

L y a D y m R o s e n b l u m

OK, today's date is March tenth, 1998 and we are interviewing Dr. Lya Dym Rosenblum, Vice President and Dean of the Graduate School here at Columbia College in Chicago.

Dr. Rosenblum, when did you first come to Columbia and what were the circumstances that brought you here, or the individual or individuals that brought you to Columbia?

I came in 1974 and I came to meet Mike Alexandroff, then President, at the suggestion of a friend of ours who was a trustee of the College. And he knew I had just received my degree, that I was interested in a variety of opportunities, and he thought Columbia and I might be a good match, and Mike and I might be a good match. It was a very good interview, we both enjoyed spending hours talking and I came back several times and Mike asked me, "Well, what would you like to do here?" "Well, I don't know but it seems like the kind of place that I would enjoy working at." I had just received my Ph.D. in Political Science and I was interested in doing some research, and I was interested in some teaching. We talked about possibilities for several months while I finished some research I was doing with Navajo Indians out in Arizona. And when I came back we decided to give it a try because the then Academic Dean of the College, Lou Silverstein, had announced that he was about to leave the College and Mike thought that might be a good place to start. So I came in Fall of 1974 as an Associate Academic Dean with the expectation that as soon as Lou left I would take over as Dean of the College. Lou didn't

leave, and we shared the role for a while, about a year, perhaps less than that. And then we established a Liberal Arts Department with a grant I was able to get from the Lilly Foundation, Lou became chair of the Liberal Arts Department and I took over as Dean of the College. If I call it various names that's because that's how we did things. Sometimes I was Dean of the College, sometimes I was Academic Dean, eventually I was Vice President of Academic Affairs, it was all the same, they were just titles. But it was a very auspicious beginning because Mike and I thought the same about many things. And as you were preparing for this interview I was looking up at the poster, The Russian Tea Room here, and I remember how many times he would talk about one or the other going to The Russian Tea Room—what we liked, what we didn't like, mostly trivial, but we also agreed on many more important things in terms of higher education, what a college should be like, what was really important...

Could you expand on that a little bit, you know, how maybe, philosophically what attracted you to what Mike was saying and where you had, you know, found...

I will try. I guess I've thought about it over the years on many occasions and have talked about it, but I'll try to compress it into interview time. I'd never heard of Columbia College when I came here for the interview. I received my undergraduate degree at the University of Chicago, my doctorate at Northwestern, I had lived in Chicago, but a long time; I had never heard of Columbia College. And my friend David Solomon,

who was trustee, I guess, mentioned it once or twice and it just did not ring a bell with me. When I came in for my very first discussion, I realized that this was primarily a school which was in the arts and communications even then; this was prior to the first accreditation. And there were about twelve hundred students in the Spring when I first came to talk with Mike. I was particularly interested, because in my research with the Navajo Indians I was interviewing children about their sense of political identity, how it developed, what influenced it. And I was interested in doing some video taping. Someone was scheduled to come to Columbia in the Film Department who was very much involved in doing just that kind of work and I thought, "This is perfect. This is what I'd like to do." I came; he didn't come, but that was part of the attraction. Part of the attraction was also the very fact that Mike offered me a position without tying



me to teaching certain basic Political Science courses, which I would have had to do in some other institution, or take on an administrative position without any other opportunities. Everything was very flexible and it was very exciting. I have every good memories of the institutions that I attended as a student but this is very different. This is really more living out an avocation in the arts, which I've always been interested in, I've always participated in, but I've never been, that's not my profession. And so this was a very exciting opportunity. And I must say that—and this has lasted all the years too—that politically we were very much attuned to the same values.

