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# Allan Berlind Oral History Interview, Nov. 12, 2015

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## Interview with Professor Allan Berlind for Wesleyan Oral History Project

Heather Zavod

November 12, 2015

HEATHER ZAVOD: It is November 12, 2015, and I am here with Allan Berlind, who retired from the Biology Department 11 years ago as Professor of Biology, Emeritus. Professor Berlind, when did you join the Wesleyan faculty?

ALLAN BERLIND: I was doing a post-doc out at Berkeley; I was there from 1969 to 1971 and I was looking for jobs, trying to confine my interviews to places east of the Hudson River. I managed to get seven interviews from California east of the Hudson River. When I first heard about the job at Wesleyan I didn't know anything about it and I wasn't inclined to apply, but the secretary in the Biology Department where I was working said, "Allan you have to apply for the job". It turns out she was the sister of Jason Wolfe who was here, and so I took her up on it and I came and liked the place and was offered a place here and that's how I came here. Jason's sister was responsible for it.

HZ: That's a coincidence!

AB: I think I took seven trips that spring back from the West Coast to here.

HZ: When you first came here did you have a sub-specialty?

AB: The department at that point saw that neuroscience was going to be a burgeoning field and they didn't have anybody who could teach in that area. They actually had one older faculty member who was teaching in the general physiology area but he was going to be retiring pretty soon and in any event he did mammalian physiology only so they had nobody in the whole area of physiology and they wouldn't after a few more years. They advertised for a neurophysiologist, somebody who could teach that. When I first got here I taught a comparative physiology course before I actually taught neuro-phys. I taught that comparative physiology course for years as well as my basic neuro-phys. But, after they hired me, I threw my elbows around a little bit and convinced them that they needed more people in the area and, I forget exactly when he came, but Dave Bodznick followed me in the area. [Bodznick came in 1979.] That was really the start of a stronger presence in the field. At that point there was one person in psych who, although he didn't know the nervous system, was interested in the physiology of behavior. That was Dave Adams. Even before Dave Bodznick came, Dave Adams and I organized the bio-psych major, which was kind of—take a few courses from Biology, take a few courses from psych. It was kind of an incoherent major but it lasted for quite a few years and attracted a lot of students. Then starting in the late '80s, the neuroscience field really exploded and started drawing input from a lot of different areas; it started making more contacts with molecular biology and other aspects of behavior. We decided to try to reorganize into the Neuroscience and Behavior major. At that point we had David and me in bio, Dave Adams and Harry Sinnamon, who was a very important person for the program, in psych. We started the planning of it probably around 1987 and there were the two people from psych, Harry and Dave Adams, Dave Bodznick and I, and Carol Lynch was involved...she was a behavioral geneticist in the Bio department who left Wesleyan around 1992, just as the program was getting started. So we planned the major, we brought it to the university and it was at a time when there was a severe cutback on faculty positions. In terms of creating new positions, it just wasn't being done and we felt that we needed one more position to really do

the program properly so we got hung up on that. We went back and forth with the EPC over multiple year periods and in retrospect I think they handled it very responsibly. They recognized the value of the program and they said so but they said we can't, on behalf of the university, approve of a program that may require a position without the administration making clear that it will come up with one. So, finally, we said, look, it would be the best thing for us if you approve the program on principle so then it could get started if the new faculty position did become available, and that's what they ended up doing.

HZ: So, what was it called then?

AB: It was still called Neuroscience and Behavior and then finally what happened was that the Biology department had an open position in the area of cell biology. We convinced them—and they saw the value of doing this, too—that it should be defined as a cellular biologist who was in neuroscience. So that's what broke the dam. The program was approved and we got started with it.

HZ: Was that unique for a liberal arts college at that time? Was it on the forefront?

AB: It was early. There were some other programs already and a lot of places were thinking about it. A number of them had had bio-psych interactions of some sort or other, biology- psychology programs, but we were fairly early in the game. Then what happened here—I don't know if you sensed my frustration in the document that I wrote [*An Idiosyncratic History of Wesleyan, 1971-2005*—the program was designed with an intro course that was supposed to be co-taught by one bio person and one psych person. Harry and I taught it together for the first several years of the program. It was a good course... we really worked well together and I fortunately learned an awful lot from him, too, but what happened was—I don't know how well you know the psych department around here or knew it back then...it was a very social-psych-oriented department with very little interest in, and very little understanding of, physiological psych. It was resistant to the program and not supportive of it and not supportive of the people who were contributing to it. They made a couple of appointments of people who could contribute a course to the program but I don't think they had very good judgment about what was really needed for it or about the people who were contributing. Finally, Harry got frustrated with the lack of support from them and said I'm going to continue contributing my upper-level courses but I'm not going to teach the intro course anymore because I can't get the support I need. So what happened was that I ended up teaching the course myself for quite a few years and that's why I say it's fortunate I learned a lot from Harry. My own specialty was invertebrate neurobiology and I didn't know a whole hell of a lot about mammalian neurophysiology but I learned it from Harry as a result of co-teaching with him. So, the course continued working well but it wasn't what we intended and we weren't getting—as a result of psych [the psychology department] dropping out of that basic level—we weren't getting the psych students who should have been in it. I have to say I think in some cases psych was discouraging students from coming into it, so that caused a lot of frustration. There was one psych member who was a very active animal rights person who said I will never approve of the appointment or tenuring of somebody in psych who works on experiments on animals. You can't have physiological psych if you don't have that, so there was a kind of low period, at least emotionally for me. We always had enthusiastic students in the program but it wasn't working quite the way we wanted it to work and that's kind of the way I left it when I wrote that document in 2004-5. But what's happened since is wonderful. What has happened since is that the psych department—well, first of all I think it's mellowed, and some people have retired, but they had a need for more appointments which they asked the

