

Kaitlin: Good morning today is Wednesday March 4th 2020, my name is Kaitlin Millen. I am conducting the oral history of Larry Provet. Welcome, I would first like to ask you, could you give us a little context as to what the environment and atmosphere was like on campus when you were here?

Larry: Wow well that was 1968. Martin Luther King had just been assassinated Kennedy's assassination just occurred, the country was basically and in turmoil. There was a shift at the time going from violence, not from non-violence to violent terms of the civil rights movement that was going on and the Black Panther Party coming into prominence at that time. So on the campus there was a real sense amongst the people of color that we needed to come together to support each other and with that we formed what's called the Black Students Union, which is a little deceiving because it was made up not the only of black students but there were Hispanic and Asian members in the Black Students Union at that time.

We could not find any other, well there was no minority faculty person that wanted to be involved with us except for one person that was my (???) they either came on faculty advisor, he's still here with us at Pratt.

So with that being said I came to Pratt second generation, my aunt graduated from Pratt 1930, the home economics and science area. The high school I went to in Louisville was a pre-engineering and architecture school which had a huge history, actually has a history that probably dates back prior to Pratt's history. One of the oldest high schools in the state of Kentucky and one of the best academically. So I was recruited to come

here to play basketball. There was a person who attended Pratt came back to Louisville who was involved in politics, was like my mother's protege and came and he recruited me he said you got to come to Pratt. I said I don't know I've been recruited to come to other schools like Purdue and Southern Illinois, but Pratt at the time and the architecture school was the top of the country so I said I'm going to Pratt and plus my aunt was pushing me to go to her to her alma mater.

So I got off the bus, well I came into Brooklyn and arrived at Pratt and the first thing that happened was it was freshman week, I don't they still do this, huge freshman week. And you go and you check it to the dorms and they give you a schedule of events you supposed to go to what's called the magical mystical tour because of the Beatles. And so all the freshmen had to go come off the buses, come out of the dorms they met at the subway station, they gave us all a subway token so that was a first introduction into the New York City subway system. We got on the subway we went downtown to Jay Street in Borough Hall where they had buses waiting for us. We came out of the subway and we got onto the bus... I'll take that back I'm wrong. We got off at Jay Street/Borough Hall then we walked across the Brooklyn Bridge and when we got on the other side of the bridge there were buses waiting for us. We got on the buses and the buses took us way out on Long Island, I think it was the home where the Pratt family had their home at a private beach and we had an all-night clambake. So you can imagine the bonding that occurred between the freshman because we didn't know where we were going, what was gonna happen to us we just knew that we were on this adventure and going through adventure kind of brought everybody together. Of course birds of a feather flock together so you got to meet all the freshmen and people at that

time that were you know of like and those are within your school because the architecture school got people together. At that time I was in the School of Engineering, the following year I transferred over to architecture. I just found that engineering was not quite my niche. I wasn't really happy with that. So as the year progressed and it was kind of, I think it was the architecture school at first they started the demonstrations because they were very, students all students were very disenfranchised or weren't happy with with the Dean and the way he was approaching design and it was really kind of, instead of inclusive, he was not embracing a lot of the newer ideas that were coming. It was he wanted to follow business as is, as it had been always and of course here we come in, you know this is a time of change that was going on in the in the whole country and so with that being said there was a student strike, a first strike starting with the architecture school in the architects and with the support of the faculty and with that the the black students on campus we came together said, wait a minute while we're going through this activism we we started to organize and we came together and formed the Black Student Union. Well Cole, in addition that type of organization was going on every campus in New York City, from Columbia, from NYU to Brooklyn College. And so there was a citywide formed (???) 6:18 network and each campus was responsible for their own activities that were going on. Except there was one time when we locked up the campus, it was a citywide event that would happen to almost every campus in New York City. So with that being said what happened at Pratt probably got a little lost in the wash as far as coverage with the news.

Heather: Could you say a little bit more about what do you mean by locked up, like what happened?

Larry: Okay, our plan was to lock down the campus. We got big boat chains, we put them on all the gates, we put locks on them, we locked him up. We put glue on the doors coming into the South Hall, North Hall, Main Hall, Main building... and understand it was only maybe about 70 others. So with that being said the majority, of course the majority were female because at that time the art and fashion school were the largest schools. So there were different groups of people that would deploy to different to different strategic spots on the campus particularly the gates. So as the gates we started out at the main, you know it started at that time the gate over by the Bursar's Office is open on Dekalb Avenue. So there was a group there, there was a group in the corner of the main gate, was a group that came around on Willoughby Avenue at the gate coming into North Hall, there's another gate by the security booth. Okay, what happened there was maybe three or four, five males and the rest of all females at every gate. When it was discovered that the campus had been put on lockdown and students couldn't get on campus as soon as it circled the whole campus on the streets and the police were called. Now when the police were called they were told that this is a private institution you cannot come on campus. But Mr. Masseria, Tony Masseria's father who was in charge of buildings and grounds, they had him come out and they had lock cutters and torches and stuff and he started at the back on DeKalb Avenue at that gate and he started to BSU followed them to the next gate. So he was from there to Hall Street and DeKalb round the corner back to Willoughby, Willoughby ends up right back

