

# **COPYRIGHT NOTICE**

**This Oral History is copyrighted by the University of South Florida Libraries Oral History Program on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the University of South Florida.**

**Copyright, 1995-2019, University of South Florida.  
All rights, reserved.**

**This oral history may be used for research, instruction, and private study under the provisions of the Fair Use. Fair Use is a provision of the United States Copyright Law (United States Code, Title 17, section 107), which allows limited use of copyrighted materials under certain conditions. Fair Use limits the amount of material that may be used.**

**For all other permissions and requests, contact the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA LIBRARIES ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM at the University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Avenue, LIB 122, Tampa, FL 33620.**

USF 50<sup>th</sup> (2006) Anniversary Oral History Project  
Oral History Program  
University of South Florida, Tampa Library

Digital Object Identifier: U23-00194  
Interviewee: James A. Schnur (JS)  
Interview by: Lucy Jones (LJ)  
Interview date: November 4th, 2003  
Interview location: USF St. Pete Library  
Transcribed by: Carla Butel  
Transcription date: July 28th, 2017 to August 3rd, 2017  
Audit Edit by: Carla Butel  
Audit Edit date: December 5th, 2017 to December 8th, 2017  
Final Edit by: Megan E Nowell  
Final Edit date: August 20, 2018 to August 22, 2018

**Lucy Jones (LJ):** Today is November 4th, 2003. My name is Lucy Jones. I am a graduate assistant for the Florida Studies Center. Today I'm continuing a series of interviews with USF faculty, students, staff, and alumni in order to commemorate 50 years of university history. Today's interview takes place in the special collections reading room at the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library on USF's St. Petersburg campus. I'm here today with Jim Schnur who came to USF in 1986 as a student. Currently Jim is assistant librarian of special collections at the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library as well as an adjunct instructor of history at USF St. Pete. Good afternoon and thank you for being here today.

**James A. Schnur (JS):** Well thanks Lucy. I first came to USF St. Petersburg, in the fall of 1986 as a student, but my first actual visit to the campus was little earlier that year. I was getting ready to graduate St. Pete Junior College<sup>1</sup> and was interested in staying in the area. Native of St. Petersburg, I've lived here my entire life. And I knew that St. Pete had a campus. I knew from going to concerts and things that I—the Tampa campus was there and big. So I just drove down the first person I talked with here was Cindy Collins who is now head of advising. But at the time she was the advisor for the College of Education, and I came back in the fall of '86. [I] started working on a degree in Social Science Education and another degree in History. And the campus in 1986, compared to 2003, was a much different place. I think all USF campuses have an issue of parking. That seems to be the buzzword.

LJ: (laughs) Right.

---

<sup>1</sup>St. Petersburg College was formerly known as St. Petersburg Junior College. It was founded in 1927 as a private, non-profit two-year junior college and has grown to become a four-year state college in Pinellas County with 11 campuses and centers.

JS: And maybe 50 years from now some future researcher, they'll have to get the problem solved. But today, we have a parking crisis on the St. Petersburg campus. Space is always at a premium. When I came back in 1986, parking wasn't that big of a deal because most of the classes we offered here: was an upper-level campus, junior and seniors, most of the people who took classes here, like myself, get off work at five and pray that by ten till six, there was a parking space somewhere nearby. So, parking was only a real issue after about five o'clock. During the day it was fairly empty. And it was one of those situations where most of the offices were open eight to five and most of the students were here five to ten. So it was different environment. Class sizes were very small and one of the things that attracted me to the University of South Florida [was that] it had an excellent reputation. I did some time at the University of Tampa as an undergrad starting out, so I had the private college experience. I also went to the St. Petersburg College and took a degree there so I had public institution experience.

When I came here to the St. Pete campus in 1986, it was like the best of all worlds because I had the university that was a public institution with notably lower tuition rates than private institutions, but yet I still had the benefit of small campus, almost like a liberal arts campus. When I started taking classes here, what I found was that over a short period of time, I fell in love with the campus. The environment is great. The faculty were wonderful. I did a lot of time over in Tampa. I took a lot of classes over in Tampa. I'm not one of the people who believes that St. Petersburg is the only place in the world to go. I think that you need to go out and broaden yourself. And I think that when my degree said the University of South Florida, I was proud that I took advantage of all the resources and all the places.

Although, at the time I started here I think that there was a general feeling among people on the St. Petersburg campus that, they were very distant from Tampa. There was that kind of aloofness, and I think Tampa generally looked at us as a kind of "oh they're way out there somewhere, and occasionally they come and visit us and all." It was a different environment. One of the things that was real notable about—when I first came to campus is I took my degree or started a degree in social sciences education, which by the way I never finished. I jumped to history soon after that and stayed there. I could walk down the hallway in what is now Davis Hall, what was then Bayboro Hall, and within 40 feet of each other, I could talk to a geographer, historian, political science professor, education professor, business. One of the things that really struck me about this campus, aside from its beauty, was the interdisciplinary focus of the faculty, that you saw a lot of cross discussions among faculty.

The advantage of being small was that you didn't have separate buildings where there were separate little worlds where people could, you know, cloister themselves. If you go down to the cafeteria, you often see a couple of the psychology professors, like Bob Fowler and Joy Clingman sitting with Harry Shaleman who was a geographer or Ray

Arsenault<sup>2</sup> who was in history. And you knew that they talked to one another regularly. You also knew that there was that kind of sense of camaraderie.

One of the big differences from then to now was when I first started here, the campus was a little bit smaller. The city was in the process, I believe at the time, of buying some land where activities center and the Snell<sup>3</sup> and Williams<sup>4</sup> house and some of the other things off to the periphery are. The campus was growing at that time, but when you came onto campus, one of the first things that you saw as you came to where the Florida Center for Teachers is today were two old houses: the Potter house and the Black house. They were these beautiful historic structures that unfortunately were beyond—I think beyond—being able to be saved. But most of the classes were in Davis Hall, what is now—Davis Hall used to be called Bayboro Hall—Coquina Hall. Down on the peninsula where the Marine Science Center, the Marine Science Building and the joint use auditorium are, there were the old barracks, the maritime station barracks.