administration for, and at that point we got very good support from the administration on telling psych you have to appoint people who are going to support this program.

HZ: Who was president at that time?

AB: Well, it's more important is who was VPAA [vice president of academic affairs]. It was Joe Bruno at that point. He was a scientist and he understood the needs of the program, and I think he was the one who put the screws on psych, but the result is that the psych department got in some absolutely wonderful young people who can really contribute to the program in the way we wanted it all along, not only because of their fields but the things they could teach in the program—Matt Kurtz, Mike Robinson, Psyche Loui—they're just very good scientists.

HZ: Has the direction in that department changed?

AB: I don't know that the overall direction has changed...they're still a strong social psych department but now they have enough people who are interested in neuroscience. And psych is back in the co-teaching of the intro course now...Matt Kurtz and my replacement, Gloster Aaron, have been teaching the course very well from what I understand. Mike Robinson, I think, is co-teaching with Jan Naegele in alternate years. So now it's working just as we intended it to. I don't know if you can see that chart over there; it's a chart of all the life science majors, but the neuroscience and behavior major is now the largest natural science major in the university. I think psych is still larger and I think that's mostly social psych people. So. NSB has just taken a wonderful turn since I retired and I'm very pleased to see it. I kind of feel that if I had an impact on this place it's that program, so I really like to see the way it's going.

HZ: When you started in college at Swarthmore did you know where you were headed?

AB: I didn't. Swarthmore...you know, it was a funny place in terms of science. It had an old faculty and old science but it appreciated, I think, where science was going, and the students were able to become really aware of what were going to be the interesting fields. So I think of the faculty down there as wonderful troglodytes, but they were able to stimulate—there are actually an awful lot of people from my era who went on in neuroscience even though that didn't exist at Swarthmore in the least. Somehow the atmosphere of the place allowed people to pick up on this. The way I got into the field—I had no idea what I was interested in—I went up to Harvard for graduate work and then my second year there I took a course with Ian Cooke. I took my first neuro-phys with him.

HZ: Not before grad school?

AB: Not till my second year in grad school!

HZ: What did you major in at Swarthmore?

AB: I was a zoology major.

HZ: When you went to grad school was that general physiology?

AB: I was in the zoology department. You didn't have to know what you were interested in. I think it's good that people go out without necessarily knowing what they're going to do. It took me a year to find it but then when I did I knew that's what I wanted.

HZ: So between the time you came here in 1971 and until the time of these attempts in the late '80s to bring in a neuroscience component, did you always have that in the back of your mind?

AB: No, we didn't really have it in our mind until we had enough people.

HZ: Were you basically teaching physiology?

AB: I was teaching physiology and a number of neuroscience courses including—midway during that period—developmental neurobiology, which had become a very important area. I didn't know anything about it, but I decided this had to be taught so I boned up on it and then Jan Naegele came in as a developmental neurobiologist.

HZ: On the other side of campus life, when you first came here were there other things you got involved in with administrative committees, faculty committees or other kinds of things? What made you aware of all the things you've written a lot about?

AB: I got involved—first, there was a junior faculty organization which maybe you've heard of from Rich[ard] Slotkin, who was very active in it. That's where I got starting interacting with people and being aware of issues involving faculty and then a few years after I got here there was something called the Faculty Caucus...it was a totally unofficial body but it was started at a time when there were beginning to be real concerns about salary issues and benefit issues. I got involved in that early on. I come from a Labor tradition [laughter] in my family. All of this was informal. The caucus was an informal organization pretty much of self-appointed people, but it was respected by both the faculty and the administration.

HZ: And it coalesced around the issue of salary?

