

# *An SfAA Oral History Interview with Erve Chambers*

## The Beginnings of *Practicing Anthropology*

by John Van Willigen

The idea for the publication of *Practicing Anthropology* grew out of a visit to the University of South Florida by University of Chicago anthropologist, Sol Tax concerning the planning of the Applied Anthropology Graduate Program there. This interview is focused on Erve Chamber's experiences being the founding editor of *Practicing Anthropology*. It follows a more comprehensive, career-focused interview of Chambers done by Judith Friedenberg, also published in the *SfAA Newsletter*. The idea for the publication grew out of a visit to the University of South Florida by University of Chicago anthropologist Sol Tax concerning the development of the Applied Anthropology Graduate Program there. In addition to his editorship, Chambers has done extensive service to the Society, including being its President. Now retired, he was on the faculty of the University of Maryland. The interview was done in March 2017 by John van Willigen, who also edited the transcript.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** We're in, Santa Fe, New Mexico at the SfAA meetings. This is a follow-up of an interview that Erve did with Judith Friedenberg. [The questions are] divided into vision, board politics, editorial plan, early articles, other editors, like the corresponding editors, and then the format.

**CHAMBERS:** Okay.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I'm really interested in the mechanics of it, and you know, the day-to-day, more concrete things about it. Although, the first question has to do with the issues that were operating in the discipline and in the national economy basically at the time when [*Practicing Anthropology* was] started.

**CHAMBERS:** Okay.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I mean, I'm not really interested in what those conditions were, but what you were thinking basically.

**CHAMBERS:** Okay.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** So, what were some of the conditions on the discipline?

**CHAMBERS:** Well, what had happened was, from my perspective, I had just gone to the University of South Florida. And before I'd been there, I'd been to Mississippi State for a while, and then before that, I'd been working outside of academia for Abt Associates. And when I came back from Abt Associates, that was the period of time where we were just beginning to talk about the idea that there were not enough jobs in academia for people. And there was kind of a panic. And having had some experience outside of academia, I was concerned that the discipline wasn't paying attention to those potentials. Well, the answer to what was happening in the discipline was that the discipline wasn't paying attention to those potentials and there's just an ignorance in the idea of what you could do anthropology successfully outside of academia, except in a very limited way. There was the recognition that there were a few people working for the government and doing things like that, but that it wasn't a significant career track.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Based on the start of your career, did you feel like you were pushed outside?

**CHAMBERS:** No. I didn't feel pushed outside because I got an academic position, but I felt that a lot of others, a lot of us as a discipline were going to be pushed outside and not recognized.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** And that there were more people doing stuff outside of academia. And what I mean by the discipline are the organizations, both the SfAA and the Triple A just weren't recognizing what was happening in terms of careers, directions for anthropologists associated with practicing anthropology, as when I got to Florida, I also put a resolution into the Triple A for the support of anthropologists working outside of practice, outside of anthropology. And that met with a lot of resistance at the Triple A because people, people were saying, "Well, this isn't a serious issue," you know. That once there were more jobs opened up--

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Can you, can you think of the people that, the specific people that you think about in terms of, for the Triple A as resisting this?

**CHAMBERS:** Yes, when the resolution came up, for example, it was discussed, it was up for vote. And we had the discussion of it in the meetings. And the President was [Francis] Hsu then. He was there, and one of his comments when they were discussing it was "Well, I don't think it's a serious issue because as soon as more jobs

open up in academia, you know, then, then the people will go there." And I think [William C.] Sturtevant stood up and spoke against it.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Wow.

**CHAMBERS:** And, I can't remember all the others, but there were a number of, old-time, well-recognized people who were speaking against it.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see.

**CHAMBERS:** And then nobody spoke for it. You know, then all of a sudden Mike Trend, who I'd known he worked with me at Abt Associates. And he is still at Abt Associates. And he, finally he got up and he said, "You know, this year--" And he huffs and puffs when he talks. He says, "This year, I hired nine anthropologists. How many of your departments hired that many?" (They both laugh) And that was a break, you know. That, was where it broke. And then other people stood up. I can't remember who all. And the resolution passed. And one of the parts of the resolution was to publish a guide of anthropologists who practiced outside of academia. And they only published it once, but they did publish it. And those were just members of the Association, but there were like about 80 people or so. Which people had never, you know, recognized. And so then at, on the heels of that, *Practicing Anthropology*, the publication started out.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see.

