually, if you went from San Francisco to Japan, you never saw the Pacific Ocean. If you flew the correct, well then I suggested that we start to understand the world and its relationships much better than we were doing at that time. So the International Education Program was intended to give an option at least to encourage the use of it, to students who could live in a world far different than that of a 100 years before Don Myers was extremely able, and came in and put his own touch on the program and built up the International Programs that really were miraculous in there

development when you consider the competition from some of the major institutions that have programs.

Speaker 1 9:19

And he was the first director of international education

Albert W. Brown 9:21

You'd have to check. But I believe that's right

Speaker 1 9:23

I, that's what we found,

Albert W. Brown 9:25

as far as I know he was, yes.

Speaker 1 9:26

Okay

Albert W. Brown 9:28

And whether there was anybody working on it before that I can't even remember. But he would go on and was instrumental in building the programs in England and France and so forth and doing an excellent job of it. And as he expanded that and gave the students the opportunity, and also the opportunity for students from other colleges to work at Brockport, it was meant that we had something which was worthwhile and saleable. In demand.

Speaker 1 10:02

One of the ironies

Albert W. Brown 10:05

Yeah.

Speaker 1 10:07

That that, that this work this project has revealed to to, recently, is that in some ways you have two kind of core curricular commitments it was not necessarily curricular, but it has curricular implications and that is access for and then for a public institution to serve populations that have been denied such service such opportunities in the past. And the other is this extraordinary and expansive, international dimension to the curriculum, whether it's through the Peace Corps program or the international education. The irony is that those are the exact same commitments, that John van Wattering had. And They are his core commitments. But I'm not sure how much He understood that to be the case for the college before he came.

Albert W. Brown 11:07

Well, they were popular ideas, certainly. But I think that you're correct that those were two to some extent they're they're the same commitment.

Speaker 1 11:19

Yes. Yes, they really are. And we struggled in the 1980s, I think to find a definition that could adequately bridge that commitment in a shorthand format, and not always successfully. Well, to move to another issue, this one being athletics, intercollegiate athletics and physical education. SUNY, as a system, as we understand it had a ban on division one sports through the 1960s and 70s. From from the first founding, yet several colleges including Brockport developed very strong programs in division three level. To what extent was the athletic program shaped by SUNY central administration.

Albert W. Brown 12:09

The athletic program at all of the state colleges was shaped by the financing. That was allowed under the student Faculty Association. It was not, in other words to be state budgeted, there was no independent sum to be used to support Division One, two or three athletic scholarships and all the other things that are the big time sports. beyond that point, I don't think there was any ban on what you could do as long as you recognized that you were not going to get any state subsidy for it. I'm going to walk on some very, very thin ice now and say that, Brockport had built up some very good reputations and of soccer, particularly and swimming I mean You had wonderful people and it's Zip Wlato and Huntley Parker, you also had sort of a mixed feeling that winning was not necessary, which is okay in any sport, but that looking good was also not necessary, if that makes any sense. I remember seeing the first basketball game at Brockport and said to Marge afterwards that in the sweet 16 high school teams that you know any one of them could have beaten and we purported to be a college where the physical ed major didn't seem to me that

winning or losing was the important thing, but how well did the teams look? And we've done wonderfully Well, as I said, in soccer, swimming and miserably bad in football and basketball at that time it was pretty sad. And it was it was difficult to to sort out boy this was true. I mean, you had wonderful people around, but there didn't seem to be any any real control over what was the quality of the performance they all enjoyed themselves and and to a large extent physical education was was independent body on the campus. Enjoyed in fact Gordon Allen, my predecessor had moved the summer camp from the Adirondacks to Fancher because there seemed to be a feeling We were talking on the athletic program