AB: Salaries and benefits in particular. There was one period in particular where they were talking about trying to cut back on things like TIAA and ultimately they did. But then we transformed into a more formal organization of a formal AAUP committee and you know at first as I remember [laughter] the officers of that were pretty much self-appointed but ultimately, I think, we got ourselves elected. We had a six-member steering committee. We actually had very little interaction with the national AAUP. I remember there were four senior faculty and two junior faculty on it, of whom I was one. And when we were making that first attempt at unionization I remember having to call up the AAUP for some questions having to deal with—and now I don't remember what it was that I called for; I probably have it written down somewhere. But we needed advice. And it was certainly interesting. The most interesting thing to me, particularly in relation to more recent times, is that the administration really recognized us as representatives of the faculty. They were willing to talk to us as representatives of the faculty; they encouraged us to talk to the faculty about what we were doing. They may have felt that we were out ahead of the rest of the faculty, which I don't think we were.

HZ: Was there a special name for that group? Was that the junior caucus?

AB: No, this was later on after we had transformed. It was the AAUP.

HZ: So that's very different. Was Butterfield president at that time?

AB: No, Colin Campbell. Butterfield left before I came. Colin had been president for a couple of years before I came. But in my last year here I was involved with—I was chair of the Faculty Committee on Rights and Responsibilities, and that's something I'll talk to you more about, too. At one point when we were dealing with the VPAA—we had many, many dealings and this was the process—we were trying to revise the procedures and by-laws of the committee and it turned out to be a three-year process of which my year was the middle year. I'll tell you more about that later on. At one point in the discussions with the VPAA I got a memo from the VPAA saying, "Because I have consulted with my lawyer, meaning the university lawyer, this is privileged information and you cannot discuss it with the other faculty members outside the committee." [Laughter] All of our jaws just dropped to the table. It was such an absurd

statement, I mean legally it was such an absurd statement, but it was also a statement of non-respect for the faculty who were trying to deal with this issue and for the faculty who might be talked to. In fact, I have no idea what prompted that memo because we hadn't been talking...the only faculty we had been talking to were people who had been members of that committee the previous year and had been involved in the first year of the discussion about it. And, it's possible that one of those people said something about it but I have no idea what prompted it.

HZ: When was this?

AB: 2003-2004 and, you know, we just kind of laughed it off...had we wanted to talk to people we definitely would have just gone ahead and talked to them.

HZ: That sounds like a change in attitude in the administration.

AB: That was one example of the type of change from—"You are the representative of the faculty so you should be sure you understand what they want before you deal with us" to "We know what should be done in the administration, and it's a deal between you and us."

HZ: Did you want to talk about that committee, Rights and Responsibilities?

AB: Yes, maybe now that we're on it. I had been on that committee before. I had served on it a few years before and then I was elected again in 2003. This was the last year before I retired. There were probably good reasons to clarify the by-laws. They were a little bit clumsy but they worked. They had worked when I had been on the committee before and, mostly what it takes on a committee like that is common sense, goodwill and fairness, but the university was becoming more and more worried about legal aspects of things. The way the revision process got started in the year before I was on it was that the VPAA got together with university lawyers and they drew up revised guidelines, which was absolutely the wrong way to start because they had no understanding of the way the committee had worked with and for faculty, on the one hand. They were also—and I don't know whether I should say the lawyers so much as the VPAA—were trying to transform the committee from something that was really a conflict resolution committee, where faculty could bring grievances directly to the committee, into the type of thing where the only access to the committee would be through the VPAA, and that struck us, and had struck the previous year's committee as well, as in the type of the situation where the administration was going to be sending cases to the committee only after it had made up its mind about what the cases involved, which is no way to do things. So, the first year's committee took this lawyer-drawn-up statement and started transforming it bit by bit. But they got hung up. I got one memo from them expressing their frustration about how slowly it was going because they felt the administration was resisting their efforts. So anyhow it didn't get resolved the first year. The second year I was chair of the committee. I don't think you could have appointed a committee that had more experience in university governance if you had hand-picked the members. We just happened to have a very experienced committee in that area. Richard Boyd, who had been VPAA, was on it, Russ Murphy was on it, who was (I don't know if you know Russ at all)—he had written a very extensive report on university governance for the university just a few years before. Krishna Winston was on it; she had worked on these kinds of issues with regard to students when she had been dean of students. And that's what made that memo about "You can't consult with your faculty" all the more outrageous. So anyhow we took what had been developed by the first year's committee and moved it further and further in

the direction that we wanted...a real place where faculty grievances could be resolved, which would be accessible to faculty.

HZ: Was that the only issue?

AB: No.

HZ: Was it general benefits?

AB: No, no, this has nothing to do with benefits at all. This is just a grievance committee. I'll have to tell you one more thing that happened between the two years but let me, let me just finish up with this. So, again we did not get to a point where we could get the administration's agreement to what we were doing and we decided at the end of the year just to make a statement that we were approving these as the committee guidelines even though we knew it wasn't going to get accepted by the administration. I gave the report at the last faculty meeting, at which we said these are the unresolved issues and I hope that when this gets continued next year, I'm hopeful that these will get resolved.

