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Yael Greenberg (YG): Today is Tuesday, July 22nd, 2003. My name is Yael Greenberg, oral history program assistant for the Florida Studies Center. We continue our series of interviews here in our studio in the Tampa campus library with USF faculty, students, staff, and alumni in order to commemorate 50 years of university history. Today, we will be interviewing John Melendi, who came to USF in 1964 as a university cashier. Through the years, John took several positions, and in 1995, he retired as associate VP of the Health Sciences Center. Good morning, John.

John Melendi (JM): Good morning.

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

JM: Okay. I was born and raised in Tampa. I attended Florida Southern College. I was working for Central Truck Lines at the time, after graduation, and they were sold out to a firm up north in Cleveland. In order for me to move up in the company, they told me I had to move to Cleveland. And I told them I wasn't worth that much money. So I looked for a job and met a friend of mine, Charlie Rodriguez, who said, "Why don't you look at the University of South Florida? They're brand new—brand new, just starting out, and you'd have a great future there." So I applied for a position here and was appointed. And that was very lucky, because at an older, established university, no matter where you started, you stay there forever. Over here, we were lucky. We had Andrew Rogers, who took three of us—Glenn Clayton, myself, and Ward Hancock, and he cross-trained us. So that's really how I got to have so many different positions in a short period of time.

YG: What did you know about the university in 1964, prior to you coming here?

JM: Well, I just knew it was a new, upcoming university, because I was born and raised here, of course. I kept reading the papers all about the university, and I knew it had to be a great university because of the location. We had one in north Florida, that was Gainesville, and they needed something down here, and we thought we'd be just a great—you know, just a great place to be.

YG: You came into USF as a university cashier?

JM: Yes.

YG: What did a university cashier do in 1964?

JM: Well mostly, we took student fees. We also took their application for loans. We cashed checks—sort of like a small bank at the time. And I believe at that time, we had, like, two tellers only. And it was a very interesting place. It was a lot of fun.

YG: Where was your—where did you do most of your work, as a university cashier?

JM: Well almost everyone was in the administration building, because we were small. We were on the first floor of the university building—university administration building, and that's where we were located. I stayed there for maybe six or seven months and then went over to the bookstore and became manager of the bookstore.

YG: Before we talk about the bookstore, can you tell me—the first time you came on the USF campus, what did the University of South Florida look like in 1964?

JM: Well, it was a very large, open area. In fact, the only building they may have had at the time was the administration building, the library—not this one—different location. They had some housing, very small, and some classroom buildings. And the reason I say it was an open area—in the afternoon, in the summer, when the lightning would come across the front, you were almost afraid to go to the parking lot because you were afraid you were going to get hit by lightning. That's what I remember completely. Nothing on Fowler or Fletcher. It was just like a big road. There was a small Holiday Inn motel there, and that was just about it, plus I think maybe Basil [Scaglione] had the restaurant down the street at the time.

YG: The University Restaurant.

JM: I don't know what it's called now.

YG: How did you get the position of the bookstore manager?

JM: Well, like I said, Mr. Rogers took three of us, and he said, "I want you to learn the complete university administrative-type work." So he said, "I'll put you each place for a while until you learn that, and then I'll just move you over." Keep in mind, in those days, we were so small that when it was time to do budget, we all met in the conference room, and even though you were in a different area, we all worked together. It was like a little, small family. Very nice. A very good time to be here. So we had people from the bookstore, people from the purchasing—all the directors—we'd meet and discuss how we're going to do budget, and then Andrew would come in, and he'd finalize it. So everybody helped everybody those days.

YG: What were your primary responsibilities as the manager of the bookstore?

JM: Well, when I first moved to the bookstore, all they had was just books. So, what we did, we knocked a whole in the floor and made it two stories. And we put the books on one floor, and then we brought in things like records, magazines, of course, sweatshirts, and also all the things you need, like toothpaste, toothbrush, and things of this nature. And that was the first—we were the second one, I think, to do something like that. So we had—it was like a merchandise store at the time. Students liked that, and then we had candy. and the sort of things you see today, we brought in those days. But the records was the thing that really the students loved. They weren't the CDs today, though.

YG: Where was the first bookstore located?

JM: It was located—the building behind the administration building, it's now called the Phyllis

Marshall Center, I believe.¹ That's where the first bookstore was located. Each year, we'd write a new plan for the new bookstore we were going to build. Of course, if you look at the history, it took quite a few years for them to finally fund it, but it was a great job. I enjoyed the students. We had a great time.

YG: How long were you the manager of the bookstore for?

JM: I'm trying to think. Maybe a year and half, something like this, and then switched again, and became director of purchasing. That was—I can't remember how long it was. Maybe a year there. And that was another new experience. In those days, when they fund you the money for your fiscal budget, if you didn't spend it at the end of the year, you lost it. So you can imagine what it was like in the last few months. If something didn't come in, you really went wild trying to make sure you spent all the funds and not send them back to Tallahassee. I think that rule has changed now. I think it can carry forward, which is—it should have been done years ago.

