

Dr. Richard Coppola
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This is an interview with Dr. Richard Coppola, current director of the NIMH MEG CORE Facility and former member of the Laboratory of Psychology and Psychopathology of the NIMH Intramural Program. The interview is being held in Bethesda, Maryland. The interviewer is Dr. Ingrid Farreras of the Office of NIH History.

Farreras: Before we jump into your NIMH years I thought we'd start with a little bit of background, where you grew up, any family influences that led to your pursuing a career in science, that sort of thing.

Coppola: Oh, yeah, I have a standard story about this. There's a wonderful movie, one of the first higher-production-quality science-fiction movies, which was *The Forbidden Planet* made by Disney in 1957 or so. I was around 10 or 11 and part of the movie was the discovery on this forbidden planet of the Krell mind machine, which was this great thing where you put this cap on and it would produce a corporal manifestation of what you were thinking. I just thought it would be wonderful to build this machine. So that structured my whole interest in neuroscience even before I knew what neuroscience was. But I went to MIT and got my degree there in electrical engineering with the specific thought in mind of doing neuroscience. The brain is an information-processing box, and so what you need to learn about is information processing, communications theory, signal processing, and I thought it was better to learn those things, which are the harder mathematical things, in a formal program and to do neurophysiology as an apprentice or as a graduate thing. In addition, at MIT, I was in the communications Biophysics Lab, and this was the lab that Jerry Fodor and Bill Seifert and people like that, who were essential, who in many

ways were neuroscientists or were interested in things about how the brain worked. So it was not an accidental path. It just seemed like that was the place to go. I mean, I went to MIT mostly because it was a good school, and I found out about that lab when I was there. I didn't know about that ahead of time. But I knew that I wanted to go to MIT because I thought electrical engineering was a good way to study the brain. It's easy to believe this as you look back on it, in hindsight. I can't swear that I had that vision at that moment in time. But that was what I was thinking of. And, indeed, I was in the Communications Biophysics Lab. I did my undergraduate thesis mapping changes in brain electrical activity in rats that were in conditioned learning experiments, so I was doing electrophysiology as part of my double-E degree. And my plan had been to go on to graduate school at MIT and stay in that area. They didn't have a department of neuroscience at that point in time. Neuroscience didn't exist. They didn't have computer science either; that didn't exist either. So it predates those sorts of things. They did have a Department of Psychology, where most of the other courses I took, aside from electrical engineering, were, and Hans Lucas Teuber was the head of the department at that point, and so I took my introductory psychology course from Hans Lucas Teuber, and he was a very dynamic speaker and certainly instilled a lot of interest in psychology. And the Psychology Department at MIT was much more physiologically oriented. This was not the softer sides of psychology; this was the harder sides, and I don't mean it in a pejorative sense. I mean them in the usual sense of more social versus more mathematical and biological. And I took physiological psychology with Joseph Altman and Amelia Beetsy [sp.], who were there studying brain processes. I mean, they were doing neuroscience. At that time it wasn't called neuroscience; it was called physiological psychology, in essence. So I had that background and was planning to stay in graduate school. But they eliminated graduate-school deferments in spring of 1968 because of the Vietnam War, and being

a northeast liberal then and not believing in those sort of things, I came down to Washington and was working for IBM doing space-related work in image processing, which ultimately becomes related later on because what I do is neuroimaging. So, again, I tried to find some way that would be deferrable, that would be not war related, that would also still somehow be informative in both directions. When I was in Washington, after about a year and a half or something like that, I ran into a friend of mine from MIT named Jim Gibbs, and he had wound up in a similar position. He was in graduate school in computer science at Stanford and decided that he needed to do something else; otherwise he was going to get drafted. So he joined the Public Health Service and was working as a computer programmer for Monty Buchsbaum, who was a researcher in the Laboratory of Psychology at that point in time. So I ran into Jim in Washington just by accident. He'd gone to Stanford and we hadn't been in touch, and I just literally ran into him on the street in Washington. I asked him what he was doing. He said he was working for this guy named Buchsbaum, writing these programs to do some event-related averaging with potentials, because he was in computing. He did not have a different background. And I said, "Jim, that's what I did my dissertation on." He said, "Oh, well come on out and meet Monty. He might be interested to talk to you." So I came out to the lab and met Monty and told him what I had been doing, and Monty's eyes got real wide, and said, "Well, Jim is leaving in a bit because he's only going to do his two-year bit in the Public Health Service and go back to Stanford. Would you like Jim's job? You can come here." And I said, "Sure." And so that was how I wound up here. I spent the time from '68-'70 working for IBM in deferrable jobs while I was waiting for Jim to end his time, and when Jim left I joined the Laboratory of Psychology in the Public Health Service as a commissioned officer, which was, as we called ourselves in those days, the yellow berets.

