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SUSAN DAVIS
(b. 1949)

INTERVIEWED BY
HEIDI ASPATURIAN

February 14, 26, and March 8, 2013

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Subject area

Humanities and Social Sciences; administration; students.

Abstract

Interview in three sessions with Susan Davis, division administrator for Caltech Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) from 1981 to 2012. Ms. Davis briefly recaps her youth and education in New England, her work with economists at the University of Rochester, and her marriage to Caltech economist Lance Davis before moving into a discussion of her thirty-five years with Caltech's Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), including more than three decades as division administrator. She talks about the growth of the division's undergraduate and graduate programs in the social sciences, the reactions this inspired within the division and across the Caltech campus, and discusses the relationship between social scientists and humanists within the division and with Caltech's physical scientists. She recounts her years working with division chairs R. Huttenback, R. Noll, D. Grether, J. Ledyard, J. Ensminger, and J. Katz and with numerous HSS personalities, and discusses the evolution and growth of HSS's academic programs over nearly four decades. She also talks about her service on Caltech staff committees and offers her personal perspective

on changes in the campus environment and working conditions for staff, particularly staff women, over her years at Caltech.

Administrative information

Access

The interview is partially restricted. Per agreement between Susan Davis and the Caltech Archives dated July 30, 2014, portions of this interview are closed until January 1, 2020. Closed portions are clearly marked in the transcript.

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CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ARCHIVES

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN DAVIS

BY HEIDI ASPATURIAN

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

http://resolver.caltech.edu/CaltechOH:OH_Davis_S

NOTE TO READERS

Per agreement between Susan Davis and the Caltech Archives dated July 30, 2014, portions of this interview are closed until January 1, 2020. Closed portions are clearly marked in the transcript.

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CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ARCHIVES
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Susan Davis **by Heidi Aspaturian**

Pasadena, California

Session 1	**February 14, 2013**
Session 2	**February 26, 2013**
Session 3	**March 8, 2013**

ASPATURIAN: This is the first oral history interview with Susan Davis, who was the division administrator for the Humanities and Social Sciences [HSS] at Caltech for approximately three decades. I'd like to start by asking you where you grew up, where you were educated, and how you happened to come to Caltech.

DAVIS: I was born Susan Gray in Providence, Rhode Island. I went to St. Leo's school, a Catholic School, until, I think, the sixth grade, and then my family moved to Cumberland from Pawtucket. Rhode Island is a very small place, but if you grew up there, going from Pawtucket to Cumberland was a big thing. We were also the only Catholic family in town, and I remember that because when I first moved there, people referred to us as "the Catholic family." [Laughter] That must have been in 1960, because [John F.] Kennedy was running for president; and I remember being in the schoolyard and hearing people talk about the Pope coming. Remember, there was all that sentiment that if a Catholic was ever elected president, the Pope would come. Then I went to Cumberland High School, a public high school. I was the literary editor of the yearbook in my senior year, I think. I graduated from high school in 1967, and then my parents moved to northern New Jersey because my father took a job in Manhattan. I had been accepted at Regis College, a women's Catholic college in western Massachusetts, and I was not very keen on going to a women's college, Catholic or otherwise. I did spend some amount of my time there dating boys from Brandeis. [Laughter] But, that said, my mother had always

wanted to go to Regis. She had gone to Pembroke, which was then the women's college within Brown University, and had never finished.

ASPATURIAN: What was your major in college?

DAVIS: English literature. While I was at Regis I met my first husband, John Groth, who was at Williams. After he graduated we got married, and he worked as a gardener at Regis during my senior year. I remember one of the nuns came up to me one day and said to me, "Is it true that we have a Phi Beta Kappa who is one of our gardeners, and he is your husband?" And I said, "Yes, all those things are true." I graduated from Regis, and John was admitted to the University of Rochester as a graduate student in political science. We moved to Rochester, and of course like all spouses of graduate students you immediately go and try to find a job. I applied for a job in the university economics department, initially in the economics reading room.

I remember very vividly being interviewed by Dick [Richard] Rosett, who was chair of the economics department, and who said to me, "You know, you really have no skills. [Laughter] But I think you're probably very smart and pretty hardworking, so I'm going to hire you." And he did, and I became the secretary to the graduate program in economics. And then—this was 1973—the Fairchild program at Caltech was started, and I think that we were kind of the beneficiaries of that. Bill [William] Riker, who was a very distinguished political scientist at Rochester, was asked to be a Fairchild scholar, and John was his student, and so John and I followed Bill and his wife across the country. John and I drove cross-country, and it was the first time I think I'd ever been—wow—west of, well, Rochester. New York to me was the West. [Laughter] One of the reasons John was able to get a research assistant–type appointment as a visiting graduate student was because the Caltech Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences had just started the social science graduate program, and they didn't really have any students. We stayed at Caltech for nine months, I think—an academic year. Then in 1974 I came back to the University of Rochester. Then John and I went to London, where we broke up, and I came back with Lance Davis [Harkness Professor of Social Science, Emeritus, d. 2014].

ASPATURIAN: This was when?

DAVIS: In the late seventies. I came back to Caltech, I think, as a research assistant in 1977.

ASPATURIAN: Had you known Lance from before this?

DAVIS: Yes. I had worked for him the year that I was here with John and Bill Riker. At Rochester, I had worked as a research assistant for Stan [Stanley] Engerman and Bob [Robert] Fogel, who wrote this very famous book on slavery, *Time on the Cross* [*Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*]. And Stan knew Lance because they were both economic historians, and he called him and said that I had worked for him. And because the graduate program in social science had barely started, there was money. So Lance hired me as a part-time research assistant, and that's how I met him. Then I went back to Rochester. And then Lance—and this is not an attractive part, but true [laughter]—brought John and me to London. John and I split up, and I stayed in London with Lance. I came back to Caltech with him and was hired to administer the social science graduate program in the economics department. Lance was one of the program's founders, which I suppose helped. He was like all good Caltech faculty—they found their spouses, girlfriends, whatever, a job. [Laughter] But it turned out I had quite a bit of experience. So I was the administrator of that. In the beginning it was a part-time job.

ASPATURIAN: This was the social science graduate program?

DAVIS: Yes. There was and still is only one graduate program, and they give a PhD in social science. Back then it was administered through the economics department

ASPATURIAN: So had you and Lance got married by that time?

DAVIS: Let's see, I came back with Lance in the fall, I think, and then we got married not long after that. So basically when I came back, I wasn't initially Lance's wife but soon was. And the graduate program was really ramping up. I can tell you how I got hired. When I first came back I was working on this project that Lance was working on with

Bob [Robert A.] Huttenback [professor of history; HSS division chair 1972–1977], on British imperialism in India. So in a way I was kind of a perfect choice. The graduate program was a fairly distinguished one, but it had just begun, so it was useful not to have to pay a full-time person to administer a program that had so few students. The first class probably had five or six people. I started doing that, and I also did some work with Roger Noll [former professor of economics; HSS division chair, 1978–1982] on his economics of professional sports project.

ASPATURIAN: I'd like to ask you about those early years because it seems to have been a pretty tumultuous period in the history of the division.

DAVIS: I guess maybe it was tumultuous. Starting a graduate program in social science was probably a step out there because up until then Caltech only gave PhDs in the physical sciences. People have asked, "Why didn't Caltech establish a doctoral program in English literature?" Well, there's no money in those fields, in the sense that the social science graduate program depended and still does depend on getting research grants just like in the physical sciences. My understanding and my recollection of all of it was that they were going to start this thing with certain stipulations like "We don't do macro" and it's still like that. They weren't going to try to replicate the economics department at the University of Chicago or the political science department at the University of Rochester. The political science that we do is still in some sense very much connected with economics.

ASPATURIAN: I went through the HSS oral histories from this period—there are about ten of them, and they're really quite fascinating. As I understand it, Huttenback and Lance spearheaded the new graduate program. They were very enthusiastic, and they had support within HSS from people like Rod [Rodman] Paul [Harkness Professor of History, d. 1987] and the support of Caltech's president Harold Brown. Among the humanists—Hallett Smith [professor of literature, d. 1996], Kent Clark [professor of literature, d. 2008], and David Elliot [professor of history, d. 2007], for example—this move caused considerable unhappiness. I wondered if you had had a chance to observe this.

DAVIS: Oh yes, absolutely, there was no question. Bob Huttenback clearly was very much behind the program, and, to be honest, while Hallett Smith was an extremely distinguished professor of Shakespearean literature, I do not think that the other humanities faculty were of the Hallett Smith caliber. Rod Paul probably was as a Western historian, but David Elliot, Beach Langston [professor of literature, d. 1979]—I'm trying to think of some of those other names—were not.

ASPATURIAN: Robert Oliver [professor of economics, d.1998] also had very strong views.

DAVIS: Oh, he was very much against starting this PhD program, and he, I have to say, was not a well-known economist. And one thing I know is economists because I did spend those years at the University of Rochester and, as I said, I worked for Stanley Engerman and Bob Fogel, who won a Nobel Prize in economics [1993]. The humanists in the division were very antagonistic, and there was a certain kind of Old Boys' Club. They liked having lunch together with the scientists at the Athenaeum [the Caltech faculty club]. When I first came, there was always talk about going to the Athenaeum for lunch. That was very big with the Bob Olivers. All these men are now dead, but I think if they came alive today they would say that they did not approve of this program in social sciences at all, and they did not like Robert Huttenback at all. They felt he was pushing something unnecessary, that he was disturbing the waters with this program, and probably too that the program was too expensive and that the people they hired were probably paid more than the David Elliots and the Robert Olivers. And may I say that while I certainly saw all of what went on, I personally always had very good relations with those people and was never treated badly because I was Lance's girlfriend, then wife. And certainly David Elliot was a very lovely man. I was never really that keen on Robert Oliver, but certainly as an English major, I was very excited when I heard that Hallett Smith was here. And then of course there was that whole thing with Jenijoy [LaBelle, Caltech professor of literature, now emeritus].

ASPATURIAN: Yes, I was going to ask you about that.

DAVIS: It was so long ago, but that certainly was one of the things that was a real tornado in the division. She had been denied tenure [1974] before I got there, and there was certainly a total clash of cultures in some sense. The Lances, the Bob Huttenbacks, the Jim Quirks, they wanted the humanities to be a research scholars program, not a program where the scientists liked the idea that they could have lunch with people who talked about Shakespeare. There are a few remnants of that today, although very few. The scientists really didn't care about the scholarship of the humanists. There was very much this attitude, and I would say it to a scientist's face. The scientists who got involved in Jenijoy's case—the Richard Feynmans—were, I think if you look back on it, very condescending. I think actually there's some mention of this in Lance's oral history, and I'm sure there are certain things about the case he might have discussed about people coming to him, with Feynman basically saying, "Oh, come on, we don't want to have a big lawsuit over someone who's a literature professor." If Jenijoy had been a physicist, that attitude might have been different. And that's nothing against her because that was very much how these scientists viewed the HSS division. It was not that they considered it second-rate, but there was an attitude of, "This is a science institution, and these people are kind of icing on the cake." You couldn't give undergraduate degrees and never teach the students English or history or whatever. That really was the tone. I haven't thought about this in a long time, but when I do, I remember being very aware of it, particularly after I was married to Lance because he was kind of in the midst of all of it. We had very good friends on the physical sciences faculty, but some of the scientists clearly viewed him as someone who was muddying the waters with his new social science program. There was kind of this attitude of, "Oh, we love to have these humanists eat lunch with us in the Athenaeum and talk about, you know, the latest novel and Nobel Prize." It was terribly condescending.

ASPATURIAN: That's how you saw it. Interesting.

DAVIS: I always say that I came from a *real* university. Sometimes I used to be annoyed at something at Caltech, and I would say to my colleagues, "Well at a real university, real universities have *x*." Even I would say that. [Laughter] Caltech is a research institute

with other things, including undergraduates. I'm not saying that in other universities, like Harvard or Yale, people don't think of themselves as better than some other disciplinary group, but it's not in the same way. Harvard scientists would never have viewed Harvard economists and literature professors as people who do their work on the side. But at Caltech I think that having this graduate program in the social sciences added even more to the threat factor for some scientists. There was the feeling that these people are getting a little too big for their britches. But then somewhere down the line that changed. Harold Brown was still the president [1969–1977] when I came, and then he went off to be the secretary of defense [in the Jimmy Carter administration]. Then under Murph [Marvin L.] Goldberger [Caltech president, 1978–1987, d. 2014], there was definitely a change. It wasn't a dramatic shift, but now you actually had people here in this graduate social science group. They had tenure, we were building up a program, and clearly there was support from the top for this. Otherwise they wouldn't have made any of these appointments. And of course the newer faculty in the sciences came from—as I used to say—"real" universities where they're used to seeing economists and English professors and historians teach at the graduate level, so I think there was a very different attitude.

ASPATURIAN: What were your impressions of Huttenback?

DAVIS: Well obviously he was one of Lance's best friends. He and [his wife] Freda were the best friends at our wedding. I liked Bob; he was kind of a hail-fellow-well-met type, and he had been MOSH [master of the student houses]. Freda was the type of person who when she came had to have the Caltech house they were living in redone. I have to say I have seen in my many years of academia people pushing the line, and I'm sure Freda was as difficult at Santa Barbara as she was at Caltech.

ASPATURIAN: Did you ever wonder why he stayed married to such a difficult woman?

DAVIS: Oh no, because I've seen people married to difficult spouses all the time. My first husband was an alcoholic. I'm not very judgmental about people's choices—I mean you say, "Gee, that's too bad." But I think Bob's career would have been a very, very, different one if he had been married to someone else. Also at Santa Barbara, he got on

the wrong side of David Gardner, the president of the UC system. I think he saw Bob as very ambitious in the UC system and feared that one day perhaps Bob might be pushing him out. So that was kind of my experience with the HSS division in the beginning. Now it is of course such a different place, and of course the graduate program has become a very successful one. I give Lance a lot of credit for that; they decided early on that they weren't going to try to replicate the Harvard economics department—they said we would not have people who did international trade, and we always said we only do microeconomics, not macroeconomics. Basically, political science became kind of the macroeconomics element. I think that was a wise choice because the number of people they could hire was so limited. Economics departments in most universities are pretty big, and they cover this great range of things, which Caltech could not. I think Lance probably was very much behind that approach of "Let's not try to do everything, let's do some things well," and now the graduate program has evolved in this neuroscience direction, where we have Ralph Adolphs [Bren Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience and Professor of Biology], who has a joint appointment in HSS and Biology.