YG: What were some of your major responsibilities as a director of purchasing?

JM: You had receiving and just the purchasing of all the university items.

YG: I want to go back to those early days in '64 when you first came to the university. If you could give me a sense of the newness of the university: What things were people saying about the university? How did the faculty and the staff interact among each other? Were they interacting?

JM: Well, I had more interaction with the faculty, because when you're purchasing items, of course, the departments would come over and place their orders, tell you what they want, et cetera, et cetera. And, of course, in a bookstore, you had you get your booklist from the faculty in order to have the books for the students that semester. So you had—I had that type of working relationship with them. Not so much as a cashier as I did in purchasing and in the bookstore.

YG: What was it like to work in a new university? Did you find yourself often having to make up your own policies? Can you talk to me a little bit—

JM: Well, you're going way back on me now. I'm sure we did, I just can't remember. Keep in mind, when you're that small, you do a lot of things in a team effort. So we would always have, like, the three of us—Glenn, Ward, and myself, with Andrew Rogers, who was, I think, at this time, was business manager. I think Bob Dennard was the vice president at that time, and we would just meet and discuss things like that. So we had a lot of time together to go over what we thought needed to be changed, what's working and what's not working. And some things worked that we liked, and some we didn't like. But it was always like a small-team effect, which was so unique, that you only have once in a lifetime, that experience, matched with a new institution.

YG: I'm sure that you had many opportunities to meet with or to converse with John Allen.²

JM: Yes, Dr. and Mrs. Allen were unbelievably fantastic people. There's a misnomer—people thought he didn't like football, because when he first came here, the thing was he didn't want football. He may have not wanted football because he was afraid that the funds would divert from academic to football, but let me assure you, I made many trips to Tallahassee with John and Grace Allen, and during football season, they knew who was playing. They knew the teams, they knew the standings. Though they were really football fans, he just had, in his mind—did not want to divert any funds from the academic setting of the university. But they were gracious and wonderful

¹ The Phyllis P. Marshall Student Center serves as the student union for USF.

² John S. Allen served as the first president of USF from 1957 to 1970.

people.

YG: What do you think John Allen's vision of the university was?

JM: I think his vision was totally academic. It had nothing to do with any type of sports—basketball or football. His main goal was academics. And I'm not too sure that he was even crazy about a medical school being here. Because you know, he came from the University of Florida, that had a medical school. In fact, we had a number of faculty from the University of Florida over at this university in the beginning, and they were sort of skeptical. They were just—didn't know if a university with a medical school would divert funds from the university budget to the medical school budget—which now, everyone knows, they were two complete different entities. The medical school budget—we used to look for our money—we used to fight with Florida and Miami, not with the universities.

And so it was really two separate budget entities. The university submitted their budget, and we submitted a medical center budget. And when we'd go to Tallahassee and ask for our money, we wouldn't be with the universities in the same group. We'd be there with the University of Florida, trying to get as much—as many funds as we could at the time. Miami, I think, got funded per student. They had a stipend per student head. So I think after the years went by, they noticed that, but in the beginning, they were very skeptical that we were taking funds that would come to the university for the medical center.

YG: You mentioned that you would often take trips with John and Grace Allen to Tallahassee. Was this prior to the construction and development of the medical school?

JM: Yes. We went there to the Board of Regents meetings, because if Andrew Rogers didn't go, he would send one of us with him. They were very gracious people.

YG: Could you get a sense of—because USF was such a new institution, was the Board of Regents acting differently towards USF?

JM: I'm not sure too much the Board of Regents would act differently, but you have to realize there were more graduates from the University of Florida in Tallahassee than there were University of South Florida graduates, so you could find it. You'd go into a budget hearing sometime, and you'd think you had the same appropriations, but when the appropriations came out, there would always maybe be a little different—a little higher percent in Gainesville. And I admired them for it, you know. If you can get it, take it. But they had people in the legislature that were graduates from Florida and Florida State. So that was one of the things that we noticed a little bit, in the earlier days.

YG: After you worked in purchasing, you became an assistant business manager. Can you talk a little bit about that?

JM: Yeah, what happened was—now we're going to start going into the medical side. I think in 1965, the legislature decided that the state of Florida needed another state-supported medical school to give our students in the state an opportunity to become physicians. So they looked to South Florida to build the medical center. Well, what happened—the university at that time—I wasn't with the administration on the medical school, so I can give you my opinions. May not be everyone else's, okay, in my memory. They had appointed Al Lawton to be sort of the overseer, to write the program for the medical—for the College of Medicine. He had other duties as well as the medical school. Their first application for a reasonable assurance of accreditation was rejected. And the reason for it is because they had a plan where they would not have any full-time faculty. They

would just use local physicians to come and teach, et cetera, et cetera. Well, of course, that didn't fly, and they were denied reasonable assurance of accreditation.