Farreras: Yes, I've heard the term.

Coppola: That goes way back.

Farreras: So Buchsbaum was in the lab by then?

Coppola: Yeah, he was still in the early part of his being in the lab. He probably only came in '66 or '67 himself. He was there at least two years because he had hired Jim, and I don't know how long ahead of when he hired Jim he'd been there, but I don't think more than two years, which would have put it around '66. You should be able to get that out of some other archives. But that was how I wound up in the Laboratory of Psychology, because Monty was doing electrophysiology. They were doing potentials in humans. I had already done that work.

Farreras: Did he want you to continue the work Jim had been doing or were you allowed to do your own work?

Coppola: It was a combination. What I imagine he saw in me was, first, that I could program, I could do math. That was the sidelight to me. Those were trivial and easy things to do. So I could certainly write programs and do that sort of stuff. And I also had a signal processing background. I had a little different background than Jim in the sense that I was more directly interested in how you do beam forming, how you compute coherences, and how you do things with these electrical signals from the brain? That's one of the few windows we have, particularly on the human brain, so he and I thought that was an excellent way to go. And you just collapsed part of that history. I mean my plan had been to do my two years of Selective Service commitment in graduate school, but at the end of the two years, Monty said, "Look, you have just got to keep this stuff, keep the

computers running. This doesn't take much time. You can do your research, you can do whatever you want, and you can go back to graduate school here. Don't leave." So he made me an offer I couldn't refuse, basically, and by that time I got used to earning a salary as opposed to being a student, and so it seemed that was a possibility. So that's why I wound up staying as opposed to leaving full-time to go back to MIT to graduate school.

Farreras: And the program at George Washington University was it what you expected?

Coppola: No, no. Not to be pejorative, but GW is pretty lightweight compared to MIT, and so it was easy to do. And by that time, being in the lab, you learn a lot more in a more direct sense, and so the program at GW was just to fill in some more particular math and signal-processing things that might be useful, and I took a lot more physiology and anatomy. And I toyed for a while with actually getting a Ph.D. in neurophysiology at GW, a combined program, and I did that for a while, but I didn't feel it was going to be worth the effort to completely bother to get the degree. I only cared about the information. I didn't care about the degree. So at that point, all I was worried about was getting the degree because you need the degree.

Farreras: So when you came in '70, Monty Buchsbaum was able to hire you without having to go through David Rosenthal?

Coppola: Dave Rosenthal was the lab chief then, yes.

Farreras: Were there sections left by then?

Coppola: Well, they were sort of sections. There were a number of units in the laboratory at

that time that physically weren't present with us, so that I don't know a whole lot about them, because by the time I knew who Hal Rosvold and Mishkin were, they had already split. What happened was, after a few years, the softer sides of the lab had been not receiving the best of reviews, and so the lab was dissolving into different ways to get reorganized. Marian Yarrow went off to a different group,

Farreras: But she was never in the lab.

Coppola: Oh, she wasn't?

Farreras: No, she was in the Socio-environmental Studies Lab and then she went to head a new Developmental Psychology Lab that was created in 1975. There were developmental people from the Psych lab who left to work in her lab, though.

Coppola: That's what it was. Okay. I didn't have a lot to do with that side of the lab, but I knew that part of it had split off to the child-development thing. I guess I had forgotten that Marian wasn't actually in the lab.

