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Kenneth V. Thimann: Early UCSC History and the Founding of Crown College

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Authors

Thimann, Kenneth V.
Jarrell, Randall
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Introduction

I conducted three interviews with the late Kenneth V. Thimann in October and November, 1986, as part of the Regional History Project's University History series. This volume, *Kenneth V. Thimann: Early UCSC History and the Founding of Crown College*, is published posthumously. Thimann died at his home in Haverford, Pennsylvania, on January 15, 1997.

Thimann was born in Ashford, England, August 5, 1904. He attended Imperial College, University of London, where he received a B.S. in 1924, and a Ph.D. in biochemistry in 1928. He was an instructor in bacteriology there from 1927 to 1929. From 1930 to 1935 he was an instructor in biochemistry at the California Institute of Technology. He joined the faculty at Harvard in 1935 as a lecturer in plant physiology and spent the war years as a technical consultant for the U.S. Navy during 1942-45. He returned to Harvard in 1946 and retired as Higgins Professor of Biology in 1965 after thirty years on the faculty.

He was the author or co-author of several books and more than three hundred papers in scientific journals on a variety of subjects, including the physiology of bacteria, protozoa and fungi; the functions of hormones in plant growth; and the isolation and deciphering of the chemical structure of auxins, the hormone regulating plant growth, a discovery of enormous importance. Three of his books are considered classics in his field. Plant biologist Peter H. Raven characterized Thimann's book, *Hormone Action in the Whole Life of Plants* (1977) as "an outstanding review of the ways in which hormones initiate and control the

growth and development of plants; written by a scholar who has participated in many of the fundamental discoveries in his field.”¹

Thimann came to UCSC in 1965 as the founding provost of Crown College and was the first faculty member at UCSC who was a member of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences (and chairman of its botany section). He was also a member of a dozen other national and international organizations, including the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Society of Plant Physiologists, the American Society of Biological Chemists, and a member of the President’s Committee on the National Medal of Science. He was the recipient in 1982 of the Balzan Prize. The prize committee wrote of Thimann: “The impact of his discoveries on agriculture and horticulture cannot be underestimated . . . He is also an inspiring leader of more than a generation of botanists and is regarded as the doyen of a line of research that has revolutionized plant physiology.”

He was nearly 60 and an internationally renowned plant physiologist when he accepted an appointment at the University of California’s new Santa Cruz campus. This was viewed by many of his colleagues as a puzzling career move: why would Thimann leave an endowed chair at Harvard for a new and unproven California campus? As it turned out, founding Chancellor Dean E. McHenry, tireless in his search for faculty for his new campus, and possessing an extensive national network of academic acquaintances, had been seeking a preeminent scientist who valued undergraduate teaching. According to one story, he learned of Kenneth Thimann through a colleague who warned him, “I know just the person you’re looking for, but he’s at Harvard and you’ll never get him.” Thimann had a special affinity with undergraduates as master of East House at Radcliffe, Harvard’s women’s college, where he had worked to create a close-knit college life among faculty and students. McHenry made an inspired and imaginative appointment when he invited Thimann to come to Santa Cruz to head what would become Crown College and to build the campus’s science faculty.

¹Peter H. Raven et al, *Biology of Plants* (New York: Worth Publishing, 1986) fourth edition, p. 513.—Editor.

He was the most significant of three notable appointments of English academics McHenry made at UCSC in its early years. Thimann, F.M. Glenn Willson and Jasper Rose, provosts respectively of Crown, Stevenson, and Cowell Colleges, made major contributions to the collegiate system envisioned by UC President Clark Kerr and McHenry. Thimann's undergraduate and graduate experience at the University of London, Willson's at Oxford's Balliol and Nuffield Colleges, and Rose's at King's College, Oxford, gave them models from which they drew in shaping UCSC's first colleges. In the early years when the collegiate system was the center of campus life, these provosts encouraged close faculty-student interaction, promoted college events, imaginative interdisciplinary courses, special meals and rituals, and amenities which gave the colleges distinctive personalities under their leadership.

Thimann begins this volume by describing his initial visit to Santa Cruz, where he met with McHenry and learned about the plans for the innovative campus, with its emphasis on undergraduate education centered in small residential colleges. He accepted an appointment as professor of biological sciences and agreed to head up the campus's third residential college. He noted that "everybody was scandalized" when he retired, "because no one leaves Harvard," and explained his move to UCSC as a natural change since he was ready to "try another activity," to start something new, and felt the "need for a change." He maintained a full schedule not only as founding provost and teacher, but continued his research unabated, and participated in numerous campus committees and national and international academic organizations.

A number of Thimann's colleagues with whom I spoke prior to interviewing him commented on the importance of his presence at Santa Cruz and the lustre he brought to the fledgling campus. One commented that Thimann "put UCSC on the map," that he "gave this place a certain cachet." One colleague said that his illustrious reputation and intellectual distinction made him "the Rafer Johnson of biology," enabling him to attract to Santa Cruz top-notch scientists, his own "stellar buddies," who would not have come here were it not for his presence. Certainly the early and distinguished development of the natural science faculty at UCSC was due to him. The scientists he recruited created what has become in only three decades one of the country's most distinguished group of science

departments at a public university. Thimann's singular contributions to UCSC were honored in 1972 when the University renamed the former Natural Sciences I building, Thimann Laboratories.

Thimann's personal style and temperament, civilized tastes and patrician demeanor gave a unique ambiance to Crown College. In what was quite a "rude age," as one of his colleagues expressed it, Crown College, with its red-tiled roofs and Mediterranean-inspired architecture, was "an Italian hill town with its own duke." This characterization was an expression of admiration, and not at all deprecatory. During an era when some young faculty were indistinguishable from their students, participating alongside them in political demonstrations and affecting the same disheveled dress and long hair, Thimann was in a suit and tie, above the fray. During a demonstration in 1968 at Crown College when the UC Regents were meeting there, Thimann noticed the students trampling the flowers and quickly made and hung a sign: "Do not step on or hurt the flowers." Another anecdote I heard involved a young woman student, found naked in the college office. Thimann's sense of propriety and delicacy came to the fore, and he matter-of-factly covered her with a coat. He seems to have been unflappable in the face of rowdy student demonstrators, bad manners, and intemperate behavior which often erupted during the period.

Thimann's narration focuses on three major areas—building and developing Crown College; recruiting science faculty and creating graduate programs in the sciences; and his views on UCSC, including the college versus boards of studies controversy, narrative evaluations, and McHenry's chancellorship. The chapters on Crown include his influence on its architecture, developing interdisciplinary college courses, establishing college social life, and faculty recruiting. He describes how the Crown Zellerbach Corporation offered to support a science-oriented college. He also discusses how he came to found the Crown Chamber Players, not as many may think, for providing fine chamber music for the Santa Cruz community—although the group developed a devoted local following—but because Thimann believed that students at Crown deserved fine role models. As he said: "I figured we've got to have the very highest quality of professional musicians to set the standards and then everybody else can follow." He wanted the highest standards exemplified in all fields and activities and believed that students would be inspired by being exposed to the best practitioners of science,

the humanities, and the arts as a part of their daily lives. He was quite critical of Provost Page Smith's "culture break," held in the midterm at Cowell College, about which he said, " [it was] as though we were not cultured or the rest of the university work was not culture." Thimann's very civilized and implicit attitude seems to have been that all aspects of daily life in the college and in classrooms—convivial meals, lab discussions around the ritual of afternoon tea, concerts, informal conversation, and discussion groups contributed to students' learning.

In recruiting science faculty Thimann revealed that when he first came to Santa Cruz he had a conflict with Chancellor McHenry about the basic conditions under which scientists worked. McHenry apparently envisaged that scientists at UCSC would teach and advise students as they did at undergraduate schools like Swarthmore or Reed, and do their research during the summer months. Thimann told him that first-class scientists wouldn't come to UCSC under those conditions; that they required graduate programs, graduate students, and year-round research. Thus, graduate programs in biology, biochemistry, chemistry, and other sciences were initiated much earlier on because of his influence. Thimann gave McHenry's chancellorship high praise, but in this one area he said McHenry didn't understand that scientists' needs were altogether different from those of humanities and social science faculty. The chapters on building a science faculty also include his key faculty appointments, his approach to interviewing candidates, and his thoughts on faculty-graduate student relationships in the sciences.

Thimann describes several student demonstrations during the late '60s and early '70s, including one during the Vietnam War when students accused him of being responsible for creating Agent Orange, a defoliant sprayed on Vietnamese jungles from 1965 to 1970. Thimann's research had contributed to the development of synthetic compounds capable of regulating and suppressing plant growth, but not specifically to the production of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T (Agent Orange). He was clearly surprised by this attack and puzzled by student politics during this era.

Other subjects included in Thimann's narration include his efforts to create UCSC's Arboretum, which now has an international reputation for its collection of plants from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. He was chairman of the

Arboretum Committee for fifteen years and helped to found the support group, Arboretum Associates, in 1977. He also talks about the decline of the college system, his views on the narrative evaluation system, his role in creating the Chicano Pre-Med Summer Program, and his thoughts on the selection of UCSC's second chancellor.

The tape-recordings were transcribed verbatim, edited for continuity and clarity and returned to Thimann for his editing. He made no changes in the manuscript, but requested that I not release the volume until his death. Copies of this manuscript are on deposit in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; and in Special Collections, McHenry Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.

This manuscript is part of a collection of interviews documenting UCSC history conducted by the Regional History Project. The Project is supported administratively by Alan Ritch, head of Collection Planning and University Librarian Allan J. Dyson.

Randall Jarrell

Regional History Project
University of California
Santa Cruz, California
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Table of Contents

Introduction	vii
Arrival at UC Santa Cruz	1
Recruiting Science Faculty	4
Crown College Courses	5
College Themes	6
College Courses	7
Architecture of Crown College	9
Faculty Recruitment	11
Reasons for Coming to UCSC	20
Graduate Students in the Sciences	21
Building the Science Faculty	24
Relationship with Chancellor McHenry	34
Selecting UCSC's Second Chancellor	38
UCSC's College System	40
Agent Orange Controversy	47
Boards of Studies	50
UC Regents Meeting at UC Santa Cruz	53
Culture Breaks	55
Narrative Evaluations	55
Chicano Pre-Med Summer Program	56
Decline of the Colleges	59
Crown Chamber Players	63
Index	68

Arrival at UC Santa Cruz

Jarrell: Dr. Thimann, to start, when were you first approached by Chancellor McHenry with an invitation or an offer to come to UCSC?

Thimann: Well, it wasn't quite an offer. One day in my lab at Harvard . . . I should think it was probably early 1964 . . . I had been running a new project at Radcliffe . . . the women's college of Harvard. They had organized the dorms into three units, called not very originally, North House, South House, and East House, and they had persuaded me to take over East House. It was a job of bringing an unorganized group of dorms and restaurants into a unit, and having something like a college life. I organized visiting speakers, and had an office in what became the East House, and saw students. I've always thought that it was very important for students and faculty to have close relations. So I tried to work this up.

Well, somehow, Dean [McHenry] or Page Smith heard of this and so they came to see me. They had been looking for scientists to help start their programs at UCSC. They saw me as a scientist who was interested in undergraduates. So they came and told me about Santa Cruz and their ideas of the collegiate structure. I was very interested. I had been at Harvard for almost thirty years. It seemed to

me that it would be interesting to try another activity. So I listened with considerable interest and later on we were in correspondence. Finally I said I'd at least come and look at the place. So Dean arranged for me to visit. He drove me down to the campus, which was under construction with big holes in the ground—an enormous hole for the library and the beginnings of this building—Natural Sciences I—and I must say I liked it. We drove around and I stayed with Dean in his house that was then on Pasatiempo Drive—I guess that was a temporary place for him. All in all I got a very favorable impression, so finally I said I would consider it. Then we had correspondence with Clark Kerr who was president of the University and he finally offered me a job. So I took what they called early retirement at Harvard—anytime after age 60 you're free to retire and you're on the pension list. I was 60, going on 61. So then I did retire from Harvard and everybody was scandalized because no one leaves Harvard, they all say. Well, nobody leaves Harvard surely. [Harvard] has a very favorable atmosphere . . . you get splendid students—some of the brightest young people in the country. And teaching is quite moderate—it's not too demanding. You're well supported in every way—the university helps out. You don't have to get every penny from the National Science Foundation as we do here [at UCSC]. So there were good reasons for staying at Harvard. But I felt the need for a change.

Anyhow I visited several times during the winter and spring 1964-1965. I met Page Smith who had an office in the house down by the entry. We seemed to get along all right. Finally I came with my wife in the summer of '65 and we looked for houses with not much success. We finally got a house and we understood we wouldn't have to have it for long because there'd be a provost's house on the campus. However, we bought the house because we liked it. Later on we moved on to the campus, and rented the house for two or three years.

Well then I had the interesting job of being dean of the [Division of] Natural Sciences and had to think about making appointments in various fields. This is very time-consuming of course. Before leaving Harvard I knew that that's what it would be so I had made some contacts with people at MIT, Harvard, and Brown University. In fact I got one of the science appointments for a man who was then at Brown.

Jarrell: Who was that?

Thimann: Joe [Joseph F.] Bunnett.

Jarrell: If we could backtrack here just for a moment. I'm curious to know when you talked to your colleagues in different campuses and institutions back East whether they were they surprised that you were, so to speak, starting from scratch in terms of your new affiliation?

Thimann: Yes. I think they were. But at the same time the people I got in touch with were for one reason or another people I thought would be interested. So they were more or less interested. And Ron[ald] Ruby at MIT had heard about Santa Cruz. Page Smith, who was not a scientist, had made some appointments in the sciences. For Cowell College I made one or two more. I got Charles Daniel, for instance, whom I thought very well of. And Page had made at least one appointment, I think two, that I didn't think anything of. They subsequently left.

