Interview with Dr. Finn Hornum

Interviewee: Dr. Finn Hornum

Interviewer: Michael Laskowski

Subject of Interview: The Life and Career of former LaSalle Professor Finn Hornum

Abstract

Doctor Finn Hornum was born in 1932 in Copenhagen, Denmark. His father was Sven Hornum who was a businessman in the textile industry and his mother was Thora Hornum who was a housewife. He had one brother named IB who was four years his junior. Finn grew up during World War II and the German occupation of Denmark. His parents instilled in their sons the idea that education is paramount to a successful life, which motivated them throughout their lives. Finn went to college at the University of Copenhagen to study Law, but began to find that Law no longer appealed to him and wanted to do something different. At this time, Finn worked with an organization that eventually helped him move to America and start Graduate school at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. In 1955, he started Graduate classes in Sociology at Haverford College. This is where he meet
his wife Barbara and they were married that next year. After graduation he began working for a Quaker school and stayed for four years until he began classes at University of Penn for PhD in Sociology/ Criminal Justice. During his studies he worked as an instructor at Temple, Rutgers and Penn from 1962 to 1967. He never received his PhD at Penn and left the program with an ABD. In 1967, Finn was hired at LaSalle College as an Assistant Professor in the new Criminal Justice Program in the Sociology Department. Over the years, he helped build up the program by creating new classes and installing internships into the program. Dr. Hornum was made the director of Criminal Justice in 1973 and was granted tenure in 1974. In 1976, Dr. Hornum was asked to become the Chair of the Department of Sociology, Social Work and Criminal Justice which he stayed until he stepped down in 1984 to concentrate on teaching and raising his family. By this time, he had two children a son and daughter. Years later in 1996, the administration of LaSalle asked Finn if he would take the Department Chair once again in which he agreed and stayed in that position until he stepped down in 2005 when he announced his retirement from teaching. This interview covers Doctor Finn Hornum’s life and career at LaSalle University from the building of the Criminal Justice program, teaching at LaSalle, Chairing the Department and the changes in the University he witnessed through his tenure.
**Introduction**: Good Afternoon, it is March 14\textsuperscript{th} 2013, and today I am interviewing former LaSalle Professor Dr. Finn Hornum. My name is Michael Laskowski and let’s begin the interview.

0:25.7 – 2:46.0  **Early Childhood in Copenhagen, Denmark**

Dr. Hornum began with the date and place he was born on September 15, 1932 in Copenhagen, Denmark. He also told me that he lived in Copenhagen until he moved to the United States in 1955. Dr. Hornum spoke about playing sports and games with the neighborhood kids during his childhood until moving to a suburban area in Copenhagen. He then spoke briefly about growing up during World War II and living under *German Occupation*.\textsuperscript{1} He also mentioned that the Nazi presence was an unavoidable part of their lives.

2:46.8 – 8:35.0  **His parents, family and the values installed by them**

Finn started with his father Sven Frederick Johansson Horum who worked up from an apprentice in the textile firm to owning his own textile business named

\textsuperscript{1} Occupation of Denmark by Nazi Germany during World War II from 1940-1945.
Warehouse Hornum. He made an excellent business out of it and was very popular with the customers as well as enjoyed his work but he eventually went bankrupt. His father died at 63, because of the stress of the later years in the business. His mother’s name was Thora Holston Hornum who was a housewife and homemaker until the death of his father than she worked in one of the Danish ministries as an administrative assistant. She worked until retirement and died at the age of 93. His father instilled the value of a high education and it was essential to learn and understand other languages. Whereas, his mother taught the values of love of family and caring for each other. He talked about is younger brother IB who was four years young than him and still lives in Denmark to this day. Finn also spoke about spending time with his aunts, uncles and numerous cousins throughout his years in Denmark.

