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## Gerald "Jerry" Notaro : USF 50th (2006) Anniversary Oral History Project: interview by Lucy D. Jones

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USF Florida Studies Center  
Oral History Program  
USF 50<sup>th</sup> History Anniversary Project

Narrator: Gerald “Jerry” A. Notaro (N)

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TRANSCRIPTION

J: Today is Wednesday, April 21, 2004. My name is Lucy Jones. I’m a graduate assistant for the Florida Studies Center. Today I’m continuing a series of interviews at the Nelson Poynter Library at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg campus with USF faculty, students, staff, and alumni, commemorating fifty years of university history. Today I am with Jerry Notaro, media librarian at the Nelson Poynter Library. Good afternoon, and thank you for meeting with me today.

N: How are you doing?

J: Good. Usually what we would do is start off with discussing what a media librarian does so we can get an idea of who you are at the moment.

N: A lot of what a media librarian is is dictated by the program and by the openness and vision of your director. They can do anything from buying the CDs and keeping them in order to as wide a variety of what I do here on this campus. On this campus, what I do as media librarian is I purchase all of the media software for the university as far as their collections are concerned. In that case, that meant becoming an advocate for cataloging those purchases, classifying those purchases,

putting them out on the shelves, and getting them circulated. We were the first library to do that within USF, and maybe within the state. I'm not sure. I know we were the first to do it at USF. It caused rumbles and spread. That was what I felt you do as a media librarian. You do what you can to be a media advocate. The second part of my job, which is the only - again, we're the only campus where a media librarian does this. I run the media department, which means media services, not only for the library, but for the entire campus. Obviously you know from your interviews how we've grown over the years. In my twenty years here, that means that the workload has really increased. When I came, it was just myself and Bob Thrush. Now it's myself, three full-time people, and three students. Even that's not enough. Another thing that we do is we run the USF Card Center here, which is a separate department on all the other campuses. I'm an advocate for media in the library. My master's thesis was called "Media: The Bastard Stepchild of the Library." You need an advocate. Media is Cinderella's turn at the ball. Media is the star darling of libraries now because it circulates so well. Even five [or] six years ago...I think it was about five years ago...the first DVD I bought. It was unbelievable. Why are you spending money on that media? Why are you blah blah blah? Everybody was grumbling and moaning. Oh, Jerry's not going to buy any more videos. He's gone insane. Now, our DVDs, which account for maybe one percent of our collection, if at all, is now thirty-five percent of our circulation. That's what you have to go through, even in the modern technology age. You can go all the way back. When I became a media librarian, I got my certification and my degree at SUNY, Buffalo. It was

specifically a program for media librarianship, which was very, very unusual back then. This was really back in the dinosaur ages. My becoming a media librarian was sort of a natural progression of having worked in libraries, a big library downtown in Buffalo, New York. [It was] a very progressive library. [It was] the first county library system in the country. [I have] even been active in the library club in college, and then becoming an English teacher, reading teacher, and the progressing to a school library media specialist, and then becoming a university media librarian.

J: That's quite a ladder of events.

N: I climb to heights.

J: Are you responsible for all of the TVs and everything in all of the classrooms?

N: Everything.

J: Only classes that can use the DVDs.

N: Right. Well, here's where it gets tricky. As things change and grow, as they always do - be ready for it - that is where the computer center then comes in. We do have DVD players, but we also have computers that can play DVDs. Then you've got DVDs that people call DVDs that are DVDs sort of, because they've recorded them at home, but there are a multitude of technologies, and DVD players can handle some of them and computers can handle some of them. It gets very murky. I've never liked murkiness. Tell me what I'm responsible for. You continually lobby because the funny. Some funding goes to here, some funding goes to there. I've always really had to beg for funds because I'm also responsible for all the distance learning that goes on; my department is [responsible]. A lot of

times, everybody agrees that we should have it, but nobody agrees who's going to pay for it. Tampa says St. Petersburg should pay for it. St. Petersburg says, well that's Tampa's responsibility. It's an endless thing that goes on, and it still goes on. People say, you're autonomous now so shouldn't it be clear? No. It's not clear. Things are much clearer in the library than they are in the media department. It's an outside of the library thing. When it becomes inside the library, it's very clear of what I'm responsible for. It's when it goes outside the library that things get a bit murky. We give very, very good service. Our surveys all come back very, very positively. Somehow we're doing something right.

J: We might as well talk about it now...the relationship between the St. Petersburg campus and the Tampa campus. Especially as it involves your work, not so much the autonomy question, but what are your connections with the Tampa pupils?