Speaker 1 14:46

and the movement from the Adirondacks to Fancher

Albert W. Brown 14:49

and there was feeling that the athletic department sort of had a summer camp of its own up in the Adirondacks, and it would be nice to have a program that affected more people. And that was One of the reasons I'm sure that Gordon Allen Rakov and the others, promoted the Fancher campus, which brought everybody closer to the campus and had more of a impact on the total student body than would've been true otherwise. I came with a set of prejudices. That was that whatever you did should be done well. And again, no matter whether you won or lost, but you oughtta look good in the job, I also had a set of prejudices. That physical education required physical education ought to reflect the need for lifetime activities, rather than simply being thrown a football in the fall and a basketball in the winter, and a baseball bat in the spring. And I proposed at different times in there that perhaps climbing five peaks in the Adirondacks under guidance or canoeing or anything else would be as good a requirement for physical education as within the compulsory PE as generally established in the institution of that kind didn't get very far with it. They also, well encouraged that it be treated as part of the personal development and health related programs. In other words that it wasn't simply for participation in a game, but it was also for your body tune up. And the other things that are part of it kind of stressed that kind of programs should now get in preventative medicine, you might say, Roger Marty Rogers was an excellent person and susceptible to all of these ideas supportive of changing the physical ed department. I'm sure his staff was had mixed feelings about all these things. But in general, they hired a faculty that would be academically qualified. And they were built on a group of people that were extremely able and. You think about bob boozar and Jim Fulton and Hudley Parker. I mean, you could not get better. physical ed people who knows but on top of that you build an academic core that could move the physical education in that way.

Speaker 1 17:30

I think that takes us to question five in a sense.

Albert W. Brown 17:35

I might add that The fact that you can't support division one sports and maybe shouldn't support them in the state university system. Chicago being an example of that is that what has happened at the University of Buffalo is they have attempted to become a division one team.

Speaker 1 17:53

I think there are I share that I'd say there are at Brockport, the physical education program as an academic program seems to have developed in a very distinctive way, much more heavily liberal arts than at Cortland or at almost any other place that we know of. That has set up some kind of tension occasionally between the physical education program and the athletic program. And we just wondered in terms of your vision of it is was the leadership provided by Warren Fraley, as dean of physical education, the way you wanted to see that program developed academically,

Albert W. Brown 18:46

I think he definitely came in with the understanding that this was a direction that the college might very well go on. And I think that basically in a general sense, yes, it had to become more academic What was the man's name Cliffley (?) was it went to Penn State and one other place.

Speaker 1 19:06

I don't know who

Albert W. Brown 19:06

(unintelligible) I mean

Speaker 1 19:07

Yes

Albert W. Brown 19:08

would be a perfect example of who was really creating some advances in the academic understanding of physical education, what it was and what it what it should do. And certainly he was in the same general camp as Warren would have been. And this, in my opinion, was

something that really needed to be emphasized in a college level. academic program that had a credit in physical education rather than simply the performance of intercollegiate athletics. And so yes, it was certainly something which I believed in and that's something which we attempted to staff and which I think made some pretty good strides. towards achieving there is an academic base to physical education which ought not to be in college it oughtta to be in a training camp for a professional team now how far we got and why we got there is our subject to question and interpretation?

Speaker 1 20:17

Sure,

Albert W. Brown 20:17

but it was there should be an academic base, which would include the usual ones in physiology and

Speaker 1 20:24

Kinesiology and

Albert W. Brown 20:25

all the other

Speaker 1 20:26

all the other ologies.

Albert W. Brown 20:28

And it should not be simply be performance.

Speaker 1 20:31

Okay. How is intercollegiate athletics structured during your presidency? How what was the governing?

Albert W. Brown 20:40

Well, we had directors, I remember Den Riev (?).

Speaker 1 20:42

Yep.

Albert W. Brown 20:43

I'd have to be refreshed. Now. The chart as to actually who was there. There was a director of intercollegiate athletics and of course, Marty Rogers maintained an important role in the total program. And I guess beyond that point. I have no comment

Speaker 1 21:00

Okay. There was a board of athletic control?

Albert W. Brown 21:03

Yes.

Speaker 1 21:05

That seems to have developed somewhere in the 1960s. Was it in place when you came,

Albert W. Brown 21:12

I believe there was one. And remember, there was a heavy controversy across the nation at that time in terms of intercollegiate athletics. I came from Michigan, which had the President's Athletic Conference, where the Presidents actually served on the board of intercollegiate athletics, which was quite controversial. But I think that structure was working alright at least I think they (unintelligible).

Speaker 1 21:42

Okay.