My favorite place to take classes was in what was in the B building. The A building was where the marine science people were all located. That was the original maritime headquarters. B building was where the barracks were during much of the maritime base history, and by the time I got here in the late '80s, they had one of the parts of the B building that was still standing. First of all, going up the stairs, it was a rickety old building, there were more termites in that one building than there were students on the campus. But it was great because it was—just this kind of sense. You had these earth tone, musty rugs that were in the building from the 1960s or '70s. You had this pool hall area, it was kind of an information commons or pre-computer information commons, where people would just get together and socialize between classes. And it was just a wonderful place to be, and classes were very small. Again, one of the benefits of coming over to St. Petersburg, compared to a lot of the Tampa classes, is that generally the number of students in a class are small.

Of course that didn't stop certain professors from getting their groupies. And one of the things that you noticed when you came here is that there were certain professors, and probably the best example was one who is no longer with us unfortunately: Harry Shaleman, who is a geographer. Professor Shaleman came here, I believe around 1968, 1970, something like that. And Professor Shaleman, for many years, was involved with a

---

<sup>2</sup>An interview of Raymond Arsenault is available as part of the USF 50th Anniversary Oral History Project collection.

<sup>3</sup>The Snell House (built in 1904) was originally located at 106 2nd Avenue NE. It is a historical house that belonged to C. Perry Snell, a man of importance in the City of St. Petersburg, until his death in 1942. It was relocated to the University of South Florida, Bayboro Campus, in 1993.

<sup>4</sup>The Williams House (built in 1891) was originally located at 444 5th Avenue South. It was owned by John C. Williams, who is one of the cofounders of St. Petersburg. It was moved to the University of South Florida, Bayboro Campus, and restored in the 1990s.

number of things on campus including the lecture series and other activities [as well as] the Bayboro Geographic Society, which was a student organization. Shaleman's classes used to be filled and what would happen is—we had—that was very popular in St. Petersburg were seats that seniors could come in and audit classes. And Shaleman would have these groupies of seniors. I mean they may have taken a class with him on European geography ten years ago, and they wanted to take it again.

And again, I think that's one of the things that you really saw about the campus at that time that was so distinct was that the faculty that you had here, many of them—not all of them had PhDs. Many of them had master's degrees or did not complete their doctorate. Professor Shaleman, for example, was a person who had a master's in geography and did some post master's work, but the irony today is that if he were to apply for the old job he had, he probably couldn't get it because he doesn't have the PhD. But boy could that guy teach.

So if you came to campus, most of the time that you saw people was in the evenings, Monday through Thursday. Weekends were fairly quiet. Again the library was a big center of activity, and the pool, and the sailing club out at the Bayboro Harbor. But other than that, it was a different environment. It wasn't a 24/7 campus the way that it's starting to become today. So what you see happening is by, really the first four or five years when I was here as a student, what I began to do was get into the classes. [I] took a lot classes here, and one of the reasons that St. Petersburg was much more palatable and much more enjoyable for a person who lives in this part of Pinellas county, I lived in central Pinellas county. This is before the new Howard Franklin bridge opened so the old, what is now the current, the 1960s span that currently is eastbound into Tampa, used to be a four-lane monstrosity. And you know, it made malfunction-junction look like a picnic.

So to get to Tampa from anywhere in Largo south, in Pinellas county, for a five thirty or six o'clock class if you weren't on the bridge by three thirty, you had no guarantee that you were going to make it because you have the obligatory 20 drives around the parking lot in Tampa by the Soc building, or Business, or where ever you parked, just to get to class. So it was easier from a St. Petersburg perspective to come here where parking was relatively abundant and parking decals were not that expensive and take classes here and go over to Tampa on the weekends and take advantage of those resources like the library being open late and stuff like that.

What began to happen by the late 1980s is that, I finished my bachelor's degree in December of 1988 in history. [I] started in the master's program, and at that point I decided to make an important professional decision. During my first couple of years here at USEF, I was working full-time during the day in drop-out prevention in the Pinellas county school system. I made a decision when I received a graduate fellowship, a small stipend, to quit the day job and put it all on the line and go for a master's degree in

history, knowing of course that there are tons of jobs waiting for people with master's degrees in history. (LJ laughs)

That said, I knew that I loved the discipline, and I thought that I could decide down the road what career path I would take. And over the first year or so that I started to do that, I was very close to a number of faculty members here on campus. And I, one of the things that I did as a beginning graduate student, is that I had the opportunity to do an oral history interview with former Governor Leroy Collins of Florida. And I told Professor Shaleman about that and he said, "Jim, you need to go and give a talk for the campus lecture series." And so, I didn't know what that was. I knew they had these lectures every Wednesday at noon that were free, that a lot of community people came to, and a lot of students too. But I said, "okay, sure."

So me, Mr. I've-Never-Given-A-Public-Speech-In-My-Life, who exempted out the speech requirement because I was before the Gordon Rule<sup>5</sup> and the speech requirement at St. Pete College. I was so lucky that I decided—again, he gave me about a three months' notice, and it was like the impending date. So I started to look for the word "toastmasters<sup>6</sup>" in the telephone directory, and got a little concerned when I, you know, got into toastmasters and saw people shaking the glass of water even more than I was nervous. So, the date came, and I think it was 1990, I gave this talk in front of a number of people about my interview with Governor Collins and about Florida history.