Farreras: What about Ben Carlson, from Perception and Learning?

Coppola: Yeah. We were on the corridor down. What's very interesting about this is that part of the cycle of where I've been has also been to recycle through the same geographic locations. At that point we were on the second floor, on the 300 corridor of that end of the building, on the second floor. And Monty, Ted, and I, and a couple of research assistants were on one side, and on the psychophysiology group of the hall was Ed Jerome.

Farreras: Oh, Higher Thought Processes, the former Aging section.

Coppola: Yes, I forget exactly what the name was, but he had Sam, who was his technician, and he had this box, which was a logic game which he played that predated a lot of the early things. And they kept trying to build this thing and study how people learn this game. But they spent more time building the box and worrying about the electronics...Just down the hall from him was Ben Carlson, and Gene who was Ben's research assistant at that point in time. Then there was Mike Boomer and Alan Dittman.

Farreras: Of the Personality section, yes.

Coppola: They were there. These were characters in the old classic sense of characters. And the other very great character who was there at that time, the only M.D. actually – and I'm blocking on his name – he was quite a character. I can see his face and I can tell you some of the stories that he would tell. He was a great character, because Boomer, Dittman, and he used to have a regular coffee hour. It was a little different organization. At three o'clock, everybody would come down to the library. The library was the library of the laboratory. It was a double-module room and that's where the coffee machine was. At three o'clock, everybody would really come down there and take a coffee break and just bullshit for 20 minutes. And Dittman and Boomer and this other fellow whose name is escaping me would regale us with stories, and they all loved to tell stories.

Farreras: Not Paul Bergman...

Coppola: No, no, he was already gone, I think, by that time. That was the psychoanalysis story. There were some remnants of that story around when Margaret Mead came

to visit us. We invited Margaret Mead over once when she was a Fogarty scholar. She wanted to know where all the movies were from the psychoanalysis project, and if she could take them out and burn them – she thought that had set back psychology and psychoanalysis because this was such a dead project, it had become so boring.

Farreras: How interesting.

Coppola: But the room where they filmed that, and the special camera they had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to build, which today you could buy from any toy store for next to nothing...the tapes were from some of these guys...Boomer in particular had said the real problem was that they had only picked one person to psychoanalyze, and this was the most boring person they had ever met, and they were the most boring tapes, just deadly. But that was before my time. But the remnants of that were still going on in the sense that the stories were still there about the huge amount of cost that had been involved in all of this stuff. I remember this in particular because we were short of lab space, and so there was a corridor that was back out over what had been the original entrance to Building 10, before they put the ACRS up, and it was this hidden corridor, and back there was where they had put the cameras for this filming thing. And so we cleared out all of the cameras so we could have room to put some computers back there – because we needed room for our computers – and I used to hang out back there. And they had left a lot of crud laying around so that I'd be tripping over these huge film canisters. They were all back there. Anyway, Margaret Mead wanted

to take those all out and blow them up. Different story.

Farreras: Was Herb Weingartner there by then?

Coppola: Herb wasn't there yet. No. Herb came a little later. There had been a couple of other people. Stanley Greenspan was there for a while. I don't think he was there to begin with at that point in time. The other M.D. who did some of the early CT work after he went to Columbia – I'm blocking on his name – Walter Reich was there for a while.

Farreras: Yeah. The Columbia person is the one that Ed Silberman was working with.

Coppola: Yeah. I'm blocking on his name, but I could dredge it up somewhere.

Farreras: Don't worry, I have it in an earlier transcript and can find it as well.

Coppola: Some of those guys were two-year guys. Adolf Pfefferbaum was in the lab. Actually, Dolf was there when I got there.

Farreras: That's a new name for me.

Coppola: Oh, yeah, Dolf was another larger-than-life character. He had just finished his M.D. and was coming as a two-year research associate in the Public Health Service, because he hadn't done his residency yet, and that's why he wound up here. I'm not sure if he was in the lab. He may have actually not been in the Laboratory of Psychology. He worked with Monty and Jim and myself. He had worked with Jim before, and then with me. Then he left and went to Stanford to do his psychiatric residency, and then went on to do EEG, MRI, and other stuff. But Dolf was there at the time.