**CHAMBERS:** So that, I mean, there was real resistance to the idea that there was any a field outside of academia for anthropologists.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes. And, Hsu's thought that it was a cycle basically.

**CHAMBERS:** Right. And that it would just happen. And that seemed to be, among the establishment, that seemed to be the feeling.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** You're talking about a business meeting of the Triple A. And it was some time in the '70s.

**CHAMBERS:** I was still at South Florida. It was probably about '78 or '79. The same time I think *PA*, came out. Well, the first issue was '78, right?

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And well, anyway. Um. And then in the interview with Judith [Friedenberg] there was a good discussion about, Sol Tax visiting and Bob Wulff, being the first editor. And then it was passed on to you [after he took a position elsewhere.] You were still working at South Florida when it was passed on to you?

**CHAMBERS:** I had just come to South Florida. I got hired and they asked, asked me if I--because Bob then was going on to--

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see. When you were hired, it was part of the understanding that--

**CHAMBERS:** Well, it was part of the discussion, you know. Would I be interested in doing that? And, and, because Bob was leaving. And, I said, you know, being naïve and stupid, I said, "Sure." (Laughs)

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see. And then at that point, it was thought of as a SfAA publication?

**CHAMBERS:** No. I mean, that was the real interesting part. The SfAA had put up some money to get started. And that was after [Sol] Tax, you know, and that was before me. Like Bob and Gil Kushner and, and Al Wolf had gone to the SfAA and asked for a little money to start it. And I don't remember how much money it was even, but there was no discussion of who it would belong to at all. And that it would be--and so when it came out--and I actually thought, you know, "God, I could copyright this in my name." (Laughing) You know?

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see.

**CHAMBERS:** You know, because I didn't know. But, and I said I wanted to make sure that it would hang around. So, I made a decision to call it "a career-oriented publication of the Society for Applied Anthropology." But that that wasn't their decision at all.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see. (Both laugh)

**CHAMBERS:** But it encouraged them to think of it as theirs.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** There it is.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** We're now looking at the front page of the first issue, which has the statement, "A career-oriented publication of the Society for Applied Anthropology."

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. And that was just made up. (Laughs)

**VAN WILLIGEN:** (Laughing) I see. You alone made it up.

**CHAMBERS:** Absolutely.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see.

**CHAMBERS:** Just to ensure that--or to try to ensure that, that they would think of it as theirs and that they would support it.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes. And then, just thinking mutually, who were the, the SfAA people that you linked up with?

**CHAMBERS:** I can't remember who it was. I remember the first meeting I went where we discussed it as it was starting, was in Mexico, and I think in Mérida.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Okay. And was there any resistance on the part of the SfAA or *Human Organization*?

**CHAMBERS:** I don't think so. There was resistance to me, including archaeology in the early issues. And just a couple people said, "Yes. Okay. It doesn't deal with archaeology."

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes. One of the things that I was going to ask about is the inclusion of archaeology.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. I always thought it should be included. (Laughs)

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah. That's the way I think.

**CHAMBERS:** And so, I went out to recruit some people to do some archaeology for...

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Right.

**CHAMBERS:** There were discussions, one board meeting ... You know, there, it's something about supporting *Human Organization*, supporting *Practicing Anthropology*, but I can't remember what the issue was. By and large, there was a lot of support. And like every time I would report to the Board, people would say, "This is great. This is..."

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Okay. What, what occurred to me was that the other publication, *Human Organization* might resist it because it would be draining away resources or changing the voice. And what I hear you saying is that that wasn't really-

**CHAMBERS:** I don't think that was a big issue. Russ Bernard was editor of *Human Org* at that time. And Russ Bernard's a good buddy in a lot of ways. And he's always pretty forceful about his resources and getting his--(laughs)--resources. So, I don't think it was a big issue with him. I really don't.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Well, you started it by saying that you, and you alone identified it as a SfAA thing.

**CHAMBERS:** Right.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Because you, you wanted to have an impact on SfAA's feelings about it. Their thinking about it.

**CHAMBERS:** Right.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** There was the support, generally, and relatively little tension. I mean argument against it.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. You know, I wasn't involved in the initial discussions at the SfAA of whether to give that money or not give that money to start up. So, like I wasn't even there then. I don't know what that was, but all I remember once it got started was, was that people thought it was a really interesting, worthwhile thing.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** So, it had matured a little bit, the idea.

