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### Lynn Hudson Parsons, interviewed by Bruce Leslie

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## Interview with Prof. Lynn Hudson Parsons

Interviewed by Prof. W. Bruce Leslie

July 27, 2005 in Brockport, NY 14420

Transcribed via Otter.ai on April 11, 2020

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LHP = Prof. Lynn Hudson Parsons

WBL = Prof. William Bruce Leslie

LHP As a historian, I attribute more to my undergraduate experience at Grinnell College than to my graduate experience at Johns Hopkins University. From Hopkins, I spent two years teaching at University College in Dublin, which is the public University of Ireland, not the private not be confused with Trinity. And I had a lot of fun there. They offered me what I assumed was a permanent position, but I turned it down. I often wonder what my career would have been like had I stayed there. Then I came back and I spent one year at Grinnell College filling in for Joe Frazier Wall while he was on leave writing his biography of Andrew Carnegie. From there, I went to Wayne State University where I was for six years. And then I came here in 1971.

WBL I'm interested that Hopkins didn't have more impact because you certainly kept up with your fellow students at Hopkins.

LBP Well, I was part of a fairly Blue Ribbon group and it's kind of hard not to do that. Is what they've been up to James McPherson and David Hackett Fisher and Bert Wyatt Brown and Willie Rose and those are just the Americanists. So I've kept up with most of them, but as far as classes my experience with advising and so forth, it wasn't any better than it would have been at any other institution, I don't think.

I think the key to the Grinnell experience, and probably any other if you know any other Grenellians you could verify this, was the small size of the of the institution and it's not so much the public versus the private, it's the small versus the large. No matter how good a place like Berkeley or Ann Arbor or Brockport can be, once you get past 2000 in your student body, you begin to lose things. I don't know anybody my age who has been to any class reunions who came from a large public university. I'm sure there are, but the ones I do know who go back are part of a class of 200 and who have kept up and who can meet with and renew old friendships and old animosities with that class, whereas if you're a class 10,000 or whatever, it's less attractive. So it's not so much the public versus private as the small versus the large. I think that's important. And I would encourage any of my grandchildren to look at smaller colleges rather than large institutions, all other things being equal.

WBL Has your admiration for the Grinnell model shaped what you've done at Brockport? Have you tried to bring those values to your students.

LHP I've tried. But again, you're up against an institution which has a variety of missions. And there, those are colleagues in other departments that deny that this is a liberal arts institution. And they have the right to their opinion, and they have a lot of students. So it's a difficult row to hoe. But I think our department or it's not just ours, but I think others and our department have tried to emphasize that you're studying history, not because you want to be historian, because we have enough of those, but because not only in terms of the content, but in terms of the skills that are involved, it's a preparation for a variety of careers. And we always have the standard examples of people who majored in history, who went on to

basically non historical positions, heads of corporations, President, the United States, Justices of the Supreme Court, and a whole bunch of other things.

WBL Do you have any memory first impressions of Brockport?

LHP I remember being interviewed in one of the upstairs rooms in what is now the Alumni House. And I saw it as a basically friendly department, friendly institution. My career at Wayne State was less than successful in that regard, but Brockport was a place that I had no qualms or reservations about coming to. I had other choices, including private institutions, but the promotion and the money persuaded me that Brockport was a place to go. And as you will recall, in 1970/1971 there was an element of expectation and excitement that this was going to be a University Center. And even if it wasn't going to be a University and it was going to be a large institution, perhaps the flagship within the SUNY college system which I'm sure attracted a lot of people besides me at that time.

WBL As I remember, it was your social activism that caused some problems at Wayne State. Can you talk a little bit about what Johns Hopkins and Wayne State movements you were involved in?

LHP Well, at Johns Hopkins, the president that time was Milton Eisenhower. And it was essentially cooperative with the Baltimore as a segregated city in the late 1950s. If you look, and I think I'm right on this, if you look at the *Baltimore Sun*, the real estate ads were divided into colored and white.

