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**Yael Greenberg (YG):** Today is Tuesday, March 4th, 2003. My name is Yael Greenberg, oral history program assistant for the Florida Studies Center. Today, we continue a series of interviews in our studio here in the Tampa campus library, with USF faculty, students, and alumni, in order to commemorate 50 years of university history. We continue our interviews with Dr. Jack Fernandez, who came to USF in the 1960s as an assistant professor of chemistry and physical science. Today, his title is professor emeritus. Good morning, Dr. Fernandez.

**Jack Fernandez (JF):** Good morning, Yael.

YG: Let's begin by taking us to the year you arrived in Tampa and what circumstances brought you to the University of South Florida.

JF: Well, first, I was born in Tampa and raised here. I went away, of course, when I went to study. And when I got my PhD in chemistry, I realized I'd probably never live in Florida because there wasn't much in Florida for chemistry. I was at Duke University as a post-doc in 1956, '57, when I heard about the university being started here. I started taking the newspaper, the *Tampa Tribune*, to keep abreast of what was going on. And as soon as the president was appointed, Dr. John Allen, I applied. I wrote him a letter and asked for a job, and it was rather early.

And, about a year later, he had hired Sidney French as the academic dean, and also, he was a chemist. Anyway, I interviewed Dr. French—I forget what year. It was '57 or '58. By that time, I had moved into industry. I was working at Tennessee Eastman Company

in Kingsport, Tennessee, which is a division of Eastman Kodak. We hit it off pretty well. The following year, they had hired Russell Cooper, who was to be the dean of arts and sciences; I guess they called it liberal arts at that time. Well, by early 1960, I was offered a job here, and I left Tennessee Eastman to come here.

My immediate supervisor at Tennessee Eastman asked me one question: he says, “Are you sure there’s going to be a university there when you get down there?” And I said, “Well, I hope so. The State of Florida says so.” So, anyway, I came down in July, I believe it was, mid-July, for a three-week period, to help register new students. What we did was to sit down and talk with each student that registered, try to figure out a schedule for him and all that, and then, in September, classes started, and I started with them. It was quite an experience.

YG: You said that you heard about USF; you started reading the *Tampa Tribune*. What kinds of things were you hearing about USF?

JF: Well, the first controversy was where will it be built? The people in Pinellas County wanted it built there. It was going to be in the Tampa Bay area somewhere. Other people wanted it—of course, people in Tampa wanted it in Tampa. Some people suggested Harbor Island—no, not Harbor Island. I can’t think of the name of the little strip right north of Tampa Bay that joins Tampa to Pinellas County, but, well, anyway; I’ll think of it in a minute. That would’ve been sort of a compromise, equally inconvenient to everybody.

And they finally decided on Tampa and to build it here, near Busch Gardens. And some of the propaganda against that was that it would be called “Beer Can U” (laughs) because of its proximity to the beer plants. But anyway, it got built, and one of the first projects was a city project or a county—popular program called Dollars for Dorms to have people in the city donate money to build dormitories because there wasn’t quite enough appropriation for everything. That went over very well. People of the area really wanted this university to come.

Anyway, I have very fond memories of that first year. It was very exciting. It was very different because nobody had tenure, including the deans, so everyone felt a little bit more freedom, in spite of the fact that non-tenured people are not supposed to have freedom. But, no matter who you talked to, they didn’t have it either. And there was a young faculty. I was 30, and I was sort of past the average, I think. I remember, in philosophy, a guy, Max Halcott, who was 23 when he got his PhD at Yale, came down here three months later and started. So it was a young group, and we had a good time.

The most interesting part of working at USF at that time was that it wasn't like it is now, where you come into the chemistry department and you know all the chemists, but you don't have that much contact with other areas, other departments. And that is very typical, not at all unusual. But when we came here in the chemistry building—there were only three buildings. I was in the chemistry building. And, in the chemistry building, we had biologists, psychologists, sociologists, people in philosophy—well, the one philosopher, who is the fellow I mentioned. There were just people from all areas in all the three buildings.

The three buildings were chemistry, the University Center, and the old library, which is now part of the student activities building, I suppose. That came up later, actually. That came up after Christmas. The three buildings were chemistry, the University Center, and the administration building; I forgot about that. In fact, my first office was in the administration building, when I came to advise students and to help students register because the chemistry building had not been turned over yet.

YG: I want to go back a little bit to when you first wrote a letter to Dr. John Allen, the first president of USF. Why did you want to come to USF?

JF: Well, I was from Tampa. I had strong ties in Tampa. My family were all here, and my wife also. She was born and raised in Tampa, and her parents also were Floridians. There was a strong tie; it was a happy thought for me to come back to Florida. I remember how thrilled I was, seeing the license tags when I drove in that time. Three was the Hillsborough County designation on the tags; it was different from now. And it was fun to see Florida with a three on it when we got into the county and all that. It was just little things like that that I remember. I wanted to come back here. This was the place I was born and raised, and I liked it. I still do.

YG: When you first saw the USF campus, can you take us back and sort of describe what you saw or what you didn't see?

JF: Well, I feel like I don't ever have to see the Sahara Desert because I saw it that day. This was before that, before 1960. I forget if it was—I think it must have been in 1959. My wife and I, with our family, came down, spent a week or two. We drove up Fowler Avenue. Now, Fowler Avenue had not existed before the university. It was cut for the university, as far as I know. In fact, it cut across an airfield. The airfield—you can probably still see patches of it on the South side of Fowler Avenue. It was about where the beer bottling plant was and would probably run into that new—what is it? The CIS building? Right across Fowler to that. Fletcher Avenue was here. It was a county road, as it is now.

