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Mark Greenberg: —January 19, 2005. I have the pleasure of being with Betty Castor, a long-time member of the Tampa community, active in politics, the president of this university from 1994 to 1999. And we're going to sit together for an interview as part of the university's fiftieth anniversary, which will be celebrated in 2006. Betty, thanks so much for coming today. I really appreciate you being here.

Betty Castor: Well, I'm delighted! Delighted to join you and talk about USF.

MG: We could start at the very beginning. We could start with childhood and go through your early education and spend hours and hours and hours together, and never get to your USF years, because I know that you had really fabulous experiences as a teacher. You were in Africa for a period of time, and there is an oral history interview that Peter Klingman did some years ago that covers some of those early experiences. So with your indulgence, what I'd like to ask you is if you might tell us a little bit about where you were born and raised, and then we'll move fairly quickly into how you got to Florida.

BC: Well, I grew up in a small town in southern New Jersey, Glassboro. I grew up in a very traditional home with two parents, a mother who spent her time at home as a homemaker and a father who was a small businessperson, I had a—I come from a large family. I have a twin brother, two younger brothers, and an older sister. So, we're all close in age range, so I think it was an aggressive family household in which you were always trying to protect your turf. But it was a traditional and good experience for me.

I attended all the public schools in Glassboro, and then went on to a college, Glassboro State[1], that was also in my hometown. So for the first twenty-two years of my life, I lived

[1] Originally, Glassboro Normal School was founded in 1923, and has been through a few re-naming and growth periods—the school became Glassboro State College in 1958, and is now (in 2009) Rowan University.

in the same place and attended all of the public institutions. And that might have something to do with why I wanted to leave and get away (laughs) when I graduated.

MG: Let me ask you about growing up. When you look at your political career, and your activities in education, were there things in your formative years that gave you that interest or led you to want to be involved in public service and in higher education?

BC: Well, there were a lot of influences. First, in the public arena, my father was the mayor of the town in which we grew up. He was mayor during all of the impressionable years for me. And his brother, my Uncle Tom, was the chair of the school board. Our little neighborhood seemed to have a lot of role models, particularly a woman who was my neighbor, Ruth Mancuso, who was in those days—this is the fifties [1950s]—a member of the school board in Glassboro.

So, number one, I had a lot of role models who were very involved in politics and in civic affairs, and I grew up thinking that public affairs was a very honorable activity and very positive. So, that, number one. And the fact that we had a college in my home town made us close to higher education. In fact, we lived just two blocks—two city blocks, or town blocks—from college. So the college was a point of departure for me. I walked to my schools and I walked to my college. (laughs) So education always played an important role, and it was like a family role.

MG: Were you involved as a youngster, or even as a college student, in elected office or in public office?

BC: Oh, I was eaten up with the desire to, even as a young person, become involved in groups and activities, and was a member of the student council in my high school years. I headed several organizations, the Future Teachers of America—I was president of that group—and then when I went on to college I became very involved in college activities, both intellectual activities and athletic activities. I was president of the Women's Athletic Association.

But in addition to that, I headed up a project, which certainly was a life-changing project for me. I headed up a project called Operation Uganda, which was an activity of college students to send educational materials to East Africa, and particularly to Uganda, which was becoming independent at the time [Approximately in 1962]. And that gave me an opportunity to help organize, to set agendas, to work, to write, and just broaden my horizons dramatically.

MG: As I understand it, your Bachelor of Arts degree is in education.

BC: That's correct—high school social studies.

MG: How did you choose that particular field? As you were in college, what were your career ambitions?

BC: Well, it—I think for young women, education and nursing were certainly the options. And I—from the time that I was—the time that had my earliest memories, I always had such great respect for my teachers. I can remember all of them. It was like yesterday. And they were outstanding. They were women; they were absolutely devoted to this profession. A lot of the teachers that I had in school taught my parents, so we were still from a relatively small town of about eleven thousand people. It was always—I always admired my teachers and wanted to emulate them. They were my earliest role models. They were educated. They were well-read, and they were well-respected in their community. So it was a logical profession for me to choose.

MG: Can I ask—what year did you graduate college?

BC: Sixty-three [1963].

MG: Heady times.

BC: Oh, yes.

MG: As you were graduating, what were your plans?

BC: Well, I was very much influenced by a feeling, an idealism of the time. I think the idealism in part came from our country's leaders—this was after the election of John F. Kennedy. I remember his inaugural address like it was yesterday—"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." It was a time when young people were really investing in international affairs and thinking about the world and how to improve this place. It was a very idealistic time. And I was caught up in that fervor as much as anyone else in my age group. I was very influenced by a college professor, who was my mentor. His name was Marius Livingston, by the way, and he was a great teacher. He helped me to understand how important it would be to travel and to participate somewhere else in the world.

So I went—I had several options. I was selected—these were the early days of the Peace Corps—I was selected to go to Ethiopia. I didn't—I had an opportunity, in while I was a college student, to become a part of President Kennedy's delegation to the independence celebrations in Uganda. So I had been there, had traveled there. I really preferred sub-Saharan Africa; that was my interest. So I looked for another program, and found one at Columbia University, a teacher's college, called Teachers for East Africa. It was perfect. I applied to that program, was accepted, and then went off to Uganda and taught school for two years.

MG: You had—(laughs) I'd love to spend a good while talking about this, and I know it's been covered other—there is—so— It pains me, but we're going to skip to the end of that experience in Uganda. Did you come back to the United States directly?

BC: Well, I traveled the long way home, and I met my former husband, who was traveling. He was an attorney from Florida; he was returning from having practiced law

in New York and coming back to the Miami area. So I returned home, and then followed him to Miami, and we were married and subsequently settled in Miami.

MG: Was it, then, a sheer accident you would end up in Florida?

BC: (laughs) A sheer accident, absolutely! I had—I actually had planned to back to Columbia, where I had a fellowship, and at the last minute I said, "Well, you know, I'm not getting any younger." I was twenty-four, twenty-five. (laughs) So I followed my former husband to Miami, where we were married. Then I became extremely involved in activities in the Miami area. I joined the League of Women Voters, which was a group of—at that time—women who were very much involved in civic affairs and studying government and making recommendations. It was the ideal kind of civic club for me. I became involved in working in elections and campaigns.

Miami in the late sixties [1960s] was a very interesting place. It was an interesting place for civil rights. The African American community was really becoming a very sophisticated community, and doors were opening. I wanted to go back to work, and applied for a position with the Dade County Public Schools. I was offered a position in an all-black school. It was the time of integration in Florida. So I was part of the cadre of teachers who helped to integrate the Dade County School System, which was a very enlightening experience, and I enjoyed it very much.

MG: There again, I wish we could—a whole 'nother interview. We'll spend some time talking about that. You arrive in Miami in about sixty-five [1965]?

BC: Uh—early sixty-six [1966], yes. Early sixty-six [1966]. Went back to New Jersey and was married, and just went back to Miami to start my career and to start my family.

MG: I understand you went to school in Miami as well, and earned another degree.

BC: Yes, right. I got my master's degree at the University of Miami, another interesting period. But that was my—actually my first relationship with USF, because I finished most of my work, and my husband was offered a position with the legal services department, heading that up here in the Tampa Bay area. And I had to leave Miami with him, and by that time we had one child, a baby. And so we were moving to Tampa, and the first thing that I did was explore the possibility of finishing some of my coursework at the University of South Florida. And up until that time, I didn't know anything about the university, but I learned very shortly.

MG: This would have been in about sixty—

BC: Sixty-six [1966].

MG: And—

BC: Sixty-seven [1967].

MG: The university's seven years old at that time, so it's still a young university. You were in education, is that correct?

BC: Yes. I was getting my degree in community college teaching, actually, and took some independent studies here at USF to finish off—did a practicum at Clearwater Community College—and got enough credits to complete my master's degree.

MG: You were here about five years. You had a family and a husband, and you were planning a teaching career. And within about five years, you're elected to the county commission.

BC: (laughs) Rather remarkable.

MG: What's going on? What prompts you to get so involved in Hillsborough County politics, to run for office? What was that experience like, the campaigning and being a relative newcomer and finding yourself not only on the ballot, but in a commissioner's seat?

BC: Well, Florida was a laboratory for growth expansion, and what one can do—what governments can do wrong, in terms of planning for growth and management. I mean, the state changed so quickly in the decades of the fifties [1950s] and the sixties [1960s], and during the seventies [1970s], growth in the Tampa Bay area was just rampant. The county commission has a special responsibility in approving developments, and at that time they were the planning commission. There was a separate planning commission, but all of the recommendations had to be approved by the county commission. I was very concerned about the decisions that were being made. It seemed to be that there was just unbridled growth, that we were not being nearly—we had not done the planning, the thoughtful planning that we needed for the population that was here and the population that was coming here.

I worked with other people, a number of the USF faculty, on starting an organization called Save Our Bay. The idea of Save Our Bay was to try to do something to limit growth and the intrusiveness of building on estuaries and on the coastline. And that led to an interest in what was happening at the county commission. I remember I hosted a group in my living room of people who were interested to say, Who can we get to start running for these offices that will care about growth management? And people said, Well, Betty, why don't you run? You don't have anything to lose. You've got three kids at home and a husband that's supporting you. And I said, "Why not?"

And so I ran in that first election. Of course, everyone remembers their first election. There were fifteen people in my race—excuse me, thirteen. There were eleven Democrats, because these were the days of the massive primaries. There were eleven Democrats and two Republicans in that race. In the first primary, I was the top vote-getter. That was amazing to me, that people would actually go out and vote for me. It was a wonderful and exciting period.

MG: How did you stand out in that crowd? What was it?

BC: I was female.

MG: Were you the only female?

BC: I was the only female, yes. There were ten men and myself. And if you can't get a majority—if you can't get the highest number of votes in crowd, something must be wrong. But, yeah, it was most surprising because I was such an outsider. I mean, most of the people running lived their entire lives in the community where they ran. So, I think I earned the carpetbagger title for a while. But then we had a very close runoff, in which all but one of the people who ran in the primary supported my opponent, so I won that one in a very close election. And then I had a general election, which I won rather handily. So I became the first female ever elected to the county commission, although a woman had served earlier, to serve out the term of her husband.

So that was a very interesting period, and one in which there were a lot of four-to-one votes on the county commission over zoning and planning decisions. But I felt very good about it.

MG: Was—you ran as a Democrat.

BC: Yes.

MG: How did that affiliation, that party affiliation, come about? Had you been a Democrat all your—?

BC: Yes. Yeah, my father—my family, for the most part, were Democrats. And in Florida at the time, the state was basically a Democratic state. It was like the rest of the South; it was a single party domination. It wouldn't have been very likely that I would have registered as a Republican. But the Democratic Party ran the gamut from moderates to conservatives.

MG: On the county commission—well, first of all, before we even get to sitting on the county commission—During the election, is USF an issue in the politics of the county commission, and in the politics of running for a county commission seat?

BC: It's not a great controversy, that was certain. But for me, it really was representative of what the county needed to do in terms of managing its growth. The university community—the broader community today, geographic community, I think is a good example of an area where local governmental officials did not do the job that they should do. And it's happened all over the state. I mean, most of the university towns have not been well planned, unfortunately. We should have imposed restrictions on the development of Fowler Avenue, Fletcher Avenue, and the environmental area. It took many years to come up with a university zone, which we have today, but by that time

most of the roadway was developed, and I think that was unfortunate. The old-time strip commercial is what characterizes this entire area around the university today.

MG: How would you have liked Fowler and Fletcher Avenue to have looked?

BC: Well, we certainly should have had service roads. We should have had a much broader buffer area that would have protected the university from some of the strip commercial development. I think that would have been—we should have preserved some of the areas. The university—we're doing a lot of in-filling today, which is necessary, but expansion is somewhat limited now by the surrounding area.

MG: While on the county commission—and you're on the county commission from seventy-two [1972] till seventy-six [1976]—

BC: Um-hm.

MG: Is that—pardon my ignorance—but that's a single term, or two?

BC: One term.

MG: One term.

BC: One four-year term.

MG: During those four years, are there specific issues that come before the county commission regarding USF, whether they be zoning issues or other ways in which the university and the commission are working together?

BC: Well, I think one of the more interesting issues was the location of the Hillsborough County Museum of Science and Industry, which was a big controversy. Today MOSI, or the Museum of Science and Industry, is located just south of the university on Fowler Avenue, but at the time, the Chamber of Commerce and the city fathers wanted the museum located downtown. I took the view that it should be located near the university, so that it could take advantage of the proximity and what the university would have to offer from faculty—and I must say that I prevailed, and we prevailed, and that is the reason that MOSI is located where it is today. It was the right decision.

MG: MOSI stands out now as being one of the relatively few cultural institutions that aren't downtown. Now, with the Tampa Bay History Center and its decision to be downtown in Channelside, and the art museum and its efforts to rebuild downtown—was there within the county—now, obviously we're talking about city and county, but were there ideas or discussions during this period about the way in which they wanted Tampa to look, and zones or focal points for cultural and arts within the area?

BC: Well, most of the discussion—most of that discussion really took place with the chamber and the city fathers. The university was always perceived as being "out there." I

mean, even today I'm always amused when people start saying, Well, it's such a long way out. And I think people in Tampa felt very comfortable with the University of Tampa; it was smack downtown. And a lot of the early affiliations of businesspeople was with—actually with the University of Tampa.

