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Yael Greenberg (YG): Today is Wednesday, May 28th, 2003. My name is Yael Greenberg, oral history program assistant for the Florida Studies Center. 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. Today, we will be interviewing Dr. Barbara Petersen, who came to USF in August of 1991 as an assistant professor in the School of Mass Communications. Currently, she is an associate professor in the School of Mass Communications. Good morning, Dr. Petersen.

Barbara Petersen (BP): 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.

BP: Well, I guess I'd like to say it was careful planning, but the story is a long one. I came right after completing my PhD at the University of Michigan, defended my dissertation in March, got everything turned into the graduate school on March 31st. Our deadline was supposed to be April 1st, and I decided I was going to be early on that. But I came to that PhD late, as well. When I graduated from college, in 1969—the University of Iowa—I was trained to be a journalist, a broadcast journalist, specifically. But at that time, a journalist was a journalist was a journalist, whether it was broadcast or a newspaper or a magazine. And I worked in this field for a couple of years. I soon learned that if you survived in this field to the age of 30 without a heart attack that it would be somewhat of a miracle. And in the process of a marriage, a move from Iowa, the birth of my daughter, I learned that there were some less stressful ways—so I thought—of practicing my field, and actually got into the field of public information, and then into public relations.

I had a career of approximately 13 years, in terms of a couple of years of journalism experience, broadcast journalism, anchor and reporter, and then public information in a major university, that was the University of Texas at Austin—energy research center—which led me to eight years in a corporate public affairs position in Michigan for a gas and electric utility. During the time I was in Michigan, my title was supervisor of public relations, or public affairs, research. And at the time, research, to me, meant a lot of background, the sort of thing a journalist would do, the sort of thing that meant that you were very aware of what was going on currently, what affected your field. I would go to energy research conferences, constantly read media, that sort of thing, and worried about the various constituencies that we had as a major gas and electric utility.

We served the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. People say, What do you mean the Lower Peninsula? Well, the Upper Peninsula is connected to Wisconsin, actually, but it belongs to Michigan. And so the Lower Peninsula—everybody holds up their hand and says, you know, The thing that looks like a mitten. That's the Lower Peninsula. And we had nuclear power plants. We had gas distribution lines. We had a lot of things that required me to have a lot of background information about how they worked. But what would happen very frequently in the field, and it still happens to this day—it's because I had this research title—somebody would come in and say, toss on my desk—"Look! Look at this research study," and "So-and-so did this, and so-and-so did that. Can we apply that here?"

And I would look at it and do my very best to try to understand it but was always very frustrated with the fact that I did not know how the research was being conducted. I had no training in quantitative research methods at that point, other than what you pick up, sort of, as I say, by osmosis in the field. And I always wanted to know how to conduct this research. So between 1977, when I moved to Michigan, and 1985—that makes my eight years with the utility company—I kept thinking there needs to be something more. I always wanted to go on for my doctorate, but circumstances with family and jobs and things always intervened. It's the joys of being a woman and trying to balance everything in your life. Finally, in—you need to stop this for a moment.

Pause in recording.

Finally, towards the end of those eight years, I started to think about what else I could do. I was fortunately situated in Michigan. The headquarters of the utility company were in Jackson, and that's in south central Michigan. About 35 miles due north was Michigan State University. About 35 to 40 miles due east was the University of Michigan. I explored the opportunities at both, and I thought, no, it is Michigan that I really wanted to go to. You knew that "Michigan," in the state of Michigan, means the University of Michigan. Michigan State we fondly called "Little U." You kind of have these intrastate rivalries in all areas.

In any event, the reason I went to the University of Michigan was, in fact, to learn how to do research. And Michigan is the preeminent place for social science research: the Institute for Social Studies Research, the ISPCR—Interuniversity—ICPSR, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.¹ It's always hard to get those letters out. I ended up having my methodological training through ICPSR every summer. For three summers, I did nothing but live, breathe, and not die, statistics, and I loved it. I had not had it before. I found it intriguing. My program at Michigan was interdisciplinary, and that fits well the field of mass communications. It is an interdisciplinary field. But the doctorate was called the "interdepartmental doctorate in mass communications." Core courses in communication theory, but required coursework in political science, psychology, and sociology.

My specific interest, also, at the University of Michigan was law, something that has always been of great fascination and interest to me. So I was able to take courses in the University of Michigan Law School, and, yes, it was a wonderful experience. I still think about that—going through those courses. Altogether then, what my studies focused on were social science research and legal and ethical issues of communication. Five years at the University of Michigan to get this doctorate, and because I had come to it late, because my husband well knew that when I finished that doctorate, we would be going somewhere, he made careful plans to take early retirement from his position, and I made careful plans to look around at the types of opportunities I thought would be ones I would like to pursue. Together, we took a map of the United States, and we drew a line across it—north of

¹ The ICPSR was established in 1962 at the University of Michigan and is responsible for providing leadership, training, and access to social science data for research and instruction.

which I would not apply for jobs, south of which I would.

I'm certain you've heard this story from an awful lot of people, and make no bones about the fact that having grown up and lived in the North for a lot of years, we were very tired of snow and rain and cold and ice. I recall one time, as I was finishing my dissertation, walking on the University of Michigan campus between the graduate library and the undergraduate library, and there was—because of all the cement and the tall buildings, there's like a wind tunnel that goes back there. It is January, I am bundled up like *Nanook of the North*, with the hooded furry-looking jacket and the muffler around my face, bucking a very strong wind just to go around the corner here, and saying to myself and to the Almighty above, "Please, God. Please, God. I promise if you get me an appointment somewhere where it's going to not snow and rain and freeze, I'll never complain about the heat. Please."² I think I get that premise for about five years down here before I started complaining about the heat. And every time I do that, I have to make apologies.

So I applied from the East Coast to the West Coast, across the bottom part of the United States, and had five interviews and traveled all over. And it was the time of the Gulf War, so I sometimes was one of only a very few paying customers on the airlines.³ In any event, of all the opportunities offered, the one at the University of South Florida was one that appealed to me for a variety of reasons. Number one was the fact that I would have the opportunity to build something. I was brought here, primarily because of my public relations experience, to build the graduate program in public relations. I was also brought here because of the flexibility that I had in teaching. Even though I'd had that experience and could, therefore, build a graduate program in that field, I'd also had experience in journalism. I had the social science research and theory—a very eclectic background, but yet one that fit together well. I was not a Johnny One Note, or a Janey One Note, so to speak. And that fit well with the department, that you have a variety of experiences.

