

11-11-1985

Herman J. Brames : USF 25th (1985) Anniversary Oral History Project: interview by Milly St. Julien

University of South Florida Libraries. Florida Studies Center. Oral History Program.

Herman J. Brames

Milly St. Julien

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/university_history_campus_bios

Scholar Commons Citation

University of South Florida Libraries. Florida Studies Center. Oral History Program.; Brames, Herman J.; and St. Julien, Milly, "Herman J. Brames : USF 25th (1985) Anniversary Oral History Project: interview by Milly St. Julien" (1985). *Campus Biographies-All Items*. 31.

https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/university_history_campus_bios/31

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by the USF St. Petersburg campus Campus Biographies at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Campus Biographies-All Items by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

This Oral History is copyrighted by the University of South Florida Libraries Oral History Program on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the University of South Florida.

**Copyright, 2007, University of South Florida.
All rights, reserved.**

This oral history may be used for research, instruction, and private study under the provisions of the Fair Use. Fair Use is a provision of the United States Copyright Law (United States Code, Title 17, section 107), which allows limited use of copyrighted materials under certain conditions. Fair Use limits the amount of material that may be used.

For all other permissions and requests, contact the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA LIBRARIES ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM at the University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Avenue, LIB 122, Tampa, FL 33620.

HERMAN BRAMES

St. Julien: I am speaking today with Mr. Herman Brames, Director of Finance and Administration on the St. Pete campus of the University of South Florida, for the USF Silver Anniversary Oral History Project. Could you tell us about your first contact with USF, how you came to the St. Pete campus, and your first impressions about the University? Also, could tell us about the set up of the St. Pete campus when it first started in 1965?

Brames: I became aware of USF back in the spring of '64. I had a phone call from Ray King, who was then the Director of Housing at the University. I was completing my master's degree at Indiana. I had been on several interviews in Wisconsin and Michigan. When I got back to Indiana I had a note that he wanted me to call him, which I did. He indicated that he had been at a national student affairs convention and had run into Chuck Wildy who was the Dean of Men at the University of South Florida. Let me back up here. Chuck Wildy, who was the Dean of Men at the University of South Florida, had run into Allen Rogers who was Dean of Men at Indiana State University. Allen Rogers had indicated that I was interested in a job in a residence hall program somewhere. Chuck had told him that there was some openings at USF in Tampa. So Ray was calling to follow up on Chuck's word with the Dean of Men at Indiana State that I might be interested. He indicated that he was interested in me and would like to send me a ticket to fly down for an interview. I had never been to Florida before and I accepted it on the spot. This was about March, and I had just come out of Michigan and Wisconsin and that kind of weather. I flew into Tampa and knew before I got out of the airport that this is where I was coming. Anyway, I was hired by the University as a resident instructor and I was hired as RI in

Beta Hall in July 1st, 1964. I was RI for Beta Hall for the school year of '64/'65 and '65/'66. In addition to being the head of Beta Hall at that time the University was on a trimester system, and I think even today the residence reps all teach. So I taught two courses each trimester in what was then the College of Basic Studies in the Department of Behavioral Sciences. I did that for two years. In early 1965 the federal government declared that the maritime base, which is the initial 11½ acreages of this campus, was no longer required by the federal government and was available for eligible public purposes to eligible agencies, organizations, and governments. There were several people in the University at that time who were interested in the University becoming involved in Oceanography and Marine Science. Of course, as those folks looked at this piece of property, it seemed like a natural place where that kind of activity could be housed for the University. Additionally, there was some interest in St. Petersburg, people who had been talking to the president of the University for a number of years concerning the possibility of some kind of university presence in this community. So the University of South Florida, for those and other reasons, decided to apply to the federal government for a deed for the old campus. The federal government did provide a quit claim deed to the University as a result of that application for use of that property for educational purposes. It so happened that during the spring of that same year, 1965, the University had over admitted some 350 freshman students in Tampa. At that point in time, most universities across the country, including USF, required freshmen students to live on campus in the dormitories. That was a requirement unless you lived at home and commuted. The present B building was formerly a military . . . was used when the maritime base was active and was used as a barracks building. It