**CHAMBERS:** The big issue came maybe a couple of years later when the question was, "Should it become a benefit of membership?"

**VAN WILLIGEN:** You, you might want to talk about that a little bit.

**CHAMBERS:** Well, originally, it was just something that we provided to--first, to alumni. The first issues went out to, all through the alumni list that I gathered from different departments because we, we were trying to get to practicing anthropologists. That's what it was for. You know, and it wasn't really for the Society's members in a sense. It was for practicing anthropologists. We sent them out to all the alumni lists.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Do you have any recollection about the number of people that were involved?

**CHAMBERS:** There were probably two, three hundred people. And I don't remember whether we also sent it to the members at that time. But you know, like we got the alumni list from the University of Chicago through Sol Tax. And we threw in my school and other schools. They were contacted. That was what we were trying to do.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And they all got free copies.

**CHAMBERS:** They all got--we just sent them off to those lists. We got a good response, you know, from different people.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes. I noticed in looking at the first year of [PA] that there was frequent discussion about subscribing.

**CHAMBERS:** I can't remember all the details. I don't remember whether we actually got people to subscribe.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Well, you know--(Chambers laughs) --there were display ads, you know--"Subscribe now."

**CHAMBERS:** I don't remember that. But then the issue came up whether it should become a benefit of membership.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah. That something that you advocated?

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. I think I did. I remember some people were for it and some people--but, it wasn't a huge issue. I think people decided it should be a benefit of membership.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And, there wasn't any point of resistance exactly.

**CHAMBERS:** Not that I recall.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And then, going to the editorial plan, there is an essay in the first issue called, "Hauling in the Future." And then I suppose you could say the [Sol] Tax's invited essay may have related to that, too. I perceive that whole Friedenbergl interview as focusing on the issues that you, discussed in this in your plan. But, I was wondering, if you can remember--of the themes that were developed in this essay, what was the response, and what do you figure there was more of an impact, in the discipline?

**CHAMBERS:** I'm not sure I remember all of what I said in "Hauling in the Future," but I think as I was looking at the initial response to the first couple of issues, there was a variety of responses. I got a lot of positive comments. You tend not to get the people who really don't like it tend not to tell you they don't. They tell somebody else-- (laughing)--they don't like it.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** (Laughing) Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** You know, although I heard a few. I remember getting one letter. I don't remember who from. He said, you know, "What do you mean calling it *Practicing Anthropology*? That means we're still practicing?" (Laughs)

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I sort of remember that.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. I may have published that as a letter to the editor. (Laughs)

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah. It's sort of a joke really.

**CHAMBERS:** But I mean, from my point, it seemed it was mostly a pretty positive reception for...

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah. Did others influence your thinking about the editorial plan?



**CHAMBERS:** Yes. And I mean, on the editorial board, I had a lot of practicing anthropologists. And we met. We'd meet at every SfAA and every Triple A meeting and discuss it, and, get a lot of good ideas about how to go on.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** No doubt would be many people involved in that, but there would be some that you would remember that really helped to clarify your thinking.

**CHAMBERS:** Well, Bob, you know, Bob Wulff stuck with it all the time. He was very helpful. Always that kind of guy. And he has a very, very strong idea about practice outside of academia. And doesn't mince words about it. And we talked. We were good friends. We talked about that a lot. Shirley Fiske was part of all that. Richard Lerner from California, the guy that worked with the NPS [National Park Service]. Richard was a very strong advocate. And always had a lot of ideas and gave a lot of help. He was the first one, he said, "Look. We got to get this on microfilm and preserve this publication."

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And did you consider any models, any other publication that you got ideas from and you tried to emulate?

**CHAMBERS:** I can't think that I did. The idea was--I mean, it was clearly at that point more intended to be a newsletter than a publication of articles. And although we would have an article or two, the real idea was to publish pieces that would talk about things that anthropologists were doing outside of academia, and to talk about the career kinds of opportunities outside of academia. The model for the format itself was one of those free handout TV guides.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Oh. The kind of thing that you get in the paper--

**CHAMBERS:** In the news, Sunday newspaper.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And not the publication called *TV Guide*.

