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Andrew Huse (AH): Well, today is July 29th?

Melissa Kelly (MK): Uh-huh.

AH: July 29th, okay. Got it right today. Two thousand and four. My name is Andrew Huse. I'm program assistant for the Florida Studies Center. Today we continue with a series of interviews in our studio here on 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 Melissa Kelly who came to USF in 2001 as a student, and currently she is the president of the Panhellenic counsel.

MK: Mm-hmm. Panhellenic counsel.

AH: And, well good morning first of all.

MK: Thank you, good morning.

AH: Yeah, thanks for being with us. I guess we'll just start out, what brought you to USF? How did you get here? How did you first hear about it et cetera?

MK: Oh, I've grown up in Tampa. I lived here my whole, entire life. So USF has always kind of been here and been known but actually it was a turn of events for me. I was going

to go to a different university, and I had changed my mind at the last minute for different, various reasons, and I decided to stay here. I was a little hesitant, but once I got here, I just fell in love with what we have and the rich tradition, and I've met so many wonderful students at this university that are so dedicated to leadership and to letting our university grow. So, it's kind of what kept me here. You know, just seeing what type of students we have and how that differs from other universities.

AH: Mm-hmm. Well, what do you think makes USF distinctive?

MK: Oh, what makes USF distinctive? Well, first that we are not predominantly known as a party school, and that is what is known at some of the other colleges and things like that, and because we are a little bit more progressive, I would say, than other universities. We are a little bit more contemporary, a little bit younger, and because of that, we are not so embedded in things that, such as partying that have always gone on and things like that. So the students here seem to be a little bit more at a higher level of thinking about what's going on. We're a very diversified university, so we have issues that come up about diversification and the different amounts of students that are here. And the rich embodiment of just who we all are. That's part of what kept me here, and part of what I love here to this day.

AH: So, you came in 2001 then.

MK: Yep, fall 2001.

AH: So how did you— when and how did you arrive at marketing?

MK: How did I arrive at marketing? As a matter of fact, it was a funny story. I went to apply for orientation, and I had always wanted to be a pharmacist. And when I went to orientation, the young lady had asked me what I wanted to do, and I said, "well you know, I've thinking about pharmacy." And I said [that] science is what I've always really been interested in. And I said, "But you know, I really have been thinking about business lately." I said, "I work in a business. I love the way that business works." And she said, "well you know, I just graduated from the College of Business here and I love it." She said, "so why don't you go ahead and give that a shot." And she wrote it down, and when I went to orientation, I was accepted to the high potential freshman program in the College of Business. And so from there, it's just guided me all the way through.

I decided on marketing for my personality. I don't necessarily think I have a personality fit for accounting or finance, and I want to be out and I want to be speaking to people

constantly. And I want to really develop those skills. And I have been able to develop them here, so marketing is the best avenue for me. And I really want to end up doing public speaking and working with women's groups and things like that. That's where my real passion lies. And I've gained that passion from working with the student groups here at USF. So that's how I arrived at marketing.

AH: Well, it definitely some across in your speech. (MK laughs) What uh—so, you were on the high potential—

MK: Uh-huh, freshman program.

AH: Yeah, and how do you get into that?

MK: You know what, as a matter fact, I think that what they do is look at your SAT scores and they look at your high school GPA, and then they go ahead and accept you. And it isn't something that you have to formally apply for. It's something that they kind of have that exists, and they say, Oh you fit the criteria. Let's go ahead and have you do this. And it's wonderful because what it did was from day one, it gave me an advisor. It gave me a schedule, a course. I never had to worry about being undecided and taking classes that I didn't need, or maybe was this going to fit into my curriculum and things like that. Everything has fit, and it's really been the best plan for me. Definitely.

AH: So it sounds like you're getting some help and some kind of expert advising to help navigate through that.

MK: Mm-hmm. You do, and you get paperwork that says, these are the exact classes that you need to take. These are the exact things, and this is when you should take them. And so they really lay it out for well you in the College of Business. I think that that's one of my favorite colleges here at USF. I mean, we have a great College of Education. We have a wonderful College of Arts and Science and things like that. But I think the College of Business Administration has really been an asset to me as a student. And I think it's an asset to many students here at this university, definitely.

AH: Yes, that's not the first time I've heard it over the course of these interviews.

MK: No. College of Business is wonderful. And every professor I've ever had there has been so helpful and so wonderful and always willing to go the extra mile for me as student: meet with me, talk with me, ease my concerns if I ever had any about a test, or

about a particular subject or anything like that. So every professor I've ever had there has been fabulous.

AH: So when you, did you apply to the business school and then they offered that to you?

MK: No.

AH: How did that work?

MK: When you get accepted to the high potential freshman program back in 2001, it's called a different program today. They've renamed it something different¹. But when you get accepted to that, you're automatically accepted to the College of Business, which is also another benefit of that because I was accepted two years earlier than other students are accepted. So I've been in the College of Business since day one. I've never had to take the prerequisites and then apply to be in it. I've been in it. And that's what's been so fabulous. That's how I got the extra advisor support and how I've had that course schedule laid out is because I was accepted to that.

AH: Does that speed the program? Are you able to just skip some of the—?

MK: No, you're not really able to skip any classes. What you are able to do though is realize that you can kind of kill two birds with one stone with your classes. A good example of that, is that you have to take six credits of social science. Well, when you take Micro and Macro Economics, which are prerequisites in the College of Business, that takes care of your social sciences. So you've kind of hit both requirements with just those two classes instead of the average four classes that you have to get those requirements with.

AH: Gotcha. And one thing that I've heard about the College of Business and that I've heard again today is just the, it seems so well planned. Kind of like a business: one thing flows to the next and everything.

MK: It is, yes, yes. It is exactly that way, and everybody there is very professional. That's something else that I've really noticed. I've never had a teacher stand up and just widely talk about opinionated objects or their opinion of something. Everything is very objective

¹Now called the Bulls Business Network (BBN).

and I really like that. And then behind it, they really do have fabulous personalities that do come out sometimes. You know, they'll be jovial with the class and things like that.

But I haven't really had many classes where we've just had an open forum of discussion about opinions and where a professor has come in and given some sort of opinion about themselves or anything. And that's what I seem to like about it. It's very professional. It's very—you know, I'm here to educate you on how to be a good, honest, ethical business person in today's world. And ethics is something that is talked about a lot more today in College of Business than I think ever has been before, or not ever has been but maybe it kind of died out over the last 10, 12 years or something. And it's recently come back, especially after the things that we've seen in our society lately. You know, the collapses of companies and things like that. So we talk about ethics and why that's important, and that we be good, ethical business men and women in the world today. Otherwise, it could be catastrophic for our economy at some point, or things like that. And they really help you see a very macro—very macroscopic perspective of what's going on in the world, in my opinion at least.