So, in addition to the public relations program, I was given the communications law course my first semester here. And I thought I was so privileged to be able to teach communications law, just purely privileged. And I had that feeling until—I remember a colleague of mine came about five or six years after I was here. And when he was first introduced to me, and I said, "And I teach communications law," very proudly, he said, "My condolences." And I said, "What?" You know, "I'm privileged." And the fact of the matter is that very few professors like to keep up that communications law routine because, literally, you are on 24/7. I have had a Supreme Court decision hit on a Monday, late afternoon, that affected the lesson that I was giving the next morning, on a Tuesday, and had to scramble to redo my notes. So I was here because I was given the opportunity to not do just one thing, but be able to combine my love and my interest for the law, and my expertise, with the practical expertise in public relations. I think that gets me here. Now, perhaps you wanted to explore further what I did when I got here. I'll let you ask the questions.

YG: Okay. Can you describe the first time you saw the USF campus? What did it look like?

BP: Was April of—oh, I take that back. That was the second time. It was December of 1990. They brought me in at the very end of the fall semester. I'd been to Florida a number of times but had never been to Tampa. And in December, in Tampa, it is gorgeous, especially when you're coming out of Michigan, okay. And I was dismayed, on the one hand, because of all the cement and the institutional-looking buildings. One of the things that has changed since I've been here that I applaud every day I come through that are the planting of the trees at the main entrance and coming through to have some greenery there, because it did look just too barren. It's an urban university. I

² *Nanook of the North* is a 1922 silent documentary that focuses on the struggles of an Inuk man named Nanook and his family in the Canadian Arctic.

³ The Persian Gulf War (1990–1991) was an international conflict that began after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2nd, 1990.

thought, okay, fine, this is what an urban university looks like. But remember me, I came from the Michigans of—and my undergraduate degree is from the University of Iowa, where the campus was the thing, and the great big buildings, and the real feel of a university. So the buildings put me back somewhat.

The interviews were very interesting. I remember that one of the emeritus professors—now deceased—actually came back to listen to me give my research presentation. I thought, well, how impressive that the emeritus faculty still want to participate in what was going on here. I remember the interview with the woman who was the head of the department at that time and who, ultimately, offered me the job. And I remember her telling me about all the opportunities there were to grow. I talked this over with my faculty, colleagues, and friends at Michigan—my dissertation committee and others—and they said that probably the best thing you could ever do would be to come to a university that looked like this, that was in its formative stages. And I think that the physical appearance of the university at that time had me saying, okay, this place is going to need some work, but I'd like to be able to help to participate in the building of that.

At the time that—so that was December—we came house hunting in April, which is another beautiful month in Florida. We ultimately moved in July, where it's hot and sticky and humid in Michigan, and hot and sticky and humid in Florida, so there was really no difference. And so it wasn't sort of until October of '91, that I really felt, oh wow, I guess I really am in Florida. Because, again, it was beautiful again. So those were the first impressions that I had. That it's going to take some building, but then again, that's why they're hiring you. And that I was going to be able to do virtually everything I've wanted to do. Wasn't going to be pigeonholed into a particular teaching or research area. I had what I wanted after all those years of building and careful planning towards that day. I had the ability to use my mind in a variety of ways.

YG: You came in as an assistant professor. Where was the School of Mass Communications in '90, '91, on campus?

BP: Crowded into a small suite on the fourth floor of Cooper Hall, and it was terrible. Anybody who's ever been in Cooper Hall knows that. The building that we're now in, we moved into it in December of '91, the CIS, Communication Information Sciences building. Now, this is sort of second-, third-, fourth-hand, but I understand that building was under construction for about 10 years. That, in fact, from the time that the architect's plans were drawn until ground was broken, until they—and they ran into financial difficulties and had to stop construction. This is all—was all told to me—that this building was under construction for 10 years.

So when I was hired in March—I think we completed the paperwork in March of '91—I was told, “Well, we hope to move into the new building in August.” Well, I got here, and they were not ready to move in. So the entire fall semester, they said, Don't get comfortable in your Cooper Hall office. We could move any minute. We could move next week. We could move next month. And we didn't actually move until finals week, in the first week of December. Our students took their exams in Cooper, and then they had to come find us over in this new building that had no numbers written on the offices. And it was difficult to even find where I was supposed to be, you know, to come to get their grades.

My office in Cooper Hall was an internal room without any windows. The classes—the classrooms I taught in, in Cooper Hall, were internal without any windows. I would come to campus at 7:30—I had an eight o'clock class, which was an experience. I did that for two years. But I would come to campus at 7:30. I would not leave campus until 5:00. I had no idea, no clue what was going on outside. It could have rained. It could have done anything, and I would just come out, and, okay, fine. I was really in a cocoon over there. We were way too crowded. We were way too crowded.

We just—we had—we just didn't have the facilities we needed.

And in a field like mass communications, where you need technology and things like that, that was quite a hindrance. It's very difficult to teach somebody broadcasting by simply showing them a book and diagrams. I mean, you need to have a studio, which, of course, was built into the CIS building—a variety of—for broadcast, we have four tracks of study in the undergraduate programs: journalism, straight journalism, which includes magazine; broadcasting at the time, now called telecommunications; advertising; and public relations. And you can do only so much in a classroom without having the physical apparatus that you need in these technical fields. So my first experience in Cooper Hall is memorable, but forgettable as well.

YG: In terms of the mission of the School of Mass Comm, what were you told about the program, where it was heading, and sort of your role in that direction?

BP: Okay, mass communications, as I indicated earlier, is an interdisciplinary field. It also is—has the distinction of being both a scholarly field as well as a practical field. When I came, the department was a Department of Mass Communications. A few years thereafter, we changed the name to the School of Mass Communications to reflect the fact that we were doing practical training. It would have been difficult to support that in the facilities we had in Cooper Hall. In the facilities in the Communication and Information Sciences building, we have a full operating studio for broadcast. We had recording and editing rooms for radio—broadcast being television broadcast—and then the rooms for radio broadcast, full operating photo labs. We have dedicated computer rooms for our writing classes, where they aren't just sitting in a room, you know, doing the “think method” from *The Music Man*. “Just think. Just think, and you'll play it.” Well, you can't just say, “Just think, and you'll write it,” you actually have to have the apparatus there. So we had our computer—dedicated computer rooms for those classes.

That shift actually had us preparing students, in reality, for jobs—one of the benefits of a school, also one of the hardest things that you have to deal with, because we are not just practitioners, we are scholars as well. Just a brief tangent here. I think we've talked about this previously, that to get a position—and I remember the position description for my own—to get a position in mass communications field today, you not only have to have the academic credentials and the PhD and the scholarly interest and that what, but also have significant practical experience, because we are teaching people to become the new broadcasters, the new advertisers, the new public relations specialists. And if we don't have those practical experiences ourselves, we have less of an ability to tell students what the so-called real world is all about.