Albert W. Brown 21:45

Of course they were dependent upon SFA money and that sort of an interrelationship to the rest of the institution as well as,

Speaker 1 21:54

and dependent, ultimately on student fees, the student athletic fee which Occasionally through your presidency would rear its ugly head as a nasty little battle. And then finally, I think things got stabilized around the end of the 1970s. So that it wasn't an annual budget battle but. One of the distinctive features of Brockport among SUNY campuses is its relation to an urban area Rochester. Would you tell us a little bit more about your view of the obligations and opportunities for the college in meeting the needs of Greater Rochester?

Albert W. Brown 22:39

Remember that I've come there directly from the Office of Economic Opportunity for the state of Michigan, where we had had a very close relationship with the urban areas such as Detroit and Flint, and the understanding the obligations of public education to serve those areas, which, obviously were out of sync with the rest of the nation you economically and educationally and otherwise, if you looked at the 64 campuses of SUNY, you found that in our area, we had a very lovely, rural, high quality Williams type College at Geneseo. And you had Ypsilanti which sat on the second stop on the Barge canal going west. And as a consequence, it's seemed to me that if Brockport had any function at all within the SUNY family. It had to become more oriented toward the Rochester metropolitan area, which I've said many times was the I believe the third largest metropolitan area in the state of New York. And which with which it had very little relationship with at the time that I came there because all the students as record shows were full time daytime, in educational programs, that there was nothing relating to the urban area and its needs. At that time, there were efforts made because the riot a few years before, to set up the urban center, which was managed by Monroe Community College, and then the Educational Opportunity Center that ECC I think it was originally that Brockport took over. It seemed to me that if the colleges to fulfill its function its responsibility to the state and to the citizens in that area, they had to be deeply involved with meaningful programs for the unserved people in Rochester not to be in competition with RIT or St. John Fisher or Nazareth or University of Rochester but rather to fill a niche, remember that in that first few years, Monroe Community College happily gave up the urban center, which we took over and they moved to a suburban campus, out on Henrietta road which at that time I do not believe was even served by a bus. RIT, left its downtown campus. We took over Part of Richard (Unintelligible) for the ELC for a while

Speaker 1 25:02

It's the west wing. It's the West wing

Albert W. Brown 25:05

right.

Speaker 1 25:06

my first classroom setting as a SUNY Brockport professor. once a week.

Albert W. Brown 25:10

How about that, but RIT went to a lovely campus with 1200 acres or whatever it was south of town. In other words, downtown Rochester was abandoned by both MCC and RIT. And (unintelligible) of course, something which Brockport simply could not stand by and have happened. So we moved to the 50 west main we moved into the Franklin Street and tried to set up a combination of programs that would serve those that normally are not served as well as to enrich the program of the regular campus, students and the faculty to bring them more in contact with the urban situation the urban and the general needs. of the metropolitan area of Rochester I think this was a deep commitment on my part, we would develop that to the extent we could we had very good relationships with a number of people in Rochester, who supported this kind of development Will the (unintelligible) a number of people.

Speaker 1 26:19

Okay, that leads to the follow up. How was this news received? But before we get to that, could you tell me a little bit more about the ECC Monroe. The ECC throughout the state are funded by SUNY through SUNY. And in almost every case that I know of serving during this period and later that they're associated with area community colleges,

Albert W. Brown 26:55

Well you had the two different programs you had the urban center, which was funded and runs through The community colleges and you had the ECC, which I think in some cases were not even run by the four year colleges. I think they were. But they were to be more of the academic and the urban centers would be more the applied.

Speaker 1 27:16

Okay.

Albert W. Brown 27:17

And when Monroe Community College wanted to show off the University Center, our urban center responsibilities, we absorbed and combined the two and I believe that that arrangement is not characteristic throughout the state.

Speaker 1 27:35

No, it certainly wasn't.

Albert W. Brown 27:38

But We combined it into an urban program that would serve both consistent constituencies.

Speaker 1 27:48

How is this move into Rochester perceived by other area colleges and universities or by other agencies or groups within the city and county

Albert W. Brown 28:00

Most of the other SUNY four year institutions were 19th century agricultural accidents if you look at their location, Plattsburgh Potsdam, Potsdam came in because they the sanitarium went under Geneseo was a was a very nice rural setting out there Ferdonia. Very long center you mentioned Chautauqua very little relationships with urban areas to begin with, because that's not the way they were created. I think that I mean that would have been true with practically everything except Buffalo State College. On Elmwood Avenue. I think that the other four year colleges were perfectly happy to see Brockport do anything it wanted to with the Rochester and any other urban area and probably felt that they were happy to continue to serve the usual populations that they have been serving If We weren't on tape. I would say they probably looked forward to our demise actually.