Before that—that was really my first foray into Florida—most of my research at the undergrad level, most of my studies were in European history. I did very little American [history], and all of a sudden it just clicked. I got to meet Governor Collins, and I was probably one of the last people to interview him before he passed away. He passed away a couple months after I interviewed him. And what made the interview very tough for me was that he was talking about a number of things that he was in a very reflective stage of his life. So it was wonderful.

Back to USF though. After I gave the talk, I met a number of people that I'd seen around campus but didn't know, like Sudsy Tschiderer<sup>7</sup> and a number of others. Within a very short period of time, maybe eight or nine or months, after that first talk, I was working as a student assistant at the activities center right after it opened, and working here in the

---

<sup>5</sup>The Gordon Rule (now known as State Communication and Computation Requirement) requires students to successfully complete writing intensive and math intensive courses prior to entering the upper division of a Florida public university or college.

<sup>6</sup>A nonprofit, educational organization with the purpose of helping members improve their communication, public, and leadership skills.

<sup>7</sup>An interview of J. M. Tschiderer is available as part of the USF 50th Anniversary Oral History Project collection and the USF 25th Anniversary Oral History Project.

library, and working in the Tampa library for a little bit. The next thing you know, I became chair of the lecture series, and it's like, when it rains it pours.

And it was great because I had opportunities here that I wouldn't have taken advantage of had I been on the main campus in Tampa because I wouldn't have spoken, you know, even though there might have only been five people in the room at the Marshall Center. I probably wouldn't have done that had I been asked over there because I would have been a nervous wreck. Here I knew the campus well enough. I saw a lot of the seniors and the community people who came to the lectures on a regular basis, and it was a very safe and great place to learn. From that, I became Mr. Introducer to all these events and over the next couple of years was either the chair, or vice chair, or historian, or archivist, or whatever you want to call it of the lecture series.

We did a number of symposiums. We did Spain in '92 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of arrival of Columbus and the issues that that brought about, and [we] did a number of other countries culminating with our last symposium which was, ironically, on Florida. So we did this great number of programs. And what was really cool with the lecture series, and I think one thing that I'd like to get into the record is that was a student-run organization. We received about 8 to 11,000 dollars a year in student government money. And with that, we put on weekly lectures, a major international program and brought in some big speakers.

During my time we brought in Russell Means<sup>8</sup>, a member of the American Indian movement<sup>9</sup>. We brought in Stetson Kennedy<sup>10</sup> who, at that point, was writing some more. [He was] a very prolific writer in Florida. We brought in a number of big people and lot of not so big people, but had people who had great stories to tell. And, when you consider that for the cost of, you know, 8,000 dollars a year in student funding we were able to put on probably 40 to 50 events a year, [and] bring a lot of great speakers that would complement the curriculum. It was a very wonderful thing. It also gave a lot of us, it was springboard for a lot of us into other leadership positions. Other chairs of the lecture series committee had been student government presidents and other things like that.

And one of the things that I dealt with early on is making sure that the students knew what kinds of programs we did. One way I did that is that I got involved with student

---

<sup>8</sup>Russell Means was an Oglala Lakota activist and a prominent member of the American Indian Movement.

<sup>9</sup>The American Indian Movement (AIM) is an advocacy group that was initially formed to address American Indian sovereignty, treaty issues, spirituality, leadership, and economic independence for the Indians. AIM later broadened its scope to include issues such as civil rights.

<sup>10</sup>Stetson Kennedy was an American author, folklorist, and human rights activist who infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan in the 1940s and exposed its secrets.

government, and I also served some time over there. The nice thing about this campus, Lucy, is that in the very short period of time we were able, you know—I was able to go from a person who went to classes and got out as quickly as possible, to a person who was very involved in the campus and who all of a sudden really adopted it as kind of my second home. Sometimes my friends and colleagues thought it was my first home. So it was a great experience.

By early 1992 or '91, '92, the campus really took an important milestone. When I first came to campus, the first couple of years I was here the big name that was associated with the campus was Lowell Davis. I never really knew Lowell. I met him on graduation. I saw him around campus. He always so friendly to the students. So I can't say that I have any insight into Lowell Davis except that he was heck of good administrator from what I saw as a student. He unexpectedly passed away, and for a period of time we had Winston Bridges who was one of my former professors, a social foundations professor who was the interim dean. And Dr. Bridges was again a great guy.

But they decided, at some point, to have national search, and I think one of the really important things that defined the campus during the 1990s was their decision—and I think it was an excellent one—to bring over Bill Heller<sup>11</sup>. Bill Heller as the—first we called him dean and he'll be dean until the day he retires even though the position has changed to VP CEO. Dean Heller, when he came on board, one of the things he knew, is that this was a jewel. This campus was a jewel. It was an asset to the city. But it also was one that the community needed to understand, and to appreciate, and to work with. So, he also realized that it was very important for the university to not only say, "here's what we do for St. Petersburg" but also to show through good faith what types of things they could do.

So you really see during the early 1990s a stronger commitment to building ties with the community. And I think that's one of his true legacies. His other legacies of course is work he's done as a professor of special education as a mentor for many great educators. But one of the things that happened in the early 1990s is that to some people, I think, over in Tampa and generally, they saw the St. Petersburg campus as this little bitty campus on this little spit of land by Bayboro Harbor, which wasn't really connected in the bigger sense. It had been about, you know, 11 years since Nelson Poytner's spirit of opening up what is now Davis Hall, and Coquina Hall, and Bayboro Hall, the Cole Library, that they started to open.

So it had been a number of years and the community had kind of lost a little bit of touch, in my opinion. Heller didn't let St. Petersburg know—or didn't let St. Petersburg forget

---

<sup>11</sup>An interview of William Heller is available as part of the USF 50th Anniversary Oral History Project collection.

how important we were. And one of the things you really see him doing is working closely with a number of projects and in a number of ways. I think that Heller's arrival kind of coincides with another transformation that you see happening on the campus. Because it's really during that time, around the early 1990s, that some of the vestiges of the old campus are starting to disappear. For example, the old B building that I mentioned earlier is torn down around 1991, 1992 something like that. And they begin to work on the new marine science and joint use auditorium.