8:35.5 - 16:37.4 Years of schooling and the difficulty of a Danish education

He began elementary school at 6 years old upon entering fifth grade he had to prepare to take a mandatory exam to advance. He said that in Denmark the students had to take particular exams that were difficult to advance to higher education. During that time, the students had to pass these rigorous exams or they could not move on to the higher grades. He did pass the exams and went on
to high school, than to the Gymnasium. He said that only about ten percent of the students passed those student exams to advance to University and he was one of them. Then he spoke on teachers that assisted him during his schooling years who taught him the importance of creativity and individual learning. He also said he learned a lot from his upper school teachers that advanced his learning to be prepared for University. During his time in Gymnasium he was interested in being an Engineer, but then decided later to go to University to study Law in which he said “was a major switch.”

16:41.6 – 27:42.7 Going to University of Copenhagen for Law

After finishing the Gymnasium and passing the exams he decided to go to University of Copenhagen to study Law. In the first year it was required for students to continue in the University to pass the Examen philosophicum. He said that besides preparing for that exam the students also began their set of studies. He mentioned that unlike American Universities the Professors rarely gave lectors and they never were involved with the students until exams. He told a story about his study of Danish Civil Law were the tutor told them” to study the massive book of civil law to where if he called at night with a page number you

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2 Gymnasium were a type of school with a strong emphasis on academic learning, and providing advanced secondary education in some parts of Europe.

3 Examen Philosophicum was mandatory introductory course at University of Copenhagen that but in general it contains philosophy, philosophy of science, history of science, ethics and/or rhetoric.
know exactly what was on it,” and he said that the tutor was correct since that was how the exam for that class was. Spoke more on other forms of law studied and how he passed the first part of the Law degree. During his time at University he lived with his parents and worked for the law department with the Danish Government. While going through his classes in Law he said he realized “that Law had little to do with Human Beings and was not sure if I wanted to continue with this.” In Denmark, the Legal practice was very limited and he could not easily do what he wanted and thought of leaving Law school.

27:42.8 – 35:48.2  Decision to move to America and to process of getting there

The idea of moving to America began during his graduation of high school with his father’s gift of a paid trip to America. He gained his international experience through a student exchange program in Denmark called the World Friendship Organization. In 1951, though the organization he had the opportunity to come to the United States and stayed in Hartford, Connecticut with a student program that wanted more foreign students. He became part of a group that ran similar summer programs for students and started the same program in Denmark which

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4 World Friendship Organization is similar to Student Exchange Program were student from one country will stay with a family in another country while a student from that country does the same.
he spent his summers with the program. Though the program was where he met the people who had later helped him with the opportunity to move to America though the *John Hey Whitney Foundation*.⁵ He applied to Haverford College in which he was accepted and moved to America to attend as a graduate student with a full scholarship.

**Interruption caused by the phone and stopped the recording. The interview will continue on recording two.**

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**Dictation 2** Interview continued at 11:10 AM

0:06.2 – 1:35.7 **continuing the arrival to America**

Working with the exchange program he was able to come to America early in 1955 and traveled the country recruiting students for the program during the time before classes began. Then, in the fall he started classes at Haverford College.

1:35.8 – 8:40.0 **beginning of life and studies in America**

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⁵ John Hey Whitney Foundation was a Philanthropic organization that provided scholarship aid to foreign students to come to American Universities.
While in Haverford, he said that all students had to have two extracurricular activities in which the work camp experience was one and his second activity was theater arts. The theater is where he met his wife Barbara a Bryn Mawr student and she was in the same play as him and they decided to get married in 1956. Around that time he had his Master’s Degree as well as his green card, but did not become a full citizen until 1963. He spoke about his trouble with the selective service and how it was difficult to find employment until a friend found him a teaching position at Friends Central[^6] Quaker school in which he worked for four years. Then he began to take PhD courses at Penn.[^7] He took courses in Sociology with a focus on Criminology which was an interest of his from the time in Copenhagen University as well as his strong connection with the head of the department who was Swedish. By this time he had a home and a son; which meant he needed a part time position and found teaching positions at Penn, Temple and Rutgers Camden. Then in 1967, he had completed all the requirements expect for the thesis for PhD. He was now looking for a full time teaching position and was offered a position at LaSalle College.