And we wanted Johns Hopkins to break that by refusing to discriminate in terms of its listings for housing and take a more active stance with regard to the segregated restaurants in the area around Johns Hopkins, notably the Blue Jay restaurant, which was segregated at the time. We had a number of unsuccessful meetings with President Milton Eisenhower who was reluctant to try to do anything about that for the traditional reasons that there were conservative alumni and while I agree with you, personally, we're not yet in a position to do anything about that. And so Chester Wickwire and I and some others, including from time to time Jim McPherson, occasionally organized picketing and demonstrations of restaurants and so forth at that time. Probably detracted from my progress on my dissertation. I'm sure I'm not the only one in that category.

WBL Did you have any success?

LHP The Blue Jay is not segregated anymore. Yeah, Hopkins does not cooperate with the landlords in maintaining segregation, but whether that was due to our efforts I don't know. One curious thing, in 1961 I think, there was a campaign for election for mayor of Baltimore. And there was only one candidate, who happened to be a city councilman at the time, running for mayor. So therefore, he wasn't risking opposition from someone who would come out who came out in favor of equal accommodations law, breaking down segregation in Baltimore. And he was a young Councilman by the name of Peter Angelos, who now owns the Baltimore Orioles and is a multimillionaire, a very successful lawyer and so forth. I saw the letter from him thanking us, for he didn't win. But he remained on the City Council for a long time. I still have that letter from him thanking me for our efforts and so forth, etc, etc. ***[I don't understand – how did he lose if he had no opposition]*** But then the following year, I went to Dublin.

WBL When I came back to Hopkins, four years later, there was integrated housing purchased for students.

LHP The whole thing we became irrelevant when the Civil Rights laws of 1964/1965 passed. It is clearly a different Baltimore than when I got there. In some respects, it was a progressive set of resumes on the crease between the North and South and in certain northern tendencies, and other tendencies.

WBL How about at Wayne State? I take it politics got in the way.

LHP I became involved in the anti-Vietnam war movement. While getting ready for us to move, I went through a lot of materials that I had accumulated, speeches I had given testimony given before the various elements of the Michigan Democratic Party, urging them to adopt a more vigorous opposition to the war. The problem was, as long as Lyndon Johnson was in power down to 1969, the United Auto

Workers was a very strong supporter of Johnson and they were extremely unwilling, and this includes the sainted Walter Reuther, to take on the administration. Once Nixon became president, then it became easier for that movement to oppose the war, but we had some real battles, I mean those elements in the Michigan Democratic Party that were interested in supporting Bobby Kennedy as long as he was around and turning the party into an anti-war movement, with limited success, obviously.

WBL You came to Brockport at a time of high hope and that fairly quickly dissolved. There were nearly 12,000 students by 1975

LHP And they were tripling students in dormitories. I'm not sure I thought about it at the time, but I was impressed with the drinking. This was when the age was 18 and they were serving booze on campus. When you look back on it, you wonder how that could have possibly happened without the faculty objecting, without parents objecting. But it just seemed like the thing. I don't know whether that was going on at Fredonia or Geneseo or not, but I remember giving an exam on St. Patrick's Day. And it must have been in the afternoon and half the class had had something to drink; you could tell by the belching and moaning and so forth. And I was impressed, but nobody ever questioned the whole irresponsibility of an institution for encouraging people to get drunk. And that's really what it was all about. And the high school kids knew about it and they would skip school to come to Spring-in and from miles around. But it amazes me that no one at that time thought that this was not really consistent with the image of public higher or any kind of higher education.

WBL You moved quickly into some leadership positions, what took you in that direction?

LHP There was a contrast with Wayne where all of the important positions were held by tenured people. I was throwing out, just a couple of weeks ago, a list of the committees in the Department of Wayne State University in which the chairman was an ex officio Chair of every committee. Whereas, and I think I'm accurate on this, at Brockport the Chair, Syg Synnestvedt, asked "What would you like to do? What committee would you like to serve?" And I think I was Secretary the first year to take the department minutes which, by the way, were in far more detail than they are now.

WBL And you were involved in beginning the London Social Science Program I believe.

LHP Yeah, that would have been in 1977. But before that I had a research grant to work on the John Quincy Adams biography in Massachusetts, so I spent 1974/1975 away from here. And then 1977/1978 on the London program which we inaugurated, John Halsey and myself. Once again, this probably slowed down my progress in getting anything published.