Well, I must say Dean McHenry was very supportive. One of the times when I was visiting before coming in September of '65, I was there when he got a call from the Crown Zellerbach Foundation saying they had heard about [UCSC] and they would like to endow a science-oriented college. So that fitted exactly and that was very convenient and nice. So we agreed we would accept the offer and he asked me what it should be called. I said I thought it should be called Crown College So it was decided. I had a lot of fun making a little letterhead with a crown on it. Because we had to be very careful about that. The printer suggested a crown and it was nothing but a coronet, a miserable thing. On the other hand, we couldn't very well use the royal crown of Great Britain. But I got a picture of the royal crown of Denmark and we used that making some slight changes. For many years we had that letterhead; I don't know if they still have it.

Recruiting Science Faculty

Jarrell: So right from the start there seem to have been two major themes—one of them was the recruitment of the science faculty, the other, building Crown College.

Thimann: Yes.

Jarrell: And assisting humanists to make good appointments in the sciences?

Thimann: Yes. That's right.

Jarrell: You had international and certainly national connections in the sciences.

Thimann: Yes. I knew a lot of people in the sciences of course. I had to appoint scientists for Crown to come on deck two years hence in 1967 and scientists for Cowell and Stevenson Colleges. Most of the Cowell appointments were made already. But those were to start as soon as possible.

Jarrell: At the same time you were contributing in a major way to thinking about the kind of place Crown was going to be.

Thimann: That's right. We had endless discussions about how the college would be run and what its interests would be. Educational policy and all that sort of thing.

Jarrell: Who were the important people with whom you had these discussions?

Thimann: Well, there was a very nice fellow who subsequently left who was sort of McHenry's right-hand man.

Jarrell: Byron Stookey?

Thimann: Byron Stookey, yes. He was very interested in education of all sorts and rather a lively chap. With him and of course with Dean and then there were scientists who were already on the ground—[Stanley] Williamson was already appointed. He and I talked a lot about supporting staff. He had this idea of bringing one or two people from Berkeley—the glass blower and the machinist. We did that. That was a very good start in that area. Of course the Lick Observatory people were already here. They had their own machinists.

One of the things that Dean told me on one of my visits was that he had finally had a telegram . . . I guess from the [UC] president's office . . . saying that Lick [Observatory] would be officially transferred to Santa Cruz. He was very excited about that. Of course it was a great thing. We're much nearer than [UC] Berkeley. Then when I did come on board, our discussions continued because I was now engaged in seeing how the college teaching would work out. So I had to get a senior preceptor and some idea of what we would teach in the college and what we would leave to the boards of studies.

Really this was already a problem they had in Cowell and Stevenson, but it was more important for us because we had to deal with the scientists anchored to [their labs] whereas humanities people can just lecture and read and write almost anywhere. [They can do their] work in the college. It was a little more complicated with science. We came out I think fairly well. A number of the people I got at that time are still here and doing very well.

Crown College Courses

Jarrell: Did you create a core course at Crown College?

Thimann: Yes, we did, but we rather cheated on that. Because the core course was to be the history of western civilization—the standard subject. We didn't have anybody who was quite the person for that. But [George] Hitchcock, who

was at Cowell was discontented there. So we grabbed him and had him teach the core course. He did it very well.

We had to get a senior preceptor. I'm trying to remember how I got him . . . He was a psychologist who was interested in youth, Max Levin. Anyhow Levin was with me for many years as senior preceptor and he was very good with students. We gave a course together. But you see we had not only the core course to think about, but interdisciplinary courses at upper levels, especially for seniors. So we had a lot of those which were, I think, very interesting courses. That's one of the reasons why I think the present chancellor didn't like the colleges; he felt that a lot of these courses were half-baked. Some of them were, but not the ones in Crown. We worked on them. I taught in two or three. But they were curious mixtures. We had one class on problems of western civilization in which I had Max Levin, the senior preceptor and an economist, Sven Arndt . . . and we focused on the economic, biological, and psychological aspects of the problems of western civilization. I learned a lot and I hope the students did. We gave different courses each year but there were two or three like that. I remember that when Merrill was built for some reason we gave the first . . . perhaps it was a joint Crown/Merrill course . . . I'm not sure. We gave it over in their new buildings anyway one year.

College Themes

Jarrell: Well, in establishing Crown College, one of the people I talked to said that they thought after Crown had been established, that the whole college theme idea became kind of contrived. What do you think?

Thimann: Well, actually I don't like to say it but there is something in that because you see we had taken to ourselves the three great sections of learning in the first three colleges—humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. So then when the fourth college was founded—Merrill College—they focused on the Third World. Well, it's not quite of a piece with the other three.

It's not exactly contrived; it's a big area of study and research and thought and so on . . . but it's a quite different subsection of thinking. I had thought that the other colleges would follow the same major subdivisions as the first three. They haven't actually. The idea of Oakes College as an ethnic studies center—that was a very unfortunate mistake because . . . you know ethnic studies has a few interesting things, but basically you can't separate these from the main lines of intellectual life. Perhaps it's even undesirable to do so. Minority kids are very sensitive of course about that. All the time I was in Crown they were always pushing for a Chicano dorm; they wanted one of the dorms to be given over to Chicanos. I resisted this because it just becomes a ghetto—it's just what you don't want, you see. You have to mix them all in.

Jarrell: So you would have a kind of a segregation under a new name?

Thimann: That's right. Exactly. Just the worst sort of thing, you see. But it's very difficult to persuade people of this. That's what Oakes really became. A lot of people were very good and moved over to Oakes because they believed in the ideas, but basically it's wrong, it's quite wrong. So I was very sorry about that.

College Courses

Jarrell: It seems that one of the main things that intrigued you about this opportunity to come to UC Santa Cruz was the undergraduate emphasis? I'd heard about your Radcliffe experience. So that influenced you . . .

Thimann: That influenced me very strongly. In fact it was one of the major reasons. That, and the idea that it would be fun to start anew—a new university and so on.

Jarrell: Had you thought through specific ideas about the kind of emphasis that you wanted to give, the kind of important experiences that you thought undergraduates should have . . . that you saw were not available in other places?

Thimann: Yes. I had a bit. For instance at Harvard before the war—they don't do it now anymore because the war was a big change—before the war we had a tutoring system rather like that at Oxford and Cambridge in which you saw students one at a time; you prescribed reading; you discussed the reading with them afterwards . . . sometimes you got them to write essays on their reading. It was a real exchange of thoughts between a senior man and a junior. And I thought this was very good.

Incidentally it was very good for me because since I got into biology from chemistry I didn't know a lot of the great works in biology and so I had to read them and I learned a lot by doing it. So I saw that this thing is really valuable. And young people somehow they're very often floating in a sea of exams and courses and things and it's very difficult for them to focus . . . boys especially, more than girls. And so I found that this was really a wonderful thing and I thought well since McHenry's going to have colleges . . . and he of course got the idea from Clark Kerr who went to Swarthmore, and Swarthmore does just the same sort of thing, I could see that this was a very good way to start a new university. That's one of the things I've been disappointed about in recent years . . . how the colleges have fallen on hard times. They are no longer colleges in that sense in that they're not very important intellectual centers. It's a dorm with a dining hall really. A little bit more, but not much more. And the new provost of Crown, Peggy Musgrave—she's really working on it; she's bringing back the collegiate structure. I think this could be very exciting.

Jarrell: So that the academic side of the colleges isn't so neglected, is that what you mean?

Thimann: Right. That there are activities within the college which are of an intellectual kind even though they're not officially courses. For instance she's having college debates now, inviting speakers and students who can take sides and make speeches off the cuff. Well, that's the kind of thing that you can do in a college. She's doing that well. I think ultimately we will get back the interdisciplinary courses, too. But it will take a few years yet.

Architecture of Crown College

Jarrell: John Dizikes said that when he visited you in 1964 he believed, if he was accurate, that you had the architectural plans of Crown College when you were still in Cambridge?.

Thimann: Oh that's right. I think it was in early '65. We had the original plans . . . oh, and in '65 and '66 we spent a lot of time arguing with the architects. They were in Palo Alto. They had some funny ideas which I needn't bother you with. But one of them I thought was the silliest. The dining hall was to be L-shaped you see. Well, anybody who knows anything about colleges knows that in the dining hall is where you have your major sessions—speakers, shows, whatever—an L-shaped building is entirely wrong. You've got to have a hall. But they couldn't see that. (Laughter) They're funny. Architects are so sold on their own ideas; they don't think about how a building will be used. They only think about what the building will look like, you know. I went up with McHenry to their office time after time in Palo Alto.

Jarrell: Did you offer ideas on the style?

Thimann: Oh absolutely. Finally I had to say, "I can't accept this. We simply can't take it." That sort of set them back. Then they really had to revise it. Oh, and also it's a funny thing . . . they had those huge windows . . . you know where the Crown dining hall is with big windows?

Jarrell: Yes.

Thimann: They had those windows facing southwest, you see, so that the afternoon sun would stream in . . . and when the kids would come in for dinner, it would be impossibly hot. They should have thought of that. So we had to get them to change it, turn it around . . . and then they wouldn't turn it around. So then they had to make two slopes instead of one main roof slope, to satisfy their egos and mine both. It turned out that [the architect Ernest J.] Kump had bought

a place in Italy in the hills somewhere, so he was very sold on that style of architecture. I think he contributed that. Most of the work was done of course by his juniors. He had one very nice man, a sandy-haired man who was a kind of a dreamer. I took to him because he didn't bring out plans and blueprints; he was thinking more about the buildings. I've forgotten his name now. He was pretty good. Kump was all right too.

When we opened I had decided we would have speakers on one night a week—college night. Mr. Kump was either our first or our next-to-first . . . and he told about designing the college and arguing with me and so on. It was very entertaining. You know as an architect he does think in completely different terms, in terms of spaces. Now we don't think in terms of spaces; we think in terms of moving about and using the hall. So there was a lot of interest in that. As it happened, although we were in good time, the college was barely ready for occupancy in September of 1967. They were still doing finishing touches and they wouldn't let us in. We finally got very mad and went in anyway. There were trenches all over and I was afraid students would break their legs. But we came out all right.

Jarrell: Whose idea was it to name the dormitories after figures in the history of science?

Thimann: Well, I think it was my idea.

Jarrell: It's lovely.

Thimann: But we got students to vote on them from lists of names, you know. We had what I thought were rather careful lists of outstanding scientific names . . . and some of them were not voted for by anybody. We never had a Pasteur building for instance. That disappointed me very much. The only reason why we had Clark Maxwell, a mathematical physicist . . . was because of the popularity of Maxwell House Coffee. They said they wanted to be called Maxwell House, you know. (Laughter)

Jarrell: The right name for the wrong reason. (Laughter)

Thimann: Yes. But that's what happens when you have voting on things that people haven't thought much about. Well, I think it was the right idea, yes. The names have stuck very well. It was my idea, too, to have specific quads. I had planned to have a fence around each quad and an iron gate. I thought that would look very nice and give people a feeling that this is their home for four years. We didn't get that. One reason we didn't get it was simply financial. It costs money.

Faculty Recruitment

Jarrell: Well, we'll dip in and out of Crown, but . . . in addition to the recruiting of the science faculty which you were doing for the entire campus, did you have a hand in the appointments to the college faculty?

Thimann: Oh yes. In all the other subjects. That was very interesting indeed.

Jarrell: How did you go about it?

Thimann: First you see you get names; then you write them and get their recommendations and finally you have a pile of applications. You sort through these and you make up a short list.

We had money in those days and I got all these short-listed people, usually four or five to come to Santa Cruz. I would tell them how to get here. Then we would have the interview and they would have lunch with the chancellor and with their future colleagues. Then they would have a session with me. I discovered that none of these lunches and casual meetings are any good at all. You can't tell anything. But by sitting across the desk with a candidate for an hour in the afternoon, it's quite clear which one you want. Because you're going on the recommendations that you have on paper. But you've got to decide is this someone we can live with; will they take an interest in undergraduates; will they fit in with the college arrangement; are they the kind of people who will come up

with ideas for teaching? That you find out just by talking to them quietly. It's interesting since I'd never done this kind of thing before.

Jarrell: You said it was fun.

Thimann: It was a lot of fun, yes. It's one of the most interesting things I've ever done. Because at Harvard I did a lot of administrative stuff. I was chairman of this and that committee, but that's not the same thing at all. You're not engaging human beings. You're dealing with what's already there.

Jarrell: You were creating a kind of family. I mean you can look at it that way.

Thimann: Exactly. It was a kind of family. I was very disappointed that one or two of them didn't get tenure. Particularly one young woman I was really sold on; I thought she was great. And somehow she got sidetracked when she was here into writing a very dull sort of bibliography and curriculum vitae of a person in her field. Her board of studies simply refused to give her tenure. This was [Kristine] Brightenback. She was here for four or five years. I thought she was great. Then there was another situation with Ed Landesman, a mathematician. The math board wouldn't give him tenure. I fought that. Perhaps he hadn't settled down and written some famous theorems, but he was an extremely thoughtful and original person.

Jarrell: But at the time these were joint college and a board appointments?

Thimann: Right. They were all joint appointments. So I wrote to a famous mathematician in New York, who had known Ed and he put me on to one or two other people and I wrote around and they all said, "Oh yes, he's great. You must keep him." So we killed the board of studies with this (laughter) and they had to give him tenure. It's turned out very well indeed. He's become rather celebrated. He's especially good at teaching calculus it turns out; he has huge grants for teaching students calculus and studying how you best do it and so on.

Jarrell: So you really went to bat for him?