had long open dorms. It was the kind that you would see in fraternity houses where you have a room twice this long with bunk beds. Rather than notify those students that they couldn't come to USF, it was decided that with the potential to renovate that B building into a dormitory and some additional rooms up in what is now the Marine Science Lab building, that the University did in fact have the capability to house those students after all on the St. Petersburg campus. So those students were notified that they could not be accommodated on the Tampa campus, but offered them the alternative to spend a year in St. Petersburg on the St. Pete campus and promise them the library resources and the teaching by the faculty right here on this campus necessary to complete their freshman year program. So the University renovated the building and there were 360 freshman students. We moved on this campus in the fall of 1966. In addition to housing, the University provided food service for them and provided for their instructional program. There were a number of faculty that were assigned full-time to the campus. They were housed in offices here and all their classes were held here. They were residents of this campus. Tim Riley was a faculty member who was in charge of that academic undertaking. Those students were here in the '65/'66 school year and that was the first year of that program. In mid-1966 I had just completed my second year as RI in Tampa. The person who was on this campus at that time was someone called Phil Gorrey. He was the central administrator. Essentially he was in charge of the physical plant and the business functions. He left to become the business manager of the University of Central Florida. There was an interest on the part of the University in replacing him with someone who had both somewhat of a business background and someone who could supervise and be in charge of the freshman program,

at least the student affairs, housing, and food service side of it. So I was offered the opportunity to come to St. Petersburg as Center Administrator, which I did in August of 1966. The freshmen who had been here the prior year were now, the following September, assimilated into the dorms in Tampa. But a new group came in that fall. So we had another 360 in the fall of 1966. We ran an academic program for them just as we and the University had for the prior year group. In January of '67, some of the dormitories in the Andros complex were finished and ready for occupancy. So those students were then phased into the Tampa campus and the freshman program on this campus was phased out. About that same time some of the charter faculty were hired in the Marine Science program and that program started getting established on this campus. Additionally, at that time, the University decided that there needed to be something more than that here to maintain and establish an educational presence here on the campus. So the continuing education offices of the University were transferred from the Tampa campus to the St. Pete campus. The University established and operated a number of non-credit training program kinds of activities from that point until about the fall of 1968. So it would have been January of '67 to the fall of '68. At that point in time there were a lot of federal programs, the Johnson era, federal grants for training purposes. I don't recall how many, but there are probably hundreds of Peace Corps volunteers who were trained here on the campus. They were housed in those dorm rooms and offered instruction in the classrooms that were available there. So Peace Corps training programs and VISTA training programs were offered here. There was quite a lot of activity in those areas in those years. That gets us up to the fall of 1968. In the summer of 1968, the University decided that it would initiate and begin offering

instruction of upper level courses on the St. Pete campus. By the way, I should mention, from the time the University secured the property from the maritime service, there were anywhere from 6-12 continuing education courses offered here each term in the classrooms. Those continuing ed. courses were graduate courses primarily for teachers, the kinds of courses that teachers here needed for master's programs, certification, recertification, and those kinds of things. So there was that activity which had been going on for those several years before '68. But in '68 the University decided that there would be an expansion of the academic program to the upper level program. An initial array of courses at the junior and senior level was provided in the fall of that year. I don't recall the actual enrollments. It does seem that at first there was . . . maybe 239 FTE were generated on this campus and it grew from there to where it is today.

St. Julien: Is it because of the junior colleges which are located in this area that they decided not to have freshman and sophomore classes?

Brames: I think that is very definitely the case. St. Pete Junior College has always been recognized as one of the best junior colleges in the state of Florida and it certainly didn't make any sense then and most people would agree that it doesn't make any sense now to compete for students with the junior college since they do a very good job at that level. So that is why the decision was made to begin at the junior and senior level.

St. Julien: Did you remain here on this campus? I know that you went back to Tampa at one point. So how long did you stay on this campus after they decided to do the upper level classes?