But Fowler didn't exist, so it was really a big sand patch with ruts in it. And when we entered into the campus, it was the same thing. It was pretty startling. Buildings were going up. Nothing was completed, so it must have been a year or 8 or 10 months beforehand. That was my first impression of the university. When I came in that July of 1960, I came with my wife. I left the kids with the grandparents, and we drove here just to see the campus, all three buildings. And, I remember, one of the complaints of people during that first year was that their cars were losing their paint because, when it was breezy, the sand—and it was just sand all over—would just sandblast the cars.

I don't know how serious that was, but people did complain about that. And then, soon, by July of '60, of course, we had streets, and the main road into campus from Fowler Avenue into the administration building was already there and paved. I'm trying to remember about the parking lots. I guess the parking lots were also paved. The installation ceremony, Sam Gibbons presided. I think he was a state congressman at that time, or state senator, and later he ran for the US House of Representatives. And he presided. Governor Leroy Collins was there and, of course, President Allen and all the dignitaries and the faculty. It was a September day; I don't remember the date.

YG: You were originally hired in the chemistry department?

JF: Okay, I was hired to teach chemistry and physical science. There was no chemistry department. The original intent was not to have departments at all. The people that started at the administration, Allen, Sidney French, Cooper, and people like that, they had the idea that departments were divisive, and they wanted people to have free flow of ideas, interdisciplinary thinking, and so forth. So they didn't call them departments. They called them programs. I was in the chemistry program. There was a College of Basic Studies and a College of Liberal Arts at that time. The College of Basic Studies offered six courses, and they were given numbers. CBS, I think it was—CBS. The 100-level course was American Idea; this was American government, basically.

The second one was physical science, the third one was English, the fourth was, I guess, math. There was a humanities and something else. I'm trying to remember now. Everybody taught in that college, as well as in their own discipline. That's why I said chemistry and physical science; I taught a course in physical science and a course in general chemistry that first year. And the physical science was comprised of chemistry, physics, geology, and astronomy. And there was also a biological science; that's the one I couldn't remember. The biological science included botany and zoology and so forth. So I taught in both of these subjects. Faculties, no matter how politically liberal they might be, and many of them are very liberal, but all of them are very conservative when it comes to how a university ought to run.

So people didn't like the idea of not having departments. And it was kind of an uprising. It wasn't any big thing or anything, but there were meetings held, and people voiced their opinions. You know, how can we compete with other colleges and universities and so forth, if we don't have the kind of structure that people expect for a university? So, eventually, we went to departments. And then, before long, we had to choose whether we were going to stay in the College of Liberal Arts or the College of Basic Studies. I seriously thought about both of them for various reasons but ended up with the College of Liberal Arts, of which I was glad. When President Mackey took over, one of his first things, and that was about 1970, one of the first things he did—he didn't just come in and do it, but he had a lot of committees working on it and studying and questioning and so forth, and they finally abolished the College of Basic Studies.

The College of Basic Studies hadn't worked out the way people wanted it to. That could be because of faculty members' natural conservatism about how the discipline should be arranged and so forth. I don't know, but anyway, it didn't work out very well. So the people in the College of Basic Studies had to decide which regular college they would go in and which department. And that all took place under Dr. Mackey's administration. But I think, overall, it was a good thing. I liked the idea of general education; that is, the basic college and all that. But there's sometimes a separation between the intent and how it's actually brought about, and that is, I think, what happened.

YG: Before you started teaching, you had mentioned that you were involved in registering some of the first students. What did you talk to them about? What were they—why were they here? Why did they come to USF?

JF: Well, you'd be surprised how many of them skipped a year; graduated from high school in '59 and skipped a year so they could be in the first class. A lot of them did that. I don't know the number, but I know that more than a very small minority. They liked the idea. I mean, it was pretty exciting to be in on a first year of a new university, be the first graduates. I have a good friend now who still claims he's the oldest living graduate of USF. I don't know that it's true, but he likes to claim it. I mean, it's a nice thing to brag about for him. And some of the—yeah, I think that was it. Students really wanted to come here, a lot of them did.

Mostly, they were people from the area at that time. And mostly they lived at home and they came to school here, which presented problems. We didn't have the university student life that you have in most schools because of that. And there were downsides. I remember, there were cases, I would see kids sitting in their cars having lunch, you know, with a sandwich, eating their lunches in the car. And that's not exactly taking advantage of the university environment at all. But there were no traditions. There were no standards set up, no guide posts. And so, all of these things had to be done, had to be set.

Traditions had to be built, had to sink roots somehow. And they did, I think, for better or worse. Some are good, some are not. I'm not sure I've answered your question, but—

YG: Did you ever meet Dr. John Allen?

JF: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. Yeah, in those days, there was a closeness that you may not have now. I mean, it wasn't at all uncommon to meet him. I remember once we had a—I was on what they called the All University Senate. That's another thing that was a burr under the saddle of many faculty members, and that was that it wasn't a faculty senate; it was everybody represented. Everybody. Plant and grounds people up to the dean and so forth. Something was happening—I couldn't remember what it was—and I went to see him to complain. That's not something you'd do today, I don't think. You know, just call up, "Can I see Dr. Allen? I want to talk to him." "Sure, come on over." And it was a little bit different, a less formal environment.

Now, I don't know what it—I have not—let's see, I retired in '95. That was before Dr. Genshaft came in, so I don't know how she is. I haven't really had much chance to talk with her. Mackey was like that. I remember calling Dr. Mackey's office one day. I wanted to talk to him, and, "Sure, come on over." And Harris Dean, who was acting president for a while. So it varied a lot, but I think there was a more—how can I say? It was possible to have more contact with just about anybody. I was used to knowing people in all departments of the campus. I probably, today, know as many people in the English department as I do in chemistry because I dealt a lot with them and that sort of thing.

YG: What were some of the early educational strategies of the university? Did they instruct you on certain things that you had to teach? Or were you given more of a free range to teach your ideals?