AH: Well just that kind of cutting edge, staying up with everything that's going on.

MK: Yes, yes.

AH: Seems really important, especially in business. Like you're talking about, it's not just the economy but the confidence in business and trade itself.

MK: No, it really is. As a matter of fact, I was thinking about this the other day. All of my books, when I go to sell my books back, I can hardly sell my books back ever because they are always coming out with a new edition of the books. And that's just one example of it always being cutting edge. There are several classes that I've had where they put a new book out every two years because they always want to be current. Because political situations change, because economic situations change, and we have to be willing to accommodate those and see how that affects us today, tomorrow and furthermore, 25, 40 years down the road. So, there's always on the cutting edge, and everybody there seems to have a really "forge ahead" attitude about themselves, and I really appreciate that as well.

AH: So obviously you've been involved in a lot of extracurricular activities.

MK: Yes, I have.

AH: So, how did you. How did you first get involved? Did you just get into the College of Business and just go right out? Or how did that work?

MK: Well, really it's very funny because my education, my academic success here at USF has been quite different from my social experience here at USF. Yes, I am in the College of Business and everything, and there are social organizations in the College of Business such as coeducational fraternities and organizations and things like that, but I really found, where I belong as Alpha Delta Pi² and Panhellenic are concerned—I found that in the Marshall Center. It's so funny.

During my orientation as well, I got so much out of my orientation. Not only did I get this great College of Business experience but I also, that's where Greek life was really introduced to me. And I think a lot of students come into school, especially young women come in thinking that Greek life is very stereotypical. It's very negative. You buy your friends. It's nothing but partying, shallow women, shallow men, things like this. And this was exactly my perspective coming to this university.

So, at my orientation, I just—I had some free time. And I went downstairs to the basement at the Marshall Center, and I was—you know, of course I think everybody has a need for social belonging. But, I just thought, I'm not that type of woman, and I'll never be that type of woman, and so I'll just go down there, and they free pizza or something like that. And thought, okay I'll just go and look and see what happens.

So, I went and I wound up speaking to the Panhellenic president at that time, and her name was Danielle Traub. And unbeknownst to me, she was actually a woman in my exact same sorority, but what we do is we disaffiliate as of August first. And so, we don't reveal our letters to anyone. We don't tell anyone what organization we really belong to, so that we can have an unbiased opinion of recruitment. So Danielle sat down and talked with me and Shannon Eddins, who was the recruitment vice president that year. And I—they asked me how I felt about Greek life, and I basically told them exactly how I felt about Greek life: that I didn't think it was for me. And that I wasn't a student. I didn't drink at the time. I don't drink really. I said, you know, I will never be hazed. I will never want to put myself in situation where I'd be forced to do something that I'm not, that I don't want to do. And I'm a Christian, and I have values and beliefs and things like that.

²Alpha Delta Pi was found on May 15, 1851, and was the first female sorority. Its motto is “We Live for Each Other” and the founding principles of scholarship, leadership, service to others, and sisterhood are still applicable today.

And they said, Wow, you know I want to let you know that it's really not like that. And said, "Yeah, you know, I'm sure that you would say that. That sounds like something that you would have to say." And they're like, you know what Melissa, they said, You should really consider it. And at that time, because I had made the decision last minute to come to USF, all my friends were already going to Florida State [University] or [University of] Florida. So really, even though I live here in Tampa, I was really the only one that was coming here to USF. So I really didn't have any friends, and I was going to live at home for my first year. So I thought, this is going to be a horrible college experience if I don't do something.

So I kind of went out on a limb and I went through recruitment, which is a week long process. And it's amazing. That's just what opened up the door for me. And funniest story is that I had—we split the day up and we go to individual parties, but the women are grouped. The potential new members are put into groups, and we visit each of the sororities on the first two days of recruitment. And before lunch, we had gone to three other organizations, and I remember at lunch, sitting down at the table thinking, I just don't belong here. I know I don't belong here with these girls, and they're not like me. And I'm not going to find my home. And right after lunch, the next party we went to was Alpha Delta Pi. And as soon as I walked into door, I just fell in love with these girls. They were classy. They had values. They were based on the ideas of Christian womanhood. They were the first sorority ever founded. They have the highest GPA on campus. They were the most involved, and the president at the time was just an amazing woman. She had such a wonderful, captivating speaking ability, and I thought, I just have to be here. This is the place for me.

So throughout the rest of the week, you go to different parties and everything. And we do a ranking process, where you kind of have to narrow it down. And so, I narrowed it down and they narrowed it down. It's a very mutual selection process. And at the end of the week, we have what's called bid day. And that's where you get your official invitation to whatever sorority says, you know, we would be honored to have you as a sister. And so, I went, obviously on bid day, and I get my bid card for Alpha Delta Pi. And the day before that is called, preferential day. And that's more of a ceremonial day, where you go and they show you a little bit of who they are, you know, spiritually meaning. Like um, they show, they have a ceremony about their ritual and who they are and what their sisterhood is really about. And that was breathtaking. It was beautiful and elegant and wonderful. And the next day, when I got my bid day card, I was so excited. And just it has all fallen into place from there. I met my best friend in my little group in recruitment, and she's also an Alpha Delta Pi.

And, as soon as I got into the chapter, I felt such a sense of love and acceptance, and the women were like me, and they did have my same values. And there was never any hazing. There was never any, you're forced to do this and you're forced to do that. And it has just opened my life up so much. I can't tell you the way Alpha Delta Pi has opened

me up as a person. And who I am today is a direct result of those women being in my life. They encouraged me, and they enriched me, and they fulfill me to this day. And we grad—you know, women graduate and move on. And just the love stays forever. And I don't have enough good things to say about Greek life. And that's really how I started getting involved was just joining Alpha Delta Pi. And then I started work with Volunteer USF. And then after I did work with Volunteer USF, I became the philanthropy chair in the chapter.

And then the next the year, they actually asked me to be the president. And I was 19 years old. I was a sophomore. And that's really unheard of to have a sophomore president because you're just typically not mature enough to handle that really. I mean, quite frankly, there's a hundred women in the chapter. We have a huge budget that we oversee. We have programs. We have teams. It's like being the CEO of your own company almost. And they had approached me and said, You know we really think that you would be the most qualified candidate to run his year. And I said, "Wow, I really didn't think that I was that qualified." And they said, Well, we do. So that's how I became president of Alpha Delta Pi. And then, at the end of my year of being president. I still have a year and a half left in the chapter. I was only a junior. I was only, you know, 20 years old. And so, I thought, what more can I do at this university that is involved in Greek life. And the Panhellenic counsel is the governing board of all sororities.