But I do not think, frankly, that Bob was well served by having a wife like Freda. He was his own master as well, but she was not, let's say, one of those supportive spouses. She had a kind of—I don't know where she got it from, but people do get this way— "to the manor born" attitude and as the wife of the UCSB chancellor, of course it immediately intensified. Also with Freda, as far as I could tell, there was always some house rehab involved. That was true at Caltech, and I think she just upped it when she got to Santa Barbara. [Robert Huttenback resigned as chancellor of UC Santa Barbara in 1987 amid allegations that he had, among other infractions, "illegally authorized payments of more than $100,000 from university funds for improvements made to his off-campus residence." (*NYT*, 3/17/87) *–Ed.*]

ASPATURIAN: Huttenback sounds like someone who was a real lightning rod, either for a great deal of affection or a great deal of animosity.

DAVIS: Yes. I thought he was great; he was great fun. I was quite a young woman; it was a little more than thirty-five years ago, and I really hadn't been involved in that level of academia before. I always found him very delightful to be with, certainly no pushover—except for his wife, I think. He could have said, "No, Freda, we're not redoing the house; this is going to bring down the house of cards, and we are not going to do this." I really think if he'd had a different wife, things would have been different, and I don't think the whole mess with Santa Barbara and the UC system would have happened. And of course when I first came to Caltech, there was the Bob Huttenback–Lance Davis camp, and then the Jenijoy La Belle–Kent Clark camp. Meanwhile the scientists—although not all of them, by any means—did not like people being called social scientists. Many of them viewed the social scientists as people who were coming in and taking on the name "science," where we already had all these lovely, wonderful literature people whose books you could read and discuss. I can't tell you how often people would say, "You know, we must have so and so to dinner to liven up the conversation." I do not believe they would have treated the Harvard literature department like they treated the humanists at Caltech. I do think there were many physical scientists who took the view that the humanists were at Caltech to "round out" the undergraduate program but did not take them seriously as scholars. I will not say that was true of all of them. And there was a lot of resentment towards the social scientists in that it was harder to say that they weren't serious scholars because they were getting research grants, and a number of them had come from pretty good universities. I feel like the humanities faculty sometimes kowtowed more toward the scientists, and the scientists' attitude was, "Oh, I've read Chaucer so now I know what English scholars do." There was a lot of that. Clearly if you did game theory, it's really not something that most people did in that period. I also think the scientists saw it as "How dare the social scientists use 'science'; they're not real scientists." There was a cadre of people who felt that strongly, and then there were people who didn't.

ASPATURIAN: Do you recall any scientists in particular who expressed these views?

DAVIS: I'm trying to remember. There used to be these social events called First Friday parties—social events that met the first Friday of every month. There were five families including Lance—the Zachariasens [Frederick and Nancy], the Kambs [Barclay and Linda], the Fays [Peter and Marietta], and the Richards [Jack and Minnie]. They'd have a party, and people would bring food. In fact the first day I came back after London, Lance picked me up and told me we were going to a party**.** I met Jean Grinols [division administrator, Geological and Planetary Sciences; subsequently administrator of the Caltech provost's office] for the first time there. These were people who were friends of ours—we'd have Thanksgiving with them. The Huttenbacks were not part of that group, and I would be very surprised if Freda's connections with a lot of these women were very good. And then of course you know that Linda Kamb was the daughter of a Nobel laureate, Linus Pauling. She is a lovely person, and none of these women was ever anything but welcoming to me except the wife of Lance's close colleague, Freda Huttenback. [Laughter] And they're still wonderful. I recall that Marietta Fay started out not being very keen on Lance marrying this woman twenty years younger, even though Lance himself was not married at the time. He had been dating another woman, and Freda Huttenback was very good friends with Lance's girlfriend. In fact, I remember really distinctly, now that we're talking about it, that when Lance picked me up for this First Friday party, we stopped off to have a drink of champagne at Bob and Freda's, and when I came in Freda said, "Oh, is she old enough to drink?" And she referred to me in the third person, so you can see she's hardly my favorite person.

ASPATURIAN: So where did this attitude come from that the humanists are—

DAVIS: Second class? There was a general feeling—and probably some of it I picked up from Lance and Bob. Lance had very good friends like Jack [John Richards, professor of organic chemistry and biochemistry] and Minnie Richards, and we used to go out together for dinners, and that's where I met people who felt like that. I don't feel that I myself was ever treated that way by any of the scientists personally. It was sort of a trickle-down thing.

So I certainly never felt that dismissive attitude personally, and I think part of that was that Lance had forged relationships with people, and not everyone was paranoid about the idea that economists would be *coming in*, and, I don't know, taking over and creating business schools and things like that. There was this "Oh, economists think that way" kind of thing, and I mean that was really something. And, remember, I had been at one of the major economics departments in the country at Rochester. I worked for Bob Fogel, who won the Nobel Prize for economics. I was shocked that people at Caltech spoke about social science as if it was—

ASPATURIAN: Some sort of pseudo-science?

DAVIS: Oh yes, very much that. I also felt, as I said, that there was this kind of attitude of, "Oh, because people who do English write books that we can read, obviously it's good to have them around." I know this is kind of a harsh phrase, but the humanists were treated like lapdogs. I wasn't there when the whole Jenijoy case first started. I'm extremely fond of Jenijoy, and I think she was probably badly treated by Bob. Still, I must say, scientists did not have the same standards for people in the HSS division as they had for themselves. By that I mean they were willing to let people come in with lower standards than they would have ever have accepted for their own colleagues. But I think that's not true anymore, and it hasn't been true for a long time. I'm very good friends with Jenijoy, and I think she was mistreated on both sides.

ASPATURIAN: So you came back and became the administrator of the graduate program in 1977?

DAVIS: Yes, I think that's right. At that time the program was just kind of bubbling up.

ASPATURIAN: In addition to Lance and Huttenback, some of the other names I have as being associated with its start-up phase are James Quirk, Roger Noll, John Ferejohn and Mo [Morris] Fiorina.

DAVIS: Yes, Ferejohn and Fiorina, that was a big thing when they hired them. They were political scientists.

ASPATURIAN: Did Lance and Huttenback bring them in?

DAVIS: Yes. Mo Fiorina actually had his PhD from Rochester. But that was part of the social science graduate program, bringing in these people, and of course many of the humanists were opposed to it. But Roger Noll had been an undergraduate in math at Caltech [BS 1962], and basically he was really the person who formalized my job when he became division chairman. At the time, we didn't have a division administrator, and I don't even remember if every division had someone, but I think certainly Mike Miranda held that position in Biology.

ASPATURIAN: It sounds in general, though, like Caltech had a much leaner administrative operation in those days.

DAVIS: Yes, I think so, but basically they had someone who did this, although they didn't give us the right job titles. It was actually Dave [David] Grether [Gilloon Professor of Economics, Emeritus; HSS division chair, 1982–1992] who got my position moved from—I don't know—secretary of the whatever to a division administrator. He is really responsible for basically putting my position on an equal playing field with all the others doing the same job. I gave a prize in his name for a good reason. [Laughter]

ASPATURIAN: What year would this have been?

DAVIS: Let's see, I was just looking that up. I think I became division administrator in 1981. But at the time I don't think I had that title.

ASPATURIAN: Roger Noll was chairman at that time?

DAVIS: Yes. I give Roger credit for giving me the job. He and I had worked together on the economics of professional sports, and at the time they offered me this job I was the

secretary of the graduate program, working for Dave Grether, who was the executive officer for the social sciences. I vividly remember Roger coming up to me and saying, "Have you got a minute? I'd like to talk to you." And he said, "Let's go take a walk." And I still remember that he said, "I know we're not a marriage made in heaven, but Connie Friedman's leaving, and I'd like you to take over as assistant to the chair."

ASPATURIAN: Why did he offer you the job, do you think, if he prefaced it that way?

DAVIS: Because I think he valued my smarts. There was some tension in Lance and Roger's relationship, although Lance had the greatest respect for Roger and was very happy to have him as the division chair. But he and Roger had had this kind of father-son relationship, and Roger was like the young prince wanting to assert his rights.

ASPATURIAN: But he transcended it.

DAVIS: He did, absolutely. I always admired him for that. Of course, it was certainly in some ways to his benefit as well. I mean here was somebody who knew the business.

ASPATURIAN: Were you the first HSS division administrator?

DAVIS: Yes, although that wasn't the title in the beginning.

ASPATURIAN: So basically you defined the job?

DAVIS: Yes. I defined it for my division because, of course, there were division administrators in other divisions.

ASPATURIAN: What were your responsibilities?

DAVIS: Pretty much a lot of the things that I think the assistant to the chair does now—paperwork and working on the general budget, although that was much less complicated then. I also did a lot of the "assistant-to-Roger-as-a-professor" kind of thing. I think he

had a conference in Washington, D.C., and that I went there with him to run that, so I acted as the department assistant too. I think it was around that time that the division administrators started meeting once a month as a group. I think it was really Mike Miranda who spearheaded that.

ASPATURIAN: Is that when your job changed from dealing mostly with the social sciences to dealing with the whole HSS division?

DAVIS: Yes. Once I stopped being the secretary of the graduate program and became the assistant to the chair, it broadened out. Also, you know, I think people started respecting me for my own talent, not because I was the wife of Lance Davis, who was the best friend of Bob Huttenback. There was some of that initially. Then I started dealing with the humanities more. I had dealt socially with the humanists before—Peter Fay was a very close friend of Lance's. But of course there had been the whole thing with Jenijoy, and the social scientists bore the brunt of that. In the perception of the humanities faculty, it was the social scientists who were responsible for Jenijoy's tenure issue. It took a while for that to simmer down. I really wasn't involved in the nitty gritty of all that, but there seemed to be the pro-Jenijoys and the anti-Jenijoys, and many of the anti-Jenijoys were viewed as social scientists, although I think that Lance and Jenijoy did not have a particularly bad relationship. But then Roger left, and in 1982 Dave Grether became the division chairman. I think Roger felt that he had been overlooked as a potential candidate for Caltech's provost, and I think he was right about that. Roger is a very smart man and a Caltech undergraduate, but he was an economist.

ASPATURIAN: I did read in one of the oral histories, although I can't recall which one [*Robert A. Huttenback Oral History*], that Murph Goldberger called Roger Noll in and said, "I'd be happy to have you as the provost but Arnold Beckman [chairman of the Caltech Board of Trustees, 1964–74; chair emeritus, 1974–2004, d. 2004] would never stand for it."

DAVIS: I believe that's probably true. Yes, I think one of the reasons Roger left was that he was ambitious.

ASPATURIAN: Do you think in Roger's case he felt like he was being patronized by the scientists as a Caltech mathematics undergrad who didn't remain in math or science?

DAVIS: Oh yes. I think there was this really strange perception among the scientists toward economics, or social science—that it wasn't real science. We've talked some about that. And I think that was one of the reasons Roger left. He's a very distinguished scholar, he's incredibly smart, and here he was being told that you're not, you know, cutting it. Now Dave Grether never had an ambition to be the president of Caltech. His father, Ewald T. Grether, was dean of the business school at UC Berkeley and was a very distinguished administrator in the UC system, but I don't think Dave ever had that type of ambition. In fact I thought it was really nice when Peter Bossaerts was chosen as division chair and then took off to Switzerland that Dave agreed to step in for a year [2006–07]. Dave is very smart and a prince of a person. He has really outstanding qualities as far as I'm concerned.

ASPATURIAN: I have a ton of questions to ask you about the 1980s so let's take a break.

[Resume session after a break.]

ASPATURIAN: Where were you located physically in your first years in the division, and how was the division logistically organized?

DAVIS: It was pretty much the same as it is now but for the fact that Dabney [Hall of the Humanities] had not been renovated. My office was on the third floor of Baxter [Hall of the Humanities and Social Sciences]; I never had an office in Dabney. My office was on the third floor at the end of the hall, and for a while I shared an office with Barbara Yandell, who was Charlie Plott's secretary for many years. Then, when I became Roger's assistant, I moved right outside the chair's office. And I was in that office throughout Dave Grether's chairmanship. I think I was still there when I officially became division administrator. I think maybe when John Ledyard [Davis Professor of Economics and Social Sciences; HSS division chair, 1992–2002] was there or after he left, I got my office down the way, because I never sat outside the office when Jean

Ensminger [Wasserman Professor of Social Science; HSS division chair, 2002–2006] was there. At some point, I did move down the hall into my own office; I didn't have kind of a receptionist's space any more.

ASPATURIAN: The humanists were for the most part over in Dabney?

DAVIS: By that time, yes, most of the humanists were in Dabney. There was a smattering of humanities faculty in Baxter, and of course Lance and Phil [Philip] Hoffman [Axline Professor of Business Economics and Professor of History] were economic historians. Lance didn't have a joint appointment with humanities but Phil did, although his office has always been in Baxter. In fact I asked him once if he wanted to move to Dabney, and he whispered, "No thanks."

ASPATURIAN: So we're in the early 1980s and Roger Noll has departed, for Stanford I think. Did Caltech make any effort to keep him?

DAVIS: I believe they did, but I think Roger wanted to move on and move up on the administrative ladder. I don't know what his title was at Stanford [professor of economics; director, Public Policy Program].

ASPATURIAN: I noted down a couple of things that happened when he was chair. He named Annette Smith [professor of literature, now emeritus] full professor?

DAVIS: Yes, I do remember that. Actually Roger was quite good about hiring women. That's absolutely right, he did that. Annette is still in his great debt.

ASPATURIAN: Yes, she talks about it in her oral history.

DAVIS: Then I'm trying to think if there were any women in the social sciences.

ASPATURIAN: I have the name Jennifer Reinganum.

DAVIS: Yes, Roger hired Jennifer. She was married to a guy named Mark Reinganum, who was at USC and then they moved to Chicago. She's now at Vanderbilt.

ASPATURIAN: I wondered if you remembered anything about Eleanor Searle [Wasserman Professor of History, d. 1999]. Do you remember the circumstances of her hiring, or do you remember working with her?

DAVIS: Oh yes, I knew Eleanor quite well. I'm trying to think whether she was hired by David or by Roger.