The other difference for the University of South Florida was that there was not a board of directors; it was the statewide board of regents. So you didn't—there really wasn't an ownership in the earlier years by some of the leaders in the community in the university. And I must say, I think that has changed. I think it's changed dramatically. But in the early years, USF struggled to be the community's university, because of its location.

MG: Were there things that you could do—I mean, MOSI, I guess, is an example of trying to draw folks to the university as being more than just you know, classrooms and other university buildings. You placed MOSI in close proximity and suddenly that kind of changes the way in which people perceive the location of the university. Now, there's other things around it. Were there other ways in which you were actively seeking to have both county and city officials think about the university as being more central to the region?

BC: Well, I think that the dramatic change was a quality of life change, that in the beginning and even during the sixties [1960s] and probably well into the seventies [1970s], I don't think people realized that this institution was turning out thousands and thousands of new degreed people, who became our teachers. They became—eventually, our physicians. They became our social scientists. They became our professionals. So there was a new professional class throughout the entire Tampa Bay area that people failed to realize. I mean, even now, you can see the influence of the older institutions—University of Florida, Florida State [University], FAMU [Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University]—in some of the social areas. But the improvement in the quality of life, the higher aspirations, a new, I think, professionalism in our educational institutions, the beginning of the community college, and now the full development of the community college—that all happened in a relatively small period of time.

MG: There are several issues that come up. I know that the University Square Mall is being developed around this time, and I believe that comes before the commission.

BC: Um-hm.

MG: There's water usage issues. There's widening of roads. Sewage comes up—all the sorts of things that—

BC: All the bricks and mortars.

MG: Right, that come up during this period. Did the commission have a sense of its long-range vision for the university's space and the space around it? Were there ever any task forces or other kinds of planning groups that mapped out—you know, five, ten, fifteen

years—how they wanted Fowler and Fletcher to look, and how they wanted the university to be situated within that area?

BC: Unfortunately, no. I think most of the decisions that were made relative to the university were made as a result of a specific application for a zoning permit. The University Square Mall is an example. It does seem—every area must have a mall, I'm not sure (laughs) if that's true, but this was only the second mall constructed in that area. So that was a very popular idea.

MG: Was it an idea you supported?

BC: I can't remember. I can't remember.

MG: In seventy-six [1976], your first full term as county commissioner is coming to an end. Presumably, you could have stood for reelection, but you chose to move on.

BC: Um-hm.

MG: What prompted the decision? What were you thinking about, as you moved into, I guess, your third and early in the fourth term as a commissioner? Had you thought seriously about a second term on the commission?

BC: Well, it certainly was a possibility. I think I would have been elected easily. I also realized that the key decisions in my areas of interest in education, for instance—were made not at the county commission level, but in the state legislature. I had broad interests; they were education, environmental issues. And I thought [there was] an opportunity because the person that I had subsequently defeated had not been as aggressive in protecting the Tampa Bay area as I thought he should have been. So it was a combination of my own interests beyond the local government area, as well as what I perceived to be an opportunity in this race.

MG: Did you run largely on educational issues in that seventy-six [1976] senate campaign?

BC: Actually, we ran—I ran somewhat on educational issues, but more on issues involving the development of the state. Water issues, water supply, growth management. I very much supported state growth management laws, taking some of this decision-making not out of the hands, but certainly giving the state more of a role in determining areas of regional impact, and those issues. So the education issues were important, but I don't think they dominated the race, no. It was much more about various state issues.

MG: When you were elected and got to Tallahassee, did USF or higher education play a role, or did you take an interest in those issues in Tallahassee?

BC: Yes. I was on the education commission—committee, excuse me—and I was always a supporter of funding for our educational institutions, higher ed specifically, as well as

public schools and community colleges. So, education—and if you look at what the responsibilities are for a legislator in this area, basically they're education, education, education, and then all of the other issues. But as a portion of the state budget, of course, education is half of all of the—more than half of general revenue, and probably half the state budget.

MG: There have been periods over the last several decades in which there've been really significant cutbacks—

BC: Um-hm!

MG: —to higher education in the state budget. When you were first in the senate, were there fights beginning about the degree to which the state would fund higher education? Were you involved in heady discussions about the way in which Florida would handle higher education? North Carolina, for example, is often placed as an excellent example of the way in which a state has developed a world-class higher education. Florida doesn't have that reputation.

BC: Um-hm. The early eighties [1980s] was a period of particular emphasis on the management of institutions as well as the funding. The big issue at the time was led by Governor Bob Graham, who wanted Florida's universities and community colleges to be in the upper quartile. So that was our goal, getting to the upper quartile and measuring us against other institutions, like the North Carolinas at the time, the University of California system.

And that was—those were heady times, and those were times when there was really a positive agenda. There was a reason to support greater appropriations, because if you make it the upper quartile, you relate the expenditures to quality, what is the quality of our graduates as compared with others. So that was a period that lasted all throughout Bob Graham's second term as governor, and coincided with the period of my second term in the senate—actually my third term, because each time I was in the senate I was there for a two-year term.

MG: How did that occur?

BC: It was because of reapportionment. My first term, I actually resigned after two years to run for lieutenant governor. When I was reelected in eighty-two [1982], I had a two-year term, and then I had no opposition, so I ran for another two-year term.

MG: After two years—so, you're four years on the commission, then two years in the senate, and then lieutenant governor.

BC: Yeah. (laughs)

MG: Tell me about the ticket. Tell me about how it comes that you had this opportunity to run for lieutenant governor.

BC: Reubin Askew was governor when I was elected the first time. His lieutenant governor was a very fine gentleman named Jim Williams. Jim Williams became the gubernatorial candidate. I had a lot of respect for him. I thought he was just a very honest individual with a lot of experience; came from Marion County, central Florida area. He asked me if I would be his lieutenant governor candidate, and I thought it was a great opportunity, and I did it.

We were not successful. But it was a great experience, and when I ultimately ran for commissioner of education, I benefited enormously from having that earlier experience. And it also gave me an opportunity after my loss to work in the state bureaucracy a little bit as head of the division of elections, a job which I did not particularly find challenging. And then I had an opportunity to come to the University of South Florida in an administrative position, which I loved.

MG: Let me—I want to talk a little bit about that, because you mentioned that even though you were ultimately unsuccessful in running—you were up against Bob Martinez in this—?

BC: No, that was the year that Bob Graham won his position.

MG: Ah!

BC: So there were actually four major candidates in the Republican—I mean, in the Democratic primary, and there were several candidates in the Republican primary, Jack Eckerd [of Eckerd Drug Stores, Eckerd College, and Ruth Eckerd Hall] among them. But Bob Graham won in that year.

MG: What was it—that's interesting. In so far as—what was it about Bob Graham's administration that you felt, based upon your time in Tallahassee, needed improvement, that you would stand in the primaries with Williams against him?

BC: Well, Bob Graham was in the [Florida] senate. We were both in the senate together. So he was—

MG: Yeah, I'm getting my chronology mixed up.

BC: Yeah, right.

MG: Okay.

BC: The first time—this was his first time.

MG: Ah.

BC: Bob Shevin was another candidate that ran that year, and Hans Tanzler, who was the mayor of Jacksonville. It was an unusual lineup; that was in seventy-eight [1978].

MG: Okay. Excuse me. And Graham will ultimately serve two terms.

BC: Right.

MG: Right. And so you—

BC: And I would have a chance to work with him very closely. We have a great relationship.

MG: Right. Okay, so that explains (laughs) why you didn't have to run against him as a standing governor. So, you had had a relationship with him though, in the senate—both as state senators, you—he runs for governor, you run for lieutenant governor.

BC: And Jim Williams, who was the lieutenant governor, runs for governor. Everybody runs.

MG: Right. I need a scorecard.

BC: (laughs) We all do!

MG: But then you end up—excuse me. You mentioned that even though you were ultimately unsuccessful in that particular race, you said you learned a good bit from that experience that would help you when you run for commissioner of education. What were those experiences? What was it that—?

BC: The vastness of the state of Florida. You know, elections today are very complex. Florida is really three, Florida is, at least. It's many media markets, but there's a tremendous south Florida the people who reside in central Florida never get to see. And then there's rural north Florida—not so rural now, but there are some vast sections from Duval County over to Pensacola, with the Gainesville and Tallahassee outposts. So it's a lot of the state to cover. There are important people; there are important institutions that—it's really hard to absorb the first time out, very difficult. So the advantage of having been there and having made some friends and established some relationships is irreplaceable when one goes back to run again.

MG: Did your message play better in some areas than others?

BC: When I ran for commissioner of education?

MG: And also the lieutenant—when you were running for lieutenant governor with Williams.

BC: When I ran for lieutenant governor, I actually joined the ticket late in the summer. The primary was in September. So it was a short period in which it is very hard for the candidate for lieutenant governor to get traction. People really pay more attention to the gubernatorial candidate. There was a feeling that I would really help the ticket, because I was a female, and because there had never been a female—until right now, there had not been a female serving as lieutenant governor, and never a female elected to that office. So people thought that would energize the ticket and jazz it up a bit, and it probably helped, but not enough.

And the other part of your question was—?

MG: Well, just what you had learned from that experience. And I think you covered the vastness of the state—

BC: The diversity. At that time, there wasn't nearly as much diversity in terms of people, especially the Hispanic population, as there is now. But nevertheless, it's a tremendous amount of territory to try to cover.

MG: Following that up, the lieutenant governor election—you just did a short stint as the director of the Florida division of elections, that you mentioned.

BC: Right.

MG: It wasn't much your cup of tea.

BC: It was not my cup of tea. My good friend George Firestone, who was also a state senator—I served with him for a little while—became secretary of state, and the division of elections was part of the office of the secretary of state. I thought, Wow! This is something I'd really like! It's a higher profile position, but it turned out to be a big bureaucratic (laughs) position, and one that—although I enjoyed it, I can't say that I enjoyed it enough to want to stay there.

MG: Of course, the elections and supervisor of elections—and that entire department—some decades later—

BC: (laughs) It became very famous!

MG: —will become quite famous. Did you see—I mean, when you got to 2000 and saw what happened in Florida in 2000, did little bells go off as to things that were just waiting, problems waiting to happen, when you were in the position in the late seventies [1970s]?

BC: No, I really—the election process was not controversial. I think the difficulty in Florida is that there are sixty-seven supervisors of elections. They are for the most part elected officials, so they have their own departments. There are a lot of volunteers that work in elections. But I think they were run very honestly. It's just that you can't today—

I think we've reached a higher level of technology and the election process has become so visible. Florida's a very divided state. At that time it wasn't nearly so divided, and we didn't have close elections. So I'm glad that I didn't have to preside over anything dramatic. (laughs)

MG: You have an offer to come to USF. And in seventy-nine [1979], you become USF's government and community relations director. How did that position come about? Who did you—did you interview for it? Was it offered to you? Tell me a little bit about just coming into the role, and how the role was presented to you—the expectations you had, and the expectations the university had, why this position was important and what might happen as a result of someone being effective in it.

BC: Well, it's pretty interesting. John Lott Brown—Jack Brown—was president of the university [from 1978 to1988]. I think he realized when he assumed this presidency that it was time for the university to reach out to the community. Joe Busta was the vice president for university relations, and they were both looking for—first they established the position, and then they went through a normal recruitment. I applied, and they were very interested in the fact that I had so much experience in local government and in the legislature, and that I would be a good fit. So I was selected, and had an opportunity to work on both the community side as well as the legislative side. With my relationships in Tallahassee and in the legislature, it worked very well.

MG: What did they want you to do? What was the job description?

BC: Raise the profile of the university. And also fight for our share of funding in the legislature. There were some—it was an interesting period, again, part of the Graham years where he was actually focusing on universities and improvement, and we were—USF was very much part of that. There was a proposal at the time to establish local boards of trustees, which we fought, (laughs) and fought along with some others, rather successfully. That was a legislative proposal, not the governor's proposal.

So that was a controversy at the time. It was also a period when we were really trying to elevate our colleges of engineering. That was a big, big issue. So we worked hard—again, collaboratively with the other universities—to establish a long-range plan for our engineering colleges.

MG: Why? Why the focus on engineering at that time?

BC: They had so far to go, and there was so much changing. I think people realized that technology was somewhat in its infancy, and that there would be—there was such a relationship between the economy in the state of Florida, and the role of engineering colleges, and to some extent business colleges and then all the others, that we really needed to set some markers. We really needed to evaluate what we were doing, as opposed to what was happening in other places. Also, Florida was losing a lot of its brainpower to other institutions and other areas, like the Northeast and the West. So those were areas of interest and concern.

MG: The issue of boards of regents versus local boards of trustees, of course, is now a very hot topic here. Bob Graham has long been a strong supporter of statewide control. In the early eighties [1980s], what were the—who was pushing for local boards of trustees? Why did they want them then? And what was your opposition to it?

BC: Well, they were pushed by members of the legislature who felt that the older institutions benefited disproportionately, and—

MG: By which? By having—?