So I thought, well maybe I should be Panhellenic president. Maybe I'll have an opportunity to impact woman's lives as a whole there. And I did that, and once I was a Panhellenic president, I decided, well what can I do to impact women on a very large scale? And so, I decided that being state coordinator of SEPC³ would be the most ample position for me to be able talk with women and speak with them about their issues, and who they are, and what they're about, and where they're going in life, and how they should be strong and encouraged, and faithful to everything they want to do for themselves and for others. So that's really how I got involved here at USF. I know that was really kind of a long stretch.

AH: Yeah, let's back up though. Let's go back to the philanthropy.

MK: Sure. Philanthropy chair.

AH: No, actually back to Volunteer USF.

MK: Yes.

³The Southeastern Panhellenic Conference (SEPC) is the annual meeting of the Southeastern Panhellenic Association (SEPA).

AH: Okay. You wanted to do something additional. What did you do at Volunteer USF? I mean, what were the kind of things that you did?

MK: Well, as a matter of fact, I—one of my sorority sisters actually called me and said, Hey there's this position at Volunteer USF. You know, I think that you'd be really good for it. Why don't you go for it? And what it was, was alternative spring break. Every year during spring break, Volunteer USF takes several groups of students to different places. We went to Warm Springs, Georgia, to the Roosevelt Institute and we do volunteer work there for a week. And she said, there's a site leader, they have little site leaders of the group. So there's a position open and I think you'd be good for it. So, I went and spoke with Amy Simon, who was the coordinator of Volunteer USF. She's just a wonderful, wonderful kind lady. And we talked, and she said, Yeah, if you'd be willing to do this, we would be willing to have you.

And so we went, and it was really my first real, I would say, leadership experience of any kind. And it was a small group of about 15 people, and a very rich group of students, a very dynamic group of students. Diverse. The people that were in this group had come from different places, different backgrounds, were different—represented different parts of our university. And so we went, and we had a good time. We did a lot of, you know, yard work and things like that. It was a rough week to be honest. It was a lot of hard work, but I got to meet students from the University of Tampa who also went with us. As a matter of fact, I'm still friends with one of the people that I went with on that trip. And so, it was a great experience. That's how I really just kind of dove into that, was somebody called me and said, Hey, I think you'd be great for this.

AH: Mm-hmm. Well, and that's not the first—I mean that's not the last time that would happen to you.

MK: No.

AH: And what's interesting is that you talked about the mutual selection process of the sororities everything, and it really sounds like, in a way, for leadership, you know, it's a mutual selection process as well.

MK: It is.

AH: And you've—they've approached you. And then you kind of reciprocated, especially later, you wanted to make an impact on a larger scale.

MK: Right.

AH: So you know it's not, you know, ambition might be part of it, but it's only part of it. You know, part of it is also just recognition. And so what is it—why do people approach you? Why do you think?

MK: Well, I think that I am a little bit more mature for my age. I'm not—I'm 21 and I don't think that I am a typical 21-year-old woman. And I think that I see something greater in people that maybe a lot of other people are able to see, especially people see in themselves. I am not a young woman who has a self-esteem problem. I don't look in the mirror every day and hate who I am and think that I'm not worth it in this life because I do. And as a matter of fact, that's a direct result of my Christianity and who I am, and how I've come to that process of my life also. And so, the reason that people come to me, I'm not sure. Initially with Alpha Delta Pi, I think they came to me because I specifically—we have something called Spirit Week before recruitment where the whole sorority goes away, and we go to Orlando and we spend a week in a hotel, and we learn how to do recruitment. We teach the newest girls how we recruit and how we get the women to come in and what we say to them. And at the end of the week, we have a candlelight.

We all sit in a room and sit in a circle and we pass candle around. And every sister has an opportunity to say something about the sorority, about Alpha Delta Pi and what it means to her. Or, she has an opportunity to say maybe what it hasn't meant to her. Maybe she hasn't felt what she's supposed to feel from it. And the candle light is the most touching thing that I've ever been to in the sorority. I mean the ritual, the initiation is beautiful also. But this candlelight is where women really get real with their feelings. And they really end up saying that they love it or, and very rarely do they ever say that they dislike it, but sometimes we end up hearing them say that they—maybe they have had a hard time fitting in, or they haven't found their place yet, or they really haven't found all these great friendships that everybody else talks about.

So when I got the candle, I had heard—I was almost the last one to go—I had heard all these women speak about the way they felt. And I had heard some really wonderful, touching things, and I had heard a lot of girls that were in my same pledge class, but we called them alpha classes. I had heard them say things like that they hadn't yet found their niche in ADPi. And so, I wound up saying—I gave this speech, and it just kind of came from my heart, and I think people really saw then that I had kind of the ability to speak openly to the sisters. And that fall semester, when the new class came in, I really tried to take a very hands-on approach with those girls. I called them. I said, "Hey, how's

it going?” So really being a leader is about being about putting yourself out there. It’s about not waiting for them to come to me, me willing to go to them.

AH: What did you say that night? I mean—?

MK: Oh, what did I say that night?

AH: I mean, just paraphrase.

MK: Sure. I said that I thought that I wanted the women, the sisters to think that they were worth any and everything that they could every want. That they should never sell themselves out to drugs, men, shopping addictions, whatever. That they should never sell themselves out. That they should love who they are and love each other for what we have together and love what they can be and where their potential is. And just several other things in that—I basically said that I believe in who they are, and I believe in what they can be, and nobody ever says that to young women. I find that—being a young woman myself, nobody is ever standing up, constantly saying, You know what, believe in what you can be. There’s all these rights that you have now. The world is really at your doorstep. Nobody ever really tells us how to knock on the door and open it, or how to get that door open for us. And so, I just said something that struck something in someone. And the sisters really responded to it. So, that was—I don’t know. I just said whatever I felt at the time really.

AH: Well it also shows kind of where your faith comes in too, you know, and that’s a part of that leadership package. And that it is—you know, that there’s something bigger than just you or a petty situation or whatever.

MK: Yes.

AH: The idea you always get, you know, hearing about sororities and everything is a lot of backbiting or whatever. And instead, what they’re hearing is almost an antithesis of, you know, what the stereotype is. You know, not we’re better than you or whatever else, but that you know, you all have so much potential that you may, haven’t seen yet. That’s why some of you feel like, you’re a little short of where you thought you might be.

MK: Right. Exactly, exactly.

AH: And then, you also mentioned that the door is there waiting to be opened, and it's a confidence issue. It's not just an issue of whether society makes that way for you. You know, they can't open the door for you. And that goes for any group that's been disenfranchised that's tried to, you know, restore.

MK: Right.

AH: You know, their proper place. So, it does betray a wisdom and a maturity beyond your years I think.

MK: Yes.