Some other people in the College and outside have made light of some of our very liberal viewpoints over the years, but we shared them and that was very important because I think it makes a difference in how you approach higher education—who comes, how important it is. To have the kind of access that we've always emphasized, the opportunity for people to try and if they fail- that was one of the difficult things for me at first, to persuade Mike that in some way we might have to reach a point where we would say, "You've tried, maybe you can try harder, but if you can't do it and you don't want to do it, perhaps this is not the right place or the right thing for you." These kinds of discussions went on over the years on an ongoing basis. I lived in Winnetka at the time and I would try to get on a certain train or two or three possible trains; very often I'd be sitting in my office as we'd be talking and I could tell that the first train had left, the second train had left, the third train had left... And

we were just in the middle of a conversation that was that important. And that shaped my thinking and I like to think that it shaped the way the College went after that, because when I came in the Fall of 1974 we received accreditation. I had nothing to do with preparing for that, of course, it was in the works. But after that, the growth of the College was phenomenal. Every year enrollment increased, the program grew, and it was just a very exciting experience for those first five, ten years. We moved to this building, we bought other buildings. I came in at a very good time. And I like to think that I had something to do with connecting the change.

Why don't you, maybe, go into that a little bit more too, what you brought, you know. Once you recognized your affinity for Mike and the opportunity was made available, what types of programs or policies did you want to develop or see instituted here?

Well, I guess what I hoped to do, and what I think I was able to do to a large extent, was to combine the best of the more traditional institutions, with which I was familiar, with the more open and flexible approach of Columbia College. The difference being the emphasis on traditional academic disciplines and the arts, which were really at the core of Columbia's being. It's not quite true, and I think with all the emphasis we have currently about Columbia being an arts school it may be useful to remember that since Mike really was the primary force in shaping this institution—leading it—he was very committed to a liberal arts education. He was very committed to- not a traditional kind of program, for example, where you had a course of study that was prescribed for the first two

years or the Columbia Great Books program which other groups took over, but rather to find inspiring teachers, individuals who would teach what they loved or what they were interested in and move students to develop their own interest in it. And he loved identifying teachers out there some place and would always be responsive when I came up with someone. He'd say, "Let's try it, let's invite them. If the class goes and the students respond, fine." If they don't, you know, part-time faculty members, they were interested in doing it; some of them didn't want to stay on. In any case, but the emphasis on the liberal arts context, for what students were doing in the art forms, is very important. And I appreciated that. I felt it might be a good idea to have more of that. And some of the things I did was develop personal support for and then implement a distribution requirement—in General Studies, for example—so that we would know that every student, at least, was exposed to some liberal arts courses. I developed the Academic Advising program, which met with a great deal of resistance, because if you have an academic advising program and you say, "If you don't perform and you don't meet certain requirements, such as certain kinds of courses that you must complete and a certain level grades you have to have..." At some point, there has to be some consequence. And following up on consequences at Columbia was never easy because we were flexible. With the Academic Advising program we began to do that and it worked. Students, I think, became more involved in what they were doing; the advisors worked with them.

I developed a number of new programs by getting, writing proposals for them for funding—the government particularly. I was able to support new programs in Journalism, in the Arts Management area; I started the Academic Computing program here with funding that we received from federal grants, the Sound program. I just had several faculty members come see me and they tell me they're coming to see the mother of the Sound program. You don't know how you feel about that, it's fine, I could be the mother of anything. But these were new programs which I felt needed to be added to round out ... Take, for example, computing. This was in 1976 and we didn't even have a computer for our business area. I worked at Northwestern on my dissertation with computers. And you produce it here and it became a very important part because I felt our students, whether in the arts or simply going out in the world to work, really needed to be become acquainted and familiar and comfortable with computer technology, and that was in the mid '70s and has certainly grown. Obviously, applications in the arts have grown, have evolved in a way since then that no one ever dreamed they would. I think there was the sense, among some of my colleagues, that I was trying to make Columbia into a little University of Chicago. And it wasn't that at all, it was, as I said before, trying to draw on the best, from my own experience in the field of higher education, and make Columbia the best that it could be as well as strengthen it. We concentrated on standards, on what was offered, and what students might be expected to do; it is a contribution of which I am proud

even though it didn't work as well, as completely as I would have hoped. But I've always thought the arts need to be explored, worked with in the context of life. And in order to have that, you have to have some understanding and background other than a specific skill. I started a study group, a task force. Lou was on that, Jeffrey was on it, some of the old timers, Lynn Sloan was on it, and what we tried to do is develop a course which would provide some overall background that would be a common, shared foundation for all of our students. We called it Cultural Patterns. And the name, we came up with, we had several retreats, we went away for weekends, we met here for days on end...