That created all kinds of havoc in Tallahassee, because Louis de la Parte and Terrell Sessums wanted this medical school here. Some of the local people wanted the medical school here. Chancellor [Robert] Mautz wanted the medical school here. So, what they did, they decided we have to appoint a full-time dean. The board appointed Dr. [Kenneth] Penrod to start a nationwide search for a dean. Meanwhile, the university went ahead and hired a secretary—Lucy Penn(?!)—[unintelligible]. And at that time, I was the director of purchasing, and they were interviewing people for the assistant business manager. Andrew walked in my office one day, and said, “John, would you like to be associate—assistant business manager?” Of course, I said yes. In those days, recruiting was a little different than today, and that's how I got the job.

And I reported to Mr. Rogers, because he was business manager and I was associate—assistant business manager. Then they went ahead and recruited Dr. [Donn] Smith.³ And speaking of Dr. Smith, he told me the reason he came here is that Chancellor Mautz flew in to Tallahassee and convinced him that this was a place that he could build a great medical center. He was dean of the medical center at Louisville at the time—very well known in the country as a top dean. And so I think he accepted the job in October of '69, because I wrote a letter to him, telling him all about how to get here, cars and rental stuff, but he didn't come until January of 1970, on board, and at that time I reported both to Andrew Rogers and to Dr. Smith. That lasted about three days. If anyone knew Dr. Smith, that doesn't work. You work for him only. And so he came in here and said, “He works for me and no one else.” And that's the way it went. No one disputed that. He was pretty powerful.

We were housed in the administration building, in three offices, while we were going to get temporary quarters in the science center building on the top floor, plus a room in the basement for the cadavers. They used to say we weren't the most welcome guests, taking space away from the college, and so while they were putting furniture in the top floor, we were in the administration building. Then one day, he walked into my office and says, “I think too many people know what we're doing. Let's leave.” So we just picked up our stuff, walked out, moved over to the science center building. He was a person who was very direct. You always knew where he stood. And so we moved over there, and we stayed there till more than likely, 1974—something like that.

We were then funded \$276,000 to build a surge building, and this would be to house our second-year class, because our first-year class was being housed in the top floor of the science center building. That was another interesting story. The legislature gave us \$276,000, and the first meeting we had with the architect—this is just on the side—he sat down with us and the university vice president and physical plant, and the first thing he said was it was a mistake. He says, “I think we have to design this building for its future use, since the medical school won't be here after a few years.” Immediately, Dr. Smith closed his book, told me, “John, let's leave. This guy doesn't know who the building is for.” We walked out and left, and two weeks later, we met with the architects at the medical school and designed the surge building. So that's one of the interesting stories right there.

YG: I want to go back, because you said so many wonderful things. Why did the Florida legislature feel that Florida should have another medical school?

JM: Well, I think at the time, there were only about 150 spaces in both Miami and Gainesville. And so they felt that they should be more opportunity for the students in Florida to go to medical school.

³ Dr. Donn Smith was the first dean of the USF Medical School.

Keep in mind now, even though they were from Florida, many of them came from other universities throughout the country. So you did have a diverse group, but they were all Florida residents. And I think, out of our first many classes that I remember, every student was a Florida resident. We felt that you use state funds, you ought to do it for state students, since it's people here [who] are supporting it, and Dr. Smith was very, very strong about that. So that's really why they did that. There was a shortage of that time, so—plus, they just felt that this was a good place for it.

YG: Do you think that—I mean, I think that—why you do you think that they chose USF, when there were other state institutions? Florida State, for example. Why did they feel that USF would be a good choice for a medical school?

JM: Florida State has a PIMS program, and they, I think, move students after two years to Gainesville to complete their medical education.⁴ But keep in mind, Florida State is north Florida. I mean, south Florida—although we're called "South Florida," we're in central Florida. Look how much we have to pull from. You look at Orlando, you look at—just look around, what we have around us, in Sarasota, St. Petersburg. So we really are an ideal location for the institution, for a medical center. It's just ideal for it, I think.

YG: Was the university administration, when the legislature came to USF and said, Hey, we'd like to help you with a medical school—were they interested at first?

JM: I don't really know that, because I wasn't involved in that—at those type of meetings. I, more than likely, at that time was at the bookstore. What I'm telling you—I'd just like to say, I knew more about what I thought was the situation after Dr. Smith got here and we started looking to see why did they do this, and then we—you have to realize that, not just here but on many campuses, although the medical school and university are on the same campus, it's like two different worlds. It's not just USF, it's every place. So that's not an unusual situation.

YG: Before we talk about some of the legislation and the famous ride to Tallahassee, I want to talk about Dr. Smith.

JM: Oh.

YG: I found a quote that he was known as the—he had a General Patton-like style.