So all of us who come to this field come to it a bit older, with our doctorates. It was not an unusual circumstance that I would come to the doctorate later, that there—I could name a half dozen people across the nation who are my close friends who have done this and did the same thing. People don't maybe take quite as long as I did before coming to the doctorate, but the fact is that you have the practical experience, and then you add to that scholarly credentials. So we are in this strange position of saying, We're going to train you to actually go out and get a job in this field. But as I always tell students, I don't promise them anything. In fact, I was just watching a story on television news yesterday, the day before, about the current crop of graduates nationwide not having jobs to go to and moving back in with mom and dad. You know, just a terrible situation when you think about it. But the fact is that, however few jobs or whatever are out there, we're preparing students in a technical and in a scholarly, creative thinking way to get those jobs. The issue is not everyone's going to. And the issue is that it takes far more than our training to do that, so we've always run this fine line of that.

My role in helping this transition towards a school was twofold. When I came, the only other public

relations professor did not have the PhD and did not have the scholarly research interests—had come to this as a second or third career, actually, from a military position. And so had practical experience on how to teach students in public relations to write, to do press releases, to do campaigns, that sort of thing. My role, in coming in, was to tell them about theory and research. When I came, in '91, the field—the scholarly field of public relations research was such that, within six months, I could be totally up to speed without ever having maybe done any of the reading before. I wasn't necessarily preparing for a public relations teaching position. I was preparing research, scholarly interests, legal issues, that sort of thing. But it didn't take me that long to come up to speed with the scholarly public relations literature, because there wasn't that much. It had been all very practical, hands-on, instead of adding the theory and the social science research base to this.

So what I have seen happen, over the 12 years I've been here, is that that can no longer happen. I've been on search committees for the last three or four people we've hired—I'm trying to think—in the field. And every time somebody comes up with their credentials, we are now looking for far more than I brought to this, in terms of public relations. I had no coursework in public relations. There was one class in public relations when I was at the University of Iowa, and basically, we just sort of read the major book in the field, and that was it. We didn't, you know, really learn any of the various skills, tools, necessary. So there's a balance that we're trying to provide. We're trying to tell our public relations students that they need to be social science researchers. And they're scared to death of it, they don't like it, but we're teaching them research, and solid research.

Our telecommunications students were told that they needed to have hands-on practice, and they're doing that in our studios and in our labs and those types of courses. But they're also told that that alone isn't going to get them a job. The field of mass communications is such a thing—you need a broad liberal arts background. They need to have the thinking skills. I see them in my communications law class because we can't turn them out there without having that background. Our advertising students probably were affected least by the move. They still need the hands-on writing classes in the labs, but basically those kinds of classes in creativity can be taught in any kind of facility. Journalism students—the computer writing labs—those were really, really critical to them, and so that was a big change for them to move to the new building and to build this.

Our graduate program was something else. The graduate program had started with sort of a general media studies kind of a degree—a master of arts. A master of arts concentration in public relations was added, but the coursework was inadequate. One of the first things I did when I came was to start to build a curriculum to add in management courses, to add in theory courses in public relations, to set a curriculum that required both research and theory, some outside work, and, actually, that curriculum still stands—that I implemented as a member of the public relations faculty, as a member of the general faculty.

So the changes, I think, that I have seen—and many of these, by the way, are dictated by our outside accrediting agency, the association—now, here we go again with the acronyms. ACEJMC: The Accrediting Committee for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. They set standards that our students have 90 hours of liberal arts before they do enter major courses. We don't see them till they're juniors and seniors. We don't have the freshmen and—occasionally, we have a sophomore who's got enough credits to come on over. They have to take two basic courses, in our program, before they ever can go anywhere else [and] take any other courses—a basic media writing course and a basic course in mass comm in society, how this all interacts. They don't pass those two courses, they are not allowed to take any higher-level courses. They have to have a grade point, which, at this point, I think is a 2.75. You'll have to correct me on that one if we have a little higher than that.

That keeps our number of majors lower. We are a closed program. They have to take an English

diagnostic test. They don't pass the English diagnostic test, they're not coming into the program. And [if] they don't have the GPA, they're not coming into the program. All of these are outside accrediting requirements that, in order for us to be an accredited school, we have to follow. Not everybody chooses to go through the accreditation process, but a quarter of the programs nationwide have this accreditation, and we're very proud to have that, but it takes the faculty as a whole. When I first came, the program had been placed on probation by the accrediting agency.

YG: The graduate program?

BP: The entire program. The undergraduate and graduate program altogether. Basically, at the time—let me clarify—the accrediting agency was only accrediting the undergraduate program. That has changed. The last time we went through accreditation, when I was still director of graduate studies, we did include our graduate program, and so we do now have accredited programs in public relations and journalism at the graduate level as well. But that's been a change in the agency's requirements. At the time, it was only undergraduate programs, and we were in—on probation, a temporary status, because of issues like control of funding. We did not have that. Because of issues like equipment. I just described the difference between Cooper Hall and CIS—and so, you know, that was a help towards it. The faculty were not doing enough research. The faculty were—had come and had had a lot of practical experience, but some of them were not research professors.

As I said, early on in its career, USF had people with master's degrees teaching, and did not go on for the PhD and, of course, kept the people with the master's. And so that affected how we could achieve accreditation with some scholarly research. So they would look to the young professors, and, despite the age, I was considered a young professor coming in for that. We did ultimately achieve accreditation—a complete, full accreditation—after a number of years, but we had to build a lot of that. I'm trying to think where to take this next, that it—you know, it isn't just building facilities, it's a combination of that. Oh, we were seriously understaffed. Budget cuts had affected the whole university in the '80s. And what would happen—because we were not a standalone program with our own budget, we were a unit of Arts and Sciences—is if somebody retired or left mass comm, Arts and Sciences would pull back that position and, you know, give it off to another department.

And our accrediting agency said, “You can't keep doing that. You have got to give this field the adequate number of professors, and you can't do that.” So there was a relationship issue between how the school could operate and how the dean of—then dean of Arts and Sciences could operate with it. And the accrediting agency, in essence, put the university on notice that it needed to change that structure. It needed to provide the funding necessary for the program to achieve this accrediting status, and, of course, the university would want that. Many programs at the university have outside accrediting agencies, and that's the whole purpose, that you have this nationwide standards kinds of issues—kind of issue to deal with.

So it took some time, and I came into this—again, I came into this knowing that the program was on probation, and that one of the things that was necessary was the type of building that I was hired to do. And I wasn't the only one. You know, there were other people over there. Anybody who might see this tape—I'm not trying to make this all about everything I did, because clearly it took a lot of teamwork. It took other people to build their portions of the program as well, and the new hires, and that sort of thing. So, clearly, I was not the only one. Those are just my memories as I come into it, that we had a long row to hoe, and we got there. We got there.

YG: The new CIS building, I remember, as a student myself, that being big news on campus. In addition to some of the technology features, what else is unique to that building?