Thimann: I went to bat for him because I had reasons to believe in him, you see. In the case of Brightenback it was that I had left the provostship so I wasn't given the chance. I did write a letter in her behalf, but I wasn't given the chance. I couldn't take definitive action because I was no longer provost. Then there was another, the Paul Lee case. That was a very difficult situation. I brought him here because I had seen him operating at Harvard and seen what a fascination he exerted on undergraduates. He gave a course for me in East House at Radcliffe, and the kids were hanging from the windows practically. He was really popular. So I thought, if Santa Cruz is going to be an undergraduate center of course we must have Paul Lee. It was a terrible mistake. I didn't know it would be a mistake. He was involved in the [psychedelic] drug culture. His teaching was not good; and he didn't do anything scholarly. The board of studies wouldn't support him, and finally the college wouldn't support him. We had meetings, and we discussed it, and . . . they wouldn't support him. I thought that my colleagues in the college would support him, but they didn't. So we had to let him go. As you know, he's had a very checkered career ever since. So maybe we were right in letting him go.

Jarrell: As a fellow of Crown College, how was he in terms of contributing to the community?

Thimann: He was quite good. He took his part in the college core course . . . it was joint teaching the first two years before we got [George] Hitchcock. We all chimed in . . . everybody gave three or four talks and one or two discussion sessions and so on. Paul did his part in that. And it seemed all right. It was a bit different from most of the rest. I suppose looking back on it I'd say it was less scholarly. But all the same it was quite interesting.

I insisted on bringing him here before we opened Crown. So Page Smith was very obliging and took him in for the first year at Cowell College. Then he moved over to Crown. Perhaps he should have stayed in Cowell. He had been at Harvard, and they'd let him go. So it probably would have been the same.

Maybe Cowell would have delayed it a year or so, but ultimately it would have been the same.

But you know I was very much against that flower child, twanging guitars under the redwoods sort of thing. I tried to change that from the beginning. But it had stuck already because Cowell had started it off that way. It was very hard to get it changed. Anything gets set in its ways very early and it's hard to change.

Jarrell: Can you tell me about the initial faculty appointments you made for Crown? Were there particularly any appointments you made that you feel very good about—at the time, and subsequently—of people you were particularly pleased that you got for the college?

Thimann: Well, of course, the scientists are not so remarkable because I knew enough that I could judge their work myself, you see. Charles Daniel of course has been a great success. There was one who has left . . . Joe Bunnett's been a great success in chemistry . . . he chaired chemistry for a long time. He dashes about all over the world now for the IUPAC, the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry and he's a big-shot in that. He goes all over. He was off in China last year and all over the place. So Joe's been a great success. I should say . . . well, Max Levin retired finally. He was never a great scholar, but he was awfully good with students. Most of the people that I've brought I think have done pretty well. I told you one or two that didn't work out. Let's just look at the faculty of Crown for a moment. Oh, here we are. Just trying to think how many actually are no longer there.

Jarrell: Yes. I could enlarge my question. The first part could be the appointments you're particularly pleased with in Crown. Then we'll go into the second part of the question which will be on how you built the core science faculty.

Thimann: Well, Bob [Robert F.] Adams, of course has been very successful. Sven Arndt in economics came later. I remember engaging him, but it was not at the beginning. It was some years after. Harry Beevers . . . well, you see, when I came

I brought a former student of mine, Peter Ray. Dean McHenry had found out that he was coming to Stanford. He was at Michigan and he was moving to Stanford. So Dean brought him to meet me and we agreed that he would come. But somehow Stanford held onto his imagination and after three or four years he left us and went to Stanford. So then I thought well, we've got to get the best plant physiologist in the country after having had a little black eye in this respect, so we got Harry Beevers from Indiana, and we had to work hard on that. Because I'd proposed him . . . since Peter Ray was in plant physiology, I didn't really think it should look like a simple replacement. I proposed Harry Beevers in biochemistry . . . he's in both fields—physiology and biochemistry of plants, you see. But there were a lot of hot-shot biochemists at Berkeley who couldn't see that. They were more medically, more animal-inclined. So we had a little trouble. Finally I got Lawrence Blinks to back me up . . . the two of us persuaded McHenry that he should make that appointment. No sooner had we offered it to Harry than Harry was elected to the National Academy. So . . .

Jarrell: That was a plum!

Thimann: That was a plum, wasn't it . . . very nice. Blinks of course was here already because he was emeritus from Stanford and he had been acting as an advisor in the earliest years. Donald Clark was the librarian of the Harvard Business School and he was a West Coaster originally.

Jarrell: Yes, he was. He was from Berkeley originally.

Thimann: Yes. Somehow I've forgotten how it was that McHenry got to know that he might be moveable and brought him here to be librarian.

Jarrell: He was at Baker Library at Harvard.

Thimann: Then Ray Collett. We got together because at Harvard I had been interested in the Arnold Arboretum. And the university was given the gift of some eucalyptus trees. Somehow I got to talking to Collett about it and how we ought to have an arboretum here. So we got very close together. As a result I

offered him the Crown appointment. Officially, the appointment was in I think, meteorology and climatology or atmosphere or something like that. But actually his major interest is the arboretum.

Jarrell: Well, how did he start growing proteas?

Thimann: Oh, that came later. Yes, quite a bit later. He started teaching meteorology and giving in Crown College one of our upper division courses—a Crown College course on the flora of the Monterey Bay area. Then he got deeper and deeper into the arboretum. We began picking up Australian things and so on. That's another story which we can get into later.

[Eugene] Cota-Robles . . . no, much later. Bill [William T.] Doyle. Well, he was an early appointment. I didn't make him. Page Smith made him. While Bill is a wonderful fellow, and he's done very well with building the marine sciences, I wouldn't have appointed him on research grounds alone. He brought some students from Illinois who weren't good. John Ellis . . . anything about John. Did I appoint him. I think he came through the literature board.

Jerry [F.] Feldman I brought, but it was not in the first years. He was at upstate New York, and I sort of persuaded him, twisted his arm to make him come. He was not happy at upstate New York, he needed a move. I sort of forced him to come. Of course some of these people are no longer here. For instance the young novelist whose father is also a novelist¹ at Palo Alto . . .

Jarrell: Stegner.

Thimann: Yes, Page Stegner. He was at Ohio State. I brought him the second year. Yes. You know, with correspondence and coming to the conclusion he seemed like a good person, a man we wanted. He was very good in Crown, but

¹ Wallace Stegner.—Editor.

finally he moved because . . . well, they were assembling all the literary types in College V. He felt he had to go . . . a pity.

Ralph Hinegardner, I brought him. He was at Woods Hole . . . he was obtained from a long list of applicants. We sorted through and then he came for an interview and that worked out well. Sylvia Jenkins was not here at the beginning. But at the beginning we had musicians that were engaged through Cowell for the Crown Chamber Players. There was a rather amusing, very good pianist, a Hungarian, who left after a couple of years. Then he was followed by a man who left us for Hunter College. And then I heard afterwards he'd gotten arthritis so he couldn't play. Poor fellow. I don't know what he's doing now. And then we got Sylvia's former husband, you see.

Jarrell: William Corbett-Jones.

Thimann: All right. That was a very successful appointment and he stayed a long time. He brought his wife along and then after they separated, Bill Corbett-Jones went full-time to the music department of San Francisco State. So we kept Sylvia.

Oh, Jean Langenheim—that was good. I was looking for biologists for Stevenson. Jean had been at Radcliffe. She had a complicated career; she had been at Berkeley; she'd gotten divorced. Her husband was a rather well-known geo-botanist and geologist. So she came to Radcliffe on a program they had for older women returning to academic life. So I knew her. Then after I left I wrote to a former colleague at Harvard, and he strongly urged me to take Jean. She's now the president of half the scientific societies in the country. (Laughter) She keeps being elected to the presidency of something. She's president of the ecologists which I think is the largest biological society.

Burney Le Boeuf—now I brought him from U.C. Berkeley. I wrote to a well-known hormone man in Berkeley and said, "Do you have a good candidate?" Because I thought we needed an endocrinologist. He recommended Burney, who was working on dogs at that time. He only picked up the elephant seals later on. We had a very interesting man who was studying seals and sea lions

who'd been three years in the arctic. He committed suicide. He was somewhat unstable but was a very lively, interesting fellow. Outside the lecture room, there's a memorial to him consisting of a mother, a father, and a baby sea lion. Have you seen that? Well, when you leave, you should go out that way. It's very interesting. Jake Michaelson, economics. I suppose I must have got him. I don't remember anything about it now.

Jarrell: In terms of all of these appointments, would you discuss each one with McHenry, and who had final say?

Thimann: Partly with McHenry, but also with Francis Clauser, who was McHenry's vice-chancellor. He's a physicist and was very helpful on the physics and math side. In fact I really almost had to have his agreement, very nearly his backing, anyway, to make an appointment in those areas—physics and math. It was that way we got Mike Nauenberg because Francis Clauser was very impressed. I brought Mike, you know, for interviews as before. He was very impressed with Mike and strongly urged his appointment. Of course he's been a great success too. Clauser was a most useful, interesting, and delightful person. You haven't met him, I suppose?

Jarrell: No, I haven't. Many of my interviewees have talked about him as the chancellor's right-hand man.

Thimann: Exactly, yes. He was going to build the engineering school. He was awfully disappointed when some feeble committee came in with the recommendation that we didn't need an engineering school. That's when he left and went to Cal Tech. It was a terrible disappointment.

He was thinking all the time about an engineering school along some fresh lines; bridge-building. He and his wife were very charming too. Do you know what they had for a hobby? You would never think of it, you wouldn't believe it if I gave you a hundred guesses—deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics. It requires a knowledge of history and linguistics and symbology and so forth . . . all kinds of things that have nothing to do with physics or engineering. Very nice.

Jarrell: So you had generally a fine working relationship with him?

Thimann: Oh yes, splendid. Yes. And Sig Puknat came to me through Cowell. I know I didn't engage him. He was already at U.C. Davis I think . . . Page Smith brought him to Cowell. Then he came over to Crown in order to be provost. He wasn't in Crown at first.

Gerhard Ringel was a professor in Berlin at the time of the upheavals there which were much worse of course than any we had. We didn't realize how bad it was, but there were all kinds of stupid things done. For instance they put in a regulation that all members of the staff must decide on faculty appointments. So they had janitors sitting on the question of whether so-and-so should be appointed in physics or whatever. Of course he left. It was absurd. He was looking for a job and he wrote to McHenry. Probably wrote around, you know. McHenry brought him in and of course we grabbed him. He was great stuff. He's done extremely well. Tom Schleich. Yes. I brought Tom Schleich. Lincoln Taiz came later. Aaron Waters. At first he had been at Santa Barbara and he wrote in that he wanted to change; things didn't work out well there. And so we grabbed him. McHenry and I worked jointly on that. That's about it.

Reasons for Coming to UCSC

Thimann: I'd seen in many colleges—what you call the monolithic style. I'd decided that it's not good if you're going to bring the best out of young people. So I liked the idea [of UCSC] and I kind of jumped at it although it took me most of a year to make up my mind to make the break, but basically I did.

Jarrell: Well, everyone I talked to about you said I should ask you why you came here. People are fascinated—your colleagues and people in other disciplines—because you had an endowed chair at Harvard and left to start a totally new endeavor . . .

Thimann: Well, in some ways it was crazy. But in other ways . . . I'd been 30 years at Harvard. I mean that's long enough to milk most of what you can have there. I was approaching 60 and I thought it's kind of now or never—one more thing would be interesting. I think many people would have done the same. It was especially attractive because it was a new university. Not quite the same as being asked to Santa Cruz now when it's been going 20 years. But this was all new and fresh and good ideas and many of the things I thought highly of . . . so it was particularly attractive.

Jarrell: I think an enterprise like UCSC is a very rare opportunity.

Thimann: Very rare. No, you're quite right. Very rare. Other [educational experiments] were being started and flopped. There were one or two in the East that flopped badly. Largely because I think they were not careful enough about choosing the people.

Jarrell: Whatever the problems that this institution is struggling with now at 21 years old, it's not going to flop. I don't think there's any question about that.

Thimann: Oh no. In fact it's just starting on a great new career, I think, with the large influx of students this term.

Graduate Students in the Sciences

Jarrell: I would like to talk in our second interview today about building the [Division of] Natural Sciences, the mounting of science programs, the whole natural sciences realm which I think you were the key person in overseeing. My opening question is: what guided you when you got here in gathering together and selecting faculty in the various disciplines? Did you have some kind of a vision or idea of what you were trying to create?

Thimann: When Dean McHenry talked to me about the sciences, he was envisaging a school like Swarthmore where there were good scientists, but they didn't have time to do any research. If they did any research it was in the summer only; their main job was teaching and advising students. I told him right away that you can't get first class scientists with that scheme; we couldn't have a good science group under these conditions.

Jarrell: Was he aware of that?

Thimann: No. Not at the time. But it's very important because Dean was so good in many ways. He did his homework extraordinarily well. This was just something that he didn't know about. But I said then I couldn't come . . . you know, nothing would work that way. We'd have to have a graduate school; every scientist likes to have graduate students; he likes the interaction with young people and needs extra pairs of hands to do the work. So you can't do science without graduate students really. Or otherwise you'd have to have an immense and very expensive group of technicians. And it wouldn't be so attractive. People wouldn't come. Even a place like the Rockefeller [University] which for years was a strictly research institute, finally had to become a university and take graduate students. This happened 30 years ago.

Jarrell: Is it accurate to say that the function of graduate students in scientific research . . . performs a dual function: the students are learning by doing but they're also providing labor?