HZ: What year was this?

AB: This was 2004...My last act on the faculty was that last report to that last faculty meeting. And then the third year committee, which Krishna Winston was chair of, finally did get something which the administration ended up signing off on. And I wasn't aware of all of the things that were going on when they did it but I got the report before it was given at the last faculty meeting of that year, and I decided to go back to that last faculty meeting just to hear what was said about it, and [laughter] one of my colleagues not on the committee, said, "I see last year's chair is here; I wonder if he has any comments on what's been decided." [Laughter] I said that I like most of what's been done and agreed to. I think in some areas they came up with better solutions than we had last year but I'm absolutely appalled by one aspect of it, which was what had been done with cases involving sexual harassment and things like that, which I thought kind of separated those cases out from the general types of procedures. There is some reason for doing this, but it separated it out in a way that I think didn't really offer protection and allowed exactly the type of thing that I had been afraid of before, that is, the administration doing deep research and making decisions before, and in some cases even before the person who had been accused of something might know of the existence of the charges. I felt the procedures in this area were designed to protect the administration, and one of my lawyer friends on the faculty—we have a couple of lawyers on the faculty—when I made that comment said, "I don't think it even protects the administration properly." It was very badly drawn up. I don't think my comments made it into the faculty meeting minutes.

HZ: Since that time, what have you been involved in?

AB: Let me just tell you one more thing. At the end of the 2003 year, when the previous year's committee was ending up and we were about to take over, there was a situation, a really ugly situation, which just kind of crystallized my fears about what the administration wanted, and the way it was operating. That was the case which should have come to the FCRR that spring but didn't and we heard about it only because the faculty member involved had an adviser on the faculty who was alarmed by what was going on and he called it to the attention of the chair of the FCRR who was equally alarmed by it. It was a situation where somebody who was coming up for tenure was accused of falsifying part of his CV, and the administration decided, and in this case I mean the VPAA decided, that there was no way that this person was going to get continued on the faculty. It involved a non-tenured person and the VPAA convinced the president that there

was no way that the person was going to be continued. So the chair of FCRR that year was alarmed by it and he called together the incoming and outgoing chair of the faculty and the incoming and outgoing chairs of the FCRR, and the four of us had a meeting with the VPAA and the president, to which the VPAA and president brought a battery of lawyers to explain the situation.

HZ: Did the person who was up for tenure know about this investigation?

AB: Yes, yes, at some point.

HZ: Did they have the opportunity to defend themselves?

AB: It never came to a formal hearing and, you know, when we were told at that meeting of the four of us with the president and VPAA—we said, “Look, if everything you told us was absolutely true then you probably will have a good case for this person to not be continued. But you’ve heard only one side of the story; that’s not the way judicial processes work.” But, anyhow, it was the type of thing that was very much on my mind—the administration wanting to be the actors and bringing a fait accompli to the committee on a case where it had already made a decision. It never did come to the FCRR. I think it may have been discussed by the Advisory Committee, but I’m not sure about that. And, as it played out, I was the only one on the next year’s FCRR who knew about this situation and I didn’t say anything about it, but it was very much on my mind and the general atmosphere was also on the mind of other committee members, even though they knew nothing at all about this particular case. It was just an attempt to remove authority and power (if you want to put it that way) from the faculty and transfer it to the administration.

HZ: Were there other cases where those kinds of things were gradually being shifted over to the administration?

AB: There were certainly other areas not having to do with faculty rights, but where the administration was creating hierarchies to deal with problems, which meant that whereas previously we had a fairly easy time talking to people beforehand and finding an appropriate person who could help us solve our particular issues and problems, it now became a set of barriers, you know, “this isn’t my responsibility,” “you have to talk to somebody else about it,” and there were other things...again, some of them having to do with the changes in the legal system of the country...privacy of information and things like that, which put restrictions on the flow of a lot of types of information which we would have found very useful to have and was formerly easy to get and reasonable to get, but they started establishing unreasonable restrictions...even restrictions on who could see student records. Sometimes it’s useful for a faculty member in the department to see fairly extensive records of a number of students who might not necessarily be his own advisees...that was just completely stymied for us...”It has to be the chair!” But we’re not a hierarchy in our department...the chair is just occupying a role. [Laughter]

HZ: How many years were you the chair?