Was this still in the '70s, or what period are we talking about?

This was in the '70s, late '70s. And we knew we couldn't make it a required course for all the students but that was the long-range hope, that it might be. It never came about. The course was one that we encouraged all freshmen to take because from many different quarters—whether it was Theater, Film, Photography—we heard from many sources: the students don't have the kind of background which they really need in order to practice the arts in a productive, exciting, and creative way. And these courses were intended to provide some foundation; some of the stimulation which might make students go on to get more on their own. That course was in place for several years. It ran into various problems. It took shape again, in another form, a few years later. It influenced future courses, even Freshman Seminar. Now there are many incarnations of that course that have been here and that all reflect a common concern: that because we

have open admissions and we invite anyone and everyone to come to Columbia, we need to find some way to provide them with the underpinning and the foundation which will help them take advantage of what we have to offer. And so education's an ongoing process, the evolution of curriculum is, in the same way, an ongoing process.

You mentioned open admissions and I'd like to come back to that, but before that, could you define, from your perspective, what the mission of Columbia College is or has been during your tenure here, and then maybe address the issue of open admissions and, you know, has that changed or has the challenge of open admissions changed?

Well, the mission of the College—as I heard it from Mike and as I confirmed it for myself, after I came here and was part of the [College, was] to pursue their interests, whatever they might be, within the context of what was offered. And in fact, that they wanted some other courses that we would be willing and able to provide for what they wanted to learn. The emphasis was clearly on the arts and communications from the start because Television, at that time, was probably the largest department at Columbia and had been known as a radio and television school. And that really remained in place pretty much at least for another ten years, but these were the strongest departments. The mission also was not just to be open but because the arts, traditionally, are fairly restrictive in terms of who's allowed to become an artist if you want professional training, to offer the very best artistic and professional education. The emphasis at Columbia

was to de-emphasize the formality of admissions procedures, portfolios, testing, etc., but to nurture and nourish the talents that students might bring which even they might not know about, particularly in some of the arts in which we specialize. So to provide access to anyone who wanted to try college is one of the strong points and that was very appealing to me too. Because that's still true today, that there are students who do not have the formal training or background to prepare them as we might think they should be prepared. They come to experience success and larger successes; to really find that they have some talent that is worth developing, and worth working on, and they do wonderful things. And so I think that was the rationale for open admissions: that if you give people a chance to try in college and to explore they will, at least in many instances, succeed

The open admissions comes also out of what I referred to before, that shared political vision that we had about what society should be and all of that, in that education should be available to everyone. And education not just in the strict sense, "You must learn to read and write!", but education to stretch your imagination and your mind and your experiences. I know the open admissions concept has been under some attack recently, and perhaps it always was by some. When I initiated the Academic Advising program I wrote a statement in which it said that by having open admissions we committed ourselves to doing something for our students. This was not—it's been said since then by other people too—a revolving

door. We're not just bringing students in. We have an obligation to help them learn something while they're here. We let them in, we invite them in, but we have an obligation to make sure that they benefit, in some way, from their being at Columbia College. And that's always been, I guess, that's always been my thinking about open admissions. It isn't just to gather all the homeless and the otherwise, perhaps, in some way, rejected potential candidates for college, but rather to invite them into Columbia College because we have something special to offer and to make sure that we make it as accessible as possible. There are always those who won't take advantage of it, who can't take advantage of it, or fail trying. But the open admissions concept was good. It makes it very much more difficult, you probably know that, for teachers.

I taught in the beginning too, and to have a class with really just one brilliant student who is at Columbia because he or she dropped out of another college is wonderful. In those days, we were still picking up a lot of '60s and '70s confused young people who didn't know what they wanted to do, where they wanted they go, but who had a lot of talent and who were very good students when they found something they were interested in. It ranged from those who really had no preparation, had no idea what college was all about, who were the first in their families to go to college, to students who would excel anywhere they went to college, and that kind of range in a classroom is very challenging. And every teacher does not even want to meet the challenge. But in many cases they did and they did it brilliantly and successfully.