BC: By having a board of regents. And you know, there may have been some truth to that, because the board of regents was made up of people who oftentimes were graduates of the University of Florida. I mean, USF had its first board member who was a student—a student regent—who happens to be Les Miller, was the first member. But I think that the state was growing so rapidly, and people had high expectations. There were many in the legislature when FIU—Florida International University—was started, and FAU [Florida Atlantic University], and the University of North Florida. They were started as two-year institutions. And there was a lot of resentment in the legislature over these institutions—that were not really institutions. I mean, can you be a university today and be a two-year institution? Most people would say no. They wanted their lower division. And those people said, All right, if the board of regents won't make these recommendations, we'll abolish them. We'll do this.

So there were all kinds of suggestions that were made, but I think in the final analysis, it was because people in South Florida, people in Central Florida, had greater expectations and greater aspirations. Now subsequently, I think the board of regents did get the message, and I think that Graham had an opportunity when E.T. York, who was the chancellor, retired to appoint one of his staff members, Charlie Reed. And Charlie became, in my estimation, a very fine chancellor, and very interested in the development of the newer institutions.

MG: Did you feel that when you were in the community relations position that USF was getting its due from the BOR [board of regents]? Were we getting our fair share? What was the university's relationship like with the board of regents?

BC: There was always a healthy amount of disagreement, and I don't think any of the institutions ever really felt like they were getting everything that they wanted or needed. There was opposition originally to the medical school. We had a tough time—it was established when I was in the position. But I thought the university had to fight very hard. We got it—we were somewhat struggling, not only at the state level to get support for the medical school, because you already had that big medical school in Gainesville; you always had the University of Miami, which, although a private institution, has tremendous state support. Then you had local institutions, where the relationship between the medical school faculty and the local institution, Tampa General Hospital, wasn't rosy. So there were a lot of—a lot of struggles at the time. Here's a new institution, higher

expectations, higher aspirations, and in that context you always find people who you can offend.

MG: One of the things—one of the arguments that's been made against the board of regents is that it has often been seen as a block to an individual university's opportunity to develop the colleges and programs and degrees that it wants, the centralized decision making over who can offer a Ph.D. program and who can offer this and who can offer that result often in some limiting opportunities for a university. Did—were there ever issues in which you found yourself lobbying for the right of a particular college to offer this or offer that, and you felt that USF was being prevented from growing into its natural boundaries as an institution?

BC: Well, I think that sometimes it took longer—you know, I go back to my more recent experience as president, when I don't think we were blocked from getting approval through the board of regents. I think it was—sometimes it seemed slower, but by and large USF, for instance, has really been able to achieve most of its goals in the programmatic, academic areas. It may have taken a little longer in some instances, but we now offer most of the programs, with the exception of a law school, which we never really pushed for. All of the other programs have been approved.

MG: Did you find yourself needing, though—you mentioned the delay. Things might have happened faster if the situation had been different. Was the delay in part of having to convince folks of something that maybe they shouldn't have needed to be convinced of?

BC: Absolutely. We've had great debates at the board of regents level about the academic preparedness to add Ph.D. degrees or master's degrees. In that regard, especially during the years that John Lott Brown was here and Carl Riggs was his provost in the early years, I think that USF was seen as the upstart institution, and there's certainly were struggles to find approval. There was a time when there was a feeling that USF should not offer more than the master's degree. I mean, that was a period there. So USF really had to struggle in that short period. Once we got beyond that, though, I think it became very obvious, because of enrollment and the desire on the part of people to enroll in these programs, that the payoff was worth that initial price.

MG: Did you have to deal with football? As president—

BC: Yeah.

MG: You'll be president when they play the first football game. But in the early eighties [1980s], when you're in community and legislative relations, are folks within the community saying, Betty, go get us a football team! Go get us a football team!

BC: No.

MG: Okay.

BC: No. No. (laughs) Nobody was talking football in the early eighties [1980s]. I don't think the initial—John Allen had made it very clear when he was president that he didn't like big-time intercollegiate athletics at all, and football was not anywhere in his laundry list. And even subsequent presidents—it was so costly to develop the university that nobody was really thinking about football.

MG: In eighty-two [1982], after about three years here at USF, you would leave again to run for the [state] senate again.

BC: Um-hm.

MG: That campaign, against McClain—

BC: David McClain. (laughs)

MG: David McClain. He had some things that he thought were, uh—

BC: (laughs) He surely did.

MG: Talk to me a little bit about that campaign, if you would, and the decisions that you made to be a more effective candidate.

BC: Well, number one, he said that the university was grooming me to run for the senate again, which of course was not true. No one in the university encouraged me. No one discouraged me. But it became apparent to me that there was an opportunity to run for this seat, so I resigned my position. I didn't hang around. Today, I think there are too many people in the legislature who have jobs in public roles, which is, I think, unfortunate and a conflict. So when I decided to run for the senate, I said, "Well, I've got to make a clean change here." So I resigned my position to run. And for a while, my opponent said some things about the university that probably were unfortunate, and he may have even regretted it. But—

MG: And he ultimately lost that—

BC: And he lost!

MG: (laughs) He lost that race. What made you want to go back to sit in the senate again?

BC: Well, it—I was, of course, fueled by my experience at the university, and the desire to help create change and a positive attitude towards higher ed—and K through 12. I very much wanted to play a leading role in funding of universities, and I had an opportunity to do that when I elected. So I ran very much for educational reasons, and taking advantage of my experience, and had a spirited campaign—a close, very close campaign.

MG: Right.

BC: We won by twenty-three hundred votes, which is close.

MG: At that time—McClain is running as a Democrat, as well?

BC: No. He was a Republican.

MG: Oh, he was really—okay. You get to the [state] senate, and Bob Graham is there in these years, correct?

BC: He's the governor.

MG: Right, as governor. So at least we know—(laughs) We've got Bob Graham in the right position now. Given Bob Graham's interests, you must have had a strong relationship with him.

BC: Absolutely.

MG: What sorts of things were you doing? Did you have good access to the governor? Were there things that, as a result of a relationship with him, you were able to do during those years that you might not have been able to do without that relationship?

BC: Well, he was obviously—had a great interest in education, and wanted to move forward. So we had a good relationship. There were also a number of legislators who were interested in education, and Florida had a long way to go. It still has a long way to go.

One of the major changes during that period was a change in the high school credits for graduation. Up until that time, every county set its own graduation requirements. So we developed a plan to extend the school day, and also to establish a twenty-four credits for graduation requirement, which was very important. It was very important for higher ed, because the state mandated that students had to have four years of English and four years of social studies. We today may raise our eyebrows and say, Yeah, but before that time, Florida's graduation requirements were not the highest in the country.

And in fact, in recent years, we've taken a step backward. I mean, two years ago something called the "Fast Track" was passed, which I thought was very unfortunate—hard to explain. But those were years in which I think a lot of emphasis was placed on education, and the state made tremendous gains in requirements, in quality, and in funding.

MG: Did Bob Graham have the interest of USF? He's a Florida graduate. Did he understand the aspirations of USF to be the third university in the state, or did you find sometimes that—?

BC: Well, Bob, of course, was a South Floridian, so he certainly understood the aspirations of South Florida. And I think his interest in education was really pervasive. He really did support the institutions. However, he was a strong opponent, initially, of the [Moffitt] Cancer Center. Lee Moffitt was one of my colleagues in the legislature, who of course—as speaker, Lee sponsored the Cancer Center founding and initial funding, and Bob Graham vetoed that bill the first time. Lee was able to come back subsequently and get the money. So that's one area. But I think for the most part, he was helpful to the university, yes.

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins

MG: —Mark Greenberg, the director of the Special Collections Department and the Florida Studies Center in the USF Tampa Library. Today is January 19, 2005. I'm with Betty Castor, and we're continuing an oral history interview that commemorates the university's fiftieth anniversary in 2006.

When we left off, before having a bite of lunch, we were talking a little bit about your second senate career, the period 1982 to 1986, and your involvement with education—with higher education—in the state. I understand that during—maybe even earlier than that senate period—you had an idea for a bill that was going to benefit senior citizens in the state.

BC: Um-hm.

MG: Tell me a little bit about that and how it came to pass, and what the bill was and what happened to the bill.

BC: Well, it was a bill to authorize the state university system to allow senior citizens to audit classes on the university campuses. I thought that since Florida was becoming more and more of a state dominated by seniors that one way to encourage their support and eventual tax support for higher education would be to get them back on campus and to provide space—space-available basis—for them to audit classes. It is very interesting. It was one of the very first bills that I filed when I became a legislator.

The governor at the time was Reubin Askew, who today is—has been a professor. He spends time at each university; he's spent some time at USF, but he has generally taught classes at all of the universities. I reminded him recently that he berated me for introducing that legislation, because it was going to cost money, and where did I think we would get the money to provide that. Today, of course, he has seniors that audit his classes! (laughs) So it's somewhat ironic. But yeah, that was, I think, a fine piece of legislation, and it encouraged seniors to get into our classes, and they are very visible today.

MG: So ultimately the legislation passed?

BC: Yes, it did.

MG: Despite—did he veto it?

BC: No, he didn't veto it, but he—it was a very interesting story. I've never forgotten it, because I was very proud of one of my first pieces of legislation. The governor generally invites new legislators to have lunch at the governor's mansion, and I was sitting next to the governor and very proud of myself, being elected to the senate. I was only the fourth woman ever elected to the Florida senate. He looked at me and he said, "Why are you sponsoring this legislation? Don't you realize how much that's going to cost the state?" (laughs) I was somewhat surprised that he even knew about it. But he did not veto it, no. It passed.

MG: During that senate term, were there other issues that you dealt with? These are the eighties [1980s]. There are ups and downs in the economy. Florida is growing by leaps and bounds. The University of South Florida is growing by leaps and bounds. Were there particular issues in Tallahassee that affected higher education, or affected this university that you dealt with?

BC: The primary issues in my last two terms in the senate were fiscal issues. Fortunately, I did chair the appropriations subcommittee on education, so I had an opportunity to really be an advocate for funding of the universities. That was good. I enjoyed that role. The issues were issues of growth; tuition is the ultimate issue year after year. So those were the primary issues.

MG: How did you—both your own personal thinking and the thinking in Tallahassee—that balance between students, or students' parents or loans, paying for an education versus the state's responsibility to pay for an education. How did you feel that that should be balanced?

BC: Well, the policy of the board of regents traditionally has been something like the twenty-five percent rule, that students should be paying twenty-five percent of the costs of their education and the state should pay the rest. Florida has moved gradually from the time that I chaired the committee into a program that I think is very, very generous to high school graduates who receive an A or B in their coursework or a high SAT score. That program today is an excellent program.

Unfortunately, the state hasn't kept pace with the need-based programs, so you have this wide gap. One of our candidates during the election said there were two Americas, and when I think of higher education, I think in Florida there are two Americas. There's one where students receive a free ride to our universities, and there's another where students who have great need don't receive it. And I think that's the biggest challenge we have. The Pell Grant at the federal level has not kept pace with inflation. It hasn't been increased. It should be increased dramatically; I believe it should be five thousand dollars today. It is not; it's down at four thousand and it's just experienced a cut.

So students today are working students. For the most part, those who do not receive the Bright Futures, which is the Florida scholarship, or who are not fortunate enough to have parents who bought into the prepaid program, do have a challenge, and the increases—seven and a half percent every year—do have an impact. That's an increase, and it has been—for the last five years, it's higher than the rate of inflation. So we've got to do more for the need-based students.

MG: Any other issues that we should touch upon in your final senate campaigns, and your final terms in the senate, before we move on to your activities as commissioner of education?

BC: I'm trying to think. I don't think so.

MG: Yeah. Well, we'll move this along. In eighty-six [1986], there's another transition period, in which you decide leave the senate and to seek another position. What prompted you to make that move?

BC: Well, Ralph Turlington had been commissioner of education. The post was elected—elective. He had been there for four terms—that's sixteen years. And so when he left, there had not been a change in leadership in a long time. Because of my own background as an educator, and also because I had served in the legislature in key education-related and funding positions, I thought it was a position for which I was well qualified, and one that I was intensely interested in.

So I ran for that office, and—it's also expensive to run state-wide in Florida. So I started taking a page out of the book of some other Florida politicians. Lawton Chiles gained his notoriety by walking the state, and by gaining the nickname "Walkin' Lawton." Bob Graham, who came from not-humble origins, had decided he would do workdays all over the state.

So I thought I would teach a class in every county. So I set out to do that, and went from county to county teaching class at various levels. It actually was a very good strategy, because it did get me into schools. I never did it politically; I didn't politicize it. But I had an opportunity to teach classes in urban areas as well as Florida's many rural counties, and of course when someone comes—when a public official comes to a rural county, it's a big deal. And the notoriety, the attention that one receives, is very helpful. So I did that. It took me well over a year to do that, but that was my campaign strategy, in addition to doing all of the fundraising that is necessary.

MG: What were some of the issues that you ran upon? Tell me a little bit about the campaign—opponents, and how that all—

BC: One of the key issues in this state is teachers' salaries. Florida lags behind some of its sister states like Georgia in average teacher salaries. So the first thing someone has to do in running for office for the commissioner of education is really appeal to the teachers, and to the teacher unions. I did that, and worked with them, and of course I felt it in the

heart—I am a teacher, so I understand the challenges facing professionals in the classroom. So I made teacher salaries a very big issue.