N: Again, it gets hairy because I do in one department what five, six, or seven departments do in Tampa. For example, there's a USF Card Center. We don't have a USF Card Center here. That's one of the many things that we do here. Then I have to somehow go back and forth with that department. When I call them and have to lobby or advocate, I'm advocating as a librarian and not in a position of authority. That's really tough. They don't listen to what I have to say. I can give you an example. For example, when we brought the SPC on campus, which was six or seven years ago, one of the things that they all negotiated was seamless. It's all going to be seamless. You've got to get the details down and the costs down and all that kind of stuff. One of the things they wanted them to have was an ID card. It became a very difficult thing because IDs are generated from

records such as admission records. There are no admission records so we had to have the ability to input that. We don't have the ability to input. You try telling these people, look, here are the problems that are going to be coming. You all met over coffee and made certain agreements, but this is what the reality is in the trenches. It was a nightmare. For a full year I tried to get Bill Heller into it. I tried getting my director into it, which didn't really help because he or she – I think that was Lanny Graves at the time.... What do they care when Lanny Graves calls over to Tampa if it's not a library issue? Because it wasn't really a library issue. That is how things happen. [The] same thing happens with distance learning. Then distance learning started to fragment. Certain colleges took over their own distance learning like nursing. Everybody's touting distance learning, distance learning, distance learning, using it, and trying to get faculty to become involved in it, but they're not talking about the reality of what it takes to do it successfully. That was what the problem is. Even when you have everybody agreeing, problems come up. When you have different departments, different colleges, different divisions, and different campuses involved, and everybody thinking somebody else is going to take care of it, it becomes a huge problem. That's where the problem is. It never really is the library. We've really been lucky. All the different media people do something differently. There used to be a media librarian in Sarasota, but the media center broke off, even though it's in the library, and became under the dean [of] academic affairs. [That] sounds ok, except then part of [the library] died. Without a media librarian being an advocate, media, that bastard stepchild, can end up in the cellar really quick,

skinny and scraggly. That's really kind of what happened. Unfortunately, in Tampa, the distance learning person and AD services person over there, who is now head of the USF Card Center as far as functionality is concerned, is a former librarian. That really helped because librarians think in certain ways. I think they're very service-oriented, and they want to get things done. We get a lot put on our shoulders because we do get things done in the fastest, cheapest way. I really think that's true. Maybe our success is part of our problem with image. It's like nurses and doctors. The doctors get the respect; the nurses don't, and the nurses do ninety percent of the work. It's sort with librarian and teaching faculty, but we'll go there another day. We are faculty. Although, when I was hired, we were not faculty. When I came here, librarians were A&P. It really didn't matter to me. I had already been a tenured librarian twice in two different situations. It didn't mean I didn't have academic creditability. I wanted to make sure I was compensated properly. Then we did become faculty. That's another part of our history. Librarians became faculty maybe eighteen years ago but not tenured faculty. That kept us apart. Many, many of the times that I go down to academic affairs and say, why didn't we get this? [They say] this only goes to faculty. We are faculty. For the eighteenth year, we are faculty. It's a little better now because things are automated. We're on a list somewhere so we get stuff. They really don't mean it. We are faculty, and I think advisors are faculty now, too. It was very tricky at one time as to who was and who wasn't. When we used to have a smaller faculty and really have faculty meetings with votes that counted and real arguments about things, it got real hairy as to who was faculty and who wasn't.



We get along well back and forth. We really have. We've been lucky. The libraries have gotten along very well. It's when I have to go outside of library functions, I would say, that it gets to be a problem.

J: From talking to Bob Thrush, it seems like the media grew out of the Tampa program. Has that tie been severed?

N: That was severed before I came here.

J: Okay.

N: It was Sam who did that. I've sure you've heard Sam Fustukjian and that name many, many times. You will no matter what area you're talking about. Sam brought me here. Sam brought me here from Indiana. He had a lot of knowledge of media and had a vision of media. I wouldn't have come to work here if it wasn't for him. He was my mentor once I got here. He was frustrating as a person, but the man had vision like no other that I had ever worked with. If you had an idea, he would let you run with it. He allowed me to do a lot of things that were very cutting edge, even today. I'll give you an example. I belong to many, many, many listservs. People are arguing as to whether media should circulate. I'm talking about big name libraries. Not only does ours circulate, but ours isn't even in the media center any more. It's out on the shelves with the books. That to me is a huge success story. There's no reason why it needs to be babysat, except for people who want more things to do in a job, I guess. Before I got here, Sam had hired somebody right out of media school, and it didn't really work. That person wanted to sit around, put numbers on records, and write out three-by-five-inch typing cards and stuff. That has never been my thing. If I wanted to do that, I