[^6]: Friends Central School is a Quaker school founded in 1845; it is a college-preparatory school from nursery to 12th grade in Wynnewood, PA.
[^7]: University of Pennsylvania
Assistant Professor at LaSalle and building the Criminal Justice Program

He interviewed with Tom Coffee\(^8\) in 1967, who was impressed with him as well as his interest in Criminology in which they needed someone. Also, at that time the government had a program in place were law officers would receive grants to get their degrees. Mr. Coffee said that if they start a Criminal Justice program they would get some grant money as well as increase the volume of students and that is how he started at LaSalle. Finn started as an instructor and after a year was promoted to Assistant Professor in the Sociology department that only had four professors at that time. He was able to institute new courses into the Criminal Justice Program over time and internships in the field which made the program very popular with the students. He said that it was the only program besides Business that had internships offered which caused issues for the department. It caused other departments such as the History and Political Science departments to lose students and they became very jealous of the popularity of the Sociology Department. He said that building the program was not difficult for the University because Dr. Coffee told the College administration that the program is

\(^8\) Chairman of the Sociology Department at LaSalle University in 1967
bringing in the students as well as the grant money which caused there to be no issue within the College. The only issue was with the other departments.

17:25.9 – 26:47.7 Changes at LaSalle University and the neighborhood during his tenure

When he arrived at LaSalle it was an all-male College that only started allowing women for the night school courses. He said that another issue for the College was the demonstrations and protests of the Vietnam War. He also mentioned that some of the faculty became active in the protests and that he did participate in the only sit-in at the College. The departments where in his view split on the war and that caused some tension for a time. Then he spoke on the psychical changes of the College. When he started they were just finishing Olney Hall were the Liberal Arts Departments were moved and spoke on the some other Halls that were built. The Estate next to LaSalle he said was not touched until much later when it was bought for cheap and that’s where the library, gym and parking lots are now. Starting in the 1960’s, he believed that LaSalle was not really involved much with the community. The houses around the college were at that time mostly white middle-class whereas further from the college he said it was mostly African Americans. The college began to become more involved with the
community as they began developing to expand the University. Finn believes that the college involvement in the community in the later years advanced the community with offering night courses for the people in the neighborhood to come and advance themselves.

26:47.8 – 33:42.3 Teaching and advancing within the Department and the University

He said that he primarily taught the Criminal Justice courses, but he also taught some Sociology courses in which he found enjoyable and he was able to give the students a communal education within that course which he believes was a benefit for them in their future pursuits. Finn said that the staff in the Department had great comradely as well as they did with the younger staff members of other departments, but the jealousy was still around with some Departments. Those issues caused trouble for tenure not just for him, but also for some that were hired in the Sociology Department. He also said that his relationship with the Brothers was excellent and that helped him during his years at LaSalle. Now, we spoke about his advancement and he said that when the new Sociology programs were advancing they needed Directors. The need was for
accreditation and he was asked to be the director of Criminal Justice Program and continued as director until 1996.

33:42.4 – 38:21.4 **First time becoming Chair of Sociology Department**

He said the first major change within the Department was when Tom Coffee left the Sociology Chairmanship to run the Evening Division. Then, two other senior Professors took the chair position within a few years when Finn was asked to take the position. He had two three year terms as Chair, but did not go into detail about what happened and then stepped down because he wanted to give more time to his research and teaching. He also wanted to finish his doctorate, then he became too busy in personal life and never finished the doctorate and that is why he stayed ABD\(^9\) and never moved from Assistant Professor. He said that he was fine with not advancing to full-time Professor because his extra research and family life kept him very busy.