Thimann: That's right, yes. It's a triple function too because they interact with the professor and sometimes, you know, they say, "Well, I don't see that." So he or she realizes that perhaps it isn't well thought out. So it's a community—the professor and his or her students is a kind of a community. When I was at Harvard we used to have tea in the lab at 4 o'clock every day. Everybody came and we sat there and matters of laboratory activity or research or science or general matters were discussed freely . . . and of course it's quite different from a German university where the professor is so remote that nobody says anything unless he asks them. But in America . . .

Jarrell: It's more of an interchange.

Thimann: . . . or in England it's the same—it's total interchange. That was enormously valuable. All sorts of things were clarified and brought up and new ideas would pop up sometimes, difficulties and so on. So I realized that you have to have that. That's very important.

Jarrell: So you made this clear to the chancellor prior to your coming here then?

Thimann: Well, while we were still talking about coming here, yes.

Jarrell: That you couldn't come under any other conditions?

Thimann: That's right, yes.

Jarrell: So I could imagine then the chancellor's becoming aware that this is the way a science faculty had to be recruited and you won't get top people unless you provided these conditions and a graduate program.

Thimann: That's right. Exactly right.

Jarrell: So that would have made quite a difference in the establishment of science programs here. It would change everything?

Thimann: It did. It changed everything. But of course they were planning this building when I came. Of course at that time it wasn't called Thimann Labs, it was Natural Sciences I. But it was planned as science laboratories. But because they had advisors from Berkeley . . . and these advisors were senior people, very nice gentlemen, who didn't really know (laughter) about modern research, they put in all kinds of labs with no sinks and no facilities, what they call dry labs, which are the kind where you have undergraduates looking down microscopes or something. You don't need experiments in such places. As soon as you need

experiments, it's a different kind of lab. So later on we had to make holes through the cement and put in pipes and all kinds of things.

Jarrell: Was it quite inadequate?

Thimann: Well, some of the rooms were inadequate. Some were set up properly, but some were not. Especially the teaching labs were not. That made a big messy change, drilling holes and everything. For a while the place was full of dust. It was the first real building on the campus, you see. For the first year they taught all the subjects in here; you would hear strains of violin as you walked down the hall. It was quite amusing then. Then, gradually the other disciplines moved out as other buildings on the campus were completed. But this was the first solid building.

Jarrell: It's so large compared to anything else on campus.

Thimann: Yes. That's right. It's only recently in the last half dozen years that we've been cramped.

Building the Science Faculty

Jarrell: So, I'm starting to see that the two topics that I had kind of dovetailed today—the Division of Natural Sciences and the mounting of the graduate program are really in tandem.

Thimann: They are, yes; they can't be separated.

Jarrell: So knowing that graduate students would have to be recruited as well and that you were recruiting in, oh, a half-dozen disciplines—astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics, geology, math . . .

Thimann: But I didn't profess to recruit astronomers.

Jarrell: No, well, we got a whole intact . . .

Thimann: The Lick people had that . . . we got the whole thing. They had their people and they had some very distinguished people. [Charles Donald] Shane had retired. I guess [A.E.] Whitford was directing the observatory. They had [George W.] Preston who moved down to [UC] San Diego when they opened the big telescope down there. But they had very good people indeed.

Jarrell: Now I know that early on in astronomy they decided to really have an emphasis here at Santa Cruz in astrophysics for instance, and certain areas of research that we ended up in specializing in. In these other areas that you would have overseen, how did you go about recruitments? Did you think in terms of research specialties or did you think of a key person who would bring graduate students with him or her . . . how did it operate? I'm unclear.

Thimann: I should say both. It was happenstance to some extent. In some fields like biology and biochemistry which I know, I knew of good people that I would want to bring. In other fields I was stabbing around and various people would make recommendations. I would think about these and sometimes, if it were junior people, I would ask for written statements. For instance, Joe Bunnett was at Brown University when I was at Harvard, so he was quite near. I heard by some grapevine, that he had west coast connections. He'd been at Reed College. So I asked him to come up to Cambridge and we talked a bit. It was quite clear that he would be receptive to an offer to come and be chairman of chemistry. Because it would need someone with experience to take on the chairmanship. So that was happenstance, but it was in many respects a very logical move. He was a well-known chemist, he had been at good universities, and now he'd rather like to go to the west coast.

Jarrell: And he'd grown up in that undergraduate climate at Reed, too.

Thimann: Yes. Exactly, which is very stimulating. Reed has one of the best reputations of any—Reed and Swarthmore . . . of any undergraduate college. They get people going on in academic work . . . Although Reed is an

undergraduate college, some of their faculty do significant research. Lou Kleinholz was there. I'd known him when he'd been at Harvard. He works on invertebrates. He had quite a distinguished career all the time he was at Reed. He's retired now.

Jarrell: For an exclusively undergraduate institution, I've become aware that a number of their scientists continue their research there.

Thimann: Yes. I hate to use the term, it's so abused . . . role models for aspiring young scientists who see that here are people who are so interested that they go on with their research although they've got a major teaching responsibility. Very nice. Helen Stafford . . . she's still active . . . I suppose she's close to retirement . . . she's in plant physiology . . . oh, there's several people and the chemists are the same way, you know.

Jarrell: So you got a head, a chair person in chemistry . . .

Thimann: I got a chairman in chemistry right . . . very early, yes.

Jarrell: Now how about physics?

Thimann: Well, physics is a little more difficult because I don't know the field so well. But fortunately Francis Clauser was already here. He was a very good person to advise me. I'm not sure how it was that Michael Nauenberg came here. But Clauser and I both talked to Nauenberg here. We interviewed him after we were here. Probably the first year, I don't remember exactly. We were both very impressed. I took Clauser's reaction very seriously. He said, "Oh yes, he's extremely good." So we cottoned on to Nauenberg very early.

Then some of the other appointments were made in varied ways. For instance, Stan[ley] Williamson—the appointment was actually made by Page Smith. He was staffing up for Cowell College which was to open the following year. He

picked up Stan Williamson from Berkeley. When I was coming on weekends, or a few days at a time from the East, we would talk about appointments.

Charles Daniel was one of the applicants on whom we had a very good file. I interviewed a number of these that Page had lined up. I selected Charles from a group that was there. So he was one of the early appointments in biology.

Then I told you that Dean did his homework very well . . . one of the things he discovered . . . I was interested in undergraduates . . . and he spotted that I had a student, Peter Ray, whose stepfather has a big vineyard in Los Gatos. Now Dean was very sharp because Peter came to Los Gatos in the summer and fall and he was at Michigan—he got his degree with me and then he went to Michigan—allowed him to come late in the fall term so he could take part in the grape harvest. Well, how Dean picked up on this, I don't know, but anyhow he had that. One time when I was here, we had a sort of general meeting, and he brought Blinks over from Pacific Grove and he brought Peter down—Peter was here—it was I suppose September.

It was quite clear that Peter would be very interested in a chance to move to the west coast. He liked it all right at Michigan, but he had this vineyard here. So I engaged Peter sort of on the spot. He was here for a number of years. Then he got an offer from Stanford. And I think he didn't quite know what to do . . . whether to go . . . but he decided that he would get better graduate students at Stanford than here. Well, at that time we didn't have very many students. Peter had one or two. We each had one or two. So we had to let him go. He wanted to go. I don't think there was much difference otherwise. Then we had to find another plant physiologist because as administrator and head of Crown I was going to be a slender reed for the plant sciences to rest on. So then we looked around the country and picked what we thought was the best plant physiologist in the country—and that was Harry Beevers. We had a little fight about that. It's all right to put these confidential things in, isn't it?

Jarrell: Oh yes. Anything.

Thimann: We had a little fight about that because Dean was still very hipped on the science advisors he had at Berkeley. I'd put up Beevers in plant biochemistry because that's more or less his slant. But these people in Berkeley wouldn't accept him as a professor of biochemistry. They tended to think of animal people . . . see biochemistry is 99.9% animals and 0.1% plants.

So they wouldn't accept him. But Blinks agreed with me . . . he and I had to work very hard on Dean to make the appointment. But of course it worked out very well. Beevers was no sooner here than he was elected to the National Academy and Dean saw that we had been right after all. So that was an interesting occasion.

Well then another appointment that Page Smith made was Todd Newberry. He had been at Stanford . . . he'd just graduated from Stanford, had been over at Hopkins Marine Station, was known here and a kind of logical person to pick up. Todd has never done much research. He started by translating a Belgian or French book on oceanic biology. And something went wrong . . . I don't know whether the author didn't like the translation or whether he got tired of it, but it dropped. But it took the first couple of years out of his [academic] life and somehow killed his research. I don't quite know why. But he's been a very useful member of the department—he's the one who writes the guide to biology for undergraduates, and he helps a lot in interviewing undergraduates and advising and so on. So he's quite useful, but useful in other ways.

Jarrell: I certainly have heard of him even myself in that capacity, because he's very well-known among the students.

Thimann: Yes. Right. And he's always available to students . . . very nice for them. Since Page was running Cowell, he became a fellow of Cowell and he saw students especially in Cowell. So there was Daniel and Newberry . . . now who else was here in the early days. Ray came, I guess, after the first year.

Jarrell: I have a list of the first appointments I wrote out in my notes . . . okay, in the 1965-66 catalog . . . Ron Ruby?

Thimann: Yes, in biophysics. But we thought of him as partly physics. Ruby was at MIT. He had heard about Santa Cruz and came to see me when I was at Harvard. We didn't have anybody in this area, so I cheerfully offered him the job. He came the very first year, Lawrence Blinks too; his work is in biophysics, photosynthesis, etc., with marine plants. He was at Hopkins Marine Station and took a strong interest in UCSC. He taught in our first courses and was a most valuable member.

Jarrell: Then I also have Cornelis B. van Niel in microbiology.

Thimann: Van Niel. Well, you see, that was again a logical thing. Van Niel was in microbiology at Pacific Grove and years ago I had spent summers at Pacific Grove . . . when I was at Cal Tech . . . and knew van Niel very well. He was the number one microbiologist in the country. So it was quite logical for Blinks, who had already been contacted, to suggest that van Niel should be brought in. Both of them were members of the National Academy of Sciences. Well, as it turned out, van Niel was never a regular member of the department. He came and taught in the general biology course—he gave some lectures in that course. We sent a few students over there to work in the lab. But he never was really on deck here as a faculty member. By the way, last year they had a memorial service for him. He died about two years ago over at Pacific Grove and his family came from all over. A man came from Germany to give the eulogy . . . it was very impressive.

Jarrell: So then in that first year you started getting some senior people to head up these boards?

Thimann: Yes, right. Well, one not quite so senior was [Claude] Bernasconi. Is he in here? I was going to look. Yes, he's listed here, but that's '68. Claude Bernasconi. Well, I have very good friends in Switzerland. When I was visiting them we talked about possible candidates and he suggested I talk to the chairman of chemistry at the . . . they called it the Eïdgenossen Technischer Hochschule in Zurich . . . it's *the* place. My friend is one of the deans there, you see. So I talked to this man and he said Bernasconi was coming through, had got

his degree already, and would be a candidate. You know how the Swiss are—they all go abroad. There're not nearly enough jobs for them in Switzerland, a tiny country. So all Swiss like to go abroad and so I talked to Bernasconi on the phone. I didn't actually see him. He sounded fine. The professor was full of praise. So later on in the mail I offered him the job. So he was one of the early chemists here.

Jarrell: Now when you were doing these early appointments you mainly relied on or consulted with Francis Clauser and the chancellor . . . Were there other people with whom you could talk over these things, or did you just feel fine being independent?

Thimann: Well there were very few people to talk to. Although besides Clauser there was Arthur Kip at Berkeley, an old friend whom I talked to about the possibility of Bruce Rosenblum. Now Bruce was not in a university, he was in an industrial lab in Princeton . . . right next to Princeton University. We had plenty of material on him. But Art Kip was enthusiastic so we approached Bruce Rosenblum. When you leave industry for a university, you take a cut in salary, but he didn't seem to mind that, and we persuaded him to come.

Jarrell: Did Chancellor McHenry give you a pretty free rein?

Thimann: Pretty free rein, yes, with the scientists he did, yes. Although he tried to get confirmation from other sources, quite naturally since he was responsible for the whole thing. But on the whole we didn't do too badly

Jarrell: Could you assure prospective appointees that there would be a full complement of graduate students?

Thimann: Absolutely. They wouldn't have come otherwise. There'd be a full complement, there would be graduate students, though perhaps not the first year. One or two people brought a graduate student. I brought a graduate student with me too, naturally. Bill Doyle brought two, I think. Though one or

two people had students that were sort of working for their degree and their work was . . .

Jarrell: And they were in midstream in their . . .

Thimann: Right. They were in midstream, and they came along. But other people came with the understanding that there would be graduate students in a year or two. And so there were.

Jarrell: Now, let's move on to the graduate part of this. Was there ever a graduate council yet? In these first years?

Thimann: It met more informally and over lunch, that sort of thing. I don't think we had anything formal at that time.

Jarrell: Because I know from my reading that we had not as a campus planned to have graduate level programs until we were further along and things had been more cemented.

Thimann: That's right. Yes.

Jarrell: So right from the start there was a limited graduate program in biology.

Thimann: Well, in most of the sciences.

Jarrell: Was there any difficulty or conflict in establishing these? Also in terms of resources?

Thimann: Well, resources were pretty sticky of course. There wasn't too much and it was the early days for grants . . . a few people had grants and we gradually of course all got grants. Otherwise it's very difficult to do modern

research without funds. But we didn't have very much money, and we couldn't offer people much money as an incentive to come.

Clark Kerr is very frugal and he wasn't good at offering big salaries. For instance, nothing to do with science, but in economics—I had a colleague at Harvard, a very distinguished economist, and he had a couple of rather aging parents. He was rather interested in the possibility of moving to the West Coast and having a place for them. I even got so far as getting him to come out here. But then Clark Kerr came through with a miserable salary offer and he was offended and wouldn't come. You do have to be careful with people.