Some of the other associated buildings, like E building, are also torn down within a couple of years. So a lot of the older structures that earlier students from the '70s and the early '80s would have associated with Bayboro campus, or Bay campus as they used to call it, were starting to disappear. The activity center springs up. The two houses, Potter and Black houses, that were on corner of Second Street and Sixth Avenue South were torn down. And in that place there's a parking lot, and then over time the Florida Center for Teachers<sup>12</sup> is later constructed.

So the campus is projecting outward. The city secured a donation of land that it gave to the university, so it could really grow outwards as well. So you're seeing a lot of things start to happen. So it's a new era for the campus. And one of the things that you see though is that, generally speaking, one of the things that you noticed about the student population from the early '90s until about '96 or '97, [is] it remained decidedly older, more working professionals working on a degree. People who may have jobs as opposed to freshman and sophomore.

Here's a case in point. One of the things you had to have for a bachelor arts degree when I graduated, which is still in effect I think, is a foreign language requirement that you either had to CLEP [College Level Examination Program] out of—show proficiency in a foreign language or take credits. Back then, again this is before distance education really was the way it is today where you can do a lot by computer and that classes are available online, the Spanish classes that were offered on the Tampa campus, most of them met Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or something like that from 8 to 8:50 or 9 to 9:50, which meant that if you wanted to take your foreign language proficiency on the Tampa campus, you had to drive over there three or four days a week. It was not convenient.

At that time, USF was not allowed to offer, as I understand it, undergraduate courses at 1000 or 2000 level with very few exceptions. So you could take it as a transient student at

---

<sup>12</sup>The Florida Center for Teachers strives to advance education in Florida at all levels. The center offers graduate-level content to outstanding K-12 teachers, media specialists, guidance counselors and administrators. Since the interview, it has been renamed the Peter Rudy Wallace Florida Center for Teachers.

St. Petersburg Junior College, but again today it's so strange because when you look at the campus as it's evolved from about 1997, 1998 when you see the first arrival of freshman. Really up to this day, the class sizes have grown. The students have become younger, and the campus has had to change in a number of ways. It's not just that the needs of an 18-year-old student are different that the needs of a 35 year-old finishing a degree, master's degree or enhancing their job, it's also that the library needs to buy new books on topics for freshman comp and a lot of other things.

A lot of changes have really taken place over the last couple of years. But one of the things that really has remained the same, I think, is that if you look at the campus and if you look at the community that surrounds it, I think really Bill Heller's legacy is the strengthening of the town relationships, with kind of the town and gown relationships. One of the things that you see happening over time too is that I think the community's relationship with the town, again largely through the work of Bill Heller—the campus partnership, the campus board, the business folk in the community, really allowed for some wonderful things to happen.

For example, during the early 1990s, right across from where Baywalk is today on 2nd Avenue Northeast near the pier, there was a place that was called the Colonial Hotel Annex. The Colonial is right next door. Originally in 1904, it was the home of Perry Snell, one of his first homes before he went off and developed Snell Isle<sup>13</sup>. The land, as I understand it at the time, was owned by Bay Plaza. Through a little bit of work between Bill Heller and Bay Plaza, city officials, a couple of flights up to Tallahassee, some grant writing, some feverish deadlines that were met—sometimes by the hair of our chin-y, chin, chins—we were able to secure funds to move the Snell house to campus.

Now that building, which is now part of the Florida Studies Center or Florida Studies Program of Distinction on the St. Petersburg campus, was no light thing to move. They had to literally cut it out of the ground. And one of my favorite stories to tell, because by the early 1990s I was Mr. Lecture-Series, Mr. Student-Involvement and just like any other student who was so committed to the campus and sometimes committed on the campus, I was there at two in the morning when they were moving the house down the street. Everybody was there. Bill Heller. All of the big names were there. A lot of the faculty members. Again, it was a real sense of community.

So just as an anecdote to talk about how the campus sometimes grew but it wasn't always without its problems. As they were beginning to move the Snell house off of the site and on to the street, just as they get over one of the curbs—they have a truck attached to another truck with the house on it. They needed two engines to move the thing—they get over the one curb and all of a sudden you hear this “Boom” and this chain pops and all of

---

13An affluent neighbor in St. Petersburg, Florida.

a sudden this window in the house shatters. What happened is a tire blew out. So here we have this situation where on the middle of street, on the middle of 1st Street at 11:30 at night, they have to change a tire with a house sitting under it. So you had this guy, and I don't know what his health insurance or what his life insurance premiums were, but my God, I couldn't afford to pay them. There's this image that I have—we took this on video—of this guy who's sitting under a tire, changing a tire with huge, I don't know, 20 ton I guess house. I don't know how heavy the house is but it was all solid concrete in construction, changing the tire. The house got to campus. A few years later we had a similar event in that we moved another house to campus. And that was the Williams' house, which was originally part of a hotel that was called the Manhattan Hotel.

Originally, the Williams' house was built around 1890 and the house was in a situation where, the building that had been added to over the years had served for a while as a hospital and later and later as a hotel was—had more termites than the B building, which was a lot to say. And, with a little bit of work from the state, we went up to Tallahassee. And my memory of flying up to Tallahassee for both of those houses for the grant meetings, we flew on this little Cessna or small plane out of Albert Whitted Airport, Bill Heller and Sudsy on one occasion and a couple of others. Mr. Brames<sup>14</sup>, he did not like to fly, especially anything that was a small plane, drove up, met us up there on both occasions. So we're flying up to Tallahassee, and we get into Tallahassee airport and it was pretty turbulent. We rush to the RA Gray building, which is where the state archives are for the hearings. We get through all that.