Brames: From that first year the campus enrollment continued to grow and I stayed here until 1975. In the spring of 1974 there was an interest in the part of the Ft. Myers area to establish a branch campus in that area and Les Tuttle, who was the dean of the St. Pete campus having established this campus, was given the responsibility to get that operation up and going. I assisted him that first year in getting that campus going with an array of courses and the physical facility in downtown Ft. Myers. That was in the fall of 1974. In 1975 the state of Florida acquired New College, a formerly private college that was going bankrupt, and they sold the idea to the state of buying the college, the property, and maintaining New College as an independent liberal arts school. The University also had an interest in establishing an upper level program in the Sarasota/Brandenton areas similar to what the University had in St. Pete and Ft. Myers. At that time the activity associated with the administration of the regional campuses was so great that the University decided to establish an Office of Regional Campus Affairs whose responsibility would be to coordinate the activity of those campuses. Les Tuttle was appointed as the acting dean of that office. I joined that office as an assistant administrator in 1975. I remained with that office in that position until about 1980 at which time an opportunity came up to come back to St. Pete in my present position. The campus grew quite rapidly in terms of the number of students in the first four or five years. So as we got into the mid-'70s there was a realization by the University that the facilities on the former maritime base were not going to be adequate to support the kinds of activities that the University had envisioned on this campus. Marine Science and the Florida Institute of Oceanography was founded and was

located on this campus. Plus the upper level program expansion and all of the students associated with that. So the University worked with the Board of Regents to do a feasibility study for higher education in Pinellas County and study the need for expanded opportunities for that. That was accomplished with the Board staff. As a result of that feasibility study, it was determined that the University would be needing additional land and expansion space in Pinellas County if we were to service the population of this county. With that in mind the University announced that it would be planning to expand in Pinellas County, but in keeping with state policy the University would be looking for the land for that expansion to be donated by someone or some entity. Having announced that, the city of St. Petersburg advanced a proposal that would have the campus expand where we are now and indicated that as the University needed more land it would become available. The Pinellas County Commission advanced a proposal to donate some 85 acres adjacent to Wassingham Reservoir. The Clearwater City Commission--they advanced a proposal which was later withdrawn. The University studied all of those options. In fact I can remember taking the Greyhound bus tour with some of the Regents folks driving to and around those sites. The net result was that a presentation was made to the Board of Regents and a recommendation was made that the University expand this campus at this location.

St. Julien: How much influence did the business community of St. Pete have? I know that the community has always been very active in trying to promote progress in St. Petersburg. How much influence do you think they had in keeping the campus here in St. Petersburg?

Brames: I would say very instrumental. In fact as the city advanced its proposal for expansion here the business community of St. Petersburg indicated its intent to assist the city in purchase of the land for expansion. An entity called the St. Pete Progress Inc. was formed to receive corporate and other contributions from the community to assist the city in purchasing the land. So I would say that the involvement of the community and the corporate interest in that was a very significant factor in that decision to locate.

St. Julien: That is probably really important for the University to have that kind of support regardless of how the people feel about it. I know that St. Pete has been very active in trying to promote progress and new cultural advantages to this area. So even though I was disappointed that it wasn't placed in Clearwater, I believe that it has been good for the University to have that kind of support. Do you recall what the relationship was like between the faculty, staff, and students? From what I understand from other people is that because the University was so small that it was compared to as having a family atmosphere.

Brames: I think it even carries over to today. Although we have grown some and we are larger, I still sense that on the part of many people. Many people who feel that if they have to complete part of their course sequence in Tampa they just dread the day when they have to drive to Tampa to do that. It is not only the drive, it's the bigness and the impersonality. Yes, I think we had that and I don't think that it has been lost. I think that it still exists.

St. Julien: How much bigger do you think this University can get? I don't have any idea how much land they have for expansion. The city and the area seems

to be growing so fast. I know that alot of people prefer to come to the St. Pete campus.