JM: Well, he was under General Patton in the service, so that came very easily to him. I remember when he first showed, he showed up in—he had on a pair cowboy boots, pair of jeans, and just his presence was just unbelievable. He feared no one. He held back nothing. He was totally honest. And the legislature actually hardly ever cut our budget. In fact, one year, Mautz said, "Donn, is that enough?" And he said, "Yes, sir, that will do us for this year." Unheard of in legislative budgets. He just knew how to do things. Just to give you an example, he came here in 1970. We had to have reasonable assurance of accreditation by July of '70 in order to meet the deadline for matching federal funds for construction.

So between January and July, he wrote the reason why a medical school was necessary. He did the schematic drawings. He did projections on student, faculty, staff, and budget. He did all of this by himself with Dr. Fishel, who came—who was a good friend of his who came, I believe, from Louisville also. They were the only ones, but you have to realize, in those days, we worked six and seven days a week. But it was a lot of fun. Everything was exciting. He left nothing to chance. He

⁴ The Program in Medical Sciences (PIMS) was created in 1970 as an expansion program of the University of Florida to address the need for more physicians in rural northwest Florida. This program served as the foundation for the Florida State University College of Medicine.

looked at every piece of paper. On every architect design, he checked everything.

So to think how much he did in just those six months—it's more than likely a record. Unheard of. Plus, you had to get approval from the local councils. You had to get it approved from Tallahassee—and all that, still get that letter of reasonable assurance. I have a feeling because of his reputation alone, those who came to check us knew that he would get it done the way he said he was going to do it. Because of that, we did get funding for phase one and phase two. It was, I think, \$10 million for phase one, and \$18 million for phase two and construction. And I think it was like a total of 390,000 square feet for phase one and phase two combination.

YG: Once the university received the letter of assurance, what happened next?

JM: Well, we started recruiting, as you can see. Keep in mind now, our first class started in, I think, July of '71. So here again, he came in January of '70. By July of '71, he had recruited all the basic science chairmen, faculty, staff. He hired Fred Bryant from Hershey to start our library. He hired Lou Nelson to start the vivarium. We had got our books in in our facility. Students were all set up. I mean—that's again—and we had 24 students in our first class. They were talking about going to a three-year curriculum at that time. As you know, medical schools traditionally are four years. But with Dr. Smith's foresight, when we constructed the drawings, we made it for a four-year curriculum of 96. Sure enough, they found a three-year curriculum did not work, went to a four-year. Didn't mess up our plans at all. He already—he already had taken that in consideration. So we just moved right along.

Dr. Hickman came in—Jack Hickman came in and started the student affairs area, and Rudy Noer helped him with a lot of the administrative-type things—plus the chairman. But just to think we brought first class in January of '71 was just unbelievable. And it was interesting because they had the center part of the top story in the science center building. The library was on the top floor. And that's another interesting story. You're bringing things back to me. When the books started coming in, everybody worked in the library. Dr. Smith and whatever faculty—they all worked in the library. We unpacked boxes and everything like this. Well, the first faculty meeting, one faculty member made a big mistake. He asked Dr. Smith, "Why is the library coming along so slow?" I have to tell you, that was the last question he ever asked in a faculty meeting, because Dr. Smith asked him where he was while we were unloading the boxes, and Dr. Smith could use the language pretty well at times.

Another thing—it was so small, every birthday party, we all had it in Dr. Smith's office. So I was able to be in this small-knit group twice—once with the university, and then with the medical school. We all met in his office, and every year, once a year, he would meet with all the career service people by himself, and he would say, "Okay, what are we doing that you don't like? What would you like for us to do?" And when he'd leave that meeting, I'd have a list about this long of things I had to get done. He was very conscious of everyone. Career service people were one of his greatest interests right there, too. So he just wasn't a faculty-type dean. He was with everybody.

YG: Okay. I want to go back again.

JM: Okay.

YG: Can you tell me about the famous ride to Tallahassee?

JM: Okay. What happened was, as you know, we had a model made of the facility, because we needed that, because no one believed we had anything. So we had the thing drawn up, and we—it was just—we'd keep it in the building, and people talked about it. So one day he got a call from

Tallahassee, like, in the morning. He said, “Look”—it was one of our friends up there—he said, “We think they're going to try to zonk you guys, so you got to come up here and convince them you've really got things going.”

So the famous ride was we rented a station wagon. They didn't have vans in those days. And the model fit perfectly in back of the station wagon. He closed it up. We put it in there. He drove, and I watched out for the police. We broke records. That was another record we had—getting from here to Tallahassee. We got there. He and I took it out the back of the trunk, put it on the elevator, carried it up the steps, and walked in the meeting, unexpected, with the model, and surprised everyone that we had that. And I can't say that got us the money, but it didn't hurt us. And we had all kinds of surprises like that.