But for the Williams' house, what strikes me the most is that whenever you lobbied for historical grants in the 1980s, 1990s, what a lot of people did is, whatever structure they were trying to save, wherever it was in Florida, they would dress in period costumes. So Sudsy went as Sarah Armistead Williams, John William's wife, and I of course went in full gear as the general with this long gray beard, like many of the pictures of him. So we're going around schmoozing with all the law makers and the people on the committee, saying how important it is to save the Williams' house and how USF will do what it can to preserve it. And all the other people are going around from other homes, I don't know if this was like a tactic to kind of throw us off or if it was just cute, is that they would go around and tug on my beard, which was glued on. So of course, by the end of the day I was just a disaster case. But the good news was that we got some good funding for both of the houses. And we were able to move the William's house.

One thing about the Williams' house that was pretty funky as well, again we're out there at 11:30 or midnight. We wheel a big pot of coffee [out]. We're on the corner of 4th Street South and 5th Avenue South, right by St. Mary's church, and we're watching as these two

---

<sup>14</sup>Herman J. Brames has had many titles at USF St. Petersburg from Academic Affairs center Administrator in the 1960s to Associate Vice President of Administration and Finance until 2004. He left USFSP in 1975 to assist Dr. Les Tuttle in developing the Fort Myers, Sarasota, and Lakeland Campuses, serving as his administrator until his return to USF St. Petersburg in 1981.

tow trucks start to move the Williams' house, and they even had to raise the traffic lights at the intersections with special poles because of the structure being three stories. So they start to move this structure a little bit, and one of things that I remember—it was about 1:30 or 2 in the morning [and] we were all sitting there, we had drank a lot of coffee—is they were closing the street as the house would go down the street—as the house would go down the street, at about one-tenth of a mile an hour. And there was this one guy, who I guess had a little bit too much fun at one of the local drinking establishments, riding his bike at around two in the morning. And I remember his gaze in his eyes, he saw this house going down the middle of the road. He didn't quite know what to make out of it. But we all knew what was happening. We knew it was a great event.

So the houses were here. The campus was starting to grow, and I think really those two structures coming to campus tell a lot about our relationship with the community, our desire to preserve the community's history, and also our desire to really be an important part of the community. What you see happening by the mid 1990s is that the campus was really starting to grow, and there was starting to be talk about, you know, what direction we should take. We were at a fork in the road. And I think in the late 1990s, we had a number of different decisions we had to make. Should we offer more lower-level classes? Would that be something that would be competing with St. Petersburg Junior College, which at that time could only offer freshman and sophomore classes? Should we try to become more autonomous from Tampa? What are the consequences of those things?

I think that one of the things, that was a very common thing, that a lot of people may have said on campus that at some time earlier when Tampa really was the final destination for all decisions, is that it was very easy for people on the St. Petersburg campus to say, Well I did what I could but it's over in Tampa. It's Tampa's fault, or it's Tampa's problem. And I'm not saying that everybody did that but, Tampa was a very easy scapegoat because every time you put your coins into the coke machine, the coke revenues ended up somewhere in Tampa. And sometimes we saw them, sometimes we didn't. One of the things that we had to, I think as a campus, deal with from autonomy perspective is, if we get more of that autonomy, Tampa's not going to be able to be the convenient scapegoat any longer, whether or not the issue is true or not. You couldn't just point your finger as say, "Well it's because of those people over there."

So by the mid 1990's, I had finished my history master's degree and did that under the tutelage of Ray Arsenault and Gary Mormino, who were very challenging in their research. And again, one of the things that I really think about when I think back on my academic work, and especially at the graduate level, is that it was so rigorous. It was as rigorous as I'm sure some post-master's programs are because the faculty here are just amazing. The following year, I did a library degree, and the reason for that is that beginning in 1991, I believe, early '91 while I was working over in the activities center

giving out locker room keys to the gym, Jerry Notaro<sup>15</sup> and a student named Tony Smith, who was a friend of mine from classes, came over and, you know, over time they—Jerry had seen me in the library. I had started to work on the lecture series, and you know, met Sudsy. Within a short time, I was going from being Mr. Get-To-Campus-Just-Before-Class to being “I have to go work here, there and everywhere.”

I started working in the library. The library that we had was—what is now Bayboro Hall—the old 1981 structure, and I started working in AV. I worked in the check-out desk, in tech services and one of the things that I found by working with all the people over there, the student assistants, the faculty, the librarians and the staff, was that it was a great place to work. These librarians were really cool because there are so many stereotypes about librarians that I think people have, and one thing that I’ll say is that they were very great in encouraging professional growth, even for a student assistant. They were great in encouraging education and really great instructors, mentors and colleagues. And I fell in love with working with them so much that I hung around. They let me hang around for a while and finish my MLS, my Master’s in Arts and Library Science in ’96.

So I graduated as a librarian just about the time that we were starting to move into the new library building. And one story that I really have to talk about, which tells about how the campus had grown was when we were in the old library building, what we had as Special Collections was about a 10 by 12 room that had probably 25 hundred books. Some of these books dating to the 1500s and about 15 hundred silverfish, which kept the books company. And it was for a while was used by the computer librarian who would sit in there with his coffee. So it was a real challenge.

The new building was being constructed, and at the time, the director of the library was a lady named Mary Grigsby. And Mary had a fondness for Special Collections. Mary had come to us from the University of Missouri at Columbia. She’d worked as journalism librarian. She was able to secure a donation of a number of underground newspapers that are a part of our Special Collections here. And she really liked Special Collections, that was one of her favorite areas, but not at the expense of the other areas. She worked closely with the media librarian, Jerry Notaro, to get him a beautiful state-of-the-art media department with awesome window views and generally made sure that the building really worked for the different needs of the people.