Brames: The campus right now is in the final stages of redefining our campus physical master plan and that master plan calls for an eventual enrollment. Keep in mind when I say eventual. No one has put a date on that. That could be in the year 2000 or the year 2020. The planning is for a campus that would accommodate 5000 FTE students which we feel would equate to about 7500 student head count. We now have 2700 student head count and 1000 FTE. So we are talking about a campus with a head count about three times what we have now. FTE about five times. The feeling is that once the campus develops its curriculum in the broader sense that alot more of the students will be full-time because they can get their programs here in there entirety so that the number of heads will reduce in comparison to the number of FTE.

St. Julien: Can you give me an impression about how you feel about the relationship between the regional campus and the main campus? Some people that I have interviewed have stated that there has been a problem in maintaining a fair amount of funds for this campus not only because the main campus is alot bigger, but also because the funding for the legislature has not always been fair as far as the entire University of South Florida is concerned because of the competition with the University of Florida and Florida State. What kinds of relationships do you see between the regional and the main campus?

Brames: Jim Heck, the Dean of Regional Campus Affairs after Les Tuttle for about four or five years, had a phrase which I thought described pretty well the relationships in many areas between the regional and the main campus. He

used to like to talk about dynamic tension which comes with the territory. You mentioned that lots of folks at USF feel short changed vis-a-vis University of Florida. The young kid on the block and we are not getting our due, etc. Some of that fairness issue comes with the territory. You could visit any branch campus you want around the United States and I bet you would get the same dynamic tension evidence there. There is some of that feeling that exists here. By and large, I think that the campus is, at times, it may be ahead in terms of whatever fairness is, and at times it may be behind. I don't think there is any intent to short change the campus just like I don't think there is any intent to short change USF vis-a-vis Florida.

St. Julien: I have heard it said that the fact that this was a smaller campus forced the campus to be creative because people didn't have specialized jobs. You had to do a variety of jobs and it forced you to use community resources more. They felt that that was a real advantage even though the funding wasn't quite so much as they anticipated for programs. Do you feel that the development of the curriculum has changed much since the beginning? Did the main campus make the decisions as to the types of curriculum on the regional campus?

Brames: I think primarily, maybe not in all instances, but I think need as evidenced by student interest and enrollments, is what has driven most of the programmatic content of this campus rather than the particular interest of someone in Tampa to do something in St. Pete. But I said generally. Now keep in mind that I said earlier that there were several people in the early to mid-'60s who felt that the University needed to get involved and was strategically located in such a place as to become involved and become

a leader in Marine Science and Oceanography. So that program emerged because of the particular interest of a number of people in that activity as versus student demand. That is primarily a research operation and only in the later years has it even become a degree granting department of the University. In the first years it was strictly research. There were no students period. So there is an example of something that wasn't student demand driven, but rather a vision of something that the University felt it could excel in and was located in such a geographic area that it was especially suited to make a contribution in that area.

St. Julien: I know that the University has had three different presidents and three interim presidents over the 25 year history. What kind of influence or change has the University gone through as a result of these different administrations?

Brames: I think that during the presidency of Jack Brown there has been placed a much greater emphasis on the graduate and research activities and programs of the University than prior to that.

St. Julien: I think that would include even for the faculty more research and publication on their part. It seems that has been some of the responses that we have gotten which is good for a university if you are going to compete with other large universities.

Brames: I think as an example of that interest and of that direction the major growth of the Marine Science Department has occurred during the tenure of Jack Brown. I don't recall the exact figures, but I think that department was a department of six or seven faculty members and it grew to currently

twenty-three during the later stages of Cecil Mackey's administration and then coming into Jack Brown's administration.

St. Julien: How do you think the students felt about the lack of sports activities for this campus?