Speaker 1 29:05

We'll excise that. What about the Rochester area colleges? St. JOHN Fischer and Nazareth. Did you get any feedback? RIT

Albert W. Brown 29:17

I had wonderful relationships with St. John

Albert W. Brown 0:00

was perfectly content for us to be a State University not too large and certainly not encroaching on their area. But they saw very little relationship between the two programs and therefore there was no direct competition.

Speaker 1 0:16

Since so much of the Rochester area business community is focused on high technology. Did you ever think about directly challenging RIT's growth during the very same period by establishing some kind of engineering program, not just totally off the ground?

Albert W. Brown 0:38

No, I don't think engineering was ever one of the things that we look towards I mean, Buffalo, SUNY Buffalo had engineering, Rochester and RIT had engineering. We did get into a controversy with RIT, who appointed a dean who came in to and And, in fact, the whole situation had been set up without any visit to Brockport or any discussion. In fact, the person that came was unaware that Brockport existed because it hadn't come up. At least that's what I was told by the person, because it had never come up in the ritual for appointment considering searching. Consequently, RIT at that time was going to set up a full provisions for sociology and the academic programs that they were going to set up, in essence a College of Arts and Sciences. And I said we were setting up a College of Business Administration. And so we discussed this at different times. finally came to an arrangement where that it was generally understood that we would not encroach into RIT and they would not attempt to compete with us. Brockport was considered by most of the Rochester establishment as a teacher's college. Or Normal School and that, therefore, it had no role in business or even the academic programs and the awareness of what we were and where we were going came relatively slowly.

Speaker 1 2:22

And that that sort of the sort of power centers throughout the county

Albert W. Brown 2:26

That's true and it did work itself out with some agreements. That with the ELC that we would develop and they would develop.

Speaker 1 2:37

We've already talked about the ELC. And although this is this is not this is jumping ahead a little Well, we'll we'll go to the next question. during your tenure the campus is was much more aggressive than other City Colleges. in recruiting and serving minority students, both in Rochester and from other areas of the state, is that a fair statement did thi create any special problems for you in college.

Albert W. Brown 3:14

Well, I had a feeling that the college should represent roughly the same percentage of minorities as the population that we serve could've been 10, 11 ,12% something of that nature. And we were running of course at three or four or less, probably considerably less than that at the beginning so that if you're moving into the mid 60s and the responsibilities you would have to recruit and serve these students. There are a great number of complicated problems with us when the affirmative action first came in, in the 1964 65 66 area for us 65 66 67 You had a reservoir of high talented people who had been held in the box and couldn't get into college or couldn't, didn't have the opportunity for higher education. When you take the top off that box, out came these very talented, very able, somewhat frustrated people who could complete their baccalaureate degree in a reasonable amount of time on their own, had been educated, and quite wise, they could graduate in pretty good shape. And remember, we were very proud of one that went to Wisconsin with a scholarship for the doctorate or something or other. But this represented the reservoir of high talented people who've been held back for a number of years after you've gotten into the regular flow of things, when the system of producing disadvantaged people rather than just you know, taking advantage of those that were not disadvantaged but have been held back Then the problems became very apparent because they've got students that were so underprepared in the relatively low grade urban schools, or whatever the culture was, that you had the problem of where do you place them? How do you do the work that's necessary to bring them up towards and succeed in college? I've said many times the old cliché that remediation is a bottomless pit. If all you're doing is remediation, and if you're producing people who need remediation, You'll never catch up. I mean, you just turned around there what's the what's the slow walk across the la brea tar pits and consequently, the conflict of how you get ahead of the cycle, as opposed to how do you make up the deficits when they become apparent, now it was never faced by any of the institutions here, personally it was joyful when you found high quality students that could come in and compete. And then we were kind of frustrated when we got those that have not been prepared for college. At the same time the need to educate, to give an opportunity if you will to all students, regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds race, creed color, what have you is very important. Remember, Brockport has as I said before was all full time. Daytime education students in 1964 65. first became aware that when the wife of the president of Owen Glass tried to get into a third level, French, (unintelligible) oral French class before they took a trip to France in the following year, told she couldn't because she had to be full time daytime there and I suggested that that was not true. And we started opening up upper division to people who needed courses. Might've been underable students.