JF: Well, in chemistry, we had a free range to teach what we knew. In the physical science course, however, that was a very structured course. There was a gentleman named C.C. Clark who was in charge of that. That was the division—I think it was called a division, I'm not sure. No, it was just called a course. The College of Basic Studies Physical Science course and he was the course chairman. That's what it was. But he had a rank, at that time, equivalent to a dean, of which there were none. But there were to be deans. What would have been a college today was called a division. Anyway, Dr. Clark organized the course, chose the textbook before we even got started, before he even got here. And he had very, very polished lectures.

He was a very accomplished gentleman. He was an older man. I would say he was in his sixties, one of the few of that age, and a very good lecturer; he did a good job. Very

organized with a lot of demonstrations of the planets and physics and things like that. I learned a lot. I loved it. My part, and the part of ordinary faculty in the course, was to hold discussion sections. Dr. Clark lectured once a week, and then there would be two discussion sections of an hour each, and then a lab of two hours. And we would run the lab and the discussion. And a nice thing about that time was that these discussion classes were never over 25 students. That was the idea. It was a very idealistic time.

People had great ideas on what to do, and everybody knew that small classes were better than large ones. Of course, that would change, with great rationalizations too. (laughs) But I think that everybody knows that instinctively. So we didn't have a whole lot to say about that. My job, or my task that I felt, was learning enough of these other areas that I wasn't an expert in, like astronomy and geology, to do justice to the course. Of course, I and the others like me, attended the lectures. Occasionally, Dr. Clark, when he got into chemistry, he would have one of the chemists give a lecture, and in geology, and so forth. But, in chemistry, we chose our own textbook.

And we would sit around, the chemists and the director of the division of natural science—who was a chemist it turns out—and they would decide what book to use, and we did. And the young ones—I had never taught before and one other one—one had taught. There were three in chemistry. The division director and this other fellow who had taught had a better background, so they decided on the book, and we went along with it. But then, we'd get into our class and teach it any way we wanted. Always with the idea that, next semester, somebody else may be teaching these kids, so we all had to unify it somewhat. But that was the only restraint. We pretty much did what we wanted.

YG: What were some of your students like?

JF: Well, as I remember, they were very good students. We had about, I think, eight or nine chemistry majors, or ten, in the first graduating class. Now we had a lot of chemistry students, but, you know, engineers take chemistry, pre-meds take chemistry and all that. But we had a lot of chemistry majors, and I would say, over half of them went on to get PhDs. We had no graduate students. We had nothing but freshmen the first year. Now, generally, science departments depend upon graduate students to do the bulk of the research in the labs; we used freshmen.

And I had a freshman, a young girl, her name was Joanna Siegfried, and she later—about her junior year—married one of the other freshmen, named Fowler, Bill Fowler, Frank William Fowler. And she worked for me in the lab, and we published three or four papers together before she got her bachelor's degree. She later went on to get a PhD at the University of Colorado and then did a post-doc in England, East Anglia University [University of East Anglia] and took a job with Brookhaven National Lab. Her husband



works—they both are still in their same places—her husband went to University of Stony Brook, which was also fairly new at that time. He is now a full professor there, and she is a very renowned chemist in her field. She's an organic chemist who has gotten into radiation, atomic radiation, and the effects on medical problems and so on.

So she's gotten into a very good field; she's won several awards from the American Chemical Society, another society, and I'm very proud of her. We had other students—I had another one who went onto Tallahassee to Florida State [University] and got his PhD there. He worked with me and so forth. The students were good. They were serious. They were learning, not only chemistry and all the other subjects, but how do students react in an environment like this? They felt the same freedom we did, in a way. They were able to express themselves a lot more than later students, I think.

YG: You mentioned the idea of the early days being extremely idyllic, full of wonderful ideas, passion. How has the university changed, and how has your department changed since those first days at USF?

JF: Well, I would say around the seventh—sixth or seventh or eighth year—the chemistry department, and probably with a lot of push from the people above, had decided to go for research, to go for a PhD program, and to get funded research. The year before that, they provided money for research equipment and things like that. I remember, before I left Tennessee Eastman Company, I got a call from Dr. Clark. He said, "We have a few thousand dollars that we can spend [that] we haven't spent yet. Do you need anything?" And so, I told him, "Yeah," I needed a spectrometer. It was \$2,500, I think, and he bought it. Afterwards, instruments were usually bought by the department for course study, not for research.

If you wanted research instruments, you had to go get money. The idea of bringing in your own funds, which is a very popular idea. It gets even stronger the greater the lack of funds there is. In other words, when money starts drying up, then they really push to get money, which is kind of difficult, as we know right now. I think now, the chemistry department—I would say that all but about five or six [people] at the most are people that are new since I left. I know quite a few of them. I've kept up with some of the new people that came in, and I'm fairly close with some of them. I was chairman the last year, of the department, and I hired a couple of them or was responsible for hiring a couple of them.

And I keep up with them, and they're very good people. The difference is that we were thinking of research because it was fun to do research and work on whatever you felt like working on. Now you've got to work on what'll bring in the cash, and it's a big strain. An example of tenure, back in those days, tenure was in three years. If the chairman did not

write a letter to the president saying, “Don’t give this guy tenure,” it was automatic. And that’s the way it was always done. It wasn’t as strenuous as it is now, where you have to—even if you have a list of publications a foot long and grant money, it may not be the right kind of grant money. You know, there’s always some pressure on that. So the idealism was—I guess it was idealism.

People thought, Well, this is the way to teach. We, the organic chemistry faculty decided that we did not want to have classes bigger than 45 students. We had a classroom that held 45, and we didn’t want to go to a bigger classroom. And we decided we’re going to teach them in groups of 45, no more, even if it meant we had to teach two or three sections. Well, I remember we hired one of these guys, the first year we hired somebody with a fairly big reputation. He had two classes to teach, 45 each. He says, “Look, I can teach 90 just as well as I can teach 45, and I can’t afford to spend the time.” And I said, “Well, I don’t approve of that, but if the chairman says so, what can we do?” I argued as much as I could, and so did others, but he did it.