In those early days, no one took vacations, and every once in a while, he'd say, “Go for a couple of days.” So I can remember one time, I went on vacation—I used to call every day, no matter where I was, and talk to him, see what's going on. I was up in Boone, North Carolina, with my three children, my wife. He said, “You've got to come home. They want a special budget hearing next week.” So we drove straight back home. Then they canceled the meeting. He went—of course, he was not very happy, but those were exciting times. You look back on them now, and you're very fond of stuff like that.

YG: With Terrell Sessums as the speaker of the House, and Louis de la Parte in the Senate, why were they—how did they help to get USF a medical school?

JM: They have—I'm not that in that crowd, but they have ways of doing things, just like how did Lee Moffitt get the Moffitt Cancer Center?⁵ You—I guess you do favors. You take from those who aren't helping you, and then you give back if they help you. And I don't know if that's how it happened in the medical school, but I know that's how it happened in the Moffitt Cancer Center. But I just don't know that end of it.

YG: Where was—once the assessment study came through, once USF received accreditation, Dr. Smith began recruiting people. How—what kinds of people was he looking for [for] a new medical school, and a new institution?

JM: Well, he went for top people. For instance, Dr. Lewis Barness. Lewis Barness was world famous in pediatrics. There were times we didn't think we were going to get him, but we did. In fact, it was interesting. I picked—another thing, I used to go to the airport and pick up these faculty members. And I had a '64 Volkswagen, no air conditioning. I used to tell Dr. Smith, “Are you sure?” He said, “Look. If they don't like that Volkswagen, they're not going to like it here, because we're starting from scratch.” But I picked up Lew Barness. The first question he asked me: “What does Hillsborough County do to support the poor children in the county?” Of course, I didn't know the answer, and of course he chewed me out all the way here.

But recruiting was not that difficult, because with the younger guys, Dr. Smith would challenge them. I know, for instance, he challenged Greg Nicolosi by saying, “Go back up there, and all you'll be doing is pouring pee out of one boot and the other boot for the next 10 years, but you can come here make a difference—if you think you can, of course.” That was the challenge—Greg came here. But if you look at our chairmen, and the ones who came here to start with, they were all well-known. Roy Behnke was well known. Roger Sherman was well known. I can't remember all the names right now, but we didn't have chairmen that you didn't—that weren't known other places. And there again, they brought people with them. And you have to realize, if you're young and

⁵ H. Lee Moffitt served as the speaker of the Florida House of Representatives from 1982 to 1984.

you're energetic and you're bright, what better future could you have in some place where you wouldn't be assistant professor for the next 15 years? You had a chance to move up very rapidly if you worked hard. And Dr. Smith rewarded those who worked.

So it was a very interesting place for most people, especially once we have our—once you have your—we had our construction funding, then you know it's a go. Because if we had not got the funds for construction, the place—it would've died. There's no question about that. So those are the times when you know you're going there. Plus, Dr. Smith's reputation—everybody knew him. He was with the AMA.⁶ He was on the committee to write drugs—on the drug committee. He was well known all over the country. In fact, I remember, we were working—the Nixon administration tried to get him. He refused to go. And he told me why, but we won't talk about that. But then we also made many trips to Washington. I can't remember the names now. You know, we're going back a long way, and I'm getting old—my mind. Okay.

YG: Okay. The first class, you said, came in 1971.

JM: Yes.

YG: And they were housed in the—

JM: Science center building.

YG: This was prior to the construction of the medical school building.

JM: It was—I think construction was completed in 1974.

YG: What do you remember about those first class—about the first class?

JM: Okay. Interesting. Some of the students actually worked with us, helping us unload boxes before they even became students. I think Joe Dibble was one of them. It was a very close class. And the interesting part about is, after each—after anatomy, they had a party. And, of course, in those days, because we were small, the administrative people would go to the parties. And they would mock their teachers. And let me tell you, these are some very bright students, and they could become very, very critical of little flaws that you didn't know you had. So that's what I remember the best.

Plus, I was in my office one day, because if you remember, we were—they were in the center, and our offices are all around them. I kept hearing noises. I couldn't understand what that was. For their breaks, they used to play hockey on the floor up there, which everybody sort of ignored like we didn't know about it, but it was a great class. But they were, like I say—and those students took a chance, too, because we had not—you know, you weren't completely accredited when they got here. We just had reasonable assurance of accreditation. So they also took a chance when they came here, and they all did well. They all graduated, and I've seen some of them lately.

YG: Those first students—were there, in terms of diversity, were there females?

YG: Oh, yes. Dr. Smith made sure that there was no bias between male and female. I can't remember for sure, but I know there were at least three. Remember, that was only a class of 24. In fact, I think Tom Bell married one of the students who was in the class with him. I think it was—

⁶ The AMA is the American Medical Association, the largest association of physicians and medical students in the United States.

Caroline Struthers was in the class.⁷ I think there may have been four. I just can't remember offhand, but I have a picture—we could tell that.

YG: In terms of diversity, were there Hispanics and African-Americans in those early classes, or did that come later on?