Speaker 1 7:18

Let's follow that up for a minute. There were a number of ways that the college tried to address the usual underprepared students. The two that come to mind are the creation of the Learning Center and staffing of the Learning Center and the size of Brockport's ELP program in comparison with some other SUNY schools. That ELP has its own support system in addition to the what might be available through the Learning Center or through any other means. Were you satisfied were is this the direction you really wanted the college to go in in terms of the size of the ELP program and the role that it came to play on campus?

I think so. I think considering our location, the nature of the students that we were recruiting I think there was nothing wrong with that it was a challenge. And the institution was not prepared for it. Remember until oh 1969 70, we were just a total unawareness of the forces that were shaping the racial and educational divisions in America.

Speaking of that could you describe in a little more detail the events of may 2 I believe 1970. Particularly That's the night that when the Black Student Cultural Center on Holley street burned down. And Hartwell Hall was occupied by hordes of students

Albert W. Brown 9:15

I'm gonna get a glass of water

Speaker 1 9:17

Sure. May 1970

Albert W. Brown 9:21

Ok the events of course leading up to that were very complex. As everybody knows, not only in Brockport, but around the state and the country. I was determined that the if we could possibly could get the black students and the other students, the faculty now they would be able to communicate at least with each other. One of the first things that I did was to set up a meeting between the Brockport student government by whatever name it went at that time and the black student group set up a spaghetti supper in the what is now the alumni house on campus There. To meet at 530 or six or something or other to talk about mutual problems to see if that the next student government at least regular student government could get together all the white Brockport Student Government people showed up none of the blacks did. And about after they

had oh been there probably 45 minutes an hour, basically, Lees Bane and 8 or 19 very frightened black students marched in with black jackets, some of them you know, grim faced and asked that they lightly (?) had some demands. to the campus, I don't know 15, 20 of them something like that, which he gave to us and then they turned and stalked out. And one of the most impressive things was the student will remain nameless a little girl was a freshman that year was crying like mad in the back row because as she told me later, she was certain that they were all going to be thrown out of college and she had just come there to Get her education. She's now a last I knew was a judge in the city of Rochester. But anyway, they all stalked out anyway. And the communication was difficult in that we had Mill Owen's personal speech department who was a wonderful person torn completely because he was himself as a as an academic, speech person and understanding and loyal to the way the American system worked, even after all they had voted that the Distinguished Alumnus of Virginia state down there and but he served as a as a buffer between the different groups and was had to have tremendous emotional problems because of that. Bob Cullbourn Coleman (?) From the service, security force likewise was our great asset in terms of working between the two different groups. But anyway, as everybody knows the situation deteriorated to that night we knew about what was going on and there was this meeting Well, there were all kinds of things leading up to it that would be interesting I mean the person and the person supposedly teaching one of the arts had said that the students couldn't take part in demonstration she'd flunk them. But if they did, they'd all get an A and there were little things of that nature that were hard to comprehend on a campus, I had taken the position earlier that if the only response that a campus could make to the crisis, as before, is we should cut and shut it down completely, because if it was not significant in a period of difficulty, then we had no right to exist and therefore, if we close we should close it permanently save their money and it went on to that fateful evening there was a meeting in the auditorium which was been watched pretty carefully. And nobody, either in the meeting or left at about first 45 minutes or hour or something of that nature. And after about 45 minutes, one of the people who has been very active on the campus, not black, but white stood up and shouting the Warry Qatari center is on fire. But you have to admit this was either tremendous ESP or some kind of advance notice that escaped the rest of us. And lo and behold came out and the Warry Qatari center was on fire. There was a student from the that group who had returned to the dormitory. Fortunately, as the clothes were soaked in kerosene and did not catch fire but didn't come back and apparently had some connection with it because of the tremendous amount of kerosene on your clothes but anyway.

Speaker 1 14:20

Was it a black student?