AB: I was chair for three years the first time I served. I first became chair when I was an associate professor and the reason I had to do it then—we went pretty much by seniority. The person who should have taken it before me put so many conditions on his becoming chair [laughter] that the department said no, and I got elected to do it. I was chair for three years and then what happened was two people who should have been next in line (this was a couple of chairs after I was chair) upped and left to take jobs somewhere else. I always accused them of leaving just so that they wouldn’t have to do the job. We felt...or the responsible elders of the department felt, that the people who would have had to take over were

too young...I don't mean too young in terms of capabilities, I mean too young in where their careers were, so three of the former chairs agreed to take another year each at least to tide over, so I was chair for a total of four years and hated every minute of it.

HZ: What are you finding in your department in terms of fewer tenure-track positions?

AB: You know, I don't think that was ever a real problem for us. Back when we got started on that AAUP business and dealing with the administration, the possibility of imposing tenure ratios was a live issue and...Well, it may have been a live issue more in faculty paranoia, than in fact. We did have discussions with the administration about what the faculty fears were about it, but in fact they never tried to really impose tenure limits in departments, and as far as I know nobody has ever been denied tenure here because the faculty in that department was already highly tenured, and that's a thing I really respect That's been a constant across all the administrations as far as I know. In terms of our department, we've always had a few non-tenure-track positions that have served us actually very well and I think served the people who were in them very well. We haven't had a lot of them but they've been important teaching positions to us mostly, and they've worked out very well. Two of the people were faculty wives, in fact: Michael Weir's wife was doing it for a long time...don't know if you knew her, Laurel Appel—she died a few years ago. Steve DeVoto's wife has been doing it for years and years, and we've been able to get temporary people when we've had teaching needs.

HZ: Have you noticed a difference in the students who have majoring in the biological sciences over the years when you were teaching?

AB: That's hard to say in a way because in theory we were getting people who were being better and better prepared by better high school courses; in fact, I don't think I ever really saw that. I don't think the things like advanced placement courses were doing what they claimed to do in preparing students for college level. I wanted to do a specific study at one point of whether students who have had AP courses do any better once they get involved in our major. Had I wanted to do that study in 1975 it would have been very easy for me to get that information, but when I wanted to do it, it was probably in the '90s some time, I was just completely stymied in getting it. So that was never resolved. So, I don't know, we had some wonderful students all along and we had some pretty awful students all along, and we had to deal with all of them.

HZ: Were the undergraduates pretty much able to go where they wanted to go for grad school?

AB: The people who graduated from our department?

HZ: Yes.

AB: Yeah, they went on to do pretty much everything. Well, [pointing to a poster of photos] this gentleman became a neuroscientist at the University of Michigan, she's teaching at Holyoke, he's a research scientist somewhere, he's an MD, she's an MD...These are all people who worked in my lab, undergraduates who worked in my lab. And I remember somebody who was a neuroscience major and who I had written a letter of recommendation for to some program up at Harvard—it may have been a public health program rather than a research program, but I remember being contacted afterwards by a person she was working for who said, "She's a wonderful person; send us more like her." I was so pleased by that. Just one other thing about what I see about teaching now: I decided early on I was never going to use PowerPoint and I was never going to encourage students to use computers in class but, you know, I walk by 150 Science Center when there's a class going on and I see the students, every one of them with a laptop

opened and when I look at them more closely, a lot of them are looking at Facebook or something that has absolutely nothing to do with the class, and I think in ways the students are getting more distant from the faculty member who is teaching the class. You know, there was something about me drawing funny pictures on the chalkboard that allowed me to interact more.

HZ: Do you think that would be lost in Coursera courses?

AB: Oh, yeah, that's the other thing. Absolutely. I would never want to do something like that. The thing I enjoyed most about it [teaching] was here's a bunch of people in front of me I can interact with and I can interact with them after class. They have problems and it's just...I won't say it appalls me, because I'm out of the loop, but it appalls me.

HZ: What have you been doing since you retired? I see a room full of interesting things here.

AB: Well, I have not taught any courses and I don't intend to. I'm trying to keep up with science a little bit but I see myself getting more distanced from it now. I still have a subscription to *Nature* and *Science*, and you can see how far behind I am. I find myself more and more reading kind of the general articles rather than the field-specific articles that I would have read in the past. And that's in part because I'm losing touch with it, a little bit with the field...I'm losing touch with a lot of it, I would say, but also because in a way the fields are moving in directions which the things that were really interesting to me are—I won't say they're being overtaken...they're still very important, but a lot of the expansion areas really don't excite me the way the other areas did. What else have I been doing? Actually, at the moment, of all things I'm preparing a talk for the Wasch Center next semester. I gave one a few years ago.

HZ: What did you speak about?

AB: I spoke about neuroscience and the law. It was called "Brain Imaging and the Law", the way people have been trying to use brain-imaging studies in court cases and that was something I knew quite a lot about. I knew quite a lot about brain imaging. I had some strong feelings about the way it was being misused in law courts. I think this very afternoon somebody is going to be talking about that at a neuro-ethics meeting over in Usdan somewhere.