AH: But, so that sounds like a real pivotal night, you know. You didn't plan on making that speech, am I right?

MK: No, I definitely didn't plan it.

AH: Yeah. It was a reaction from what you heard.

MK: Mm-hmm.

AH: From those people. So, did you feel different after that night? I mean, I think people saw you differently.

MK: Oh, I think the sisters saw me differently too. Did I feel different? No, I felt relieved almost that I could finally communicate what I really felt, that I could finally put it into words for the sisters because we have chapter meetings every week, but there really isn't all that many times when the whole sisterhood is together when we're not doing something specific such as a social or something like that, when we're all together. And when the women are open enough to let you say things like that to them because often times we're young students, and if anybody tries to come up to you and say, Oh I think you're worth it. It may come off as crass and fake, almost.

But at this point, the women at these types of things, we set the tone so that they're very open to whatever is going on at the time and that they will hear what you're saying, and more than hear you, that they will really listen. They're going to listen with a lot more of

themselves. And it was a very pivotal night. You're absolutely right because that moment really did open up the door for me for a lot of areas. And then in turn, I tried to open up the door for them. And I still try to do that, even now that I'm not the president, and I'm not doing that with them necessarily. I still try to open that door, not only for my organization now but for other organizations too. And that is really something powerful I think.

AH: And that moment wouldn't have been possible without that context, without the candlelight, without the intimacy, you know, et cetera. So okay, so we've established how you've gotten some leadership credibility. And the next step then would to be chapter president, right?

MK: Yes. That year, four months after that candlelight is when they asked me to be chapter president, yeah at the end of the year. And it was funny, I was—you have to be one year on the executive board. You have to serve one year on the high council of the sorority before you can be the president. And that makes good sense because you need the experience of being on exec. And exec is the board that makes all the decisions for ADPi. You know, there's eight sisters in the chapter, consisting of the president, vice president, recumbent vice president, treasurer, you know, standards chair, social chair—

AH: And this is when you were a philanthropist?

MK: Well, when I was the philanthropy chair, philanthropy is not an executive board position. It's an office in the chapter, but it's not one of the high ranking offices.

AH: So was this—when you got into the philanthropy before—

MK: Yeah, before the candlelight.

AH: Okay.

MK: I had been philanthropy chair since January. We run on a calendar year basis of offices. So I had been philanthropy chair in January. We did the candlelight in August. And then I was asked to be president in really November or December, right around that time frame. And I was planning on being on the executive board in 2004 or 2003 because I wanted to be president now in 2004, so I kind of had a game plan. I kind of knew. I had known that I wanted to be president of the chapter since the day I walked in. Since *the day*. But, it was amazing because we have what we call traveling chapter consultants,

who come from our nationals, and they come once a year and they assess our chapter and say, You girls are doing fabulous in these areas, but maybe in these areas we need to improve. And it's different for every chapter. Some chapters may need to improve in scholastics. Some chapters may need to improve in their communications or their membership education or whatever is going on.

And at that time, we had had a sister who had her pin pulled. And that's pretty devastating when we have to ask a sister to leave the chapter. And we had to ask her to leave because she was—just she had poor conduct and things like that. And she was a very loved sister, and it was very controversial as a matter of fact. And there were two seniors running for president, and they had both served on exec. And I went to—every officer had to meet with the traveling chapter consultant, and because I had been philanthropy chair, I had to also meet with the traveling chapter consultant.

And so I went in and she asked, you know, how I was. And I said, I was fine. And she said, “Well, tell me what you've done with philanthropy? What did you do with that position?” And I told her that I felt like we increased our philanthropy just 100 percent. We were doing a lot more with our national philanthropy, the Ronald McDonald House⁴. We had done this project called trick or treating for cans, and we had gone out as a sorority and gotten 6000 canned goods on Halloween night, that I had donated to The Spring⁵ and to several other organizations. And she said, “Well great, what position do you want to hold next year?” And I said, “Wow, property manager.” Because that was an executive position at the time.

I don't know if you know but the Greek houses are brand new at USF. And we were stepping into this Greek housing project, and I wanted to be on the cutting edge of that, so I could move us into the house. So I could be on the forefront of that, so that I could be president the next year. And she said, “Well, how do you feel about president now?” And I said, “Well I don't think I can because I've never been on exec.” And she said, “No.” She's like, I can get special permission for you to be president if you'd want to take the position. And that time, I had a fulltime job. I've also worked fulltime while I've been in school. And I had a fulltime job, and I had a significant position where I worked. And I said, “Well, I don't know. I have a job that I care about, and I love this, and I saw this.” So she said, “Why, don't you think about it for a few minutes.” So she gave me about 10 minutes to think about it, or so.

⁴Ronald McDonald House's provide families who have traveled for treatment of a seriously ill or injured child a place to stay as a family unit. Every house provides prepared meals, private bedrooms and bathrooms, laundry rooms, fee Wi-Fi and computer rooms for the families

⁵The Spring is the largest domestic abuse shelter in the state of Florida. Its program helps victims rebuild their lives and raises awareness about domestic violence.

And when I came back that night for chapter, my name was on the slate. They had called and gotten special permission. And I had pretty much decided in a matter of minutes that I wanted to, kind of, give up my life, the life that I had, my job, my this, my that, to really be chapter president because it is a labor of love doing that. You have to be dedicated to the sisters all the time, 24 hours a day. They call two, three, four o'clock in the morning if they're upset. They broke up with their boyfriend [and] they need to talk, or if they need a ride home, or if they have a problem or something like that. You know, they'll call.

So I said yes, I would be honored to be the president of this chapter. And I just struck when the iron was hot basically. When they offered it, I said yes. And I had to be elected to the position. I mean, of course, I was put on the slate with other two senior women, and I wound up just—I won the election. So it was an amazing turn of events actually. I mean, I would never have expected to be president at such a young age, and really none of the other sisters were expecting such a young president, but—. And it had its ups and downs, but I learned so much from it. And in the end, our chapter is stronger, and I am stronger for it. And that is what I will just treasure forever.

AH: Well, how did you beat two seniors who had been on exec and all?

MK: Well the two senior women that were running were very controversial women. They're great sisters, good sisters; however, just because you're an older sister doesn't always mean you have the wisdom to run the chapter either. It doesn't always mean that you're any more mature or that you're anymore out there. And I happened to be a more exceptional person for my age. And I know that, and I realize that. I am a little bit more mature, and it's just a result of how I grew up, and how who I was growing up and things like that.