would've been a cataloger or a book librarian. I wanted to do things. When I came in, he had already severed the ties. Bob went from being a Tampa employee to being a St. Petersburg employee. [He went from being] not only a St. Petersburg employee but a library employee. Sam was a builder. He was an empire builder. He was criticized a lot for it, but it gave more influence to him when he came to a decision. There are things that make it more difficult because of that. It would be nice to be able to pawn that off to another side of the library. Nobody wants to be responsible for it because it's a pain, but it has to be done. Libraries traditionally take care of those kinds of tasks well. Even Sarasota is just amazed at our success rate and our lack of complaints up here. They get complaints all the time down there about stuff not being there on time, not being delivered, or mis-deliveries. Our biggest complaint that we ever get, with every survey we've done, and we do a lot of surveys, is lack of funding for what faculty think they should have either in the collection or in the classrooms. Those are the best kind of complaints to have.

J: That's what you want.

N: That's what I want. Maybe once or twice I can remember somebody saying, I didn't like that person's attitude or something, about a particular event. When I investigated it turns out it was a misunderstanding or whatever. It's really the lack of funds. There again, where the library is expected to fund the whole campus; again, I go with the cup. I know what we need. This is what we need. Now who's going to pay for it? Everybody runs. [It's] like a DNA test being given at an orphan shelter.

J: Could you tell me a little bit more about how Sam Fustukjian recruited you?

N: Actually, I can't say he recruited me. When I turned thirty-five, I had been an English teacher, a reading teacher, and then a school librarian. After doing that for eight or nine years, I said, I've done my duty for the country now. Although, I really loved being a school librarian. I really did. There was no support for it. I had four schools, four libraries, no help, and I was the break for the teachers every day when I went to a different school. It was just getting to be a little bit much. Media was very hot. AV was very hot at the time. Again, nobody wanted to touch it. None of the established librarians [wanted to touch it]. Everybody shuffled around the responsibility. That was my "in" because, why would any university or college want a school librarian? You know how they look down at the elementary. That was that I was willing to come in and take that responsibility. What I did was, I had to leave New York where I was and go out to the Midwest to prove myself. I went out to a small college called Franklin College in Franklin, Indiana, which, luckily, was a very fine, small liberal arts college. [I] enjoyed myself. [I] did my five years there, and when I hit thirty-five I said, now I'm going for the biggie job. I'm going to sustain; I'm going to work the rest of my career; I'm going to do some good. I really, really looked hard and applied for what I considered to be three dream jobs. This was one of them because I knew it was growing. My parents had sort of retired here; they were still going back and forth, but I knew they would end up here. I had a sister down here, and my best friend had moved to Tampa. I swore I would never live in Florida because it was too hot. Florida was a very different place twenty years ago. You really had to decide

whether you were going to give up the culture and everything. We have it now down here because of everything else. St. Petersburg is a wonderful place. I applied for three jobs, and I said, who wants me, and who wants me first? I heard from two. I remember the phone interview. I remember calling Signy, Cindy. I remember thinking that Sam was Southeast Asian. I thought he was from India from his accent. He was so enthusiastic and so knowledgeable about media that I really wanted to come. It takes that in order to do what you want. Some people like going where nobody knows what you're doing. I knew in order to have an advocate at a higher level to let me bring it where I needed to be. Then I came down, and there were four finalists. At that time, I was being wooed by one of the other jobs. I figured I could be a little cocky. I was a little cockier when I came down than I thought I would be, but Sam and I really kind of spoke the same language. I said to him, I know I'm going to get another offer. Where do you think we're at? I said, look, you're going to have to offer me the top of the range. [He said] well you're coming to Florida now. I said, I know, but this is what.... I said, how is a decision going to be made? He said, well, there's a committee, but the decision is basically mine. I knew at that point that he wanted me and that he was probably going to strongly recommend me. I left kind of knowing. I wanted to be wooed by the other job, too, but before I knew it, I got a phone call. Here I am in Franklin, Indiana, which is right near Indianapolis, by the way, and the county seat, as they call it when you're from the Midwest.... I had never heard of that, being from New York, but if you're from the Midwest, you know what a county seat is. He said to me, and this was like two weeks later, well I've got

good news, and I've got bad news. The good news is you have the job; the bad news is you have thirty days to get down here because I'm afraid they're going to freeze the position out on me. You know how the budget goes. You'll never know how fast you can move until you get a phone call like that. Within thirty days I was down here. That's how I got here. What happened after I got here was kind of interesting. Sam and I locked horns. He wanted to tell me how to do my job. That didn't make me happy. I wanted him to ask me or to let me suggest and then support me or talk about it, but he wanted to tell me. There came a showdown about six months after I came down here. I knew I wasn't used meat by thirty-five; I knew if I felt I wanted to move on, I could. Although, I loved it. The minute I walked in the door, Bob said to me, you must meet Sudsy.