BP: Well, there are four departments housed in the building. And, let's see, I've been here 12 years—I will be here 12 years—22 years ago, if we go back to when this building was conceived, somebody at this university said, Hm, mass communications—communications, which is a new name from speech communication, in our field is known as the human communication, interpersonal communication organizational half, as opposed to the media, mass communication half. Those departments should have something in common. They ought to belong together. Library and information sciences, that program ought to have something in common with those other two. We ought to have those departments together. And then the fourth one was management information systems out of the business school. You know, the old *Sesame Street* thing: Which of these things does not belong with the others?⁴

The MIS [management information systems] connection, although it can be made, has never really been made. I have strong interests in the library and information sciences program, having worked through part of that in my doctorate. I was actually a teaching assistant in an innovative class to teach our beginning reporters how to gather and evaluate information. And that class was co-taught by a journalism professor and the head of the undergraduate library at the University of Michigan, and I was the teaching assistant who was delightfully positioned between those two. So I said, "I have a strong interest there." Certainly, my program—I understand the differences between communication studies and mass communications, and in many universities, they, in fact, are joined under the same dean—in a college of communication. This university chose elsewhere, or chose another route.

Before I came, there was a large move to combine the departments as—not to combine the fields, which were separate, but to combine the management of the departments, and it was strongly resisted, apparently, by the mass communication faculty more so than the communication faculty. I kind of found that to be a problem, because my own training, interdisciplinary-wise and in communication science with mass communication emphasis, said these are basically the same roots, having diverged along two different paths, but the same roots. And as a matter of fact, when I teach mass communication theory and research, I always make sure I have a unit describing how we do come out of the same roots and then have gone separate ways, mostly because of personalities and people and individual directions of departments. So somebody said these four departments—library, LIS; MIS; communication studies; mass communication—they'll all want to be working together.

So the uniqueness of the building was not just that it was a new building, but that there was supposed to be some interdisciplinarity going on. You know, I haven't seen a lot of it. There are a few of us who, again, have strong communication interests or library information science interests and will work one-on-one and individually. And I've worked on thesis committees—crossed with these. I've been on search committees in the library. I think I've been on tenure and promotion committees in the field of library and information science because of those interests, but that's sort of a one-on-one thing. So those who conceived the building as being this nice, little integrated thing didn't—plus the fact, business, having outgrown its own building, continues to encroach onto our building. I must say that for the record, that they keep encroaching over here, and they've never really had that connection, well, with the other disciplines.

YG: From 1995 to 2001, you were the director of graduate studies for the School of Mass Comm?

BP: Yeah.

YG: Can you talk a little bit about what some of your responsibilities were, and some of your initiatives?

⁴ Petersen refers to the song "One of These Things," which was regularly used on *Sesame Street* for sketches where viewers would be shown a group of four items, one of which was different from the other three.

BP: Okay. When—and there's a little bit of history to this too—so before '95. The graduate program, as I said, had its roots in just sort of mass media research, and then there was a journalism component, which is a natural, and then this public relations thing was added. There's always been a graduate committee made up of faculty—elected faculty members—and I served on that committee as a faculty member before being appointed director. And it was actually before serving on that committee that I was already building the public relations graduate committee—curriculum. So we go back onto that.

When we got a new director of the School of Mass Communications in 1995, it was his prerogative to choose a director of graduate studies. I sort of remember this as well, too. I was off at an academic convention that we all attend: The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, the AEJMC. And I've gone every year—it's my 14th or 15th consecutive year. It's a very rewarding intellectual stimulation. I present, I've done programs. I've been a division head in the law division. I was head of that division, and I've had elected positions in public relations as well.

So I'm there doing my academic thing and meeting the new director—I was actually on his search committee, because we had a search committee from the department when he was selected—and one of my colleagues came up to me, and said, “Get ready. The new director met with the executive committee of the school and asked for a recommendation for director of graduate studies, and we said, ‘Well, there's’—and what he said was, ‘I need somebody who can organize, who can build this program, who can manage all of the students.’” We had 75 to 100 graduate students at that point. We fluctuate anywhere between 60 to 100 because not all of them go full-time, and it's difficult to kind of count heads when you only see them once a semester, if that.

And so my colleague said—and so he goes through this laundry list of what he needed, and we looked at each other and said, “Well, there's really only one person who can fill that.” One of the benefits of coming out of corporations is that I had leadership training. I've always been an organized person, and I've dealt with supervision and that sort of thing. So coming into academia from a corporation, I was always, you know, very organized. So, sure enough, you know, the director comes over to me and says, “I have this opportunity for you.” And I'm scared to death because I thought, Oh, wait a minute! You know, how am I going to juggle all of this stuff? But I did. I juggled it. One of the things that—the program is very informal. We have closed registration, and people would just sort of leave telephone numbers, little scraps of paper, “I'd like this course, that course.” I was like, “Well, wait a minute, you know. A master's program is not just about taking class after class after class. There's supposed to be some integration, some planning, some advising.” And, yes, there was advising, but it was like the student requesting it.

One of the big changes I made was that, in fact, I organized it such that the students were required to come in for advice thinking, at least once a year with somebody, so that they weren't just off trailing on their own. There were no forms—developed forms. There was really no organization of who was in what class and whatnot. One of the hardest things to do as a graduate director is to predict what classes—or to project what classes are going to be taught, because what you have to do is to predict how many people are going to be in those classes. And when you have a program where not everyone—in fact, the minority—are full-time students, you don't know that you have enough students to sustain a class. And we always had this struggle. College of Arts and Sciences says you must have X number of students, otherwise the class has to be canceled. Well, what if the class is required? And if they don't get it this semester, they're going to be put behind, yet again. So one of my biggest chores was to try to figure out this curriculum.

Another thing that had happened is that professors sort of taught when they wanted to in the

graduate program, and I said, "Well, you know, I'd like to do that too. But the fact is, I think we need to think about what the students need." So I coordinated. I coordinated class offerings so that they wouldn't have impossible choices. You have a required class—we have—they're all night classes, so you really can only do one required class per night. If you put two per night, I mean, you know, they can't bilocate, and so there was that. Building the reputation of the school, recruiting, trying to find graduate assistantships—I was getting very creative in trying to recruit people to the program who needed money, and we didn't have the graduate assistantships to offer at the time. I was allowed—or the university allowed a position if it were significantly related to the student's field. Well, when you're in public relations, you have a multitude of opportunities across campus to work in that field and have practical training, so to speak.

So I placed students in the public affairs office. I placed them in positions in business, in the Marshall Center, in the library, in the alumni affairs center, in places where they needed people to do newsletters. And public relations people can write, or should be able to write, and could put together communication programs, communication packets for them. So that then would bring to me the best and the brightest of those I would go out and recruit. I would look for those with the higher GPAs, the minority scholarships that were available, that I knew if I got the person interested, they would apply, and off we go.