Farreras: It seems like at least some of the sections were still alive and functional...

Coppola: What their official administrative organization was, I don't think I paid much attention to at that point in time. But it was very clear geographically and organizationally what was going on. There was Ed Jerome and his research assistant, Ben Carlson and his. There was Ted and Monty and I and ours. Gewirtz was down the hall, way down in another spot because he didn't have any equipment involved, as I remember. That was sort of what broke up some of the things. Ed Jerome had his machine, this thing he was going to do, and I kept saying computer, couldn't get it, couldn't make the transition. Same with Ben Carlson. He was doing his perceptual things, and they were building elaborate things to do, so they couldn't quite make the transition to more modern technology, although the technology was certainly primitive by current standards, but still...part of their problem was that they were struggling with the technology as opposed to the science. They spent most of their time dealing with that struggle, and that's what's held them back a little bit. They actually had good ideas about a lot of things, but... It may be a little bit of just Monday-morning quarterbacking about them, but... What happened was that these people that wanted to do these harder things, but they had no skills for doing that. I mean, they were bright people. And the technology available to do a lot of these things was very primitive, so you really had to build it yourself in some way. And so they would, but the amount of time they would spend building some equipment to do an experiment was 50 times longer than the time it took to do the experiment, and that's not a good ratio to getting things done. And whereas with Monty and I, we wrote the programs to do the things, and so in a couple of days, I could have a new program, I could have a new experiment up and running, and we

then collect a lot of data. I tried to convince the other people that computers were not just a passing fancy, they were going to be here to stay. Ron Rieber [sp.] was the other person.

Farreras: Rieber?

Coppola: Ron Rieber. It just came back to me. Not the raconteur but the two-year guy who went to Columbia. I'm still working on the other, with Pazenick [sp.]? No. Never mind. This is going to drive me crazy. So I don't think he was physically nearby. Certainly anybody who was on the second-floor corridor anywhere, I would have at least met or remembered, even if I didn't have much to do with them.

Farreras: Okay, and was there a woman working with Jerome?

Coppola: Margaret Young. I think Young was her name. She was a very nice lady. She left to go to Extramural very soon after, when things started to tighten up a little bit. I don't remember how but she moved to Parklawn very quickly. I don't remember her doing much of anything here. I think she was pretty much on her way.

Farreras: Do you think that that decline was already clear by the time you arrived?

Coppola: I think so. A little bit of this is, again, hindsight. My recollection was that they weren't getting much done when I came, and I thought they seemed to me to be past their prime by the time I got here. And that went on for some numbers of years, but then... I remember we had a very early lab review. When was the first lab review that I participated in?

Farreras: You're talking about the Board of Scientific Counselors reviews?

Coppola: Yeah, C types review, what we called the council. We had set up some remote

things where we could actually run the experiment and have video, you know,
And I think it was right after that when it was clear that some of the less-productive sides were being looked at more closely.

Farreras: Would there be any type of pressure applied to those less productive areas? Any financial pressure or loss of FTEs or...

Coppola: I think they're losing FTEs, yeah.

Farreras: So certain people were being squeezed out of the lab?

Coppola: Yeah, you know, if your research assistant leaves, you don't get to replace him, things like that.

Farreras: Or space?

Coppola: Yeah, space, we need more space, so who was being more productive? There weren't any draconian pressures on them, but there was clear pressure.

Now, when did Monty and I move to Biological Psychiatry?

Farreras: Seventy-four.

Coppola: Seventy-four.

Farreras: You were there from '70 to '74.

Coppola: Right. And we moved as part of the demise. I think we were a more productive part of the group and a more biologically oriented part. And so we moved to Biological Psychiatry.

Farreras: Was that by choice? Or were you asked to join them?

Coppola: Well, Monty and I talked about it, and we felt that we needed to get out of the Laboratory of Psychology if we were to get more support, because they didn't want to...

Farreras: You mean resources?