JM: I know Bob Martinez was in that class, because I just remember him. And he—I'm sure he's a Hispanic. Were there blacks? I don't believe so. I'm not sure, but we could also check that out. But I know there were Hispanics. Of course, being in Tampa, there's a good chance you could get a few Hispanics in your class.

YG: Those first students—24—came in during the construction of the medical school building.

JM: Yes.

YG: Can we talk a little bit about the construction of the medical school building? What were some of the plans? What were some of the unique features of the building?

JM: It was done in two phases, as you well know. The architects were from Miami. It was James Garland and Aldo Lastra. And it's interesting—they were housed where the golf course is now, because the golf course had a temporary building when they first started. Well, they went ahead and constructed a new pro shop at the golf course. But the old temporary building was where we housed architects, and that's where they stayed over there. Dr. Smith, at the first phase—I think he did the basic science departments, the teaching areas, the library, the cafeteria, and the bookstore. That was phase one. The other thing he did—he insisted there be two patios, and he wanted the patios to be an area that was open, where the students could actually sit out there, have functions if they wanted to, but it'd be an open area. In fact, we've had a lot of our Christmas parties in the outside patio from phase one.

An interesting thing happened, though. We designed the thing, and we had a schematic drawing of the patio area, because when we went to Tallahassee, we had pictures of all these different areas, what they were going to look like. Well, one day he came into my office, and I thought he was going to come right through my door. And he said, “Did you see the patio—what they're doing?” I said, “No.” He says, “Come on, let's look at it.” So we went over and looked at it, and it was completely different. Come to find out the architect's spouse was a designer, and she was on it. She redesigned it with all these different pots of plants. Of course, we couldn't get to the architects fast enough. That was completely thrown out—went back to our original plan. They acted like we didn't change it that much, but since we had a copy of what we wanted, it was pretty hard to dispute what we wanted. So that was one of the interesting things.

The building came in about a few months late, so we had furniture all over the place. We had to rent a storage warehouse and store the furniture. Of course, it doesn't come in the same way the building's completed. We didn't have that many problems. If you know Dr. Smith, he's not one for frills. So it's a very sparse building. So it was rectangular, squares. There was no—there were no dead spots in the building. We couldn't afford to waste space. Then in phase two, which was \$18 million, he did the clinical departments, he added on to the library, added on to the cafeteria. And then we brought in the clinic, so that was part of phase two, plus the auditorium. So that was the way phase two was, but the—and that was—I think the whole thing was completed in '74.

YG: How did—let's talk a little bit about funding, because you've mentioned throughout the

⁷ The student's name is Lindsay Struthers, now Dr. Lindsay Struthers Bell.

interview that people have this misconception about how a medical school is funded. How did the—how was the medical school funded?

JM: Well, we submitted our own budget separate from university. What we would do—in the first few years, Dr. Smith and I did all of it. We projected what we would need, and we would submit our budget—we would do a legislative request, just like the campus did, except it was a separate document. And so did Florida medical school and the University of Florida, so ours would go up there the same as University of Florida medical school did. And then we would get funded and make—do our operating budget. And as we got larger, what we would do each year—Dr. Smith did a zero-base budget. If you were in a department, you didn't add—he didn't believe in this adding to stuff, where everybody just threw out a percent. He said, no, you start at zero base, what you need, and submit it.

So we had each department submit what their funds were for the following year. And that's including the vivarium, the library, and so forth and so on, and then we would meet with each one of the department chairmen and go over their request. And, of course, he went over it with a fine-toothed comb. He didn't put junk in there. You didn't put stuff you didn't need in there. And we would go with that budget, and then we'd put it all together and decide what's our percent of increase over this year, and if we thought it was too high, we would work on that. So that's how—very simple. It wasn't that complicated.

YG: In terms of the university administration, the medical school was coming in at a time when John Allen was slowly phasing off. And then, of course, we have Harris Dean coming in, and then ultimately Cecil Mackey.

JM: Okay, Harris Dean was, I think, interim president at the time. And Cecil Mackey came in, and a lot of changes were made in those days. I think he—I think every dean was either removed, or what have you, except two—Dr. Smith and Ed Kopp, engineering. I think those are the only two deans that survived during the Mackey era. But you have to realize the university has its own problems, and they knew Dr. Smith knew what he was doing. So they really left us alone that much—a lot, because they had other problems besides us, and the chancellor was very, very talented, and he had a lot of faith in Dr. Smith. So we did a lot of communication directly with the chancellor at the time. So Dr. Mackey really didn't interfere that much with the day-to-day operation.