ASPATURIAN: It was 1979, so this would have been under Roger. She was apparently part of a program that Goldberger started. He provided seed money for each division to bring in—

DAVIS: —senior women. John Benton [Dreyfus Professor of History, d. 1988] was involved in the Eleanor Searle hiring. He lured Eleanor here [from UCLA].

ASPATURIAN: Is that how it worked?

DAVIS: I believe so.

ASPATURIAN: He brought her in as a fellow medievalist?

DAVIS: Yes, exactly. He was a man who was very much the medievalist; he loved intrigue. He sometimes would feed the flames a little when there was some—

ASPATURIAN: Something percolating?

DAVIS: Yes. He liked a little of the intrigue; he liked the politics. Sometimes I used to think that in some of these medieval courts he would have fit right in. His death was really a great blow as he was really an incredibly distinguished scholar, and it was just so tragic. Oh, that was a very hard thing because when John Benton fell down the stairs and

died, Lance and I were the first people there. Elspeth [Benton, his wife] called Lance, and Lance and I drove over and John was lying there.

ASPATURIAN: Did he have a stroke or was it a fall?

DAVIS: I think he fell. He had very bad arthritis; it was probably even more than that, and he just fell. Really, that was a great blow. I believe Elspeth remarried and now lives up in Northern California. And Eleanor—I think we were very good friends. Some people felt that Eleanor was rather imperious. I never felt that way. She was extraordinarily successful in an arena where women at that time were not. Even though there tended to be more women in the humanities than in the sciences, she was in a field where that was certainly not the case. [Eleanor Searle was the first woman awarded a PhD from the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies. –*Ed.*] She fought hard to be the scholar that she was, and I was very fond of her. She could be a bit high-handed, but at the same time she had a great sense of humor, and sometimes she was very vulgar in the most—Eleanor was always the kind of person who could say some really scatological thing, and the way she would put it would be almost elegant. [Laughter] She certainly was opinionated but no more so than John Benton. I think that in many cases when women take strong positions, it's held against them, although I don't think this is as true now. And of course she had many things to say about her colleagues. [Laughter] I liked that about her, and I think a lot of times these colleagues were not people at Caltech. She was also executive officer in the humanities for a while [1989–1992]. And then her husband, Leonard Searle, was an astronomer at Carnegie [Institution of Astrophysics]. People like Eleanor were not high maintenance. They may have been high maintenance with their colleagues but they were not high maintenance to the staff.

[PORTION TEMPORARILY CLOSED, bottom of page 18 – top of page 20]

ASPATURIAN: Are there any other high-maintenance personalities you'd like to mention?

DAVIS: Oh my gosh; there are so many. [Laughter] People vented a lot, vented about their colleagues. Now if that was an eight-hour-a-day event, then I would never have lasted all the years that I did, but it wasn't, and I like to believe that people felt that I went out of my way to help them. I was having this discussion with Tom [Thomas] Palfrey [Flintridge Foundation Professor of Economics and Political Science] and his wife, Cheryl, the other night at dinner, and we talked about the ways that our division has changed in that it seems that division administrators now work for the division chair in a different way. I always perceived my job to be one in which I was the division administrator for *all* the faculty, for the graduate students, for my staff—that my role was global across the division. Certainly my immediate boss was the division chair, and certainly it was the division chair's prerogative to hire and fire anyone. But I did feel that I wasn't working for just the division chair or just the faculty. Now I can't speak for the other divisions, but nowadays I think there's a sense that the division administrators work for the division chair—that the division chairs tell them what to do and they carry it out.

ASPATURIAN: It sounds like you had more autonomy in your day?

DAVIS: Yes, I did. And I also saw myself as an advocate for faculty, especially for postdocs. We had those two-year Mellon Foundation postdoctoral instructors, and I was very involved with that program. I used to write the reports every year to both the Mellon and the Ahmanson foundations. I would talk to the individual postdocs, and I would take care of drafting the reports for the division chair. I always felt I was the advocate particularly for non-tenure track faculty.

ASPATURIAN: What were the rough outlines of your job description?

DAVIS: [Laughter] From my position—whatever it takes to get the job done was how I viewed it. Sometimes I would have to find somebody a house that would accommodate their baby. Generally—and I think this was true of division administrators in general—my job was to make sure that whatever a faculty member needed, we would throw our assistance to that. Some people need to find a house for their baby. Then there are other faculty members who, if you asked me about them, I would bet I probably spent no more than three hours in the last ten years doing anything for them. Phil Hoffman is a classic example. He's a senior professor, but if I said I spent twenty hours doing anything for Phil Hoffman over all the years he has been here, I bet that would be an exaggeration. Sometimes there are just people who are needier; sometimes there are people who by the nature of their work require more administrative assistance; and sometimes, frankly, there are people, like mathematical theorists, who don't have five postdocs and never seem to need much. But I always felt that whatever needed to be done I should try to do. For example Andy [Andreas] Aebi is a lecturer in German, and we don't have research faculty in that field. So what could I do for Andy? I could arrange for the Swiss Consul, when he visited here, to come to dinner with us in the Athenaeum. I always tease Andy, saying I've been to so many dinners with Swiss consuls that I should get Swiss citizenship. [Laughter] But I've always felt that it's particularly important that the class structure that exists with tenure and non-tenure shouldn't lead to unequal treatment. I'm not saying tenure shouldn't exist—obviously we reserve tenured positions for areas that we do research in. We don't do research by and large in foreign languages, and Annette Smith was the only person who was ever tenured in one. We don't have art historians—well, we had one but not anymore. What I tried to do is to minimize any sense of a caste system. Now in comparison with other universities—because I know so many people from other universities—the Caltech caste system is actually relatively mild. On the other hand, I've always wanted to make sure that I was not the person to emphasize the distinctions that did exist. We don't have full professors in German, but if taking the Swiss consul general to dinner at the Athenaeum gave Andy a little boost—a well-deserved boost—in status, I would do it. What did it cost? Almost nothing.

ASPATURIAN: So you took an interest in intangible things outside the promotion structure?

DAVIS: Yes, and I really worked hard on behalf of the people who were non-tenure track. Visitors were a little different, although I also felt visitors were very important because when you don't have a sixty-person English department, or whatever, you rely very heavily on visitors to add breadth. That's why I spent time driving them, picking them up, helping them find houses, getting them acclimated, and so forth. And also they're interesting people; this was not a painful thing.

ASPATURIAN: You had a very holistic approach to your job.

DAVIS: Yes. I really feel that that's important, and it's something that I don't think is valued that much in the institute anymore. I'm not the only one who feels this way; I hear it from many others, in other divisions and in other departments. I have a lot of colleagues and friends who are not faculty members, and I like to believe that as part of my job I could sometimes intervene to make something happen a little sooner or get it done in a fashion that would alleviate some of the stress of the staff person on the other side. I'm very good friends with Dick [Richard] Seligman—

ASPATURIAN: —who, for the record, is director of the Office of Sponsored Research.

DAVIS: Yes. When he first came—and I think he has some funny story about me with that too—I really felt that it was important for our research grants to establish good relations with his office, and I think he's just a wonderful and extraordinary man.

ASPATURIAN: It sounds to me—correct me if I'm wrong—that you seem to have acted in a lot of respects as kind of a division-wide advocate without having necessarily a portfolio for the position.

DAVIS: Exactly. I think I saw myself as an advocate for the faculty. There are a lot of faculty—even those with tenure—who need advocacy but especially people like the

postdocs. I would really work with them on things like writing the proposals for those Mellon instructorships, and a lot of times these people had just come from being graduate students. They didn't always know how to maneuver through the system, and sometimes they might ask for something that was not really a professional thing, like could you help us with housing, could you help my kid get into the daycare center? That was a common thing I helped with, and I can assure you that not all my male colleagues who did this job in other divisions did that sort of thing, although they might have had someone on their staff—a female—to do it for them. So I think that I did feel it was important to be an advocate for people who didn't have, and were not going to get, tenure or who were here for a short time—visitors, our postdoctoral instructors who were just new to this game, our long-term lecturers who aren't on the tenure track. We treated these people very well—everybody knows it's not their fault that we don't have tenure-track positions in their particular fields, and I'm not saying we should have. I don't think that at Caltech—given the size—that you can have a tenure-track position in everything, but again, I tried to smooth out the differences, if you will.

ASPATURIAN: I wanted to ask you also about some programs from the early eighties. For instance, the Baxter Art Gallery. The 1980s were the time of its great success, and, in 1985, its abrupt demise. I wondered to what extent you were involved in any of that.

DAVIS: The gallery closed under President Goldberger. Dave Grether would have been the division chair. The story there is that Mildred Goldberger closed it because she felt snubbed by the Art Alliance ladies of San Marino.

ASPATURIAN: That's the story in a couple of the oral histories.

DAVIS: I have no proof in either direction. The gallery was started under Roger Noll, who I think had some bigger plans for it.

ASPATURIAN: It was doing very well, from what I understand.

DAVIS: And I think, as in many other cases, that perhaps that success contributed to its demise a bit. Perhaps if it had stayed under the radar, or only been *pretty* successful, things would have been different. I still see Jay Belloli [curator of the gallery]. I think he's still doing something at the [Pasadena] Armory [of the Arts]. Yes, Roger was very supportive of the gallery, and I think he really was excited about the prospect of it being bigger. I think that many people would have felt that that was misguided, and perhaps some of those were trustees—although I don't know; maybe some trustees thought it was great for Caltech to be associated with an art gallery. But there was a kind of persistent rumor that Mildred, who had done advanced work in economics (and I remember there was originally some concern among the economists that she would come in and decide that we were going to have to do macroeconomics), did not see eye to eye with the ladies of the Pasadena Art Alliance; and, as often happens, I suspect the people outside the organization underestimated the power of the people inside it. Mildred Goldberger was the wife of the president of Caltech, and the Art Alliance might have dealt with that a little better.

ASPATURIAN: Well, it was her husband's decision.

DAVIS: And how about that—well, what about Murph? I mean he is the president [laughter], and I honestly think that portraying Mildred Goldberger as the wicked witch who closed down the art gallery is really unjust. It was almost this kind of Lady Macbeth idea—that she would be whispering into his ear, "Close the gallery." Of course not. Goldberger was the president, a distinguished physicist; he was obviously someone who could weigh alternatives, but that doesn't mean that he always made the right decisions. And I think he was very fond of Roger, so it wasn't like he had any desire to knock him back.

ASPATURIAN: Interesting. Annette Smith does say in her oral history that Goldberger told her at one point that closing the Baxter Art Gallery was the biggest mistake he ever made as president.

DAVIS: You know, lots of times at Caltech they don't seem to find the middle way. I have seen that. Why couldn't, let's say, Roger and Murph or Mildred and some of the ladies of the Art Alliance say, "Look, this is a research institution, we really don't do this kind of thing, but we really think this is an important, so let's compromise on some things."

ASPATURIAN: It didn't need to be either/or.

DAVIS: Exactly. I think sometimes that does happen, and I think we do it in our own lives too. Oh, we can *only* do this or we *can't* do that, you know? That said, Roger loved the idea of expanding Caltech's cultural side. I think *Sulfur* magazine—that was a literary magazine—came in under Roger too. Roger was an undergraduate Techer who got his PhD from Harvard, and I think there was a part of Roger that really embraced the liberal arts and very genuinely thought it was really important for undergraduates to have that exposure and experience. There was this kind of craving for breadth. So he had this outlook of "Let's have a literary magazine; let's have an art gallery," but I also think some people might have seen that as overreaching and going beyond Caltech's core expertise. I think at one point he even wanted to move the gallery from the basement of Baxter over to Dabney.

ASPATURIAN: He wanted more space for it, and that issue became a flashpoint?

DAVIS: Yes. And I think, frankly, that was asking too much. Then of course when the gallery closed, the social scientists took the hit for that too, because they got a lot of that space in Baxter to set up the experimental economics lab. And they had nothing to do with the closing. That's something that irritated me, now that you're talking about this. The social scientists were never consulted about closing the gallery, and the next thing you know, people are implying that they were involved. Of course I was married to a social scientist, but I sometimes observed among the physical scientists this kind of attitude—not exactly that the social scientists were Philistines, but "Oh, the humanities faculty were not people who dared to use science as part of their portfolio." There was some of that, and I think that it affected how they saw the gallery too. There was this

sense of, now we have the Plott [Experimental Economics] Lab, and it used to be the art gallery. And of course the scientists didn't care a whit about the experimental economics lab, but they did think, isn't it nice to have an art gallery? I will say that I do not think that that is the case anymore and hasn't been for a long time, but when I first came, it certainly was. The fact is I was not formally classified as a division administrator in HSS, and yet in the science divisions the same position as mine was classified as being a division administrator. That was the case that Dave Grether made to get my promotion. He got together with Don Archer [compensation and employment manager in the Caltech personnel office] and basically said hey, we have this woman who is doing the same job as these people in the science divisions.

ASPATURIAN: It sounds like the scientists perceived the humanists as adding an element of cultural enrichment?

DAVIS: Yes, exactly.

ASPATURIAN: They did not see the economists that way but rather as scientific wannabes?

DAVIS: Yes. The economists were perceived as wannabes, although I do not think that would be true now. When I was first here, there were certainly snide comments about how the economists were money-hungry—the attitude reminded me of anti-Semitism. Once I actually talked to someone—I don't remember who it was—and he sounded like something out of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It was like, all the economists cared about was money, and they wanted to take over things. I thought, "I think that we've seen this in some past," although I would certainly not want to over-stress the comparison. It was striking to me then to hear people talk that way about economists—or social scientists, if they weren't saying economists—in that way, and then of course about how the poor humanists were suffering. The truth of the matter, I would almost say, is that a rising tide lifts all boats. I think the humanities faculty benefited greatly by being in a division that had economists and people who had higher salary levels so that you wouldn't have this huge disparity between the divisions. As a result everyone got

raises—I'm sure that anyone who cared to could figure out the data on that—and I don't think that was a bad thing.