J: He just knew?

N: He just knew. Of course, that's the history of the USF Singers because I started doing that right away. I went into Sam's office. He had an open door. It was wonderful. I said, you know Sam, you know how to do my job so much better than I do. Why don't I leave and save you that money, and you can do my job and your job. [He said] what? What do you mean? It was fine ever since that day. I miss him to this very day. In fact, I was offered to go over there. I was on my way over to Tampa to run the digitization program for USF when he had his misfortune. Why would I ever go to Tampa? Why would I ever go to Tampa except to work with Sam again? And of course to start something from the ground up, which is what I did here. It was like four video tapes when I got here and two overhead projectors. Bob was wonderful to work for. Bob was a terrific guy. He

made my job easy when it came to that part of it. The technical part of it is just running cables and knowing so much about the different technologies. It's just unbelievable what they get out of my department for such a small amount of money. In fact, in Tampa they have engineers and broadcast engineers and all these things doing what we do over here at an AV specialist level. [That is] not a very high level. As years go by, I'm responsible. I'm also a librarian, and I do library work. I'm in three hours today and four hours yesterday in reference. I'm expected to be [a] top-notch research librarian on top of what I do. I've sort of had to farm the technical stuff over to David to take care of making those decisions. One person just can't do it all. If I had a choice, there would be no question. I'd run right through that library door rather than the technology door. The technology door got me in the university level, and I really enjoy it. As the years go by, I have to fight to stay the librarian and not the technician.

J: Well, keeping up with the technology is difficult

N: It is difficult.

J: Not everybody can do that.

N: Right. Sometimes it comes at a sacrifice with my librarianship, and that will never happen. I won't let that happen. I love doing library work. I know I was born to be a librarian. There's no question. Almost thirty years I've been a librarian, and they really have flown by. I've loved my library work. It's been challenging. Being a media librarian is not one of the easier areas to go into. I don't even know if anybody goes into AV. It seems to be computer librarians is what everybody has to do. Really, computer librarians, media librarians, and digital librarians really

face the same problems and the same prejudices. Oh, that's computer stuff; that's not library stuff. That's the computer center. It's the same thing with the AV. Oh that's not library stuff; that's the AV center.

J: What are some of the more interesting projects you've been involved with at USF?

N: As a librarian? Well, certainly the number one thing is designing and opening up the new media center and the new library. Nothing will ever rival that as far as the amount of work we put in, the challenge that it was. [It was] exciting [and] agonizing. I used to wake up.... I'm telling you the honest to god truth; it sounds so ridiculous, like I don't have a life. I used wake up in a cold sweat [like] I forgot something important. What did I forget? Like a parent that was packing, home alone, leaving the kid behind. What have I not thought of? We really did such an incredible job. The minute I got here, Sam started planning for a new library. We didn't get one for another eleven years. We planned right, that was number one. We were consulted, that was number two. That had to be the most exciting thing, the fact that we planned the library, and we have such an incredible media center. You would never know until you go somewhere else to see how lucky we are. As an academician, I would have to say [that] the most exciting thing that I was involved with is winning the Professorial Excellence Program Award. There's only two librarians that have ever gotten it. It's an academic honor. Being the type of person that's looked on as a technician: Jerry, my DVD is broken, what should I buy? Jerry, I can't tune in to channel forty-nine, what should I do? It took a year. It was like you were going up for tenure or full

professorship. Getting that was a highlight of my years. There are many, many other things that I've been involved with that have been wonderful: the founding of SAPL [Society for the Advancement of Poynter Library], the USF Singers is certainly been a wonderful thing that I've been involved in. The founding of the club that the *Crow's Nest* just reported on. It was on the front page of the last....

J: Oh, the....