And so I worked very heavily with recruiting students across the board, making sure that we had positions to offer. Somewhere along the line, during my graduate director status, I was appointed a member of the college graduate committee, and I ultimately became the chair of the college graduate committee. And there were a couple of initiatives that I was able to work with that are still in place today. And I've been out of the graduate director position now for two years going on three—something like that. And it was by choice, by the way. It was by choice—six years—and I needed to step down and to go back to being a research professor.

But while I was working with the college committee, there was a matter of how to allocate these university general fellowships. There had been several ways proposed. I conducted a study—I mean, I'm a social science researcher. We went through, we looked at the departments who did and didn't have them or whatever, and we proposed a plan that is in place—the equitable one—because there are small apartments, there are large departments, and it was frustrating to see these fellowships go to the larger departments, when the smaller departments may have just as much of a need for them and have a suitable student. So the position—the program that is now in place is that if there is a sufficient number, that every other year, a department will get one. And the department chooses who it gives it to, as opposed to a university committee looking at—or a college committee, excuse me, looking at all of the graduate applications and then deciding.

Another thing I did with the college graduate committee—we continued to question our mission. What is it that we were supposed to do? We thought that as professors, we ought to be contributing to policy formation. And it seemed that there was just way too much paperwork that was simply checking off boxes, and so we had—we made a resolution in the committee, and we proposed it, and we went to the college assembly, and we talked about all these things to the point that other committees said, Well, yeah, you know, we think maybe we would like to follow the graduate committee in doing more policy assistance to the deans, if that's the role, as opposed to the paper shuffling.

You still have to review new programs. Not a problem. But there were some things about—the college graduate committee was, when I first came, deciding who was going to be able to teach in the graduate program or not. And those were strange kinds of things that—paperwork things that one had to go through. With the development of the graduate school—when Dale Johnson came in as dean, there were tremendous changes made in the graduate school. And the first thing he said

was, “Well, okay, if you have a PhD in your field, you're in the—you teach in the graduate program.” And that made sense to me, coming from a research university. So we have rules so we didn't have to go through and—it's kind of demeaning, actually, for an individual professor to have to submit credentials to the director of graduate studies for his or her program, that then have to go before a committee within the school to say, “Does this person teach or not teach in a graduate program,” and then have to go before a college committee. And Dean Johnson saw that and said, “No. We're going to fix this. We've got rules here.”

So during that time, I organized. I think the expression that my director has said my legacy is is that “She made the trains run on time.” The program—students didn't have impossible choices. They had—I had arranged that they would come in for advising. I had entire program plans that they could work out with me. Once they made their program plan, they were—you know, as long as they followed that plan, it was a simple matter of keeping up with their permits. If they hadn't decided what they were going to do, sure, that's okay the first couple of classes, you know. But you can't have 30 credits in this program and still not decide what you want to do, and just sort of put together a collection of classes. So [I] tightened up requirements, made sure the prereqs for the various classes—I made the trains run on time.

YG: Most recently, here in the library, you've been involved with a comprehensive communication plan for the USF library system. Can you talk a little bit about that?

BP: Okay. One of the graduate seminars that I have always taught since I've been here is called “Public Relations Counseling.” What it is is social science research training for graduate students. And every time I teach it, I find a project that they can apply their research and counseling skills to. And that project, in my mind, has to be for a unit, for an agency that is a nonprofit. So I have used university departments. I've also used outside agencies, such as the Tampa AIDS Network, to give some sort of a practical training for my students.⁵

I end up spending, like, the entire semester before the class is offered setting this up, to do the preliminary research, to find a research question that is meaningful to the agency or to the unit, that my students would be able to work with and do. In the case of the library—I've always had a fondness for the library, and I approached Dean Perez, saying, “I know that you've got a number of projects going on. Talk to me about what is of interest to you, and, if you agree, I can bring to bear to this a research professor.” And I had six graduate students—six, seven—six graduate students that semester—“I can bring to bear a public relations agency approach, if you will, to helping you resolve a particular research issue.”

We went through a number of things, and what seemed to stand out to me was the situation at USF—that graduate class was offered in the spring of 2002, so I'm working on this in the fall of '99. What stood out to me was the change in the mission of the university as a whole, to say that it was a major metropolitan research university, which is a huge change in mission from the way this university was founded, in 1960, as a teaching university. It seemed to me that at the university level, that not all of the pegs had been in place, and that the insertion of the word “research” in front of university did not make it a research university but had huge implications for everyone.

Again, because of my corporate experience, because of my knowledge of management, I know that when the top management sets a mission, everyone else within that particular organization has to accommodate that mission and to change it. We had begun that in mass communications, as I had said, bringing in research professors, making sure that our accreditation committees were satisfied, not just with our practical training but with our scholarship. We had already made that transition

⁵ The Tampa Aids Network (TAN) was founded in 1985 in order to provide education, support services, and advocacy for all people with HIV/AIDS.

there. It seemed to me that the university library was going to have to insert—not just insert the word “research” there. I think the people here are way too smart to just know—to think that it just takes that word—but to actually think about what it might mean.

And because of that and because of looking at the existing mission, which starts out with teaching—it has been changed, and now it starts out with research—I said, “Well, my expertise is communication. And what I know about achieving a research status for a library, and the Premier Research Library standards from the Association of Research Libraries, is that it isn't just the number of books you have, it isn't just the number of people who come in and use those, or whatever else. It is that entire relationship with your research faculty.” And when I'm talking about relationships, as a person who has an expertise in communication, I'm saying that the core issue in relationships is communication.

So we started to look at what kind of communication, on an organizational level, was there between the library and research professors. This did not mean that individual faculty librarians did not have good relationships with individual faculty who were doing research at the university. Clearly, I had such relationships. This library was the second—on the second day—I think the first day I actually went to the department. The second day I was over here, at the library, saying, “This is an important part of my being, as a research professor, and I'm going to get to know people and do things.” But does everybody think that way? I don't know. So let's find out the state of the relationship. Because if the heart of that is communication, and from what I see, there is no organizational level communication here, you know, it's only so much individuals can do without the organization coming in.

And Dean Perez, to her credit, said, “Wow. That's great. Let's see what we can do.” So from my social science research training for my students, I set up—and I had to do sort of the basic work, but then they actually—I just bring them in, wherever stage they're at, you know. It's not quite like throwing the baby in the pool and seeing if he or she can swim, but it is similar to that. I look at the individual skills people bring to the class. They should have had those—that's kind of a termination class of their various academic experiences. It isn't something you start with. So, what do you bring to it? What can I do to build upon those things? And off we went. We conducted a major opinion survey of both research faculty, and then those faculty librarians, what in the literature are called professional librarians, who would interact on some major communication issues of this relationship that would ultimately lead towards this library becoming a research-centered library, capable of achieving ARL membership—highest standards nationwide membership. So that was the class we did.