When it comes to faculty salaries, there are certainly fields where you have to pay more to attract the attract people that you want. It's like any other market. And that is something that people at Caltech used to not understand—that there is a difference. The grocer or great restaurateur does not make what someone else may make because society has decided that this is the bar for that. I'm not saying that there weren't disparities—I'm sure there were—but I think, as I used to sometimes tell humanities faculty, that some of them made sense. Humanities faculty were sometimes quite flippant about research grants—their attitude was, "Oh, anyone can get these." The truth is, it's not *easy* to get an NSF [National Science Foundation] grant, and also that NSF grant brings overhead support, which pays my salary and their [i.e., the humanists'] salaries. [Laughter] One of the things that I used to love and hate at the same time was this famous discussion about overhead. I used to tell this to economists: "I am overhead; I am not a direct charge, so before you decide that you don't want overhead, then do all the work on the grant yourself because you know what: You need us and you need Sponsored Research to get this going." And oftentimes I think in the humanities it was even more so. Sometimes there was sniping like, "Oh the economists, they got a grant for a million bucks," and I had to remind them that the $50,000 in overhead that came with it goes to all of us. I think that's not so true anymore; I think nowadays people are much more savvy about research and university funding.

ASPATURIAN: I wanted to ask you also about TACIT [Theater Arts at the California Institute of Technology], which also emerged in the 1980s, and what your recollections were about that.

DAVIS: Yes, that was directed by Shirley Marneus. I think TACIT was another thing, like the glee club, the art gallery, and *Sulfur* magazine, that Roger Noll threw a fair amount of support to. I never actually talked to Roger about this myself, but, as I've said, I certainly could see how if you had been a Caltech undergrad in the 1950s you might want to encourage some cultural branching out. I think that Roger was aiming for that

well-rounded thing—he was really trying to add a few little curves to the square scientific box.

ASPATURIAN: Earlier you mentioned art history as another program that Caltech discontinued. I wanted to follow that up because it relates to something that happened soon after I arrived at Caltech [1984] and which gave me some insight into how Caltech operated. Do you remember Marty [Mary Martha] Ward?

DAVIS: Oh, yes, I do.

ASPATURIAN: She was an art historian, and I guess she was let go. There seemed to be quite a dust-up over that, and I remember that people from my office [Caltech Office of Public Relations] were talking about it, writing letters of support for her, and so on. This was an academic issue, but it reached into all parts of the community, and I thought that said something very interesting about the campus culture. She didn't really want to go, I think.

DAVIS: Oh no, no one ever wants to go, especially in the humanities. This is a great gig. You don't have to teach thousands and thousands of students, and you have much more research support, basically because you are relying on the largesse of all the overhead that comes in from research grants that have nothing to do with art history. [Laughter] I think Roger Noll hired Marty—I think the Baxter Art Gallery was connected with that—and, again, I think frankly that it was clearly misguided. I think Marty unfortunately suffered for it, but she landed on her feet and is now an art historian at Chicago [associate professor of art history, Department of Visual Arts, University of Chicago]. But I think that was perhaps a decision that in retrospect even Roger would have acknowledged—well, maybe not, because you know how academics never want to admit they've made mistakes. But I think Marty was a victim of let's-broaden-our-perspective over-enthusiasm. You know, Lance used to say that Caltech is a place where we don't do everything, but we do everything well. And I think that's kind a summary of the mantra of the place.

Some material in this session was originally recorded during Interview Session Two.

SUSAN DAVIS

SESSION 2

February 26, 2013

ASPATURIAN: We broke off in the early to mid-eighties last time. One thing I noticed about this period is that the HSS division had this rather large exodus of people. Karen Blair, Holly Jackson, Joyce Penn, Martin Rubin, Stuart Ende—they all left. What happened?

DAVIS: I think most of them didn't get tenure.

ASPATURIAN: These were all humanists, I believe.

DAVIS: Yes. Martin Rubin was a huge case—he actually brought a lawsuit or something. You will still see him today at the Athenaeum. He comes every day. He's a very, very large man who wears shorts—he will stand out. He's had kind of a tragic life: His wife, Merle, died in 2006, and they were like two peas in a pod. Joyce Penn didn't get tenure either, and there are two schools of thought on that. I don't know what happened to her—we were actually quite close friends. In truth none of those people are literary stars at any other university. I think they were below the caliber of what was expected here.

ASPATURIAN: A question just occurred to me. There was some tension in the division between the humanists and social scientists for a number of years. Your husband was on one side of the divide and—

Davis: Oh, absolutely. Lance was the person they brought in to start the social science program.

ASPATURIAN: Your background, however, was in English literature. Did you feel a bit torn?

DAVIS: No, I saw no reason why these things weren't compatible. They were compatible at every other major university. Harvard has a mainline economics department with Nobel laureates, and they also have a mainline English department.

ASPATURIAN: But they're in separate departments. I did wonder, though, if at times the social scientists perhaps looked at the literature people and said, what the heck are they contributing? And vice versa.

DAVIS: I think that what happened was that the bar was initially never as high for people in literature. And that was true of most of the humanities people. Then when you got in the Jerry McGanns and the John Sutherlands that changed. It's very interesting, because Hallett Smith was one of the great scholars of his day—the editor of the *Norton Anthology* [of English Literature]—but I think he wasn't interested in building up a strong academic program. I didn't really know Hallett; I think he was semi-retired by the time I arrived. And clearly Bob Huttenback wanted to change the literature program. Bob wanted it to be more like Harvard or the University of Chicago, more like mainline universities, where the stature of the faculty was not determined by the discipline they were in.

ASPATURIAN: So in the wake of that, in the 1980s, all these new people came. I've got Jerry McGann, James Lee, John Sutherland, Doug Flamming, Kim Border, Rod Kiewiet; there was quite a paradigm shift, I guess, in the mid-eighties. You must have been involved in that. Could you talk about it?

DAVIS: As I've said, as far as some of the physical scientists were concerned, the humanists were the playthings of scientists, how very nice. I was at a party with Richard Feynman where he was pretty dismissive, saying kind of, "Oh it's lovely to have these people here; we have to have people who know Shakespeare." But they weren't saying, "We have to have people who are advancing the knowledge of Shakespearean scholarship." I think that was not really considered that important. The social scientists kind of battled that outlook at some level, and having a graduate program and hiring certain types of people was already a step in that direction. Now, in fairness, it would

have been very difficult to have a graduate program in English or history because we didn't have the breadth, the number of people, in the faculty.

ASPATURIAN: That must have constrained the division's ability to bring in some of the people they wanted to. That's the impression I get from reading some of the oral histories.

DAVIS: I don't think so. Roger brought in Jerry McGann [Dreyfus Professor of Literature, 1980-1986, now at the University of Virginia]. But Roger had gone to Harvard, so Roger actually knew good scholarship in humanities. They brought in John Sutherland [professor of literature, 1984–1992; visiting professor 1992–2007; now at University College, London]. They paid a lot more money for these people. That's another thing that no one ever likes to talk about at Caltech—well, they didn't then, but I think they certainly do now [laughter]—which is that money counts. I think I was once at a party where Feynman was saying that the economists and social scientists were people who were always looking for money, while everyone else was doing this for the greater glory of research. That's just foolish. I think, yes, of course, there are definitely disciplines that get paid more than others, and unfortunately humanities across the world is not one of them.

ASPATURIAN: That's true

DAVIS: To hire an English professor, you didn't have to pay the kind of money you had to pay for an economist or a physicist. I like to believe that's changed a lot; certainly in the division, I think they tried to equalize. It does mean, though, at some point in your field, you're going to have to compete with the outside world too, and you're going to have to be that good because people do get lured away, and a lot of times they get lured away for money, or sometimes I think—I know this is true in social science—a lot of faculty want students, and they want more of them. Although I do think that a lot of people like it here and stay here on the social science faculty because they don't have to have hordes of students, and the ones they do get are very good. As Lance always said, teaching Caltech undergraduates is like teaching graduate students elsewhere. I think the

institute cares very strongly about the quality of the social science faculty and the humanities faculty.

ASPATURIAN: What sorts of memories do you have of some of these people who came in in the 1980s? John Sutherland?

DAVIS: I just loved John Sutherland from the day I first met him. He was really a class act—incredibly amusing, and also he has that sort of self-deprecating side, which I think is quite genuine. We're quite good friends, and I think he's a tremendous scholar and having him on the faculty here was really a pleasure. I was very sad when he left. Let's see, who else in English? I think in the case of Jenijoy, I sort of had to make my own friendship with her because I was much aligned with the "forces of evil." I may say, Jenijoy has never treated me that way, but sometimes it was somewhat uncomfortable, but I will honestly say that that was because of other people. For example, we didn't have Jenijoy to dinner because then the Huttenbacks would be there. But we've become very good friends over the years. I sometimes think Jenijoy as a person got lost in that whole tenure controversy.

ASPATURIAN: What an interesting observation.

DAVIS: I can't say I was brought up to dislike her, but the camp that I was in was kind of vilified for having ridiculous standards blah blah blah, and what did they know about the humanities, and all that kind of thing. It's so strange in a way what a *big deal* that actually was, and in some sense maybe not for any of the right reasons. I really give Jenijoy enormous kudos because she certainly never said to me, "Oh, you're Lance Davis's wife, girlfriend, fiancée, whatever, and I'm not going to talk. . . never". And I don't think she did that with other people either.

ASPATURIAN: She has a certain largeness of spirit that allows her to overlook all this.

DAVIS: Yes, I was trying to think what that word is. I'm not sure I would be as good at it if it happened to me by any means.

ASPATURIAN: It's some sort of temperamental gift, maybe.

DAVIS: Yes, it is. And she's terribly funny too. And I'm sure she was very hurt by a lot of this. I don't know—Jenijoy was probably not going to be the next Hallett Smith. On the other hand, if things had been different, maybe Jenijoy *would* be at Harvard as a professor. And she is a wonderful teacher, there's no question. I think that she was sometimes used by some of the science faculty because, as I say, there was that "We want people around who can talk about Shakespeare when we're in the mood" type of thing. It was quite condescending.

ASPATURIAN: We haven't talked about the historians much, with the exception last week of Eleanor Searle and John Benton. Others were Dan [Daniel] Kevles [Koepfli Professor of the Humanities, Emeritus], Rod Paul, and Peter Fay [professor of history, d. 2004].

DAVIS: Peter Fay and Lance did some things on imperialism together, so the Fays were very good friends of ours. Bob Huttenback of course was a British historian so in some sense he was a humanist. I don't think he would have gotten the division chair job if he hadn't been a historian; I don't think they'd have given it to a social scientist at the time. But of course Bob was aligned with the social scientists, so I guess he was in both camps.

ASPATURIAN: There is also [Robert] Rosenstone [professor of history].

DAVIS: He's one of my favorite faculty members. He started some of the film programs, and when he talked to you about what he did, he didn't talk down to you; he talked to you as someone who was interested in his work, and would ask for your opinions.

ASPATURIAN: He respected people's intelligence.

DAVIS: Absolutely, without question. I felt that Robert is someone who does respect and is quite good with women. Now he's married to Nahid Massoud, a lovely person. He always had a party every year, and he invited us out, and he always had interesting people around him. But he did get the nickname *La Principessa* from women staff and maybe

some of his women colleagues too. [Laughter] Everyone who worked there referred to Robert as *La Principessa*. It was very amusing because it gives you really a flavor of him, and it doesn't make you dislike him at all. He still has a charm.

ASPATURIAN: How about Dan Kevles? Did he have any nicknames?

DAVIS: No. I'm very fond of Dan. Dan clearly was annoyed when Dave Grether got the chairmanship after Roger left, and maybe he was still annoyed when John Ledyard got it. Dan really felt that he should have been a division chair. But in terms of my relationship with him, I liked him very much; I still do.

ASPATURIAN: The Kevles are at Yale now?

DAVIS: Yes. Dan had friends among the social scientists. I think Lance was fond of Dan; they came in at the same time. But I do think that Dan, who had been the executive officer [for the humanities] under Roger, felt overlooked and a little aggrieved about being passed over as division chair. And then when the offer came from Yale; frankly, if you're a humanities faculty member—and I don't mean social sciences, I really mean humanities—let's face it, that's not a huge group. We were never going to teach all the disciplines that are normally covered at places like Harvard, Yale, MIT, and the University of Chicago. We have to pick a few things and do them well. I think that still remains the case, and it was harder on the humanists because they already had all these people who taught history, who taught English. I think there was less opportunity to hire high-powered people than in the social sciences, where the graduate program sort of defined the hiring. I think Dan would have probably liked a graduate program in the history of science or the history of philosophy. And today we do have more of a core program in those fields.

ASPATURIAN: Yes, that's evolved in a really interesting way. Another name from this era is Bruce Cain [professor of political science, 1976–1989]. For the record, he was a political scientist, working in American politics.

DAVIS: A smart guy, no question. I haven't seen him in years. Bruce was a very smart guy, but I think he saw that political science here was a little more economics-y than he wanted, and he was probably less a theorist and more an applied type. It *is* hard at Caltech to be in some of these disciplines. I'm focusing on the humanities and social sciences, but I suspect that may be true in some of the other divisions too. There may be such people in geology, although I don't know enough about it to know whether there's a cadre of people who feel maybe they don't cover the whole panoply of disciplines in that particular specialty. I think Bruce was a good buddy of Dan's.

ASPATURIAN: I was wondering why he left. Well, he was given a research center at UC Berkeley. Caltech didn't make an effort to keep him?

DAVIS: No.

ASPATURIAN: How come?

DAVIS: I don't think they thought he was good enough.

ASPATURIAN: Really? But he's at Stanford now. That's interesting.

DAVIS: Sometimes they make mistakes. Also I think Bruce is a very applied type; and I think that the whole game theory—the whole experimental economics stuff—was probably not his cup of tea. I think it was a perfectly reasonable move for Bruce, and I don't think that Bruce, at least in my experience, was mean-spirited about his stay here or anything. I think he thought it was a good thing, but he wanted to go to a place where people did political science.

ASPATURIAN: And where he could have graduate students, probably.

DAVIS: Yes. Lance always said that he thought that was very amusing. He said that having actually been at Purdue—which was a big, classic economics department—he always thought it was so interesting how people desperately want graduate students until

they get them. [Laughter] It was a perfectly logical, reasonable move for someone like Bruce.

ASPATURIAN: So in that area we have also Rod Kiewiet [professor of political science] and Morgan Kousser [professor of history and social science].

