

*Interview with Steve Piker, retired professor of anthropology at Swarthmore College from 1966-2009. Steve filled many roles during his time at Swarthmore, however his role in this project comes from his work being a liaison between the faculty and SASS following the 1969 sit-in at the admissions office and later his work first as a faculty member of the Black Studies Curriculum Committee and then as chair of the BSCC (often called simply the Black Studies Committee). This interview was conducted by project intern John Gagnon on June 24, 2014 at Steve Piker's home. Notes for clarification or further insight are included in [brackets]. The transcription is word for word with two exceptions, unnecessary conversational "words" such as "um" and other expressions used in conversation have been edited for the sake of cleaner reading and clearer understanding, and occasions when Steve asked that he not be quoted on what he said because the topic addressed was a personal interpretation of a person that was only his impression not a factually supported statement. Dr. Piker offered clarifications of this June interview which are also marked in [brackets].*

JG: Just to start off I thought I would look at your background before you came to Swarthmore.

SP: I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, went to Reed College in 1955, graduated in '59, majored in History. Went to graduate school in Anthropology at the University of Washington in Seattle, started that in '59 and completed that, the PhD, in '64. Social work [Sociology], cultural Anthropology, which is my main area of Anthropology in the United States and Great Britain and all of the outliers of Great Britain like Ireland and Australia basically all PhD dissertations in Anthropology are based on field work, so I did my field work in Thailand. Then came back, completed in '64, my first job was at Carleton College, '64 to '66. Then the opportunity arose to come to Swarthmore for the academic year '66-'67. So I came there and retired in '09.

JG: And what work were you doing at Carleton?

SP: It was a joint Sociology-Anthropology Department at Carleton like it is at Swarthmore, and I was a full time Anthropologist in the joint Sociology-Anthropology Department.

JG: So you just jumped right in there.

SP: Yep, just jumped right in there.

JG: And how did you end up switching to Swarthmore so quickly?

SP: That was sort of fortuitous. I really like it at Carleton; in fact had I not gone to Reed, Carleton is where I would have gone to college. I was not on the job market; I was not looking for a job. It was as I mentioned before, or maybe you mentioned, Swarthmore's Sociology-Anthropology Department wasn't founded until the academic year '65-'66. Now why for a school Swarthmore's caliber and nature there was no Sociology-Anthropology Department is a very interesting question, but I think it's not what we're talking about, although you can read my history of the first ten years of the Department-I talk about it

there. So the founder of the Department of Sociologists [Sociology and Anthropology], and the first chair, named [Leon] "Lee" Bramson, one of his major first jobs was to recruit more faculty. He was working through his colleague, "old boy," net, and he somehow-I don't know where-got my name, and he got in touch with me and asked me if I would be interested in being considered. I came for an interview and the combination of how impressed I was with Lee Bramson, my expectation that I would really like to work with him under his mentorship, and the opportunity that early in my career to get in on the founding of a new Department at a school of Swarthmore's nature and caliber to be the first Anthropologist at Swarthmore, that persuaded me to leave a place where I was quite happy and content.

JG: Coming to Swarthmore how much work did you have to do for founding the Anthropology Department?

SP: A lot, but it was very-those of us who were involved in that-You know the name Jon Van Til?

JG: yeah [*Jon van Til was a professor of Sociology who joined the Sociology-Anthropology staff at the same time as Steve Piker. He was also involved in the creation of Black Studies. Jon van Til is often mentioned or involved in many of the conversations in the Steve Piker papers collection, which is available in the Friends Historical Library for reading in the library. Though this is a collection of documents under Steve Piker's name, many of the documents are not authored by Steve or are addressed to or from Steve. The do, however, pertain to the work that Steve did in helping to create the Black Studies program.*]

SP: Lee Bramson was there by himself in '65-'66. The next year it was Lee, Jon, and me, and we were sort of the three founders. I mean Lee founded it but we were the triumvirate. And Jon and I became very close friends and good working colleagues and that's the way it was in the Department for several years. And there was an awful lot of stuff to do: recruiting new faculty members, curriculum development. The Department was just awash with students back then; there had just been a lot of student agitation for having Sociology-Anthropology at Swarthmore before the decision was taken to have it. It was sort of like barbarians amassed at the gates and when the gates fell down, they all rushed in. We were just awash with students, but it was a very positive, exciting period. The morale in the Department was very good. We all really enjoyed it a lot.

JG: So it was just the three of y'all handling that?

SP: Well the mandate for the, in typical Swarthmore fashion, of course you know who Courtney Smith was. When he decided that it was time to give serious consideration to having Sociology-Anthropology at Swarthmore, he felt that you can take it for granted that the board of managers was on board. He set up a blue ribbon committee [an independent committee of experts to investigate an issue], mainly social scientists, to decide what kind of program would make good sense for Swarthmore and to make recommendations for how to implement such a program. So that committee worked for, I don't know, a year maybe longer and recommended a program. The size of the Department they recommended was five people, three Sociologists and two Anthropologists. Lee was on board '65-'66 by 1970 there were eight FTEs [*full time equivalent*] in the Department and the Department has been very hard, you

wouldn't think that the number of us in it would be hard to count, but it is not entirely unambiguous and that's been about...seven or eight FTE's has been about the size of the Department since then, divided between the two disciplines.

JG: So it got size pretty quickly.

SP: Yeah. That was the intention though. The intention was to spend a few years bringing the Department up to strength and get its curriculum established, and that intention was fulfilled. The committee that recommended the Department, that wrote the report, that's what they were expecting.

JG: And then in 1968-'69 you get involved with the formation of Black Studies.

SP: Yeah. I didn't so much get involved with the formation of Black Studies then, it was the admissions office. Well but those things were of course interrelated. [*Steve Piker's papers do not have much detail as to the sit-in and connected event, refer to the faculty minutes collection also available in the Friends Historical Library for further information about these events from the perspective of the faculty*] Let me tell you how that played in my life. I came back to Swarthmore in the fall semester on 1968. You know where Crum Ledge is? There's two blocks of faculty housing down there in the woods [*near the Mullan Center and pool*]. My wife and I and our young son Josh lived there. I was all gung-ho about planning, building a new Department. I knew the stuff that was going on, on campus.

JG: And this is after you had come back to campus from Thailand [*for continued research work on the subject of his dissertation*]?

SP: Yes. This was the fall of '68. Everybody knew what was going on. There was Frank Pierson's Black Studies Curriculum Committee that was in operation working on developing a Black Studies curriculum. [*Many details of this can be found in the Steve Piker papers collection. The members of this committee were Marilyn Allman '69, Allen Dietrich '69, Clinton Etheridge '69, Charles Gilbert, Marilyn Holifield '69, Don Mizell '71, John Shackford, Samuel Shepherd Jr. '68, Jon Van Til, Harrison Wright, and Frank Pierson*] The issues which became so familiar had already surfaced: the number of black students, the number of black faculty, the number of black administrators, why are the only black employees on campus janitors, all this stuff was in the air and being worked on and tended to extensively by the college, the administration and the faculty and the students, especially black students, SASS. And I was sort of a spectator. I wasn't involved in any of this work, although many of the people who were I knew quite well like Jon Van Till who was very involved in it. So I sort of knew what was going on. Then at the beginning of the spring semester '69, I don't remember the exact dates, but it was in January, the admissions office sit-in occurred. You probably know what happened.

JG: Yea.