So, um the sisters just—they chose it. I mean, the sisters chose it. And the women were involved on the executive board, who was [sic] involved in the pulling of the sister's pin. And furthermore, those sisters weren't really very—they weren't sisters that the other women in the chapter felt like they could come to and talk to. And the president has to be a very open, open-minded person, and because of the candlelight, and because of this and that. You know, one of the woman who was running had been our new member coordinator the year before, and she's just a very nice young woman but, I think that she had felt that when she was an officer, she was better than the other sisters maybe. And the sisters kind of saw that and said, You know, we cannot have her. She'll think that she's better than us, and then we won't get anywhere in our chapter.

So I think that all those things combined kind of made that decision for them. So it was a weird night as matter of fact when I won because the other girls were upset and crying about it. And they had been in the chapter longer than me. And so I imagined how I might

feel if that had happened to me this year, and girl two years younger than me won the election. I would feel like, what is this?

AH: Who hadn't been on exec and they made all these special—

MK: Yeah, yeah, who had not—yeah, they made all these permiss—I'd be like, who is this? What is going on? I would feel that way. So I understand how they felt. I do sympathize with that very much.

AH: Well how did you feel that night?

MK: Oh, I felt honored. I felt like I couldn't believe that the sisters respected me enough already to allow me to take such a position with them. I felt loved, very loved and very well respected and things like that. That's really—it made me feel so proud. Almost a sense of shock though. It really—reality hadn't really hit me that this was going to be the next year of my life. And really what I didn't know at that time is that it would become who I am for the rest of my life really and that it would impact me so much that it would mold even what I want to do when I leave college. And that's was really what it did for me that year was it molded the things I want to do with the rest of my life, where it concerns women and women's groups and specifically sorority life as a whole.

AH: So, you mentioned the president is on call all the time.

MK: Yes. (laughing)

AH: Well actually before we move on to your duties and stuff, did you make any attempt to try to heal the wounds with the other candidates and did that happen right away or did you wait, you know.

MK: Well, with one of them yes. She was little bit more open to that, and she was happy for me. And she said, "You know, I'm happy for you and they're no hard feelings." And I said, "Good because I respect you, and if you had won this election, I would be more than happy to work with you and serve with you." Because even if I hadn't won, I had still—I was running also for another position so to make sure I was going to be on exec. And she said, "No, you know I am happy for you and the sisters made a good choice." However, the other woman was a little bit more bitter I would say, and she just wasn't. And you know, honestly to this day, if I—I don't really see her very much. She's graduated now. But I do hear. We all keep in touch. We all stay in the same circle, and she does not speak

to me. So I think she has a little bit of harboring animosity, but you know, bygones are bygones, and she'll have to live with that with herself.

And I did, as a matter of fact, she was still in the chapter for a semester when I was president. And I always tried to treat her with very much respect. I mean, if she came to chapter not dressed appropriately—we have certain guidelines. You have to come dressed in business attire for meetings and things like that. If she didn't come dressed appropriately, or if I just saw that she kind of had a bad attitude in chapter, I wouldn't call her out. I would never point her out. And I did make provisions for her to make sure that I was sensitive to her feelings because I understood how she might have felt, so—. I tried and if she didn't reciprocate, and if she doesn't ever reciprocate, I think it will be on her, and not me.

AH: Sure, sure.

MK: That was the way the cookie crumbled for there.

AH: All right, so your duties then.

MK: Oh, my duties.

AH: Rides in the middle of the night, you know (MK laughs), counseling about breakups. What else? What's the typical—.

MK: Oh, any and everything. As a matter of fact—oh, this is quite complex. The president, like I said before, is like being the CEO of your own company. We have a recruitment team, we have a finance team, we have membership education team, we have a liaison team that corresponds with our national office, we have all these different things going on. And then we have kind of the satellite positions, such as philanthropy chair, scholarship chair, intramural chair, special events coordinator, things like that that are going on as well.

So, on any given day, you get maybe 15 to 20 phone calls from different sisters, and those are just the sisters in the chapter. You also work closely with the advisory board—we all have an advisory board—and so that consists of anywhere from one to six, maybe more women. So talking with advisors, talking with our national office about what to do with certain programs, and things like, but also corresponding with Panhellenic here.

You know, I have a governing board here at this school that's made up of students. I also have a house corporation, and the house corporation was the biggest deal that year because the houses were being built. We had broken ground on the Greek village, and so we were in the process of moving Alpha Delta Pi from the townhouse that we had on 50th Street to this house here on campus. And something that our sorority, like many other sororities, has been pushing for for the last 25 [to] 30 years, it was finally becoming a reality. So that was a huge, huge deal when I was president. So those were just the given, you know, every day responsibilities.

And then of course, there were always the balls that get thrown in your court. If something bad happens, or if something—a sister does something or says something, or if there's some sort or issues that comes up, there's all the procedures in line to handle those situations. And more specifically, the women calling is—I don't want to say a headache at all because it's not—the most consuming of your time, are the sisters in the chapter. And that's the best part about it, the women in the chapter are what make it the greatest position ever. It's dealing with all the external factors such as the advisors, the house corporation, Alpha Delta Pi nationals and things like that that make it a little bit more—wow this is so much. This is everything that's going on. I have to do this, and this, and this, and this. But overall it's fabulous, and I've just loved every minute of it. Every minute.

AH: So you've mentioned the Orlando venture, the candlelight. You mentioned philanthropy. What are some of the recreational things, you know, that go on, just for fun?

MK: Oh, just for fun. Socials. We do a lot of socials with other organizations like fraternities and things like that, but I find that the one that the sisters respond to the most and that they come out to are sisterhood socials, when we do things with just our sisterhood. We'll have an ice cream party together, or we'll all go out to dinner after chapter, or we'll all go to the movies, or something like that. And it's not literally all 100 of us, but it's maybe 25 or 30 of us. [When] we have ice cream socials usually most of the sisterhood shows up for that.

Most of the women show up for those types of things. Or we have a movies night where we stay at home, or we have a slumber party. We do all kinds of things that really build our sisterhood because you have to open the door and let the women have the opportunity to be friends and sisters. If they only joined and then we said, Okay great, just come back every week for a chapter meeting, there would never be those bonds there. There would never be those special moments that we have together. So just being with each other, going—doing these socials, doing things like that and spending time with each other really allows us to open ourselves up to who we are.

And I think that that's how we really grow from ADPi is that we have these amazing friendships. And I was thinking about this. The current president, Tiffany, was the vice president when I was president, and she and I are very good friends. And we were discussing this on fourth of July, and I said, "It's amazing how Alpha Delta Pi is just an entity. Alpha Delta Pi means something fabulous; it's beautiful and I'm glad that it's there. But it's just this thing. It's not tangible. There isn't really a table that it Alpha Delta Pi. It is just this thing. And we all come, and while we're here we're completely—it's the catalyst that opens the door for all these friendships to happen, for all these bonds to occur. And then when we leave, we keep these bonds, we keep this forever. And Alpha Delta Pi is still there in its position waiting for the new women to come, waiting for more women to come and be enriched by what it is, and what it can be, and who they can be while they're here and a part of it.