DAVIS: Yes, they stayed on, and they found their niche. I think Morgan was very interested in the quantitative side of economic history or history in general. Of course, Rod's been in administration for a while [dean of students, 1992–96; dean of graduate studies, 2000–02; dean of undergraduate students, 2011–2014], and he does really well. I think it was also, frankly, a good place for them. You didn't have to teach two hundred students in introductory political science courses for the next ten years, or something like that, and you didn't have to worry about graduate students. Lance used to say if you care about your graduate students, it's a lot of work, and it takes away from your research. You've got to spend time with them, and you *should* be spending time with them, but if you really want to win a Nobel Prize in economics, sometimes it's probably best not to be teaching to hordes of people, and they didn't have to do that quite so much. Although Lance said, of course, that the students you were teaching at Caltech were so smart, it was a real pleasure.

ASPATURIAN: One of the things Annette Smith mentioned in her oral history was that there was interest in hiring [Pulitzer Prize winner and MacArthur Fellow] Jack Miles at one point?

DAVIS: Yes, but I don't think of Jack Miles as a research scholar. I mean he's a writer, right? I know Annette was very interested in creative writing. I remember the ever-famous Clayton Eshleman.

ASPATURIAN: They translated the poet [Aimé] Cesaire together. Then I guess their collaboration ended.

DAVIS: Oh yes, you could see that this was not a marriage made in heaven, and that this was going to be difficult. But Annette is a much more relaxed person than she was when I first met her. And in fairness to her, she wasn't given the same respect as other faculty, and that was true of a lot of people in humanities and social science. But there are people who don't get tenure in other divisions, not just our own. Not everyone who comes through here is a Nobel laureate. There are plenty of scientists who have come and gone through here.

ASPATURIAN: She said in her oral history that there was tension between her and John Benton over her appointment to a tenured position. She said that he intrigued against her. Did you see any signs of this?

DAVIS: Yes, definitely. I think that maybe John—and I can't swear to this—did not feel that Annette was a scholar's scholar.

ASPATURIAN: As a medievalist, he knew so much about the era in which she was working [nineteenth- and twentieth-century French literature].

DAVIS: Well, John could be difficult, but John Benton will remain one of the major medieval scholars. Annette will never be that. And part of that, frankly, was that she started much later. She had three boys. Plus there was no group around for her. There was no French literature group.

ASPATURIAN: And her husband was the MOSH?

DAVIS: Yes, when I first came out here in '72–'73, they still lived in the MOSH house. I went to a party there. Annette I have a lot of respect for. She didn't have the title of professor until Roger Noll was division chair, and I think, all things considered, she really has done remarkably well. And John Benton was somewhat of an embittered man at some level; he had a lot of very serious health problems. He was an amazing scholar; he was not the easiest of men. And I give Roger Noll a lot of credit for getting Annette a tenure track position. Because she certainly deserved it. When I first came, she still had

this tension with Huttenback and Lance, but that changed quite a bit. I think she wasn't treated as respectfully as she should have been. Annette was a scholar who had just published this big book on [Arthur de] Gobineau, and everybody was talking about Jenijoy, and I could see how she might have thought, "What am I, chopped liver? Nobody is falling all over themselves to promote me." I don't think she took it out on Jenijoy.

ASPATURIAN: No, there was no rancor expressed toward Jenijoy in her oral history

DAVIS: No, not at all. But I can see how she felt, you know, like, "Who am I?" "Why hasn't anybody thought about this? And maybe if I was a pretty young thing"—there was certainly some of that in the case of Jenijoy too. I would be very interested to hear how many people on the faculty who were staunch defenders of Jenijoy actually read her book.

ASPATURIAN: It was a complicated case.

DAVIS: It was a complicated case, but there was that attitude among some of the scientists. And basically it was, here are these people and they provide us with interesting things to read, and they don't claim to be "scientists." And now we have these social scientists; how dare they even think that they should be considered scientists.

ASPATURIAN: So it was just a very different time.

DAVIS: Yes. Today is just a huge sea change from when I came. It's a very different outlook. Also we had people coming from other universities too. You know, Baltimore [David Baltimore, Caltech president, 1997–2006; Nobel laureate, 1975; Millikan Professor of Biology and Everhart [Thomas Everhart, Caltech president, 1987–1997; professor of electrical engineering and applied physics, emeritus] came from these big universities. Not everyone lived happily ever after there either, but they had whole departments devoted to disciplines like English literature, and they had been part of that.

ASPATURIAN: So they had had more exposure to a university culture that valued these fields equally.

DAVIS: Exactly.

ASPATURIAN: Annette Smith mentioned something else that I want to ask you about. She said that at some point you and she and a couple of other women made a presentation to Murph Goldberger about improving working conditions and salaries for the campus staff. She was very proud of that, and she mentioned you, specifically. Do you recall this?

DAVIS: Now that you mention it, I do remember that Annette was very much involved in improving things, and not just for women. I mean, she was very concerned with staff overall.

ASPATURIAN: Yes, she said she was aghast at how little money they made.

DAVIS: Absolutely. Well, I certainly made considerably less money than all the male division administrators. Unfortunately I don't have data from other divisions. Jean Grinols was a division administrator in GPS at the time, and Sally Doll in Engineering [and Applied Science], but I'm quite sure we were not paid as much as our male colleagues. In my case they could pass the lower pay off as—well, I was in humanities, but I don't think that was so easily done in geology. Which was good. Annette was very active in this area. I remember that wonderful picture of a group of us in front of Beckman Auditorium, standing arm in arm. Annette's in it too; have you ever seen that?

ASPATURIAN: No. Shoulder to Shoulder?

DAVIS: Shoulder to shoulder. It was kind of the beginning of the OWC [Organization of Women at Caltech].

ASPATURIAN: She also said, and I guess this was pre-OWC, that she was part of a group that made some sort of presentation to Goldberger with a series of skits. Do you remember anything about this?

DAVIS: I don't remember these skit things.

ASPATURIAN: She said that you were instrumental in helping her, and also that some women seemed to deeply resent the intervention on their behalf.

DAVIS: That was probably true—I don't know—but part of it was, I think, that people were all in their own little places. I think at Caltech the scientists were all in their labs, and so there was a lot of insularity. Even very late in my time at Caltech, people would still say, "Oh did they teach you that? I didn't know they had so and so here," and so on. One of the things I actually resented was that staff women elsewhere on campus were sometimes extremely condescending to people in my division. Probably because I talked to staff women more, and probably because the male staff wouldn't give a damn about any of it, they were so out of it.

ASPATURIAN: Condescending to the faculty?

DAVIS: No, and not condescending to the staff themselves, but some of them inherited the mantle of superiority that their scientists imparted. I saw some of that sometimes over the years. I can't even think who specifically, and some of those people would be gone, but you know, if you took English in college that was enough for some staff to feel that they could speak eloquently on English scholarship. Hell, I was an English major, and I couldn't speak eloquently on English scholarship. [Laughter] I think that was part of that idea of, "We work for scientists and you work for—"

ASPATURIAN: Imposters.

DAVIS: [Laughter] That's right. And indeed that was certainly reflected in my salary but for David Grether. And Don Archer, I have to say, who certainly went to bat for me.

Don Archer is someone whom I have huge respect for. I thought he was very supportive of me.

ASPATURIAN: Were you in on the ground floor of establishing the OWC?

DAVIS: I think I was. It's hard to know. I was in the picture.

ASPATURIAN: It was started to bring about some positive change in working conditions for staff, a large proportion of whom were women. Can you talk about what led up to that?

DAVIS: I think part of it was the era. Part of it was that Caltech was still a very male-oriented, male-dominated place. People were starting to think, "Maybe we need more women scholars. Maybe we need more women administrators."

ASPATURIAN: Did this begin under Goldberger, after Harold Brown left?

DAVIS: It was after Harold Brown. Definitely under Goldberger. And, remember, Mildred Goldberger was hardly a shrinking violet. Is she still alive?

ASPATURIAN: No, she died. They had moved to San Diego [La Jolla]. The Everharts went to Santa Barbara.

DAVIS: Yes, because when I saw him the other day he said, "When will you be coming to visit us in Santa Barbara?" And I thought, "My goodness. He's definitely a man who's gone from being a bit distant and aloof to oh, pat you on the back, give you a hug." [Laughter] I think the day he stopped being president, he really enjoyed being back in engineering.

ASPATURIAN: Was there anything else you want to say about the OWC?

DAVIS: It was really thrilling to be part of that. To say that it was needed is an understatement. I'm always impressed that Annette was so much involved in it. I'm trying to think of other women. Frankly there weren't many other women faculty members in the sciences either before Goldberger.

ASPATURIAN: I don't think there were any except Olga [Taussky] Todd [professor of mathematics, emeritus, d. 1995], and she became emeritus almost immediately. She became a tenured faculty member, then she retired.

DAVIS: Yes, she was a mathematician, but I think Olga Todd was not initially brought in as a tenure-track faculty member.

ASPATURIAN: I don't think it was a real concern until Goldberger came in and said, "We're going to bring in some female faculty."

DAVIS: That's right. In some sense it was heady days that we [i.e., the OWC] were actually doing something, but I also remember that it was very democratic, in that there were staff women and female graduate students involved. There probably were undergraduates too.

ASPATURIAN: Do you remember some of the early things you did? I heard a lot about the dental program, I think.

DAVIS: I think that's right.

ASPATURIAN: Caltech was persuaded to add dental coverage to health insurance. Up to that point, staff didn't have dental coverage?

DAVIS: I think that's right, they didn't. I think there was definitely a disparity in salaries, without question, and I think there was probably disparity in some of the benefits. But as I say, people were starting to see as a group that it didn't matter whether you were

faculty, staff, or student—this was a place that was not terribly women-friendly. I don't want to say it was women-unfriendly.

ASPATURIAN: At the time I arrived, it was kind of women-blind, in my recollection.

DAVIS: Yes, I think that would be safe to say. Everybody was greatly interested in the Jenijoy case, but nobody really was greatly interested in why didn't we have more women in chemistry. [Laughter]

ASPATURIAN: See if you think this is correct. There was frequently an attitude of "We like things just the way they are, and we are among the finest minds in the world, so if we like things just the way they are, they must be fine."

DAVIS: Yes, I absolutely agree.

ASPATURIAN: It was sort of without rancor, but the upshot of it was not constructive.

DAVIS: And I think, actually, the naiveté with which this attitude was spread throughout the campus is astonishing. Today I would bet if you asked some of those men, they would blush, or else they wouldn't remember it. Either people would say, oh God, you're right, we didn't do things well there, or else they would be, oh, we said that?

ASPATURIAN: I guess they now have daughters and granddaughters who are all grown up, and they can't conceive they ever thought any differently.

DAVIS: I think that's absolutely the case. Those were heady days, and people were excited about the prospects of what could be done. This was a very-staff driven thing. There weren't a lot of women faculty; and not all women faculty who were here embraced this. There are still some women faculty who are here today, not necessarily in my division, who are about themselves, and who are not necessarily rushing to push down the walls so that more women can get in.

ASPATURIAN: Do recall any support or pushback from male colleagues on this?

DAVIS: I was trying to think about the other division administrators. I don't think Mike Miranda got involved. Mike Miranda is a very political guy; he was in the Navy. Mike still calls people "Sir." I remember the first time I went to a division administrators' meeting; we had a faculty member or someone there, and Mike was calling him "Sir." I thought, "What the hell is this about?" I think that in our first meeting with Chameau, he called him sir. I love Mike Miranda; he put that division administrator group together and there's power in numbers, even if they're small numbers.

ASPATURIAN: What about support from the professors in your division? Roger Noll? Dave Grether?

DAVIS: I have to say that Dave Grether was really the person to whom I owe my salary and my career to in some sense, and that's not to say Roger Noll was not supportive. But it was Dave Grether who looked and said, "Why do these other divisions have women who are division administrators, and why don't we? Why is this position classified differently?" And then John Ledyard was an enormous support for me.

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ASPATURIAN: [Laughter] Good point. Shall we take a break?

[Resume interview after break.]

ASPATURIAN: I'd like to ask you about Dave Grether as division chair. What was he like to work with? What do you think his major accomplishments were?

DAVIS: I think David was a terrific division chair, and so was [his successor] John Ledyard, and there is a reason that I funded a student prize named for both those men.

ASPATURIAN: You endowed the prize?

DAVIS: I didn't endow it but I basically gave a $2,500 for an undergraduate prize—that's the Grether one—and another $2,500 for the Ledyard one, which is a graduate prize.

ASPATURIAN: Is it annual?

DAVIS: Yes, with an award of $500 each. They gave them already last year. It was my sort of going away gift to the two men who made it possible that I had enough money to be able to do that. [Laughter] My hope is that each year there will be an undergraduate prize, and since John was very involved with graduate students—it was the nature of what he did—I gave the graduate prize in his name.

ASPATURIAN: For graduate work in the social sciences?

DAVIS: Yes, for one of our graduates. In the case of the undergraduate prize, it could be anyone, but probably again someone who is doing social science.

ASPATURIAN: What was Dave Grether's academic specialty?

DAVIS: He's an econometrician.

ASPATURIAN: How did the division change under him in terms of politics, people?

DAVIS: That's a really interesting question. David is a very fair man, and you know, he did this job for ten years. He was a terrific division chair and will go down in the history of the campus that way. I think John Ledyard was also very, very good. That's why I gave a prize: I think those two men had an enormous impact on the division and the institute as a whole. David is very thoughtful and not a man with a huge ego. He's a very secure man, an extremely thoughtful man.

ASPATURIAN: More deliberate.

DAVIS: Deliberate. I always felt he was in it for the long run. I'm sure he had offers for other administrative jobs. That frequently happens when you're a division chair at Caltech because it really is like being a dean elsewhere. David is very smart; he's very thoughtful, and he doesn't let his ego get in the way of decisions. He has a tremendous sense of humor, I might add; he's extremely funny. I also think that of everyone I worked for, he was the most astute about judging people.

ASPATURIAN: Can you think of a couple of examples of his management style?