We applied a theory called “co-orientation analysis,” where you ask one person what he or she thinks, or one group what that group thinks. You ask the other group what it thinks, then you ask the one group what it thinks the other group thinks of it, and when you have enough of those variables—and we did replicate a tested survey instrument that would measure those variables and adapted it to the library setting—we were able to say, Oops, there is not a strong organizational-level relationship here. Not “oops” so much as “now we know.” And we gave seven specific recommendations, focusing on the organizational-level communication, again, that needed to be established.

The end of the report—again, I commend Dean Perez highly, who said, “Oh, we have some things here to do. How are we going to do this? I want to use this report.” I met with her several times after the term ended and with others in the library, actually gave a little communication workshop to the top managers on what it means to—what's the differences between public relations and marketing, which is always an interesting conversation to have. You cannot do the marketing of your services until you've done the public relations research work.

YG: I have to change the tape.

Track 1 ends; track 2 begins.

YG: Okay, we had to change tape.

BP: Okay. I was talking about giving the communication workshop, so to speak, to the management. And we continue to talk about this and, finally—I'm not quite sure the words were used—I finally said, “What? Do you want me to just sort of move in over here?” She says, “Yeah,” and she made it happen. She bought me out of a course each semester. That required my director to scramble a little bit to find somebody to teach a course, one in the fall and one in the spring. She provided a research assistant, and it was someone who had been in that spring class, who knew the project very well, so I was able to work with her. And we set about to implement these recommendations.

One of the recommendations was further research, and that was one of the things we conducted in the fall. Going to specific—about 900 specific research faculty to ask specific questions. What do you need from this library to help you be a research professor? Learned a few interesting things from that, too, which is that many of the faculty on this campus do not think of themselves as research professors. That entire culture shift, from this being a teaching university to going towards—to becoming a research university is not universally accepted, simply, I think, because of the nature of a culture being so strong that just inserting a few words into a mission statement isn't going to change that culture. There have to be other things going forth with that.

So that was one thing. I was to also get to learn—to know more about the individuals at the library. So I was given an office, with my research assistant, and we would come to various—I, especially, would come to various meetings, sit in on the meetings of various groups, committees around the library. Early on, formed a communication task force that was going to further the recommendations that we had made in our study about improving organizational level communication with the research faculty. The task force was deliberately small so that we could have a good discussion. But all of us were to go out and work with others and get opinions from others. Our tasks were twofold—what we were able to accomplish by the end of the research project that I've done here. One of which was to enhance the website, the section of the library website directed towards research faculty.

The entire website had, at that point, been under a change to reflect the issue that this is a university system, we don't just have [the] Tampa campus, but we have other campuses and other units of the library, and that there needed to be a unified presence there, and that there were some much—many necessary changes needed to be made with the overall appearance of the website and the ease of retrieving information. So my component that I focused on was the for-faculty component. And with the task force, we reviewed countless—I have given up on how many each of us reviewed—websites for renowned research universities, what they did for their faculty. Early on, came to the notion that there needed to be a faculty newsletter. A newsletter from the library, from the professional librarians, directed towards the interests of the research faculty, in addition to the teaching faculty.

It seemed that the teaching faculty were pretty well taken care of, whether they knew it or not, with the offering of special classes, of assistance with research—with projects for their students, that sort of thing. But what could a researcher do? What were some of the things that would be of interest? We now have access to numeric data through the university library website. We have a tutorial, and that's going to continue to build. One of the things I learned from the initial survey, as well as the

secondary survey, and it's something that intuitively I knew just by working with faculty—faculty are presumed to know everything, or they think they do know everything, you know, “Give me a PhD, and I know everything.” But they really—a lot of people really don't. They don't know how to do basic library research. I mean, I've had question after question from people about, well, you know, What's this and what's that? And, “Well, if you just sort of go to the website, it's there.”

So it occurred to me that what is necessary—because there's a great deal of pride associated with being a professor, and you don't want to admit that you don't know much about one thing or another—is to have sort of a non-threatening little way for them to sort of build experience with research, which would then get them to get into the site to find the information, which would then help them make the connections back to the professional librarians. One of the most important things you can do in a communication project is to make sure you know your people, your audience, your culture. So I have read very intensively in the library and information science literature and found that, in fact, there are many similarities. They're just not called that or organized that way. So everything that we've suggested from communication theory, we would back up from library and information science theory so that we could make those connections.

That was true of the original report from the spring 2002 counseling class, their plan and the seven recommendations. That became true, also, in a scholarly paper that I worked with, with the material here, and presented last March to an interdisciplinary public relations conference about communication management in an academic library situation—bringing together those bodies of literature of what needs to be done to make a research library. And premier among that is something that the professional librarians know well, that the paradigm—the way of thinking about how librarianship should be practiced—is different in a research library environment than in a teaching library environment.

And that that paradigm shift needs to occur within the people working here, in order to begin to make those organizational-level relationships with the faculty, instead of a librarian staying in the building behind a desk or behind a door or behind a computer, that, actually, visits are made out to the departments—that you become part of what is important to a particular department's research needs by going to meetings, staff, faculty meetings, that sort of thing. So we worked all of that in together, produced an academic paper—which, by the way, is, you know, we're now going to be submitting for publication. All the names, faces have been changed to protect the innocent. And as is true in social science research, we do not name, we do not identify personalities. It's the aggregate that we're interested in, and the relationships of the demographic variables, so to speak, with the opinion variables.

The very last thing I did—and I'm still writing up the final report—was to conduct group research with the professional librarians. With the sponsorship—co-sponsorship of the communication task force, I did those in early May, whereby I tested, in a qualitative research way, three separate variables. The first one was knowledge and understanding of the organizational communication necessary between professional librarians and research faculty. The second was an internal communication variable of the messages, the understanding of what needed to be done about communication within the library, between management and employees. And then the third one was not so much a testing of a variable as it was the brainstorming of all these bright minds around the tables, of what needed to be done to get this library to move from its roots as a teaching facility to the research mentality.

And that brainstorming session was just delightful. We—as individuals, the educational method that you use is called “think-pair-share.” Individually, think of five things you personally can do to make this happen. Share those with small groups at the tables. The groups then combined, because there's bound to be overlaps, and then share it with the whole room. The professional librarians

were separated into two groups because of size. I ended up having 13 and 14—13 in one group, 14 in the other. But the little tables were arranged so that you had interaction between reference and cataloging and special collections, and other fields, too—the kind of interaction that may not happen on the job—so that we could get a variety of opinions on that. And very, very gratified that in the brainstorming session, a lot of people knew what it would take and were willing to move there.

So, overall, if you look at the whole year and a half, I think, I've lived with the library, what I've been trying to do is to act as a consultant—those places where communication both internal and external would be important to moving the library forward, towards its goal of becoming a research library. The culmination—we did manage to get all seven recommendations in, one of which was to hire someone, in the capacity of a communication manager, who had the social science research training, who could go further with these ideas, who could put the final touches, develop the actual plan—communication plan—internally and externally, making certain that these were the types of communications that would move the library forward.