And furthermore, we're ADPi's for the rest of our lives. We take it with us forever, and we give back to the sorority, a lot of us do. We stay with it, and we give back, and come back and we do work with the group. And specifically sisters, such as myself, I will always want to be involved in ADPi. I will always want to work with ADPi. And that's something that I really treasure, that it wasn't just a college experience for me. It was something deeper.

AH: Well you know, it's kind of interesting that you mentioned the fourth of July because, you could easily replace ADPi with USA.

MK: Yeah.

AH: And say something just as meaningful.

MK: Right.

AH: We have a former president of USF running for senate.

MK: Right.

AH: Are politics in your future?

MK: Are politics in my future? (laughing) You know what, I have thought about a life in the political realm. I'm just not sure where to start there as a matter of fact. I have a friend, my friend who was a student body president here two years ago. I don't know if you all are interviewing him or what, but Michael—

AH: What's his name?

MK: Michael Griffin.

AH: Oh okay.

MK: Yeah, he is a fabulous person, and he and I actually dated during my freshman year. And he's very involved in the ADPi circle, and Michael is very involved in politics. And so him being so involved in politics, I had never really thought, oh I could do the same thing. And I might, but more specifically, I don't know if I'd want run for senate or run for Congress or anything like that. But I definitely want to be in public position where I can help people in general, where I can be kind of a center point of where—specifically with women's groups. It's not that I don't like men's groups. It's that I don't know how to talk to men's groups as well as I can talk to women's groups. And so, I don't know if politics are in my future. I guess I'll just wait and see whatever life has in store for me.

AH: Just curious.

MK: Maybe. Maybe. I haven't planned on it though.

AH: Anything else on the ADPi presidency before we move on?

MK: Anything else on ADPi presidency? No, other than it is the most—I mean I love it more than I have loved anything else, ever. More than I have loved being even Panhellenic president. You know, I love my sisters so much. I love the girls in the chapter because they are the classiest, smartest, most beautiful, warm-spirited women I've ever met in my life. And I can't imagine who I would be had I not done this position. And I would encourage any women to ever, if you want to be chapter president, to do it. To do it and love it for all that it's worth because it's gone in a heartbeat. I can't even believe that it's been this long since I've not been doing it.

And it's ingrained in you for the rest of your life. You'll never forget the year you were president. You'll never forget the recruitment when you were president, or the new girls when you were president, or Diamond Ball, or Pi Passion, or Mallard Ball, which are our three socials that we host every year. I'll never forget those events when I led the chapter. I'll never forget doing initiation that year, when I got to be the conductor of initiation. So no, it is just going to be one of the most memorable points of my whole life forever, forever.

AH: Well before we leave that behind then, what was your favorite moment as president?

MK: Oh, my favorite moment as president.

AH: If you think there was like a best, or happiest, or whatever.

MK: Yes, yes. I have it. At spirit week—I mentioned how we do spirit week every year—when I was president, we did spirit week, part of it, in the house because the house was brand new. We needed to get the girls excited about the house. This is our home. We want to be so thrilled, and two women in my pledge class, in my alpha class, had come to me, and they said, “Melissa, this is the happiest I have been in ADPi since we were Alphas.” And that moment, right there, just summed it up for me that like I had done a good job with these girls. And that I had loved them and they knew [it].

Our president the year before was not as well liked, and so when the girls had mentioned that to me, that it was just the best. They felt the happiest, and they felt what ADPi should be. Oh, that was the most joyful moment for me, ever. And my next joyful moment was initiating our new girls. Being able to take those oaths with them, and say that you know, I believe in this and you believe in this, and we'll stand by it, today, tomorrow, and forever. Those were my most memorable moments of being president, definitely.

AH: Alright. Most challenging.

MK: Oh, most challenging. Hmm.

AH: I wouldn't say difficult but challenging. Difficult what—

MK: Challenging? The house. Getting the house up. Working with USF and getting that house to go up, because there have been so many things that have happened with the

housing that Greek life as a whole has felt one way about and perhaps our university has the felt the other way about. And the way the houses were built, and what we've had to do to decorate for example, the money that we have had to spend or filling the house for the first year because girls were scared. They didn't know what to expect from these houses. You know, it's more dorm-like than the traditional sorority house, and I mentioned that our university's not a very traditional, as far as like the Greek columns, and the brick houses, and these old homes and things like that. And so, that was the most challenging part of being president, was getting the house, getting the girls into the house. The houses didn't open until two weeks before recruitment so two—as a matter of fact, almost a year ago from now, we were packing up our townhouse where we had been for years, moving into house that's bigger but also that is very uncharted territory for all of us.

And so, knowing what to expect from that was the hardest part. Knowing where to go and how to deal with things that we need done with the university. There's a lot of provisions there, there's a lot of rules. You can't put Christmas lights out. You can't, you know, you can't decorate your home without approval and things like that. So, we want to decorate our home for recruitment, but we have to have approval. Well, how can we get this approval through in two weeks? That won't happen. Things like that. Just those different scenarios coming up.

And actually the move was a big deal because we had so much stuff. And then we had to decorate. And how are we going to decorate our home because the decorating of our home really is our shining example of who we are. And what the home looks like will say something about who we are. So that was a big project. Finding women, alumnae women who were willing to take time out of their life and come and decorate the home, and even spend money on the home was a lot, trying to find those women out there was quite a bit, so—. That was the most challenging part, but in the end still one of the better parts. Still one of the better parts.

AH: Sure. And totally tied together with that best moment too. You know, being in the house early on.

MK: Yeah, exactly, exactly, yeah.

AH: Alright, so you move on and from ADPi president, what was your next step then?

MK: Panhellenic council president.

AH: Okay, yeah. And you know, you kind of talked about your logic there. You wanted to make a bigger difference, especially in women's lives. How do you go about running for Panhellenic president?

MK: Well for Panhellenic president, I just filled out an application, and I ran against four other women—three other women from three other organizations other than mine and what happens, each of the chapters has a vote. And my chapter had a vote and every other chapter had a vote. There are eight sororities in our council. And every chapter has a vote, Zeta Tau Alpha this year did not have a vote because they were brand new. They weren't even, technically, a chapter at this university. They were only a colony, so it was really seven votes this year. And the women in the chapters really make the decision. Every president of the chapter says, Okay ladies, this is who's running. Let's go ahead and make our decision. And then I will vote for you at the round table that we do, when we have the election. And I just won. I ran against another chapter president as a matter of fact. And I ran against a member who had been on a Panhellenic exec the year before. And I was selected, so that's how I got into it.