And everybody else started saying, Well, what the heck? Why should I teach more classes and get further behind in research? And so, classes increased in size. It’s what happens everywhere. I had a student that went to MIT. I asked him about the—this is back in the late ’60s, early ’70s. I said, “What are the classes like there?” I knew the fellow who taught the organic at MIT; there as one guy that taught the basic organic course, a sophomore course. He says, “It’s a 300-student auditorium. They teach it all in one class. Everybody’s in that class.” So even at MIT, a very expensive place to go and very fine faculty, they go to big classes.

I mean, given the system, where you have to supply the money for your own research, it’s the only thing that works. One of the other schools—and I’m not positive about this, but I understand the University Central Florida, the chemistry department, were asked if they wanted to go on and expand to a PhD program. And they had a series of discussions and decided not to because they thought that would undermine the undergraduate program they had worked hard on. So it’s possible to do that sort of thing, but you don’t get the fame or the big bucks for that.

YG: In those early days, was there diversity, as far as faculty and/or students in your department?

JF: Gender diversity, yes. There were lots of girls in class. And there were, in the charter faculty, there were several women I can remember. In chemistry, we had none, but there was always—I remember once, I hate to tell you this, and you can cut it out if you want to, but we were hiring somebody, this was about our third or fourth year, and there were a

couple of candidates. One was a woman; one was a man. And we thought the woman was the best—there were three or four of us that were in this committee.

And the director came to us, “Oh, you guys just want a harem. Like, wait a minute, (laughs) that had nothing to do with anything. So there was always that in the background. I think bias and prejudice is always present somewhere. And we did not hire her. I don’t remember what happened. I just forgot. I just remember that comment. We’ve only had one black faculty member, a very fine chemist, Dan Aikins. He came—I forget—I guess it was in the late ’60s, early ’70s. He stayed. He got tenure. He was very productive, and he went onto the National Science Foundation as a rotator. Faculty members got to work for NSF for a year or two, in which they helped review and organize proposals.

And it gives them a good training on how to write a proposal, for one thing, and how to get things published and funded. He stayed two years and then decided he was going to go somewhere else. And he went somewhere else, and so he didn’t come back. That was a shame, but I don’t think there was a big problem with that. The first year we were here, the university was still segregated, racially segregated. It wasn’t until the second year, 1961, I think it was, when the universities became racially integrated. And there was no, that I can remember, there was no incident or problems or anything like that. I remember discussing it in one of my laboratory classes, freshman chemistry, and there were some students that didn’t like the idea very much. But, you know, people are people.

YG: Where was your first office?

JF: When I came those first few weeks to help register students, I was in the administration building on the first floor in a corner somewhere. Several of us were using one office. My first office—I got the first key that was issued in the chemistry building, and it was in room 310. I think. (laughs) I think it was 310. I had an office and then there was a lab down the hall. Eventually, I moved my desk down to the lab, and I just used the office for a library because I was in the lab almost all the time the first 10 years or so, working with the students and just doing what I wanted to do.

YG: What did the building look like?

JF: The chemistry building?

YG: The chemistry building.

JF: Pretty much the way it looks now, except that—I don't know if you're familiar with the third floor of the chemistry building. On the—let's see, on the east side, it's the way it was then. On the west side, it looked exactly on the east side; that is, a big hall down the middle with labs on the sides. In the interest of efficiency, they filled in that corridor to make more space. The beauty of it was that those were laboratories, and if you have a spill in the lab, you open the door, and you're out in the hall. Generally, you're in the hall of a big building.

But here, you were out in the outside. And so, that was a good safety feature, and it was more humanizing, I think—or more humane I should say, to be in contact with the outside. One of the things I always criticized about university buildings is that, so few windows in those days. I think, now, they're going more to windows. And it was in the interest of saving money with heating and cooling. I remember discussing with one of the deans once about that. And he said something about how, "I don't know why faculty members are so concerned about having a window." And I said, "Well, I don't either, but it must be something because every dean has one." So it was a little, sort of a submerged anger that people had about that.

YG: You mentioned faculty interaction in the early days between departments. That was something that happened throughout campus?

JF: I think so, yeah. It wasn't between departments. It was just that the departments were so close, in such close proximity, that, you know, you go to lunch, you get the guy next door, and he might be a biology professor or an English professor or something else. You'd have lunch together, and you'd talk about other things. I felt [that] the greatest education I have ever had was in those first five years because my closest friends were people in chemistry, of course, but in philosophy, in biology. I've had a full graduate program in evolution, I feel, just from being a friend of Glen Woolfenden, who is now professor emeritus also, who is an ornithologist. He would come to the house and just, you know, he'd go on for hours talking about his birds. He's an ornithologist, and he studied birds, and the whole theory of evolution just kind of came out of all this, explaining himself and all that. I feel like I learned a lot from him, and then philosophers, all these other people. It was very exciting. There's no time for that now, I don't think. I mean, nowadays, you've got to get those bucks in.

YG: John Allen was the first president of USF, and when you came in, he was the president of the university. What were some of the—were there any major accomplishments that stick out in your mind during those years, that he helped bring to the university?

JF: Well, he set the tone for this general education program, which I think was a good program; it was a good idea. It got submerged in the end, but it was a good idea. It's the kind of thing I've been talking about. You know, you learn from each other and so forth. You might point to the medical school. He got a medical school here. I don't know if he was responsible for it, but it came during his tenure and the engineering school. So he helped the university grow. He was responsible for the layout of the campus. I say "he," but it's somebody's office; I'm sure he didn't sit down and draw these pictures out, but he was responsible for that. And, at first, it was criticized a lot.