Coppola: Yeah, we needed to be out of this lab that was not in favor, and that wasn't...and although we seemed to be in favor... But the whole lab was being compressed a little bit, and so I don't really know how much of that was a push or a pull on Monty's part, but it certainly seemed more appropriate for us to be in a different laboratory, and that was when we moved out.

Farreras: And they were okay with your joining them?

Coppola: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was Biffoni. But from our point of view, the only thing that we did was change the name. We didn't physically move, we had the same resources. We did wind up moving down the corridor, and that had more to do with the fact that they were taking space from the Laboratory of Psychology to expand some biochemistry stuff and neurochemistry stuff down in that corridor. And that was all Laboratory of Psychology space, and so they said, "Okay, we're taking it." And at that point, I think that was when Ed Jerome and Ben Carlson retired. Or if they didn't retire, then they went from having lots of space to having a cubicle to sit in.

Farreras: At the same time, until the mid-'70s, then?

Coppola: Yeah, I can't swear to the timing of all that. I'm a little vague.

Farreras: Because '75 is when Rosvold's Neuropsychology Lab and Yarrow's Developmental Psychology Lab was created.

Coppola: Yeah, basically the Laboratory of Psychology was being completely scrunched into a small remaining core piece.

Farreras: Which was Dave Rosenthal?

Coppola: Which was Dave Rosenthal, and that was pretty much it.

Farreras: So that was still considered a productive area within the Lab?

Coppola: Well, that was still part of the core part. They were doing schizophrenia research. His main interest was in the adoption studies, the cross-fostering studies, and the psychopathology issues, and so there was a smallish group that remained in that. But Jerome retired, Carlson retired, Dittman and Boomer, retired.

Farreras: Ted Zahn stayed.

Coppola: Ted stayed.

Farreras: How come Zahn didn't go with you?

Coppola: Ted stayed. I don't know why Ted didn't go with us. I think...well, he was a psychologist doing psychophysiology and really did somewhat different. Although GSR and the type of work he did was more biological, it was in many ways more classically psychology also. Or maybe he just didn't feel like moving. I didn't get a sense of the administrative issues. Ostensibly, and I'm just thinking out loud at the moment, organizationally, Ted was the head of that group, and because Ted was the more senior person I think this was viewed as Monty getting his own unit. Spread his wings a little bit. So I think that probably speaks more than anything else to why Ted stayed and we went.

Farreras: I see, so Monty left to get his own unit and Ted stayed in the Psychology Laboratory and kept his own unit.

Coppola: Yeah, yeah. He kept his.

Farreras: And did you and Monty continue your own research, or did you have to collaborate with the people in Biological Psychiatry?

Coppola: No, we continued our work, but we also got involved with more clinical studies in terms of patients and things. But it was basically the same work that we'd been doing. There were a lot of technological bursts at that point in time,

and the main thing that we worked on was to bring in the first PET scanner and to get involved with brain imaging and brain mapping in terms of the EEG, which is what I did for them. It's the old window-on-the-brain thing. That was my stuff. That's where it came from.

Farreras: That's what you always wanted to do.

Coppola: Right, exactly. It does fit together a little bit. I'm always amazed, every once in a while when I – I don't do this very often, so that's why I get maybe a little more verbose, because I probably talk about every 10 years – but it did sort of work out.

Farreras: At this point you were in the Biological Psychiatry Branch so you may not be able to help me as much in describing the transition from Rosenthal to Weingartner to Mirsky. Do you know whether the Lab's downsizing began under Rosenthal or...

Coppola: Oh, yeah. But there were some waves here. When you go to Weingartner and then Mirsky you're talking about night and day, this was a whole different issue, a whole new class of things going on. It really is completely past almost by the time you're in Weingartner. I mean, Herb came in because when Dave got ill, and then Herb had joined the lab around '75 or '76, I don't quite remember. But I remember talking to Herb, he was a friend at that time, and I kept close contact with him. Let me just explain how I got back in the lab, because it's part of the story in a sense.

Farreras: In '80?