here by where the guard booth is now. That was the final gate, at that point in time there were masses of students on Willoughby Avenue hanging out the windows in the dormitory. It's like just all of it, but they were there in support of the black students. There was one group that wasn't. The buildings that's behind the guard booth right now that was the engineering building and they had an ROTC program there and the ROTC program was not very happy with what was happening. And to that all that to be said the ROTC, all the members of the ROTC groups came out and they were in the parking lot between the pie shop and the engineering building. So then you had the whole body of BSU students in front of his last gate and when they clipped the lock, the police who were there with their riot gear and everything but weren't allowed to come on campus and we were on the sidewalk. What they did was they started to push us back onto the campus, when they pushed us back onto the campus you had the ROTC behind us and that's when the pushing and the shoving and the fighting starts occurred between the ROTC numbers and the Black Student's Union, which were majority female so that was big issue there. I'll give you an example how cohesive the support from the rest of the campus was I had a roommate and in 215 Mark Zolinsky, I'll never forget this kid. About six foot four soccer player from Poland and at that time you know the Polish country in the government they were in turmoil so he was a revolutionary. And the police, when the fight started so now they could come on campus because there's disobedience going on and they gotta say, but they came on campus and they were only arresting and going after the black students. So Mark, all I remember is I got there was a couple police officers coming at me, I was trying to protect a couple of women, and cops come at me and one actually hit, I got hit here I got taken to the hospital and all I know I

looked up and Mark was pulling one of the police officers off of me. Last I saw he was in the dormitory so I don't know how he got across the street or how he got there he's pulling off of me. Now to make a long story short, I was not personally I went to the hospital and anybody that wasn't injured were arrested okay.

Heather: How many people with that I mean just roughly?

Larry: I'd say about 35, 40. Ryan Shipman contacted our legal adviser who happened to be Eleanor (???) very famous. Eleanor came down to the precinct and everybody that was arrested were released and allowed to come back on campus. Well in support of us of the black students after that, the faculty went out on strike. So the Institute was shut down. To give you a little more history the president Donovan at the time, had been the Chancellor or the president at the time, they don't have a chancellor then, it was the President of the Board of Education in New York City and was involved with Ocean Hill Brownsville and he was a real no-nonsense kind of kind of guy. He was famous for having been a negotiator to get American spies released from the Russians. He was a real no nonsense guy. He was gonna take the hard line on this, what he did. And I think he realized how much support the black students had from the rest of the student body. So the school was shut down literally for about two weeks, if I remember, two weeks or more. Finally the president Donovan agreed to have a sit-down with the black students in his office. Well he didn't realize it when he had to sit down the whole black student union was gonna show up in his office. So we came with a list of demands, things that we want which we presented to him.

Heather: Could you tell us what they were?

Larry: I can remember everything it was basically for the Institute to open its doors up to be more inclusive of the community that was in. To have more minority representation on a faculty. To have more recruitment of minorities and minority programs on campus to bring in more students. It also kind of called for his resignation but that was kind of negotiated and was taken out. Also we include the architecture school in that where we wanted, we supported we have a lot of support to the reorganization of the administration of the architecture school. That's basically, it was quite a bit to ask for. We also asked for more for the Institute to invest more in culturally diverse activities that would invite the community onto the campus because it's that time usually Pratt was an island unto itself you can you couldn't get on campus unless you were a student. Pretty much as now, but there was just a real, real effort not to engage juthest surrounding community at all.

Heather: Were the same gates up there that are here now?