And that was accomplished at the beginning of April. And so, April, May—with two months' worth of a communication manager, and I'm already seeing the differences because [of] the launching of the new website. I saw press releases. I saw news stories. There's a very good little communication tutorial on the website that the communication manager put together with the help of some of the librarians who knew the technology. And that's necessary. The for-faculty section's going—has gone up—still some work to be done on that, but, again, that's going to be promoted by the communication manager to the departments. And I think by fall, you're going to have some strong inroads into that organizational relationship.

Again, I think a number of people may have misunderstood the purpose of the relationship kinds of questions I was asking. It wasn't personal relationships between librarians and faculty. It was that organizational-level commitment. Again, I have to say that none of this would have been possible without Dean Perez saying, “Yes, this was needed. Yes, we're willing to implement this.” And so she has. So my year as a consultant, followed by the research project, has opened up, I think, a lot of avenues. When this is published, which I'm sure—I'm certain it will be because it is groundbreaking work in communication management—when this is published, I think this will also bring that necessity for communication, understanding, relationship understanding, to the library and information science community nationwide.

YG: Where do you see the future of the CIS?

BP: Digital, digital, digital. One of the things that has been fascinating is, you know, back to say this building was planned 10 years before we actually moved in. And if I'd been here 12, then it makes it 22 years. This building is obsolete.

YG: Why is it obsolete?

BP: This is—our studios, our television studios, are analog, okay? It's a first work—and when I say analog, it raises, Okay. It's extraordinarily expensive to convert to digital, but mass communication programs nationwide are having to do this. And the way they do that is they've got to go out and find the money. The university isn't funding this. They've got to find donations and things to do this. We've been fortunate. We're in a huge media market, and we do get an awful lot of support from the professional media organizations in the Tampa Bay area. But—you know, they'll give us equipment, that sort of thing, but this is called a major renovation. We have two television studios. One we're maintaining analog right now. We're converting the smaller of the two studios, piece by piece, to digital.

When we moved into the building, radio broadcasting was a major issue in area—even though it's really very interesting, because many of our graduates end up in radio. The need for the labs in radio, and the need for somebody to teach this, diminished over the years to the point that we no longer have the radio labs. Those rooms have been converted to television editing rooms. When we moved into this building—there's a beautiful photography area, portrait studio rooms, developing rooms, the whole thing. Well, guess what? Photography's gone digital. And we have changed our program to the point where now we've got this—the big servers—the students are being taught with digital cameras. They're doing their editing on the big server computers, and there sit in those darkrooms, which have to be converted.

We're talking about renovations—physical renovations to the building to reflect the technology. We've gone through any number of generations of computers in our writing labs. When we first came, they were pretty pitiful, but they're now in our writing labs—state of the art, connected to the Internet. That was not ever thought to be necessary—“We'll just have a standalone computer here, and they'll write.” Well, so much of the research and what they need to do, they have to connect to the Internet. So we have those changes that we've been gradually making, and again with donations, and with very specific targeted donations to those particular technology areas.

So our building has become obsolete, in a sense. We're working hard to try to bring it back up to standards, because technology has changed. The basic matter of gathering information, writing a good story, having good writing, understanding what it takes to put together a television package, those are theoretical issues that are still the same. But when the technology changes that much that you are not able to train your people in state of the art so they can go out to get a job where state of the art is being used, that becomes a difficulty. So there are big changes there—technologically concerned.

Back to my promotion of theory in research. Twelve years ago when I was teaching public relations undergraduate classes and saying, “I'm going to talk to you about theory,” and, oh, the rolling of the eyes and, oh, you know, “Ivy League, what is this? You come from a big university, and we're just poor little”—I actually heard this—“we're just poor little Southern students, you know. We can't understand this theory.” Yes, you can. The field of public relations has changed. You cannot turn out somebody who can only write and put together pretty pictures—if, in fact, they can only write, I mean, the writing is so key—and put together pretty pictures. If they don't understand what they're doing or why they're doing it—theory is the why. You can have an assortment of tools—and whenever you ask an undergraduate, give them a question: “How would you solve this problem?” Immediately, Oh, well, I'd have an 800 number, and then I'd do a brochure, and then, of course, there would be the press releases. I'm saying, “Why? What's the problem you're trying to solve? What have other people done that have tested how this problem can be resolved that you can draw upon?”

So the insertion of theory, theory, theory, into our undergraduate program—clearly, it was needed at the graduate level. And that was done. But the undergraduate program, I've seen that change. We have wonderful faculty now. I am supported. I used to be the only one teaching in the graduate public relations program. And six years ago, we hired a wonderful woman, who is a beautiful theorist—and more of a theorist than I will ever become. I'm the research person, she's the theory person. And we've actually worked together. We've—a couple of years ago, hired another very, very promising young researcher person, again, with practical experience in public relations. And our program is getting national attention because of what all of us do, in terms of teaching our students the why behind the what that is there—the critical thinking skills.

So those are the kinds of changes I've seen. That's what I'm—you know, technologically in the

field. One thing I cannot leave out as well—although I don't specifically teach the journalism writing courses or the broadcast writing courses, there's this thing called convergence. When I started, I told you about my own training as a journalist, in the late '60s, at the University of Iowa. And I'd always said this: "A journalist is a journalist is a journalist." You have that solid training. We had to go through the entire writing curriculum, the entire newspaper curriculum, and then they added broadcast courses on top of that, okay. That was about the last time I ever saw that.

Over the years, I've seen the deterioration in the quality of broadcast news, which is, in fact, almost an oxymoron to say that. It started with the smaller markets, where they were being chatty and, you know, "How's your dog," and that sort of thing. And that always appalled me, as a strictly trained journalist. You know, then when it started to move into the national level—whoa! I'm old enough to remember the 15-minute newscasts—Douglas Edwards.⁶ This is pre-Walter Cronkite.⁷ In 15 minutes, Douglas Edwards gave more news than I see in the half-hour programs that are broadcast nationwide now. You get maybe five minutes, 10 minutes of hard news, what's going on, and the rest of it is somebody's idea of entertainment.

When broadcasting started to talk about the entertainment shows—broadcast news started to talk about the entertainment shows that were on that network—I figured all was lost. There was always that straight division in my training. Convergence of media may be bringing us back to where I started, when a journalist is a journalist is a journalist. Because the cross-training necessary to do a piece in a newspaper, an online piece, and a broadcast package, means that the core reporter—the core journalist—has to have all of that same kind of training that I had a real long time ago. I'd hate to give the number of years. And that's a very positive thing.

We are gearing up our program. We've added a professor, two years ago, with this specialty, and he has continued to add to the curriculum and to our coursework—our required coursework—these convergence types of courses. Others in our faculty have come in with those kinds of specialties as well. Maybe coming in—we have a woman who spent years as a program manager in a television environment, who also knows the necessity of integrating those core journalistic skills. So that is a huge difference. And on the one hand, the specialization of our tracks of study helps students to focus very narrowly, very specifically, on the particular field they're going to go into. On the other hand, I don't like seeing that, because they're too narrowly focused.