DAVIS: Well, I think it was just the daily way he did things. When the Baxter Art Gallery closed in 1985, it was under David. Roger [Noll] loved the art gallery; he was a Techer who wanted HSS to resemble the humanities and social sciences at Harvard. David understood that it was not going to be Harvard. He was very deliberate and very thoughtful about what areas we went into. We also had *Sulfur*, this literary magazine, and again it was Roger who got that going. He had great enthusiasm, but he didn't always look all the way down the road. And I think David took some hits as a result of some of these things disappearing, but he really cared about more than his reputation. I

would say that was probably true about John Ledyard as well. They were both secure in their own sense of worth and what they did. Here's another example with David: When Jean Ensminger stepped down early from the division chair position, Peter Bossaerts was chosen as the division chair, and then Peter of course was dancing and flirting with the Swiss. I remember I thought at the time: This is Peter's big thing in Switzerland; it's big business, and he shouldn't really accept this job. He should say, "I'm flattered that I've been chosen but—" So basically Peter took the position and went on leave.

ASPATURIAN: How long had he been chairman?

DAVIS: He hadn't been chairman at all.

ASPATURIAN: He'd just been appointed?

DAVIS: He'd just been appointed. Then David was really the one who stepped up. That's the kind of thing David Grether would do. He didn't really want to be division chair again. He'd done it for ten years. But he stepped in because he cared about the division.

[PORTION TEMPORARILY CLOSED, bottom of page 48 – top of page 49]

I think the last thing David wanted to do was be division chair again—and a kind of lame duck division chair at that—and then Peter says he's not coming back. But David and John Ledyard are men from a different generation. They're both really classy men, and when they take on something like that, it's really about the larger group, not just about "Oh, isn't that nice; I'm the division chair and people think so highly of me." Neither one of them was like that. And David could have said to Peter, "Hell no, I did this for ten years; I'm not going to be a lame-duck division chair." But he's an extremely thoughtful man, and his ego never really gets in the way of decisions.

ASPATURIAN: How do you think he managed relations with the other divisions?

DAVIS: I think quite well. I think he's very respected. I think Paul Jennings [professor of civil engineering and applied mechanics, emeritus, and Caltech provost, 1989–1995; 2004–2007], who was provost at the time, respected him very much.

ASPATURIAN: Did the division's reputation either internally or externally evolve substantially under him?

DAVIS: I think yes. Both David and John maintained the professorial standards that the institute is known for. I don't think that was always true. And part of that's just an evolution of how the division is viewed over the arc of time that we're talking about. I think that people had more respect for it.

ASPATURIAN: Were there other key players on the division under Grether?

DAVIS: Well, Lance and [Charles] Plott [Harker Professor of Economics and Political Science]; I mean the social science faculty was a pretty prominent one. Of course, Roger had just left. Let's see, who else was on the faculty? All the experimental stuff came in, and of course Dave did some of that himself as well, professionally. People trusted

David Grether; they trusted him to not put his interests first. If he's doing a job, that job is not just about his interests. David's very thoughtful; he's deliberate, and he listens.

ASPATURIAN: That's a very important quality in a leader.

DAVIS: Absolutely. I think John Ledyard is a little more—he's not quite as deliberate as David.

ASPATURIAN: I've worked with him on a couple of occasions. He was a fun guy.

DAVIS: He's a fun guy, and though he's somebody who cared about the social science program, he didn't let his ego get into every decision either. He probably comes across as a little bit more out there than Dave. To this day, John has these TGIFs on Friday, where he invites the graduate students. He's still very involved in the graduate program, and he's still very involved in research. I would probably say he's probably a little more involved in terms of having graduate students than Dave is, but Dave's the kind of guy you can go to about anything.

ASPATURIAN: I did not know Dave Grether at all. John Ledyard struck me as someone who wore his chairmanship very lightly.

DAVIS: He did. Both of them were like that. Dave is a quieter man. He is much more thoughtful appearance-wise, although he and his wife, Susan, are extremely funny people. I think both John and David are people who advanced the division terrifically. And it was about the division and not about them.

ASPATURIAN: Aha! That's nice.

DAVIS: And Jean Ensminger in a way—

ASPATURIAN: How did she get chosen? She hadn't even been here very long.

DAVIS: Oh, David Baltimore was really taken with her. I remember being at something with him and the division administrators at the Pasadena Public Library. Jed Buchwald [Dreyfus Professor of History; MacArthur Fellow] had just been recruited to join the Caltech faculty, and Baltimore knew him from MIT, where Jed had been director of the Dibner Institute [of the History of Science and Technology], and I said to him, "You must be very excited about having Jed." And he said—and I remember this distinctly—"Oh, Jed's great, but the person I'm really excited about is Jean Ensminger." Jean and Jed came the same year, and Baltimore was just taken with her. I think her project appealed to him; what she was doing with this Kenyan thing and all, living among the tribes. He just was crazy about Jean's research, and he was really swept away by her.

ASPATURIAN: Something else I noticed about the nineties is that a lot of different programs were established. I have here SEPP [Science, Ethics and Public Policy], "Race, Politics and Region," "The Long Nineteenth Century."

DAVIS: But they're not really things that stayed. SEPP—that was Dan Kevles—lasted a long time. I think "The Long Nineteenth Century" was not really a program; I think we had a grant or something. It involved working with the Huntington [Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California] on some things. There's always been that connection with the Huntington, and that keeps going, especially as it's really important for the people in humanities. The thing that I really think has been an incredibly successful program has been our postdoctoral program in the humanities, which started under Grether.

ASPATURIAN: Was that the Mellon postdoctoral program?

DAVIS: There is a Mellon program, and there is an Ahmanson program. I suspect some of this was generated by the humanities faculty at the time, and I think that's been a very successful program and continues to be. We also have a Fletcher-Jones postdoc—I'm not sure if it is endowed—and the Wally [Walter] Weisman postdoc is one named after him. And that was a very wise plan instead of trying to establish a graduate program in the humanities. In the case of humanities you'd have had to really beef up the faculty *tons* if

you decided you were going to have a graduate program. First of all, which discipline, what would you choose? Would you choose English? Would you choose History? Okay, maybe English, but we only had four or five professors. We didn't have really the *bodies* to start the kind of competitive department, the kind of thing that you would want to be comparable to the Harvard or Yale English department. The numbers just weren't there, and I think that was decided very wisely. But the postdoctoral program was a great idea because it allowed the humanities faculty to have access to junior scholars.

ASPATURIAN: How was it decided which faculty members got the postdocs? There wasn't one position for each faculty member?

DAVIS: No, there wasn't. It was decided by the faculty. They tried to balance it by maybe one year history, one year literature. The faculty would make a case for their field because one of the things that you were supposed to be doing too was *mentoring* these people. The whole point is to have that mentoring experience, and I think it's been one of the most successful programs. And these are postdoctoral *instructors*, now that's another thing. They're not like postdocs in the sciences, who do not instruct. They teach. They're basically assistant professors without the title, and with considerably more research money than most assistant professors get in the humanities. That was another thing that was really important when we were putting this together—making sure that people have enough money. And these are two-year appointments; so they can go off and work in an archive in London, or whatever. It's a program that I'm passionate about because I think it made a huge difference in the division, and I think it's extremely successful. And some of our faculty came in through this program—Bill [William] Deverell [now at USC] was one. I think it really was great for the humanities faculty. I remember Lance used to say that these humanities faculty sometimes had the best of both worlds because they weren't responsible for this young person's research and at the same time they're bringing them into the fold like you would with graduate students. You can benefit from them, and they can benefit from you. It's a very win-win thing, I think. I personally think it's a program that's really been terrific and fits Caltech so well.

ASPATURIAN: One thing I noticed is that since Hallett Smith and I guess in a sense Robert Huttenback, there has not been a single division chair out of the humanities side.

DAVIS: I guess that's probably true.

ASPATURIAN: Any thoughts or insights into that?

DAVIS: I'm not really sure. Partially it must have been that you had this social science program, and there is this whole fundraising aspect needed to support it; and the social scientists by and large did fund their graduate program. People had research grants in the social sciences. The number of research grants in the humanities is pretty small. But our humanities postdocs have been very successful. They've gone on to good positions. Because instead of spending another year as graduate students teaching their brains out in Introductory English, they actually have more time to devote to their research.

ASPATURIAN: I think I did a story on this at one point, and I remember being told that Caltech had almost an embarrassment of riches to choose from when it came to applicants because these were very highly coveted spots.

DAVIS: Yes, that's true.

ASPATURIAN: Because of exactly what you said, plus the money, plus the proximity to the Huntington, which made an *enormous* difference.

DAVIS: Absolutely. I really think it's a tremendously successful program.

ASPATURIAN: It sounds like this was one of Dave Grether's major accomplishments. Are there any others that spring to mind?

DAVIS: I think making sure the social science program was funded, that we hired good faculty, and also I think, like in any job, letting people go who weren't good, and that's always a hard thing to do. It's always easy to give people jobs, and it's not so easy to say

things just aren't working out. There's also the challenge of dealing with the changing presidents, the changing provosts. Working with Robbie [Rochus] Vogt [professor of physics, emeritus, and provost, 1983–1987]. I'll tell you something—Robbie Vogt was not the easiest man to be reporting to. I actually like Robbie very much, and I see him now and again, not very often. But he was not an easy provost. He's not an easy man. I do remember when Dave was first in the division chair job, and Robbie called. I answered Dave's phone, and I remember he said, "I want to talk to Grether about his chickenshit faculty." And I was like, "Oh my God." That was Robbie. I have to say, over the years, I've gotten to know him. He learned "chickenshit" when he was in the punishment battalion in World War II. He certainly had a very interesting and very difficult life growing up: His parents were anti-Nazi; he was in a punishment battalion. He told me that in the end he was picked up by GIs. I haven't seen him in a while, but periodically he used to come to my office. I was terrified of him when he was the provost. I was so happy when he stepped down. And now we've become friends. Because he and Diana [Diana Kormos Buchwald, professor of history] taught a course together, and then I got to see him in a different way.

ASPATURIAN: Speaking of Diana, the 1990s also must have been when the history of science program started ramping up?

DAVIS: Yes, and Dan [Kevles] was very involved in getting that going.

ASPATURIAN: And Diana came in at that time?

DAVIS: Yes, Diana came in [1989]. Jed came in later.

ASPATURIAN: And at some point Modi [Mordechai] Feingold [professor of history], I guess.

DAVIS: Modi came when Jed came in the early 2000s. Jed and Diana were getting married. I think it was considered a big coup when we got Jed to come here, and then of course the whole Einstein project took off. I was very involved with that: I went with

Diana to Boston when the project was still at Boston University. The Einstein project didn't have to come to Caltech; it came because Diana was chosen as the editor, and that's where she was. I remember I went to BU with Diana, and the Einstein papers were in this little cubbyhole attic thing. And I remember thinking, "Wow, how great for the project!" because at BU it was at the top of a staircase inside these three little offices.

ASPATURIAN: And then it moved into this gorgeous house in Pasadena. It's a perfect place for the Einstein papers.

DAVIS: Absolutely. So I was very involved with that. Diana and I were and are close friends, but she definitely needed some administrative help getting things together, and that's really what I did. And she's done an amazing job; she has her heart and soul in that project. It's not easy, and also there are all these different personalities to deal with. It's not that different from being a division chair. You have people with different skill sets. They're not all people who are tenure-track faculty, and they're all in this house together. Without personally knowing the previous Einstein editor or all the other editors of similar projects by any means, I still have a feeling that in terms of this kind of project, Diana would be right up there. I have always thought that if she ever decided she'd had enough of Einstein, it would not be at all surprising if one of these other projects, such as the Jefferson papers [Princeton University] or the Edison papers [Rutgers University], would snap her up.

And I'm still kind of involved with that project. Sometimes when I go to Israel, I go to show the flag for the project there. In fact it's very funny: The last time I was there, which I think was maybe a year ago, I was meeting this guy named Roni Gross, who's the head of the Einstein Archives at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I was driven there by Issachar Unna, who was also involved with the project; he's a retired physicist at Hebrew University, a lovely man. So Issachar and I are driving to meet Roni, and when we get there I go to shake hands, and Roni Gross immediately pulls his hand back. Because he's Orthodox and I'm a female who's not a member of his immediate family, there's no physical contact. And when we got back in the car, Issachar said, "All

the time we're driving, I'm thinking, 'There's something I've got to remind Susan of before we see Roni Gross.'" [Laughter] It really was funny. He's just so cute.

ASPATURIAN: Here are a couple of other names that I have on my list from the late nineties: Cindy Weinstein [professor of English; executive officer for the humanities] and also Alison Winter?

DAVIS: Cindy, of course, is still here, and Alison was part of the history of science faculty, and I think her husband worked for us too. I can see his face. Alison worked with Dan Kevles. I think she and her husband, Adrian Johns, went to Chicago, and it's very possible they're still there. I don't know if anyone else has recently left the division.

ASPATURIAN: It seems to have been fairly stable in recent years.

DAVIS: People do stay here a long time. It's a good thing, you know. And frankly, even if it's true in the humanities that the downside is "you don't have graduate students," the upside, as Lance used to say, is "you don't have graduate students." I remember Lance talking about this and saying that having a cadre of graduate students is a huge responsibility, especially in humanities where you're not using them as worker bees. You really need to be there for them a lot in a different way, and it takes a lot of time and energy.

ASPATURIAN: I'm struck by the fact that you worked with six, seven different personalities in the division chair position over the years. How did you do that? That's not an easy thing—adjusting to each successive turnover in leadership.

DAVIS: I worked with all the personalities in the faculty. So in some ways I saw some of those people before they became my bosses. [Laughter] And sometimes that helps. I have to say that probably the most difficult person I worked with was Jean Ensminger, and not because she herself is difficult, but because she knew so little about the division. She knew so little about the institute. She'd barely been there. She'd come from Washington University, St. Louis, and it was a very different university. Let's face it;

most universities are very different from Caltech. This is a research institute with students. It's not that that's not great, but it's really a very different kind of place. And I always tell people that. I say, you have to remember that it's for research, primarily. That doesn't mean students are treated badly by any means; in fact they have a lot of opportunities to work with people. Even if you're not going to be a scientist, that's fine—we turn out people with joint degrees in English and various things—but it is different, and if you're a faculty member who needs a cadre of colleagues, that's not going to happen to you here.

ASPATURIAN: No, it's not. If you want to be surrounded by acolytes, you have to go elsewhere.