Well, I was a little disappointed with Kerr's offer to me (laughter) in the way of salary. He did up my Harvard salary by \$1,000, but it wasn't very impressive. Still, you know, when it gets down to salary you've probably already more or less made up your mind, one way or the other. I'd sort of thought well, let's go. So it didn't upset me much. But some people might have been upset by that.

Jarrell: I want to pursue this line about money—in terms of mounting graduate programs, in terms of the monetary incentives, that you can proffer in making offers for people to come here. Did you feel that Chancellor McHenry was experiencing some kind of a struggle in getting enough faculty positions assigned to UC?

Thimann: Yes.

Jarrell: And also in terms of the kinds of resources that were available to you to mount what you thought were adequate programs?

Thimann: Well, on the faculty positions, the regents were quite nice for the new university . . . they lowered the ratio, faculty to students. It was normally around 18 to 1, and they lowered it to 15 to 1. On the understanding that that would only be for the first two or three years. So we were able to get somewhat more faculty than we could now have. Then they upped this 18 to 20, but for a while

we operated on the theory of 15 to 1. We almost never had 15 to 1, we always had more than that.

Jarrell: But when you got here and started really getting involved in the recruitment, was there quite a discrepancy between what you had envisioned and what was actually available to you? Or was it pretty similar to what you had imagined?

Thimann: Well, you see, I don't know. I hadn't imagined anything. It was all so new, you see. It was very difficult to visualize. The students that I brought with me I had grants for actually. One was already well along—he was going to get his degree from Harvard actually. He had done two or three years at Harvard. He's now at Davis. But anyhow he was a teaching assistant and was supported on that. Then there was a young woman for whom I got a special grant. Oh yes, and I had a run in with Dean on that. (Laughter) See, he made me dean of the sciences for the first year. This student had a grant, and the grant had attached to it a smaller sum for the student's own use—for travel and expenses and so on, \$500 I think. Dean insisted on taking this for the university's contribution. I discovered that by accident, that it had been removed. I was so furious . . . I called him up, he was off at a regents meeting somewhere in the south, and I insisted on getting him and telling him that was terrible and I couldn't accept it. He wouldn't budge. And so I said well I can't serve as dean under these conditions. So I resigned the deanship then and there. (Laughter)

Jarrell: I read in your bio-bibliography that you were acting dean of the division for one year. Is that correct?

Thimann: For one year, that's right. I resigned. And Dean persuaded Joe Bunnett to take it. It was barely a year as I remember. I guess that's another thing—Dean was not experienced in running a science group, you see. In a science, people tend to have grants for everything, including their graduate students. Whereas in the humanities and social sciences it's quite different. In science you need funds for the lab as well for the maintaining the youngsters. Of course if they're teaching assistants, they get paid enough to live on.

Jarrell: My next line of questioning has to do with Chancellor McHenry's tenure from your particular vantage point—I would really like you to elaborate for me on some questions that I have about his chancellorship here. It certainly would start with your being brought here with a very specific task. McHenry could do recruiting in the social sciences and humanities. I think he showed great imagination and flair in discovering you and having you take on science recruiting.

Thimann: Well, I think he did a very thorough homework job, you see. When he and Page Smith came to visit me at Harvard, they'd already found out a lot about me. They found out I was running Radcliffe College and was interested in undergraduate teaching. They found out that I'd been brought up in University of London where relations are very close between faculty and students. So they'd done a lot of homework, they were very well prepared.

Jarrell: So when you got here you had a number of jobs besides being a research scientist—you were an administrator, a recruiter, and founding provost of Crown College.

Thimann: Which hadn't started yet.

Jarrell: To recruit the faculty and kind of shape the sense of what Crown College was going to be.

Thimann: Fate played into our hands too because you see the Crown Zellerbach people called up one day and said, "I understand you're going to open a science-oriented college and we would like to support that." That was really marvelous . . . That was why it was so exciting. Because as they say at Harvard, nobody ever leaves Harvard. But this was something very special.

Relationship with Chancellor McHenry

Jarrell: If we could return to my question about Chancellor McHenry . . . on how you view and regard his work, and how he conducted this endeavor.

Thimann: Looking back on it . . . he did rather wonderfully well. He couldn't be expected to do the sciences, it's not his field.

He was awfully good on the physical aspects of building the campus. He would go and put red ribbons around trees within a few feet of the building foundations, that they were not to be cut down, and of course the builders hated it. But he was very good about that. He and Jack Wagstaff, who was the architect, were very careful about the siting of buildings, in keeping the meadows open so that the buildings didn't all show downtown, so to speak. There was the open part and you came up here, half in the woods. That was very skillfully done. Dean was excellent about that.

He was pretty good I think in giving me a free hand on the appointments. As you see he did some very clever work in bringing Blinks and Ray and so on. In a few cases we didn't agree, but on the whole he would check up on me and the appointments turned out all right. So that he was a fairly easy man to work with. He was easily approachable. I could call him up and discuss things. And of course he had an awful lot of paper work in his office and he was always going off to regents meetings. But still you could work with him quite well. He was accessible. See, the present chancellor, nothing against the present one, but anybody in that job now, is much more surrounded by secretaries and paperwork.

Jarrell: And insulated by a whole bureaucratic . . .

Thimann: Right. Yes. I mean you never see him. Whereas Dean you would see him around. He would come around. I got that cue from him in the running of Crown College which I hadn't thought of . . . I'd never really done a major administrative job. I'd done small ones. I'd chaired committees for Harvard and

so on. But I got that from Dean—that the boss must be around and must be accessible. So I did this at Crown . . . there was a secretary, Sylvia Holmes, and if a student came in and wanted to see me, I would see them if I was there, you know. I told her the provost *must* be accessible to the students. I would go and drop in on people's courses . . . sit in the back of lecture rooms all the time . . . so I felt I knew what was going on. I think that should still be done, but I know it's pretty difficult. Deans and provosts should really be visible and be around.

Jarrell: And be a part of things.

Thimann: And be a part of the thing, yes. I like to think that at least in the sciences, deans should be able to drop in and discuss research with people. I know that they will say well we're too busy to do that, we couldn't do that, but somehow I don't know if there aren't ways of sorting out the business so that you have time to be around and be a participant in the thing instead.

Jarrell: Of being just a functionary?

Thimann: Right. Well, it doesn't work too well. I remember in London . . . of course London is a little bit tinged with the European idea [that professors are more remote] . . . not major, but it is there.

Jarrell: It's not quite as democratic as it is here?

Thimann: Not quite as democratic. If you wanted to see the professor, you made an appointment beforehand. You had 15 minutes or something. So I don't think that the senior professor came around the lab very much. But of course that was in undergraduate labs. In graduate work though, a single professor is in charge and he's there . . . and the big professor chairmen don't come in of course. It would seem like interference. But all the same there is that feeling that you can see people if you want to. They are visible from time to time and they all have graduate students of their own. Well, [Kivie] Moldave does that here. He has a lot of graduate students in this building. And so he's in and out. I think

that's very nice. I think it's very nice and important that students feel that they're not only administrators but working scientists as well.

Jarrell: You said about when you were provost that you went out of your way to be available and to be seen.

Thimann: Yes. To be a part of the group, yes. I think everyone should really. I know some people manage it, some don't. But it's very important. One nice thing about Page Smith, you know, was that he kept on writing his history series all the time that he was provost. And as you know he just came out with the last—the eighth volume. Such patience and devotion . . . he managed to find time for it. And John Dizikes while he was provost of Cowell was working on his book and brought it out at that time. So some people manage it. It's a little better I think, in a writing field where all you have to do is to settle down. You've got your papers and you go right to it. Whereas in the lab, if you don't sort of keep your hand in, it doesn't work.

Jarrell: In your relationship with McHenry . . . you felt that he was accessible, supportive for the most part, gave you a free hand . . .

Thimann: Yes. He gave me a free hand in the appointments. Of course we did have money for that. Now that's something that I believe we don't have now. If you got down to a short list you would have three or four people come to Santa Cruz and interview them. And that's how you made your final decision. But I'm afraid that we don't have that much money now. We only bring the last one very often or the last two perhaps, something like that.

Jarrell: Really. You can't afford to bring three or four to make a comparison?

Thimann: No. It costs money and money is a bit tight. But it diminishes the skill with which you make the appointments. It's a case where a little money goes a long way.

Jarrell: Then you don't make expensive mistakes quite as likely?

Thimann: That's right.

Jarrell: It's easy to make appointment mistakes, isn't it?

Thimann: Very easy. I think I told you last time I learned that. That you have people here and they visit and you have lunch with the chancellor and all that—it's all useless. What you need to do is to sit down with a guy for an hour quietly in the office and talk across the desk. That's the only way you really decide whether you want them or not. That's the way I made all my Crown appointments, all the college appointments. By and large they worked out pretty well. One or two of them didn't, but mostly they did. One young man in the social sciences accepted to be residential fellow in a dorm, but then he got drunk one night and went around knocking on the girls' doors and I heard about it the next day and I made him leave immediately, made him find lodging in the town. I couldn't have that sort of thing starting off; it was in the first year.

Jarrell: Well, you've commented on Chancellor McHenry's really gifted way of overseeing the building of this campus . . .

Thimann: Yes. Of course I must say, it was an unusual opportunity for him. He was impressed by it. Of course he loved the place and it was his baby really. He felt proud of it and I know he's been very disappointed after he retired that some of the following chancellors didn't pick up all of the things that he was keen on. He was very disappointed I know. It was an experiment. It's still an experiment if we would stress the good experimental side. Perhaps a new chancellor may do that.

Selecting UCSC's Second Chancellor

Jarrell: Would you tell me about Glenn Willson in terms of selecting UCSC's second chancellor?

Thimann: Glenn Willson was made provost at Stevenson College after Charles Page left; he was already a fellow of Stevenson and he was the logical candidate. He was so clearly competent that in a short time, he became chairman of the Council of Provosts. When Dean McHenry retired, Glenn Willson was one of the names suggested for the chancellorship. But unfortunately the committee was very heavily weighted by former Berkeley people. Often these committees, the majority of the members are regents and other officers and there are two or three faculty members. I think, there were only two or three faculty members—I was one—who were clearly outweighed by all the others. They all voted for Mark Christensen because he was a Berkeley man, and they knew him. I was the only one I think who voted for Glenn. Glenn was the next name—I mean those were the two top names.

Jarrell: I never knew that.

Thimann: No, I know. Nobody did.

Jarrell: So you were on the search committee?

Thimann: Yes.

Jarrell: Which was convened I suppose about a year or six months before McHenry retired?

Thimann: I couldn't tell you how long, but some months before he retired. Well, it was not actually the search committee—the search was done more or less at statewide. But then there was a committee to consider the candidates and to interview the top two or three. That is the one I was on. We should have taken Glenn, there's no doubt. They took Christensen because as I say, it was a Berkeley oriented group. Most regents are Berkeley alumni, you know.

And of course that was a disaster. It soon became clear the appointment was a disaster—it was not long before it did—about a year, a year and a half. I was also

on the committee for the LBL—the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory—the physics lab. I was the sole biologist on that committee. We would meet over there three or four times a year. After the meeting we would go and meet with President Saxon who was himself a physicist. The chairman of our committee would tell Saxon what we had decided or what we had talked about. He was very understanding, a very good man on that chore. He did a good job as president though, you know, I'm not a judge of that. But anyhow at one of these meetings I said to Saxon, "You're going to have to take Christensen away because it's not going to work and the faculty are all up in arms." He wouldn't listen to me. He simply would not listen. Took no notice at all. He evidently didn't believe it. Then there was a UCSC faculty committee that wrote to him and said that this won't do and you'll have to work on it. Finally after three or four tries we got him to work on it. But it was very difficult. They were so absolutely sold on the idea of retaining Christensen. That he was a wonderful chap.

Jarrell: I have in my list of questions here to ask you about your perceptions of what went wrong. But I didn't know that you had such an intimate knowledge.

Thimann: Well, I had an intimate knowledge, but it didn't do me any good. I didn't have much influence. (Laughter) I was very startled that a man with his ear so close to the ground as Saxon was so convinced that this was a good appointment . . . that he just wouldn't listen. I had thought I had only to mention it. We were in his house, you know, and it's confidential . . . and I thought that he would immediately start the ball rolling.

Jarrell: That he'd be responsive?

Thimann: Yes. Not a bit of it. It took quite a while. Well there were so many things went wrong, you know. Christensen made wrong appointments, and he promoted people who hadn't done anything . . . so we had a long list of complaints.

UCSC's College System

Jarrell: Well, one related issue to this, to Christensen's tenure and certainly the whole period after McHenry retired, we'd started out as a collegial-based undergraduate model campus . . .

Thimann: Yes, yes.

Jarrell: And in the sense that the colleges would be the energy centers and the social, intellectual, cultural centers and discipline centers. That the life of the campus flowed through the colleges and that the administration would be the handmaiden of the colleges so to speak, okay . . .

Thimann: Yes. That was really the case.

Jarrell: It seems that was turned around and the reorganization that started to take place during Christensen's tenure and proceeded rapidly thereafter, wrenched the focus?

Thimann: It did, you know . . . it's terribly sad and a few people like Dennis McElrath and I see it with a kind of sinking of the heart. Because now they're talking about a faculty club or faculty center and they're talking about a student social center which will take people away from the colleges and take faculty away from the colleges. So it's really . . . that idea is rapidly going out, which is a great shame. And all we can do is kind of try to maintain little barriers of our own to the outflow . . . the way Peggy Musgrave is doing at Crown.