But if you look back over it, you see where everything is, it makes sense because he spread things out so far. That was a complaint—you had to walk so far to go from here to there. But a lot of buildings have filled in, and the campus looks pretty normal now. If they had done it all clumped together, it would've been very convenient for those first people, but then what happens after that? Now they can build a whole bunch of science buildings all in the science area, and a whole bunch of buildings in social and behavioral sciences, and fine arts and so forth in another area. It's hard to say. I mean, I think his idea of the general education idea was a good one.

YG: And—

JF: The idea was that every student would have a basic education in these six areas. That was his idea. And I think that's good, general education. How it's done can vary. If you go to a European university—I taught at the University of Madrid for one year on a Fulbright. And there, if you're a chemist, you study chemistry and calculus and physics, period; no English, no lit, no history, no sociology or arts or anything else. That's all at high school. You finished all that in high school. Well, I don't think an 18 year-old can study Chaucer in the way that a 25 year-old could. But anyway, that's the way they do it. Here, we don't do it that way. And you say, well, people criticize American education, but where does all the scientific progress come? Where are the Nobel Laureates in literature and economics and all that? Many of them come from here. So it must work somehow.

YG: We moved onto Mackey. How did his philosophy differ from President Allen? Were they very different?

JF: Well, in the sense that he abolished the College of Basic Studies. There were problems in it. Well, one of the problems was the average salary in the College of Basic Studies was way down from the salaries of corresponding departments in other colleges. If you were teaching physical science there, you were making less money than if you were teaching physics, or chemistry, or astronomy, or geology. So he abolished that, and these people had to go into the departments and then compete for the funds, which is probably to their advantage. Because, especially in fields like English, it seemed to me

that the people that were teaching the basic college English were probably doing as good of stuff—as good work as the people in the English department, and they realized it. So I think it was a good thing that they abolished it because, even though it was a good idea, there’s a difference between the implementation and the theory sometimes, most times.

YG: Did USF sponsor picnics or social gatherings in those early days, for its faculty and staff to interact?

JF: Did who?

YG: Did USF?

JF: USF, the whole university? Yeah, there were things. I don’t remember now. Back in Allen’s day, they used to hold a ball once a year, the President’s Ball. It was over at the University Center, second floor. And it was a dress-up affair. People wore tuxes. My wife always says that the ladies always wore high gloves, you know. It was very formal, very pleasant, very nice. It had a band. You know, Allen did not allow liquor on campus, none of that. He didn’t believe in that.

He did not allow football on campus, either; that was another one of his things. He thought that sports were for the students to participate in, and everyone had physical education programs. I agreed completely with him at the time because I thought it was really destructive. But later, I began to see that, to many legislators—the guys who pay the bills—we weren’t really a university. A university is a place where football is. (laughs) And I’m glad we got it now because I think it’s going to help us. It’s unbelievable what the football program has done, as everybody knows, in six years.

We’re competing for one of the bowls and all that. And that brings us a lot more fast recognition than anything else, except maybe some of the political stuff that goes on. That brings a lot of recognition too, but that’s the wrong kind. So, I forget the question. Oh, Mackey, yeah. Mackey did away with the basic college. I liked Mackey a lot. Some people didn’t like him. I thought he was fine. One thing is, he knew everybody by name within a year. I’d go by, and he’d say, “Hi, Jack.” You know, this kind of stuff. And I was just an associate professor at the time. But, anyway, he was a good politician. That’s what, I guess, you could say. And he knew how to get things done.

YG: In those early days, how did you get to work? And where, in relation, did you live to the university?

JF: I lived about 10 miles south of here, near the Hillsborough River and what is now called Martin Luther King. [It used to be called] Buffalo Avenue. Near there. It was a long drive, no interstate. I'd usually drive up Nebraska Avenue, sometimes I'd go around just for a variety. It was a long drive every morning. And then, in the evening, I'd come back. And in 1972, we moved walking distance from the chemistry building. Now—it's been 31 years [and] we're still there. We live one block east of 50th Street, between Fowler and Fletcher. In fact, we're now moving. We just sold our house, and we're moving to Harbor Island because I do most of my things at Harbor Island now. But anyway, how we got to work, sometimes we carpooled. I had a friend who was a curator at the chemistry department for a few years, and he and I would carpool. One or two students, occasionally, you know, at times we'd carpool with them. When the interstate came in, that helped a lot—to a point because it got really crowded. But that was long after I left.

YG: You mentioned Dollar for Dorms.

JF: Yes.

YG: Could you describe what Dollar for Dorms was?

JF: Dollars for Dorms was a public—I don't know who got it going. It may have been our university that enticed some of the business leaders in town to get it going and so forth. But it was a popular movement. People were donating money to get the university started. I don't remember too much detail about that because I was involved with a whole lot of other things at the time. But yeah, I remember that because, a little later, some of the citizenry became angry at the university for various things, as evidenced by the Johns Committee<sup>1</sup> that you'll probably ask me about later. And things like that, and there were people who complained that certain professors were teaching not-nice things. So there arose an animosity, in some quarters of the town, against the university. But, at first, there was a great friendship, a great desire to have the university here, and it was pretty widespread. And then, after a while, it just all settled into the usual. You know, they're glad we're here, but there's no big fuss about it. I'm talking about right now.

YG: Were there things about working at USF in those early days that really stand out in your mind that you'd like to leave for the record?

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<sup>1</sup>The Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (also known as the Johns Committee) was established in 1956. Similar to the investigative committees during the McCarthy period, the Johns Committee conducted wide-ranging investigations; they focused on academics, Civil Rights Movement groups, suspected communist organizations and homosexuals with an aim to expose what they believed to be subversive activities.