So, as far as I'm concerned, I think the open admissions concept— as long as the College can serve the students well—is one to be maintained at all cost. When it comes to the point that we're stretching our resources so far that we can't serve the students, then open admissions needs to be looked at in a different way. We have not come to grips in any final way with that. But whether it's just simply a first come, first serve, or we may try it for a semester or two and see whether this is what you want to do, I don't have the answer. We've all talked about it, we've all struggled with it, but we're all trying to hold on to what we think is a very valuable concept, a very valuable part of our history, and at the same time not get caught in a dead end.

Let's change hats for a moment from administrator, you mentioned the courses that you taught. Could you, maybe, describe some of your favorite ones or ones that you developed that were particularly successful, or maybe students that you met through these courses that stick out in your mind?

I taught basically only two courses here because every time I started teaching a course, something would interfere and I would be called to a meeting or I'd have to do something else. Then, I would stop and think, "Can I really do this, do I have the time to do my job here?", especially when I became Dean of the College and had many other responsibilities, "Can I do that and be available to students and be available to myself to prepare for the course?" So, I taught basically two courses, one was an introductory political science course which was not taught and really hasn't

been going since then. And that was very interesting because I came up against what every other teacher at Columbia came up against right from the beginning, and that is: Do I evaluate my students based on what I expect of them or what they should be learning by whatever standards, or do I evaluate them on the basis of what they're bringing to the classroom, learning experience? And I discussed it with them, for example, the writing part, very early on. I asked them whether they wanted me to grade their papers in terms of the writing of the paper or in terms of content. And we agreed that the content was more important, that they wanted the help with the writing. So those are the comments I would make on the side and I would look at the content thing.

I must say, in terms of—I had been at Northwestern and most of the emphasis at that time was in political behavior and the more or less scientific evaluation of it, using computers and all that. And so I would have them go out and do interviews. And I do remember one student particularly who came back and he talked about his grandmother, who was an unofficial worker or captain, I would probably call her. She really ran the neighborhood. And he, through her, brought an enormous amount of political experience and wisdom and knowledge to the class, which was just wonderful. And I had them put their questions in an interview form and took them over to—we did not have enough computers here yet to analyze the material, so I walked it over to Northwestern, into a lab on North Michigan Avenue so we could analyze and maybe come back and get their reports. And it was a very

exciting experience for them, in that they've never done this, and it was a very exciting experience for me because that was not the way I ever learned political science or studies it or worked on it.

I developed that Cultural Patterns course and its successor, The Artist in Apprenticeship, which were both introductory courses for all of our students. But I didn't teach those; I worked with the faculty who were teaching it. And then at some point, growing out of my own interests—I was born in Germany, I came here just before the war started. I lost a large number of family members, friends, my whole life, I guess. And so the Holocaust was a very important part of my life. And, through the interviews that I mentioned before—where we were interviewing Holocaust survivors—I thought it was time to bring some of that to a wider audience. And Columbia students, in general—first of all, very few young people were aware or knowledgeable, perhaps not even very interested in what had happened. But I thought both from a historical standpoint and from a human standpoint there was something that was important enough for them to learn and I thought I would try to bring it to them. The chair of the Liberal Arts Department, Les Van Marter, was also very interested. And so together, we developed a course, Holocaust Studies. And that too was very important to me. The students who came to it and what they brought to it, how they responded. It was, again, very different from being involved with the interviews of Holocaust survivors. For our kids, our students, this was something they signed up for—obviously these are all electives. And they stayed with it. They signed up for these

courses. One of the problems we always have had, in ambitious classes of the College, is that people are not interested and they turn off and they walk out and they leave. We had a very high retention rate in those classes and I found that very, very satisfying.