I was also a strong proponent of building programs for students who come from poverty, and by examining the structure of the school so that it can be a place that encourages services outside of education to address the needs of families who have social needs. Higher education is always important, because it's really the key to Florida's economy. So I tried to make that an issue as well. And equity in funding is a controversy in the state of Florida, but we do have a fairly good formula, which uses funds from the wealthier counties to equalize the funding throughout the state. So I was very supportive of the equalize formula.

MG: Was that an issue in the campaign?

BC: Not so much. There's no county that believes it gets its fair share, and there's always—Florida's formula for funding public schools is extraordinarily complex, because it's a mix of state sales tax and property tax, and the property tax then has to be equalized. So it is a complex formula, and one that has proven effective, I think, over the years. In that regard, Florida gets high grades for its formula. It gets low grades for its generosity.

MG: (laughs) You've had experience in higher education, experience in elementary, middle, and secondary school education. Are there issues from one to the other, or—not necessarily preferences, but do you have—do you see particular issues as key to one or the other, and do you find yourself gravitating towards one level of education or the other?

BC: Well, I think it is unfortunate in one respect that there is not more of a continuity between educational levels. The state university system is very separate from the K-12 system, and the community college system, even though there's a strong articulation between community colleges and the universities, it could be—I think the system could be built—I think there could be initiatives to connect these systems. They seem rather remote today, and they have been. But it really takes a major effort, I think, to build the kind of integration that I'm thinking about.

MG: You're in as the—you sit as the commissioner of education from eighty-six [1986] until ninety-three [1993]. So that's six years.

BC: Um-hm. Seven years, actually.

MG: Is it seven? You stood for reelection after the first four—

BC: Yes.

MG: Anything particular about that reelection campaign?

BC: (laughs) Well, the former governor of the state of Florida ran against me, Claude Kirk. It was a very lopsided—

MG: (laughs) That must have been interesting.

BC: It was interesting. I thought I would get away without any opposition, and at the last minute Claude Kirk qualified, and I said, "Oh, no." But I'm not sure that he was ever really serious about the race.

MG: What was his point in running, do you think?

BC: He wanted me to have opposition. I think it was simply a partisan thing. He had been out of public life for a long time—

MG: His politics is a little different than yours.

BC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MG: So did that—I mean, was that part of the—

BC: Well, I generally—yeah.

MG: Philosophically, was he very different in what he thought the position should be?

BC: We didn't have a lot of dialogue, and I tried to ignore him. That was a good strategy, because I won handily.

MG: Okay. You didn't serve out the full four years of that term, correct?

BC: Right.

MG: Because another opportunity presented itself.

BC: Right.

MG: You're serving in a capacity in which your primary responsibilities are to K through 12, and a state university comes knocking at the door. What was the first approach that was made? This would have been, I guess, Frank Borkowski's departure. In fact, before we go there, I missed an issue, because you had had some interaction with the university as a member of the board of regents, correct?

BC: Right.

MG: Now probably we should talk about that before we do that, because despite serving in a K through 12 capacity, you're also on the board of regents, correct?

BC: Right. I served by virtue of the position as member of the board of regents, and also as a member of the board of community colleges.

MG: As a member of the board of regents, were those issues during those issues that brought you into close contact with the university, in which you felt that you were able to have some say—?

BC: Well, there were a number, because the commissioner of education actually has responsibility—administrative responsibility over the student loan program, over many of the scholarship programs, and financial aid. So that's a large responsibility of the commissioner of education's post, and I was very active in that capacity. Also, I used the position to analyze the need for expansion of the State University System, and was very supportive of the expansion in Southwest Florida, and the evolution of the tenth university. So that's another area where the commissioner can serve in a role, a very positive role, with special responsibilities.

MG: But it raises an issue, because as I recall, the University of South Florida had a campus, or an affiliation, with Edison Community College in Fort Myers.

BC: A branch campus.

MG: Yeah. Had there been issues that the University of South Florida wanted to expand with a permanent and strong foothold, as opposed to giving way to an independent university? And how did that play out?

BC: Well, there was obviously a lot of contention. The idea of a joint campus is a wonderful idea, but the reality is you have two major institutions, a community college and a university two hundred miles away, that are jockeying for control of facilities and other space and programs. It never was a marriage made in heaven. It was helpful that the university was there to offer classes, but at the same time Southwest Florida was exploding in growth. And I do think, because when I first came to USF the Fort Myers campus was still our branch campus, but it is very tough to be part of an institution that is so far away, so remote, and has many daily problems with a joint relationship. So I thought that it was time for the development of an independent institution. And it has filled a very special need in that part of the world, that part of Florida.

MG: We'll come back and talk about this in greater detail as we move on. But it raises the whole issue of a university with branch campuses.

BC: Um-hm.

MG: And your views when you'll become president of the university—you know, your views of the relationship between Manatee Community College and New College and USF Sarasota, and then Lakeland, which I guess is very young. Lakeland comes about what, eighty-seven [1987] or so, I think—

BC: Um-hm.

MG: And so it's a very young campus with Polk Community College. As a member of the BOR, were there discussions about the appropriateness or the way in which the BOR wanted to approach the idea of these community college/university relationships—and the idea of branch campuses to begin with? Did that ever come up for discussion?

BC: Somewhat. Most of the designation of branch campuses came about legislatively. The board of regents and the universities had the responsibility of making them work. And I think it was also the recognition—growth all over the state, the desirability of people having access to four-year institutions. The state had done a very good job with its community college system of making sure that community colleges were within comfortable driving range of all people in the state of Florida. That worked. But the community colleges had limitations. So it was, I think, fortuitous that the universities could reach out and start their branch campuses.

But you've seen today the evolution of that, which is that the community colleges have basically said, "Heck, we ought to be four-year institutions!" And several of them—St. Pete College—St. Pete[Petersburg] Junior College has now become St. Pete [Petersburg] College. Other institutions aspire to offer four-year degrees. And frankly, in some cases the universities have been unable to fulfill some of their mission, because of lack of funding and because of cost. Education is one of the majors—the need for teachers in the state, it helped to foster the argument for community colleges to say, We have a teacher shortage. USF or UCF or FIU or Florida [University of Florida] are not producing enough of the teachers. We should be doing these courses or presenting these courses. And that strategy has worked, that strategy has worked.

MG: On the BOR, were there particular situations pertaining to the University of South Florida that came to your attention, that you had to—?

BC: Speak out?

MG: Yeah.

BC: Well, of course athletics is always an area, and of course USF had their short period where a basketball player was accused of improprieties with a female student and the university investigated it—tried to, I think, close the case. The student was unsatisfied; there were a lot of newspaper articles about whether or not the university had adequately dealt with this player. He remained on the basketball team, and that was frankly offensive to me and so I spoke out about that, as did other people as well.

MG: How does something like this make its way to the BOR, in so far as—I mean, it's an issue here on campus, and there are—was the law involved with the victim and the—?

BC: Well, there certainly are—today, I think there are programs on every campus that ensure that complaints that are made, sexual discrimination complaints or any other

serious violations, whether it's a student athlete or anyone, but there are offices that students can go to. At the time, these programs were not nearly as well defined. So there was a need, and I think there was a need to speak out. What generally happens is that presidents of institutions have to deal with these issues, and the presidents work at the pleasure of the board of regents and the chancellor. So the chancellor is the key person here; if he thinks the university has handled the situation appropriately, he can say that. I think in the case of the basketball player the chancellor had some real questions about whether it was handled appropriately, as did members of the board of regents.

MG: I had an opportunity to sit with Frank Borkowski, and to talk to him about his career at USF. He spoke about his relationship with Charlie Reed as a difficult one. Did you have a sense that Frank Borkowski was embattled during any period in which he was president here [from 1988 to 1993], and if so, what's your take on the issues that President Borkowski was facing, and his relationship with Charlie Reed? Did you see any of that in a way that left an impression?

BC: No, I was not intimately familiar with the relationship that the two of them had. But the chancellor works for the board of regents, so I imagine that it was not simply the chancellor but members of the board as well.

MG: Ultimately, as Frank Borkowski explains it, he was encouraged to move on, which opened up a need for a president here at the university. How did it come about—did you have a thought that this was something that you wanted? Did somebody present the idea to you?

BC: It was my idea. (laughs)

MG: You saw the opening and thought that this would be a good—

BC: Yeah. I thought it would be difficult, because I do not have a terminal degree. However, I said, "You know, this is an institution that I care about. It's one that I'm very familiar with, and I think I have the administrative skills. I know the issues, I've been involved at the legislative level. I've worked inside the university." So I said, "Yeah, maybe I ought to apply." So I talked to friends, which is of course what happens in these, and several people—I received several nominations, and then had to formally at some point respond with a formal application myself, which I did.

MG: Is—

BC: Then went through a very (laughs), very interesting period where you really subject yourself to a lot of interrogation and inside evaluation—

MG: I want to ask about that, too. Judy Genshaft tells some interesting stories about that process, as well. Let me ask you—is it fair to make any comparisons between your role here on campus in the seventies [1970s] as a director of community affairs, and your run for the senate, and then being a member of the BOR and your interest in the presidency?

Did anyone raise an issue of your closeness from one position to the other? Did you need to leave the BOR in order to seek the presidency?

BC: No.

MG: No one ever said that—it was never raised as a concern or issue?

BC: It was not raised as an issue, my membership on the board of regents, by anyone in the process itself. Someone externally actually filed some kind of suit that they filed with the [U.S.] Supreme Court for some kind of a judgment [*Kimel et al. v. Florida Board of Regents et.al,* 2000]; the Supreme Court just dismissed it.

MG: And their point was that you shouldn't be able to—

BC: Their point was that a member of the board of regents could not—you could not be a member of the board of regents and apply for this position. It's a little different with the commissioner of education, because you serve on the board of regents by virtue of your position as commissioner of education.

MG: As opposed to by appointment.

BC: Right, not as an appointee of the governor. So it was not an issue raised during this period by anyone in the system, but it was raised by a citizen from Volusia County.

MG: It was your idea. The position came open, and you thought that you could make a difference. So you applied—or were nominated, I guess, and applied. What did you say in the application letter—you know, the degree to which you were actively soliciting support and talking about your credentials? What was it that you told the chancellor and the board of regents?

BC: I told them I could serve in this position well, that I was not only familiar with the university and the importance of USF to the state of Florida and this region. I talked about my background, and tried to stress my commitment to education, and of course the external dimensions that I thought prepared me better than someone who would come from a strictly academic point of view. So I tried to play to my strengths.

MG: Right, and I wanted to talk to you about that, because it certainly happens that there are non-academically careered presidents of universities, but in your case, you came a different route. And you understood that from the beginning, that that might be an issue, that some people were, Oh, she doesn't have a Ph.D. Besides talking about your strengths in the careers that you had had, were there any other ways in which you tried to put any issues about the terminal degree to bed?

BC: Well, I tried to confront it, and during the interview process I had an opportunity to do that. And I tried to understand—I really tried to put myself in the place of my detractors, who would say, Mrs. Castor, you can't possibly understand what it's like to be

a faculty member, because you haven't been a faculty member. So I tried to understand where they were coming from. I think the best analogy, or the best understanding, that I came up with was that faculty members feel this in part because of the struggle that they've had over everything from funding to their departments to the faculty governments issue, and tried to let them know that I would probably be a better advocate and supporter for faculty governments than some who come from the inside.

And I think also that faculty have a high sense of integrity, and one of the reasons they're suspicious of politicians is that they don't think they share the integrity that faculty members share. I tried to assure them (laughs) that someone who comes from a political environment can also have integrity, that even though you come from the art of compromise—when you're in an academic setting, and you're—you have to be, I think, very outspoken about issues of integrity and culture.

MG: The interview process, the application process, is fairly intrusive.

BC: (laughs)

MG: Talk to me about that. So you submit a formal letter. What happens after that?

BC: Well, in the case of my process, the board of regents had already set up a very formal process before I ever indicated any interest in this position. So I certainly didn't influence that. They had—there was a community advisory group—there were kind of three levels. The first level was a group of community and university people, who would do the first round of evaluations without interviews. That group met—I think there were thirty-two, some humongous group—and they had first the paper evaluation of the formal applications and nominations, and they selected—I think there were perhaps eight of us who got through that process. Maybe ten, whatever; a couple dropped out. So we had about eight. Then we were invited to come to campus for a formal interview before that large group.

MG: Of thirty or so people?

BC: Yes. Yes, and during that period you had your large group of interviews. And then that group made recommendations to the chancellor. The chancellor then set a time period for formal interviews at the campus level, where each of the candidates came in for a couple of days—two days, I think it was in my case—and we met with all of the usual campus groups and personnel, everyone from the Student Government Association to the Faculty Senate. It was an open session, so you had a series of very—and then in our, of course, with the regional campuses, we visited the regional campuses as well. Generally had a dinner, an informal dinner with half a dozen people. So it was—everyone had an opportunity.

MG: And what did you say to these folks? Did you have a vision? Did you have a plan? Were there specific questions that you were asked, or specific statements that you made that suggested a path to the future for this university?