Jarrell: Have you thought about why the shift from the colleges has taken place?

Thimann: Yes. Well, I don't want to say anything against the present chancellor [Sinsheimer] because he's done many things very well—for instance he's made some excellent appointments—Frank Drake is a really first-class dean of sciences;

Kivie Moldave is a very good academic vice-chancellor. He's made good senior appointments. But he came from a background, MIT and Cal Tech, that had nothing in common with a Swarthmore kind of idea. So he had no reason to think that Clark Kerr had an important piece of vision in designing a university along these lines. It was Clark's baby in concept. So he [Sinsheimer] just felt there's a lot of people over there in the colleges giving funny courses on different subjects, probably not very academically rigorous . . . and he began right away. The very first year he closed off practically all the college teaching except the core course. We had these interesting advanced courses in cross-disciplinary subjects . . . wonderful fun . . . really, we learned a lot giving them as well as I'm sure the students. But he couldn't see that. So he thought in terms of a centralized, typical university with everything run from the top.

Jarrell: So you're saying that Chancellor Sinsheimer's undergraduate and graduate academic background at MIT and Cal Tech gave him a different institutional slant?

Thimann: Yes. Totally different.

Jarrell: That he doesn't have an appreciation of what, as you say, Clark Kerr's baby was all about?

Thimann: Exactly. I think he thought a lot of it was just vague talk. And didn't need to be academically encouraged.

I think it's also true that many of the faculty who've come since, also have no particular feeling for this. Now I served on a committee called the Fifteen-year Plan—it preceded the Twenty-year Plan—and it was hopeless because there were two of us who were from the collegiate days—one who sympathized deeply . . . she had come rather late, but she had been active in the college and three who had now come in recently and had no feeling for it. So of course we simply couldn't agree on the role of the colleges—3 and 3. As a result, the report was more or less unimportant. These people who are now a majority, have not really had serious connections with the colleges. One of the things that

Sinsheimer has done is to say all the science faculty should be associated with Crown College. Well, that's absurd . . . I mean you've got 75 science faculty or something. You don't want that many. As a result most of them never come. They have no stake in the college and no interest in it. There's something equally silly about all the artists being in College V.

Jarrell: So that that whole idea of interdisciplinary interchange between arts and sciences and humanities is . . .

Thimann: Yes. That's all lost sight of, you see. And what little we have in Crown consists of the economists and the people in German literature . . . Sig Puknat was provost of Crown. So the whole idea of the interaction between faculty of different interests is lost. One of the nice things about Harvard, you see, was that the faculty of the houses was very skillfully chosen.

I used to have lunch with economists and historians and a very good man in Greek history and we had wonderful times . . . extremely interesting people. That's what you get. Of course you get the same in the Oxford and Cambridge colleges. I'm sure that was in Clark Kerr's thinking. That's all going out the window, very sadly. It might be possible if we got a new chancellor with the same collegiate background, it might be possible to reverse the tide. But even so, it would be difficult, because so many faculty have come in who have no feeling for it.

I still think that when you're 18, 19, 20, you know, you're very movable . . . you know, extremely interested in meeting people with different ideas and so on. And the relation between undergraduates and faculty is therefore very important.

Jarrell: The kinds of combinations young people come up with are not orthodox or conventional and for that very fact are interesting . . . of being a pianist and an aesthetics major or being very interested in classical studies and physics, all of the varieties of joinings that young students can think about.

Thimann: Exactly. Yes. It's ever so important.

Jarrell: It's kind of disciplinary segregation, I guess.

Thimann: Yes, exactly. That's what it is. Well . . . you used a very good word there. Segregation. I hadn't put it that way, but that's what it was of course. And it's totally foreign to the idea of the college. When I started Crown, Dean was rather fixed about this, I must say. We had 36 faculty, period. I wanted one more because I wanted to appoint the musician, you see. No, I put it in and it lasted for a year and then I was told he'd been taken away and put in another college. Because we had our 36. So in some respects Dean was a little rigid, but he was so good in many ways that I can't hold that against him.

Jarrell: Okay. We finished a lot of my topics last week and one thing that I wanted to pick up on this week was a continuation of your estimation of Chancellor McHenry's tenure. We were talking just about his abilities as chancellor on this brand new campus.

Thimann: Well, I think one of the great things about McHenry was that he got the idea, Clark Kerr's idea, that this would be a different kind of campus. The colleges would be really teaching and social and every other kind of unit. No one else really quite grasped that. He hadn't been to a collegiate campus like Swarthmore where Clark Kerr had, so it was in a way the more remarkable that he, a product of UCLA, could see the point and really go for it and do it more or less the way Clark Kerr envisaged.

Jarrell: You said last week . . . you called UCSC, "Clark Kerr's baby."

Thimann: Well, it was, yes. But you see McHenry really carried out what Clark Kerr had in mind. I think many people couldn't have. Subsequent chancellors haven't been able to do that. Of course Sinsheimer you can't blame him, but he grew up in MIT and Cal Tech . . . totally different kind of institution and that's the way he visualizes it.

Jarrell: In realizing or Clark Kerr's vision, McHenry inevitably put on his personal stamp. He had to interpret that vision.

Thimann: Well, that's right. He interpreted it quite well. He did some things I thought were a bit funny. He allocated a fixed number of fellows to each college, you see.

Jarrell: Oh I didn't realize that there was a fixed number.

Thimann: Yes. He had the general idea that the first college would . . . I think he got that from Page Smith . . . center on history, the second college on social science, so that it was natural that the third college should be natural sciences. As I told you last time, he was lucky enough to get a bid from Crown Zellerbach to support the science college. But having got those three, you see those are the three major areas of scholarship, then it's a bit difficult to go on. So that's why the fourth college became, well, you know, the undeveloped world, the third world . . . it's a bit vague. Then their fifth college didn't really have anything—it's now settled down to performing arts. But it didn't really have that at the beginning. So that idea needed more working out. I don't think either Kerr or McHenry had gone that far in their thoughts. The proper thing to do, I suppose, would have been to start again with the great three and work that through.

Jarrell: Hadn't thought of it that way, yes.

Thimann: Because those are the major divisions. You could perhaps justify performing arts because it's almost a separate thing from the general humanities. It has different people interested and needs different kinds of equipment . . . theaters and things like that. So every now and again, you could justify one like that. But basically it should have rolled. Then this Oakes College emphasis was very unfortunate . . . McHenry was most impressed with the man who became provost of Oakes, [J.] Herman Blake. Oakes became a kind of ethnic, minority-centered college. But again that's not really a basis of scholarly activity. It's all very well for giving out charities or whatnot, but for a university it isn't a proper basis.

Jarrell: Would you speak about what you recall of the controversy over what later came to be named Oakes College? The move to name it Malcolm X College?

Thimann: I wasn't very close to it actually. It's very fortunate that we didn't call it Malcolm X because he's forgotten by now, you know, really. It was a difficult time . . . see, this was the time of student uprisings all around. And Santa Cruz had its share. Although we were lucky in that it was not nearly as destructive as at Berkeley. But it was very bad for a few terms. It was the time when the regents met here on campus.

Jarrell: I was going to ask you about that.

Thimann: Well, at that time, you see, the regents used to meet in different campuses each time. When it came their turn to meet here, we were in the thick of it. And it was difficult for me because they met in Crown College dining hall.

Jarrell: In October, 1968, yes.

Thimann: Oh yes, you've got all the dates pat. Well, that was a very unsatisfactory meeting. See, they met in there and all these kids and lots of people from downtown came and joined in the riots. I mean it was not limited to students. There were a lot of people wearing berets in imitation of the . . . So the regents came. But the student demonstrators made the meeting almost impossible because they stood outside and hammered on the doors. So the people inside could hardly hear themselves speak. The police came around, but they were too few in number as well as incompetent. There were a lot of people who I'm sure were not students at all. But they were about the age of students. They came in and began shouting in the meeting and made it very bad. I was sitting in the Crown College office and all these people were milling about outside. There were even one or two of our faculty among them. Especially a mathematics professor and I thought that was very bad, sort of encouraging the demonstrators just by being there, you know. Making them feel they were all the more official.

Then the demonstrators stood up . . . they had a bar across the campus entrance and tried to stop cars coming in. When the regents were going around to view the rest of the campus, they lay down in front of the regents' bus. So all these things . . . really were not putting over any real point. If they'd had a real point, it might have been justified. But they didn't really seem to know what they were doing or why they were doing it.

Then there was a big meeting after the regents had left in one of the dining halls. Dean McHenry appeared at that. He was very, very brave, you know. Because of course they were all furious with him and shouting him down. He managed to make himself heard and had them quieted down and listen to what he had to say. Among other things he said, "You see, I don't have horns." I think it had an effect. Many people would have disappeared at this point, or gone into hiding. He was willing to go to it. Glenn Willson was then provost of Stevenson and also chairman of the Council of Provosts. We only had three or four colleges. I think we only had those four.

Agent Orange Controversy

Thimann: He was very good too. He persuaded me to appear. It was a big meeting in Crown. The meeting was on academic freedom. The students were complaining that their academic freedom was being infringed. I forget now why. So I got up and waited my turn, and there was a long queue waiting to speak. I explained how nobody was infringing on anybody's academic freedom. They were all perfectly free to talk as they were doing here and to do whatever they thought fit. But of course they couldn't accept that. So they began asking me questions about the use of herbicides in Vietnam.

Jarrell: Agent Orange?

Thimann: Yes. Which was just then coming into the news. And I did a lot of work on the substances that became herbicides. In fact . . .

Jarrell: In your work with auxins?

Thimann: Yes. You see when we discovered the first natural auxin, then my first impulse was to see if the activity was special for that compound or if other compounds like it would also act as auxins. We found several that did. But then in England they went still further and developed a compound but it didn't have the endonucleus . . . it was more stable, but also had activity. That led to still another development 2-4-D, which is much more stable. That of course was the basis for herbicides—it still is. 2-4-D is still widely used on farms. Such compounds are very good because they kill certain plants and not others—they're selective. They're non-toxic to animals and humans. And the whole . . . well, it's too bad really, but we don't want to drag this up . . . it has nothing to do with this history.

Jarrell: Certainly I was going to ask you about the social implications that the students became aware of your basic research and how that was used in these compounds in the production of these herbicides, defoliant, in Vietnam.

Thimann: Defoliant, yes. Well, of course, I did use that in Cuba. When I was at Harvard, we had a botanic garden in Cuba. I used to work down there. One of their problems was a new weed which had been brought in at the turn of the century and was now very bad in Cuba. So we worked on killing that. So I did know something about the use of auxins as herbicides. Of course the students held this against me. But they thought I had developed 2-4-D. In fact I didn't. But I developed other compounds which were not so cheap, so that you couldn't use them. Anyhow, they held that against me for a long time. When I tried to make a speech that time, they brought up the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam.

Another time there was an informal meeting at Central Services for some reason. A whole lot of students gathered. They were claiming that McHenry was racist. Now I don't know where they got this. Poor McHenry, he was very hurt by that. Because from the first he had hoped we would get minorities here. And one of his first tries was when he persuaded a little black girl from some high school to come to UC Santa Cruz and she was the only one. The poor child . . .

she was so scared, she ran away halfway through the term. McHenry would have loved to start off with a nucleus of black students. Well, this was very early on, but somehow the Chicanos held it against him. They said he was racist. They had a big demonstration. I went to this meeting hoping to persuade them that it wasn't true. I've forgotten what their claims were, but it reminded me very much of that play of Ibsen in which they call him an enemy of the people. You know, just the same sort of thing.

Years later when I had to give the faculty research lecture, there was a whole group outside. As I afterwards found out, they were planning to go into the lecture and break it up. But I didn't know this. But I knew that they were against the herbicide business, you see. So in the very beginning I explained that although I had worked on the auxin and on synthetic substitutes for it, I'd not worked at producing herbicides and I hadn't made 2-4-D. The news was carried to the crowd waiting outside and they dissolved. They realized they didn't have a strong case. It was rather lucky. Otherwise things might have been messy.

Jarrell: How did you feel during this period and during these occasions . . . when you were accused and treated in this very uncivilized way?

Thimann: When a thing like that happens, you think oh well it'll pass. You don't take it very seriously. You think well it'll be here today and gone tomorrow. It was curious that it survived so long. The whole Agent Orange thing survived for years and years as you know. Finally the publicity was so bad for the Dow Chemical Company that they gave in and gave so many million dollars to the [Vietnam War] veterans. Although they knew very well that it couldn't have been . . . any trouble they had couldn't have been due to Agent Orange.

Coming back to McHenry . . . he really behaved very well on those occasions. He was strong; he kept in mind what he was trying to do—he didn't allow himself to be sidetracked. They had it also very much against Vice-Chancellor Hal [Harold] Hyde. He was to them the image of the sinister business man behind everything. They tried to prevent his coming on campus once or twice down there at the gate.

Jarrell: I didn't know that.

Thimann: Yes. Well, it was so meaningless really. It's curious. If they'd had a real point, you see, one might have sympathized with them. But it was so meaningless. The students didn't really know what it was they were fussing about.

Jarrell: I think it was a very generalized critique of capitalism and imperialism.

Thimann: Yes. Right.

Jarrell: And it was defused, and it was not focused, and when . . . in retrospect it seems that if you had some possible scapegoats you could pin some of this on . . .

Thimann: Well, you see, in a way the war in Vietnam was a kind of scapegoat. The funny thing is that the riots were just as bad in France which was not involved in the war in Vietnam. And worse still in Germany. So that was only dragged in somehow. That was not the real thing.

Boards of Studies

Jarrell: Well, another aspect of McHenry's chancellorship . . . in carrying out this undergraduate emphasis, the collegial, the residential college system . . . in making that real, there were some developments here such as the boards of studies.