DAVIS: That's exactly right. In humanities, even our postdocs are not postdocs. We are not dependent on the PI to pay for them. It's essentially being an assistant professor, except it's easier. They don't have to teach nearly as many courses, and they have way more research support than most assistant professors do at most Ivy League institutions. Sometimes, you know, you'll see Jed [Buchwald] or Modi [Feingold] with the postdocs, having lunch, and I think it does bring a new, different flavor to your life [as a professor] if you've been in the same place for a long time, and particularly where there isn't a department in your name. We use it as a drawing card for new PhDs, and also for very senior faculty who know the joys but also the difficulties of mentoring graduate students. You've got this person, and they've already got their PhD, so you don't need to get them through that, and now they're at a level in their research where you can communicate with them in a different way. They're more like colleagues. Look at Warren Brown [professor of history]: He's a medievalist, and there's nobody else around him, but now he has postdocs so he has some people he can talk to. Also now these people are going on the market with some publications and some teaching experience under their belt.

ASPATURIAN: I wanted to ask you about some of the exceptional staff people you've worked with. Two come to mind, both secretaries, one only by reputation and the other I know. I used to hear off and on a lot about a woman named Mary Ellis Arnett. And the other one of course is Rosy Meiron.

DAVIS: Now Rosy's an exceptional person. Mary Ellis Arnett was a secretary who worked in the division for a long time, and she was there at a time when the demands on staff were quite different. I would not call her an exceptional person. She worked hard, she typed, and people like Jenijoy loved her, but the truth is that intellectually she was no match for Rosy Meiron. Rosy speaks seven or eight languages; she's a very, very smart woman. She's like my mother; I've been having breakfast with her almost every Sunday for the last ten or twelve years, and we do other things together too. Her language skills were great. She worked a lot with John Benton and Eleanor Searle when she was a staff member.

ASPATURIAN: How many languages does she speak, for the record?

DAVIS: She speaks French, English, German, and Hebrew. She speaks some Italian. She probably speaks some Arabic.

ASPATURIAN: If she worked with John and Eleanor, she must know Latin?

DAVIS: She knew Latin; these are the Romance languages that she had. I'm sure she was trained in all of them. She was born in Prague, and they moved, fortuitously before World War II. Her father was an engineer of some sort.

ASPATURIAN: They moved to Palestine?

DAVIS: No, they moved to Egypt. They got out—happily—before the war but not that much before. And her father worked in a firm—I don't know if it was French or Egyptian. Whatever it was, Rosy said that during Yom Kippur and the other Jewish holidays they would always have some excuse to explain his absence from work—that he was sick or something. After the war they moved to Italy and from Italy to Israel. I think Rosy's Czech is quite minimal now. But I was once in a store with her in L.A., and the next thing you know she's speaking Czech with the guy who was working there. She had a brother, Leo Mosrak, who died about four or five years ago, but before that he took his grandchildren and his wife to Egypt, and they went to the place where they had lived in

Cairo. The young man who had been their little doorman in the 1930s is now some ninety-year-old man, and he is *still* a doorman for this apartment block. And so there was a thing on Egyptian TV about this Jewish family coming back to the house, with Leo talking about the experience in fluent Arabic.

ASPATURIAN: The Egyptians saved their lives.

DAVIS: That's right. Rosy has done quite a bit for the Einstein project also. She still sometimes volunteers at the Einstein House as a translator.

ASPATURIAN: She's something else.

DAVIS: She's amazing, but she's a fretter. She's a good Jewish mother, and she worries about her son [Daniel Meiron, Jones Professor of Aeronautics and Applied and Computational Mathematics at Caltech] and this and that, but we're very, very close.

ASPATURIAN: Are there grandchildren? Does Dan have kids?

DAVIS: No, Dan's married to a woman who has two of her own older children. Rosy's just an amazing woman.

ASPATURIAN: Judy [Judith] Goodstein [Institute archivist, emeritus and Caltech registrar, 1989–2003] has also been affiliated with the division for many years.

DAVIS: Yes, she was a faculty associate in history. I think she still is, and she sometimes teaches. I ran into her the other day as I was heading across campus, and, boy, just thinking about these things, I realize I've really spent my life with these people. You can see why I stayed. It's a really been an interesting life. In fairness, my life has been a lot more interesting as I *was* married to a faculty member and I had a different type of experience. Some of our colleagues would have a different take on this. If you do this with Mike Miranda, first of all he will call everyone by their name, and he will not have any personal experience. Jean Grinols and I are the only people, really, who had so many

personal relationships with faculty, and I was obviously the only person [i.e., division administrator] married to a faculty member. She was very close to all the geology faculty, and I think the geology faculty was also a little bit more like the humanities—they weren't so huge, they weren't spread out with 6,000 minions, and that does make a difference. But I would certainly say that I'm probably the only person whose social life got very involved with the people I worked for. And sometimes that could be dicey, but by and large it wasn't. I like to believe that on both sides we were enhanced by the experience. I knew them well enough, and they knew me well enough and there were things that we could do, and to this day I think that's true.

ASPATURIAN: Why don't we stop there?

Some material in this session was originally recorded during Interview Sessions One and Three.

SUSAN DAVIS

SESSION 3

March 8, 2013

ASPATURIAN: I'm sure you were involved in a great deal of divisional decision making over the course of three or four decades, and I wondered how the division fit into and handled the allocation of resources on campus. It wasn't one of the five science divisions. In terms of things like named professorships, and discretionary funding from the institute, how did HSS figure in all that, and did it change over the years?

DAVIS: I think, actually, that the HSS faculty, and certainly the humanities faculty, benefited by the fact that we were in a comparatively rich institution. I don't think that at Harvard or Princeton, say, assistant professors would have gotten the same funding. That's true in social science too, but less so because, of course, people were getting NSF grants and things like that. But even then, the economics and political science programs at NSF didn't have the kind of funding that NIH [National Institutes of Health] had. And also much of that research wasn't as costly, too. Once in my life I had in my hand all the faculty salaries at Caltech [laughter], only because Roger Noll didn't want to carry them, so I did. I didn't look at them, I might add. People in English literature probably didn't get paid as much as people in theoretical physics. And that's really the market; that's true in a lot of things. I think many Caltech humanities faculty might not agree with me on this, but having seen the numbers—having seen what people got—I think that actually they did okay.

ASPATURIAN: Did the division feel that it had to work harder or do more or face more challenges, for example in attracting funding for named professorships?

DAVIS: Probably.

ASPATURIAN: I guess I'm asking about its relationship with Development.

DAVIS: I do think that when I first was division administrator in the 1980s, Development didn't pay much attention to us. It was easier to raise money for science, although a lot of the science money came from the federal government.

ASPATURIAN: Sure. I'm wondering about private sources.

DAVIS: I'm trying to think of the people who were Development directors: [Theodore "Ted"] Hurwitz [1985–1990], [J. Ernest "Jerry"] Nunnally [1996–2002], [Gary] Dicovitsky [2002–2008], and such.

ASPATURIAN: Tom [Thomas] Anderson [1991–1996].

DAVIS: Tom Anderson. I think of him as being the most receptive and—

ASPATURIAN: Proactive?

DAVIS: Proactive. When I look back on that, I think he was. Probably Grether and Ledyard can speak to that better than I can, but I do think that's the case. The research that people do isn't as expensive, and I think that those division chairs were pretty generous. When you're a professor of literature, you do not need a lab of seven people. But that does not change the quality of what you're doing, and in fact there are other things you have to do. And indeed there are all sorts of archival resources that you need. I think we were very generous with travel funds. And those travel funds were important: It's very hard generally to get an NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities] grant, and when people get them, they're not huge. And I think both Grether and Ledyard understood that there was virtually no money there. That doesn't mean we shouldn't be going out and trying to get those funds, but I do think that we were sometimes able to be a little more generous with research support to people in the humanities because the economists *were* getting a lot of their own grants from agencies like the NSF.

ASPATURIAN: One of the things that becomes very clear when you look at past issues of *Engineering & Science* magazine and so forth, is that in the nineties you have names like

Alvarez, Kiewiet, Sutherland, appearing over and over. And then in the 2000s there's a shift to Colin Camerer [Kirby Professor of Behavioral Finance and Economics], Preston McAfee, Ralph Adolphs, Antonio Rangel [professor of economics].

DAVIS: You're seeing the shift also to neuro [neuro-economics].

ASPATURIAN: Yes. How did all that come about? And what was your role in it?

DAVIS: I think probably it started with Colin to begin with. You had people who did more behavioral stuff, and I think that it was kind of a natural thing. Neuroscience, neuroeconomics, was starting to heat up.

ASPATURIAN: Did you participate in any meetings where this was discussed?

DAVIS: Oh sure. Not the decision to go into that field, but Mike Miranda and I went to the brain imaging center meetings all the time. And those meetings included Antonio Rangel and Ralph Adolphs. When Scott Fraser was running the brain imaging center, I used to go to those meetings, and then Ralph took that over. I don't really know the reasons for that.

ASPATURIAN: Now Scott Fraser's leaving.

DAVIS: Oh yes, he's got a big center at USC. But I do think that from an intellectual point of view, that whole move into neuro was actually a very good one and was given considerable thought. I think what sometimes wasn't given much thought is the space issue. That was my biggest hassle with it—that all of a sudden all these people had postdocs, and we didn't really have the space for that. We hadn't designed it as we had the graduate program. And now Antonio has a whole area, a wing, which is what he would have if he were in Biology. Certainly Ralph Adolphs, I think, has done a terrific job in bridging the two divisions. He has a joint appointment in Biology and HSS. So neuroeconomics, I think, has been a very good move. The field's quite hot still, and it made sense at Caltech, whereas someplace else it might not have worked out. We didn't

have to get rid of things so we that could make a place for neuro. It was a natural kind of thing. That's one of Caltech's really great strengths. Across the board, it's that they're able to see opportunities that other places, even very good places, don't. They get in on the ground floor, and I think that's certainly true of neuro.

ASPATURIAN: I think it was also around this time that the humanists moved back into Dabney. Were you involved with the renovation of Dabney?

DAVIS: I was very much involved in that. It was under Jean Ensminger.

ASPATURIAN: So, in the early 2000s.

DAVIS: Yes. That was something she really liked because she herself has this huge house; she's very interested in that sort of thing. And I was very involved with the rehab of Dabney. It was a big project. I enjoyed it, but it was like designing the offices—who gets big offices, that sort of thing. But anyway, the good news is that she herself has an eye for architecture, and I think she was really interested. To be honest, I think that was one of the reasons she took the job of division chair. She wanted to remodel. She'd already done her house. Having seen her house here, and knowing that she did the same thing at her house in St. Louis, she likes doing homes. I'm not saying it was the only reason she took the chairmanship, but I think it was a big attraction. Because that was a dicey thing, to take the chairmanship when she had not been here that long. And clearly there were people who felt that other senior people in the social sciences, and humanities faculty were better candidates. Jed Buchwald of course had run the Dibner Institute at MIT.

ASPATURIAN: Yes, he had lots of experience.

DAVIS: Yes. I have to say that Jed's lack of enthusiasm for people who are economists did not help him in that regard—his quite vocal "Arrrgh, those economists, arrrrgh." At the time I thought, "Well, if you're going to be running for office, that's probably not a good thing."

ASPATURIAN: We've gone through most of the division chairs, except for Jonathan Katz really [Sugahara Professor of Social Sciences and Statistics; division chair, 2007–2014], whom you also worked with.

DAVIS: I worked with him, and although we had talked about my retirement, I think, frankly, that I went a little sooner than I would otherwise have done, but in fairness I feel that he certainly could not have been nicer to me. He's not only smart; he loves fundraising, and he's very good at that. I don't know; the jury is still out on his tenure. I guess he's done five years; this must be his second term. Yes.

ASPATURIAN: He came in '07, so undoubtedly they renewed his contract.

DAVIS: Yes, that's right. I think he probably enjoys fundraising more than any other HSS division chair with the possible exception of Bob Huttenback. [Laughter] Bob was very good at that, and Jonathan has been very, very successful there too. I mean, there are people who are good fundraisers, but really they don't like it. There are a lot of scholars who just don't feel comfortable doing that or are just not really good at it. He's not like that, and I think his outreach has probably been more extensive than many.

ASPATURIAN: So from that standpoint, he's been good for the division.

DAVIS: Oh, I think he's been very good for the division, no question about it. I do not think he will stay five more years, but I will predict [laughter] that unlike the departure of Chameau—

ASPATURIAN: I don't think he'll be going to Saudi Arabia. [Jean-Lou Chameau resigned the presidency of Caltech in 2013 to accept a position as president of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Saudi Arabia. *–Ed.*]

DAVIS: I think we can be pretty sure that Chameau is not going to be bringing him to Saudi Arabia, although I think they have social interactions because their wives are of a similar age and were friends. They have a mutual interest in wine, and I think Carol

[Carmichael, wife of Jean-Lou Chameau] enjoyed their company, but I would be surprised if Jonathan does this for five more years. Maybe he will stay, but I just see bigger things for him. [In spring 2014, Katz announced that he would be stepping down as HSS chair. *–Ed.*]. Let's have a little break.

[Resume session after a break.]

ASPATURIAN: We were going to wrap up these interviews by talking about some of your Caltech committee work. How many committees do you reckon you've been on altogether?

DAVIS: Not *that* many. The Committee on the Quality of Life for Staff was one. That was the big one. [Looking at interview outline] You listed the search committee for the director of the Women's Center. I had totally forgotten that. I also wrote down the Faculty Liaison Committee on Reengineering, and most recently [laughter] the Institute Parking Committee. And then I also put that for the past six years I represented the institute in the larger community as a member of the executive committee of the Urban League Board.

ASPATURIAN: Let's talk about the Quality of Life Committee, which was very interesting.

DAVIS: It was, but it was so long ago.

ASPATURIAN: It was '92, I believe? [1990–1991, actually. *–Ed.*]

DAVIS: Yes. And that made it kind of difficult for me. I was going to business school at the same time.

ASPATURIAN: Was that out at Claremont?

DAVIS: Yes. Actually, serving on that committee was a really nice experience for me, and I'm very glad I did that. Paul Jennings was the person who initiated that, as provost.

ASPATURIAN: He and Everhart, yes.

DAVIS: That's right. Jean [Grinols] was on it, and Marcia Hudson. I'm looking at the list of names: I don't remember who Rayna Murray was. Brian Jenkins, I think, was in finance? Joe Parker of course was at physical plant. I think Bill [William] Patchett was in chemistry, and Priscilla Piano—

ASPATURIAN: She was over in geology.