WBL Well, now that as you look back, do you have any regrets about your balance of service, teaching and scholarship?

LHP I probably would not have become involved as much as I did in the service area if I had to do it over again. It's a tempting thing to do for some people. If you're looking for an excuse not to do the research, or if you think you're not doing a good job, perhaps more importantly. There are many opportunities at this institution for you to escape to. But in my case, I always was able to come back and at least do a credible job of publication research.

WBL Do you think the fact that you were in institution in crisis propelled you towards more service than you might otherwise?

LHP Not really. Crisis was everywhere in the 1970s. And, as you know, the whole SUNY system was being kicked around.

WBL You wound up chairing or co-chairing a presidential search. Perhaps you could talk about being Faculty Senate President because I know that morphed into the presidential search.

LHP Right. I became Faculty Senate President for the 1980/81 academic year. And in those days it was just for one year. And by coincidence, not by planning on my part, that was when Dr. Brown chose

to resign, without much warning, so we didn't have a year to put together a search procedure. And in those days, there was no standard operating procedure for search committees. So the faculty leadership was pretty much on their own. And because the College Council was somewhat laid back in their approach to the day to day operations of the College, we were able to do pretty much what we wanted. In terms of setting up a search committee we were careful to include all the various constituencies of the college, the students, the alums, the professionals, and three members from the College Council, served on the committee.

And we made one big mistake that I regret; we chose not to go with a head-hunting search firm. We were quite determined that we could do this by ourselves; we didn't want outsiders interfering with that. The result was we wasted a lot of time going through the credentials of people who clearly were not qualified, and so forth. I don't think the result that we came up with would have been much different, because the finalists in that search were all highly recommended by well-known people in the profession, but we could have saved ourselves a lot of time by employing somebody else to do it. But I don't remember anybody on campus at that time suggesting that we that we hire anybody; that came later and of course it was much more successful in later searches.

The other mistake I think we made was that someone raised the question whether or not an on-campus visit to the candidates' campus was something we should do once we narrowed it down to two or three people. My understanding, and I think I'm right is that usually when you get off-campus, we've talked with people there, and the person who advised us, nice guy Murray someone or other, a friend of Don McWherter, who was assigned to moderate, said "that's not necessary". Well, that would have been interesting. It would have been important. I think if we had gone out and talked with some people in Eastern Montana University, we could have saved a lot of grief that followed.

WBL I don't know how much it's covered by confidentiality, but could you discuss some of the issues that people discussed when it came down to final decisions?

LHP No, I think we were obviously looking for a strong leader. I personally was looking for somebody with a liberal arts background. Didn't have to be a historian. And I think of the three finalists, two of them were historians, as it turned out Dr. Komisar and talked to Congress or I forgotten what is academic.

WBL Was it business? Who was the third finalist?

LHP Lorman Ratner of University of Wisconsin at Superior. I don't know what happened to him. But two out of the three. And of course, people pointed at me as chairman of the committee think I rigged it but that was hardly the case.

I don't know if it's been any studies done, but I'll bet that you take a cross section of college presidencies, that the number of former historians is disproportionate. I've never counted it up, but I certainly have run into a large number.

WBL We got into deep difficulty after the retrenchment. So could you reflect on the 1980s, on how we dealt with it? As you said, crisis was everywhere, but we were a bit more in crisis than many.

LHP Yeah. It's hard to dispute the opinion that we possibly we over-built in the 70s, that we expanded too much. And then because we were over built, that we were more vulnerable when the hard times came in the 1980s when demographics turned south and although that was what Dr. van der Wetering had to deal with, though it was hardly his doing.

I don't know what the choices were. But we do know there was the so-called reallocation of resources [aka retrenchment] in 1983, in which a number of people [c.50] were let go, with the idea that those vacancies would be shifted to other more productive areas in terms of enrollment. But the hard times came and that never happened. Those empty lines just kind of evaporated. So the areas that were lost faculty were alienated, and the areas that are expected to get the lines were alienated, which created additional problems for Dr. van de Wetering, I think.