Larry: No turnstiles, it was just just open gates that had security gates on all of them. Then the other thing, oh it's one other thing, Pratt was negotiating at the time to buy 185 and 195 Willoughby. Now 185 and 195 Willoughby were middle-income, historically black residences. They got, they had already got 215 which was fine but all the people who lived in 185 or 195 requested that, and we knew quite a bit because in there in

those buildings were quite a few black artists and musicians who had been very involved with the Black Student Union. And so they had requested that we not include that in our demands but that we would support them on that not happening becoming another party in this, because they didn't want it to be this place and we felt that with the richness of the people that were living there and the connections and the support we were getting from them that it was important that we support them on that effort. So that was also part of the demands. As it turns out the president's daughter they ended up folding because like I said the faculty were out too, it was totally shut down and agreed to almost all of our demands. I give an example of the following year, that was money given to the Black Students Union to have a 24, no a 48 hour jazz festival in Higgins Higgins, because the top floor of Higgins Hall was, there was a gymnasium and auditorium. So the auditorium was turned over to the Black Student Union and literally we did have a 48-hour Jazz Festival, which included, I couldn't even go down the names of people that were there from Alice Coltrane to Santana to Betty Carter, it was the all-star all-star lineup and continuous as well as what lesser-known groups but we got that because with all the activism was going on in New York City at the time it was a organization that was that was formed called the Collective Black Artist. And the collective black artist recruited students from Pratt and any other art school, or from Juilliard and some of the arts, it was a total arts organization. And so you could go to them and say okay we would like, we went to them and said we want to put on this 48-hour Jazz Festival what can you do and not to mention my roommate Aaron Bells, his father Aaron Bells senior was a bass player with the **Count Basie Orchestra** and was very well known and well renowned in the New York City jazz scene. As well as

my cousin is married to TS Monk, Thelonius Monk so we had a lot of connections and so that helped. But the collected black artists what they would do, as far as the arts were concerned whether you were in the visual arts or the Performing Arts is that they would take an established, like okay we went to them they said okay I'm gonna put this this concert on, this festival and they said okay how much money you have and we said okay we've got this amount of money \$10,000 I think it was. Okay for that amount of money we can give you this, this, this and this and what they did was they would take an established, they would take two or three establish musicians and then they would bring in lesser-known or student and they put a whole ticket together so you could have the headliner and you have other people so at the time we had two jazz groups that were here on campus that I played on one of them was called, one of them was called the forces of the universe. Which later became, I forgot what they were called, but anyway, so we have a jazz group on campus. So we ended up playing in the festival and which was kind of crazy because of some of the established groups who came in, if they were missing a piece they'd allowed, they would pull somebody from one of the younger groups for pull us up, come on you young blade you're gonna have to come and play with us today and push this forward. So I'd got to play with Yusef Lateef and Betty Carter, I think it was ,and (can't figure out name, 21:38)

Heather: What did you play?

Larry: Percussion, percussion. So the the opportunities that existed through the collective back artists, not only on the campus but there we started to go out with

Hofstra University, we'd go to Columbia, we'd go you know to jazz spots etc. And so it was I was about involvement, inclusiveness of Pratt being involved in the communities and really put the Pratt name out in terms of the local jazz scene, the local art scene because they would, they you know, Pratt artists would be able to exhibit at the Studio Museum with Romare Bearden and Jacob Lawrence etc. My roommate Fred Moore has some of his work, is you know at the time he also graduated fine arts program and masters also in fine arts here in painting, he's in Long Island. He has some of his work as part of the permanent collection now at the Studio Museum because of that connection that was made, that gave him the entry point into it now. Architecture was a little different because in the architecture school even after it was retooled, the industry in the 60s and the 70s for most architects of color when you went out into the field you were a draftsman, which was a kind of, it was very discouraging. And so, and there weren't that many established...

[Break in recording 23:25]

We would go out on internships for the architecture school and it would you were kind of limited so I ended up working with Rob Shipman, he was pulling a lot of minority students in to work with the Pratt area Community Council and we were, and we were focusing at that time on the Housing Survey of the Fort Green/Clinton Hill areas because they were very seedy at the time. This is way before you're just wondering before, back before where it is now. It was a lot of red lights, red lights areas where there was prostitution going on and drugs etcetera etcetera. So we had to go block to block and catalog the structures of the homes and the buildings that were in this whole area that took quite a bit of time and it was a team, of about... and because we were

people of color we kind of blend it in so we weren't, really like we were intrusive leading into the neighborhood. But back to the activism...

Heather: Yeah, but how about how big was that team when you went out to do that?

Larry: About 6 of us. But that just goes to show and that from, the from the activism in the in the 60s and what we asked for, for years and there was a Summer Youth Employment Program on campus, which became, the first one was called Anansi Awakening that was in 1969. Anansi is a spider, an African spider and this was the awakening of the spider, basically just saying that Pratt was awakening some community and people of African descent. And so that program was very well received by, it must have had about maybe about 350 400 400 students from the community that were involved. It employed Pratt students to be instructors and we had everything from the arts and dance they did bring because music, sports, college prep it was an all inclusive program which was taken over by what's called the Central Brooklyn Model Cities program. And the Central Brooklyn Model Cities program was basically the same thing on campus and Pratt programs here on campus probably became the model for all central brooklyn model cities programs because they ended up opening one at Hofstra University, one at Queens College, one at City College. The next step on that was then the Central Brooklyn Model Cities program expanded out to take their programs off the Pratt campus and we went to HBCUs. And so for this one summer we were at Clark College in Atlanta and so the whole working force of students, working with students, we all were transplanted at Clark College in Atlanta and we held the program there.