Coppola: Yeah. What had happened was, I was with Monty, and we were doing well in this group. And then we brought in the first PET scanner and started multichannel

brain mapping, and I finished my doctorate by that time. It was a little slow because I was having too much fun in the lab, and it didn't really matter to me. But eventually I was going to have to actually get my own union card and do this the right way. And at that point, the problem for me became, how do you make the transition from not having a Ph.D. and going to a more independent position. I was happy to work with Monty, and Monty was happy to have me stay, but...

Farreras: Because you were officially a research assistant?

Coppola: Yeah, I was a support staff to Monty. I mean, I was part of his support staff. I didn't have a doctorate. And so it was time to have my own. And it was when Mirsky came back in that he hired me as a PI in his new reorganization, which was then called the Laboratory of Psychology and Psychopathology.

Farreras: I thought the Lab's name changed in '75, under Rosenthal?

Coppola: I don't know. They had already contracted the lab. They had pretty much finished the adoption studies. They were pretty much done, and there wasn't really anybody else left in the lab at that point. A few people. But they wanted to have a Laboratory of Psychology, and so my understanding – and a lot of this may be hearsay, I don't really know – was that they started a nationwide search for a lab chief, and what they wanted was a very big-name, a nationally prominent psychologist.

Farreras: I heard Marty Seligman was one of the people they interviewed.

Coppola: Well, the main person they wanted was Mike Posner, who really wasn't interested. I knew Mike. I mean, I had met him at meetings and things, and I

knew him a little bit, and I knew he wasn't coming. The other fellow I didn't really know. And they finally got to Mirsky, who understood that he was number three on the list, and the reason he got it was because the first two guys said no. But I had heard ultimately that they negotiated, and this went on for a long time, and that Herb at that point didn't have enough stature to make the cut for this. So Herb would have liked the job.

Farreras: I interviewed someone who quoted Herb as saying – in reference to his becoming Lab chief – that “Oh, they would never hire me as a permanent chief.”

Coppola: I think Herb understood that. I knew Herb, he and I were pretty good friends at that point.

Farreras: But someone else I've interviewed said that he *had* been offered the position, but that he turned it down, for reasons he could no longer remember.

Coppola: No, he understood that he was acting, and he understood that it would... I think he would have liked the job, and he understood that it was probably an extreme long shot. He was at the beginning part of his career, but he wasn't that young. I mean, it wasn't like he was fresh out of school or anything.

Farreras: And he had lots of collaborations.

Coppola: He had lots of collaborations. I don't know how he wound up in the Psychology and Psychopathology Lab. I think he had been around for a while, and there was not the right administrative spot for him, but he was a psychologist. And when Dave got ill he had enough stature to be the lab chief, at least in an acting sense.

Farreras: When I interviewed Bob Cohen I asked him why they even pursued this at all. If the Lab was already dwindling, with few people and few areas still available, why not do away with the Lab altogether and just divert the funding elsewhere?

Coppola: My understanding was that it was the psychology lobby; how can you have mental health without psychology? You've got to have a lab. The Intramural Research Program cannot not have a Laboratory of Psychology. Psychology still had a prominent position in the notion of mental illness. So it was just considered that they needed this as part of the program, and that was why they had instituted a search. The idea was, they dwindled all the resources, but part of the idea, what they always do in that sense, the director hoards FTEs so you can give them to the new guy to build a new lab, and that was the idea, that the new lab chief would be given resources to build with. And the idea was to rebuild the Laboratory of Psychology with a prominent person. And Herb didn't quite fit the bill for that, and he understood that, and Allan Mirsky was who they finally got. Allan had been number three on the list, and he understood it. But, nonetheless, he had a few positions to hire and to bring in some new people and to try and rebuild the lab. So he came in with a pretty good cache of goodwill and some resources, and he came to talk to me and offered me a position in the lab.

Farreras: He knew you?

Coppola: Yeah.

Farreras: From what?

Coppola: How did we know each other?

Farreras: Because he left NIMH in '60 or '61...