SP: It seems that what I'm about to tell you is not literally true but it seems sort of like it was. The faculty was in continuous session; that's not true but there were maybe 15, 20 hours a week of faculty meetings [*again, the minutes of these meeting are available in the Friends Historical Library for further details*].

JG: And what were those like?

SP: I'll get around to that in a minute. Clothier, the inside of Clothier looked like you would expect it to look like from the outside now. It was a huge church auditorium; it seated 1000, 1200 people, the whole student body was in there except for black students 'cause they were in the admissions office. It wasn't full time like that; there were committees and one thing and another. The faculty meetings were in-there was an awful lot of faculty time when every day it was meeting sometimes for two to three hours. Everybody recognized especially Courtney Smith, the administrators who led the College, that the administration and faculty had to be in conversation with SASS. And of course SASS wanted to be in conversation with the appropriate parties and bodies and offices in the College, and it had been; there had been a lot of this conversation the previous fall. But with the black students occupying the admissions office and the whole faculty they were in the Biology building, how was this going to occur? The administration decided that there would be a liaison committee of faculty members and SASS members that would manage the communication between the faculty and the administration on one hand and SASS on the other. Somehow it was decided, not by me-I didn't even know there was going to be such a committee-I didn't seek any involvement in any of this kind of stuff, it was decided that I would be one of the faculty members on this committee. The first I learned of that was when I heard my name mentioned by Courtney Smith in the faculty meeting. In fact I think I had dozed off a little. Hearing Courtney Smith call my name was what woke me up and for a couple of minutes I didn't know what the hell was going on that had to do with me. So this committee came into existence. Do you know who Asmarom Legesse was? *[He was only black faculty member at that time, though he was not "African-American" as he was from Ethiopia [Eritrea]]* Asmarom and I were very close friends. He was so invaluable to the College not because of official positions he held but because he's such a wise, learned, multi-cultural, compassionate, caring person. No single person at Swarthmore back then helped as much as Asmarom did to negotiate this stormy period as well as it did. But it was behind the scenes brokering, conversing with people, sharing his ideas. And his personality - to know Asmarom is to love him. Asmarom is Eritrean by birth [born in Ethiopia], Harvard Anthropology PhD; even that early in his career he was a distinguished Anthropologist; East-African pastoral nomads was his work back then. So this committee came into existence and in fact where we met was at the house I was living in down at Crum Ledge just because, not because of me, just because that, meetings were mainly in the evening and that was the closest comfortable place and there were no other faculty homes as close as that. Most evenings we would be down there, the faculty members who were on the committee and three, four, or five SASS students. It was back and forth between SASS - but through the committee-between SASS on one hand and the faculty and the administration on the other. And initially and always the purpose of the committee was to be liaison, communication, but what happened de facto was that it wasn't possible to just do communication. In deciding how and what's going to be communicated you configure the content of the negotiations, so the committee actually became very involved in the negotiations. And this went on for - I don't remember exactly how long the black students were in the admissions office before Courtney Smith passed away-what was it 10 days 12 days? This committee was in operation; the faculty was in continuous meeting, the students were meeting *[the details of the so-named plenary meetings of the student body is documented in the supplement to the Phoenix which can be found in the Phoenix collection]*, Student Council was passing proclamations. Frankly white student activists were attempting to co-opt the black student activists, and the black student activists were having none of it.

They knew exactly what was going on. One of the expressions that was developed back then is, among SASS students: we don't want to be part of whitey's liberal arts education. But also the black students had tremendous visibility and within the student body, tremendous legitimacy, and white activists wanted to cash-in on that. The black students - there was no antagonism - but the black students didn't cozy up. So these negotiations went on for however-long, a week, 10 days, and there was give and movement on both sides and the administration and I think especially Courtney Smith decided he wanted a summation. This was destroying the life of the College; the academic life could not go on in the College while all this was happening. People's emotions in time were so much captured by this. The College was not going to be able to operate as a college if this continued. So the word came to our committee ten days in that Courtney Smith wanted a summation of where things stood as far as SASS on one hand and the faculty and administration on the other actually significantly getting together, you know finding some common ground. So the committee was charged to prepare a report for that question, and Courtney Smith said he wanted it the moment it was prepared. So we got input from the faculty; here we are the faculty had moved and here's what we've done, here's what we have in prospect. We got input from SASS, here's what we've done, here's what we say, here's what we have in prospect, and the committee sort of tallied it up, and the upshot was bleak that the gulf between the faculty and administration on one hand and SASS on the other seemed to be very, very wide and very, very deep, and neither side then acted as if there were prepared to move any further. Courtney Smith said he need to have the report - whatever the date was, it was the date he died - because some deliberations were going to be taking [place] with the administration and the Board of Managers, and we told him "Yeah we can probably have it for you" the previous day or evening, and he said whatever time it's finished, bring it to my office. Well it wasn't finished until midnight or one in the morning. I hand-carried it up to his office. Needless to say the office was locked and nobody was in the office, but happily I was able to find a janitor in Parrish, who let me in, and I put that report with the extremely bleak summation and prognosis on his desk. So when he came in the next morning, an hour before he was stricken, I think that report was on his desk. I'm not sure, and if it was I'm not sure that he saw it. It could be that his office staff came in before he did and organized his work for him. He may never have seen it. And then that morning he came in and was stricken with a heart attack in his office and died literally in his office. And that was like a two-by-four to the base of the College's collective skull; it was just a stunning thing. And just about immediately that day SASS left the admissions office and issued a conciliatory statement, prominent in which was praise of Courtney Smith. You've probably seen a copy of the statement-it must be in the paper somewhere.

JG: Yes. [*The statement can be found in The Phoenix collection among other places.*]

SP: There was no antagonism, no anger in the statement. In following that, both sides, SASS on one side, faculty and administration on the other rededicated themselves to working together, and progress was made. And a lot of the work that was done was work on fashioning a Black Studies program. And the first iteration of that was Frank Pierson's BSCC, Black Studies Curriculum Committee, brought out and was approved by the faculty in I think '69. In here [*Steve Piker papers*] there's a tremendous amount of the correspondence and memos and whatnot. The ideas that were being batted about, as to the content of the program and the administrative structure of the program, but also the staffing of the program.

There's a tremendous amount of stuff in here [*Steve Piker papers*] about that. The faculty - I think it was in the fall of '69 - did approve what the committee recommended. The committee's recommendations had the more or less qualified support of SASS, but I think it was recognized by everybody, SASS, the faculty, the administration, because the resources, especially the faculty resources were so scanty for Black Studies at Swarthmore then that what could be implemented and actually put out there as part of students' programs of study was sparse, not all that substantial-nowhere near as substantial and as good as what the college wanted. So then the Black Studies Committee was instructed to keep working on this, and I don't remember exactly how or why this happened, Frank Pierson may have just decided. By the time he stopped being chair of that committee he had put no less than three very hard working years into that committee work. This was in addition to his regular full time responsibilities as a professor of Economics and chair of the Economics Department. So he probably said o.k. I've paid my dues, let somebody else do it. And they asked me to do it. It's never been clear to me why they asked me to do it. I've never worked in the area of Black Studies, however the two things I can think of that may have conduced to asking me to chair that committee-I was not tenured then-was one I had all this heavy involvement in the admissions office stuff and what was going on around it, the issues that that interfaced with and second as an Anthropologist I know how to design a program of study, the purpose of which is to learn about a culture and likewise a people. Anthropology is not a uniquely good but good disciplinary choice for the person who's going to head up that exercise. Frank Pierson, had he been able to continue, I sure would have done an excellent job.