JF: Well, the main thing was the associations with people in the various areas, the various disciplines. That was probably the most important thing. And, just to show you, in summer of '61, the theater department put on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I don't know if you know the play, but there are some rustics that live in the woods, and they put on a play for the king. And these are just really dumb guys and so on. Well, they had faculty members to play those roles, and I played one of those roles. And it was great fun. And I got to know the people in theater and the students very well and all that. We rehearsed a lot. We put on four or five performances, and it was quite an exciting thing for me. We were part of it, at the time, it seemed like—part of the university.

I think people tend to feel part of the department, now, more than the university. And I think that may have been what the founders were trying to avoid. But what stands out was that there was a lot of tension in the faculty because rules were being written. And well, for instance, we sat down the first year, a committee, to write the curriculum for each of our departments. And people had different ideas from other people. You know, each person has a different idea. You know how that is. And there were just endless arguments about, should we have one year of qualitative analysis or one semester? Things like this. There were lots of fights about that.

It was interesting. It made us all think about it, so there's a positive aspect to it. But we spent a lot of energy on that, a lot of energy. And then, hiring was another thing. You know, we wanted to hire people. And there were people who wanted to hire people who were just dedicated to teaching, that would be good teaching, and others who wanted to hire people who could do research because they knew that, over the next year or two, we were going to eventually migrate into that direction. So there was that kind of tension, and people felt very empowered to express themselves at that time. I remember many meetings with the president and the academic dean and other deans and the faculty, all in the auditorium of the chemistry building.

And people would stand up and just directly argue with the president, saying, That is not right. We shouldn't do it that way, and so forth. I don't know that they ever have meetings like that now, maybe in the Faculty Senate, but I doubt it even there. So it wasn't a time of bliss and peaceful, idyllic study and research and all that. It wasn't that. It was a very tumultuous period for almost everybody I think. Because we were setting the stage for this university, what it was to become, for better or for worse.

YG: You mentioned, in the early days of USF, the community really rallied and supported the university. And then, slowly, tensions between the community and some of the faculty and some of USF began to arise over things like the Johns Committee. Were there other issues that brought up a lot of—?



JF: I've been trying to think of that since I mentioned it. I can't remember the specific issue. It was some young man, who objected to what the instructor was saying, and I don't even remember what subject it was in, to be honest with you. It became very obvious that his parents were the ones that were upset, and they were using the son to complain. And that, if nothing else, that rallied the faculty because one of the things that faculties believe is that they should be able to determine what they teach, and that their orientation is correct. Even though it differs from somebody else because everybody has a right to teach; that's the meaning of tenure.

So I can't remember the kid's name, and I don't want to say it anyway because it doesn't matter, but there was a lot of outcry and meetings with Dr. French and Allen and people like that, complaining and wanting to get this guy fired. And it didn't happen. But it did cause some problems. I'm trying to think of what else. I can't really think of what else. I remember the Johns Committee was interesting, of course. I never followed in detail what was happening with that because nobody in sciences got involved, for some reason or other. But I know that they were meeting at a place called Hawaiian Village Motel on Dale Mabry, just south of Columbus Drive.

That's where they were holding their meetings, which is kind of interesting. And apparently, they were looking for homosexuals in the staff and faculty, and they were complaining that there was rampant homosexuality, and this was infecting the students and so forth. When it became evident to President Allen that these people were meeting there, he invited them on campus, made space for them, and they came and met on campus, which sort of toned it down a little bit, just that act alone. It was an act of openness that they had to acknowledge. And they managed—I guess it was, because of them, four or five people left the university. I knew one of them had been one of the faculty members had played in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I knew him there.

That's the only place I knew him from. The other one was—well, I won't say who he was, but anyway, I had gotten to know him somewhat well. We'd have lunch together once in a while, and it never occurred to me that—anything about these guys, until the Johns Committee. It was just a bad time in the history of the university. And things like that, just like the present flap about Al-Arian<sup>2</sup>, things like that really polarize people. People say, My god, they're right. We've got to get these people out of there. And other people say, Wait a minute, what are they trying to do? So it's another catalyst for polarization, of which we don't need much.

YG: We're going to stop the tape right now, so I can switch tapes.

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<sup>2</sup>Sami Al-Arian was a professor at USF from 1986 to 2001. In 2003, the federal grand jury indicted Al-Arian for violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act..

JF: Sure.

*Track 1 ends; Track 2 begins*

YG: Okay, we're going to continue with our interview, and I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about the student body. First of all, was there a dress code for students and faculty in those early days?

JF: Yes, but it was applied by the individual instructors. There was a dress code. There were no shorts. Girls had to wear—I don't know that they had to wear dresses, but they couldn't wear shorts, nor the boys. And I use girls and boys, I know that's pretty old fashioned nowadays. Professors were asked to wear ties and coats—jackets, I mean. Of course, some professors just absolutely refused to do that because it was their civil right not to wear a tie if they didn't want to. You know, it was that kind of an era that added to the tension. There was always something to be angry about. As far as the students are concerned, they were pretty conventional. Kids wore crew cuts back in those days, the boys. And the girls, they just dressed like they did in the '50s, nothing outstanding. The real, sharp change came around the time of the Vietnam War, I suppose.

YG: What were students wearing during the Vietnam War?

JF: Well, then they went to walking around barefoot and stuff like this and T-shirts and jeans or cutoffs, flip-flops, all this sort of stuff. Now, in the chemistry lab, I absolutely did not allow sandals or anything like that. They had to have covered shoes, and they had to wear safety glasses. And I made no exceptions to that because it's dangerous, and I could be sued, even though it wasn't as logical to sue somebody then as it is now. I remember telling a kid once that—he forgot his safety glasses. I said, "I don't have any more. You have to go get them." He said, "I live on the other side of town." "Too bad." And he left, and he was really angry. He got a ticket for speeding on the way back, and he was going to hold it against me. He never did. But, you know, people learned that way. I had just come out of industry, and we had to wear safety glasses. But, as far as the dress was concerned, it was just anything goes during the '60s, much more so than now.