Coppola: Oh, yeah. No, I did not know him from then. How did I know him? How did we first meet? Boy, I'm drawing a blank. Oh, I know how it happened. It happened through Richard Nakamura, I believe. You'll have to check with Richard. Because, you see, Alan had done monkey work, and he had lost his monkey lab at BU. So that was one of the reasons why he was interested in leaving, because he had lost his primate lab up there in some reorganization. He had worked with Rosvold, and that's where they did the CPT. That was Mishkin and Rosvoldway back when. And Richard Nakamura was a post-doc in that lab at that time, with Mishkin. So Alan was talking to Richard, who hired him in a position for the primate part of the Laboratory of Psychology. In addition to the Laboratory of Neuropsychology, the Laboratory of Psychology was going to have primate research. This was part of what Alan wanted. Richard and I had been doing monkey electrophysiology when he was still part of Mort's group. So I think that's probably how it came about, because Richard knew Alan before, and I had been doing electrophysiology with Richard, he introduced me to Alan, and that was my opportunity to branch out under Monty and have my own group. Richard Nakamura was going to do the animal electrophysiology and I was going to do human electrophysiology and we would collaborate. that was how I knew Richard. And so that was our design, we had discussed this all ahead of time, because we viewed this as the new Laboratory of Psychology. We were essentially starting a whole new thing, and all the people in it were going to be

new, in a sense. The only person in the lab who really represented any piece of the old lab was Ted Zahn. He was it as far as we were concerned. I don't know if there was anybody else. There may have been a couple of other pieces, but they were in the corner somewhere. The only person who was prominent, the only person who was going to really be part of the new group was going to be Ted Zahn. Richard was going to do the monkey electrophysiology. Eva Pragay was coming down from Boston; Alan was bringing her with him. I was going to do human electrophysiology. The other person who was going to do the human work was going to be Connie Duncan, whom we hired. And that was the new lab. And Herb was going to be more the softer side, the neuropsychology side of that. And that was the design for the new lab. At least those were the people I interacted with. The other part to that was the remnants of the adoption-study stuff. There were still some remnants of people who had been involved with some of the adoption stuff. I don't remember if there was anybody, because Dave by that time was out. And I don't think there was anybody else left at that point. I don't think there was. But the design for the new lab was basically animal, both histology and track, the basic sort of neurophysiology, the electrophysiology work with Richard that I would collaborate with. Eva Pragay was doing more unit work; Richard and I were doing the more macro electrode work. There were two different approaches to the electrophysiology. On the human side, I was doing the brain-mapping-oriented stuff; Connie was going to do the P300 type stuff. Herb was continuing with his development of neuropsych testing for looking across

pathology and across treatment groups. Ted was doing his psychophysiology, so that was sort of the design for the lab at that point. So what year was that?

Farreras: Mirsky returned in '80.

Coppola: So that was '80. Yeah, because I got my degree in '78 and I spent the next...

Well, it took a while. Those were the two years when Herb must have been acting chief, probably from '78 to '80, because I had been talking to Herb about this, too, that's why I knew what was happening with the search and whatnot. Herb wanted me to come back over but he didn't know quite what was going on.

Farreras: Was the work that you just described Mirsky's idea of what he wanted to focus on or was this something the NIMH administration wanted him to do once he came?

Coppola: No, that's what he wanted to do. My understanding was that they did not give him much in the way of marching orders other than rebuild the lab. Although I think it was clear that they wanted a more biological emphasis. And that was the background he had. So they were in accord but I don't think that he had any very explicit details about that. The ultimate place where that fell down... I mean, there were a number of things that happened. The biggest problem, of course, was that it was really a poor design to have another primate lab.

Farreras: You mean competing with the Neuropsychology Lab?

Coppola: Yeah, that made no sense. The main flaw in the design was it really was inappropriate to have another primate lab, and they're very expensive, among other things. And if you put up Mirsky's work against Mishkin's at that point, Mort's star was pretty high in the sky, at that point.

Farreras: Could you have closed down the primate lab and just focused on the human research?

Coppola: Yeah, well, that's ultimately what happened. Things get a little fuzzier after that for a variety of other reasons. I don't know how much of the gory details you want and I'm not sure how much I'm prepared to put on the record, if you know what I mean.

Farreras: Of course, let's just talk about what you feel comfortable discussing. We can also turn the recorder off if you want to say anything off the record.