And which was a huge enlightenment for the students and no effort the practices because we had never been an HBCU setting, we've never been, you know a lot of them had never been in the south and so and it was totally paid for by the Model Cities program and then when we came back it came back to the Pratt campus for two weeks and we kind of had a sizing out or engagement on campus where we retooled everything that has happened over the summer. Including ending with a big humongous Sports Olympics between all the programs that were in New York City between the Hofstra and the Queens that so we had a big Olympic sports program where each program developed a banner for their program and they had teams that competed against it was just like the Olympics, we had a walk in and the whole thing so it was it was great.

Heather: So I just wanted to ask, were you still a student at Pratt then?

Larry: I was still a student Pratt then , I was a student at Pratt until 1974 because the architecture school I started so if 72 my first year I was in the engineering school by the way 70s... started in 68. One of my classmates actually was a couple years ahead of me - Horace Williams became the vice president here Pratt and Horace continued those programs with Pratt's own summer youth program that was funded by Pratt. And that eventually became the Benjamin Banneker high school on campus and evolved into the Benjamin Banneker high school that now exists you know, right down the road. But his summer youth program also provided at the same time, one of our demands that the Institute responded to was in terms of recruitment of minority students was a man was brought in by the name of Julius Randall and that's when they started the co-op

program. And the co-op program focused a lot on the minorities coming into the co-op program. As well as the Hyup program.

Heather: And I think, was the co-op program, they were in high school?

Larry: No, the co-op program was art students. If you were a minority and you were here at Pratt, he would get you a paid internship with IBM. That was probably the biggest thing because we had such a great engineering school. And so the engineering school, IBM partnered with Pratt and so anybody was in any school and wanted a paid internship we go to IBM as well as Kodak up in Buffalo they go up and there were plenty for the photography and art students. And so that would extend your time here at school because what would happen is you would work a semester, get paid and then you come back and you go to school for one or two semesters depending on how it was. It helped me when I was coaching because I that was a huge recruiting tool for me too because we were Division two and we had money but we didn't have a lot of money to pay to recruit student athletes, so I could recruit student athletes. Listen, I didn't tell you I came back in with the head basketball coach an one of the other design team for the LRC building after 1974-75. But anyway so that's another story down the road. But that helped me in terms of recruiting because then what would happen is I would recruit students into, and probably the biggest area was called data systems management which is outdated now. And they would come in and they would work the summer as their internship and then they would go to school fall and spring was around to play basketball. But meanwhile the paid internships paid very, very well which would

actually pay for their tuition you know, and we're also set up in a manner where their living expenses were also paid for while if they had to go outside of New York to go to the internship. So they would receive their pay for the internship at the end in lump sum. So here you know I'm working, I don't have to pay for food, I don't have to pay for lodging I'm going to work in the summer and I come back and I get a big lump sum payout which I could say use it pay tuition if I had to pay tuition or buy materials. As we all know going to Pratt if you're in the art, engineering or architecture schools, materials could kill you okay. Which was one of the main focus of the Hyup program, oh no but the way main focus is later on of the black students, I mean black alumni association. That was really motivated because we knew that we needed to get scholarship money you know it's provide scholarships for minority students to pay for, basically the first focus was on supplies and materials okay. The Hyup program paid for everything, food, lodging, materials, you name it. But because of this help educational opportunity program you had to qualify for that. You had to be at a certain economic status and was not just for minorities. Certain economic status had to be, you couldn't have scored seven hundred on your SATs you had to be somewhere in the middle you know someone that would need assistance because Hyup program also provides tutoring which is still of a little existence to this day. But it was a lot larger back then, it has shrunk down.

Heather: Do you remember how many students, roughly when you were?