Our biggest problem was where the campus would call us up and say, Look, we need you to give us two or three people out of your budget to support what we're doing for you. Of course, Dr. Smith—I was the messenger—Dr. Smith would tell me, “You tell them blankety blank they're going to get,” so I had to call them and make—I'd have to smooth over real nicely. But those were our biggest things right there. The campus was—they were doing our physical plant work for us, custodial work, and then we found out we could get funding better if we went for it directly. So then at one time, the custodial area all reported to the medical school and were in our budget. So they were all under me at the time—all the grounds, all the custodial work for the medical center. I think after I left, the university took them back again. But they had it to start with. It didn't work. They gave it to us. Went to Tallahassee, asked for more funding for more positions. And then that's how we did it that way.

YG: By the time John Allen was getting ready to leave USF, he knew that USF was going to have a medical school. Did he warm up to the idea of a medical school?

JM: I don't really know. I never moved in those circles. You have to admit—you have to understand, when you work for Dr. Smith, you work for Dr. Smith. And so I never—I never participated in any of the campus activities. I was a medical school man. And that's where I stayed.

Dr. Smith was very—how can I say it? We were very loyal to Dr. Smith. In fact, every—after we got going, along the way, he would take one month off, every year, vacation—a complete month, and he would go fly-fishing in Colorado. He would tell nobody where he was, or his phone number, except one person. And that's me. I would tell no one. He told me if it's an emergency, give him a call.

I remember Cecil Mackey calling me in his office one day, and he says, "I know you know where Dr. Smith is." And I didn't lie. I didn't know where he was, so I said, no, I knew his phone number, but I didn't know where he was. So I said, "No, sir, I don't know where he is." I would tell nobody. And those who know Dr. Smith know that I would not tell anybody. He was a great man. And while we're thinking about that, one thing that really bothers me: They have not yet made anything in Dr. Smith's honor. They haven't even—I wrote a president saying, you know, someone needs to say "Donn L. Smith administration" on it or something.

They don't realize without Dr. Smith, there'd be no college of medicine, nursing, public health, no VA Hospital, no Shriner hospital, no cancer center, and Tampa General wouldn't have the reputation it has today without USF's presence. And why they haven't done anything—I hope their president sees this. It's a shame. I mean, he's made an impact not just here, but in the whole state of Florida, and I mean, how many people come to the cancer center? In fact, I don't know if you know this, but he was the one in charge of the cancer center when they were building the building. And in fact, the outside bricks, they weren't shipped in. He put a foundry here. They made the bricks right here on campus. So someone needs to recognize what a great man this guy was. Can we hold for a second?

YG: Yes, we can. Okay. I want to go back and talk about something—about the groundbreaking of the medical school.

JM: Okay. Well, you know, where it's located now, it was nothing but just brush land at the time, and we had just a sign saying "future home of the medical center." And so we knew we were going to have a dedication one of these days, but Dr. Smith wanted to have a private groundbreaking. So, what he did was we passed word of just the folks in medical school, career service, everybody, and said we're going to meet tomorrow morning, at six o'clock on the hill. And the location is where the clinic is right now. So we all got there, and with the lights of our car—that was our lighting. He brought the shovel, and every single person dug a piece of dirt up at that day. I have to tell you, when the campus came alive a few hours later and they found out we did this, all hell broke loose, because they wanted to have a big splash. But if you knew Dr. Smith, he wasn't a splashy type of guy. So that was his way of having our groundbreaking. It meant a lot to all of us. Everybody touched the shovel, whether you were custodial or you were a vice chairman, everybody was equal, and we had a great time. Everybody talked about it for a long time.

YG: Once the Tampa community knew that the University of South Florida was going to get a medical school, where they supportive of this endeavor?

JM: In the beginning, we had many problems with Tampa General Hospital. Keep in mind now, when you have residents in the hospital, it takes about a third longer with the patients, because first the residents will see them, they'll go over what the patient's problems are, and then the doctor will come in. They'll talk to the doctor about it. The doctor will look at it. And then the doctor speaks with them. So that was a problem of the time element, because time is money, I'm sure. And there were those who just didn't want the medical school. So there were town-and-gown situations, but that's not unusual.

That's the same everywhere else. I understand right now, things are very well. I'm not involved in it,

but I can read the paper. Tampa General is making money. It's a great hospital. And it's only great, I think, because the university is there. But there were problems in the beginning. And Dr. Smith always had to be very aware that there would be a problem here, a problem there. The person who would know more about that would be Dr. John Curran, who is still with the medical center, but I think he went through more of the problems than anybody that I know of, and he's been here for many, many years.

YG: The VA hospital. The cancer center. Lots of other buildings and medical institutions were going up as USF was coming into fruition with their medical school. Were there strong connections between the medical school?

JM: Oh, yes. Of course, the VA hospital—most their physicians are USF physicians. The Shriners are a little more independent. I think that—if I'm not mistaken, they may even own the land that they're sitting on. The cancer center, keep in mind now, when we first started out, Dr. Cox and myself flew up to HCA, because they ran the administrative part of the cancer center. It's not run by the medical school. It may—I don't know what it is right today, but when we first started out, the employees there aren't state employees, they're employees of a private corporation, and that company is being run by HCA at that time. So they were really the—and they had their top people in the top positions, but everybody else was part of the corporation. But that was the way it was set up to be. So they are dependent and independent. Of course, almost all their physicians, I assume, are USF faculty members. And we have research facilities there, also, being done by USF faculty members. So that's the—and then also, they had the psych center. A lot of these things today—as you realize, I've been away almost 10 years now. But the cancer center was an intricate part.