So, my teaching here was limited, in terms of formal courses, but I don't feel it is limited in my influence on other courses and other teachers. I've worked with teachers across the board, for many years. I started the Graduate School in '82, I guess. And at that point was the Graduate School as well as the Undergraduate School and so there were new departments and programs that we started to the graduate level. And I feel that in discussing with people which programs we were going to develop, I was both learning and teaching. Many of them came in to direct programs, Education Studies or the Dance Movement Therapy—which I thought was a wonderful thing to bring to Columbia. Actually, my thought had been to have an arts therapy program. I was persuaded that concentrating on one area would be better than several of them. And, in fact, the Dance Movement Therapy program has been very successful and it ties in the Dance Department; it added more psychology courses than we had had in the Liberal Arts Department. Each thing I did, at that time, seemed to have other effects. And that, that was good.

The atmosphere of an entrepreneurship, you've named so many things that you added or developed or worked with other people. Is that what made Columbia distinctive as well? Could you have done those things

at other institutions, do you think?

Probably not, and it wasn't easy here either, because entrepreneurship is a central value of Columbia College; it certainly was in its beginnings. Mike valued that very highly. He hired chairs, originally, who were themselves interested in their fields but who were entrepreneurially oriented, very strongly so. So entrepreneurship runs up against entrepreneurship and there are problems. We may have very good ideas but they may intrude on someone else's territory or turf; we've had many good discussions on these subjects. But that was the atmosphere and it was created and it was open to try and if you failed, you failed. The Cultural Patterns course ran up as much against political opposition as well as failure as an academic course. You pick up your pieces and you start over again. We started a different way of approaching what I knew was a problem and a lot of other people agreed was a problem. So, yes, the encouragement of entrepreneurship sometimes went a little too far; other times it really has made the College what it is now. And when I came in '74, in the Fall, we had, I think it was eighteen hundred students then and it just went up and up and now there are eight thousand. And a number of places during that time, I can recall saying to Mike, "Shouldn't we just stop and look at what we're doing and see how well we're doing?" We rarely had time and we rarely have time now to stand back and look at what we have brought here.

Does the, would the early College retreat tie into that, I mean, in that reflection? Bert Gall asked me to make sure I asked you about that, so...

I appreciate that. It's fun for everyone else to talk about it now, but it

was very painful for me at the time. It was not well received. I thought that the faculty, small as it was, we had about twenty full-time faculty members at that time, I could have them all say what goes on in the College. That's where I came from, but it didn't go as well as I would have hoped. When I spoke to entrepreneurship: Who was I to tell the chairs how to be entrepreneurs? That started it. It wasn't all happy, we argued and discussed but as a result of the retreat we started having happy retreats every year. And one year, about ten years later, when we cancelled it—for a variety of reasons, timing, there was an interference—there was quite an uproar among the faculty as to why we weren't having a Faculty Retreat. And while in the beginning they were seen as my project, something I was imposing, there was also an enormous difference between the first year and what later evolved. And that is that the first one or two, everyone was protecting their own turf and their own department...

Competing...

...cross-barriers, cross-disciplines. And that began to change each year until now, I think, you rarely see a breakfast or lunch or dinner at a retreat with more than two people in one department sitting at a table. Rather, they mix and interchange with other people. And I think it's wonderful. But the retreat was what Mike called, when I first set it up, he said, "Do you know what you're doing? You're opening a Pandora's Box." And I said, "Yes, you're probably right, but somebody has to open it. And we're growing up as an institution and it's time to take some chances." I think it worked very well, and as I say, some of the mythology that has

grown up around that retreat is amusing, is funny, and is touching because I think we all knew that we were entering a different stage in the institution's life, and that was fun. It was a large living room and it had three spokes going out in little monastic cells which were, I guess—maybe it was a monastery. But there'd be long walks in the woods and there'd be long conversations around the fireplace because we were all in this one, small space. And it was the beginning of something very, very good.

You mentioned earlier, you made a reference to the old timers.

Who are some of the old timers that you remember the best, for better or for worse or for whatever reason, in those early days that you were here? You know, things that students or faculty today just, you know, wouldn't have any idea about looking at Columbia, where it is at the turn of the century.

Of the century...

Yeah, right, not that century...