**CHAMBERS:** No, no. Not *TV Guide*. The free newsprint thing, eight by ten or something like that. And I said, "Well, that's about what we want." (Laughs)

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Did, did you [make] that decision independently.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. (Laughs)

**VAN WILLIGEN:** (Laughing) I see. Yeah. And, and it came to be resisted.

**CHAMBERS:** It came to be resisted?

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** Well, I mean, I've never been happy with it. Eventually, when the editorship left my hands, it became a kind of a mini-journal.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Right.

**CHAMBERS:** And, we had a harder cover and everything. And like to me, the newsprint spoke to the immediacy of the publication, that this is information you don't need to keep around.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** It's something that you, you read for information. And one person suggested that it was also a really good size to line your birdcage with.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see.

**CHAMBERS:** (Laughs)

**VAN WILLIGEN:** What I remember is a statement or writing that you did, saying you, wanted a publication that was suitable to wrap fish in. Yes. And in my notes here, I say, "I figured you'd wanted a publication which would be eagerly sought out, read, and acted upon, then tossed." More like *Southern Living* and less like *The Ethnologist*.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. Exactly.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes. Okay. And then um, early articles. Just describe what your intent was. One of the mysteries or questions I had was how did you recruit manuscripts? I've listed out the manuscripts in the first issue by author, and I was wondering, you could just say how you happened to get, get all of that.

**CHAMBERS:** Okay.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** The article by Steve Schensul.

**CHAMBERS:** That, Bob Wulff already had that on hand. He was actually getting ready to assemble an issue when he left. He handed me this--that's the one thing he handed me was Schensul's article.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see. It from my perspective, it's a classic. It's for me, the most memorable article.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. It was a good one.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah. A really good one.

**CHAMBERS:** Good one to start with.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes. And then the article by Al Wolfe.

**CHAMBERS:** I don't know if I asked or if he said he'd like to write something.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Oh, okay. And then the article about Community College, which was, to me seemed very logical, given the mission of *Practicing Anthropology*. But, how did you [get that].

**CHAMBERS:** I don't recall. I remember at that time talking with [the persons] who wrote that article?

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes. I've just written down their names. Clapham and Furlow.

**CHAMBERS:** Furlow. I remember talking with Furlow, because he had been trying to get more involvement of community college anthropologists in the SfAA. And I guess I probably asked him to write something.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes. Okay. And then Barry Bainton. Was that part of the original package? This is the report of a SOPA [\[i\]](#) [Society of Professional Anthropologists] big meeting basically.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. But I don't remember where that came from.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And then this article, by Seaton (??) its topic was business needs of Latin America.

**CHAMBERS:** Boy, I don't [remember].

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And then, persons that helped you recruit articles.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. Some of the members of the Editorial Board that would help. It was very hard. And I think that the struggle with *PA* even then was to try to get practitioners to write, as opposed to academics who wanted to get a little article in.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** And you know, that's always been a struggle. I had my students probably fifteen years ago went back to some of the issues with *PA* and tallied up how many of the articles had been written by academics and how many had been written by practitioners. And, it was astounding that, the high percentage that had been written by academics.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** And uh, that was always a struggle to get people to contribute to...

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** And of course, the whole idea wasn't--it wasn't supposed to be based on articles anyway. It was supposed to be based on information.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Right.

**CHAMBERS:** But how do you get people to send the information? And that was a huge struggle.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes. Perhaps the biggest struggle is getting timely information.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. Yeah.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Were there--can you think of the techniques that, you used to overcome that? I mean, you had the corresponding editors which had a portion of both academic and non-academic practitioners.

**CHAMBERS:** Right.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And then your personal network relationships.

**CHAMBERS:** Right. Right. Yeah.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** You have your own experience.

**CHAMBERS:** Right.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Anything else?

**CHAMBERS:** Mostly it was just personal networks and, the corresponding editors, but I mean, if you look at the issues, you'll see this gradual transition from news to article. The reason is because articles are relatively easy to secure and, and news items are difficult, because people don't just send you news very often.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** No. They don't. And there, there is this problem when they send it to you, it's probably not--

**CHAMBERS:** Right.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** You, you know, it has a quick turnover you might say.

**CHAMBERS:** Exactly. So, the first issues, I mean, the news--most of that I just wrote, you know, and out of stuff I dug up.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** So, would you go out and like call people up and talk to them about...?