JG: And not only that, but the Anthropology Department had just recently been built up itself.

SP: Yeah, yeah. And also [it was] where curricular offerings more or less directly relevant to what people were coming to understand that Swarthmore intended to mean by Black Studies. [*Preliminary descriptions of potential programs found in Steve Piker's papers give further detail as to which Departments, and sometimes specifically which professors and themes, might contribute to the concentration.*] There's more of this in the Soc-Anthro Department than any other department in the College. Of course they could have asked Jon van Till; Race and Ethnic Relations was one of his fields in Sociology. Now it was never clear to me. The one further thing I will say in this question, John, is the work I did on the liaison committee and subsequently my involvement on the Black Studies committee formulating what I think can be fairly represented as the college's first substantive Black Studies program; what Frank Pierson's committee recommended couldn't be substantive because the resources for having a substantive program weren't there. I still think of those two committee chores as the best most fulfilling committee work I've ever done at Swarthmore College. And a major reason for that-and most of the committee work I've done at Swarthmore College has been committees came to be staffed in part by students as it involved students. The SASS students on these two committees did wonderfully. They were wonderful - needless to say there was tension, there was strong disagreement - but they were just awfully good, awfully good. And the faculty members were very dedicated and these were tension a lot of work, more work - frankly faculty members at Swarthmore don't intend - we all serve on committees, but no one intends, most committees you serve on you don't intend to spend much time at all on them. Both of these committees were very, very time

consuming while they were in operation, and the faculty members just did superbly, I thought. Now this file [*Steve Piker papers*] is a vast amount of the stuff that was going on in the committee, what was being thought about, the differences of viewpoint, the alternative ways of trying to conceptualize Black Studies for Swarthmore in all its dimensions, content, structure, staffing. There's an awful lot of information in these two files about how Frank Pierson's committee thought about that and how the subsequent committee thought about that.

JG: And so what were the discussions like deciding what Black Studies would be consisted of?

SP: An awful lot of different issues surfaced, but - of course this interfaces with - and of course Swarthmore College is not the only college in the country that was trying to get up to speed in one heck of a big hurry in having an academically good quality Black Studies program taught substantially or only by black faculty members and having more black students than they previously had had and having more black administrators. Everybody, especially all the good colleges, all the colleges that Swarthmore likes to compare itself to, were just wearing out horse flesh trying to get down that road in a hurry. One of the major issues is where are the faculty members going to come from. I don't have specific statistics to quote to you but so few qualified black faculty members in the United States in 1972, nowhere near enough to go around. That was just one of the ineluctable parameters of the situation; the other had to do with where are you going to get black students? A statistic I remember, in one of those years 1971, '72, - and it was much harder to get black male students than black female students, and when I say get them I mean find them that would be academically qualified for Swarthmore. And for a long, long time - I don't know if this is still holding up as the ratio of female to male in the black student body was 2:1 female to male which created a sense almost without exception that black students didn't want to date except within themselves; that created real problems for women. They couldn't have the kind of social life they wanted to have. One of those years, '71 or '72, of black high school graduates in the United States, the number who scored 1200 or higher on their SATs was only 200 [among male black high school students]. I don't know what SAT scores are, they're scoring differently now, but back then I think the highest you could get was 1500 or 1600. Now 1200 in the nationwide picture was a good score it was significantly above average, but Swarthmore's averages SAT's were around 1400, and the admissions people felt-and I think probably correctly-that someone with a 1200 does not have a good prospect for succeeding at Swarthmore. There were two, three dozen schools like Swarthmore that wanted 20, 30 percent of these black males - half of whom probably shouldn't have been admitted in the first place because it would have been unfair to them that they wouldn't have had a good chance of succeeding no matter how much support they got. These were major start-up issues. Then as regards to content of the program nationwide there were all sorts of models being proposed but one cleavage which separated a lot of the models is, was, is Black Studies going to be fundamentally an academic program or is it going to be something else housed by and sponsored by colleges such as consciousness raising programs for black students? A lot of American colleges and universities including some very, very respectable ones, such as in the Ivy League, toyed very seriously and even experimented with the latter model. Now, and of course this was discussed in the committee, - probably the single person-do you know who Kathryn Morgan was? She had vast stature and was held in very affectionate regard by all black students on

campus. Kathryn Morgan was probably the main person who decided, who determined, which way the stick was going to float on that issue. And Kathryn Morgan just made no bones that a Black Studies program at Swarthmore College with which she could consciously be associated with would be an academically respectable program. So that's the way it went. That committee produced a report - it's not in these documents [*Steve Piker papers*] but you should certainly be able to get it. It may be at the Black Cultural [Center]; people could do a paper chase for you; you really need to see that report because that report is the distillate of all that discussion that went on for a period of a year, year-and-a-half, maybe two years.

JG: And what would the title of the report be, roughly?

SP: It was 1972, '73 "A Black Studies Program for Swarthmore" and on the front page it has the membership of the committee that was a report that was presented to the faculty. It was like the report that was presented to the faculty in 1962 or whenever by the committee that was mandated to recommend a Soc-Anth Department. The report of our committee was exactly coordinate to that report. Here's why we think we should have a Black Studies program; here's the kind of Black Studies program we think makes good sense for Swarthmore, here are recommendation for how to go about implementing it, about getting it started and implementing it, and the faculty approved the report-that was no surprise, not necessarily because the report was so great. I haven't seen the report for 40 years but my guess is that it was a good report, but the faculty was on board for having a substantive Black Studies Program at Swarthmore. And then the question [was] getting it implemented and staffing and getting a director of Black Studies. You know who Clem Cottingham was? He was the first director of Black Studies. And then of course there was the question - everyone agreed, everyone on the committee agreed that in the conceptualization, formulation, implementation of a Black Studies program at Swarthmore the Black Perspective has to be prominently represented, bordering on paramount-but that's very general. First of all what is the Black Perspective. I mean there are millions and millions of black people in the United States and to find the perspective that is shared by most or almost all of them you would have to climb up to such a high level of generality that it's not going to have much specific content. Second there was the question which was a subspecies of a very big interesting and important question all over the academic world: who's qualified to embody this? Who embodies this? Who can embody this, more specifically, do you have to be black to embody this perspective? That's a very close first cousin to the question which pops up in the life of every Anthropologist who does field work in another culture: do I have to be Thai to develop a useful understanding of Thai culture? It's the same question; it's the question that pops up whenever we're interested in trying to learn about the cultural other. Can one learn significant, important, interesting, worthwhile things about the cultural other? Swarthmore College clearly thinks the answer is yes. If you want to sit down with the college catalogue, exclusive of the Natural Sciences, I'd bet a month's salary against a Krispy Kreme doughnut that two thirds of the courses that are offered in the divisions of the Humanities and the Social Sciences importantly involve materials on the cultural other. If you don't think the answer to this question is yes, then I have a question for you: what the hell are you doing at Swarthmore College? Since Swarthmore College curriculum is so extensively and heavily and deeply devoted to that, if you don't think that success in this endeavor is



possible, Swarthmore College is not the place for them to go to school because Swarthmore's curriculum is very heavily mortgaged to the conviction that yes a significant amount of success with this endeavor is possible. But this is widely and sometimes hotly debated all over the academic world, this issue. Not just specifically with reference to who's qualified to teach about and learn about the Black Perspective but the perspective of any cultural other.