HZ: Would you go?

AB: I can't, but it would be interesting. There was a talk by one of my colleagues, Sonia Sultan, at the Wasch Center last semester and her work has kind of reopened the question of inheritance of acquired characteristics. We gave that idea a decent burial 50 to 70 years ago, but there's now evidence that in some circumstances it can occur. And, as sometimes happens, when somebody talks about it, Lysenko comes up, and Mike Lovell made a comment that when he was a student at Reed in 1949 he heard a talk by somebody who had been fired from a college in Oregon for, I think he said, teaching Lysenkoism in some of his classes, which turns out to be not entirely correct. I got intrigued by the case, and the more and the more deeply I got into it, the more intriguing it got and it turns out there's an absolutely wonderful cast of interconnecting characters that are involved in this, and it turns out he was fired, among other things, for being active in the Progressive Party in 1948. That was Henry Wallace's party in 1948.

HZ: Do you have other interests or responsibilities on campus?

AB: My only formal responsibility is that I am the academic mentor to the wrestling team. I wasn't a wrestler but my son was. I'm on the Wasch Center Board.

HZ: The Wasch Center is quite a place. Have other colleges and universities done similar kinds of things?

AB: I don't know, and I'm impressed. I always say, I don't want to have an office over there... I like my office over here in the Science Library and I like being able to schmooze with my colleagues over here rather than over there, but as I've seen the Wasch Center in action I'm more and more impressed. Karl [Karl Scheibe] has been director for ten years, and he's done a wonderful job with it. He was the one who created it along with support from the Wasches and from the administration. Unfortunately he wants to step out of the job and I don't see anyone who can replace him. He's unique in a lot of ways because he has so many contacts inside and outside the university.

HZ: Was he one of the social psychologists?

AB: Yes, and a good one. But we just got a list of all of the retired faculty which I looked at and I thought, I don't see anybody who can do the job.

HZ: It seems that it serves different faculty members in different ways.

AB: I've been engaged with it mostly in terms of the talks that are given. I would love to go to the movies, but I don't like taking two hours in the middle of a Wednesday afternoon, and I haven't been involved in any of the WILL [Wesleyan Institute for Lifelong Learning] course business. I'm just not engaged with a lot of what it does.

HZ: Does your wife participate there?

AB: She does come to some talks. We both heard Rick Elphick the other day but otherwise she's not. So what else do I do? I make up double-crostic puzzles, if you do double-crostics. I'm enjoying retirement. I actually retired early... I retired when I was 62 in part because of frustrations about corporate Wesleyan and where it was going.

HZ: Who was the President at that time?

AB: It was the end of [Douglas] Bennet's era. The problems of the hierarchies and business models of operation I think became accentuated during Doug's era and it just wasn't the way I wanted to operate. It wasn't affecting me in terms of my main roles here or in terms of my teaching or in terms of my research, although I felt that down the line it might. It was affecting me just in terms of these interactions about getting things done, communicating with people who really respected the faculty. I don't mean to say that Doug didn't respect faculty but he was just distant from them in a way... he was a different kind of person. I was actually on the search committee that appointed him. I knew why he was coming in and I knew what he was going to be like, though I didn't know he would be quite so uncommunicative.

HZ: Do you think this is a similar story at other institutions?

AB: Absolutely similar to what's going on. In fact I had a roommate at Swarthmore who ended up on the Swarthmore faculty after going away for his PhD; he was on the Swarthmore faculty for a long time. He retired, maybe even around the same time I did... he took early retirement, too. I've been in touch with him ever since we graduated. We had our 50<sup>th</sup> reunion a year ago in 2014 and I boycotted it because Swarthmore had just made a corporate-style payout to a departing president, and I first of all said that if you can afford to spend the money I'm giving this way you don't need my money and you're not getting it, and I felt that the reunion, for the administration, was a fund-raising business. My former roommate started, without my knowing it, a blog about corporate Swarthmore that pointed out some of the same problems that were going on there, and I contributed to that blog with a detail of my communications with Swarthmore about this payout that appalled me so much. He was much closer to the situation there but he

felt the same thing was going on there as here. It's not unique to Wesleyan...it's just a different style of management for reasons that I don't particularly see as valid and I find frustrating.

HZ: Has this corporate Wesleyan or corporate Swarthmore affected admission decisions?