Larry: I would say at that time there were at least fifty, at least fifty. Oh I'll give you an example of a product of the Hyup program is our current Parks Commissioner, Sheldon Silver. Yea he's a product of Pratt Hyup program, okay. Uh activism, let's go let's take a couple steps back over back. So at the same time on campus with the black Students Union we also found a huge alignment with the Black Panther Party at the time because they were opening up camp, they were opening up offices all over Brooklyn and all over Manhattan, Harlem. Coincidentally, and this is so much stuff going on here, Brooklyn there was a what they called a black cultural center that opened up in Brooklyn called the East and that worked, that was in association with musicians and music and artists and it's a ten Claver place and they allowed black students from Pratt and the BSU to come to and exhibit and to work with their artists as well. And so they ended up coming on campus in the summer to provide a lot of the art instructors outside of students that were participating in the summer programs. It's on the music side of it was a man named Reggie Workman, he was a bass player, opened up an organization here in Brooklyn that was not too far away we call the muse and that was about cultivating jazz and prolonging and making sure that it didn't get lost in the wash. And also to train and and to cultivate a new jazz, our jazz culture in Brooklyn as well as musicians, as well people just who appreciate it listening to jazz. They were very involved on the campus. To make a long story short, Horace Williams who also played basketball at Pratt was a junior college all-American and he came up vice-president here, he was the vice president for community-outreach for community relations. And so he was very instrumental in making sure, ensuring that Pratt was well connected with the surrounding community and what was going on. So Pratt basically was right in the

mix and in the focus of the changes politically, culturally that were going on here in New York City. Which is not far in effect with what's happening in the climate that's going on now in today's world with the one exception. In today's world the climate is pushing towards tribalism, everybody you know is only concerned about their own little niche. The push there was about inclusiveness, about coming together, about peace and love. Even with the Black Panther Party because our involvement with the Black Panther Party at Pratt nad BSU was with their breakfast programs. This is about feeding you know, disenfranchised people in the community, children, family make sure they had a breakfast before they went to school so that they could perform well in school. So that was a major thrust and we also had other students that were artists in their publications.

Heather: So where was the office where you did the breakfast program, where was it?

Larry: It was at one of their sites, which moved. Basically they ended up having that at 10 Claver Place.

Heather: Oh in the east.

Larry: Yea at the east so we ended up going over there.

Heather: And Pratt students, from the Black Students Union actually worked at the program?

Larry: In the program, yes. So we were, it was connection on with the community and the movements that were going on and the greater community in New York City, as well as what was going on campus. Now the climate, *coughs* excuse me, on campus during the strike was very tenuous because of the position that president Donovan took. There was FBI presence on the campus, there was a special unit from the New York City Police Department, they were called the red team or the red something that was always an observation, we see them up on the roofs of the buildings up at 2:15 with cameras taking photographs and you know keeping eyes and kind of keeping eyes and ears on us. As a result of that we bonded together in groups because, like I said it was a female dominated group, so we were in 215 Willoughby and I think, I don't know how many it was about seven or eight different rooms that were designated which were the larger apartment units where at that time we would have eight to ten people staying together. And at no time was, women were not allowed, and within the BSU, were not allowed to walk on campus all around without being at least, we'd have groups of three and have one meal with them. It was that much paranoia and with people were being followed and being observed and we didn't know where that was going to go. After the the settlement was made, which you know with the Institute, soon after that President Donovan passed away, he had a heart attack. They kinda, it was kind of blamed on the Black Student Union, not just the Black Student Union but all the activism was going on because, the black Students Union we weren't the only ones that would be activists on campus, there were other groups you know that were pretty active and pretty vocal on campus. That started, I think for the next two years in the spring there was some sort of shut down within the university of some sort of demonstration. I guess we found that it

worked, other organizations and we body and supported them and the faculty said well this is what we could do. We can bring about some change and change in the institute and it brought about quite a bit of change.

Heather: So what did, the faculty did that shut down?

Larry: Oh yea the faculty supported almost every strike that occurred.

Heather: And what was that, was that all the groups coming together, or how did it work?

Larry: After that yes, it was groups coming together.

Heather: After Donovan died?

Larry: Yeah.

Heather: And how did they... so they made different sets of demands?

Larry: Yes. You know it was common ground, what do we have in common that we want to see change you know in terms of the Institute. And so, and whose issues were more prevalent at that particular time. You know, probably the last one was the school of architecture. It was revisited by new deans, new hires, the format in terms of how

classes and stuff were conducted, teach and changed a little bit. It was more of focus on design as opposed to technical drafting. And so thinking outside the box, which is where we are today, you know. And having gone through that, I think that that put me in the position of always trying to think outside the box now having gone through that process because that was what was eventually embraced by the Institute. Divergent thinking, coming up with new ideas, not trying to propagate the status quo so a lot of changes, a lot of changes occurred at that time. We're talking about from 68 through 75 and the ARC building that shows you that's was a huge, the institute refused to put any kind of investment in sports. Although it had the oldest history in sports in New York City. In 1901 we were the world champions in basketball. Unbelievable, you would not believe. And we won the world championship, I believe it was a game against Harvard. Our soccer team was rated in the top five in the nation every year. And when they had a New York Cosmos, two consecutive captain's for the Cosmos soccer team were from Pratt. I could go on and on and on as far as the sports today there was a reluctance, they said well yeah we're in art school, we like you know. And in fact when I was playing here, what's now the students said it was the gym, and we called it the pill box because it wasn't of official size. And so when they closed the old guard in 1967 Pratt purchased the floor, and took the floor from the old guard and put it in the armory on Putnam Avenue here in Brooklyn. Pratt and LIU worked collaboratively together and so we would play our basketball games and practices at the armory, I'm putting the map in them. When they first did it, LIU would play the first game and we would play the second game and there would be thousands of people coming to these games all the time. But and so that meant that every day that we had practice, we had practice every