BC: Um-hm. I had a formal presentation that I made, and it was based much on the work that had been done by Dr. Borkowski's group, and a real vision for the influence that the university can have on students, faculty, and the community. I stuck to that same vision. There were a lot of questions in my case about research, and I think a feeling among the—a lot of people that someone who did not have a terminal degree certainly could not take the university forward in a research capacity. So I took great pride, several years later, when under my watch USF became a Research 1 institution [bestowed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching]. Research was a recurring theme of my interviews.

MG: How did you handle it? I mean, I want to get at—I think in ninety-eight [1998] USF becomes a Research 1 university, along with FSU and University of Florida. They didn't know that at the time, those who questioned. So how did you deal with the persistent questions about research?

BC: Well, I had to convince a number of people, particularly the research professors, the group that called themselves research professors, that I understood research as a part of the teaching enterprise, that yes, I was very familiar with that. I was familiar with the commitment that an individual faculty member makes to research. And I was also very familiar with research as a quantitative measure of the success of an institution, and the whole grants operation. So I enjoyed that discussion, because I think that advocacy is an important component of what one brings to the leadership of an institution.

MG: Did you go into that process with any advisors or help from folks on the inside? Were you—I mean—

BC: Yeah. I talked to many people inside the university, and generally people were helpful whether they thought I was the best candidate or not. I mean, everybody at the end of the day, once a decision is made, people will be very helpful anyway. But I think people wanted to help, and I had some help and I also had some detractors. So it was an interesting period.

MG: How long did the process go on?

BC: Well, I became—I indicated my interest accidentally, frankly, in response to a telephone call that I had from a *St. Petersburg Times* reporter, who said, "I understand you've been nominated," and I said, "Yes, that's correct." And that made a headline. I wasn't prepared for the—to actually reveal that I was going to be a formal candidate. But that was in early October—or perhaps it was earlier, I'm not sure if this is correct. But it was not all that long. The process had been ongoing for some time. Interviews were in November, and the selection was made in December. So it was pretty compact by the time I got in, but it was—a lot of discussion really occurs on the front end of these searches.

MG: What was your reaction? Where were you when you got the—was it a phone call? Did Charlie Reed call?

BC: Actually, I was residing in Tallahassee at the time, and we had passed the interview stage. Even though I was an acquaintance and a friend of the chancellor, he did not indicate to me that I was selected until the day before the board of regents meeting—or the evening before the day. He told me that he was going to recommend me, and that he was flying to the—the meeting was here in Tampa, here at the university in the Marshall Center—and he was flying in and he wanted me to fly in with him. By that time—by the end of the conversation—I had a good idea that I was going to be selected. So we flew in for the morning meeting, and the ballroom was filled. I stayed over in the president's office, because the board of regents was going to have to vote, and he was making the recommendation to the board. Now, I know Charlie Reed well enough to know that he would have betted his—

MG: It was a formality?

BC: Yeah.

MG: When did—does one negotiate the position once it's offered? Were there any issues that you discussed with Chancellor Reed about accepting the position? Or is it—once it's offered to you, you accept it and start on the job?

BC: Dr. Reed is a very strong person, and yes, he said—he wanted strong leadership. He wanted—he's always been interested in the financial accountability side. I wanted very much to help the university's profile within Florida and within the region. Of course, you negotiate some of the salary issues. But I thought that he was very generous, and salary was frankly not an issue for me.

I think that he realized that—he had a management style where he said, "You will run the university," and his rule was, "If I don't hear from you at least once every two weeks, I'll call you, and I don't want to call you," which was frankly very good advice, because you keep thinking, I'm responsible for what happens here, and I need to make him responsible. He shouldn't have to call me and ask what's going on. So there were some parameters. He never interfered.

MG: But there was a lot of discussion, I guess. There was a lot of phone calls from you to him, and these were just general kind of updates, "This is what's—"

BC: Right, right. I certainly got calls prior to board of regents meetings about any issues, and the regents operated in a way that there were certain regents who had responsibility—more responsibility in certain areas. But I think my experience was similar to that of other presidents, and that is that the chancellor did not interfere. He was busy being the advocate for the board of regents to the legislature and to the governor.

MG: Who were your fellow presidents, and did you have much interaction with them?

BC: Yes, I had a lot of interaction with them. John Lombardi was president of the University of Florida, and I had a very fine, good relationship with him. John Hitt was—he may be the longest-serving president now—president of the University of Central Florida, and we had an excellent relationship and started to build ties between our two institutions that I think have been very worthwhile. Adam Herbert was the president of North Florida, and we had an excellent relationship, and it benefited me when he became chancellor. Mitch Maidique was president of FIU, and he has remained at that institution. The presidents of—Fred Humphries was president of FAMU, and I had an excellent relationship with him. So I had a good rapport with my fellow presidents.

MG: There is the issue of where to live as president of this university—

BC: (laughs)

MG: —and the issue for you was unique, in that you were the first president with an opportunity to live in presidential housing.

BC: Um-hm.

MG: I know that Frank Borkowski had been president when Lifsey House construction had begun. When did you come into the discussions about the Lifsey House, because as I understand it, it wasn't finished immediately upon your assuming office.

BC: No. Right.

MG: And it is the house—

BC: It's quite a house.

MG: It's quite a house. Tell me about that. Was it ever discussed that you needed to live there? Was it entirely your decision that this would be where you would live?

BC: Number one, the house was well under construction when I was selected. It was almost completed. When I discussed my coming here with the chancellor, the understanding was that I would reside in the Lifsey House. It was never open to discussion. The foundation had put a lot of money into this big contemporary home, and I frankly felt that I should obviously live there. And I enjoyed living there. I did reside there with my husband, and we used it to entertain. It is—as you know, the downstairs is like a museum, because it is very large, contemporary, Frank Lloyd Wright-type of design. I enjoyed it. Others look at it and have varying opinions—some people don't like the contemporary nature of the house—but it did provide a place where we could entertain.

The actual place where the president might—bedroom—my facilities on the second floor were very modest. It's not a home that a family, certainly, as in the case of the current

president with two small children—it really doesn't work very well with kids. But for me it was fine, and it served a good purpose.

MG: Were there things about the house when you came in that you were able to change?

BC: (laughs)

MG: It hadn't been finished. Did you walk in and say, "Oh, no; we need to do this differently," or, "We need to do that differently?"

BC: There were a few things that I probably would have done differently, but the house was constructed in such a way that you really could not make modifications to the major areas of the home. I encouraged the university to do more landscaping, because I thought the house looked a bit stark compared to the university. We made some improvements, and they continue to try to warm it up a little.

MG: I've managed to see the entire house. I've been up on the second floor. Was the house comfortable? Were there opportunities to decorate or make the house home for you?

BC: Sure. Yeah, I mean, you can put a few little things in. (laughs) My husband and I joked a lot, because there are balconies on the inside and the outside, and if you want to make a sandwich at the end of the day, it takes a few minutes to get down the stairs, but you can lean over the balcony and holler down. But we enjoyed it, and frankly we had opportunities to have an extended family visit, so that was always helpful and fun. We made the most of allowing the university to allow the facility, too.

MG: I want to talk a little bit more about the house. I understand there was a wedding in the house.

BC: Yes!

MG: Tell me about that.

BC: Well, my son actually was married in the church, but we had the reception there, and it works very well. It's a large—there's a large backyard, and that's where we had the reception. So that was a lot of fun; it worked well.

MG: And there was some entertaining. Christmas carols, and other kinds of gatherings.

BC: Yes. We always had—during the holidays we had a lot of functions for—and we had many functions with the students, and that was always nice; they would always come to look around and say, Oooh! Wow! (laughs) It was a tremendous kitchen; you could have a function in the kitchen itself. We also had musical—one of the large rooms downstairs is really, in spite of all the concrete and glass, it was actually very good for small musicals. We frankly enjoyed it. I'm sure that people did come because the architecture's

so unique, and would look at it and say, This isn't my cup of tea. But we liked it. It was also a nice opportunity to show off the work of Graphicstudio [at the Institute for Research in Art at USF], and some of the results and products and the nice paintings and artwork from the university.

MG: Is everything—are the decorations in the home from the Graphicstudio?

BC: All of the art, yes, was from Graphicstudio, and from the contemporary art museum.

MG: You had a way of getting around campus, I understand.

BC: Um-hm.

MG: You had a bicycle.

BC: I sure did. I rode my bike. And because I lived here, it was a tremendous advantage. Bert Hartley, who was vice president of facilities, always knew when I was on my bike, because I would come in Monday morning with my list. When I rode around this campus, and looked at the facilities, I could tell whether (laughs) there was an old car pulled up that—I really—I looked at it the way that students or their parents or families or visitors from the campus would look. It did distress me that the campus was not more attractive, and I worked very hard with the university architect, Steve Gift, and our facilities staff to really put more emphasis on the appearance of the campus.

MG: Describe the campus for me when you arrived.

BC: Well, the campus was neat. The campus continued to be stark-looking. There was no central core. To walk from the Administration building to the Marshall Center any time of the year except the winter was—uncomfortable, frankly. In the summer it's ungodly hot, sometimes. And I just thought it was time for shade. It was time to do something more dramatic with our physical landscape. So we worked on—the first project was the central core, and that was a very tough project, because the initial designs that came in were kind of—it was an environmental landscape without—it was a natural landscape kind of design that I didn't feel was appropriate for the university itself, which is a rather structured place.

So we went back and did a second design, and that was somewhat elaborate, with the pool and a way to build a covered canopy, at least from the Administration building to the Marshall Center. Then we started thinking about landscaping the new College of Education building, and walkways—covered walkways—and then we started thinking about the entrance and planting some trees. These are things that one would ordinarily think of naturally, when they think of their home. But people had not thought that of the university, I think just simply because of the cost.

MG: What justified that money going there as opposed to the money going someplace else? Why the decision to do that?

BC: Well, I think it comes down to two things. Number one is competition, and the other institutions in Florida were thinking the same way that Florida was. We've got to make this an attractive place for our students. It's the same reason that we build recreational facilities. Should they be a priority? Probably not, but this is a competitive world, and students today want to go to—want to attend an institution where they have the benefit of that recreational facility. They also want to attend a place where they can get together, where they can enjoy an outdoor environment and a place that is pleasant and pleasing. So we did use some of our facility money—and some of our foundation money, actually—to start to do the kind of landscaping that I think we needed to do.

MG: One of the most beautiful areas on campus now is the walkway between Administration and the Marshall Center. The bougainvilleas, when they're in bloom—

BC: Ah! Beautiful.

MG: —the reflecting pools, the Martin Luther King statue—bust—there. Tell me about that area. Is that how you describe the central core? Is it that—?

BC: Um-hm.

MG: Okay, so it's that area in there.

BC: The walkway between Cooper and the College of Education, over towards the Sun Dome. The outdoor art—very important. It's a statement. This is a place of learning, and places of learning ought to be pleasant places, and they ought to be pleasant environments.

MG: There's more than just landscaping—the trellised walkway—several trellised walkways—and landscaping. There's also a fair bit of buildings going up. It's a period of continued growth for the university. Where are—what's being developed? What buildings are going up? Where is your focus in terms of—you know, significant PECO [Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund] dollars for major new facilities on campus?

BC: Well, the first building, the first groundbreaking that I participated in was for the College of Education, and I'm very proud of the college. I think the architect did a tremendous job. I think it's a very pleasing facility. I was also here at a time when we made the decision as a university family to invest in new student housing. Student was—(laughs) was really bad. It's one of those areas that, because we were a so-called commuter school, the university never really felt that it had to invest, and one which the board of regents discouraged. So their policy hadn't changed; it had to become more student-friendly. And again, going back to the whole competitive nature, students in the eighties [1980s], late eighties [1980s], still did not want to reside on campus.

Something changed. Perhaps it was something as simple as thoughts of safety becoming important. It might also be the expense of living off campus. But students again wanted to live on campus. So part of our—part of my idea of making the campus more attractive was not only to make it more attractive, but because it was going to be the backyard for a larger and larger group of students. So we engaged in a large plan to build student housing, which meant that we had to go out and finance that ourselves, because the state will not contribute to student housing. All of those issues, I think, were part of the rationale of the changing face of the university.

MG: Is it the Education building that has that first green glass and steel?

BC: Um-hm.

MG: And that dramatically changes the architecture. I recall seeing that John Allen called the first original five buildings "Florida progressive."

BC: (laughs)

MG: It was, I think, a comple—

BC: That's putting a shiny light on it!

MG: Is it? So we now have essentially new colors, the green and the gold.

BC: Well, the Communications building was an early building, followed by the Education building. And that became a model.

MG: And was there a conscious—a conscious decision, then, to go with a new look that had more green glass and steel with it.

BC: Right.

end of interview

USF 50th (2006) Anniversary Oral History Project
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Mark Greenberg: This is Mark Greenberg, the director of the Florida Studies Center and the Special Collections Department in the USF Tampa Library, and today is the sixteenth of March, 2005. I have the pleasure of being with Betty Castor for a second opportunity to talk about her presidency here at the University of South Florida in the 1990s. Betty, thank you for coming back. I appreciate you being here.

Betty Castor: It's good to be back.

MG: When we left off in our last taping, we had gotten you here as the president. We had talked a little bit about things like the Lifsey House, the relations between you and the faculty, some issues regarding the physical plant and changes on campus. I'd like to pick up the changes on campus, because it's one of the themes that I think is—it runs through the entire university's history. This campus has not always been known for its aesthetic beauty. And many of the most positive changes are made when you arrive. There's a real change, I think, in architecture and the way the buildings look, and then just the general landscaping.