**CHAMBERS:** Well, when I encountered people, you know, that--somebody's working for a police department over here and say well, "I'll do a little something on that." Well, the other thing is some of the pieces I would create a question or a dilemma, an ethical problem, for example, or something like that, and send it out to

twenty anthropologists and ask them to make a comment. And then we'd have a little commentary on that issue. On that kind of thing.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And that, that would be a combination of practitioners and--

**CHAMBERS:** --And academics. That would give you an opportunity to put forth some of the issues we weren't talking about very much, in terms of what did practice mean. You know, is, is--for example, in ethics, are the ethics issues confronted by practitioners who work for the government, is that different than, what happens in academia? And let different people talk about that issue. And those were some of my favorite pieces.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** That sounds really interesting to me. This would probably apply more to true articles, but do you recall any editorial problems? Was the writing that you received good enough to meet your standards?

**CHAMBERS:** Well, not always. You know, you get different... We did--because of what I envisioned as a publication, you know. I would rewrite articles with very little checking back with the author. You know. I rewrote every article essentially. Some, of course, were very good, so they didn't need much. And some needed a lot. And, I would, every once in a while, I got in trouble, you know. An author was saying, --(laughing)--"What the hell did you do with my article?" And I don't know why I--how I had the courage to do that, you know, to somebody else's work. But, but I was seeing it as a newspaper, you know. Not as a journal.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see.

**CHAMBERS:** And, every once in a while, I just really screwed up. Poor, poor Don Stull gave me a really nice article and you see, I used to do the makeup of the publication. So, when we put the publication together, I would put the article, you know, the different columns in--paste them into the publication, then send them over to the printer. And I pasted his with pieces of his article in the wrong--(laughing)--order. And so, the article made no sense at all. And I don't--and I didn't, you know--so when I missed checking on that and it came out, and he was very nice about it. (Laughs) You know. And so, I republished it in another issue. (Laughs) But yeah. I mean, we just rewrote the whole thing.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I see. So, they would submit copy on type script.

**CHAMBERS:** Right.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Then you would blue-pencil it?

**CHAMBERS:** Um-hm.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And then, and then retype or have it retyped?

**CHAMBERS:** Now, what did I do there? I didn't retype it. I guess I just gave it to the typesetter as it was. I haven't thought about this for a long time, but it really was thinking of that publication was a newspaper. You know, with a whole different editorial policy than you would with a journal.

**CHAMBERS:** Once I had the copy, I made arrangements with the University of South Florida's printing. So they would once then take that copy. Then they would give it back to me when they had set it, however they set it.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** They would send you like galleys that--

**CHAMBERS:** Galleys. The long strips of thing. And then I would put those in. You know, I would actually arrange them then in, in the publication, give it back to them, and they would print it up. And then we, you know, we even mailed it out ourselves. Like we put the address labels on and took it to the post office.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** That to me is remarkable. There was a lot of work to do, let's say.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Guest editors. I would imagine that some guest editors where there was a reliance from the beginning on guest editors, I see that as another strategy for dealing with this network [for] finding out information?

**CHAMBERS:** Right.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** But it would support the development of the article orientation, rather than the news orientation.

**CHAMBERS:** Right. Right. And that again was, more, more--pretty much a product of just time, you're coming out four time a year with this publication and you got to

have copy. You know, and that's the easiest way to get it is to get somebody to put some stuff together for you.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I think maybe my perception is that they were pretty motivated generally.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. Yeah.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** You know, they--to do it once and...

**CHAMBERS:** Right. And they--just as they do now. A lot of them would come from the SfAA meetings. There would be a session on practicing in for the government work, government work or something. And I'd say, "Hey, why don't you put some of that together and we'll do it?"

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And so, your recruiting of these guest editors was often the organizers of sessions.

**CHAMBERS:** Quite often. Yeah.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Not always, but...

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Did this work well? What you've said about it is positive basically to this point.

**CHAMBERS:** Well, it worked. I mean, it moved the publication in a particular direction, which I would like to have seen it, you know, a little more newsy. But, but it worked well in terms of producing copy and interesting copy, worthwhile copy. And I can't remember that we ever were short, that we didn't have enough to publish. Like we always probably had a backlog of a couple of issues.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** So, the backlog was always pretty healthy.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. It was good enough. I mean, I always knew what was coming up next.



**VAN WILLIGEN:** And then the decision to include archaeology, you said that was a point of tension with some people.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And what you said at, earlier in this discussion, that it was always part of anthropology, important.