AH: So what do they look for? For Panhellenic council, what is it? Obviously they don't have as much, maybe as much personal contact with you as your own chapter, so how does that work? What do they look for?

MK: The reflection of what you've done in the past specifically. For example, I was chapter president, so obviously I've had presidential experience. I knew how to be a president. More than that though, how is my chapter? If I was a great chapter president, then I can be a great Panhellenic president. And the reflection of that is in my chapter, and if somebody had said to me, before the election, you know Alpha Delta Pi seems like a better chapter. They seem like a happier bunch of girls.

We have a reputation for being, um, I don't want to say snobby because we're not snobby at all, but the girls are—we've won sorority of the year eight out of ten years. We've had the highest GPA. We've got a lot of accolades basically, and so when you have a lot of accolades, people tend to have a negative—Oh they think they're better than everybody else or what have you. And that was maybe the perception of us at one point. That we were too good for anybody else or something like that. And really, that's not true. We're just proud of who we are.

But somebody had mentioned to me in another chapter that we seemed a more humble group of girls, that we seemed like just a happier, better group of girls now. We weren't out to compete with anybody, that we were out to just be who we are and love what we have. And that, when she said that to me, I thought, wow, that is another point for me where I just feel like these girls—I have just loved this so much. And so, I think that

people probably saw that. You know, especially with the other chapter president, you know with her chapter as happy as my chapter. And with her chapter able to do the things that my chapter had done, and maybe that's why they chose it. I don't know. I hate to think it's a popularity contest because I really don't make it a point to go out there and be friends with every single person, or to—and I love people, but I don't go out there and campaign for these things at all.

AH: Sure.

MK: It was just kind of where the bricks fell basically with this one. And um, it's been great. I'm still doing that position right now, so it's a good position, and you get to see a lot of different perspectives of different sororities, how not every sorority is like my sorority. Not every sorority is the same way at all, and we are all catering to a different type of woman out there. And we're all—it's kind of like a different market almost. It's kind of like marketing. You know, you've got the different markets. You've got the different groups of people, and where do they fit in, and what are they all about, and things like that.

AH: So, you know, it sounds like a two-way thing once again. You were already mature but there's being, you know—

MK: Yeah.

AH: ADPi president has done something to you, you know.

MK: Yeah.

AH: Made you believe a little more in yourself, and then on the other hand, you've made an impact—everyone's made an impact on each other within the chapter.

MK: Right.

AH: And if you were, you know, a leadership style more like your predecessor, or some of the other people, you know, that we've mentioned, it probably just wouldn't have turned out that way, right? I mean, part of the—part of the perception of being snobby can be an outgrowth of, you know, a backbiting kind of inner competition—

MK: Yes, yes.

AH: And paranoia, and cliquishness and everything else.

MK: Yes, yes, exactly.

AH: So that when you have a more, you know, you know when you're more relaxed and more humble-acting because you don't have all this sniping going on—

MK: Right, exactly, exactly.

AH: So yeah, it sounds like a lot of those things paid off too. Now more about the position. You know, you say obviously, you're becoming familiar with a whole bunch of different markets, niches, you know different chapters and everything.

MK: Types of women, right.

AH: What are your duties? What are your responsibilities?

MK: As far as Panhellenic council, it's quite different from being chapter president I've noticed. Because being chapter president, you are the forerunner. You lead the chapter versus on Panhellenic, I have a great group of women that I work with. And I'll be very honest, they do a lot of the work. And what I do is that I run the Panhellenic meetings, and I correspond with our national Panhellenic delegate. Her name is Chris Bridges. And I basically oversee the board this time. So it's a little bit more of—I would say it's not so much—not so much that chapter president was micromanaging by any means, but you're a little bit more hands on. And with this, I have to be more hands off almost. And so I've learned a lot about leadership even from this, that I could go from one position where I was consistently having phone calls every day, consistently having meetings to this where I have a meeting once a week. And there's a lot going on, don't get me wrong. There's a lot going on.

AH: Sure.

MK: But that it isn't as involved. I don't get the phone calls. I don't have all the serious meetings. I don't have to meet with the advisors. Yes, I talk to the Panhellenic council, the national Panhellenic council, but it's not on an every day basis like you do with the chapter advisor. And so this position, I think what I tried to learn the most is, because what it is is representatives from every sorority. I mean we make up—the only sorority we don't represent is Chi Omega and Zeta Tau Alpha this year.

So we've got women on our board, we have a board of eight. And we have a cabinet and then we have the recruitment team and things like that. And of all these women, they represent all these different chapters. And it's interesting to me that when they come together, that they let their guard down. Like normally, I mean imagine that in any group you're—it's kind of like the United States. The United States, we are the United States, and then Italy is Italy, and England is England. And while we may all get along, we all may be have a different culture and a different way of being and a different way of thinking.

And it's kind of like of that with these women that I see. I see the different values that they have and the different perspectives that they have. And then it reflects on their chapter and who those women are and what they're about. And so I've learned quite a bit about who these different women are and when they let their guard down, they let you see who they really are. And that's good and that's bad. And so, I get to see kind of everything in them, and I just learned a lot. I learned to appreciate a lot and learn to appreciate them a lot too.

AH: So why do you think they let their guard down? Is it that they're in a completely new environment or—?

MK: No, I think it's because sometimes they're looking for anywhere that they can find fulfillment. They're looking for friendship. They're looking for, you know—sometimes I wonder why they joined Panhellenic. I know why I joined Panhellenic. I wonder why they joined Panhellenic. And sometimes it's for great leadership experience. They just want the leadership experience, and that's good. Be a part of it because you want to be a leader. And other times I wonder if it's because, are they really that happy in their chapter? Are they really there with what they—do they love it the way I love it? And so if they don't, well then maybe they could come join this Panhellenic sisterhood.

When we're on Panhellenic. We do create a different sisterhood. We have our own sisterhood because of course we have to disaffiliate from our own chapters. We're really not allowed to be ADPi's or Chi Omegas or whomever. We have to kind of disaffiliate from our own chapters. And so we have to be each other's sisters and each other's, you know, life line and friend and everything. And so, they find a lot of comfort in that I've

found. And you know, that's just with this board. I'm sure that every Panhellenic board is different every year depending on what women from what chapters are on it. And that's what I've seen this year. But it could be very different in other years, and I'm sure it was different last year and different the year before that. So, it's just been a more unique experience for me I think.

AH: And try to describe too, you said it's a little more hands off, you know. You're not getting into all kinds of different business, you're real close up. But how is that different, that exercise and that leadership style. I mean, what is it that—are you there to just kind of help facilitate everyone else. I mean, you say that you run the meetings.

MK: Pretty much.