JG: But even despite that it was still encouraged that it should be predominantly black professors that comprised the Black Studies Department?

SP: Yes, and there were partly because they were of course being black, they were black and they had lived the experiences of black Americans which are much more heterogeneous than expressions like "Black Perspective" would suggest. It's just like the perspective of Jewish Americans or Catholic Americans, they are very heterogeneous. Partly for role modeling reasons, that the black students felt and a lot of people thought, including me, thought that this was very sensible, that there is something fundamentally wrong with our education at Swarthmore if 98 percent of the black adults we see on campus in the employee of the college are janitors or working on the dish belt down at the dining hall or in some menial capacity.

JG: And was that something that was addressed much or dealt with?

SP: It was talked about a lot, but dealing with it you have to find qualified black faculty members, qualified black administrators, and then there's the question how many should there be and this reduces to how many angels can stand on the head of a pin. It's certainly more than we have. I think looking through these papers [*Steve Piker papers*] it was felt that by the mid or late 1970's have six to eight would be less than the college wanted to have but it would represent a success. But then there was also the question of how they-what recruitment, would there have to be special recruitment practices, because when you think about it, Swarthmore is a very small college with small Departments, and positions in Departments whose subject matter is relevant to Black Studies are only going to come open once in a coon's age, so if you wait for natural processes, retirement, not getting tenure, Swarthmore faculty member voluntarily leaving the faculty, to open up a black studies related slot it's going to be awful slow, awful slow, so you shouldn't. But this was always the way the college did its hiring. Should special efforts be made and if so what form should they take?

JG: And was there a strong resistance to taking special efforts?

SP: Well there's some materials in these files [*Steve Piker papers*] about that. I wouldn't say resistance; I would say objection, some of which I thought was reasoned well, although I personally didn't agree with it, but I could see where they were coming from. And the issue which hovers around is academic standards; you mess around too much with the recruitment process, you qualify academic standards in at least two very important ways: one is you get people who professionally just aren't good enough-they shouldn't be at Swarthmore, they're not the cream of the crop-and second is you get imbalances within departments and between departments. I mean the History Department, you're now dabbling with the History Department, [and] it has its curriculum which is the discipline of History as the History

Department, in its judgment, which has evolved, emerged, and evolved over a century and a half, as the History Department thinks it should be presented in its curriculum. There are some very considered reasons, judgments that have been approved by the provost. The History Department doesn't operate autonomously; they're accountable to the administration. How much can you mess with that? There are no easy, clear-cut resolutions to these questions. I mean no easy, clear-cut resolutions that measure up.

JG: And how much was setting the Black Studies curriculum tied to either what professors were currently available or what professors the college thought they could [acquire]?

SP: Here's how that plays. The Department of Sociology-Anthropology, in whose founding I was heavily involved, was actually invented twice. One on a higher level of generality and one on a much more specifically. The first invention was the committee which Courtney Smith set up to recommend the Department and their report, that report on a high level of generality invented what the Sociology-Anthropology Department at Swarthmore should look like. Then four, five, six of us got there and working within these guidelines we specifically invented the Department. The Courtney Smith's committee didn't try to name the courses the Department should offer, what readings should be in them, what the assigned work should consist of; that's what the faculty members who are there do-of course accountable to the administration-but that's what the faculty members do. So ditto with Black Studies; when you get your hands on that report which the committee in which I was involved produced that recommended the substantive Black Studies program, you'll see, yes, a substantive Black Studies program is invented here, and one that grows out of it is continuous with what Frank Pearson's group did. But then once a Black Studies faculty was on the ground, much more specifically they reinvented, and this is appropriate, of course in close consultation with colleagues in other Departments, always accountable to the provost. They're not freelancing it, but they reinvented the Department. That's with new a program, that's a healthy model, that's a good model. For the people of the committee that recommends the program to try to specify the program down to the dotting of the i's and the crossing of the t's when they don't even know who's going to be teaching in the program is just an exercise in utter folly, is just bound to screw up.

JG: So at the beginning, like 1969, 1970 when the discussions are just getting going about founding the Black Studies program, at least from your interactions, at that point what were the end goals foreseen as?

SP: End goals were not - I don't think anyone who was involved in this planning process supposed that end goals were envisioned, but they aren't for any of the established Departments at Swarthmore either. I mean if you asked me today, what are your goals for the Department of Sociology-Anthropology for 20 years down the road? I'd laugh in your face. I don't know who is going to be here; I don't know what kind of developments there are going to be in the field; I don't know what the disciplines are going to look like then with any particularity. I mean to try to answer that question-I mean if you want to sit around a schmooze about that it's fine, you know I enjoy bull sessions as much as the next person-but to try to answer that question prescriptively by writing an administrative brief, a mandate, which dictates that's where we're going, that's stupid.

JG: So mostly to define it as a program or a major and to let it develop in its natural course?

SP: Yeah, and it's expected as it is of all the disciplinary programs at Swarthmore, the Departments. Black Studies has never been a Department at Swarthmore; in that respect it is the first of a new breed of programs, interdisciplinary programs, that became much more numerous beginning some years later, like Asian Studies which I was heavily involved, Latin American Studies, Interpretation studies, Francophone Studies, all these studies, Women and Gender Studies-or whatever they call it. These programs do not have Departments; they are staffed only by faculty members who have appointments in regular Departments. It's easy to imagine for Black Studies, you have a historian or two, a sociologist, and anthropologist, have someone from literature.

JG: And was it ever envisioned that Black Studies would be its own Department?

SP: I never saw, I don't remember hearing about it. But it's never been envisioned that any of these would be Departments. Departments-the idea when I came to Swarthmore, the faculty and the curriculum was virtually entirely disciplinary. The one significant exception-Departments corresponded to discipline, Physics, English, History, Political Science, Classics-the one significant exception to that there was a somewhat interdisciplinary program, not major, in international relations, and when you read the stuff especially in the Frank Pearson Black Studies Curriculum Committee period they looked closely at that as a more or less direct model for how the Black Studies program should be organized and administered. Now later on all of these new programs arose and Swarthmore became less disciplinary; the curriculum it still remained predominately disciplinary, but it became more interdisciplinary in significant part but not in whole because of all these programs which are interdisciplinary. Go look when you get back to Swarthmore-you can probably do it online I'm sure-just get the college catalogue and go to any one of these programs and look at how many different Department lodgings are represented among its faculty roster.

JG: When y'all were-especially the faculty-founding the Black Studies Department how much of it was seen as something to work towards progress at Swarthmore and how much of it was also seen as a goal to work towards something on a national level? Was that a consideration-making progress in cultural relations between blacks and whites?

SP: Well, somewhere at the front of the catalogue, the reader is being slathered with an abstract mission statement; you'll find phrasing like Swarthmore College wants to turn out useful citizens. It's expected the whole curriculum will do that, will contribute to that. After you graduate from Swarthmore there's going to be an awful lot of continuity between the post-graduate John and the pre-graduate John. You brought a definite persona, and had you not decided to come to Swarthmore but go someplace else, I have no doubt that you would have gotten a good education, had a fine experience, come out with wonderful life opportunities, make a constructive contribution to our society. How can you say empirically, specifically, say what Swarthmore's contribution to this is?

JG: So the main focus was to do what you can-which is at Swarthmore?