**WBL** Maybe it is time to bring up the Al Brown comment that “The model for Brockport is Brockport.” Do you have any thoughts on the model that emerged then for Brockport. I think you said and my image was a liberal arts college, but that clearly wasn't going to fully work.

**LHP** Well, we still are technically listed as a College of Arts and Sciences and that the nomenclature. I may be wrong or it may have changed but at one time, there was the University Centers, and then the College of Arts and Sciences. Now somebody may have gotten to it and changed it since but that was my memory. When I became Faculty Senate President, one of the reasons I was interested in that was my conviction that too many of us had been psychologically, if that's not too strong, psychologically intimidated. You remember there was one point when people talked about the new liberal arts. And we had this jerk from Eastman Kodak come to speak to the honors convocation and I walked out. I have forgotten the vocabulary but it was that liberal arts education was a thing of the past and they had trained for jobs and so forth and so on. And I remember walking out of it, but I think there are a number of us and not just in the professions but a number of us in our department and others that we were just a service department and that professionalism was the wave of the future. And we had to be careful in our grading that we weren't too rough and so forth. That was behind my presidential remarks in 1980. This is that if you go down that road, the students will sense that you don't really have confidence in what you're doing. And if you don't have confidence in what you're doing, then they're not going to have confidence and I tried to energize people to take more pride in doing what they're doing with some success so that when you major in it if this be elite, and there was always talking about elitism and liberal arts are for elites and we're not an elitist folks.

I think also there's an assumption that President John van de Wetering and a lot of the administration never saw an institution like Brockport competing with private institutions, whereas I do see it competing. To them there's a cohort out there are intended for private education and public education is designed to help those who didn't make it in the private sector, and I know people in the administration believed that. Whether John believed it or not, is something that you'd have to ask him. But I have challenged that all along. I've always seen institutions like Brockport and Fredonia and Plattsburgh and the place on the other side of town [Geneseo] as competing with privates. Obviously, the resources of the high-end private institutions like Harvard and Grinnell are superior. Grinnell has a budget has an endowment of a billion dollars and they're taking 1000 students. Okay, that's a million dollars per student to support them; there's no way we can compete with that. But St. John Fisher, come on! Nazareth get serious! We know from our experiences that we are a better institution than they are in terms of the quality and I see us as always competing for them.

I do think that every Fall semester, we start out with high expectations and by golly, this year is going to be different, students will be more eloquent and more learned and the syllabus is going to be improved and 20 years ago that may have lasted a week. Now it lasts month or so. So that's good.

Before you get jaded, some of us even make it through the semester without even getting cynical about the whole but there's no question that the students, and I don't know if they're any brighter, but they certainly are smarter in the sense that they may introduce themselves to you after the first day of class or, if they miss a class, they will leave a message apologizing. So I think the atmosphere in the classrooms is immensely improved over what it was 10 or 20 years ago. But I assume that's happening elsewhere as well. I don't know what the model of a public institution in the state of New York is anymore. We have some problems with a Board of Trustees that tends to see SUNY as an extension of the welfare state and is convinced that we're all lazy since we only teach nine hours a week. We obviously have a lot of time on our hands.

**WBL** That leads me to ask you about your feelings about SUNY - what is going right, what is going on wrong?

**LHP** I don't have any strong feelings. The only other extensive experience I've had with large scale public higher education was in Michigan where the Board of Governors is elected. Everybody is on the

ballot, along with Governor and Senator and Congressman. And if the Democrats win the election, usually the Democratic candidates carry it. If the Republicans win, then they do, but since Michigan goes back and forth the result is that you have a mix of Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives on the board and it's not entirely up to the governor. The government plays no role in appointing them.

So if we had that kind of a system, we might have a more responsive and responsible Board of Trustees. Pataki is not the only example of viewing the Board of Trustees as a kind of a dumping ground for people who need some kind of political recognition. I think Mario Cuomo did the same thing, albeit with less deleterious results than Pataki. But you can't be sure necessarily because if these are people elected that they're going to be any better. But I sometimes think that would be better if these people were on the ballot along with the other positions rather than having them appointees.