Take me back to a vision that you have, or a vision that the university architects have, for the campus. Was something articulated that said, "We want the campus to look like this," and then all the activities surrounded filling that plan, or did it happen in a more mad-hawk way?

BC: Well, it really came as a consequence of a major university review of academic programs and campus life. And that was completed just as I was becoming president. One of the findings, one of the strong findings, was that the campus was not a very inviting place for students, let alone faculty and other people that worked here. There were not outdoor places where students could congregate or faculty could congregate. There were not trees. It was hot to walk from one building to another during most of the year, but

especially in the summer. One of the recommendations was that we make the university a more inviting place.

We attracted a—I think—just an outstanding campus architect in Stephen Gift, who came with a lot of experience at other institutions in how to make campuses more inviting. He started with the central core and said it ought to be a place where there are benches. It ought to a place that is pleasant. It ought to be a place where there are trees. And we developed a plan where there was a lot of buy-in, and a lot of cooperation. We looked at this flat surface (laughs), and said, How can we build some burms? We might not be able to construct some hills, but at least we could do some burming. I was particularly interested in the entrance and trying to plant trees, and just change the dull flatness of the university. I think we, to some extent, achieved that.

MG: The entranceway. In pictures, early pictures of the entranceway, it wasn't much to look at.

BC: No, it had that low, flat university border, with the name. It didn't say anything.

MG: Right.

BC: So we—and I even noticed coming in today, it probably needs to be enhanced and enlarged. But at least we planted some trees. I'm sorry that they didn't line the entire entrance, but we expended dollars and of course there's not a lot of money—in fact, almost no money—that's allocated, for instance, by the legislature for enhancing campuses. So we had to be very cautious about the dollars that we put into that.

MG: Where did those funds come from?

BC: They came from facilities budget. We just took some of the dollars in the building program and allocated them for landscaping.

MG: Yeah. When you came, had the business about the Picasso statue been put to rest? Did you have any—

BC: Not entirely. There were still people who wondered what happened to it, and where it went, and—

MG: What did you think of the idea?

BC: Well, I think it would have been a very positive center. I think it would have been a very positive statue. But the challenge was getting a license, which is a requirement of the artist's estate, and the university and the supporters were never able to achieve that. So—our facilities staff recommended to me that there was no need to pursue it, or that there was no possibility to pursue it.

MG: What did—Okay, so—During your presidency, efforts to actually receive the license from Picasso's estate had come to an end?

BC: Prior to my coming here. I knew of it. It was never something that rose to an issue that we really had to deal with during my presidency.

MG: The list of buildings built while you were president, it reads like the—

BC: It was exciting.

MG: It is. And we have the new Alumni Center, named for Sam and Martha Gibbons. We have the College of Education expanded, I guess on the west side. We have a parking garage built near the Marshall Center. In fact, Phyllis Marshall retires and the Marshall Center's renamed. So I want to come to that. The Sun Dome is renovated. We have a water tower that goes up. The MLK [Martin Luther King] Plaza is renovated, as we discussed, and we have a new entrance. Of those—

BC: And in addition, we started the planning process. Under the board of regents and legislative process, it took years for buildings from the initial list—placement on the list—to the planning and everything. So even the environmental building [Natural and Environmental Sciences] that was dedicated recently was started on my watch.

MG: Right.

BC: The Business College addition—

MG: That just opened, was also—it all seems to take so long!

(both laugh)

BC: Yeah. It is depressing, but it can take a long time.

MG: Tell me about those additions. There are several things that I know drive the possibility of either a new building or an addition. One is enrollment, and the fact that the building is absolutely needed to meet the demands of students and faculty using those facilities or within that college. That's one element. There's also the element, though, of just—the desire or the decision to modernize the campus, to beautify the campus. Where's the mix in all of the physical development of the campus, between absolute necessity and efforts to improve what we have?

BC: Well, in some respects, we are—we were very fortunate. In fact, all of the public universities in Florida—the newer ones—were growing at a tremendous rate. During the years that I was president, the PECO Fund[2] was growing. So we—we benefited from state funding, and from some challenge grants from donors who were interested. There's

[2] Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund.

always a challenge between making facilities available to meet that growth and looking at the older facilities on campus.

For instance, the biggest challenge of all was residence halls. The old residence halls were in terrible shape when I came here, because there was never a plan to produce more to finance the old ones. But we were able to do that by building more residence halls; our Student Life department, working with the architect, came up with a plan to actually finance the renovations through expansion of facilities, because you had a stream of dollars from student fees. So that occurred on my watch, and I think it has really enhanced the university in a number of ways.

But there are still challenges. I don't think we've ever done what we should do in the arts and sciences, particularly with Cooper Hall, which is a building that receives more traffic than any other—and hopefully there's a plan to tear it down and build a new one, because there's just so many renovations that you can go through when you have the kind of volume that that one facility has. Another example is Chemistry, but we were able to use funds to renovate the laboratories.

MG: Let me come back just to dormitories. There's now a dormitory named for you.

BC: Yes. (laughs)

MG: Did that come to you as a surprise? Was it one of the original—

BC: It was the original.

MG: Ah.

BC: And—it's in, of course—in renovating it, it was stripped to the shell, and then really reconstructed. I was pleasantly surprised that it was named for me. Occasionally students will come up to me and say, "I lived in your hall," and I meet parents who say, "My daughter's in your hall." It's an all-girls facility. So I'm pleased with that. And I understand there's something called "Betty's Beach," (laughs) which is adjacent to the facility, as well. Everything I know about it is very positive.

MG: The Marshall Center, for years called the University Center, is renamed as a result of Phyllis Marshall's retirement. Was it just kind of a foregone conclusion? Had there been plans or talk long before her formal retirement that this would happen? Do you recall how this all came about?

BC: No—actually, yes. There is a law in Florida that facilities cannot be named for living persons. So—and I think for the most part that's a very good thing. From time to time there are exceptions, and I think Phyllis is certainly one of those. Representative Mary Figg, who's had a long association with the university, and whose husband is a faculty member here, sponsored that bill in the legislature. So some of us, of course, knew what was happening. It was a surprise to Phyllis.

But I can't imagine a better and more rewarding—something to recognize Phyllis Marshall's tenure at the university. She certainly is one of the better-known staff members at this institution, and dearly beloved. She was someone who was here during the sixties [1960s], and actually lived for a while—the girls' residence hall was in the Marshall Center. Those students from the early sixties tell stories of those first few classes about Phyllis and her instructions to the girls to wear gloves and things like that when they go out. (laughs) So there's a lot of lore and a lot of stories, but Phyllis held many positions here, and was just such a friend to the students, and such a supporter and such a cheerleader for the institution that I think it's very appropriate and very fitting.

MG: One building that stands out probably more than any other—excuse me, one facility that stands out more than any other on campus now is the water tower. It's enormous. You can see it from all over the campus. Had there been any discussions about that water tower and where it would be and how large it would be and how it might blend or not blend in?

BC: No. (laughs) I think the water tower just kind of appeared at one time. As it was going up, of course, there were physical reasons for the size of it, but it was still a surprise in the context of how it appears with the other buildings on campus.

MG: Just—something we need, and it is what it is?

BC: Yeah. I'm afraid that from time to time, like the towers that we see sprouting up for telecommunications—every once in a while you see one and you say, "How did it get there?" There wasn't a lot of planning and a lot of discussion about that tower.

MG: Pizzo Elementary School.

BC: Love it!

MG: With you and your education background, that is an important partnership—

BC: Well, for years the university administration fought against an elementary school here on campus.

MG: Why?

BC: They wanted that land reserved for university buildings. And I thought it was just such a statement to make, to invite the public schools to actually build a facility here; they could have a relationship. It's not the old laboratory school format where the university ran the elementary school. It is a public school run by the Hillsborough County School District, but with great collaboration with the College of Education. So it made a lot of sense. And it did a lot to foster a closer relationship with our public school partners.

MG: Did we have any say over how the school would be named, or did the county handle that entirely?

BC: The county handled that.

MG: Because the Pizzo family—Tony Pizzo in particular—is so important to Tampa history.

BC: Oh, right. I thought it was very appropriate, because he was such a historian. It blended well with the university's mission.

MG: Were you involved at all, once there was a decision made for the school to be built adjacent to the campus? The relationship that would develop between the College of Education and the school, were there discussions about that, plans?

BC: Oh, yes.

MG: Did you have any particular involvement in that, because of your background and interest—?

BC: Well, we had, of course, great little debates about who paid for what. But the biggest challenge was that that corner of the university is actually the site of a former disposal area. So we had a lot of issues with the Environmental Protection Agency, and we had to do significant site improvement before the construction could begin. We thought it would never begin. It's just one of those problems. It used to be an airfield dump, so there were some chemicals in the ground that had to be removed, and linings and all kinds of environmental protective devices—put in the ground! And that can hold up a project. So that was an interesting piece of it, too.

MG: And understandable, given that you've got kids playing out on the fields.

BC: Right.

MG: Obviously safety's awfully important. We kind of moved away from some of the physical changes on campus. Talk about budgeting, and the budget. In looking through my notes, there's one point in which a twenty-five percent budget cut is suggested for higher education.

BC: (laughs)

MG: Your reaction—I think you're quoted as calling it "absurd," which of course is true. But tell me about the atmosphere from the president's office, dealing year in and year out with the budged vagaries in Tallahassee, and how you—coming from that environment, how you negotiated sort of the complexities of the higher education budged, and whether you thought—from your background, maybe you had an angle that a lot of academics who come to the presidency might not have.

BC: Well, the legislative process in one respect never changes. The appropriations committee start every year by—with an—

Pause in recording

BC: —doesn't make a lot of sense. "Let's cut the budget. Let's do zero-based budgeting. Let's start from the beginning. Where can we cut?" And that has—that really started during those years of my presidency, when some—when there were more, I think, more of a turn towards conservative domination in the legislature. And the target really was universities for several years. The idea of cutting twenty-five percent of the budget didn't make sense in a state that is a state on the cheap, that has never funded higher ed as the way that it should—in the way that it should. And in fact, this is not only Florida, although Florida has a bigger challenge because we have growth on the one hand, and a legislature—and a governor, I must say—who don't believe that education should be funded the way that educators do.

But this is a national problem as well, and in the last, I would say, six to seven years, just as I was—in those years after I left the university—there have not been substantial increases in higher ed. And as a consequence, the institutions have relied on tuition. This is a national phenomenon. So as states have reined in their budgets and their spending, so that there can be no tax increases, fees have soared, and tuition has been the big area that has increased—at least seven percent a year in Florida for the last ten years.

MG: You've linked changes in the legislature and the growing conservatism in the legislature to problems in the higher education budget. Do you feel that the linkage is something that you could expand on? Were there any issues, or did you ever have any discussions with legislators that kind of—that made that linkage for you, that suggested that we really are—that we really are in a transformation here in Florida? As the state becomes more conservative politically, higher education is going to continue to see cuts. Did legislators ever sort of have discussions;"Why do you need all that money?" [and] things of that nature?

BC: Oh, yeah. And in fact, I think that sometimes the leadership—perhaps not this year, with Senator [Tom] Lee and Representative [Allan G.] Bense; they seem to be a little more broad-minded about the universities and funding. But there certainly has been an attitude that those universities have resources where they can raise their own funds. Of course, that's very limited. Yeah, there is the possibility with tuition of increasing it, and there is also some increase in revenue from research. There's also our endowments that play a larger and larger part. But even the endowments, if you look at the money that is generated from them in one year, it doesn't nearly compare to a legislative appropriation. So there's—and I think that the reality is that people think that universities are more liberal bastions of thought and that people at those universities have ideas that don't always conform to the attitudes of members of the legislature. So that's always a healthy atmosphere. (laughs)

MG: You managed to stave off twenty-five percent budget cuts.

BC: Oh, yes.

MG: But in terms—

BC: But we did have to make some cuts during—it's cyclical, revenues are cyclical, and we did have to go through a cutting process.

MG: As those cuts were being made, what was your philosophy? What areas were sacrosanct, and what areas did you feel the university could make budget cuts without cutting to the bone, or at least amputating a limb?

BC: Well, taking care of the current enrollment and the salaries of current employees is always number one. Our issue was how can you expand? At the same time that we were in this atmosphere, we had demands from the St. Petersburg campus and legislators who represented that area to increase enrollment in St. Pete. We had a legislator who wanted us to start programs in Pasco County. We had pressures on us from Polk County and in Sarasota. So this was particularly difficult for USF in those years, because of our sprawling regional campuses.

We lost the Ft. Myers campus. In my estimation, that was a positive thing; this was a campus that was growing enormously, and it was two hundred miles south of the Tampa administration. It was very hard to administer a campus which is several hundred miles away. So I thought that was in the final analysis a good decision. But you still—when you cut off that enrollment, which is the generator of most of the dollars, it is a loss. And it's a loss because the university has made the investment over the years. Those were all balancing factors in the budget.