SP: Well, it's education, being well educated about the realities of black people in American society, everything else being equal, should equip you better to live and work constructively with the kind of issues that attend that. I, speaking for myself, wouldn't want to try to go beyond that. As far as influencing what else goes on in the academic world, Swarthmore does that. I think it doesn't do it to a great extent because neither Swarthmore College, nor by far the vaster part of the academic world, thinks that Swarthmore College should be a model for the American academic world. Swarthmore College is very unusual and what's distinctive and wonderful about it is ineluctably tied to that unusualness. What's going on at Swarthmore College is not going to in any useful sense provide models for what goes on at a public state university. What goes on at a public state university may be just fine.

JG: And do you think Swarthmore felt any responsibility because of that to take the lead with this?

SP: Well how are they going to take the lead? What does it mean take the lead?

JG: I guess to be one of the first schools establishing a Black Studies program.

SP: Well it wasn't one of the first; it was in the herd. But the reason there was such a herd effect here is because frankly-a lot of ground work had been laid in the '50s and especially in the '60s in the schools becoming aware that hey this is a major lacuna, there are a number of lacunae: that we don't have a Black Studies program, that we don't have black faculty members, that we don't have many black students-people were concerned with that and whatnot. But it was black student activism that produced the herd effect-and black student activism was everywhere. Now one of the questions that was asked was now that so much had been done and frankly a whole lot of significant, substantive progress had been made before the admissions office sit-in, now where I'm going now in conjectural history which is a very steep and very slippery slope, you know you put your foot on that slope, you're likely to take an ass over teakettle tumble before very long-was the admissions office sit-in necessary to get things to where they got. And I don't know how you would conclusively come anywhere near being able to answer that question, but that's not the only question which I think reasonably bears on was the black student sit-in a good idea because this kind of stuff, student activism, is going on all over the country, and the SASS students felt-and I think very understandably-that they wanted to be solidary with this. And in fact there was-(54:45 -55:50) [*\*Steve Piker wished to not be quoted on his statements*]

JG: And what about the relation of black activism and all the other activism, like Vietnam War and women's activism?

SP: Let me share an opinion with you on that, John. I thought that there was you could say black activism and white student activism and I frankly-and just at Swarthmore, I don't have first-hand experience, and amount of significant first-hand experience with this any place else-black student activism was much more constructively conducted, much more sensibly conducted, and much more reasoned than was white student activism. This doesn't have to do at all in my thinking with the importance-comparing and ordering rank order the worthiness of the causes that were espoused by the two different activisms. It had to do among other things with practicality; the black student activists say

ok we want a Black Studies program, that we want a significant amount of black students so that there can be a viable black community on campus, that we want black faculty members, black administrators. Their goals were specific, they were empirical, they were practical, they were immediate, and they were in principle realizable, although maybe the college would decide to undertake some and not others. Where white student activism so often tended to be along the order that we're not going to stop disrupting college life until American troops get out of Cambodia - I mean literally. There's just a total disconnect so often between what the white student activist were actually doing on campus and what goals they said they were trying to foster. The black students pretty much always-now of course they wanted to diminish or eliminate racism-but they didn't expect Swarthmore to diminish or eliminate racism in the American world. They were always looking at proximal, concrete, practical, attainable things which would move the situation in a good direction. And white student activism was often so global; what they were doing was real specific. And white student activism in the aggregate of three, four, or five year period was significantly more disruptive of the normal life of the college than was the black student activism associated with the admissions office business.

JG: And yet an interesting point that comes up a lot is that black student activism was often described as militant. [*This comes up often in discussion of the sit-in as well as describing the black students in general in faculty minutes and in letters/correspondence in the Steve Piker papers.*]

SP: Yea, there's a real problem with adjectives we like, and talking with one person who was involved in black student activism, this person made a big point of saying "we were completely nonviolent," and that is true; which is not true for every other campus in the country. At Cornell the black students were in whatever building they were in with guns. That's true it was completely nonviolent, but it was definitely coercive, and it was definitely confrontational. Shortly before he died and all these thousands of students gathered over there in Clothier and faculty there and everybody making speeches and whatever-and I guess Courtney Smith was asked to come-he said a few brief words to the assembly-I never knew Courtney, I met him just a couple of times very briefly; I never had any significant association with him, but he was quiet he was unobtrusive, very serious, he certainly wasn't socially a gladhander or glib or anything like that-he got up in front of the assembled multitudes and just quietly said, no lead-in, "we have lost something precious." [*The report/transcript of this speech can be found in the supplement in The Phoenix collection.*] He didn't say what it was that the College had lost, but I'm pretty sure what he meant was the College had lost its commitment to treating with each other non-coercively, non-antagonistically, non-confrontationally. And it had no question about it because although the black student activism was definitely nonviolent, in fact from my experience and what experience I personally had from and the much more that I heard about, that the black students were generally quite polite. Even when they went into the admissions office and got everybody who was in there out, they were very polite about it. You know, "would you please come with me;" while they were in the admissions office they kept it as neat as a pin. Even when disagreement was strong they were not impolite, not impolite face to face. The same can't be said for a lot of the white students.

JG: And how did the faculty respond to that after the sit-in?

SP: I thought the faculty-we're talking about a very long period-

JG: I guess more directly after SP: I thought the faculty overall behaved well, kept its eye on the ball, tried to identify important issues, and then mobilize our distinctively Swarthmore resources, some of which of course were money but some of which was the ability of which Swarthmoreans seems to have to communicate well and effectively with each other in a mutually affirming way even when we disagree. "Let's keep trying to deal with it that way; let's keep trying to deal with it that way."

JG: And it seemed that part of that was directly after the sit-in, the faculty undertook sketching up plans for I think what they called "crisis situations" and handling that

SP: Yeah but nothing came of that. Part of that I think - now slipping under my Anthropological hat - part of that was like funerary practices in a number of cultures. Courtney Smith's death was a blow, I mean a numbing - it didn't, that in itself did not disrupt the operations of the College. The administration just closed ranks. Do you know who Ed Cratsley was?

JG: Was he the vice president?

SP: Well he was vice president in charge of finance, but he was senior vice president, so he became the acting president for the year and a half or so that it took to get a replacement for Courtney Smith, and he did a superb job. Susan Cobbs, who had been Dean of Students, was not elevated in title and who was very highly thought of in the faculty and in the college, she and Ed Cratsley were sort of the duumvirate and they did a superb job, the college stayed on track. So many people in the College, the wish was so intense to undo the tragic loss and writing "we will never let this happen again" kind of manifestos. Part of the thing behind this is if the black students hadn't have been in the admissions office, Courtney Smith wouldn't have suffered a fatal heart attack. And again it's understandable that such sentiments would emerge, but that's just 100 percent wrong. He clearly had coronary artery disease. He was a young man; he was in his early 50s. It's understandable that such sentiments would emerge, especially in such a tight knit community. And no one would say it out loud, but you heard-newspapers like the Delaware County Times, which is not one of the paragons of American journalism from my experience I don't know if you have ever looked at it, would report that there are stories at Swarthmore that people are saying that the black students killed Courtney Smith; I never heard that said at Swarthmore. But there were things like Lee Bramson, chair of our Department, he wrote a manifesto which never saw the light of day, happily, "we have lost a beloved leader and we must never let anything like this happen again." And Lee was very devoted to Courtney Smith and work very closely with Courtney Smith. Courtney Smith had been very helpful to the new Department and to Lee and very encouraging and supportive, and Lee had lost a parent surrogate. We'll somehow make it up to Courtney by solemnly swearing we will never let anything like this happen again, but nothing ever came of this. That kind of sentiment surfacing in that kind of situation is not surprising. The noteworthy thing is not that some of that kind of sentiment surfaced but that nothing came of it. The College collectively had the good sense not to try and walk down that road.