Somebody just asked yesterday, "When did Columbia start?" And I said, "1890." That's the different Columbia that really wasn't this Columbia at all. I think it's interesting that some of the people that I would remember are, in fact, very much here and are still very much part of the scene. I can't resist putting this in: My sitting here reminds me of the session Chap and I had on Friday afternoon looking at some of the rushes of an old interview with Mike, because he's sitting in a corner of a couch, as I am sitting here. But, he's sitting very much in the same position...

Talking about the same...

And Tony says, "Now, talk about this, now, talk about this..." And I can just hear the two of them talk-

ing to each other and encouraging each other to talk about these things or think about these things. Chap was one of the people here when I came. Michael Rabiger was here, Bob Edmonds was the head of the Film Department and, very shortly after I came, Tony Loeb took over. Bob stayed around for some time. Lynn was here already, John Schultz—of course—who is now retired and Betty were in the Fiction Writing Department. Those two paintings right here are paintings, one behind the other, by Harry Bouras, who was the inspiration for Liberal Arts at Columbia College. Harry taught just about anything you can think of. He was an artist but he was a renaissance man who had interests and knowledge in just anything you can think of. Sometimes he would get carried away with his enthusiasm and classes were not exactly traditional classes: grades were offered freely, high grades, that is. And I remember when I had my Assistant Dean at the time, who was a scholar in the liberal arts and also graduated from the University of Chicago, as it happens, and he saw Harry's class to see if he couldn't get a little more order into those courses. And he came back and he said, "Well, there's very little you can or want to do about Harry's courses." You can require, and we did, that he hire someone to read the papers that he was asking people to write, some evaluation, that there be some criteria for the As that he was handing out. But you wouldn't want to... because he inspired more students, generations of students, actually, at Columbia, and inspired them to think about things that they never thought about before.

The next retreat we had to talk about what our Education Department should be like, when Harry participated too. And we had

a wonderful weekend that time also. And just talking about ideas and where we wanted to go and it was an association that I really treasured. My husband and I were with Harry the last days of his life in the hospital. Harry was one of those people who always wanted to be in charge. And he asked my husband whether he wouldn't help him go and... Of course he wouldn't do that, but that was—Harry was full of life. He was talking about, at the same time, he was talking about going off to Europe as soon as he came out of the hospital—which we all knew he was never going to do. But Harry's classes were in a class by themselves... As a matter of fact, Bill Russo is a friend of my friend who encouraged me to come here, and apparently it was over a luncheon at Riccardo's that my name came up and the idea that I would be a good dean at Columbia College was discussed. And so, I've known Bill all that time.

Riccardo's, which is no longer...
Which is no longer in existence.

And was a great hang-out for journalists and...

And I think, until the very last few days, Mike and a group of his friends would go there for lunch on a weekly basis—for old time's sake, I think, because I don't think the food was very good anymore and the place was getting shabby. But the conversation, apparently, was still very good and so he continued. But there was some colorful people. We had some part-time teachers who were wonderful...

Could you, maybe, because we haven't gotten much on part-timers and their contribution in the earlier period, maybe you

could mention some of them individually and what, you know, you remember most.

I wish I could remember his name but I can't right now. He taught literature, he was also a refugee from Germany. And Mike had met him somewhere, brought him in, he taught a very serious literature course all through those first few years that I was here still and several years before then. There were journalists I remember. I hired a young woman, Evelyn Norton, who died recently. She taught a course in journalism and was an inspiration to a lot of students. There were people who taught once or twice only and didn't come back. They taught in special fields. We had someone from Chicago, taught courses in Chicago politics; taught them because he was interested in them and deeply involved and passed on, passed on to other activities, he's very much alive. The part-timers were a very important part of our teaching always and, as I said, that was one of the things that Mike strongly encouraged and I enjoyed. If I met someone or I heard of someone, I'd go out and try to talk them into coming to teach a course for us. And very often they did, and very often they did for a pittance because in those days there was, there weren't many teaching opportunities and people who wanted to teach, they didn't really care. It was hard to get appointments at universities and they were delighted to have the opportunity to share what they knew with our students. Things have changed, as they do.