AB: I have no idea. It's the type of thing...I am isolated from a lot of the functions of the university. There was a time when I knew every faculty member when we were trying to organize a union. I knew a lot about what was going on but I certainly know a lot less about what's going on now. I don't even have a feel for how Michael Roth is doing. I have the sense that he respects faculty a lot more and enjoys interacting with faculty a lot more. But, I don't know that for sure. And you know there was another instance that shows how things have changed. Pat Tully...she was the head librarian at Wesleyan who was abruptly fired, not this fall, but last fall. She was a person who was very highly respected by faculty, very highly respected by her staff. The reason why I was so impressed with her—you can probably tell that I tend to pop off on my mind about things, and the library did some things, I forget exactly what they were, that I didn't like, but I immediately popped off to her about it. "This is absolutely awful"...She just took it in stride and explained why they were doing it and dealt with it and dealt with me about it. This was not the first time the head librarian had been fired. What happened the previous time was in the 1970s and the administration at that time was very aware of the position's importance to faculty and very aware of the importance to the library staff. They discussed it with the President's advisory committee on appointments; they discussed it extensively with the staff in the library (I don't know whether collectively or individually); they got a lot of information about this person and then they made what was their right, the decision to fire the person, and in that case I guess it was the right decision from what I knew about the situation. In last year's case they discussed it only among, as far as I know, three higher administrators—the VPAA, the vice president of finance, and the President. So the decision was made with absolutely no input from anybody outside the administration and it caused quite a ruckus.

HZ: How about the students, did they get involved?

AB: I don't know if the students were aware. She's the type of person who was far removed from students. But it was such a different handling of the situation; it wasn't the action of an administration that recognizes the faculty role and trusts it and respects it. So that was something that appalled me. But there was corporate Wesleyan again.

HZ: What were your most exciting times here?

AB: I'm not an excitable person, although you might not think so. You know, the question is really what I value most, and as I said, I value my impact on the science program here, neuroscience in particular. I valued my interactions with my colleagues in my department. Biology was a wonderful department. We liked each other, we supported each other, we had disagreements, we talked them out maturely. It was just a very good bunch of people to be involved with and I think it's remained that way. I had a lot of interactions with faculty members in other areas which I really valued in part because I got involved with some of these committees early on and got to know these people, you know, I think not only people who I like but people who I think respect me. I will say I have more respect from faculty across the university than from a lot of administrators, but I did get along very well with some administrators, too, and you know it was the type of a situation where we were often at loggerheads about something but we were able to deal with it from a position of their understanding of where I was coming from and my understanding of what

their role was. I value a lot of the students who I worked with and am proud of the impact I had on their lives. It's funny, I haven't really kept up with a lot of the undergraduates who worked in my lab. I'm only in touch with a handful of them over the years. Yet, I feel as if I've had an impact on their lives as well. I think I was reasonably good at dealing with students who weren't right up at the top of the ability levels of the class. I liked it.

HZ: How important was the PhD program for your department and were you here when it was first formed?

AB: It was first formed around '68 or '69, so it was really in the starting period. It was essential. It was essential in terms of our getting the faculty. I don't think anybody who has been on this faculty would have come here and stayed here if there hadn't been a PhD program. I had a small number of graduate PhD students, not a lot. But I would say the same thing as people who had more students. It was very important to me...that it was here...not only for my own students and interactions but for the way the general atmosphere was of the program we operated. There's one Biology faculty member I can think of who I don't think has ever had a PhD student and yet that's somebody who also appreciates the value of the program. I actually had an interesting discussion with a former undergraduate who worked in my lab, this guy [pointing to picture], a few years ago. He graduated in '74 and then his daughter came here as a student. He benefited from that interaction with graduate students and so I saw him when his daughter was here at least 10 years ago and we got into a number of discussions. He said he thought Wesleyan would be better without a PhD program and he said things that I think are wrong because he wasn't aware of where our graduate students went on to and how successful they were. He had the impression that we weren't doing a particularly good job in terms of what we were doing with our students when in fact we had very good success, on the whole.

HZ: So basically they go on for post-docs from here.

AB: They go and do pretty much anything that graduate students from anywhere do—All three of mine have gone on to research careers rather than teaching careers. They've all been doing very well at it, and a number of them from other labs have gone on to good teaching positions.

HZ: And of course the co-education question didn't arise for you.

AB: It was already co-ed, although those were the early days for that, too. When I came it was nowhere near 50-50. I would not have wanted to teach at a single sex institution.

HZ: You wanted to talk about MB&B [Molecular Biology and Biochemistry].