DAVIS: She was over in geology, right.

ASPATURIAN: That must have been a fascinating committee.

DAVIS: It was.

ASPATURIAN: I remember the Quality of Life questionnaire. It was anonymous, and we were encouraged to speak *very freely*. And some of us did.

DAVIS: And we did, that's right. Look at this article from [the Caltech faculty-staff newspaper] *On Campus* in [May] '91, which reports that the major area of concern for staff was wages and salaries.

ASPATURIAN: Yes.

DAVIS: And that was a major concern. I think we were behind the curve on that, and in some sense it's impressive indeed that this committee was formed and that we were able to bring about constructive changes. I think that Paul Jennings really wanted us to be frank and honest and do due diligence in surveying the campus.

ASPATURIAN: Did you get a sense ever of what prompted the whole Quality of Life project?

DAVIS: I was trying to remember why that happened. Were we losing people in record numbers? I don't know. It's hard for me to believe that because people stay so long. And I'm trying to remember where this was generated. I'm just reading from this same article: "The committee concluded that the time is right for alternative work scheduling at Caltech."

ASPATURIAN: The time is still right for it.

DAVIS: That's right. Flexibility in working hours, I think, certainly was a concern. Here it says ". . . prevailing belief among Institute staff that there is no group to represent their interests." That's right, because the undergraduates have ASCIT [Associated Students of the California Institute of Technology], and graduate students have the GSC [Caltech Graduate Student Council]. Staff did have the OWC, whose formation of course had preceded this. And here it says "that far too many of the staff feel demeaned or feel they're treated as second class citizens. The committee recommends that the faculty administrators be made aware of this perception as a necessary first step to addressing this problem." I think that was something that was very important. The fact that people did feel that way, I think, came as a shock to many of the faculty.

ASPATURIAN: Did the faculty or administration or their representatives read what the surveys had to say?

DAVIS: I honestly don't remember. I suspect that top administration certainly did. I don't think the average faculty member did. There was also this whole thing about unequal retirement plans. It says here that they [i.e., the committee] "propose that the Institute develop a defined contribution plan, either TIAA-CREF or a similar plan."

ASPATURIAN: And then the feds stepped in on this around the same time too, I believe.

DAVIS: That's right [reading from the *On Campus* article again]: "They also note the need for a feedback system for making staff and faculty supervisors aware of problem in their performance." In our division we had written performance reviews, and I think they came in when Janet Howell was the supervisor of staff. And there were people who were against performance reviews, even people on the staff. I think it was a really monumental thing to have done this, for a place that oftentimes was very—after all, this wasn't Berkeley. Of course I may be wrong—I wasn't there at the time—but I think that Caltech was somewhat untouched by the whole activist wave of the late sixties and early seventies—the civil rights movement, the women's movement. That doesn't mean there weren't people here who wanted that—as I said, we had that great picture of all of us walking across the lawn for the Organization of Women at Caltech—but I think that Caltech really was removed. I mean, people were burning their bras in other places [laughter] and doing other things at major universities, and we were out of the loop on a lot of that. So this Quality of Life survey was really a big thing when it came.

ASPATURIAN: It's really interesting to speculate on what touched this off.

DAVIS: When you think about it, it is interesting. I give a lot of credit to Paul Jennings,

ASPATURIAN: Jennings and Everhart.

DAVIS: And Everhart too; they were both behind it. I'm not quite sure they'd be doing that now. When I look back on it and think about it, I'd almost forgotten what a really major, major thing it was.

ASPATURIAN: It led to some very concrete changes too. One thing I do remember is that your committee recommended the formation of a kind of staff advocacy panel. Many of us were very much in favor of that, but the idea kind of went by the wayside. I believe I heard that the Caltech General Counsel's office vetoed it on the grounds that if Caltech initiated something like that, it might be looked at as an anti-union measure and put the institute in legal jeopardy. Do you remember any of that?

DAVIS: I remember something about that. I do know there was some concern. And there was always the complication of the Lab [Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which is a NASA facility, managed by Caltech –*Ed*.] being a federal laboratory. Oh, yes, look at this: "Adopt a cafeteria-type benefit package that would allow employees to tailor benefits to individual needs . . . recommends that the Institute should allow some credit for unused sick leave at the time of retirement." There was a whole thing about the sick leave, there were some more holidays initiated, and there was the whole childcare issue. Remember? When I think of it now, I remember this line [reading]: "The committee also addressed a number of problems of lesser concern. In addition they acknowledged staff concerns about child care but felt that other groups were already addressing this issue." I look back on that, and I wonder, what were we thinking?

ASPATURIAN: Were there any working mothers on that committee?

DAVIS: Marcia Hudson had children. But Jean and I don't have children. Of course, Mike [Miranda] has a son. And certainly Joe Parker had children, but they were grown.

ASPATURIAN: I always thought that the major thing to come out of that entire episode was that it created a new climate on campus: "Certain things that we have previously tolerated are not going to be tolerated anymore. Clean up your act." That was the main message that came out, aside from the concrete stuff over salaries. What do you think?

DAVIS: I think that's very true, that it was really a sea change in how staff were viewed, and how they should be treated, and in that sense, really, it was quite groundbreaking. And also I think that dealing with the equity issue was a major achievement. As I said, Dave Grether certainly took care of that for me early on. But that kind of problem, I think, was a leitmotif in other parts of the institute.

ASPATURIAN: It was also a problem in that if you did not have someone with pull going to bat for you, the whole campus system didn't protect you. I think this committee and this project changed a lot of that.

DAVIS: It didn't protect you at all. I think it changed it an enormous amount of that. I know I look back on it and think, this survey was in 1990.

ASPATURIAN: More than twenty years ago.

DAVIS: Yes. You forget sometimes, really, what a different place this was. I also think we now are quicker to look at other universities and at what's going on in the general population.

ASPATURIAN: Well yes, I think you have to because everything is more interconnected now.

DAVIS: I'm interested, and you may know more about this, in this whole question of the new childcare center and the reaction of people in the community.

ASPATURIAN: I just know what I've read in the *LA Times* where some woman was complaining that her five-million-dollar home [in Pasadena] was not one that needed to be exposed to this kind of disruption.

DAVIS: I know. I'm actually quite appalled at the anti-child sentiment that's reflected by this; it just seems rather out of date given that there must be some subset of neighbors who had children, and maybe they have grandchildren now. I'm just very surprised.

ASPATURIAN: The one-percenters.

DAVIS: Exactly.

ASPATURIAN: It does seem some things were more progressive twenty years ago than what we're seeing now.

DAVIS: Well I think in some sense that's true, at least from my individual point of view. Growing up, I protested against George Wallace; I was involved in civil rights. The

concept of dissent was one I was very comfortable with, and I think that wasn't true of the generation before ours, or maybe a generation and a half before. I mean, look at how many of those women worked for years in the Caltech Registrar's Office with probably no salary increases, no opportunity for advancement. And that whole business with what kind of retirement plan there should be for staff, the attitude toward childcare— think about that. And now I think maybe the opposite has happened, that people have forgotten—as one always does, right?—that so many of these things that we do take for granted now were once things that no one would ever consider important. No one would believe it, I think.

ASPATURIAN: There are all these enormously accomplished and successful young women in their thirties and forties running around insisting, "I'm not a feminist." That just drives me up the wall.

DAVIS: I have to say, me too.

ASPATURIAN: We're showing our age, but really. They say they're not feminists—what do they think they are?

DAVIS: That's absolutely the case, but it's as if they've forgotten. It's very interesting since I was of course very actively involved in the African American community because I'd been on the Urban League board for many years. Obviously society hasn't changed all that radically, but certainly it's quite different from when people grew up [under Jim Crow] in Selma [Alabama], and all of that. But they haven't forgotten what it was like before, unlike the way that a lot of women have. Yes, we have an African American president, which is an *astonishment* to me— I think it's one of the happiest things that happened in my lifetime, and it just makes me weep sometimes when I think about it. But I think that the current generation, not only the women but the men too, just forget how really different it used to be for women.

ASPATURIAN: I think so too. On that note, let's segue from the OWC to establishment of the Women's Center. You were on the committee that hired the first director of the

Women's Center [in 1993]. My understanding is that there were some pretty heated deliberations on that committee.

DAVIS: You know, I think there were.

ASPATURIAN: The person they ended up hiring was Kathleen Bartle Schulweis.

DAVIS: Yes, she was the founding director. I haven't thought of her name in years. What happened to Kathleen? I don't know if she quit or was fired or whatever.

ASPATURIAN: She resigned. But I understood that there was a big split on the committee over whom to hire.

DAVIS: What about Helen Hasenfeld?

ASPATURIAN: Helen Hasenfeld was the ombudswoman at that time, and of course Caltech no longer has an ombudswoman.

[PORTION TEMPORARILY CLOSED, bottom of page 73 – bottom of page 74]

ASPATURIAN: It's a question of whom they identify with. I wanted to get back to what you recall about the establishment of the Caltech Women's Center.

DAVIS: I think we were all so *happy* about having a Women's Center. I mean in some sense we *were* pleased that this happened. [Women's Center is now part of Caltech Center for Diversity. *–Ed.*] I do think staff women are treated so much better than when I first came. That doesn't mean there's no need for a Women's Center—I think there's probably a definite need for one, especially with some of the things we've seen with the undergraduates, some of which just seems to be constant. I know Rod Kiewiet struggles with that too. There's just all sorts of stuff that just goes on that really, you know, needs work. The whole student house system, the way things are—really, you have behaviors that are from another era.

ASPATURIAN: So is there anything else you'd like to put on the record?

DAVIS: I would say it's been a hell of a ride. [Laughter] No, I have to say that I felt that ninety percent of my career was fantastic. I feel incredibly fortunate. I mean, nobody wakes up and says, "Hey, I'm going to be a division administrator," or a university administrator; you don't do that. I was going to get a PhD in English literature and no doubt be one of the hordes of PhDs in the early seventies who would not have been able to get jobs, like my first husband, who graduated from Williams and ended up working as a janitor at Regis, where I went to college. But I honestly think that Caltech has been a lot better than most places I could have gone. It's hard to know because I spent my whole career here, apart from the time I was at the University of Rochester. I really think that I've been extraordinarily fortunate. I like to think I put a lot into it. In fact, I put a lot more into it, frankly, because I was married to a faculty member, and I was dammed if people were going to say that's how I got this job. Because I'd heard that before—about anybody who was a faculty wife. I think you don't hear that so much anymore because I think people get it. Offering jobs to wives makes perfect sense if you're trying to attract someone, and sometimes, let's face it, we've brought women in, and we've brought *their* spouses. Certainly, Diana was here before Jed, you know. [Laughter] I really think that I was very lucky the cards fell where they did, and I also think I worked very hard at it.

The one thing I hope doesn't happen is a change I do see at Caltech. It seems to me more bureaucratic, without question, and I think unnecessarily bureaucratic. I think that's the one thing that I feel sort of sorry about. Sometimes that's necessary—there was the raising of the "federal grant flag," as I called it, where we had to follow federal rules and regulations; and certainly there are a lot more regulations and things that you have to be more careful about now, and which maybe we should have been more careful about in the past, but I do think that there is something to say about the way we did things. For example, the way I helped people find houses and called around about schools—this is not something that people will be doing now.

ASPATURIAN: Caltech was a bit like a family, in some respects.

DAVIS: Yes, very much so. And I think we tried to maintain that—that was one of the positive things about it being a small place—that you have this family attitude, that you could call up somebody and say, "Hey, can you help: I've got somebody coming in who's an assistant professor, and his wife is looking for a job; would you consider talking to them?" And I'm not saying that people don't do that now, but there is less of it. I mean there does seem to be more interest in these rules than before.

ASPATURIAN: The attitudes have changed.

DAVIS: Have you noticed that yourself?

ASPATURIAN: Yes, I think it's kind of what we were talking about earlier. I think from the mid to late eighties right into the mid-2000s or so, Caltech was governed largely by a sixties sensibility because that was the generation of people who were running the place and supporting it. That generation is moving on into retirement or just into, you know, the post-fifty age group, and there's a new mindset coming in.

DAVIS: Yes, though I will say, on the positive side, I think there's much more concern about benefits, about retirements, than there used to be. When we first came, a lot of this stuff didn't happen. I think some of those things have been really positive.

I do wish that as an institution we had more minority students. I can't blame that on Caltech by any means, and I think that's the famous chicken and the egg thing. There are a lot of very smart black kids who look at Caltech and say, "Harvard wants me, and a lot more people there look like me." We do have many more African American faculty members than we had when I first came, and so I think in fairness to Caltech they are making some progress.

ASPATURIAN: Certainly with women they've made progress.

DAVIS: Yes. Definitely made progress with women, and the number of women, and how women are treated financially. And look at Frances Arnold [Dickinson Professor of Chemical Engineering, Bioengineering and Biochemistry]. I think Frances Arnold could do anything but be Pope now; I think she has won every possible prize known to men and women. [Laughter] Did she win the National Medal of Science?

ASPATURIAN: The National Medal of Technology.

DAVIS: Yes, for technology because of the nature of her research. Obviously Frances is an exceptional person, but it is the case that we also have Jackie [Jacqueline] Barton [Hanisch Memorial Professor of Chemistry and chair, Division of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering; MacArthur Fellow; National Medal of Science recipient] and Jean Ensminger, who have both been women division chairs, and we have Diana [Kormos Buchwald]. I don't think Diana will ever be a division chair, but what she's doing is very important. I don't think Diana would want to be a division chair, and I think there are a lot of women who would be considered for some of those positions that actually just want to do their research and don't want to get involved in administration. Frances Arnold is the kind of woman who would, I think, someday be a university president—when she got tired of doing university research. But she's clearly not tired at all. And I don't think Caltech is really behind the times by any means, but I do think—I'm concerned by the fact that there seems to be a little fallback with the undergraduate population.

ASPATURIAN: Well, hopefully, that will be corrected.

DAVIS: Partially I think it's just that people haven't cared enough. But I do think Rod—I mean he's obviously a personal friend of mine, and their son is my godson—still, I think he takes his job as dean very seriously. So I think that's good. As I say, it was a great ride.

ASPATURIAN: On that note—it's a good note.

Some material in this session was originally recorded during Interview Session Two.