How has the student body changed since you came to Columbia? Is it something, is there a... has it been gradual or...

I think it's hard to describe that because when you go from twelve

hundred to eight thousand, the sheer quantity and numbers produce change in themselves. I think, I remember here—over the years—students are much better than they used to be. Students are much better this year than last year. But there's no way to measure that exactly; many are and many aren't. I think our distribution clearly has changed somewhat because we have a much larger component of suburban students now than we did in the early days. We were really more an urban institution then than we are now. But I don't think that has changed the feel of the institution as much as we thought it would. We have more imaginative students now. Our proportions of minority students have not really changed that much. Unfortunately, a lot of other institutions have experienced a drop in African- American male students and that's something that's simply an unfortunate aspect of our social system, our political system. We've increased, for example, our Hispanic population, and that's very good because the city has become, there are many more Hispanics in the city, and more and more they realize that higher education is a way to make their lives more productive and take part in the responsibility for their lives. I think people come here more with, perhaps, clearer ideas of where they want to go. I think that may be a change, at least that's my impression from talking to students, that more students seem to know what they want from Columbia College. Whether that's in response to the fact that we are doing recruiting, which we did not do in the early years...

When did that start?

It was someone, it was usually Bert and a few others; probably the last fifteen years or so there's been a

more concerted effort at recruiting in the high schools. And that may make a difference. In the recruiting effort, we present our programs: this is available, that's available and you better be able to say, "Yes, this is what I want." Whereas when they just heard about Columbia, it was a good place to go, and it was a fun place to go and it was a creative place to be, they'll come and then look around and see, "Well, what do I do now?" And they'll try different things.

Can you talk a little bit about the origins of the Graduate School? You said that started in '82. And, again, perhaps, you know, the philosophy behind it and what the purpose was and, perhaps, continues to be.

Well, we talked about graduate school for a couple of years and I recommended to Mike that we try to put together a proposal as to what he might want to do in graduate school and then see whether it was indeed feasible. There were a number of reasons and a number of motivations that went into it. One was that in some areas, such as Film, particularly, and Photography, but Film more so, the program really was a graduate program; it was an upper class program. And it seemed appropriate to make an honest woman of this program. It was a very good program in essence, and the preparation for it was the undergraduate program. So, it was just a question of transferring some of the advanced courses into separate packages of work and making sure that the students have the preparation for it so that the concentration at the undergraduate level could be from the beginning, introducing students to it. Many of those students came one semester, two semesters, dropped out because it was very demanding, very difficult.

So, the graduate program is kind of seen as a combination—as it is in most graduate programs—of the departments that had an undergraduate department. The graduate program was seen as its crowning glory, depending on who you talk to, or as a combination of the best of the students and making sure that they could really feel that they had mastered something which they couldn't at the undergraduate level. Photography felt very strongly that the department would not be recognized properly unless it had a graduate program because for many photography, fine arts photography, that is an important area and it still is in our department. And for that, if they wanted to go into teaching, they needed graduate degrees. So there were a number of areas. There were other departments where we felt it should occur, Film saw it that way too.

The idea was, at the graduate level you could invite people, you know, you could recruit students who came from some other discipline and now wanted to add the film. They had something to say. They might even have already said it in another form but now they wanted to say it in film. The same thing is true in Photography, I suppose, and the same thing—take Arts Management, for example. We started a program in Arts Management and then we went, with funding we got from the government again, set up a graduate program because we tried to appeal to people who had been in the arts management field and administration and who wanted to learn more about the arts—which they could do at Columbia—or, artists who had already established themselves but who wanted to

learn more about the business end and management. So, Mike asked me to put together a proposal which would make it unique and also doable, feasible. We went through several formulations of that proposal and we started out with three programs in 1982. There was Film, Photo, and I think it was Arts Management. And then we quickly added either the Fiction Writing or Arts Management—whichever wasn't there first—and we ended up with seven programs. We had Education Studies, which we had had for some time as a course of study, and then we added that as a graduate program, got it approved through the state and that has been a very successful program. Again, our emphasis there was to combine it through the arts and through the inter-arts program that was really our very first program. I have to back off and step back for a moment. I was working with this consortium of colleges and universities and they had a program at Loyola and DePaul in inter-arts which nobody was very happy with, because it didn't fit the education programs. The people who were running it, Suzanne Cohan, who is still with us, and her friend Becka Rubin, and a third woman, didn't quite fit in there because that's not what they wanted to do, these traditional approaches to teach education. And I volunteered to take the program to Columbia College. Mike approved and so I invited them to come here, start the program; it was the very first program we had here.