One more thing. According to Tim Flanagan, whom I trust, the budget cuts in some of the other states, some of whom have much stronger background in public higher education that we do, are horrendous. In Wisconsin, and Minnesota it's much worse than it is here. But given the pressures on state budgets generally, it's going to take some doing to maintain the standards that we have.

WBL You talked about Pataki or his trustees involvement, what were you thinking of?

LHP I think they have a clear agenda number one, that there's a lot of waste in SUNY. They come from a background that assumes that the government is wasteful and private industry is not, despite the examples of Enron and other private institutions. But if it's public, it's obviously wasteful. So they forget that the word "trustee" means you're trusting these people to advance your case. And up until last year, they were consistently willing to cut SUNY's budget. That's unheard of in other other states. So I think number one, they think something is fishy or wasteful about SUNY, which doesn't help morale within SUNY itself. And there are some who have a political agenda; they want to refashion the curriculum, particularly in the area of the social sciences, to reflect a particular point of view, which most academicians do not share. In this area, I think they've been less successful.

WBL How do you feel about the liberal arts core that they mandated?

LHP Well, that's interesting, because that created some odd alliances. Many of us were sympathetic to some kind of insistence that you cannot be educated unless you have a background in history, unless you have some knowledge of literature, and so forth. And so when people came along and advocated that not having the same agenda that you do, it puts us in some difficulties. I did not initially at least, and maybe still don't have any real problem with the mandatory American history component. The problem is that we were not given any resources to do that. And they assumed that if you have to teach a course in American history with 75 students, you do it with machine scored exams, and that's okay, because that's what public higher education is all about. And we tried with some success resist that. But if they had said, when they started 10 years ago, we think every student should have a course in some kind of historical background, American history, or whatever, world history, and here's the money to do it, then I think it would have been a lot less difficulty than there was. But the fact that we were expected to make do with a shrinking budget terms of inflation all the rest of it just indicated a certain amount of hypocrisy, at least on their part.

WBL I believe you were the first person to serve a second term as Faculty Senate President. Can you contrast the Brockport of your two terms?

LHP I think in the interim between 1980 and my second President van de Wetering had opened up the process of campus governance. In other words, the Faculty Senate President was a regular participant in most of the staff meetings of the President. And there was an attempt made I think to include the faculty in certain aspects of policymaking, although not as much as was the case of Dr. Yu, when he really opened it up in terms of the budget committee. So now the faculty are not presented with a budget but with one which they actually put helped put together. So I think in that sense, it was a more open institution. I think people paid more attention to what was going on. They had to give the constraints and

the restrictions and the limitations that SUNY was going through. But I enjoyed a friendly relationship with Dr. Brown. That was not an issue as far as I'm concerned.

WBL You serve in President Brown's last year. What were your impressions of his presidency?

LHP Well, as I said, in those days, it was kind of a closed thing. I never attended any staff meetings or anything. Other than Jack Crandall, I didn't really know any of the vice presidents or any of the people that Dr. Brown had around him whereas I knew the people around John van de Wetering. I think the most interesting toward the latter part of van de Wetering's term for me was when he pointed me to be Director of Student Retention, which I spent a year doing for him and then a half year with Dr. Yu. My research indicated was that, not contrary to what a number of people thought including myself, we were not losing students. The attrition rate at Brockport was no different than it was at any other institution similar to Brockport with a similar academic profile with a somewhat similar admissions criteria, and with a similar mix of students, commuters versus residents, and a relatively small number of minorities. And I forgot the other criteria that we identified, but if you looked at institutions that were similar to us in that regard, we actually were a little bit better.

But we still were losing a lot of students after the first year. And my recommendation was that the only way we can do anything to change that is to change the admission criteria, which is exactly what Paul Yu did. And that is the reason why our retention record is much better now. But it wasn't that we were doing anything wrong. It wasn't that the professors were not showing up or not showing an interest in the students. There was nothing that I could see that indicated that the faculty or the administration was screwing up. It's just if you if you have this kind of an institution with a mix of commuters and residents and a large number of part-time students, you're going to lose them because part-time students have other pressures like family pressures or economic pressures and so forth. If you don't want to lose students have a 100%, female, Catholic residential college. If you have everybody of the same religion, same gender, and all living in the same place, you're going to lose very few. It'll be pretty darn blasé. But the more homogeneity you have, the better your attrition rate or the better your retention rates can be, but you give up other things.