Coppola: Okay.

Farreras: I have heard that one additional reason might have been that he Mirsky was doing sort of "old fashioned psychology", that he wasn't keeping up with the technical advances, neuroimaging, that kind of thing.

Coppola: Yeah, but that was visible earlier on.

Farreras: Before Leslie became acting chair in '95? You mean it was visible earlier, in the '80s?

Coppola: Well, it was visible to me in our first lab review. Now when was that? That must have been '84. I'd been doing all right, I had gotten my brain-mapping work off the ground and we had windows on the brain. I had a lab up and was being pretty productive at that point in time. And that's when it became apparent. We couldn't get Alan to focus on the lab review. I said, this is it. We don't produce an absolutely cohesive, cutting-edge, new view, we're going to get cut. Alan didn't get it, I don't think, at that point. He thought he had a view. I mean, I

don't know. But it didn't work out. There may have been other issues involved right at that moment. But that was my first view that there was a problem, because we'd all been doing pretty well, except for the primate issue, which we knew was a problem.

Farreras: And the primate issue was evident from the very beginning?

Coppola: Oh, yeah. We understood... Well, because we were moving into the ACRF, because of the space issues. They were over in [Building] 31, I still had a little piece over here [Building 10, Clinical Center], kind of floating in between things. It was a complicated mess for a couple of years. Richard still had space in Building 9 because he never really moved out of Mort's lab. He just stayed over there. And the idea was that there was going to be a primate facility in ACRF, and ultimately they decided that that wasn't going to happen. And it was clear that that shouldn't happen, actually, so it was hard to really fight very hard for that. And it was hard to say that the Laboratory of Psychology was doing something that was significant alongside of what Mort was doing, and why should you have this? So it was pretty clear by that time that was in trouble. That section of the design for the new lab was in serious trouble.

Farreras: What happened after the review came back? Were there any changes?

Coppola: Well, yeah. I think there was a clear shift that the primate stuff had to go, as I remember. But my first view that there was a problem in what was going on was when we put together our material for the review – and I have a very distinct memory of this – was that we all handed in drafts of our sections and Al had them

all. And I said to Al, “Well, when are we going to get together to massage all this into a nice package?” and Al said, “Oh, no. I’m going to do that.” And that was when a flag went off in my mind that we had a problem, because we had had a pretty collegial team. It was just...let’s all put our brains together. This has got to work. We’ve got to produce. I’d been through lab reviews before here, I’m not sure that Al understood. I don’t know if that was part of the issue or not, just how important this was. And part of what happened at the lab review was because we never put a cohesive thing together. He just gathered in every person’s piece, and it didn’t have an overarching view. And the BSC reviewed us and Mort’s lab at the same time. I don’t know if you’ve ever...if you’ve ever been to one of Mort’s reviews, it’s like clockwork, and pieces of the puzzle fall into place. This person is doing this because it fits here; and this person’s doing that because it fits there. It’s just gorgeous. So the same set of counselors were sitting to review both labs the same time, and there was just no comparison. You know, here was this hodgepodge, some pieces of which were okay, and here was this beautifully orchestrated thing with how everything fit together into an overall design on Mort’s side. So the Laboratory of Psychology didn’t look too good.

Farreras: So the primate section was criticized.

Coppola: The primate section was jettisoned.

Farreras: And the human work, the P300, Herb’s research? Was Herb still there?

Coppola: Yeah, Herb was still there, although Herb was getting a little unhappy.

Farreras: I meant to ask you about that because I’ve heard there were some tensions that

contributed to his leaving the Lab. That must have been after this BSC review then?

Coppola: Yeah. Now, I don't remember the exact timing, but shortly after this, Alan's wife committed suicide, and that really took the lab apart. There had been tensions up to that point, too, of course. They had separated before that and so there had been tensions that had drifted down throughout the lab.

Farreras: I've heard some about this. Did this have an impact on who was brought in or let or on what type of research was pursued or not? Oh, you want me to turn it off? Sure, that's fine. *[Tape recorder turned off]*

End of transcript