Interdisciplinary arts?

Interdisciplinary arts, it started out Interdisciplinary Arts Education. And it was teachers who wanted to learn more about being artists and for artists who wanted to be better

at teaching. And out of that group, the whole Education Studies Program, which is a much broader program, includes that but is not restricted to that. When we applied for graduate school approval from North Central we had that program in place and we had already graduated the first class. Because the students who came from Loyola and DePaul, getting their degrees there or waiting until they were ready at Columbia. And that was a very exciting collaboration; it was also very exciting simply because of what we are and where we wanted to go. And the Graduate School, in other areas, turned out to be not as unique as Mike would have wanted it to be, but it was unique in the emphasis that we had and the kinds of departments we had and how they fit in with the rest of the curriculum, the rest of the institution. It went from fifteen students to six hundred students now in a fairly short time, I would say fifteen years. And we've had some great successes in terms of the graduates, the programs, the recognition they received outside of the institution and higher education in general. And I think it's a very, one of the best. I'm proud of the progress we have made. In fact, one of the problems that we have now is we can't handle the number of students that we have, especially in areas like Film, where there's pressure at the undergraduate level and pressure at the graduate level. One of the things we're always concerned about—because teaching really is our primary goal, we're not a research institution, we are a teaching institution—and whatever resources, teachers, material resources, whatever goes to the Graduate School is, in fact, taken from the undergraduate. And it's a very fine balance that you want to strike. You want both faculty and students to use the Graduate School

as a model, as a goal, what can be done, and at the same time not overemphasize it. And I think we have. I can't think of any full-time faculty member who's teaching in the Graduate Program who does not retain a very serious commitment and interest in the undergraduate teaching. And that's, that's good, that we have more faculty being better.

A thing that has come up again and again is certainly the importance of Mike Alexandroff's vision, contribution. And, you know, everyone really that I've interviewed talks about their relationship to him on some level. What does his absence mean to the institution, you know, where do you see Columbia going to in the future, the challenges that it has to face? Because he was so important, how has that influenced or affected the institution? That's so hard to gauge and it's so hard to express in words, really. It's a feeling, it's emotional, it's real. Mike was leaving for several years before he actually left. He was, in a sense, distancing himself from the institution to a certain extent. And we all felt that, we were all aware of it, and there was a great deal of anxiety among a lot of people as to what was going to happen. And so we had a chance, I guess, growing up to think of what it would be like in the post-Mike period. I don't think anyone quite knew what to expect or what to even want because in some ways, many of the things that I have been doing and that we were all doing together at that time probably could not have been done if he had continued. It needed to be done with a leadership; any institution, any organization, any political system works that way: There's

some things that only the leader can do. And I think we're probably still in the transition period right now. Mike had a very special personal vision that he communicated. You could go into Mike's office and sit down and talk to him about something that you felt was terribly important, you felt very strongly about, and you walked out and he'd completely turn it around. I would have faculty members come in and talk to me about something they'd be very upset about, very angry about and they would go in and talk and I'd say, "Talk to Mike." They'd go and talk and they'd come back and they'd be at the opposite side of the issue completely or feel totally different about it. Not because he argued with them but simply the sheer way of his personality. He would talk and he would let someone else talk but there was something about him that was very magical. And because he also looked like one of my grandfathers... I'd lose right there. I always had a very special... there was something... He should not be compared. I think no future leader, not our present President, not our future President, can or should be compared to Mike because it was a different time, it was a different institution, there were different people, those of us who are still here—we were different. And I think that we miss him but I think at the time he left we were also ready to take some new steps into a different period. I don't think we're there yet.