MG: Tell me about your philosophy, or your feelings towards the branch campuses. There's been so much now made of the kind of devolution of those branch campuses from being centrally administered here in Tampa. The idea—and I had a conversation with Judy Genshaft recently—that it appears that we might officially become a system, like—I guess like New York—I think they use the model, actually, of University of Houston, or several other schools that have a system orientation to them. As you were the president, did you feel the tension between the—you know, a desire for growing autonomy on the branch campuses, and the kind of parental responsibilities here in Tampa, and did you have a vision? Had you been president today, would you have—back in the nineties [1990s]—have expected particular types of movement or progression?

BC: I think it's a natural consequence of the growth and maturation of the branch campuses, yeah. I think it was inevitable. And as the expansion occurred, it brought with it more demands to be independent. The university has this kind of contention at the campus level, where departments want to become colleges, and there's always a feeling that we're not getting our fair share. And those issues are magnified on a regional campus. I thought that we did a good job in building up the campuses, particularly the St.

Pete campus, which received a lot of attention because legislators from St. Pete were in powerful positions, and they spurred on that kind of demand. But I'm glad that they're not completely independent.

MG: The St. Pete campus now is moving towards its own SACS [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools] accreditation, to be largely independent. It now has a chancellor, it has deans. Is that something—in your mind, what were the necessary components—?

BC: Well, you have to have a mass. You have to have a mass, and you have to have a certain balance, if you will; you have to have a certain enrollment to really be able to sustain the campus operation. After all, this was a campus that started from scratch. It had one graduate program in marine sciences when it started, and that hardly qualifies it to be an independent institution. And you have to build up some quality there, as well. And I think that that is happening. I think it's a lovely facility, and it has a very good mix now, and the campus itself has identified its strengths and the programs it wants to pursue. So, I think it's part of a natural contentiousness. And at the end of the day, you have to make some tough decisions. Where are your strengths going to be? Where do you want to put enrollment? Do you want to become a residential campus? That was another issue.

MG: You mentioned Pasco County. Were there ever discussions of another branch up there?

BC: Um-hm. Oh, there certainly were discussions of a joint program with the Pasco-Hernando Community College.

MG: Oh.

BC: And USF participated by offering upper degree—not upper degree, upper class—courses on site at the campus in New Port Richey.

MG: Lakeland is still quite young when you become president. I think Lakeland's establishing—

BC: It was a tiny campus.

MG: Yeah, in about eighty-seven [1987], I think. So—St. Pete is 1965, so they're well along. But if you look at Sarasota later—and of course which I guess Lakeland is just the baby of the group—were there particular issues, especially that relationship between a community college and the university, and the joint facilities—

BC: Well, actually it worked very well. The joint campus worked very well, because the university had a small program and the community college dominated. But with all things, (laughs) these joint facilities have to have the right mix of students and programs, personalities. And when you get to a certain size the demands take over, and that's exactly what happened in Lakeland. Actually, we had a very fine senator, Curtis

Peterson, who was for many years chair of the education committee and the appropriations committee. In fact, I served with him in the senate. But his dream was to have an engineering college in Lakeland on the campus. So for years we went through that. The university just wasn't ready to build an engineering college in Lakeland.

But those are the kinds of issues that the university has to contend with over the years. Now, I think the entire boom, the I-4 [Interstate 4] boom between Orlando and Tampa, makes a much more compelling argument to build a presence there.

MG: Right, and now of course we're moving, starting our own campus right there. The idea of an engineering college at Lakeland—

BC: (laughs) Freestanding.

MG: Would it—was there any idea that we would move the engineering school from here over there, or these would be—?

BC: I don't think so.

MG: Okay. (laughs)

BC: I don't think so, but for years people thought that Lakeland—and Polk County may yet become a center for technology. I think as the new campus is constructed, I think there'll be a lot of thought to what technology center can be spawned in that area.

MG: Well, we've got to talk about football.

BC: Oh! Yes. (laughs)

MG: We should talk about Conference USA and athletics. John Allen was not a believer in NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] athletics. He was much more interested in intramural types of things. And yet, over a period of time—and certainly well before you get here—we do have intercollegiate athletics. But the big day, I guess, is in ninety-seven [1997], and you're here, and we play football for the first time. Obviously this didn't happen overnight. You would have been here for about three years, I guess, before we played the first game. Tell me about the lead-up to the first game. A lot must need to go on.

BC: Well, number one, we had a report as Frank Borkowski—President Borkowski—was leaving. He had gathered together another—yet another—committee to make a recommendation on whether football was feasible or not, and the recommendation was strongly to build a football team. So as I came in, frankly, I very much benefited from having that report. But I very much knew that there was—throughout the university there was a difference of opinion on what the alumni and the community folks and the students wanted.

So, there was a lot of discussion about the feasibility, and my discussion was with members of the board of regents and the chancellor. The chancellor was no great fan of starting a football program at USF, and it required the chancellor's recommendation—approval—as well as the board of regents'. They were very cautious, because when the University of Central Florida program started it went in the red. So their interest was in looking at the cost and how we were going to fund this.

Our Department of Athletics was very much in favor of starting football. My interest was in program equity, and we fortunately had a way to address that, because we started to compensate for the number of players that would be recruited when we started women's soccer. And that helped to balance the gender equity issues. There were many, many issues, not the least of which is a stadium and where you would play these games. And then we had our own conference. We had moved from the Metro Conference into Conference USA[3], so we had to negotiate with Conference USA—the football playing schools in Conference USA. So there were a lot of irons in the fire.

I must say that perhaps there were two tipping points. One was the tremendous outpouring of people in the community, who cared about the university and also cared about football. Our foundation had grown to a size where it could make commitments, financial commitments, to help a team develop. Paul Griffin was the athletic director, and recruited an excellent coach, who has remained with us. We addressed the gender equity issues. In the final analysis, when the faculty senate debated the issue, they of course were not terribly excited about football, (laughs) but they weren't terribly opposed, either.

MG: How did you feel about it? Did you feel you were handed football that you had to implement, or was it still when you arrived something that could have, with the right political massaging, have gone away.

BC: I think that I could have put it on the back burner, and not addressed it. But I sensed that the university was ready, and I think it has made—I think it's had a very positive impact. I know there are a lot of people in academia who just bemoan the whole NCAA thing and the athletics—I'm not one of those. I think it is a cultural aspect of higher education, and especially of these large public institutions, and I think it has made a very positive impact on USF.

MG: Lee Roy Selmon, beloved Tampa Bay Buccaneer, helps to bring the program. It needed prestige. What role did you play in his arrival? How does his arrival—?

BC: He was hired prior to my coming. He was hired under Dr. Borkowski's presidency. I credit Paul Griffin for reaching out and bringing him to the university, because he is a tremendous role model for people in the Tampa Bay area and all of Florida. So his presence was a positive factor.

[3] The Metropolitan Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, or Metro Conference, merged with the Great Midwest Conference to become Conference USA in 1995.

MG: With his arrival—and I don't know whether the two are linked—but one of the things that does occur that I want to just address briefly. There's a growing role for African American leaders on campus, and I'm thinking in particular of Harold Nixon, who was the first African American vice president—

BC: I'm proud to say I hired the first African American vice president. It was my first hire, as a matter of fact.

MG: When you arrived and looked around, did you see a lack of diversity, and were these—?

BC: Absolutely. And our community knew it. People knew. They looked at the university and they said, This is a very white place. We hadn't had the Hispanic advisory commission very long, either. So diversity was extremely important, and making sure that African Americans were represented in the highest positions was one of my goals. And addressing diversity—even the African American employees at the university thought that—they could sense that they were not as highly valued, perhaps, as they wanted to be. I think that that was an undercurrent at the university. Diversity in higher education, because people are more creative, they're more realistic, they're scholars, and diversity is a big, big issue in education.

MG: In addition to hiring folks like Harold Nixon, were there other significant efforts that you made to increase the diversity?

BC: We had—well, I was very interested in gender diversity, and hired the first female vice presidents as well, with Kathy Stafford, who was vice president for advancement; Noreen Seagres, who is a Hispanic woman, became the first vice president equivalent, because she became the legal counsel, the general counsel, for the university. She was young and dynamic, very bright, and deserved that position. I recruited Lori Stryker, who had worked for me previously as a budget director. So we tried to—I tried to diversify my own president's staff as much as possible, and then we had a diversity committee that reported to me. We tried to encourage, and make an issue of, hiring within the departments, where it's a little more difficult, but along with my provost, Tom Tighe, we created financial incentives for the colleges and departments to diversify their faculty hires.

MG: There's efforts to increase the Latino presence—such a strong history of Spaniards, Cubans, South and Latin Americans here in the Tampa Bay area. Donna Perino, now—and I suspect this is since the end of your presidency—but things like ENLACE[4] and other organizations that are very active in trying to recruit—

BC: We developed the Latin American/Caribbean program.

[4] Engaging Latino, African-American, and other Communities for Education: http://enlacefl.usf.edu/

MG: Right. In addition to things that Donna's now doing, creating LACS[5], other things that you did to recruit or encourage greater Latino presence?

BC: Well, we were particularly active with the College of Business, and developed exchanges. We had a very fine faculty exchange in Mexico, where through our international relations efforts we sent faculty—in fact, I went on one of those trips myself, a summer program where our faculty went, studied together and learned in the Mexico setting. We've done several exchanges with Costa Rica, Panama. So that was a—that kind of outreach, I think, was very important. I think we make a mistake in not having more of an emphasis on hemispheric relationships and programs and exchanges.

MG: One of the ways in which the university has a diverse community is its Muslim population. There has been, I know, for many years a strong Muslim community here in the Tampa Bay area. And I suspect as the growth of that strong Muslim community, an interest in having a Muslim studies or Islamic studies affiliation with the university. I don't—I believe that Sami Al-Arian arrives at the university in about 1983, so this is well before your time—he arrives, I think, in the eighties [1980s].

BC: Um-hm.

MG: But at what point are you approached about Islamic studies and about the interest in creating or—and I don't recall the exact year. Is WISE[6] created before you arrive?

BC: Um-hm.

MG: Okay.

BC: Please. (laughs) WISE existed when I got here.

MG: At what point are you aware of the existence of WISE? What point do you have any communication, either with anyone associated with WISE or just about the fact that there is this partnership that's intended—?

BC: Well, I was surprised one day when I had—when our public relations department came and said, "There's someone from the [*Tampa*] *Tribune* that would like to sit down and talk to you about WISE," and I said, "What is WISE?"

MG: Ah.

BC: And that's how I became initially aware that WISE was an organization.

MG: So they're really completely off the radar screen as far as the president's office was concerned.

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[5] Latin American and Caribbean Studies

[6] World and Islam Studies Enterprise, Inc.

BC: Oh, yeah.

MG: So it hits the radar screen when the *Tribune* comes calling. What did they want to know?

BC: They wanted to know whether the university—what our involvement was with this organization, and particularly interested in Dr. Al-Arian and how—and his activities.

MG: Had you ever—you know, though your engagement with the faculty—had you ever met him before? Did you—was his name known to you in any way?

BC: No.

MG: Just—shows up and he's a computer science professor, but his claim to fame, I guess then, is through his affiliation with WISE. That's how he becomes known to you as opposed to any other interaction you might have had.

BC: Right.

MG: When do things—when does the heat start to boil?

BC: Well, I think immediately after the *Tribune* wrote their article revealing that he had been outspoken at a conference in D.C. or Virginia, and had made inflammatory comments. He was the subject of a TV documentary that had been released months before that. So people start saying, "What's going on there?"

MG: What's your initial thoughts—what are folks telling you about how to deal with him?

BC: Well, I immediately did what anyone else would do. I asked the provost and then the dean of the college, and of course Dr. [Michael] Kovac was filling both roles at the time. He was provost, and knew Dr. Al-Arian. He'd been hired on his watch. We began looking at the issue of WISE, number one, and the WISE agreement had never been signed off on by the president of the university. And so as we began to investigate—internal investigation looking at WISE—we made some changes in how those affiliations can be generated. We also did a fiscal examination of the university's relationship with WISE and made some changes there. We learned that some graduate assistantships had been entered into inappropriately.

MG: That issue of the graduate assistantships comes out in Reece Smith's report. At what point in this whole process did you believe that a formal report should be written? And then, how was—we know that Reece Smith had been an interim president, but did you have a relationship with him, or in some way that would have said, "Reece Smith's the right person for me to ask to handle this issue."

BC: Well, we took those preliminary steps internally, looked at the relationship with WISE and we looked at the financial implications, what could have prevented some of those minor things. This just kind of kept festering under the cover, and at some point—early, after the newspaper articles were in process or immediately after—I asked our law enforcement people to get involved and give me a recommendation, and reach out to all the investigative agencies. Talked with the chancellor, and made sure that I wasn't out there on my own.

So we were reaching out very quietly to informed sources, saying, Do we have a problem here? And the reaction we got from law enforcement was, "No. The campus is safe; everything is going as it should." The point at which things changed—

MG: I wanted to just ask—how about from other segments of the community? Was the Jewish population outspoken early on?

BC: Oh, yeah.

MG: Did you receive phone calls, emails, letters from different factions asking you to handle this situation in different ways? Where were those pressures coming from?

BC: Well, initially we invited—I happened to be away when this story initially broke. But Dr. Kovac invited a group of Jewish leaders to the campus to talk about it. When I returned a week later, I invited our Religious Studies faculty to talk about it. We reached out to leaders in the Muslim community as well. I think there was contention between the groups.