Brames: As you aware of, alot of our students are working students and--as opposed to alot of the students on the Tampa campus who are full-time residents living on the campus which is their total environment, they are not working, and they don't have to support themselves--so alot of our students don't have alot of time for that kind of activity to begin with. On the other hand, there are certainly some who did and do participate and would have or would now if additional things were available. You mentioned earlier that someone said that because of the sparseness of the facilities we had to do things creatively and look at different ways of doing things. We have no softball diamonds, but I played with students on campus softball teams that participated in city leagues which is the same as intramurals except it was the city of St. Petersburg. I played on campus basketball teams with students in the city of St. Petersburg Recreation Department's league. We didn't have the softball fields out here like they do in Tampa or the tennis courts or the gyms or things like that, but there were opportunities for students to participate if they wanted to. Not in all areas. I mean we didn't have the benefits of everything available in Tampa, but there were some opportunities. On the other hand I think that there have been and there are students who feel like that there is a dimension of a college experience which is lacking on this campus by not having the full array of facilities that one might have

on a larger campus or even a campus not so large that might have a more typical college or university physical plant.

St. Julien: It seems that there is a lot of emphasis on cultural activities, like the Lecture Series Committee, the Dali Museum, and the Poynter Institute. So there seems to be a lot of emphasis, rather than on sports activities that there might be on other campuses, for the cultural facilities available in the community. I know the community relationship with the University has been very important and very strong. Could you tell us about that relationship and how it influenced the development of the programs here at the University and participation with the community?

Brames: Some people have suggested that there is a lot of existing town-gown intermingling relationships. What exists today has really only begun in the past several years in my opinion. Depending upon whom you are talking to and their perspective of things, you could get different perspectives on that. In my opinion, you could talk to some people who would suggest that there is very little. Others might suggest that there is substantial activities. Without suggesting either one let me just say that in our area of activities and programming there is significant involvement by certain segments of the community. Primarily I would think, except for very popular programs, it would be . . . You have a lot of retired folks who come to a lot of our lunches, not all of them, but a lot of them. For the past several years we have been involved with the arts community through the art show that is done here over a period of about a week every year. That involves a different group from the community. The Brown Bag Luncheon maybe brings in one group and the Two Sitters Art show maybe a different group. Other specialized programming and activities like the

China series might appeal to a different group. There is alot that hasn't been done that could be done to increase and broaden that participation but some of that, for instance, is really based on the fact that alot of times alot of your community involvement in a campus stems from activities which spin off from academic units, be it the theater, the music department, or plays and productions which bring the community on the campus. We don't have academic programming in those areas on this campus. To paint the picture a little more clearly my guess is that on the Tampa campus at the University, the majority of folks who would get on that campus, outside of basketball, would get there for fine arts events. That is a guess.

St. Julien: The impression I'm getting from your answer is that there wasn't much community support for the University when it first started.

Brames: I think the early interest in the campus development here was probably not broad based. I'm not saying that there wasn't any interest, I'm just suggesting that maybe the campus' beginning here did not result in a ground swell of public opinion or a need for access to higher public education. But that again is not to say that there wasn't support for it, and this community has always had support for this campus and when I talk about town-gown or community relations I'm not trying to suggest they have ever been bad because they haven't, it is just that what I am saying is that while most people out there are very extremely supportive of the campus and its activities and programs, that there haven't been alot of people out there brought to the campus to participate in that in other than a classroom kind of a study.

St. Julien: I talked to one of the former students and one of the things that she remembered was the interaction among the students in the classrooms. She seems to feel that because of the difference in the ages of the students like having retirees taking classes with people just getting out of the junior college and the interaction among them was much more volatile than say a group of students in class that had all just gotten out of the junior college and were basically the same age. As a teacher, did you notice that difference?

Brames: My teaching experience was with the homogenous group on the Tampa campus. I taught freshmen and some sophomores who were all 18 and 19 years old for two years. When I transferred to St. Pete I no longer taught. I have not taught anything on this campus. I have heard the same thing said by other people, but I think some of the folks here that you are going to be talking to would be the appropriate people to get responses from.

St. Julien: In summary, as you look back over the period of the growth of the campus, what would you say were some of the best or some of the worst developments that have come from the expansion of this campus in such a short period of time?

Brames: Hopefully the best thing is what still looms ahead of us. I'm not sure that I have anything that I could pinpoint as the worst thing. The few years that I have spent here have been good and rewarding experiences. I mean it when I say that I hope that the best experiences are still the ones to come.

St. Julien: Well, thank you very much for having this interview.