Mary came on board at the same time as Bill Heller. So they kind of came on as a one-two punch to really kick the campus up a notch. She came after Sam Fustukijan left. Sam started here on the St. Petersburg campus as a director of Poynter Library and in the early 1990’s went over to Tampa on an interim basis and later permanently. And Sam was another person who was an important part of the campus. Again, he had been acting dean

---

<sup>15</sup>An interview of Gerald Notaro is available as part of the USF 50th Anniversary Oral History Project collection.

for a while. Every interaction that I had with Sam was just wonderful. He was a very good man from my interactions with him, and a good mentor in the library field.

Mary was also very encouraging of me as a student assistant, as a grad student to get my library degree and to, you know, take advantage of whatever opportunities come along. Unfortunately, Mary left to go off and become a library director in Nokajo, Japan with Southern Illinois' University Carbondale that had an extension library. And Mary and her husband Gary were very fond of Japanese culture, she knew some Japanese. And it was a wonderful opportunity for her. It was a sad day to see her leave, but it was a great day when her replacement Lanny Greaves<sup>16</sup> came onboard. Lanny was very wonderful, very personable type of person, the kind of the director that really, like Mary, encouraged a lot of professional growth.

Lanny really took the baton from Mary and oversaw the construction of the current library building. And I give him a lot of credit because I know that he must have had some really wonderful meetings with the architects and construction people to put some sense into their heads. About the only thing that I was frustrated about when we moved into the new building was when I came into the Special Collections closed stack room and saw the sink sitting there and thought, "Great a faucet with running water right next to rare books." (LJ laughs) But you can't have it all.

Lanny also ran into a number of budget obstacles that I'm sure that he had to fight and was able to win over. The building opened up on time. What we did was—in the summer of 1996, the building was done. It signed over. They did the final walk throughs and all that. And one of the things that those of us who were on campus in 1996 during the summer that remember, is that we closed for few weeks because we had these kids that were hired to help move this collection. They had to move 140, 150 thousand books and journals and all that. The great library fire from 1996 was something that really showed Lanny's love of the library and also his leadership skills. Lanny had been in the military for many years. He had done a lot of great services as a library director at another academic institution in Louisiana.

What happened was, as they were moving books back from the old building to the new building, it was on a Sunday afternoon I believe. There were boxes, probably about four feet high between what is now Bayboro Hall and the library. And these were the boxes of all the furniture that they had unpacked. So they had this mountain of boxes and somehow, I guess an ash from a cigarette or something, hit the boxes. The next thing you saw were these flames that were going up to scorch the second floor of Bayboro Hall. I mean it was a pretty big fire. Of course it gave the new building's alarm system an

---

16F. Landon "Lanny" Greaves was the director of USF St. Pete's library from 1995 until 1999.

opportunity to be tested because smoke got into there. The old building of course, it was just craziness.

Mr. Brames, I remember the pictures that were taken of—there's this one picture that was taken of Lanny, in his shorts and his polo shirt, commandeering a fire extinguisher. Lanny and myself and few of us went into the old Poynter Library, which at that point was pretty much vacant of the first floor. And with our fists just smashed every fire extinguisher container and went and just used every one of them. So they did work. We were very happy about that. So the great library fire of 1996, it was kind of one of those things where it probably is not a very big thing but it really shows how we all came together as a team on one Sunday afternoon.

When the new library opened, of course it was just wonderful to be in this structure. And I think that when they constructed it, they were under the impressions, the architects, that it was going to be the library to end all libraries in terms of space. I think it was just the early years of the Internet and electronic technologies and people were looking at that as a great solution. They didn't know how much book publishing would remain important. And now where, you know, about seven years into the building now and we're already starting to feel a little bit, you know, the pants that we bought at Christmas are still feeling a little tight on the waist now. So we're already seeing that we continue to grow. Special Collections for example, we're growing so quickly that I hope I have room for some of the wonderful things I'm trying to pursue right now. But it's a challenge.

You know, I think one of the things to think about with the library too, just to talk about that is that the staff at the library and the librarians. I think we really, you know, there's an old saying that people say about libraries, that the heart of any good institution, a liberal arts college or a university, the heart is its library. And I think that our library, and by extension, the USF library system really has done a fantastic job of that through its many initiatives. One other thing that I'd like to say too because, one of the things that those of us who either have been students, or staff, or faculty for so long hear a lot is all the change that's come onboard. I mean within the last year we've hired almost an entirely new senior administrative team. We now have separate deans of colleges. So that the dean of the College of Business physically located in Tampa has Sarasota people and Lakeland people report to them, but that we are a stand-alone college.

We've gone through a lot of changes in the last year, but I think that one of the things that I'd really like to say is that it's important, and that's why I really appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the Oral History Program. People have come to us bringing great talents and great skills, but I think it's really important to remember that, while we may have been a smaller campus, while we didn't have the parking, the crowds and the issues that we may have today, that we still did a lot of great things back then. Some of the things that we used to do, we don't do as much anymore. For example, after 1996,

after some controversy, student government decided to zero fund and get rid of the lecture series. And I remember one student government president who complained to me when I was chair was that all we did was attract what they called, the quote, gray hair crowd, and what I did was reminded them that many of those quote, gray hairs, were people who were auditing classes. Some were quote, gray hairs, who were taking classes for credit and also that we couldn't—we would hurt ourselves and hurt our relationship with the community if we stopped being all the special things that we were.

You know, they've had other lecture series since then: the ethics program, the Monday night lecture programs and all. But it really says something that Harry Shaleman could get one his colleagues to come over from Tampa or Sarasota to talk about current events in China, and we could fill up a room with 200 people. And the marketing that we could do and I don't mean marketing in a for profit way, but the marketing of the campus as being a center of knowledge, and learning, and a community resource was just immense. It was an incredible experience.