MG: What was the sense? Was there an initial sense that the reports were right or correct, and was there a sense that Dr. Al-Arian had been involved in supporting terrorism? At what point are these rumors and innuendo and arguably character assassination, and at what point do you sense that there might be some issues here where this individual is very possibly engaged in some activities that, if not illegal, are very unpalatable? Does that ever enter into it, really, what he was doing?

BC: Not at this stage yet.

MG: Okay.

BC: I think there's a lot of contention about the inflammatory remarks that he made, and whether that was a reason to dismiss him.

MG: Right.

BC: And so we were looking at the legal position of the university and whether we were acting appropriately. I think the point at which things changed somewhat for me was later in the year when one of the people who was—who had spent time here at the university—showed up as head of the Islamic Jihad.

MG: Right.

BC: When that happened, a trigger went off that that doesn't make sense, because he was here and involved with WISE, and actually taught a summer class for two successive years, then disappeared, dropped out and turns up in the Middle East as head of the Islamic Jihad. At that point, I said, "Well, back to law enforcement again." Law enforcement had no knowledge of him. None.

MG: Never knew he was here, never knew he was in the country?

BC: No. Never—he was never a suspect.

MG: Just completely off the radar screen.

BC: Off the radar. So I said, "Well, we probably need someone who has a fine reputation to come in and look at the steps the university took." At the same point, we continued our discussion with law enforcement; "What should we be doing?" You know, contacted the intelligence committees. We were in touch with [U.S. Senator] Bob Graham's office, for instance, "Do you know something?" We were in touch with the attorney general's office, "Is there something we should be doing here? Do you know of anything?" And in all the time that I was university president, I received no indication from any agency, from any agency, that there was anything here that we should be doing differently. We ultimately suspended Dr. Al-Arian, as you know—

MG: Why? What did you feel was a justification for his suspension?

BC: The—we thought that he needed to be suspended pending an investigation, and formally asked law enforcement to investigate this matter.

MG: At any point, did you feel you had grounds to fire him?

BC: No. I mean, we followed the rules and regulations of the university and the board of regents, and the state and Constitution of the United States.

MG: At one point, and I believe it's during these issues, a young man by the name of Damian Hospital, a.k.a. War Perjures—

BC: Oh, yes.

MG: —shows up. Kind of an upsetting and very—I think relatively brief—but difficult time. There's a bomb threat. You're forced to deal with that, for the safety of students. Tell me a little about that. Do you remember those days and what you were thinking about, whether or not there were any connections between issues involving WISE and then this young man? Were they completely separate issues in your mind?

BC: Yes.

MG: What motivated—

BC: They actually were. Well, actually, the bomb threat was a letter received by *The Oracle*, and very brief. *The Oracle* editor, whose name I can't remember now, decided to write about it, and of course that's all it took! (laughs) People became—any time you have a letter like that, people become very concerned. It got some publicity—a lot of publicity, as a matter of fact. People on campus said, I'm not going to come to work that day. It was a threat against one of our female faculty members, where it said that somebody would be killed, and had disparaging words to say about me. It was our—

Our campus police investigated that quickly, and they had this individual, who ultimately admitted to this, and they really felt that he was responsible, because when they went to talk to him in his dormitory room there were some Nazi posters around. So they really thought that they had the individual. But at that time, we didn't have the evidence, or they didn't have the evidence, to arrest him. So that was kind of something that went on. I never thought that they were connected.

MG: The reason I mention it is that I think at some point, in looking back over *The Oracles*—the "War Perjures"—there was some—maybe that was a name that he had come up with that was some kind of a made-up group that had alleged Islamic overtones or connections in this young man's mind. And I didn't know whether—the reason I had posed the question was whether the student population, or those who might be a little unbalanced, were playing off various issues that were going on, on campus and other areas, creating more of a—more flame, and hence the connection; whether that was what this young man was thinking and whether those Islamic—alleged Islamic—War Perjures organization had anything to do with anything else going on on campus.

BC: No. I don't recall anything like that.

MG: Good. One more little issue that comes up, and then we're going to close with some other things. Senator John Grant seemed to have had a strong reaction to the invitation of Greg Louganis, who was invited to campus to speak. But it raises, I think, an important issue for the period in which you're president, and that is the growing, vocal, and public, and, I think, self-confident stand of the gay and lesbian community. How did you—did you get involved at all in the issue of whether or not—?

BC: Absolutely. I think that our students—I got involved from the point of view of equal rights, equal opportunities, and also protection of gay and lesbian students. And I think that we were in a period of some hostility, and to have comments like Senator Grant's, I thought, was totally, totally uncalled for. We had a gay and lesbian, gay and lesbian committee. They met; they were authorized by me and the university. I also took the lead among university presidents to ask the chancellor to include in our anti-discrimination regulations for the entire board of regents the inclusion of the gay and lesbian individuals. And he would not even bring it up at the board of regents meeting. And it is still not

included in the statutory non-discrimination clause. And I think that that's appalling, because we do know there are hate crimes, and we do know there are individuals around. There were at the time. So I was very sensitive to the issues of the gay and lesbian community.

MG: At a certain point, you made some decisions about the future, and your interests in continuing or not continuing on as president. When—and I guess this would have been in ninety-nine [1999]—you had been here for five years?

BC: Actually, five and a half years.

MG: Five and a half years. Was there a contractual obligation that you had to the university, and that your decisions were related to whether or not you wished the contract to be extended? Were there—was it a much more fluid type of relationship contractually with the university? What prompted a decision to seek another career opportunity?

BC: Well, actually, I did not seek another career opportunity. I was very happy at the university, and in all of my roles I think I look back most fondly at my tenure here at the university. Actually, I was sought after several times to enter various pools for various positions, and sometime during the late spring a headhunting firm, Heidrick and Struggles, called and said that they would like to submit my name for the search for president of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. I said, "Well, I'm really not interested in leaving the university." My first response was just that I'm not interested. And I received another call several weeks later, "Can we please—would you please just talk to somebody about it?" I said, "Well, send me some information." And so that was the beginning of a process where they recruited me.

One of the people who was somewhat instrumental in convincing me that this was a great opportunity was Governor Jim Hunt from North Carolina, who chaired the board. They were looking for someone who had a career in education but who understood the issues surrounding teachers, and they really wanted someone with some university understanding. And they just made an offer—and it was a position that was very intriguing to me, the idea of building a higher standard for teachers, much like faculty. So I became very excited about that, and enjoyed very much my tenure with the National Board. We did it!

MG: We—you make the decision. You have an option. You can accept the position—the National—

BC: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

MG: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards comes a-calling, and you are actively courted for this position. You've been at the University of Florida—ah, South Florida for five and a half years. I guess—is it a tough—you know, pros and cons in a list on a sheet, reasons—

BC: Oh, yeah. It was a very, very tough decision. I was very, very torn.

MG: What was left undone here at South Florida that really made that decision? What—or, was it things undone, and what were they; or just other things; "No, I really don't want to go. I want to stay here as president." On the sort of reasons to stay side, were there things that—"Oh, no, I've got to get that done, and we're so close to that success." Do you remember—?

BC: Well, I think that the opportunities at the university just always continue. USF was really moving along, I thought, very nicely. We had increased our endowment dramatically—when I left, we had the second largest endowment, we slipped a little now.

MG: Yes. Right, a hundred and twenty-five million—

BC: Oh, it's two hundred and twenty million endowment.

MG: Yeah. And I think at the time it had gotten up to about a hundred and twenty-five million, in 1997, which—I guess after the University of Florida—

BC: Right.

MG: —and before FSU [Florida State University].

BC: Yes, yes. And we were on the—I felt we were in a good position academically. We had increased our Ph.D. programs. We had become a Research 1 university. So I looked back and said, "Wow. This is very good progress." Now of course there are always things left undone. When I looked at the National Board, they were in their infancy, and really wanted to build nationally. And I think it is the key to improving teacher education in this country. It was a tremendous job. And I think it was more the challenge than anything else that led me to accept that position.

MG: Let me ask, just as we get ready to close—the Research 1 university status. Did that come and land in our laps here at USF? Did you actively campaign—?

BC: Oh, no. I actively campaigned for it, over and over. The chancellor, Adam Herbert, had been chancellor for about a year, and he was convinced—his goal was to classify the institutions in Florida. We knew that his classifications were going to be research down to doctoral granting institutions. And I spent a lot of time with Chancellor Herbert and his staff, because—actually, we had—Our endowment had grown. Our external research grants had grown. We had a research committee that was spawning dollars. We had the Moffitt [Cancer Center] that had just become nationally designated.

So we had a lot going that, when you look at—our competition for it was Florida State University, and we had as much going, except for the number of Ph.D. graduates, and that was an area where we were not quite competitive. But all of the other elements came down strongly on the side of granting us research designation. And I think that really was

a tremendous decision, and one that reinforced for the faculty the fact that we'd really reached a new plateau.

MG: One of the things in discussions with other faculty that we've come across is some ambivalence about whether or not we were ready, especially in some of the arts and humanities subjects. I've had conversations here in the library whether or not the library met the needs of a research institution. Were there discussions against becoming a Research 1 designation? Did you see or hear from faculty or other groups on campus some reluctance as to whether or not we had what it took to succeed in that avenue?

BC: No. I think it was more a recognition of what we had achieved than whether or not we had the books. The position of the library was more of a—well, USF over its history has—perhaps quietly, perhaps not so quietly—been gaining in academic stature based on these parameters. And why should they not have the same recognition as those two older universities, Florida and Florida State? So it was more a point of pride, I think. And it didn't cost anything, although we certainly have not received the resources of some of our older sister institutions. There's no doubt about that.

MG: Did you feel that Research 1 status would bring in additional dollars from the legislature?

BC: Yes. In fact, there is a formula. It was my hope that it would be recognized by our legislative funders, as well.

MG: In the aftermath of your presidency, I think there've been a number of nice honors. Tell me, when you're named to the Florida Women's Hall of Fame by Governor [Lawton] Chiles—is that at the end, after your presidency has ended?

BC: No.

MG: Oh, it's during?

BC: Yes. In fact, it was—I think it was in ninety-six [1996].

MG: Ah. How does that—how did that come about?

BC: Well, it was a very nice recognition.

MG: Just get a letter in the mail? (laughs)

BC: Well, it's a little more involved than that. But I was nominated by the Status of Women Commission, which is a statewide advisory board, and the governor makes three selections a year. So that was certainly a very nice recognition. I'm very proud of it.

MG: You're the first female president here at USF. As I think about it, have there been many—or any—female presidents in the State University System?

BC: Yes. Helen Popovich, who was a former faculty member here at USF, became the president of Florida Atlantic University during the late eighties [1980s].

MG: Ah. Okay.

BC: So there had been one—

MG: So not a first, but you're near the—

BC: Right. Second. And we had a chancellor, Barbara Newell was chancellor in the late eighties [1980s] as well.

MG: Did the designation to the Hall of Fame—obviously you've had a very important and influential political career. As you look back on your career and you look back on the presidency here and the honors that you've received, is being a woman part of what identifies you and part of what makes that a special accomplishment—?

BC: Yeah.

MG: Or is it just coincidental? You're a woman, you're—

BC: Well, I think the gender issues have always followed me and been related in my career, since I was the first in several categories. I was the first woman elected to the Florida Cabinet, but the firsts started earlier when I was elected to local government, to the county commission. And I was the first state senator from this area, and only the fourth female ever elected to the state senate. So things have changed rapidly in the couple of decades that I have been involved. And I think partly my career measures the growth in gender issues, gender politics and equality. So yeah, I think being a female, for me, was definitely an advantage.

And watching the growth in opportunities for women has been rather dramatic. I mean, the majority of students now are female, at all levels except I think Ph.D. There are more students here at USF, and at the other universities there are more graduates with bachelor's degrees and master's degrees. The medical schools are now fifty percent female—that has been a tremendous change. There are some fields where women are still not represented. But I've always been particularly interested in the issues of gender advancement.

MG: If you had to think back on one or two real highlights from your presidency, things that stand out either as accomplishments that you're most proud of, or just moments of real enjoyment here as president, do several things come to mind?

BC: Well, I think that many issues come to mind. As I drive back to the campus, of course I'm constantly reminded of the changing face of the university, which is, I guess, a combination of seeing so many young students who are living on campus, as well as

buildings that certainly look nicer, and are more appealing. And I think that academically, you always measure a presidency by what has happened. It's not only the research designation, but the growth of programs. And the struggles to get recognition for the university certainly had not ended when I got here. And I thought there was a lot more scrutiny on some of our programs than some of our older sister institutions.

MG: Anything left undone that you would like to see? If you were back in the president's office, some things from your legacy that you'd like to see completed?

BC: Well, I think that there are—when you look at the issue of resources, I think that you always come back to that. We haven't done, as you mentioned earlier, what we should have done in the arts and sciences. I mean, that's an area that is sometimes, because the enrollment is so much at the undergraduate level, people forget that there should be an emphasis at the Ph.D. and the research level as well. So that certainly is an area where I think the university can grow, and should grow—and an area which is important in the way our society operates, and what we hold important.

MG: I want to thank you very much for coming in.

BC: Well, thank you! I appreciate it.

MG: Glad you've been with us.

End of interview