Albert W. Brown 14:21

And So things from that point on were a little bit confusing. There was rioting up and down the campus along about 11 o'clock or thereabouts. Things were kind of quieting down some and the

black students barricaded themselves in the back of the Student Union. They sent word that they would like to have me promise them safety so they could all go home I told him I can only take care of things on the campus. Once they left the campus, they were on their own, because that's as far a jurisdiction I had. And I would do everything in my power to protect them while they were on the campus. They felt that by that time, you know, there had been some some physical damage done to several people. They were very frightened and hauled up, and barricaded in there. I told them that I would give them all the protections. And the only way I could do that would be to call in either the sheriff department or the state police. They were of course standing by off the campus. And they said they didn't trust that and I said, who do they trust and I think they say they trusted me. And I said, I would go back of my uniform. And I couldn't button it, but I would come back and walk around them all night long running material, and they said, that would be silly. And I said, Okay, let's get down on what isn't silly and this is basically what was said? And they said, Well, if you can call in you know, the sheriff's department to y'know protect us we'll work on it. So at one o'clock or whatever was in the morning, there was a lieutenant from the Monroe county police, Sheriff's Department, with the leadership of the black student liberation front or whatever they called themselves then and we would decide where we might place a person to protect and did have thoughts running through my head at that time, as to what was, proper preparation for college president to as we stood in the dark next to the student union and said we think we should have a deputy placed here and I said that (unintelligible) until finally place 'em. They say now nobody has to get into harm they'd like to (?) he said and I said if anybody comes out I want to know it. So we had the place in pretty good shape then and the night kind of quieted down. Next morning, I had called a meeting for about nine o'clock or something or other in Hartwell. And I went over (unintelligible) or so Of course we had wall to wall students in there and I did walk from the back door

Speaker 1 14:43

and these were largely white students

Albert W. Brown 17:07

whites and blacks and everything in there

Speaker 1 17:08

protesting the war, the black students had already moved from the Student Union over to Hartwell.

Albert W. Brown 17:12

Yeah, And so I walked through and if you stood with one foot up in the air and said, Please move your hand so I can step I mean, I walked into the office, phone was ringing off its hook, and I might say we were up most of the night there monitoring things but and the report from Albany was that students had barricaded Hartwell they want reminding me that that was against state law. And I said there are a lot of people here in the building but it can't be barricaded because I've walked from outside in and I expect the administrative staff will be coming into a meeting and slowly they did come in and we sat down and they continued to say that reminding me that you couldn't block a state building I said we're it's not blocked it's it's difficult but you can get in and out and if you wait long enough nature will have some effect on this. So along about 10 o'clock nature had taken over and the major obstructions in the building had gone to wherever people go when they (unintelligible)

Speaker 1 18:21

What did all of them want

Albert W. Brown 18:23

well they wanted to be certain that the building was not, you know, barricaded because

Speaker 1 18:28

I'm sure you didn't want to call in

Albert W. Brown 18:30

Well we have state police standing by

Speaker 1 18:31

Yeah, I know. But

Albert W. Brown 18:32

I don't know

Speaker 1 18:33

Because it appears that that takes whatever it is to another level.

Albert W. Brown 18:38

Yeah, I would think so. Yeah. But they wanted to be kept informed, but they want to remind me of what was my (unintelligible) I'm not trying to play hero or anything I'm just saying that it was a good demonstration. uncomfortable. demands were either non existent or irrational I mean there was. Leaders were sort of unthinking, but remember that you have to understand that there's tremendous social agitation I took the position and still do that Kent state for all of its horror was a great puberty rite as far as higher education is concerned. Up until that time, it was generally believed I believe by students and many faculty. by townspeople and everything else, that you could flaunt the critical edge between the parties without consequences. And it was awful that we shot students with 30 calibre ammunition. It's also awful that you put untrained National Guard with live ammunition in front of students who are totally irresponsible and may have never been spanked by their parents when they were unruly. And I might also say that I got calls that night from well meaning people who were really not far from the campus who said that if I needed help they would come in and take the campus over. And as much as it had a tradition of weaponry that I would attest that they would have been able to if we had called in several groups of militia type people who were ready to straighten out the world and well meaning and everything but but after Kent State I say it's a puberty rite because I think then people in the back of their mind started to realize faintly at first that people can really get hurt in these things it's not all fun and games, which it had been for many of them and then you could stand in front of a television camera, shout obscenities and parade up the campus. Ho, Ho, Ho, Brown must go everything and that's that's fine. But there are consequences. And I think people started to see that which to some extent made everybody a little more sane in the months ahead. Anyway, the Warry qatari center burned down was it 20 some odd people indicted eventually in one way or another,

Speaker 1 21:13

nobody convicted.