Again, if I had been a student at Florida, or Florida State, or the Tampa campus and I had taken my classes in a big setting like that, I would have got my degree. I would have walked away from the university. When they sent me things in the mail, I would have said, "oh that's cute" and thrown it away. And I think that one of the things that really made it great for me to come back, it was almost like a total homecoming when I was able to return here as a professional in February of 2002 was that I really had an affinity for the campus. I mean it really does grow on you. It's a good part of you. So—break.

LJ: I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about how the library system is set up and how the different campuses within the library system coordinate.

JS: I'd be happy to. Well, the St. Pete library, the Nelson Poynter Library—actually the earliest incarnations, I think, were what used to be called the State University System Extension Library, which was formed in the 1960's. There was in the mid 1960s something called FICUS, the Florida Institute of Continuing Edu—University Studies, or something like that, which for a while operated out of the maritime base. And FICUS coordinated a lot of the, what we used to think of as distance learning, which is when you would write a check to the Department of Continuing Education in Gainesville and you'd—the bookstore at the University of Florida would mail you the books. And if you needed support materials and you lived in Sopchoppy or you know somewhere along the Ocklawahalla(sic) River<sup>17</sup>, they would send you them. They would mail them from the extension library.

---

<sup>17</sup>Here Schnur could mean [eitherwith](#)er the Ochlockonee River near the Sopchoppy River, or the Ocklawaha River near the St. Johns River.

And that was a big part of, you know, the way that distance ed used to be. The St. Pete campus library, you started as a small room in the A building, and the early librarians there were probably dealing with space issues from the get-go. Nineteen seventy-eight was very important year for the University of South Florida and especially for the St. Pete campus. After much work over the years—Nelson Poynter was a big part of that as the editor of the *St. Petersburg Times*—the St. Pete campus was able to secure land to expand. As part of that expansion, it was the growth of the campus to what is now currently Coquina Hall, Davis Hall, and the old library, which is Bayboro Hall, and the lands around it.

On June 15th of 1978, Nelson Poynter attended the ground breaking for this expansion and later that day passed away. And it was almost, you know, within a couple of months that the wheels were set in motion for them to rename the library on campus in his honor. His papers are now part the of the university archives. And the library really started to grow. When the old library building opened in 1981, they probably thought that that was state of the art. We had a long time audio-visual guy, audio-visual equipment operator named Bob Thrush<sup>18</sup> who for many years used to wheel old 16 millimeter projectors and film strips into classrooms. And when they opened the new 1981 building, they had this state-of-the-art media center, which is about as big as two faculty office buildings. And at that time, that was probably sufficient. When Jerry Notaro came in 1985 or 1986 [he] really started to lay down the law about buying videos and growing the video collection, and as faculty began to use more media classrooms it showed how quickly that became obsolete. So the library grew over time.

I think if you look at the library system today, one of the great things about being at the USF library is that you have a lot of integration of services and also integration of, you know, and communication between faculty members in different libraries and staff members. When I started as an undergrad student in 1986, the online catalogue had just been introduced: LUIS. It was not web LUIS, just LUIS: library user information system. And they had these old telex terminals with either the amber or the ugly green screens. And to use your student ID on the Tampa campus, you had to get your ID punch-holed.

So what they would do is take your old photographic, laminated USF ID and they would put some number—probably a soc number—into a thing and it would actually punch it. So like an old 1970s card reader. The book pockets in the back of all the books on the Tampa library were these old computer cards that were probably like seven by three or something like that with a punch. So when you'd go to check out your books on the Tampa campus, you'd give them your ID and they would run that through this old punch reader and then they would run the cards through. And it could really be a pain because if

---

<sup>18</sup>An interview of Robert Thrush is available as part of the USF 50th Anniversary Oral History Project collection.

somebody wanted to play a dirty trick and like swap cards around, you could check out a book that you didn't actually check out.

Over here in St. Pete we were even less sophisticated. You used to sign out books. It was still the old card with stamp and date due and stuff. And if there's one thing I'll say about being a librarian, I'm sure glad I wasn't a librarian when they had to sort cards at the circulation desk. But what happened is by the late 1980s, I think the library system—I think the closest the library system really was, in large measure, the result of the potential of automation. I mean, I think when I first started here was one of the first years that when you bought a decal, it wasn't specific to a campus. During much of the 1980s and 1990s, the fees may have been different but it did not denote on it that it was a St. Pete hangtag or Tampa hangtag. It was just a USF hangtag. With the library system, once circulation records went online, after a couple of years you could go to the library catalogue and not only locate whether a book physically existed but also see whether it was checked out.

I mean, to find out if they had a book at the University of Florida in 1986 was like asking for the water to be—you know—the water to be parted and the mountains to be moved. It was very hard. It would take 50 thousand key strokes for the librarian to do that. You could do it but it was difficult. What you began to see by the early 1990s was the introduction of CD-ROMS and other databases. A very primitive way coming to the libraries. To me a database is going to the physical printed volume of book review index and looking through the book. To most students today, if it's not on a search engine on the Internet, it doesn't exist.

And so one of my jobs, especially in Special Collections since most of what I deal with is not readily digitized, is to use those skills that I learned as an undergraduate here, the kind of the tools of the trade to help students today, who got through high school on Google or one of the other search engines and don't understand that sometimes the 1831, you know, Charleston newspaper that they need to find for the Civil War class is not scanned onto the Web. They might actually have to go and put a microfilm on to a microfilm machine. And it's hard because, I think, one of the things that, you know, they often talk about how you really learn and you really become knowledgeable as you go through a series of epiphanies. So when you first learn how to do something, it's like when we first learn how to walk and then you learn how to talk and then you learn everything else.