38:31.0 – 49:50.1 **Taking up a second term as Sociology Department Chair**

Dr. Hornum took the position as Department Chair again after the administration had various issues with the two people in the Chair position before him and they asked if he would return and he agreed. He said “I always saw myself as more of a

\(^{9}\) ABD: All But Doctorate
teacher than an administrator,” but he did the job well. He also mentioned that it was difficult to run this Department with separate programs but he had good relationships with all the professors and the Department ran smoothly. The Department had advanced over the years of his tenure from hired Professors to advanced number of students. He still continued to teach and do research which included traveling those times were very busy as well as fulfilling. The workload eventually became too much where Dr. Hornum decided to go into partial retirement. This move had meant that he stepped down from the Chair and focused on teaching until he was ready to fully retire. Before we spoke on his retirement, he gave his thoughts on scholarly advancement with technology. He said that he was one of the first in the University to receive a personal computer and believed it to be an advantage for the administration and when the students started getting computers the learning skills became enhanced. He believes that the use of computers and the internet are a great advantage for higher education, but the only problem is the social media sites.

49:50.2 – 58:43.0 Retirement from the University

The hardest part of retirement for him was giving up teaching; he did not enjoy the scheduling and the hours with being Chair which meant an everyday
commitment. He was ready to leave that behind and the fact that the family loved to travel and could not as often with his demanding schedule helped with the decision. He said that the rest of the Department was not surprised by his retirement because he had talked about it before, but some of the administration were shocked and did want him to leave. He mentioned that one of the greatest aspects about LaSalle was that the students are the most important thing to the University and he believes that was started by the Brothers. Dr. Hornum told me that there was not a process for retirement; that he just told them he was going to retire and fill out some paperwork. He also told me that he believes the Department was in very good shape with strong Professors but he admitted that he does not know many of the new Professors within the Department today.

58:43.1 – 1:30:44.4  Retirement Years

After retirement he was still involved with the program that helped him come to America and meets with them twice a year and is on their Board. He also is still involved in and corresponds with the Pennsylvania Prison Society.¹⁰ The interview was interrupted again by a phone call but we just continued shortly afterward.

He has also been involved in other various international Criminal Justice

¹⁰ Pennsylvania Prison Society: An advocacy group that supports formerly incarcerated prisoners and their families. It is headquartered in Philadelphia.
organizations as well. He still travels with his wife to many different destinations around the world but for him they are all vacations since he can no longer take them as scholarly trips. In his spare time, he told me he has been translating some Danish books for English readers. Then he said the one thing that has taking up some time for him was that he is writing his memoirs. He said that he has only started writing them because of the interest of others from his American friends to his family and he feels blessed that while in Denmark and in America he wrote down much of what was happening in his life and travels so he would not have to try an remember all of the facts so many years later. He told me that he occasionally keeps in touch with some of the people he had worked with at LaSalle and is always happy to hear from those people and uses some social media to keep in touch as well with family, friends and former colleagues. He said that he still misses teaching and gave a great quote “that if you’re going to have a rewarding life, the academic life is a nice one” because they help a person feel that they accomplished something by helping others as well as yourself. He brought up how is involved with Eastern State Penitentiary and how they are using the facility now with being part of the community group that helps with keeping the prison still useful as a historic landmark. He told me that before retirement he would hear from students about assisting them in their careers as
well as others and he does believe that he has helped in making the Criminal
Justice system in America a little better. Finally, he told me that he is very happy
to see how the University has excelled over the years with its involvement in the
community as well as the advancement for its students.

1:30:46.0 – 1:31:44.1

The End of the Interview

Dr. Hornum told me that he would be willing to send the University a copy of his
memoirs dealing with his time at LaSalle after they are completed. Then I thanked
him for his time and for a great interview and told him that I appreciate what he
has told me. I did learn a lot about him as a person and Professor as well as the
University itself. He thanked me for interviewing him and then the interview
ended.

The Interview concluded at 12:30 PM