N: The gay and lesbian group. That's been a very proud day for me and a happy time. We were the first to do a lot of things, not because it's number one or we were the first as much as it is that I was able to convince the powers that that was the best way to do it. A lot of people would spend money from the department for resources and then keep them in their closets for 365 days and bring it out for the one hour that they used it. I was able to go through them and say, look, this doesn't make sense. If you let me have it and let the library have it or let me have the funds to purchase it, everyone will be able to use it. You'll always be able to have it. It'll be cataloged; it'll be protected. There've been very, very, very little of people who have spent departmental funds on media and then put it in their drawers or in their apartments. If you go to other campuses on other colleges, you will find just the reverse. The majority of stuff is stuck somewhere in a departmental closet somewhere.

J: One of the things I like about the media center here is that it's on the second floor. It's not up in the attic or in the basement of the library. It's in the middle.

N: Right. That's where it belongs. Luckily, we are able to be there because of the bridges because we have to bring equipment out.



J: So you can take it over...[interrupted]

N: You can take it over without having to go through the rain or to be under covers. That really has kept us on the second floor of both buildings. It started off in the old marine science building near the auditorium. There was a huge auditorium there. It's probably still there. I don't know if anybody uses it. We used to have movies there on Friday night with popcorn. That was a Sudsy thing. There was sort of a closet there where the equipment was, and the faculty came and got their equipment from the closet and went to the classroom, used it, and brought it back. That's what happened when Bob came over. He was an employee of Tampa because Ad Resources was in Tampa. Even now those questions of who's responsible for what are still not answered. It's who ever is bold enough, I guess and can afford to just do what they want to do. Those questions still come up today. I was in a meeting last week in Tampa about diversity and multiculturalism, [and the questions came up about] what is Tampa responsible for? What is the Division of Equal Opportunity and Diversity responsible for doing over here? Those things are never addressed.

J: Let's go back to the buildings. I think you mentioned, perhaps before we started taping, that when you came there were only three buildings on campus.

N: That's a little bit of an exaggeration. Coquina was just being finished when I got here. The new library had been built for a couple years. When I walked into that new library, the first floor was like an airport hangar, there was so much room. Within seven years, you couldn't move. That's why when we designed this building, we tried to design space-wise for utilization as best we could. There was

Bayboro Building. This was the Bayboro campus, not the St. Petersburg campus, as you well know. When I came down here, my cousins had come down here in the 1960s, and one of them graduated from here. He said, oh you're going to be at the Bayboro campus? I didn't know what he meant because that was before I got here. Why the name is so strong; that's why when this one opened, we renamed it. There was the library, there was Coquina, the pool was not open - it had been closed. That's what I meant. The three main buildings were the library, Coquina, and Bayboro. They all looked sort of alike. They had just finished Coquina when I got here. Then there was the old section. Sudsy was really here from the very beginning. I sort of came at phase two when things moved over to these three buildings that existed. That was it. Those were all the three buildings. They were relatively new. They had air conditioning. Marine science was marine science. In the beginning we were all kind of one. Now we're even less than one. When I came we used to still have keg parties over there on Fridays. When Sudsy came, the cafeteria [and] everything was over there. When I came, they had sort of moved over here. There were still some things going on over there. There were a lot of things still going over there. The auditorium was still being used for movies and for films and things. The classes had all pretty much moved over here.

J: Since then we've also gotten the...[interrupted]

N: Since then we've gotten everything. Everything. It's just unbelievable. Every time you turn around there's a new building. Of course it's even bigger now. I remember when the CAC was built. That was in stages because we didn't have a lot of money. That was 1989 [that] it opened up. The reason I know is because I

was approaching my fortieth birthday, and I swore I was going to go over there and lose weight. I spent six months over there during my lunch hour every day until I lost about thirty or thirty-five pounds. By the time I hit forty, I was down to my fighting weight. We won't talk about how long ago that was. It was 1989, I believe. Actually, [it was] the end of 1989 and the beginning of 1990 because I turned forty in June of 1990. It opened up in stages. There was no gym. I don't think there was a gym in there yet. I don't know. They added things on. You go in and there's a new section opened.

J: Who are some of the people that you remember the most? You've mentioned Sudsy and you've mentioned Sam Fustukjian; you mentioned Bob.