day or we had a game, the Institute would provide us with cars that would take us from the campus over to the armory for practice and bring us back.

Heather: So why did they restrict the resources to sports if they had this history I mean what was the explanation?

Larry: Well that there was no real explanation, it's just that there were, you know they didn't feel that that was an area of investment that would help the institute because they was really focusing basically on the academics and they couldn't understand how that would boost or help the whole institute - well that changed between 68 and 74. There was a, because of the always community involvement we have now that we had established in these connections, there was a track team in Brooklyn called the Adams Track Club. And the Adams track club, Fred Thompson was the coach. Fred Thompson was, was a very successful lawyer, civil rights lawyer, who stopped, he didn't give up his practice, he didn't stop practicing law either but he focused on the Adams Track Club. Now this is another history you might not know about the Adams Track Club, almost every member of that track club ended up representing the United States in the Olympics. Three of them were gold medal winners, and so here you have this outstanding Track Club and they were practicing running in the streets. So Fred came to Horace Williams, who had just become the president, says listen. And Tony Masseri, who was not part of the Black Students Union but was another athlete who had just come in as the new head basketball coach and myself and his assistant, we all came together and we advocated and pushed forward for the Institute to invest in the new

athletic facility. The compromise was, okay we'll put the money aside, we'll build this building, we'll do it but you wanted to have a pool and we're not gonna have a pool in it. We're going to have photographic studios, film photography was in the lower level. We said that's fine, we'll take the upper level, so that's how the ARC building was built. Now that's why it has this 300 meter indoor track because it became the home of the Adam's Track Club. With that also came the Colgate women's games which is the largest women's track meet in the world. 10,000 women come to the Colgate women's track, Colgate women's games and brought Colgate in also as a company, as a sponsor to provide money to help build the building. So the institute said wait a minute, okay if you could guarantee that we're gonna get where this building is gonna be self-sustaining, after we get it up it's not going to cost us any money and we've got these all these sponsors and all this notoriety is coming with, we said fine, we're going to go for it. So that building, but it's all based out of going back to the 60s at the changing focus of the Institute to really incorporate and become involved in the surrounding community and the resources that were available to it here in Brooklyn.

(Not sure who?): I'm wondering, so I was just thinking there was so much change happening as you're talking about this time. I feel like what I know of the history of Pratt is not a lot, is that that kind of era ended after a while and I know when **shootie** came in in '91 the school had changed, do you know anything about what happened after?

Jerry: Well, Jerry Pratt came in. Pratt family, right after Donovan, okay. Okay so he was, he was here. And you know he's a good guy you know, he tried to do, but again

he was part of the Pratt family and he wasn't, he was... at that time Pratt Institute was a tax write-off for the Pratt family. If you know anything about the history of the Pratt family owned Standard Oil. Big mansions in Glen Cove, Sea Cliff Long Island, right next to JP Morgan's, the whole nine out there. So, and this why, that's why Pratt to this day is a non-profit or not-for-profit. Because they use it as a tax write-off. So each time there was a deficit anything happened, over the money okay the fix it, it's done. So with that being said there was not a lot of interest in how the Institute looked outside of professionally, how it looked in terms of the community, outreach, branding and all you know. That when **shooty** came in it started to change a little bit, a little bit. He was somewhat supportive, well he was supportive because he, at the time we had they pushed it opened up the **puck** building as a off campus new plan, the **puck building** then they moved over to 14th Street and he was pretty instrumental in that and that type of outreach. And so then the other, the other part of it is that the engineering school left that was the biggest one. Because engineering school was the biggest minority recruiting vehicle that we have here. The architecture school, not so much, engineering school, they were very big minorities, very big. A lot of it had to do because of the co-op program, because it was attractive people to come in cause tech was just coming and starting up. Just to let you know, basic language was just what you would, you use on your phones now was developed here Pratt. Because before that was **Fortran**, which was those big giant things that you have on Wall Street and then the basic came in and allowed cell phones and smaller computers to actually have a language that could be translated into something that was more user-friendly

Heather: And that was in the engineering school.