AB: When I came there was one department, that was the biology department, and it was very heavily oriented towards cell biology and molecular biology and genetics. I was the physiology branch when I first came. I told you how coherent the biology department was—after the split, I should have added. Earlier on, we all liked each other and we all respected each other, but had such radically different ideas of what was important in biology and (I have to amplify that, too) the people who ultimately became the biology department had a much broader view of what was important in biology, whereas the people who spun off into MB&B had a much narrower view of what was important and, as a result, every time there was the possibility of a new position coming up there was blood on the floor. So Barry Kiefer, I don't know if you know anything about him, he was the first dean of the natural sciences; in fact, he was the one who established the deanships, basically the administration developed the deanships for him. It wasn't called a

dean then, I forget what it was called, but it was at first only for our division. We were the only one that had one. We had the graduate program, we had a lot of other things that had to be dealt with and so it was through Barry's efforts with the administration that we finally engineered the process of the split of the two departments and on the whole I think it benefited both groups of people. You know, as I said, we all liked each other, we continued getting along with each other, but they had their own business to deal with at the other end and we had ours, and things went much more smoothly in the department after that. You know, the other aspect of that is there was a lot of consternation elsewhere in the university about the establishment of the MB&B department because they did require new faculty for it and new faculty had been approved and some people in other areas of the University felt it was a position grab by the sciences again and were kind of antagonistic. That was part of the reason why we had such trouble getting Neuroscience and Behavior started because there was still this kind of lingering antagonism. At the end of my "Idiosyncratic History" there is a quiz in there and one of the questions in that quiz is, "What was the faculty vote to establish the MB&B department?" The reason I put that question in was that at the retirement party of an MBB member someone made a comment about how the MB&B department had been unanimously approved by the faculty. In fact, it had been a very split vote. The other upshot about Barry's involvement was that when the other divisions saw we had this special person interacting with the administration for us, they realized that they should have one, too, and that was when the other deanships got established. Again, I think it was a very good thing.

HZ: The deans still exist...

AB: Yes. In the sciences we've been very well served—with one exception. They've acted as our representative within the administration.

**Note:** The remainder of the conversation was not captured by the tape.

## **APPENDIX**

Added by Allan Berlind in May 2016

I'd like to update one matter, add a few comments on another, and direct people to other materials that I've placed in the University Archives since I retired.

During the interview, I expressed concerns and skepticism about the procedures the administration set in place to deal with matters related to sexual harassment. As of a few months ago, a case has arisen that might well demonstrate whether my concerns were valid. The case is now in federal court. At the University level it appears to have been handled (or possibly mishandled) entirely by the administration. As far as I am aware, it never came to the attention of the FCRR, despite the fact that the original complaint was by one faculty member against another. While I know nothing about the woman who brought the suit, I have to wonder if she would have reacted differently, even if the same outcome had been reached, if she had been heard out by a group of colleagues rather than having a decision imposed by administrators.

There is a great deal more to be said than what I said in the interview about what happened in the early '70s with regard to the faculty caucus and AAUP chapter and their discussions with the administration. One bottom line is worth mentioning: while we did not accomplish much in terms of the specific compensation and benefit issues we were discussing, we did accomplish something important, the

establishment of a principle that the administration and a faculty group would meet regularly to discuss these matters. While the later history of this process has had its ups and downs, that principle has persisted ever since that time. My personal history in this process, with regard to both the early events and later related ones, is described in much more detail in my *Idiosyncratic History of Wesleyan, 1971-2005*, which is available in the University Archives.

The *Idiosyncratic History*, which is based largely on my communications from and to various members of the institution, also contains sections dealing with our merit system for faculty salaries, the now extinct Faculty Committee on Minority Recruitment and Retention, attempts to establish an indemnification policy for faculty serving on university committees, persistent problems with the performance of Physical Plant, my attempts to have Wesleyan establish a policy with regard to smoking, my experiences with searches for institutional leaders, the problems created by students for those of us who live near campus, my experiences trying to deal with antagonism among some faculty toward the sciences and our graduate programs, and several other exciting issues.

Also in the Archives are several summaries, with appended documentation, of other issues I was involved in, for which I felt there would be no institutional history preserved unless I did it myself. These items include:

The Binswanger Teaching Award, which for the first many years of its being granted was systematically biased against the possibility of scientists receiving it (a problem which seems to have been corrected);

The Graham Prize, an award which was, for many decades, granted annually to a science major by the decision of science faculty, but which was recently taken over entirely by the administration and awarded in ways that violate the conditions of the will providing it (a problem which, as far as I know, has not been corrected);

Issues resulting from the inaugural address by a new president of the institution, which got him off on the wrong foot with just about all faculty;

Issues related to the role of the Advisory Committee on the appointment of a new VPAA from outside the university, and why the committee decided only to make a recommendation with regard to granting tenure, but not to make a recommendation with regard to the appointment as VPAA;

Extensive additional material on the Faculty Caucus and AAUP, and on the Faculty Committee on Minority Recruitment and Retention, and the formation of NSB.

Finally, the Archives also has a written copy (expanded version) of a talk I gave at the Wasch Center in the spring of 2016, entitled "Genetics, the Red Menace and Academic Freedom: A Cold War Immorality Tale". This marks the only time I have ever actually written up the content of a talk or lecture I intended to give. I did it because I was so out of practice, nearly twelve years after retirement, at estimating how much material would fit into an allotted time slot. The content has proved to be of interest to many recipients.