YG: The early student body came mainly from Tampa, around the area?

JF: Yeah, from the area mostly. I don't know this for a fact, and I don't have the statistics, but I'm pretty sure that I remember reading that they were mostly Floridians. This young woman that I told you about, Joanna Fowler, came from Punta Gorda. And we went down

to her wedding, as a matter of fact, a couple of years after she came here. Her husband was from Massachusetts. I think he was from Massachusetts, but that was unusual. There were some from out of state, but mostly they were in-state students, much more so than now. There's still a lot of local people that come here. But yeah, they were mostly state students.

YG: Do you think that they were more serious, back in the early days, than students are today, about learning, about studying?

JF: That's hard to say. They were more career-oriented. I remember, myself, as a student, and I saw this in Joanna and most of the students of that day, these kids wanted to get their degree and do their profession, whatever that was. I still see that. Well, as of '95, still saw it then but not as much. Now, kids were, I think, a lot of people—well, let me back up a minute. Somebody told me once, of the students who know exactly what they're going to do, about half of them change their major within the second year. So, I mean, people do that. (JF sneezes) The impression I have is that students now are more preoccupied, not with fulfilling a dream of some kind of work they want, as much as they are in making money, getting a job.

And this is what parents seem to want them to do. I remember having a class of honors students. I was in the honors program for a while. It was a class of 20 or 25 students, and the first day, I asked everybody to introduce themselves. I wanted to make it as relaxed as possible, and "Tell me what your major is?" The first, I think, 12 or 13 wanted to become accountants. I said, "Wait a minute. Accounting is fine, but I can't believe that a majority of this class wants to be accounting, which I personally consider a boring subject." I just said that, you know to—. "Why is that?" One girl raised her hand. She says, "Because my parents say there's good money at it." And I launched into my tirade about that, you know, that if you're not doing what you like, there's not going to be good money in anything.

You won't do well in nuclear physics if you don't really like it, or in medicine or anything else. But that's always been—I thought people wanted to do chemistry, these students that we had. I had about 40 or 50 undergraduates who worked with me in the research lab all through my career, maybe more than that, probably more like 80 now. And these people wanted to do chemistry. They liked it. Even during the '90s, there were kids that wanted to do chemistry. I always made a distinction for them, between wanting to be a chemist and wanting to do chemistry. I tried to inculcate that idea that there is a difference. I think there was more of that, wanting to do chemistry than there has been lately. Yet, a lot of chemistry being produced. When we advertise for a position, there's plenty of people that apply. They get hundreds of applications sometimes. Not hundreds, but over 100 sometimes. Have I answered the question?

YG: I want to bring you back, again, to those early days. Was there any food service on campus?

JF: Yes, Morrison's. I believe that was the first, Morrison's Restaurant ran the food service. It was in the University Center on the east side on the first floor. And it there a cafeteria line you could go through, just like you would at Morrison's, same kind of food. And I used to eat there almost every day, and students ate there. I guess everybody ate there. There were only 1,900 students that first year, and approximately 1,500, as I recall, were full-time equivalents. There were a lot of people that would take just one course or two and were working and so forth. But, yeah, that was the main food service on campus, the only food service, I guess.

YG: Was it good food?

JF: Yeah, it was fine.

YG: In those early days, did you read the *Oracle*? The campus newspaper.

JF: At that time, there was the *Tribune* and the *Tampa Daily Times*. And one day a week, the *Tampa Daily Times* would publish a USF edition. They'd bring it out here, and people could read that. That was what we had the first year. I don't remember how long that went. The *Tampa Daily Times* was finally bought out by the *Tribune* and no longer exists, as such, as far as I know. I don't know when the *Oracle* got started, but it was several years later. We had the *Times* once a week for a long time. Yes, we used to read it. You know, there was no football to talk about, and it was written—I don't know how much was written by students and how much was just the *Tampa Daily Times*. I don't remember that.

YG: Do you remember some of the issues that were written about in the *Oracle* frequently?

JF: In the *Oracle*, no. Well, it depended on the times. You know, during the Vietnam War, there was a lot written on that. If there was a change in the status of students or a tuition increase or things like that that affected students, I'm sure there was something. I can't remember right now. And, let's be honest, I didn't read it all that much, just on occasion I would pick one up and look at it. I never read newspapers much, at all.

YG: You mentioned the Vietnam War. Were there, in addition to the Vietnam War, were there other political issues that were talked about on the USF campus by students, faculty, and staff?

JF: Yeah. Every election. There would be a lot of discussion about that. Well, you said in addition to the Vietnam War, but there were some real fiery speeches during the Vietnam War. And I remember, I don't know if it was Abbie Hoffman<sup>3</sup> or one of those fellows came down here and gave a speech and, God, stood my hair on end. He was, really, a very powerful speaker. I can see why he became well known. If that's who it was. It was one of those folks. We did occasionally have a professor who was very vociferous about things. There was a fellow named Bruce Williamson in biology, and he caused a lot of stir. But this was more in the late '70s or early '80s. He would put on his beret and make a speech, and it was just another personality.

He was a very calm, easygoing biologist, very good teacher. And he'd get up, make a speech, and you'd think this was Lenin. He was a communist, an avowed communist. I don't know if he was a member of the party or anything, but he said he was a communist, and he believed in it, and that caused a lot of uproar. I remember, I had joined the rotary club by then, the Rotary Club of Ybor City. And one of the fellows told me, "We ought to send that guy back to Russia." Well, the guy was from Minnesota or someplace. He was from Wisconsin. I don't remember where he was from. But they can't send him back to Russia. He's an American. He's got a right to say this. But this guy didn't agree with that at all. I'm trying to think of controversy.