Thimann: That was because he didn't want to have departments, you see.

Jarrell: Right. Now in your understanding in the late 1960s when you had this new creation called boards of studies which were organized along disciplinary lines . . .

Thimann: Just like departments but with another name.

Jarrell: What was the basic difference between an old-fashioned department of biology, say, and a board of studies in biology?

Thimann: Well, there was no basic difference—the differences were in the details. The boards of studies were free to decide on their curriculum and many of them decided not to have graduate work. So a department would normally have been more under the control of the big boss who would have said, “There will be graduate work, period,” you see. So they were a little freer in that respect. His idea was partly just to get away from the terminology. We called them boards of studies . . . we weren’t going to call them chairmen . . . they were called conveners. Of course that didn’t last.

Jarrell: Another important function of a traditional department is the power to appoint faculty or to make its own appointments. But that was not the case here?

Thimann: No, that was not the case. You made appointments by recommendation to the chancellor. In those days it was a joint recommendation from the board of studies and the college; the college had more or less equal say unless the board of studies was very strong one way or the other. In fact I remember in Crown, we made an appointment over the head of the boards of studies twice, I think. And the board of studies in one case didn’t want to give tenure . . . the guy was here and they didn’t want to give tenure.

Jarrell: What board of studies was this?

Thimann: Math. I didn’t believe their conclusions and I wrote to some very distinguished mathematicians in the East with whom this person had been in contact. And they gave me such strong letters that I was able to beat down the board of studies. I had the candidate meet the board of studies and we had lunch together and so on, but I made the decision. But that hasn’t happened since. On the other occasion a man here didn’t do much in the way of published papers, but he did a terrible lot in other directions, and I was able to beat them down on

that too. Perhaps because the boards of studies were not officially departments . . . it helped the college to have a stronger influence. But since then that's changed, of course.

Jarrell: But in this situation you had a much more complicated distribution of power?

Thimann: Yes. Well, I wouldn't say *much* more complicated. It was a little more complicated.

Jarrell: A little more complicated. You had the colleges which had a certain amount of discretion.

Thimann: Yes. And the colleges had slightly different criteria you see. They were thinking of me as a member of the fellows and a participant in the college core courses and the advanced courses in the senior year—the interdisciplinary courses. You see at Crown we had a core course for the freshmen and then in the junior and senior years we had interdisciplinary courses given by two members or even sometimes three members of the faculty together. And these were extremely interesting. I regret the passing of those very much. For instance we had a course, Problems of Western Civilization, in which we had an economist, psychologist, and myself, a biologist—you couldn't do that ordinarily. My last year at Crown three faculty members offered a course on the 12th Century. They had an historian, an economist and an art history person . . . it was very interesting and good.

We had educational autonomy to a large extent. The elementary biology courses in the first two years were put on by the board of studies. I taught in those. They were a bit difficult because they were given in the time of student rebellions; students were very critical and objected strongly to the exams—to some of the questions on the exams. They said they were not fair and not appropriate—not “relevant” was the word greatly used in those days. But we got away with it.

UC Regents Meeting at UC Santa Cruz

Thimann: I was going to say about the UC regents meeting in Crown, it was particularly difficult for us because the entrance to the dining hall is right opposite the entrance to the Crown College office. So we sat in the office and people kept coming who were scared stiff. We took them in and let them sit in the office. You know, parents or visitors. They saw all this going on and they were terrified. At any moment the crowd might have burst into the office, you see. So it was a somewhat unsettling occasion. There was nothing we could do about it. I mean several hundred people compared to a half dozen of us. But we stuck it out. Then Governor Reagan arrived. He was a UC Regent. There was a policeman who parted the crowd to allow Reagan to walk through to go into the dining hall. But Reagan would have none of it. There were TV cameras turning, so of course he just plunged into the crowd and elbowed his way through while the cameras were turning . . . made a very nice little piece of publicity. Those were the times . . . thank goodness that's all over.

It's curiously different now. It all stopped in 1972. Suddenly. And made everyone think somebody's been orchestrating this. I don't know whether it's true or not. What do you think? It seemed so artificial.

Jarrell: Well, I don't have a conspiratorial view of it. I mean this is neither here nor there. I don't think it was outside agitators. I think it was adolescent, young adult rebellion and disillusionment.

Thimann: But why would it end suddenly?

Jarrell: Well, the war ending; I think it had a lot to do with the war.

Thimann: It ended suddenly in France too.

Jarrell: I think that the coincidence of the founding of this campus and the coming of age of this particular kind of youth culture . . . was a rather interesting combination of the two.

Thimann: Yes. Probably true.

Jarrell: I think the “City on the Hill” notion is what I’m referring to. There was definitely a very utopian infusion in this whole enterprise.

Thimann: Right.

Jarrell: Now would you agree with that?

Thimann: Yes. I would agree with that. Utopian infusion. And of course in a way that was part of the original Clark Kerr idea too. It’s just that he took it too far. I thought he encouraged too much anti-intellectualism . . . which after all is out of place in a university.

Jarrell: But when you’re dealing with volatile young people and a utopian vision, the students interpret it in a different way.

Culture Breaks

Thimann: Well it doesn’t seem to me to fit in with a university. At least it’s awfully hard to see . . . for instance Page Smith had what they called a “culture break” in the midterm—that maddened me. As though we were not cultured or the rest of university work was not culture.

Jarrell: So that you saw that as an artificial kind of . . .

Thimann: I saw it as a total misunderstanding of the function of a university. I was very mad about that, but there was nothing we could do about it. We

weren't even running Crown then . . . those were the first years . . . I was a spectator more or less. Besides I had the sciences to work on and I was building up science faculty, making appointments, and getting Crown faculty and so on. So I had plenty to occupy me. But I viewed that from the outside with great disapproval.

Jarrell: In doing my research, I certainly came to see you and Page Smith as embodiments of two quite different traditions (inaudible).

Narrative Evaluations

Thimann: Oh, did you! (Laughter) Well I think it's probably true. I wasn't in favor of the lengthy written appraisals of students.

Jarrell: The narrative evaluations?

Thimann: Yes. I thought that the idea was quite nice, but in fact it wasn't practical. So it has turned out. I mean we have found that in going to graduate school or medical school particularly, or law school, they tend to put the Santa Cruz applications on one side and first look for the A's and B's in the others. Then if there are still some vacancies then they pick up ours.

Jarrell: In the sciences from very early on didn't science students have the option for either letter grades or evaluations?

Thimann: Fairly early. Not immediately. But the number of students who choose the letter grade option is still not large; it's only 25 percent or so. I thought it would always be more, but it isn't. Unexpected that. Of course I think those are the students, especially who are hell-bent on getting into medical or graduate school. They think that's going to get them in. They're confident enough in their work that they're sure they'll get A's and B's. And so. Otherwise, they would be afraid to do it.

Chicano Pre-Med Summer Program

Jarrell: Another part of student life that we've vaguely touched on is the question of minority students here and affirmative action—special admits as well. I noticed that you were chairman of the Chicano pre-medical summer program in 1973.

Thimann: Oh, I started that, and I got money for it.

Jarrell: Right. Would you describe the genesis of that program?

Thimann: Well, that's very interesting. We used to have a lot of students who were going to medical school. I saw that practically none of them were Chicanos. In fact we didn't have too many Chicanos in the university, but we had a sprinkling. Then I realized that after all they need people with Spanish background because . . . at least in California . . . so many rural districts have a largely Chicano population. So I got some money from one of the foundations in New York, to start a program which would get them in and teach them before they had to cope with the courses in the fall. That was the idea. A lot of them had some and dropped out after the freshman year 'cause it was too hard for them. I figured a lot of that was because they weren't properly prepared; they'd all been to rural high schools and the English was poor and the teaching was very second-rate. So we got them in and gave them English language, mathematics, chemistry, and biology—four subjects for the summer. Then they enrolled in the fall.

Jarrell: So these students were living on campus for the entire summer?

Thimann: Yes, they were residents. We took over one of the dorms for them. We didn't dare do it for a very large number. We limited it to 15. Because I thought that was all we could take care of. I hired a couple of graduate teaching fellows to give the courses, and I took part in some of the courses myself. Then in the fall, they enrolled and gradually they did better; they did fairly well and

some of them did get into medical school afterwards. I figured what was needed was an input of well-trained Chicanos for medicine in the West.

Some of them dropped out. We had one who dropped out to become a priest after the freshman year. I thought that was rather unusual. I had one or two blacks. One young woman got into the University of Chicago Medical School. And the last I heard she was doing very well. But that's some years ago . . . she's no doubt in practice by now. I wasn't thinking so much of the blacks because that's not a western problem really. I mean blacks are all over and they're urban people. Whereas Chicanos are more rural and they often don't get good teaching. And we have to face it—the rural high schools are not the equal of the city high schools. Except in exceptional cases.

Jarrell: So how long did the pre-medical program . . . I saw it described as Chicano pre-med and also disadvantaged pre-med, both. Were those the same programs?

Thimann: Yes, the same program. Chicano pre-med—I think it probably lasted five years. I think we started in about '67 or '68, and it ran till I think the year after I retired from the provostship.

Jarrell: Another program that I'm aware of was Hispanic or Chicano women in the sciences. Did you have anything to do with that?

Thimann: No, I didn't have anything to do with that. That was somebody else's idea. By the way, Ralph Hinegardner was very helpful on the Chicano pre-med program. He and David did some of the teaching at one time. He helped to run it and I believe he took over the running of it after I retired as provost—for a year or two.

Jarrell: You were provost until 1972?

Thimann: '72—that's right. I came in '65 and all I was then was dean of sciences; and provost of Crown from about '66 for a year to prepare. And then we opened in '67. So I served till '72 and then . . .

Jarrell: Can you mention any other serious problems or conflicts that you experienced with the chancellor?

Thimann: Well, you know, I don't think so. I think we got along surprisingly well. Partly because he did leave me rather free. I was free to choose the faculty. I was not quite free to choose the distribution of faculty because we agreed that Crown would be science-oriented so we'd have a stronger science group than in other fields. Otherwise I was pretty free. And so we didn't have enough grounds for disagreement.

Jarrell: Because you had your autonomy and . . .

Thimann: I had my autonomy and I went my way, so to speak. I enjoyed it. It was very interesting. I'd never done anything like that before. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I've been chairman of university committees at Harvard . . . from time immemorial. And big committees at that. But somehow this was quite different. So that's very interesting. No, I have to thank McHenry for that autonomy. Because he had faith in the colleges. That's another thing. It wasn't his idea and yet he had faith in it. Rather remarkable. Quite an achievement.

Decline of the Colleges

Jarrell: There was an emphatic attention paid to the colleges in those early years. But it seems that the college/boards of studies relationship shifted quite drastically when the reorganization took place.

Thimann: Yes, it did.

Jarrell: And I wonder, do you think that in the way that the college/board of studies equation was balanced in the beginning that there was some structural defect or some problem that made reorganization inevitable? How would you interpret the fact that it shifted from colleges to the present system?

Thimann: It's a very good question . . . you've put your finger on a very good question. You see, I don't think there was anything structurally wrong with it. But it depended on the members of both groups seeing the point . . . feeling that this was a good kind of structure. As we took in more and more people, the balance of people who saw the point, to put it crudely, and those who didn't, gradually increased. So in a way, it was sort of doomed after the first half-dozen years I think. It began to slide. Then when Sinsheimer came, he completed the destruction. But it was certainly weakening. As you grow, you've got to be very careful if you want to preserve an odd, unusual kind of structure; you've got to look for people who have a feel for that. Of course everybody doesn't. I don't think anybody thought about that at the beginning, but that's a very important point.

Jarrell: Yes. I mean because it seems to me that the mechanism was the colleges . . . that that was going to be the main way that the undergraduate emphasis here would be carried out and lived and experienced by everybody.

Thimann: Yes, that's right.

Jarrell: And that once you have it that the colleges exist in name only and they become simply residences . . . then how is the undergraduate intellectual, cultural experience supposed to be imparted to the students?

Thimann: That's right. You see, it's very difficult. Then you become a regular university with a strong emphasis on research and things like that and the undergraduates are left out. At Harvard and Yale they've done quite well in that they've used their dorms as kind of semi-colleges. At Yale they actually call them colleges. They have graduate students and teaching fellows talking to undergraduates. So it's halfway to a collegiate system. They had the great

advantage of enormous endowments so they could put up these houses in somewhat non-dorm fashion to make them more collegiate in structure. But of course we didn't have anything like that.

We started out in the right way. I think if we had been more alive to the importance of keeping the college function in the foreground, we would have done better. But I think by the time I retired in 1972 the collegiate structure was still quite strong. But I think soon after that it began to slide.

Jarrell: Now part of it you say is the importance of whether incoming faculty have a sufficient appreciation for the colleges?

Thimann: Yes.

Jarrell: If they have no experience themselves with that kind of arrangement, there's a problem. Do you think it also had something to do with the allocation of resources? Money?

Thimann: I shouldn't think so, no. Because, you know, (laughter) we never have had much resources. This has always been a terribly impecunious campus. More so, I think, than any of the other UC campuses. I mean the regents have never felt for what we did. Remember that McHenry had to sell the regents on the idea by assuring them that the college system wouldn't cost any more than an ordinary campus.

Jarrell: Yes. That's right.

Thimann: And of course that's asking for trouble. Because it does of course, inevitably.

Jarrell: Tell me about student and faculty interaction . . . in the classroom and out. Could you give me a sense of that?

Thimann: Well, we did a lot to try to foster that. For instance we had college nights every Tuesday and all the faculty were supposed to come. We had a high table with some fellows and some students; we also had faculty scattered around the eating hall dining with the students. We felt that would be important. And indeed that's what they do at Cambridge and Oxford, of course. Except that they all sit at the high table there. So they don't get the really close contact. But it gives a feeling . . .