JG: And then by the time, a year or so later, when you've got the committee organized for establishing Black Studies, you as a faculty member reaching out to other faculty members to work with them, did you have the sense that they were pretty receptive of your goals?

SP: Yes. Now you say reaching out-the membership of the committee was not set by me; the membership of committees at Swarthmore is set administratively and [the administration decides] which students get on. SASS said who the black students were going to be; I think Student Council says which students will be on which committee. So the membership of the committee was certainly not set by me; it was set administratively, but yes - I've never had an experience at Swarthmore working with people who were outside of my immediate bailiwick, my immediate bailiwick is the Soc-Anthro Department, that wasn't a positive experience, people as helpful as they could, which does not preclude disagreement but disagreement will be conducted in an constructive, amicable, mutually accepting, affirming manner. Basically when a committee is set up to recommend a program, the committee is going to guide its own work, and for something like Black Studies which is heavily interdisciplinary, that does involve a lot of outreach to different departments. How's the History Department going to get a black faculty member - better go talk to the History Department.

JG: So you really did have to be in contact with a lot of the College in that process.

SP: Yeah but this kind of being in contact, as the situation indicates, it's a good idea. An awful lot of this goes on at Swarthmore; the process is done very well at Swarthmore; it's one of the real strengths of Swarthmore. So this did not just appear; this was part of the atmosphere at Swarthmore; this kind of process works well; generally you expect it to work well at Swarthmore. If you asked me to think of an example where it worked badly I don't think off the top of my head I could think of an example.

JG: What kind of relationship did you develop with the students, particularly from SASS that were on that committee with you?

SP: Well I thought we worked well together. Like with students on other committees that I've been on, just by virtue of being on the committee I didn't get to know them well at all with reference to anything that went on outside the committee-you don't expect to. Probably the one I got to know best-and best in this case as far as student-faculty relations go was pretty well-was Don Mizell, but that was in very important part because he was a major in our Department and the two Profs in our Department he worked most closely were Asmarom Legesse and myself. You might say Don and I had a lot of money in the bag independent of the committee, you know had a lot of experience with each other independent of the committee. But you don't generally expect being on a committee with students-unless you know the student independent of the committee-you don't expect much by the way of student-faculty, other than the work of the committee, you don't expect to make much in the way of student-faculty relationship to develop just by virtue of being on the committee together.

JG: One thing that I was interested about was that it seemed, looking over the documents of the creation of the Black Studies [program] - I guess part of it is interdisciplinary but it seems that there was a lot

more creativity and new structures going on with the plan of that than had been present in other majors and other programs.

SP: Well remember majors are disciplinary and there's one thing I should say about the difference between majors and these interdisciplinary programs. Majors-Departments I should say, between Departments and these interdisciplinary programs. Departments exist at a much higher more stolid level of institution than these programs do for the simple reason that all faculty appointments are within Departments; there are no appointments in these programs-virtually none. Lee Smithey is officially half-time Soc-Anthro and half-time Peace and Conflict Studies, but I can't think of anyone else. Clem Cottingham was both. He was a political scientist. That's how it's been with all these interdisciplinary programs. All of the faculty members who participate in interdisciplinary programs, they have full-time professional responsibilities other than the interdisciplinary programs. It's a labor of love. What was...[the question]

JG: How much creativity it seemed...

SP: It seemed that there was a tremendous amount of creativity when the Black Studies program was created, but it seemed to be that way-it wouldn't seem to be that way now-it seeming to be that way was, I think, in significant part an artifact of the Black Studies program was the first of these [an interdisciplinary program], so this was a new beast wandering around in the woods. Now we've got about eight or ten of these programs on the books; it's been a long time since this was a new best. We're used to 'em, so it doesn't seem as novel and unconventional as it did in 1969, '70, '71, '72.

JG: It was kind of curious to see stuff like the fieldwork requirement or recommendation. It seemed that a lot of discussion was for some period that part of the Black Studies program should be to go out...[*into the field for study or involvement and action*]

SP: But again if you look at student programs of study now, you'll see that in many, many of these programs students in the academic year and over the summer doing primary work with people or research of applied sort is a part of the program. Look at you, and you're just a freshman, so far you haven't been anything other than a freshman but you're no longer that, back in 1970 it was very unusual for primary research with people. So again Black Studies was one of the first; the Soc-Anthro Department was also one of the first to push this. Back then it was very unusual and very unconventional in the College curriculum and students' programs of study.

JG: So do you think that was due more to the fact of when it was created versus the feel that it was necessary for Black Studies?

SP: Well nowadays you look at-I've been very much involved actually in this business primary work with students' program of study - it's partly in connection with my Departmental stuff at Swarthmore especially in connection with foreign studies stuff I did. There are a large number of Departments now which strongly recommend if they don't require primary work with people as part of the major-Soc-Anthro, Education, Linguistics, Religion likes it a whole lot, some of the area programs-Asian Studies,



Latin American Studies they push it real hard. Black Studies was one of the leaders in this and it made good sense for how Black Studies was coming to be conceptualized back then, but the College substantially signed on with this. Now some Departments don't do any of it. Don't expect physicists as part of the major, although even there - what [was] her name, she was chair of the Department for a really long time-she taught a course in the Physics Department, it wasn't required for the major, but about this issue especially in the Physics Department was big from time to time vexing issue, women in Physics [Amy Bug]. We knew each other anyway and talked a lot, and I sort of got rung in to work with class and with her on how you would develop some primary research with some people that would throw light on how we would think about whether they want to study Physics or not because so few women do.

JG: And also a little bit on the development of the program. It seemed that some of the students that graduated in 1969 got some kind of distinction as Black Studies, not majors, but like a specialization...*[This question was inspired by a May 28, 1969 notice signed by Professors Leonard Barret, Asmarom Legesse, Ethel Sawyer, and Frank Pierson which identified Marilyn Holifield, Marilyn Allman, Harold Buchanan, Jannette Domingo, and Michael Graves as having "completed the requirements for the Concentration in Black Studies." This letter is found in the Steve Piker Papers.]*

SP: I don't know exactly what that was but especially back then, I think now for graduates the two large scale batches of honorifics conferred by the college, one for honors students which is honors and what degree of honors, honors, high honors, highest honors, and the other for course students which is distinction in course. And then there's a few special awards given to seniors but they're very few in number, but if this was some variant of that, I don't know.

JG: So there wasn't really much of a Black Studies program before that?

SP: Before when?

JG: 1969, 1970.

SP: Well I think you could say there was no Black Studies program. I'm pretty sure the faculty approved the program proposed by Frank Pierson's committee in the Fall semester of '69. That was the first Black Studies program, the first real Black Studies program at Swarthmore I believe.

JG: Before that there were some classes that individually addressed issues

SP: Yeah.

JG: - but nothing cohesive?

SP: Nothing cohesive. That's a good way to put it. Again it goes back to for the black students' purposes, was the admissions office sit-in really necessary because a lot of progress there had already been made. The College was conscientiously, faithfully, really working on this, devoting a lot of time, effort, and attention to this. If some part of the purpose of the black students was to produce this herd effect

nationwide, then yes the admissions office sit-in was a good idea because Swarthmore's black students joined with the nationwide wave of activism. They participated in that.