Larry: That was an engineering school. But when the engineering school left that was kind of a down...

Heather: Do you know why they closed it down?

Larry: Interesting, I think the amount of corporate connections that they have in engineering school started to fade away. Actually, in actuality everything a lot of that was leaving New York and going to California, you know. And as you see uh, I'm really not quite sure why it was phased out but when as soon as it phase out everybody from the engineering school from Pratt, because we have, in fact, the oldest as it's at that time, and up until they no longer exist, it was the oldest basketball rivalry in the United States between and Poly Tech. Which dated back to the eighteen something 1899 something like that. And so all the engineers that were at Pratt then, with the Poly Tech, and as you see Poly Tech ended up merging with NYU and now they are no longer either, you know. So I think it was just hard for independent schools like Pratt and specifically in those high-cost areas of engineering just to stay and compete with the state operated, almost all more substantially, because we were you know we were considered a private, or basically on the same level as an Ivy League school, as far as everything, Professional Studies, cause we had that time we had no liberal arts everything, professional studies. So we were like, we would sit on the same level as a Harvard, Yale, and MIT. And then I think it was in the mid-seventies when they started

to look at even liberal arts as even a possibility on campus, and so the changes are going on and basically I think that was the biggest, that was the biggest change that occurred.

Heather: When we were in the archives, it looked like there was trouble even beginning in the 70s in the engineering. There seemed to have been protests or something to do with, or threats that it would close or something in the 70s.

Larry: There were threats that, that it was not, that Pratt thought it was gonna, it wasn't financially you know stable enough for them to continue with it. Then I think what continued that allowed it was it was a co-op program. Co-op programs brought in a lot of partnerships and we were basically a feeder system to the industry and when the co-op programs faded away and the engineering school faded away, then they're, that kind of made some major changes. So now is it the Institute has to reorganize, say okay now what are we going to invest in? And the biggest investment I think went to the architecture school, the school of architecture. And of course the art school is gonna continue on, the fashion school and one time I think the fashion school was larger than what it is now, fashion was huge here. Huge, huge, I could remember as far as minorities, uh Beverly Johnson was, taking classes here. I mean top models, Peggy Dillard, you know who Peggy Dillard is? Well she was like the second model to be on the cover of Vogue magazine, she was a student here at Pratt, in the fashion merchandising department. I could go down, the fashion school was huge. It still is very very influential. Uh, in arts, in the art school, as far as that's concerned, that has never

wavered, never. And the connections that haven't been put in place, I'm going to give you an example. My roommate Aaron Bell, he became art director for a Uni World, which was at one time was the largest black advertising agency in the world. Levon Leak, that's another one. She was the art director for 25 years for Essence magazine. She was part of the BSU, another BSU member. I guess, Sondra **Estebest (55:45)** she was a painter and she became a poet and she's considered one of the founders of the

Heather: Was she one of your...?

Larry: No she was ill, she still lives in the New York and she's still painting and she's still doing poetry and she's considered one of the top 25 minority poets in the world historically going back. Go down the list, there's people all over the place. John Jones, he moved to St. Croix and is one of the top artists. Glen Tunsil did not attend Pratt but was going to, was going to not Cooper Union, what's the other one?

Heather: SVA? Parsons?

Larry: Parsons, was going to Parson and Pratt had an agreement where we were housing Parsons students here on campus. And so he became part of a few here, although he was at Parson, he's now chair and professor at Parsons, both here and in Paris. And as well as he's some very prolific artist, fact he's a featured artist up the vineyard every August. So Glenn, he was just on the television Saturday, I just saw it.

They just did a television show about him on Saturday, Saturday morning. Oh I can just keep naming names and names.

Heather: How are we doing with time? Just want to check in.

Other: We are at 10:32, an hour in. Um, I think if anything at the time how did, let's talk about the gates a little more. Did the students want them down, torn down? No, keep them up?

Larry: No, keep them up but they want them open. No guards, and that's what happened. They opened up the gates, the community came, and you know the community could freely flow and they didn't close up at night either. So come on campus and walk around and do the same, the other. And then there was an agreement that was made with the, what was it the 88th precinct?

Heather: I can't remember.

Larry: 88th precinct on Classon Avenue? And they provided extra coverage from the police department since the campus was open. So they would have cars coming around to ensure safety and see what was going on campus. And the thing though, was this. Because of the summer programs and the community was used to being on campus, it became a part of the surrounding community and the community embraced Pratt and protected it.

Heather: When did the summer programs stop?

Larry: I'm not really sure, because when I left in '81, because I was here as a student then as a faculty member and head basketball coach and I ran in the ARC building until '81. Uh, there was a summer program. After that, sometime in the mid-eighties.