N: Of course, Ray Arsenault was here when I got here, although Ray and Kathy were living in France when I got here. So I didn't get to meet them until they came back, but [I remember] Ray and Kathy of course. Harriet Deer. Oh my God, Harriet Deer, all the people that were here.... It's terrible to talk about how wonderful they were. Harry Schaleman, my God, Harry Schaleman. We all knew each other. Sudsy was over when they opened Coquina. Her office was there, and that's where the dining was. We all saw each other every day. Sudsy was the heartbeat of the campus, as far as I was concerned. We all had lunch every day. We saw each other every day. We said hello every day. I'm trying to think of who else. It's going to be terrible if I forget people. Of course [there was] Bob Thrush. I'm trying to think of people who have gone. It's been so long. When Doc came in and showed me that picture from the Old Timer, we laughingly called it the Old Timer's Luncheon. That was 1990. That was fourteen years ago. It's amazing

how many people have retired back then. Our first associate dean...English teacher...second floor...Coquina building when they all moved over there...also a musician.... We had such wonderful music, programs, international programs, the Brown Bag Lectures, concerts, and theater. We had a lot of that back then. We felt it was our obligation to make this place different than a community center. One of the things that would raise it would be the culture that we brought. We worked really hard. Then there was a change in attitude, as you well know or may have probably heard. That change was, it's the students' money, let them spend it the way they want. That's when we started getting jugglers, caricatures, contortionists, and balloon twisters. They're on campus now. We didn't spend money on stuff like that before. Then that painter who picks the colors. Of course Sam was a big influence on campus. As you know, he was acting dean twice. He went over to Tampa and was director over there. [He] most likely would've been the dean of libraries had he survived his operation. Bob Hall, of course. These were teachers that people will talk about forever; especially somebody like Harry Schaleman. I remember meeting him the very first day. [He said] oh, hi, I'm Harry. In those days you didn't know who had a doctorate and who didn't, and it didn't make any difference. Harriett, Harry, and Pam Sterling did not have Ph.D.s but were highly, highly regarded in their profession. When Harriett found out that I was active in theater, film, and that I was the new media librarian, she just about flipped. We got along so well. I spoke her language [and] she spoke my language. If she wanted something, [I said] yeah, of course we'll get it, I'm happy to get it, or we already have it. It was like humming music

because she helped me, and I helped her. She taught Shakespeare a lot. Today is Shakespeare's birthday, by the way. She taught an interesting course that was Shakespeare on Film. They would study different versions of the same play on film, which you don't get to do very often. What an academic exercise. I used to have to go out and find all the different versions of Julius Cesar and all the different versions of Hamlet. Those were great times, finding those kinds of things and trying to come up with those. Those were real academic challenges. That's what you get into academia for. Not that [USF] isn't academic now, but it isn't a personal place like it used to be. Those are the growing pains. I've always told Tampa over all the years. They always say that they're getting more like Tallahassee or Gainesville, and I say, yes, but we're getting more like you. You see the difference immediately going back and forth. When I first came here, I lived in Tampa because my best friend lived over there, my other best friend moved to Tampa, and I really didn't want to live in St. Petersburg because it had the reputation of being God's waiting room. My parents lived here, and I didn't want to live in a retirement community. It was a very big mistake. Luckily, [it was] one that I rectified within three years. I moved here and luckily was here long before the boom came again. I could actually afford to live in a nice house in St. Petersburg. It was immediately apparent when you went over there. There were some advantages. When I became involved in multiculturalism and diversity, there wasn't any here. I started going over to Tampa and got into some big committees over there. I felt like I was part of somebody who thought like I did. It took a bigger and more diverse place to have that kind of thinking that I

get. Luckily, I've been able to come back here with what I learned over there and the fruit is the proof. Well, not necessarily the fruit.

J: Could you tell me some more about multiculturalism in St. Petersburg because that's one of the things I've noticed between the two campuses.

N: Big difference.

J: There's a very big difference.

N: Very big difference. Of course you know Tampa has a more diverse population. Right away you have a large Cuban population over there. When I lived over there and moved there, I had gone from New York to Indiana to Tampa. It was like going back to the dark ages when I went to Indiana, although it was a wonderful place. You didn't find a Greek restaurant, or if you went to a Chinese restaurant, it was run by two farmers whose family had been there for forty-seven years, and they knew how to boil rice. When I got to Tampa, I moved into a part that was very influenced by the Cuban culture. I went shopping there about a month ago, and most people speak Spanish in that neighborhood now. I was happy for that. I loved all that. On this campus, I wouldn't say it's because St. Petersburg is any more racially divided, although I think we probably have a worse history, probably because of the tourism industry. [If] you read Ray's book, you understand why that all happened. I'm not justifying it; I'm just saying you understand it. The lines were a little bit more clear. We just couldn't get the diversity over here. We had nothing to attract people here. Tampa's changed a lot in twenty years. A lot. It wasn't like it is now, even ten years ago. They worked at it. They worked at making it more comfortable and more diverse. That really is a

lot of the difference. I was open from the day I came here as far as my lifestyle. I didn't want to be anywhere where I couldn't be [open about my lifestyle]. I got a little bit of flack, [but] not much to my face. There were a couple of the long-timers that I know were pretty homophobic. I also knew they were a lot of other kinds of phobics so I didn't take it personally. They didn't promote multiculturalism or diversity the way it needs to be promoted in order for people to feel comfortable being here. I think Tampa got that message. Boy, did they get accelerated when lawsuits started flying. That's the difference. They have a slew of people over there whose responsibility is to do that. We don't have that over here.