Albert W. Brown 21:14

Nobody convicted nobody. We graduated most of them one of whom last time I knew had held a state job. And they were they were troubled times but a reflection of the culture civilization lack there of or the decision making process.

Speaker 1 21:42

What seems amazing about it in retrospect is the way in which the two strands of 1960s youth protests come together in in almost bizarre way for Brockport on that night with the fire And

then the African American students who are charged with torching their own building, using that as and then that I guess they were genuinely afraid.

Albert W. Brown 22:13

Remember that we were on the pathway from Cornell to Buffalo.

Speaker 1 22:18

Yeah.

Albert W. Brown 22:19

Remember, we had at least two students who had spent training areas in Cuba or China. remember that they were very effective. And that, in that period of social unrest, they were I mean that alleged and I wasn't in Cuba or wasn't in China with either of them but our information was for whatever it's worth was that they were well trained, and had been in causing trouble in Cornell before that. Were incidentally white they were not black One of them would used to called a press conference, and then she'd chew garlic and then get up as close to me as she could and call me everything she could think of. And words didn't hurt me but I hated the smell of garlic all the time.

Speaker 1 23:26

Of, there'll be some revisions to since they're in May 1970, because I didn't get this interview conducted when I wrote the piece that was written largely from the documentary evidence, student newspaper

Albert W. Brown 23:38

an interview with a student was it a black student what's it called one (?)

Speaker 1 23:42

No, the piece that I gave you earlier, it the documentary evidence consists of the stories in the stylus the stories in local newspapers. And what we had in the archives. I didn't have time against that deadline to check with real live human beings. Who had been on the ground

Albert W. Brown 24:01

in your materials, you'll have a couple flash sheets on the Black Panthers. Some of those things that would be interesting

Speaker 1 24:08

but

Albert W. Brown 24:11

move along.

Speaker 1 24:11

I hope you like it. It comes out well for you. I, I had. Yeah, one thing at this point. It was really hard for as a student in the period, grad student advanced grad student whatever, young professor to to find some way. I'm not going to necessarily call it the middle, but a sane avenue for protests and to keep the insanity of the moment at bay. And in looking at at, this particular episode and your response to it, I was struck by how even tempered it was. And well you it was it was really quite distinctively so

Albert W. Brown 25:00

Of course my, my great regret for the whole thing that we were able to produce probably the least educated group of people that colleges have ever turned out because they spent their time on the libraries that steps in social activism when it should have been inside reading American history and talking about (?) political science. We I mean if you could use that as a learning experience, fine. But there were a great number of people that went through it without learning a damn thing who now make statements like we should do away with the Electoral College, because that's the situation in Florida, which is on the indication that they flunked civics 101 or never took it

Speaker 1 25:07

or never took it. Right.

Albert W. Brown 25:41

No concept whatsoever of the balance of power or the reason for

Speaker 1 25:46

or the reason for it or a considered judgment as to whether it holds any value for the 21st century.

Albert W. Brown 25:52

And this is, this is the great tragedy of the 60s and 70s.

Speaker 1 25:57

Yeah, I think we at another time we should talk about that. I'd like to hear about that. Because I think that a lot of that, from my perspective gets revealed in general education programs.

Albert W. Brown 26:09

Absolutely

Speaker 1 26:10

And the way in which all things are now equal and let students choose what they need to learn to know.

Albert W. Brown 26:20

But there's no foundation

Speaker 1 26:21

There's no foundation, right. Well as as as I mean, this is the perfect segue. During the mid to late 80s, the character of the college seemed to change from optimistic growth in enrollment to federal (?) state funding to precipitous declines in both. And looking back, why do you think the college was not able to maintain particularly its undergraduate enrollment?

Albert W. Brown 26:47

Well, the first big problem was that that private institutions had the support program which was based on graduate rather than on years of being in college. Therefore they discovered that if they

could graduate a person in two years, or three years, they got the same pay as if they had kept them for four years. So that was, (unintelligible)

Speaker 1 27:13

I don't know. I think it means that we're coming towards the end of the tape. So what I'm going to do is I'll put a new tape

Albert W. Brown 27:19

Okay