Heather: Do you have more? Any other?

(other person): How do you feel your program prepared you for your future careers?

Larry: Well that's, I'm a renaissance person.

Other: I'm a jack of all trades.

Larry: Jack of all trades. I was drafted by the Chicago Bulls, played professional basketball. Didn't make the team, so I went to Chicago in '74 and came right back. Okay? And that's when I came on campus and started advocating for the ARC building and became the assistant basketball coach with Tony. While I was doing that, I was working with the Pratt area community council. I was working with **LoJolla Belle and Harry Simmons**, in the architecture field. And it was very discouraging in terms of what I was, my strong point was always design. My strong point was taking people's needs and interpreting them into a space or an environment. I did not want to be a draftsman,

and that's what, the type of role I was constantly put in. So then I said, ok... I have a cousin who also went to the Pratt graduate school in architecture in Long Island who is a practicing architect. So I said this is what I'm going to do. And he doesn't like to do a lot, he does major projects and his strong point was not dealing with people in terms of individualizing space, so I worked with him quite a bit on his projects, he was projector manager, he dealt with the major stuff I dealt with the interior and the small, public spaces inside. So I did that for a while, but when I was hired as basketball coach at Pratt, you I don't think they still have it. At that time, the rule was you couldn't have any extracurricular activities until after 4 o'clock. So, I would be at my office at the ARC building and basically in the morning I would do my recruiting calls, I would have my drafting table and do my work. A buddy of mine, who I was playing professional basketball with said listen, why don't you come over to the school I'm at here and sub in the mornings, you can make whatever you want to. Just being a hustler, I said yes that sounds great. I went over and I started subbing, well I fell in love with it. To make the long story short, my whole family are educators and I was going against the grain anyway. So I got there, was subbing. Well the lady I was subbing for turns out she was in her fifties and she was pregnant. So they asked me to be a long term sub. She never came back, I went back to school. I got a bachelors in education and a masters in education and supervision administration. So currently I am a school supervisor in Williamsburg.

Heather: What school?

Larry: It's called, **Westgroves Ninos**. My specialty was, I found, was in early childhood. So, 40, 38 years I created a school called **Stagg Street** in the Williamsburg section. That was the only preschool of design, of art and design in Brooklyn. We were recognized by, and we did it in partnership with MoMA. The studio, and we were the only preschool program that had studio artists with the studio in the school program, so we were the only non-public school that has the studio in the school project going on. And also **Cool Culture**, I'm on the executive board for Cool Cultures, do you know what Cool Culture is? Ok, Cool Culture was created to give access to families of color, to cultural institutions in New York City. Each family receives a Cool Culture pass, five people have free admission to any cultural institution in New York City, but it comes also with what we have called Cool Culture ambassadors, who work with the families to get them to leave... you know, you're a minority family and it can be, to go to The MoMA or The Met it can be intimidating for anybody, the first time you. So here you have parents who have a high school diploma, you've got kids ok let's, how can we get them to take their kids to go to The Met? So get them supports, ok take your child, and go on a scavenger hunt. Let's go to The Museum of Natural History and let's find a tyrannosaurus rex. They get them in the door, once they walk in the door you would not believe the changes that occurred to these families because now they've stepped outside their comfort zone. And the parents end up going back to school, they use the pass they go every week, the children are being culturally enriched. And then, my school, all the teachers were all taught and instructed with professional development on how to observe art and then interpret that in terms of whatever you feel it is and use that as a tool for teaching. So if I, say I take you and you were going to look at a piece of art

and you're a four year old child. You come back, you don't say, you don't ask them questions about what did you see, you say what can you tell me about this? They may go wherever they go, but wherever they go with it you're going to write down the stuff, we're going to talk about it, we're going to make a dialogue about it, let's write a book about it, let's do this, let's do that. And so, so instruction becomes based on the children and what their, what their interests are. And once you do that, if somebody thinks that my ideas are important by any means necessary, give me tools to express my ideas. So now they want to write, they want to read, they want to talk, they want to speak, they want to be able to do whatever they can do to express their ideas. So that's what, that's one of the great things about design and art. So the school is based on that. And so, that school existed until I retired in 2012. After that, it's kind of going down. It's still there but it's no longer a school of the arts.

Heather: Could you spell the name of it?

Larry: Stagg Street, Stagg Street Center for Child is what it was called.

Heather: Any other questions before we? No? I think we should...

Larry: You can keep me here all day.

Heather: We might ask you to come back.

Larry: I got different areas I can talk about.

Heather: Ok, well thank you so much

Larry: Thank you so much.