J: Is it a reflection that [St. Petersburg campus] is not considered an equal part of the Tampa campus?

N: I think because of our size, we don't have to have a whole office. We do have a diversity officer, and that's Gary Olson. Before that it was Winston Bridges, and before that it was Herm Brames. These were secondary duties for somebody who was very, very busy.

J: They were professors or administrators.

N: They were administrators. Winston rose to the rank of associate. I'm sure Gary Olson, in his time in academia.... He's head of academic affairs. Winston was more of a teacher than a publisher and a researcher. Of course, Herm wasn't faculty at all. I've sure you've heard plenty about Herm. He came here the first day. He was here with Jesus; left his sandals here. He lived on campus. You know

that, too, I'm sure. It's a good story. You need to know that. Did you interview him?

J: No. Somebody else, I think, has.

N: Ok.

J: I'd be more than willing to hear [the story] from you.

N: I don't want to give you anything secondary. I know he was the first one here. He actually lived on campus with his wife and one boy at that time. He went on to have another boy and a girl. He was here right from the very beginning. We had our first semi-official diversity meeting about a month ago because we have a multicultural coordinator. It's a programming position, it's not a diversity position. That was enough to say, hip hip hooray, and let's have a meeting. We had to turn people away, and we went on an hour longer than we were supposed to. It shows the interest is there. We have a mailing list with thirty-four people. We had a campus climate study done. I went over to Tampa last week and listened to the report. I'm going to give my summary of the report to everybody on the list. We have people who are very interested in it. We need to get hardcore about it. As I told people in that meeting, we never had an eyebrow raised about any diversity issue until they did a study about why so many African-American students were happy at JC and didn't come here. Boy, did it raise some eyebrows. They said that they just didn't feel comfortable. I know minority faculty that told me they don't feel comfortable, not so much here [on campus], but in St. Petersburg. It's not like being in Atlanta or New Orleans or other cities that are more friendly. We are in the process of opening up a museum of African-



American History. We have to do that. These people are still alive that are very significant to our African-American history. We lost Shelton not too long ago. He was living history. We need to start talking and gathering this information. Things are getting better, but we need more than workshops. Very soon, we're going to need an office of diversity and somebody to track these things and work with it before it gets to be a problem.

J: Do you think that it would be easier to get such a person if the two campuses were separated?

N: No, I really don't think that that's it. I think it's just a matter of money and priorities. We have a lot of needs and a lot of money poured into this campus in the last few years in positions because of faculty. I'm hoping the day will come soon that we'll have an office of diversity or whatever they want to call it. [I'm hoping we'll have] somebody who is responsible both legally and culturally for the cultural climate. These are not things that just happen. We like to think we're a great big melting pot, whoever comes in is welcome. That's never been a success.

J: That touches on another topic, which is the relationship between the university and the community.

N: Ok.

J: You mentioned the St. Petersburg Singers as an example and some of the other programs you've been involved in.

N: A lot of those programs were targeted to specific audiences. Bill Heller is the one who made us known in the community. Those things come at a price. There's

sometimes you wish you were anonymous when they come piling in and you've got to serve a population that's tough to serve, because our resources are limited. That was a lot of the problems that went on during Bill's tenure. He opened the floodgates, and we didn't have much to give away. It's just his nature. The plus side was people started knowing who we were. There are people who still don't know where we are, you know that?

J: I know people in St. Petersburg that I have to tell how to get here.

N: Absolutely.

J: Yeah.