JG: You've mentioned a little bit about the herd effect, just the colleges and universities establishing Black Studies programs, how much did that influence Swarthmore's development [of their Black Studies program]?

SP: There's just an incredible competition for faculty and students, black faculty, black students because the demand was so great and the supply was so small. You don't have to have a PhD in Economics to see how that plays. I wasn't aware of any nastiness. Oh but this created an entrepreneurial niche for a few black academics that became what other black academics called "revolving door scholars." They would hold full-time academic positions at maybe three or four different places, full salaries at three or four different places, so each of these three or four different places could list them as black faculty members. There wasn't much of that, but it got noticed. There wasn't much of that, but if you wanted to line your pockets and if you were a black with a PhD, you could do that.

JG: There's definitely the demand.

SP: The demand, the niche was there.

JG: It seemed one suggestion for bringing in faculty at one point was either designing programs where students could work with other colleges or designing loan programs where professors would come on loan; did that ever develop?

SP: Early on, there are a couple black colleges and universities in the neighborhood of Swarthmore, Cheyney State and Lincoln [University], and one of the ideas that definitely surfaced when this pressing urgent question of where are we going to get black faculty members arose, well maybe we can borrow them from Lincoln [University] and Cheyney, maybe they can come on exchange or something.

JG: But nothing really came of that?

SP: Nothing really came of that, not that I know of.

JG: Do you know why?

SP: My guess is the credential level of the faculty-this is just a guess, I was never involved, I mean it was discussed at the Black Studies committee when I was on, but I was never involved with the administrative deliberations about should we do this should we not do this-the credential level of the faculty members at Cheyney State and Lincoln [University] was not thought to be adequate.

JG: And would the same be said for having students take classes there?

SP: There was a bit of that but I think not so much Cheyney State and Lincoln but two or three of the southern, black schools. What's the one in Atlanta?

JG: What is it...I'm forgetting it now.

SP: You know who Fred Pryor was? In the Economics Department about my seniority; Fred and I knew each other well for a long time. Fred was independently wealthy, or his family was anyhow, and Fred was very involved with working with black, southern colleges. He was on the Board of Managers of a couple, raised money for them, helped them with curricular development, was very committed to that, but I'm not sure that any students [were involved in an exchange.] - I don't remember for sure.

JG: Morehouse College? [*referring back to the black men's college in Atlanta*]

SP: Morehouse, yeah.

JG: That was one discussed for doing an exchange program?

SP: I can't remember with which one, there was an exchange program for a while with at least one southern, black school I believe. I wasn't involved in that; that doesn't signify any opinion on my part about whether it was a good idea or not, it was outside my bailiwick. In the natural run of things I would not have been part of that.

JG: Was that part of the Black Studies program or was that just more of a changing of view?

SP: Well my guess, like with foreign studies more recently, you know suppose it turns out you do major in History and suppose you go and do a foreign study at Oxford University in England, just about certainly you will take a couple history tutorials over there and you'll get credit from the History Department towards a portion of your History major for them-like that.

JG: So the idea is that if you go to these black colleges and take the classes there ...

SP: They'll transfer the credit back and whatever department accepts the credit - if it's your major-the credit counts towards the 32 you need for the degree and maybe will be able to help you with some other requirements for the degree, such as major. I don't know whether for distribution requirement they have to be courses taken at Swarthmore or whether you can count transfer credit I just don't remember. When you ask Martin Warner that, he'll know; he'll certainly know.

JG: How much of the designing of the curriculum that type of planning was borrowed from other schools or was discussed?

SP: Well certainly the people who were working on developing the curriculum were paying a lot of attention to what was going on at other schools. How much was actually borrowed-remember we talked about the two different stages in which Departments were invented-how much was actually borrowed was determined by the people who were doing the second stage of the invention.

JG: So it's hard for you to say...

SP: Black Studies is like any other - have you heard the expression: a university without walls? I was employed by Swarthmore College, Swarthmore College, a university with walls, there I'm a

Swarthmore College faculty member, but I had my broader network of people that I was connected to the profession and I read journals, and I participate in projects with faculty members from other schools. So I would learn a lot about what's going on in the profession at other schools in ways that I'm often not entirely self-conscious of that influences what I do at Swarthmore, no less so for Black Studies that it's just like any other field at Swarthmore in that respect.

JG: One thing I came across reading through some papers was the Danforth Foundation; is that something you remember? *[A report from this can be found in the Steve Piker papers. The report discusses the experiences of professors (with an extra effort to give them to black professors) given fellowships to take a semester to do independent study related to Black Studies]*

SP: Yes. There's a report in here.

JG: Is that the kind of think that played an important role?

SP: That's the kind of thing people paid a lot of attention to at Swarthmore. Also I neglected to mention - you know who James Michener is, the author? He's a Swarthmore grad, gives a lot of money to Swarthmore. Sometime in the early or mid '70s he decided he better give a little money to support Black Studies curricular development. So a faculty member, initially a part-time faculty member... James Michener brought [a course] because he's a literary person. Are you familiar with the socio-linguistic expression: black English vernacular? That's the dialect of English that's spoken in the "ghetto," just like "redneck mushmouth" is a dialect of English that spoken back up in the hollers of Appalachia, who knows what they call what's spoken in Philadelphia. Black English vernacular was important to the lives of an awful lot of black people, BEV is what it's usually referred to, so Michener said there should be a course in the curriculum on BEV. Now who's gonna teach such a course? It would be a socio-linguist, so Michener gave money to hire such a person. That person subsequently was interested in how this develops, turns out at that time and for a long time after, probably the number one socio-linguist in the country was a man named William LeBov, who was at Penn, I don't know what department, but in an interdisciplinary program called the Center for Urban Ethnography, and LeBov specialized in BEV. Well Michener gave enough money to buy one course. Well you're not going to run a nationwide search to buy one course; you're going to go hire a good looking senior graduate student. The administration decided a socio-linguist will be in the Soc Department, and this is a little bit after the period we're talking about because I was the chair of the Department then, so whoever was provost then, probably Harry Wright. You know who Harrison Wright is? He was chair of the History Department then during this period; he's a South-Africanist by profession, very much involved in this stuff; you'll find a number of documents in here *[Steve Piker papers]* by Harry Wright. Anything you find by Harry Wright you should read carefully, not that I always agreed with him by any means, but Harry Wright was just an exceedingly reasonable person; he reasons terribly, terribly well, so if he has put pen to paper for some issue that you're interested in reading what he has to say is going to help you in your thinking. You may not wind up agreeing with him, but he's going to help you an awful lot. He became provost, and he called me and said something of the effect of "Steve buy one course from a socio [-linguist] on BEV." I said well you're not going to run a nationwide search to

bring in a faculty member to teach one course, so I called LeBov, and yeah come on down we can talk about it, and LeBov says "ell I got the fellow you want, he's my best graduate student in a decade, John Baugh." So John came out and taught the course and John was great, and he was in the Department for a couple of years and became full-time, never got on tenure track. And that was one of these places I remember I had a couple of disagreeing conversations with a provost to the following effect: "look, you say you want to significantly want to increase the amount of qualified, black faculty members, here we have John Baugh who presently is just at the beginning of his career, says he wants to stay at Swarthmore and have a lot of his career at Swarthmore. John Baugh is black; he's going to be at the forefront of his profession in 15 years; he specializes in BEV which could be the core subject matter for a Black Studies program; figure out some way to create a slot for him." He would have stayed. I'm not sure he would have stayed for his whole life, but he would have stayed for a while, but they didn't do it, said "no, we can't do it."