AH: When does it come a time that you know—

MK: I put the—

AH: That you say, you know—

MK: Well, in exec board meetings, when I meet with the other girls and I find out what's going on in their teams and things like that. And when I see them kind of struggle with their positions, I have to be the one to kind of grab those reins and say, "Okay well this program doesn't seem to be going as well. What do you think that we should do about it?" And once I ask them, once I challenge them with the question, what do you think, and they maybe don't have a response. Then I will then tap into with, here's what I think would be best. And here's maybe what we could do together. And this is how we can approach this situation. And it's very case by case. It depends on what comes up.

But I have seen a couple of times this year, where—and these women, specifically the women that are on the board are women that maybe haven't been chapter presidents. And they haven't had maybe the same leadership experience, and so they come. And my goal this year for Panhellenic, and I told them this when they joined the council, that I wanted them to develop as leaders. I wanted them to develop their leadership skills. I didn't want to run the board this year. I don't want to babysit these girls. I want them—it they are grown up enough to be on Panhellenic council then they have to be grown up enough to run their teams and to run their position on their own. And I'm willing to help and I'm willing to do whatever I need to do for it, but overall I want them to really develop who they are. Because I think that it's trial and error. You don't learn excellent leadership

unless you're willing to go through trial and error. And that's where I—what I went through in ADPi, and that's what these girls have to go through.

So, the reason I stay purposely stay a little bit more hands off is because I want them to develop who they are as leaders and things like that. And I want them to see that the way that you talk to people really does matter. The way that you approach a situation does make a difference and how people respond to you and react to you. And so, I stay a little bit more hands off with it, and it's worked out better this year. I do sit in judicial hearings and things like that. Like if the sororities break a rule, we have a—basically we have a code of ethics, a constitution that all the sorority presidents adhere to and agree to. And sometimes they'll break those rules and we say, Oh well, let's have a judicial meeting, a mediation and talk about it and see what we can do to make this situation better. So I usually sit in on a lot of those. And I give my opinion, and I tell them what I think would be best at that point. So that's kind of when I get to do a lot more of my position.

AH: Well, that's interesting because I just heard about a book.

MK: *Pledge, The Secret Life of Sororities*, right?

AH: No.

MK: No? There's another book?

AH: It's a business. It's one based on business.

MK: Oh, okay.

AH: The idea behind it is that leaders develop leaders, and that the people under them help give them the inspiration, et cetera to become leaders themselves.

MK: Right.

AH: And it sounds like that's really the role that you're trying play, as you know—

MK: Yes.

AH: This is your court, playing it.

MK: Yeah.

AH: Do your thing.

MK: Right. Kind of like coach almost. This is really, you're really the leader, but I'm here to support you when you have those moments when you fall because *every* person who does leadership falls flat on their face. Every person because you don't grow unless you do.

AH: Sure.

MK: You don't learn.

AH: Yeah, you say trial and error. Leadership involves risk.

MK: It does.

AH: I mean, it's responsibility.

MK: It does. It involves great risk, and so when those girls do fall in those positions, I want to be there to say, "Okay this maybe didn't go so great, but how can we fix it. What can we do to make it better, and how can we make it better the next time around too?" So kind of helping them to see that objective point. It's good that you can be challenged by your peers, that you don't have to always be challenged by an advisor or staff, that you should be able to be challenged intellectually with your leadership skills by your own peers. And that's what a lot of it's about too. It's about answering to someone who's your own age and having to go to someone and say, "You know, do you approve of this?" "Do you think this is good?" "Do you think this is acceptable and things like that?" So, I think that that's encouraging for them too.

AH: Well, and being able to answer to an equal, you know, instead of always having an outsider coming in where you don't have a choice.

MK: Right, exactly, exactly. That's what—that's another good point of the position is that I really get to just help them develop who they are. And hopefully when they leave Panhellenic they'll be better leaders in the end. Hopefully they'll look back and say, this was worth it and I loved it, and I learned from this. And that's the most pivotal thing, is that they learned and that they grew from it I think.

AH: Well, unfortunately I only have a couple of minutes left, but—

MK: That's okay.

AH: I do want to cover your—the Southeastern Panhellenic—

MK: Panhellenic Conference.

AH: Yeah, conference. It happens once a year. When and—

MK: March, in March in Atlanta at the Sheraton Hotel, in downtown Atlanta. And basically it's just a conference where these 3,000 women, women from Panhellenic—it's usually the Panhellenic officers from all the schools that are coming together and everything. And we have a lot of motivational speakers that come. And we have, we're really there to cater to women's needs. What are women's needs in college? So we have different sessions on, yes sorority life like membership education, living your ritual, respecting sorority life as a whole and things like that.

But we also have a lot of speakers come and talk about who are we as women in the year 2003 and '04, and '05, and '06? And who were we 50 years ago? As a matter of fact, this year coming up, 2005 is the 50-year anniversary of SEPC, and so it's great that I'm on the board this year because this is our like jubilee. This is our golden jubilee, and we get to celebrate who were women 50 years ago? Wow, in 1955 who were women and then who are we today? And look at how much we have changed since then. Look at how revolutionized everything has become, and the '60s with the Civil Rights Movement, with women's rights movement and things like that, and how we've changed our perspectives. Now that we work outside the home—a direct result of maybe the war and that got women into the work place—how we can incorporate that. So overall, I see it as just this Mecca almost of me being able to impact these 18 to 22-year old women, and I just think it's going to be the greatest thing ever. I can't wait for it. It's going to be amazing. Definitely.

AH: So, are you on the calendar year on Panhellenic as well?

MK: Yeah, calendar year Panhellenic, so my Panhellenic position is over.

AH: So you're through at the end of the year?

MK: Yep, and I then I just have SEPC until March. And then after March, my leadership here at USF is done.

AH: Yeah. Well, you'll be graduating shortly after.

MK: Yeah, I graduate about six weeks after that, so kind of right on the ball with it, so—

AH: Well it seems to have all fallen into place. You know, you couldn't have asked for better.

MK: No, God no. As a matter of fact, I think about that all the time. I could have never have asked for a better college experience. I had no idea that when I decided to not go to that other university, and I did decide to come here, I had no idea that my life would be as enriched as it is. I had no idea that I would become who I am. As a matter of fact, it's why I want to do what I want to do. It's why I always want to be around women who are 18 to 22 because I find that we are our most pivotal at this age. And we're not set in our ways yet, but we're not too immature to not understand where we're going at that point. So, it's just opened up my whole life. I can't even explain it. And I love USF for it. I will always be appreciative to this university for that.

AH: Well, USF may have helped open up your life, but you're the one who opened up the door as everyone must do for themselves, so—and thanks a lot for being with us today.

MK: No, my pleasure. I'm so honored that I could be here. No, this has been great. I loved it. It's awesome. Thank you.

AH: Thank you.

End of interview