N: There's no excuse for it. We're a big force on the campus and in the community now. They certainly turn to us quick enough when they need things. I'm on the phone, I'm a reference librarian. I know what they call us for. They'll call us and ask us for a phone number rather than pay a quarter to call somebody else or to look it up. Especially as a library, we're a big resource. A lot of that goes with media. As much as it irks me that we have to put such an emphasis on that, it's just an evil necessity to do that kind of public relations stuff. The earliest involvement that I remember, long before there was a community board, long before there was a board, and long before there was a community association, there was SAPL (Society for the Advancement of Poynter Library). SAPL was founded the year I came. It was Sam's idea. He brought all the big people in town, Sally Wallace, Marion Ballard, and a lot of big names. [He brought] Andy Barnes from the *St. Petersburg Times*. That was the first time they were invited where their opinion was asked for, and certainly their money and their time. There was a

little bit of friction when they brought a fundraiser and a development officer on the campus for going after the people who were already giving to the library. Sam was such a visionary; he was ahead of the campus. He's the one when he became acting dean that founded the CAB, Campus Activity Board. I think that's what it stood for.

J: What does SAPL stand for?

N: Society for Advancement of the Poynter Library. When I first came here, the Poynter Library was being built. I went up on the roof every three days for six months and took photographs of them. When they opened up, I went over with the tray; I had narrated it with music. I hope they put it on a DVD or a video some day. [I] showed it being built, all the different stages of it being built. They were really excited. That was Sam's idea. He started it, and then I took it over when I came. The man was just incredible. They have it in their archives over there. [They will be] nineteen years [old] on June 14. That was my first day. It was Flag Day, June 14. I'll be going into my twentieth year come June. Don't feel obligated to ask me more if you don't have any more.

J: Sometimes things come up.

N: That's true. We don't mind pauses.

J: Students. You interact with the students in a lot of different ways. You have the ID cards and the library patrons. I was just curious how they changed over the past twenty years.

N: A lot. Most of the students were not active with things that were going on. We had the Student Union Board, and it was mostly Sudsy, whoever was the

president of student government, and a few people who did everything. I did all the work. Joe Alvarez, he's one that comes to mind. I think Jimbo was president of that little group at one time. They all become important to the campus, and they become community leaders in their own way. They were all older and mostly getting certification. The big change came when the SPC, which was SPJC at the time, when they brought their freshmen and sophomores. I remember we were really nervous about that because these were really different in ages, not necessarily in ability, but in age. I think it was terrific. It was really refreshing. We never saw anybody walk hand in hand on this campus; we never saw anybody sitting on the grass or on the floor in the library. It was a lot of rah rah rahing when they came here, but I thought they were terrific. I really, really liked working with the administrators. I thought they were terrific. There was some real hot, heated stuff going on at the top between the leadership: territory rivalry, rules, history, [and] that kind of stuff. I was impressed by the administrators. They did a good job. I really liked having the students on campus. It caused problems that were not their fault. They were technical problems. [The students] were respectful. They may have been eighteen, seventeen, [or] nineteen, but they were respectful. They enjoyed being here a lot, and I think it was a good move. It wasn't a move that I was that thrilled about at first. I'll have to say, I was among those who were not really thrilled, but it changed. Then the learning communities came in. Then, of course, freshman and sophomore classes [came in]. Then all hell broke loose. We're a lot busier. That's another thing; we're so busy. We were never this busy. We're really hustling to keep up. Funding is getting to be a

problem now. We've got all the programs here, but we don't have any extra money. We have all these students here, but we don't have any extra room or extra class space, equipment, or resources. We're busier down at reference. This is why I love being on reference because I know what's going on down there, although, I know what's going on upstairs, too, from being in the media center. We're certainly not isolated there either. We've got all different levels. The graduate programs are growing like crazy. I just heard yesterday that we're going to be offering a Ph.D. soon in the field of leadership.

J: That's good.

N: Yeah. It's just going to be amazing how much extra work it's going to be. The demand and the level of the librarianship is going to be incredible. Not that we're not up to it; we certainly are. We certainly get Ph.D.s in other areas, but it's the amount in the increased amount of areas that's going to change.

J: Will you have to focus more on those subject areas?

N: In a hardcore. I work with a lot of Ph.D.s from the Tampa campus that happen to live over here, and I help them out with their research in education. My background is in education. That's what I have a degree in. If somebody comes in with an area I'm not as familiar with the resources, that takes a lot of preparation. When you're doing research at a Ph.D. level, when somebody needs something, you can't say, can we get something else for you? They need that, and they've already known when they walked in the door and identified that as what they need. When it comes to interlibrary loan and other resources that we use, it becomes different.

J: Do you have any last thoughts [or] anything that you came in here thinking you would talk about that we haven't covered?

N: No, my memory was a little bit better. I wish it was even better, but no, not really. I think I've been pretty chatty enough.

J: Alright. Well, thanks for coming in and doing this.

N: Thank you.

*End of Interview*