JG: Were there other situations like that?

SP: Very few because there are very few John Baughs in the world. Personally and professionally he was truly outstanding. Within 10 or 15 years he was at the pinnacle of his profession, of the socio-linguistics profession. I don't think I ever met James Michener, no reason I should have. John Baugh made a - and this was anyhow four or five years after I chaired the Black Studies committee - but he made a very significant and decisive contribution to the early years of the Black Studies program. He was what you wanted half a dozen of.

JG: You said stuff like the Danforth Foundation were important?

SP: What they wrote?

JG: Yeah.

SP:, that's the kind of stuff people in the College pay attention to. They pay attention to that. But it's never supposed that-Swarthmore when they're developing new programs, they devote a lot of attention to relevant stuff that's going on at other schools, but devoting a lot of attention to relevant stuff that's going on at other schools is a far cry from supposing that what's going on at other schools is going to be a model for what's going to happen at Swarthmore. It almost never plays that way.

JG: Were there any people that you haven't mentioned that you felt played an important or positive role?

SP: Yeah, there's one that we haven't mentioned that played a very important negative role. Do you know who Fred Hargadon was? Have you seen this letter? [*Letter from SASS in regards to the actions of Dean of Admissions, Fred Hargadon concerning his handling of issues pertaining to his report on black students at Swarthmore. This can be found in The Phoenix collection as well as Steve Piker's papers*] This is from SASS students. This was December 16, 1968, which means right on the eve of the admissions office sit-in. This was from SASS students to Jon van Till because Jon van Till was a member of the Black Studies Curricular Committee who they were in close touch with. This letter is about Fred Hargadon. This letter is 100 percent accurate on Fred Hargadon. He was the director of

admissions. In some senses I knew him a bit; he was a very public figure, very capable, very good administrator, was very devoted to students but in a traditional paternalistic manner, and he had just a wildly overblown ego, and he so needlessly alienated the black students. Just read that paragraph [*here he shows the letter to me and I read it*]; he sent that to Student Council after Student Council endorsed some of SASS' positions [*this is an excerpt from that letter that SASS copied into their letter*]. I mean that's the petulant cry of a spoiled child. You can take that; I'll give you all of this stuff if you want [*these things being his copy of his, Steve Piker's, papers*] (*a few words follow regarding receiving his copies of these papers*) I remember Hargadon very well and how he played his hand in this thing and this letter characterizes him down to the dotting of the i's and the crossing of the t's, and this letter is very unflattering of him. That was Fred Hargadon.

JG: So how did you and other faculty members work around that?

SP: Well he stopped being director of admissions after about a year or two years. He was a very good- the director of admissions, the admissions office is one of the few offices at Swarthmore where there are highly measurable, quantifiable criteria for success, and he was very successful. He recruited very good classes.

JG: And he ended up moving on to Stanford?

SP: Right, he went on to Stanford and then Princeton or was it Princeton and then Stanford. He became director of admissions at Stanford.

JG: Do you think he felt the pressure that he needed to get out of Swarthmore?

SP: I have no idea; certainly that's not something that would be discussed. We didn't know each other in such a way that he would ever discuss something like that with me. So I have no idea. Courtney Smith was very high on Fred Hargadon, and Hargadon obviously had vast capability. And I think part of the problem- and he was very devoted to students but it was this traditional, paternalistic manner; he'd get to know students during the admissions process; he'd stay in-touch with them after they came- but he thought he could sort of direct their lives. Up until the early or mid-sixties, this kind of paternalistic, caring posture towards undergraduates was very much appreciated by undergraduates. Hargadon befriended them, but he expected them to follow his suggestions. Well Hargadon, like just about all of us, was not a man for all seasons, and the season changed and this kind of paternalism was no longer welcome. That was part of the problem and the other part of the problem was his overblown ego. I mean that guy, he was an egomaniac. He had such a high opinion of himself. I thought he was- if there was a villain in this piece it's Fred Hargadon. Now don't quote me to that effect in anything you write. I guess you're gonna have to deal with the question, when you guys write this up, - there's a whole massive correspondence and intramural memos and whatnot in here [*Steve Piker papers*], none of it was intended for publication, or almost none of it, you'll see a little of it was- how you're gonna be able to capitalize on the contents of what's here without getting into some ethical hot water. That's your problem; that's not my problem.

JG: Were there any people on the other end that were exceptionally helpful, that you haven't already mentioned?

SP: I don't think Asmarom Legesse's helpfulness can be overrated and Kathryn Morgan also.

JG: Can you talk a little about how she comes into the picture?

SP: Well, recruiting black faculty members, she was recruited to the History Department, though strictly speaking, I don't believe she's a historian. She's a folklorist. And then this special bond - I knew Kathryn a bit - this special bond which was very strong and very positive that developed between Kathryn and most or all of the black students. She had a vast - she had no authority over any of them [the students] and never thought that she did, unlike Fred Hargadon who didn't actually think that he had licensed authority, but he thought he could direct them [the students]; I don't think Kathryn ever thought that - but she had vast influence with the black students. I think no one's stature was higher than Kathryn's in the eyes of the black students.

JG: What years was it that she came on board?

SP: Early '70's, about '70, '71, '72 maybe. [*Prior to that she taught a course titled "Topics in Afro-American History" during the spring of the academic year 1969-1970*]

JG: I'm sure that's listed somewhere.

SP: You can find that out. Oh, one thing I'll mention is there are a few other people who are, I think, still standing who were there then and who were very, some of whom were very involved in this stuff. I'm pretty sure Harry Wright is still alive. If he is, it would be a wonderful thing if someone could be in touch with him the way you're in touch with me. Hans Oberdiek, you know Hans Oberdiek in Philosophy or know who he is? He was there then, actually a few years senior to me because he had been there for two or three years by the time I got there. Gene Klotz, mathematician, now he's retired, and I'm pretty sure he's still around some place. Jennie Keith, a long-time close friend and colleague of mine, she joined the Department in '67, a year after I did. We were together in the Department forever close friends. She was a distinguished anthropologist; she was provost of the College for ten years. She's retired now but she's down in Delaware somewhere with her husband. All these people-go to the provost office, they'll [the administration] know how to - although the History Department, if Harry Wright is still alive, the History Department will know how to reach him. Who's chair of History now?

JG: Professor Burke

SP: Yea, just go ask Tim, he'll know how to reach him. Hans Oberdiek is just there in the Philosophy Department; I don't know if he's there this summer. Jennie Keith would also be a very good person-also women's issue, the stew, the broth, all the stuff, racial issues, Vietnam war issues, poverty, gay issues hadn't really got on the front burner yet, women's issues. Jennie was a specialist; she was a leader in moving the college towards a better situation with women's issues. It'd be real good to talk to Jennie. I guess on back to figuring out uses of your time.

JG: The last thing is if there is anything that you'd like to add that I haven't asked you yet that you feel is important.

SP: I will think on this, it has been a very stimulating time we've spent together. I will think on this. Right now off the top of my head I'm not thinking of anything but by tomorrow morning or the next few days, I know how to reach you, and I'll just send it to you. [*Nothing of particular note arose in his discussions with me after this interview session.*]