YG: Once the medical school was established and running, in addition to the focus of acquiring new professors and acquiring new students, the idea of research was something that became important to the medical school. What kinds of research, if you—if you're aware of, was the university doing in those early days?

JM: I don't know this. This is more—Dr. Nicolosi would have more of a knowledge than I would of that. My focus was mostly the bricks and mortar, and money, and receiving the stuff like this. I don't know anything about the research end of it, but I know the one thing—you have to have it, because in order to be promoted, you have to have a research background also.

YG: Once USF had that initial letter, and they weren't accredited yet, how long did it take for the medical school to receive accreditation?

JM: I don't remember. I have a letter in my files—I know that whenever you, on the money part of it, that after 10 years, they review what you've done, and if you haven't been in compliance, you owe them the money back. But I have letters—I copied the letter that said you have been in compliance, your tenure is due, no problem.

YG: We went from the assistant business manager to associate vice president of the Health Science Center. What were your major responsibilities as associate VP?

JM: Okay. I was in charge of the budgets. I was in charge of the fiscal administration, receiving, the post office, PO and M—plant operations and maintenance. It's kind of interesting, because when Ron Kaufman came, Greg Nicolosi and I were like—I think he was an executive associate, and I was associate vice president—we sort of worked together all the time. So one of the questions Ron Kaufman asked, he says, “I can't figure out what you two guys do.” And the first thing Greg says, “Well, what needs to be done, if John doesn't do it, I do it. If I don't do it, John does it.”

So that's more—but Greg was mostly more in the academic end of it. He attended more of the academic meetings. In the beginning, when Dr. Smith and I were here, I was part of everything. I was on the dean's committee at the VA hospital, because every place he went, I went. And I was sure it wasn't because he wanted somebody to verify in case he said something, he knew I'd be there with him. So I was in every committee in the beginning, because we were small. But in later years, I had—it gets so large.

YG: In terms of your own history at USF, what are you most proud of, in your 31 years of history at the University of South Florida?

JM: Well, I'm very proud of the university, but the medical school is my baby. In fact, the old saying was when you walked around campus, if you cut the medical school, and John hears you, he starts bleeding. And that's the truth, that I'm so proud of the medical school. You know, being a graduate from an accounting—I could've been counting soap all of my life. The opportunity to be somewhere where the future physicians in this country are going to come from, a place I helped start, research may come for cancer, that I helped in building, even though I didn't have any part of the intellectual part, at least I was part of the bricks and mortar. It's a very—I was very proud of it. And I think one the proudest moments—Dr. Smith was not a guy who would give you compliments all the time. When I retired, he said if he ever had a son, he wished it was me. So I kind of get chills when I hear that—it was just a—it just was just a great place. It was the right place at the right time, with good people, and he took somebody who knew nothing about medical schools, and he trained me. I just had a wonderful career.

YG: Where do you see the medical school in the next decade? I know you've been out of the medical school for a while now, but you have a unique history, in that you were involved in the beginnings of a new medical school. Where do you think USF is going to go with their medical school in the next decade?

JM: I really don't know. I'd like to say I know that, but I just don't know. I know that the people talk about too many doctors, but I don't think that's the case. From what I remember, we haven't got—we may have too many doctors in the big locations, but we don't have doctors in the areas we need doctors—small towns and places like that. So I don't have enough data in my mind nor have I read enough to know where it's going. I just know that we're always going to need doctors. And I'm so thankful to the cancer center, because my wife was a patient there. So, you know, if you look back, I have a lot of friends who have gone there and been cured. So it makes you feel good. You know, it's better than counting soap.

YG: My final question, and this is something that I've asked all of my interviewees: If you could leave something on tape, a statement about either the colleagues and friends that you've associated with over the years, or to future colleagues and or students who come to the medical school, what would you want to say about the University of South Florida?

JM: Well, I think in an institution like this, you only get out what you put into it. I think a young student, if he's going to be a doctor, has to be a doctor because that's what he wants to be. It can't be something that you think is a financial reward, because I can remember, after things were going in my last few years, I would be going home—I could see our doctor walking across the walkway to the VA hospital. I knew they were there in the morning, and I'm going home to my family, and they're going across the street. I could say—I would say to any student who wants to be a physician, you better want to be a physician, because it's not an easy life, and not easy on their spouses. So it's just been a great place, and having you get me here to remember some of the things that had slipped my mind brought back some wonderful memories and some chills.

YG: John, thank you very much.

JM: Thank you very much.

End of interview.