So I recommended that we slightly change the model. I don't know whether Paul Yu would have done that anyway, judging by what he said when he came, but I think those findings played right into the role, right into what he wanted to do in the end. Ray di Pasquale was quite comfortable with that as well and our standing within the community with all the other colleges I think has dramatically improved. Nobody disputes that.

WBL If I might change topics, after your second presidency, you developed a World War II project.

LHP Right, we took advantage of the 50th anniversary of America's entry into World War Two and put forth a public humanities grant to the National Endowment for the Humanities, which sponsored about a year and a half series of lectures, films, and exhibits in which we worked with the Rochester community, all the major museums. It was successful.

Thinking back on it there are things I would have done differently. I think we were hurt by the allegedly remote location of Brockport from the rest of the Monroe County. And if I had to do it over again, we probably should have budgeted for a professional publicity public relations agency to promote the events. Because as it was, we did it on our own. It's similar to the Brockport presidential search. We were amateurs, and we should have been willing to hire professionals to do that which we had to learn how to do so the publicity for those events was not as good as it should have been. And the turnout for the lectures varied. Sometimes we had a full house, sometimes we didn't. So I think in retrospect, if we had budgeted \$25,000, let's say to a public relations agency and said "here, promote this thing and give us your recommendations to what we should do", it I would have much better but certainly the College did well from it.

WBL Had you had any previous involvement in what has come to be called public history?

LHP No, not before nor since.

WBL So what led you into such a different adventure? As I remember, there's something about some posters you father had.

LHP Oh, yes, they may have stimulated my interest. Those are things that I've carried around and still carry around that remind me of that period, although it's not a professional interest. I have not done any research in that period. Others have done that.

WBL How has the History Department evolved during your time here?

LHP Well, we had that long hiring drought, in which we went from what 25 to 15 faculty and I think that really hurt us. And the result is that now everyone, with one exception, is over 60 or under 40. In a different circumstance that could be very, very dangerous, with differing philosophies and perhaps different politics, but that has not been the case. Joan Rubin was hired in the late 1970s and we didn't hire anybody until Anne Macpherson which was about 1997 and she was just tenured about two years ago. So that's almost 20 years. That's not good. And it's amazing that the Department has held together in that sense. One or two people who were less than completely happy have since left so that helped too.

LHP When I had occasion to make remarks at my retirement reception, I made the argument that you really should take advantage of when you're at the top of your form or near the top, for that's when you should leave. And you should leave voluntarily, which doesn't always happen. And that's what I said without comparing myself to athletes or something like that. But this has been a good year for me as chair and a good year for me in the profession with television appearances and so forth. And my book [*John Quincy Adams*] is still widely recommended and touted. And my teaching in the last semester had been very good as I told you. But I said also that I was happy. I was proud of the fact that I have played a role in one way or another in hiring the new people. And I named them all which was a challenge because I was afraid and forgetful. I had some magic way of doing it. I forgot what it was, but I got through it. And then I said, as I looked at my friends from Michigan, that there are those in this room who know that a generational change is not always easy. It's not always comfortable. That it doesn't always work out well. But this is done and then I was very happy about that whole thing. And I think the young faculty appreciated the remarks; all of them were there, except Jamie Spiller who was off climbing a mountain somewhere.

WBL Do you have thoughts on how the discipline of history has changed across four decades or five decades?

LHP If you look at the *Journal of American History*, it's not gone in a way that I'm comfortable with. And I don't know of anybody who's happy with what's happened to it in terms of the kinds of articles that are published. If you pick up any of these copies, you'll see what I'm talking about. They tend to be a little more esoteric than I'm used to. Maybe American history has been written over too much and people are finding other things to do. How many times can you tell the story of the Great Depression or how many times do you want to refight this or that? Maybe you have to go in other directions. Maybe that's the case. I don't know.

WBL So you feel we're slicing and dicing?

LHP It might be a good idea to have a moratorium on publication for 20 years. Well, I'm not usually an authority on intellectual trends.