My own training being such that it's across a lot of areas—I'm comfortable in journalism, I'm comfortable in public relations, comfortable in broadcasting. Probably the only area I'm not real comfortable in is advertising. I've not had that experience, but I certainly do understand the connections there. That's the kind of student we need to be turning out. And when you have too narrow of a focus in the curriculum, the folks don't see what the other side is doing. I've taught communication law every year since I've been here—12 years. In that class, I bring together the four and show them how the First Amendment, specifically, and the various tort laws of libel and privacy interact, no matter what their chosen field is going to be. That in issues of promises made by a journalist to a source, reputation loss, that sort of thing—I can set up a journalist and a public relations person to look at the same information from two different perspectives. And I like having that in one class. I like having across disciplines in one class. They need to have more understanding of the other aspects of mass communications.

So there has been some thought because I've—for years I have been involved in the leadership, nationwide, of education and communication law and in public relations, and, in general, in mass communications theory and research. And there has been thought, nationwide, that maybe we've

⁶ Douglas Edwards (1917–1990) anchored CBS's first network nightly television news broadcast (1946–1962), later named *CBS Evening News*.

⁷ Walter Cronkite served as anchorman for the *CBS Evening News* from 1962 to 1981.

become too specific, and maybe our programs need to have more core courses where the students interact. I'm fortunate that I have the law course where that happens. But we are really, really specific in our other program courses, and you can often have students who never know. We've got about a thousand majors, and they'll never even know there was anybody else in that program if they haven't been in the same class with them. And so those are the kinds of things that I think that's where the future is going. The convergence isn't just with media, but convergence is with the type of education we give our students.

YG: My final question, and this something that I've asked everyone sitting in the chair before you: If you could leave a final thought, either to future students or previous students and faculty, of your history at USF and the significance and the influence of USF on your career, what would that final sentiment be?

BP: That's a very hard question to answer. Let me go back to think about the students who've come to me and told me what I meant to them. I believed in them. I made them better than they ever thought they could be. I'm hard but worthwhile. I expect 200 percent from the students, but I give 200 percent myself, and I'm working right there along with them. My graduate students, especially, are just amazed when I go into a counseling seminar—walk into any seminar—that I'm right there with them doing the work. Never been afraid of work. I'm a workaholic, probably. My undergraduates have told me, in communications law, that they came in afraid of the topic, not liking it, and ended up feeling—with the class—how much better they understood just their daily living.

In communications law, I'm telling them, “Even if you never go to work in mass communications, this class is going to be something you're going to take away with you. You're going to remember. You're going to learn.” I've never learned so much, say students. I've never been so challenged to do my best, and have been able to meet those challenges. The ones, of course, I love are the ones who barely make the passing grade, but probably stand in my memory more because of how hard they tried. I would like to be remembered as somebody who made a difference in their lives and who helped them achieve their potential. I'm not a person who can make another person be someone or something that they are not already capable of doing. So, what I'd like to do is to work with students, to discover what their strengths are, and to build upon them—to also help them understand what their weaknesses are, so they can improve them.

I pull no punches. I'm kind of renowned for that. I will be very blunt. I said, “I don't have time to play games here. Your education is too important. I'm going to give you constructive criticism every time. This is what you did well. Keep doing it. This is what you did not do well, this is how you can improve it.” As an academic, whenever I have a paper given to me for evaluation, there's writing all over it, whether it's good, bad, or indifferent. There's writing all over it because I'm reacting to the student. But the fact of the matter, as an academic, I believe that any work is a work in progress.

So a student gives me a paper, term paper, whatever else, and I'm telling them how to improve it, “Now, you're going to go back out and rewrite this.” And they look at me, “But the class has ended,” you know. Those who want to move forward will actually go back and rewrite, knowing that it's going to help their future performance. Students stand out along the way. I've had students who—bright, talented—came to work on a master's degree after years of experience and sort of just needed the confidence that they really could do this. Went on to work on doctorates. I have some who are professors now with me. And I always keep telling them that as soon as they leave me, they're going to know a lot more than I ever knew. And my legacy may be that I taught so and so.

A couple of things people suggested for my tombstone are—that are really good too—the one is the

Marine motto, which actually came from Nietzsche, “What doesn't kill you makes you strong.” Actually, a former Marine in one of my classes said that, and I was so amused. I have repeated that story. It's actually in print now, in a little brochure describing the public relations program. It's now in print, “What doesn't kill you makes you strong.” I never intended to be a hard professor. I really didn't. And I still don't really think of myself as hard, as much as I am precise—very, very precise. My syllabi go 10, 12 pages because I describe the process of learning, I describe what I expect of them. I describe what I intend to give them. And I sort of want to have a contract, if you will, between the students and myself of what each is supposed to do during the semester. “I will take you this far. I can't go all the way for you, because you've got to come and do some of this, but I'm going to be fair with you.”

My evaluations, I mean, overwhelmingly, “Well, she's tough, but she's fair.” I can live with that. Some people hate me—“You're too tough. I never wanted to work that hard.” Well, if you never wanted to work that hard, why did you come to college? Why did you try to do something? Did you think you knew it all before you came in? Education is just so important to me. I'm first-generation American. My parents emigrated from Eastern Europe before Hitler came into power in their area. They came over in 1930, lived through the [Great] Depression. Had no education. None. I'm the only one in my immediate family to have even gone to college, much less gotten an advanced degree. Education has always been extremely important to me, and that's what I try to impart to the students. I give to you my 200 percent. Yeah, I may expect 200 percent back from you, and I'm sorry if you're not willing to give that because that's what it's going to take. That's what I always had to give to get the education that I need.

The other thing that's delightful, by the way, is I always love learning from my students. In communication law, the word has gone out that, in the colloquial sense, you can argue with her and get a better grade. What that means is—to me—I encourage people to give me logical arguments, not contentiousness, but argument in terms of logic, about the material I'm presenting. And if they see it in a different way and can interpret it logically and come to a reasonable conclusion, yeah. If that's not the answer I thought of, sure, I'm going to give you credit for that. Because that's, in essence, what the law is about anyway—different interpretations. And so I love it when students think of things that I haven't thought of. And that's an awful lot of fun for me.

I don't know what else to say other than the last thing that was said to me—by somebody who wasn't a student but the significant other of the student who just graduated, who just met me in sort of a little celebration dinner that we had, and said, “You know, you were born to this. You have made such a difference in the life of the person I know, simply by believing in him.” “Yeah, but he was good, you know. I didn't do anything.” Said, “You were born to this.” Probably. I can't see myself doing anything else.

YG: Dr. Petersen, thank you very much.

BP: You're welcome.

End of interview.