Of course, the Johns Committee was very controversial on campus. A lot of the students were very upset by that, as were faculty. You talked about, what did faculty and students talk about? There was a program you may not know about. In the first two or three years only, and it was called the All University Book. They would get together, somebody would get together somewhere and decide on a book that everybody was asked to read, and then, it gave everybody something in common to talk about. It was a really nice idea. Of course, a lot of people didn't like that, "Why the heck should this guy be telling me what to read?" You know, that sort of thing. But it was a nice idea.

There was a book, the one I remember most was the *American Presidency* by Clinton Rossiter. It was very good. It talked about the history—this guy's a historian—the history of various presidential epochs and so on. And I think *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* might've been one. Or Vance Packard, what was it? *The Hidden Persuaders*, I think that was one of them. Very nice stuff, and I enjoyed doing it. I don't know that we sat around and conversed about them with students very much, but I imagine some people did. Certainly people in the humanities and English might have, or history when that came up.

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<sup>3</sup>Abbot "Abbie" Hoffman (1936 – 1989), was an American activist, anarchist, and revolutionary during the 1960s and '70s. He co-founded the Youth International Party.

But that was an effort to get people to come together. And the All—the so called—what was called then the All University Approach where the whole university is approached in projects, rather than just departmental. That was the early idea of John Allen.

YG: Race relations at USF. Do you remember, were there demonstrations on campus?

JF: Demonstrations? You mean, against—?

YG: Against segregation, against things that were going on in other parts of the country?

JF: Well, against segregation, I don't remember any because that happened right away. The integration happened right away. And it went over very smoothly. I don't remember any problems with that, anywhere, certainly not from the faculty. There may have been some disgruntled students, but they didn't say anything much. I'm trying to remember now. During the Vietnam War, there was probably a lot. Martin Luther King, people like him, I'm sure, had polarized a lot of people. I'm trying to think. I just can't think of any right now, any specific demonstrations. Race relations wasn't a problem here that I can remember. Now, I may be totally wrong on that. I may have totally forgotten about the most devastating thing that ever happened to the university, but I don't remember any.

YG: Did you participate in any sit-ins or demonstrations at all?

JF: No, I never did. I'm not inclined to that sort of thing. I have opinions, of course, but I'm trying to remember. I don't think so. I was on a panel discussion a few times to discuss certain issues during that hectic time of the '60s and early '70s, but not a whole lot. I remember I was on a panel once with a history professor who represented—well, he was, I guess there were a couple of people who were extremely conservative. No, one. And there was one person who was very radical, left-wing. And I was the moderate. And this was before a student group. And guess who everybody attacked? The moderate. I thought somebody would attack this guy, and somebody would attack that guy, and I would sit there and moderate it. Uh-uh. They were all attacking me. And these other two fellas—one of them I knew quite well; the other one I hardly knew at all—they were protecting me from the students, it seemed like. Maybe that's just the way it seemed to me. You know, I may have felt under attack that point, but that's the way it turned out. It was kind of interesting.

YG: Before we close, I want to ask you two final questions. The first being, you've had an extensive career at USF. Is there something that you want to leave on tape to future

generations, a favorite memory or something that's important to you about the University of South Florida, in your tenure here?

JF: Boy, that's quite a question. I never taught before I came here. I taught for a little bit at Duke University when I was "post-docing" there. And I feel that I was a very good teacher. I got along well with students. I got several teaching awards. And when I look back on my career, I did a fair amount of research. You know, not a whole lot but enough. I have published about 50 research papers and so on, and I did some administration and all that. But the thing that, if people ask me, What do you miss? Do you miss anything from your job? The only thing I miss, and I don't miss it a whole lot, but the only thing I miss is the teaching. I really enjoyed that.

The research was such an uphill battle all the time, to get money and to get results that meant something. It's kind of a relief not to have to do that anymore. The other side, administration, I only did that for a year. I was chairman for a year, and I enjoyed that a lot. But I have a feeling that, if I had done it for two years, I would've been sick of it. What would I like to leave? I just think the university is such a resource that people rarely realize what's here. I personally took at least 10, 20 courses. I didn't sign up for them. Usually, I'd go to my buddies. And there was a guy that taught constitutional law, Sot [Sotirios] Barber. I asked him if I could sit in, and he said, "yeah." That was one of the best courses I ever had. I took courses in English with Willy Reader and other people, with Wes Davis, who taught short stories.

Willy taught poetry. And I would tell people, this is a great place that everybody in town, anybody over 17 years of age, can avail themselves of. And they ought to. I think that's the main thing. We've got courses for seniors, learning and retirement, I think it is. Those are fine, but they're specialized and so on, but it's fun to get into a class with ordinary students, kids that are in their teens or early twenties, and the relationship you feel in a place like that with somebody that really knows what he or she is talking about. It opens up a new vista for you. There's just so much to do in this world, and people should avail themselves of it. That's my main thing, I guess, I would say.

YG: Are there any people that you would recommend that I interview?

JF: If you can get him here, Glen Woolfenden. He's in the biology department. He retired, I believe, last year. The reason I said if you can get him here, he lives in Lake Placid. Is it Lake Placid? No, what am I talking about? I'll tell you later. I can't remember right now. He works at a place called Archbold [Biological] Station. And even though he was on the faculty here—or was—he did all of his work down there because he worked on birds. I think he would be a superb guy to get. He speaks well, and he has a lot of good ideas. Bob Whitaker in the chemistry department; he's been retired longer than I, and he came

in '63, and he retired in '93, put in 30 years. He would be very articulate, and I think you would enjoy talking to him. In English, I would say Jack Moore came fairly early. I think he came in the early '60s, and he's in the English department. He taught in American studies and in English. And he's very good. I think you would really enjoy him. I'm trying to think of those now. You're mainly thinking about people from that era, older people. But anyway, those three or four, I think, would be very good.

YG: Dr. Fernandez, I want to thank you very much for spending some time with us today.

JF: Thank you very much for having me. I enjoyed it.

***End of Interview***