**CHAMBERS:** Always was, you know. I mean, for a field, always were. I just didn't really get any biological stuff that, that I felt I could use. Or I didn't go out of my way. I've always had a fondness for archaeology.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** And I think it's very relevant. I think the experience of archaeology that's now become public archaeology is so similar to the issues faced by [other anthropologists]. I mean, that was the period that archaeology was just undergoing this new legislation that created all these jobs outside of academia.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah, that's right.

**CHAMBERS:** And I thought we should be a part of that.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Did you do archaeology as an undergraduate? You, you had some archaeological experience.

**CHAMBERS:** Well, not really until I got into graduate school, in which I almost failed my archaeology class because I didn't get along--(laughing)--very well with the teacher. But, I was still always fond of it, you know.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** That was always sort of my attitude.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. (Laughs)

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Did Sol Tax continue to have any interest?

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. He was on the Editorial Board. I mean, he was a--what was his title? Advisor/editor. He agreed to do that. And he came to some of the meetings that we would have at the Triple A. I can remember him sitting there at one point, and

we were talking about how can we improve the publications. And he said, "Well, you could get larger type, because--(laughing)--I can't read it." (Laughs) And he was always--and I can't remember exactly what he said, he always said it wasn't quite what he had had in mind. And he was very supportive, you know, and I think later we published another little piece by him, but he was very supportive. But it wasn't quite what, what he thought...

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Were you concerned from the start about this transition to a mini-journal rather than a newsletter?

**CHAMBERS:** I thought it was terrible. You know, I, I did not like that. I still don't like it.

I mean, things have changed now because now we have a newsletter. We didn't have a newsletter at that time.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Oh, I see. Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** The newsletter presumably should take some of that weight. But it, I mean, it doesn't because it doesn't have much--(laughing)--news in it. But, I thought when it became more bound and more journal-like, that it lost what it was supposed to be.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** And that started happening right away.

**CHAMBERS:** Well, yeah. I mean, I created the article. I became more and more dependent on the article during my editorship for the reason that it was the fastest, easiest way to put together a publication.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yeah.

**CHAMBERS:** And then that transition, then after my editorship, then they made it into the, more bound magazine or journal kind of, kind of format.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I notice, I think it's [on] Wikipedia that, something on the internet anyway calls it a journal/magazine.

**CHAMBERS:** Oh, really?

**VAN WILLIGEN:** You know, I immediately read that as them not knowing--

(laughing)--what to call it.

**CHAMBERS:** What to call it. Yeah. And that's good. I think--I never knew what to call it really.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** No.

**CHAMBERS:** "Publication" [what it was] I think. It's a publication.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** You called it that at that time? I mean, the way you talked? You said publication rather than...

**CHAMBERS:** I said, yeah. I think that was pretty much it, because you had this. What is it? It's, you know--it's not a TV guide. (Laughing) And it's not a journal. You know. It's a something. It's a publication at least.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** There you go. I'm now finished with all the questions I was going to ask. Is there anything that you want to add?

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. I think it was an important thing, because it came at a time when a lot of people weren't sure what it meant to be an anthropologist that was working outside of academia. And I think it helped define that. And, that led to other things, and eventually to more acceptance of practice outside of academia within the whole discipline. And so, I was proud of that, that it did that.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** I think it's a big deal basically. Always did, always have.

**CHAMBERS:** Yeah. I think so. I think you know, one of the interesting things about our discipline is, within the United States, probably the... I would--at least places I've been, like Thailand, or Mexico, or so on and so forth. The distinction between practice inside and outside of academia just isn't as, as important. I mean, people routinely work outside of academia.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Yes.

**CHAMBERS:** So, in a, in a way, *Practicing Anthropology* represents a unique situation of how practice is done within the United States.

**VAN WILLIGEN:** Thanks a lot for spending the time.

Articles in the first Volume of *Practicing Anthropology* October 1978

Tax, Sol. 1978. "A Community of Anthropologists."

Chambers, Erve. 1978. "Practicing Anthropology: Hauling in the Future"

Schensul, Stephen. 1978. "Commando Research."

Wolfe, Alvin. 1978. "The Jobs of Applied Anthropologists."

Clapham, Stephen and Richard Furlow. 1978. "Anthropologists in Community Colleges."

Bainton, Barry. 1978. "SOPA Spring Workshop."

Seaton, Frederick. 1978. "Business Needs Latin America Specialists."

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[i] The Society of Professional Anthropologists, based in Tucson, Arizona was the first of what came to be called Local Practitioner Organizations.