Jarrell: They don't exactly rub elbows?

Thimann: No, they don't exactly rub elbows. But we did have each faculty fellow meet a certain number of students. That was different in each college. But there was a senior faculty fellow whom students could see at all times. They could always see the provost at all times since I just sat in the office and my door was next to the front door and students could come in at any time. So they had that much informal contact with the faculty at all times. We didn't have organized tutorials as we used to at Harvard. At Harvard every faculty member sees 7 to 14 undergraduates regularly on a once a week basis. We never got to that. But that costs money you see. They have to give less courses because they do that. It's not too bad, but it means you have a larger ratio, faculty to students. I mean with one to twenty it's pretty difficult to do anything on a personal basis. As you know, it's no longer one to twenty, at least not in the sciences.

Jarrell: No. It's one to forty you were saying.

Thimann: That's right. In biology it's one to forty. I don't know what it is in the others. It's harder to tell in the others.

Jarrell: So you had college nights, you had accessible senior people available to the students . . .

Thimann: Yes. Then on college nights we had informal talks. After the talks, there were questions and discussion, and people could stay afterwards and mill

around and talk to the speaker and to the faculty fellows. So that those were, I think, very important.

Jarrell: So that all of this fostered a kind of bonding of the students to the college?

Thimann: I remember when I was a student very well. I had a very good art teacher at Crown—in those days we had a good group of faculty . . . they weren't all scientists which is stupid . . . and she made much of teaching non-arts majors. This was a very successful activity in Crown. She had all kinds of students—poets, economists and biologists doing art; they weren't great, but they learned a lot. It was an eye-opener for what you can do. I thought it was very successful. She did it for years. I'd had some disagreement with the chancellors—one just comes to mind. You don't mind . . . it's very scrappy, but things have to come to mind, you know. Well, we had regular college faculty fellows meetings which we don't have now of course, and they were called fellows rather than faculty. We talked about college affairs. But McHenry was I guess dominated by the UC and UCLA procedure. They have a few things called colleges—there's a department of chemistry at Berkeley called the College of Chemistry for some historical reason, I don't know why. In all cases, there has to be a faculty-elected chairman of those things. So I had envisaged that as provost I would chair the meetings and steer them. But of course we had to have a faculty fellow chairman. My eye was put out by this, but . . . you know, it was a very small thing, but it was a basis of disagreement. McHenry was quite sure we had to do it that way just because the use of the term "colleges" on other UC campuses . . .

Well, you asked me about any of the things I'd disagreed with the chancellor and I couldn't really think of any. That's a small one.

Crown Chamber Players

Jarrell: I talked to Sylvia Jenkins about the origins of the Crown Chamber Players. I wanted her recollections since she's the present music director . . .

Thimann: Yes, she has been for some years.

Jarrell: She said that the spring of 1986 was the twentieth anniversary. She gave me a little bit of history, and said that the Crown Chamber Players started out as a very intimate, personal kind of group that you wanted everyone to be able to share in.

Thimann: That began with McHenry. He found out . . . he was very good at finding out things . . . that [Rosario] Mazzeo who had been clarinetist in the Boston Symphony was now living here. He asked Mazzeo to be an advisor in music. Then I found out that Willie Van Den Burg was also living here or nearby. So the three of us got together . . . and there was a pianist, a Hungarian by the name of Bela something or other. We put on a few concerts . . . I forget what the surname was, but you can look it up easily enough.² He was a good pianist, but he was not a very good teacher, but that's a detail. Jascha Veissi played viola. We dragged him in a little later. There was of course the violinist who is still here—and who has been the center of so much controversy.

Jarrell: Julia Zaustinsky?

Thimann: That's right, Zaustinsky. She was denied tenure. I don't know why really . . . the University is very, very softhearted when it comes to things like this. They don't press it very hard. Anyhow the men didn't like playing with her; it was nothing to do with her being a woman; the men didn't like playing with her because she was erratic, you see. She would somehow miss a bar or something like that. Then everything (laughter) goes to pot when three or four people are playing together. She played quite nicely, her tone was quite good and all that. But somehow it didn't fit for this . . . you have to have a certain communal spirit to play trios and quartets. I think she was perhaps too much of an egoist. I'm not quite sure, but anyhow it just didn't work. We thought this would be troublesome. But by and large we got along with clarinet, 'cello, and

² I have been unable to identify the Hungarian pianist to whom Thimann refers.—Editor.

piano and other instrumentalists. Very soon it was clear that this was going to be a continuing tradition. We had one or two concerts.

Jarrell: Where were the concerts held?

Thimann: In the large lecture room downstairs.

Jarrell: I was under the impression that maybe they were held at your home too at first?

Thimann: We had one at home, but no, the regular series was here at Crown. Later on when Crown dining hall was built, we moved in there. But it wasn't built till the following year. So the first year we met down there. Then it was obvious that we were going to continue and they were all fellows of Crown so we called it the Crown Chamber Players. It became a permanent establishment. Although we didn't design it with that in mind . . . it turned out the dining hall has excellent acoustics.

Jarrell: Then there's the splendid matter of the Bösendorfer piano and how that came to Crown College.

Thimann: Well, you've been told about that, have you?

Jarrell: Well, no, I haven't. But I adore that piano.

Thimann: You've played on it, have you?

Jarrell: I've played on it a couple of times years ago, yes.

Thimann: It's gorgeous. Yes. Well, how did I find out that there was a Bösendorfer on sale at the piano store in town . . . I think somebody told me that they'd seen a Bösendorfer, and I thought we've got to buy a piano anyway. So I

went to Sig Puknat who was then dean of humanities, and asked him if he would put up the money for a piano. After all, it could be the property of the dean of humanities, but it would be normally housed in Crown College. It was a bargain. We got it, I think for \$5,000 . . . they cost \$50,000 now or something like that. It had belonged to a local millionaire who didn't play, and didn't use it; he moved away or something and he sold it to the music store. Of course the music store didn't expect to sell it very easily, so they had the price set very low. So we snapped that up, and that was very, very lucky. We had a lot of luck in these early days.

Jarrell: Yes. Well, that's a particular little piece of serendipity.

Thimann: Yes. Well, it's frightfully heavy. It's got a very solid frame. So to accommodate it, we bought a moveable stage; it's cut up into sections so the students can move it. And on one section we fixed the piano permanently, so that all we had to do was to wheel this thing up. Otherwise we were afraid it would be damaged by constantly being lifted and set down and so on.

Jarrell: It just sits right on that platform all the time?

Thimann: Just sits on that platform and the rest of the platform comes in around it. Works out well. But we went to a great deal of trouble about that. Looking through catalogs for various stages and gadgetry. Max Levin was a great help on that.

Jarrell: Now William Corbett-Jones was . . .

Thimann: He came later, yes. He was the pianist at Crown for quite a while. Then he was teaching at San Francisco State and he and Sylvia got separated. They'd played piano duets. So Sylvia stayed on as music director. Goodness, she's been music director for many years now. She's awfully good of course.

Jarrell: She's a fellow of Crown College?

Thimann: She is now, but she wasn't for a while. That was part of the strict limitation . . . we were limited to 36 college fellows, and a music fellow was not among them. We had 36. So I asked, I simply said to Sylvia we'll make you a fellow . . . but no . . . it lasted for one year and then the administration took her away, put her in one of the colleges on the east side that didn't have a full quota of fellows. It was a long time before we got her back . . . many years, many years.

Jarrell: Yes. But I would say that the Crown Chamber Players has become well known and well loved throughout central California.

Thimann: Would you?

Jarrell: Yes.

Thimann: We do get people from outside of Santa Cruz, it's true, at the concerts.

Jarrell: So it's been a way certainly of enriching the campus's cultural life.

Thimann: It wasn't done for that.

Jarrell: No? What was it done for?

Thimann: I thought if we're going to have any decent music, we've got to have some standards; we've got to have role models, as they call them, for students to look up to. So I figured we've got to have the very highest quality of professional musicians to set the standards and then everybody else can follow. I didn't realize that it would have such an effect on the teaching. You see, Sylvia has pupils and they have pupils and so on—two or three levels of pupils. All deriving from the fact of having one good person at the top. So I was thinking mainly of the educational aspect. But they must perform at a high level, but I wasn't thinking that it would be a boon to the town and the county and so on, as it turned out to be.

Jarrell: So what has your role been in the Crown Chamber Players over the years, official and unofficial?

Thimann: Unofficial almost entirely. First, as provost, I was automatically in charge so to speak. I acted as sort of business manager and consultant for concerts and for the choice of visiting players and so on. That was natural because I was the provost. But after my provostship had ended I just stayed on as kind of informal manager and stimulator. I liked the idea and it was going well. And I enjoy the music myself. It would have been different if I hadn't been musically inclined, I think. Yes. Sig was rather musical and so he did well with the Crown Players.

Index

- Adams, Robert F. 15
- Agent Orange controversy 47
- arboretum 16
- Arndt, Sven W. 6, 15
- auxins 48
- Beevers, Harry 15, 27
- Bernasconi, Claude F. 29
- Blake, J. Herman 45
- Blinks, Lawrence 15, 27, 28, 35
- boards of studies 51
- Brightenback, Kristine 12, 13
- Brown University 3
- Bunnett, Joseph F. 3, 14, 25, 33
- California Institute of Technology 19, 28, 41, 42
- Cambridge University 8, 25, 43, 61
- Chicano Pre-Med Summer Program 56
- Chicano women in the sciences program 57
- Chicanos 7, 57
- Christensen, Mark N. 39, 40
- Clark, Donald T. 16
- Clauser, Francis H. 18, 26, 29
- college themes 6
- College V 42

Collett, Ray T. 16

Corbett-Jones, William 17, 65

Cota-Robles, Eugene 16

Council of Provosts 38, 47

Cowell College 3, 4, 14, 26

Crown College 3, 6

- architecture of 9
- Chamber Players 17, 63
- Chicano dormitory 7
- college courses 5
- naming of dorms 11
- under Chancellor Sinsheimer 42

Crown Zellerbach Foundation 3, 34, 45

culture breaks 55

Daniel, Charles W. 3, 14, 26, 28

Division of Natural Sciences 2, 21, 24

Dizikes, John 9, 36

Doyle, William T. 16, 30

Drake, Frank 41

Ellis, John M. 16

engineering school 19

faculty club 41

faculty-student ratios 61

Feldman, Jerry F. 17

graduate students at UC Santa Cruz 22

Harvard University 1, 2, 8, 14, 22, 34, 60, 61

Hindegardner, Ralph T. 17, 58

Hitchcock, George P. 6, 14
Holmes, Sylvia 35
Hopkins Marine Station 27, 28
Hyde, Harold A. 50
Jenkins, Sylvia 17, 63
Kerr, Clark 2, 8, 31, 41, 43, 44
Kip, Arthur 30
Kleinholz, Louis 25
Kump, Ernest J. 10
Landesman, Ed 12
Langenheim, Jean F. 18
Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory 39
Le Boeuf, Burney J. 18
Lee, Paul A. 13
Levin, Max M. 6, 14, 65
Lick Observatory 5, 24
Malcolm X College controversy 46
Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2, 3, 41, 42
Mazzeo, Rosario 63
McElrath, Dennis C. 41
McHenry, Dean E. 1, 3, 15, 20, 21, 30, 33, 34, 35, 37, 44, 47, 49
Merrill College 6, 7
Michaelson, Jacob B. 18
Moldave, Kivie 36, 41
Musgrave, Peggy B. 8, 41
narrative evaluations 55
Natural Sciences I 2

Nauenberg, Michael 18, 26
Newberry, Todd 27, 28
Oakes College 7, 45
Oxford University 8, 61
Page, Charles 38
Preston, George W. 24
Puknat, Siegfried B. 19, 43
Radcliffe College 1, 13, 18, 33
Ray, Peter 15, 27, 35
Reagan, Ronald 53
Reed College 25
Regents of the University of California
 meeting at UC Santa Cruz 46, 53
Ringel, Gerhard 19
Rosenblum, Bruce 30
Ruby, Ronald H. 3, 28
Saxon, David S. 39
Schleich, Thomas W. 19
science graduate students 21
Shane, Charles Donald 24
Sinsheimer, Robert L. 41, 42, 59
Smith, Page 1, 2, 3, 14, 19, 28, 33, 36, 45, 55
Stafford, Helen 25
Stanford University 15, 27
Stegner, Page S. 17
Stegner, Wallace 17
Stevenson College 4

Stookey, Byron 5

student center 41

Swarthmore College 8, 21

Taiz, Lincoln 19

Thimann Labs 23

Thimann, Kenneth V.

- and affirmative action 56
- and Agent Orange 47
- and recruiting science faculty 4
- and work at Harvard 2
- and work at Radcliffe College 1
- arrival at UC Santa Cruz 1
- as dean of the Natural Sciences 2
- as provost of Crown 35
- assessment of Chancellor McHenry 34
- faculty recruiting 11
- resignation as dean of Natural Sciences 33
- teaching college core courses 7, 52
- views on the college system 8, 59
- views on the narrative evaluation system 55
- working relationship with Dean McHenry 58

UC Santa Cruz

- anti-war movement at 50
- boards of studies 50
- campus demonstrations 46
- college system 8
- financial allocations by the regents 60

graduate programs 31
reorganization of college system 59
University of London 34
Van Den Burg, William 63
van Niel, Cornelis B. 28
Veissi, Jascha 63
Wagstaff, John 34
Waters, Aaron C. 19
Williamson, Stanley M. 5, 26
Willson, F.M. Glenn 38, 47
Yale University 60
Zaustinsky, Julia 63