WBL What are your greatest disappointments about Brockport, if you have any?

LHP Yeah, I do. Practically all of us, I don't know whether that includes you, came here with the assumption that we would be here for two or three years, and then we would go on to something more prestigious or so forth. And with one or two exceptions, that isn't the case and without any names some of us have adjusted to that rather easily, and others have not, and they took it out on their students, they took it out on their colleagues, while others have reinvented themselves. Bob Strayer, for example, came as an Africanist, learned Russian, and became a leading advocate of the concept of world history and was Director of General Education for three or four years. He then left fairly contented, I think, with the institution.

And others persuaded themselves that this is the best history department on the East Coast and they live contentedly with that kind of image of themselves. But I think that this is probably where I should have been. Once I realized I wasn't going anywhere that became acceptable. And what's the line from the Rolling Stones "that you can't always get what you want, but you need to want what you get". Wanting what you get is just as important as getting what you want. And that has been my approach.

WBL This might be redundant now but I was going to ask you what gives you the most satisfaction about your time here?

LHP I think my wife is included in this. We are leaving, I think with a certain degree of respect and affection. What more do you want? Some of that may be phoney, but I don't think so. Everybody was there. You could predict that; people even came from the east side even to attend. That's nice.

WBL Any other thoughts as you look back?

LHP No, I don't have any words of wisdom to pass on anybody that I can think of.

WBL Finally, you're not leaving history completely behind. What are your future plans?

LHP I've been asked to contribute to the McPherson-Fisher series on pivotal points in American history, with a concentration on the presidential election of 1828 - the defeat of John Quincy Adams and the triumph of Andrew Jackson. I haven't sent the proposal yet, but if that proposal is approved I'll do that. Then there's an article half written on JQA and his relations with women beginning with his mother and his wife and so forth. I've got the raw material, but I don't know what to do with it because I don't have the background yet in that kind of history.

And there's another article that's half done on Adams' report in 1819 on weights and measures, which he was asked to do, somewhat offhandedly I think, by Congress, but Adams being Adams took it very seriously. And it's a marvelous document, tracing the history of measurement from the Bible, down to the present, the competing theories, the advantages of the metric system. I guess what was on the agenda was whether the United States should join the rest of the world other than England and adopt the metric system which is immensely logical, being French. Adams makes the case for it and explains why it is logical. But then he says that there's such a thing as cultural inhibitions and long standing traditions. And Americans have to make up their mind whether they want to chuck all this and join with the French, or whether they want to stick with essentially the English system. I don't think he makes a recommendation, because he still wants to be president and he can't say, well, let's embrace the French, because that's going to get him in trouble. But on the other hand, there was still a lot of Anglophobia in the country, so he wasn't going to say let's stick with the British, but he lays it out and it is an essay in cultural bias. How easily can you overcome culture? A kilogram he says is universally assumed to be two pounds. So if you want to convert a kilo into two pounds you do it. Well, it's not really two pounds

it's 2.2 pounds, but it's shorthand. It's easy to do that. Do you want to you want to go in that direction? Or do you want to stick with the English system? So I need to brush up on my science in order to get through that - that's another article.

And then of course, there's a history of Castine, Maine which I will attempt to do also. So I don't, I don't intend to walk away from intellectual endeavor in that regard.

WBL You've several times mentioned delaying scholarship for service or to avoid it. But you must be very pleased with the way your scholarship has gone in the last seven or eight years.

LHP Yes, so I guess my regret is that I should have done it sooner. I mean that grant in Massachusetts was in 1974/75 and *John Quincy Adams* wasn't published until 1998 and it's not really that long. Come on Lynn, what's going on here? Well, that went on and other things. And I was able to publish articles in between. The book was obviously the most satisfactory aspect.

WBL And then this year, as you said, it's been a grand climax with the AHA thing.

LHP In January of 2004, which was repeatedly televised well into the following summer. So someone at my son's reception and the backyard in Castine said I saw you on tv. This would have been July of 2004. So that was nice.

WBL A wonderful way to end the interview. We will miss you after 34 years as you ride off east into the sunrise tomorrow.