And I think the same is true with research and scholarship. I think that for people who think that something is just available, just because it's on the Web it's correct or it's easiest. Sometimes you can spend ten hours at the microfilm machine and not find anything but then you hit the next reel and you hit the jackpot. And that feeling that you get when you do that, which is usually after two pots of coffee—at midnight they are

kicking you out of the building—is just a wonderful thing. The library system, I think, has really grown closer over the years simply because we do a lot of shared resources. We purchase databases in a shared way. We use the former virtual library now, the USF electronic resources are purchased in a way that they benefit all the university campuses. If you're a St. Petersburg student, it works out with the people over in Tampa so that a lot of the things that are available to you at home are transparent. You don't know where the portal is that gets you to that distance database. It's just there.

So I think that it's really important. And, I think that as the library system moves—tries to move closer to prestige and looks at designations like ARL [Association of Research Libraries] status, it's important that we continue to work together. You know, they have some great Special Collections over in Tampa. My job is not to become a mini Tampa. My job is to focus on the things I need to do to complement my curriculum. If somebody came up to me with two truckloads of books on Ybor City, I can't take them. A, I don't have the space and B, they don't serve the researchers best here. Tampa would be the place for them. So, it's important that we all work together in that way. I think that's only going to continue as the library system continues to move into new dimensions with electronic books and other things that are going to require guidance and advice from librarians of different fields. So it's going to be an important thing as we continue forward.

LJ: Well, in addition to being in the Special Collections, you've continued some involvement with your history, history background.

JS: [I] started off as an adjunct at Eckerd College, 1996. I taught a semester at St. Pete College, Junior College as well but I really fell in love with teaching. And I think that in large measure I have to give credit to three professors who were very important to me in the history department at USF. There were many. The entire department was very important but Ray Arsenault and Gary Mormino it goes without saying. Also two others that are very important to me are John Belohlavek<sup>19</sup>, who was the third member of my thesis committee, who like Ray and Gary, watched as I put papers through their hands for my thesis without a passive voice sentence construction in them. And my last professor was Roy Van Neste who's in the history department but teaches European history and who I took many classes with and directed readings with as an undergrad.

They were very instrumental in my learning how to become a scholar and my learning how to write. So I give them a lot of credit, and I think that over time one of the things that they instilled in me was a real love of learning. They had a real passion for it. It's something that I've kind of continued down the road through my research and also

---

<sup>19</sup>An interview of John Belohlavek is available as part of the USF 50th Anniversary Oral History Project collection.

through the teaching because I think one of the advantages I've had, by having good faculty members as mentors is that it's made me, as an instructor at Eckerd College, become very interested in my students and really try to work toward them.

I tell every class I teach that I don't know everything, but like a good reference librarian, my job is to try to help find the information that the student is looking for. That—I tell my students when they're writing papers in my classes that it's important that if they have questions and they're taking one of my Florida history classes, "Come see me because together we can look at resources and really work through that." Over the past seven years, I've probably taught about 30, 35 classes and independent studies at Eckerd. So it's been really—it's been great.

When I graduated here with my library degree and the student funding ran out, I worked for a while as the assistant library director at Tarpon Springs, beautiful library but I hated the drive up US 19. And I worked for a while at another library. And in 1999, in October, I was given the opportunity to become the first college university center coordinator for Eckerd College, which was really an interesting situation. At that time, there were some issues between USF St. Petersburg and St. Petersburg Junior College<sup>20</sup>, soon to be St. Petersburg College, about where—you know, who should be offering what courses in Pinellas County. It was a very delicate situation.

And my job for Eckerd College was to be the Eckerd College liaison for their courses that were offered through St. Petersburg College as University Partnership Center. So I was their advisor and mentor. I worked closely with people at SPC, worked closely with people at USF, and what was really neat about the whole situation was I found that, just like being a reference librarian requires that you listen to people and that you help them find information, being a good academic advisor is the same thing. And I found that it was very easy because I went into the position without any background in academic advising and became an administrator of a center and started a very ambitious and very good program with Eckerd College where they offered in-house bachelor's degrees for people at Tech Data Corporation in Clearwater where I was advising at some point over 100 students, and students who went from the gambit from business management to org studies to information systems to history.

So Mr. Florida-History was all of a sudden trying to articulate credits from years ago on some diploma from 1965 and what that could bring in. I think the relationship between Eckerd College and USF St. Pete is also very important. I stayed at Eckerd until I came here full-time as an advisor, and I continue to teach there occasionally. The nice thing about Eckerd is that the Eckerd got its beginnings here at the maritime station. So, Eckerd

---

<sup>20</sup>St. Petersburg College was formerly known as St. Petersburg Junior College. It was founded in 1927 as a private, non-profit two-year junior college and has grown to become a four-year state college in Pinellas County with 11 campuses and centers.

began as Florida Presbyterian College in the B building where I started taking classes. And I think that the relationship between Eckerd as a private liberal arts college, USF St. Petersburg as a comprehensive research university, and St. Petersburg College is one that is very important to Pinellas County. It's good that we have all these alternatives. I've worked at all three. I've been a student at two of the three, and it's just a wonderful relationship to see.

One of the great things I enjoy about teaching too, and it doesn't have to be in a credit earning class—one of the classes I most love to do is—I started about three and a half years ago as an instructor in elder hostel. And so, it's not uncommon for me to do a number of elder hostel programs a year, sometimes as a single lecture, sometimes as part of a week but we take them on what I—we call the golden treasures of Tampa Bay. And these things book up sometimes six months in advance. And I even had a couple of groupies who heard I was going to be doing part of one of their spring training baseball programs, who heard I was doing it and signed up. And it's really neat when you figure that somebody's coming across the country in a Winnebago camper to hear you talk about something you love so much, and paying you to do it. (LJ laughs) It's a great thing, so—

And again, I go back to the mentors I had over the years, the many faculty that I've worked with, the many colleagues I have in the library who really make it fun to do what we do. It's a lot of work, but it's also that the dividends are so great. And whether it's at the reference desk or whether it's in the classroom, it's really neat to see a student who comes to you needing some assistance and they walk away satisfied, and you feel like you've made their day or at least saved them from the wrath of some professor somewhere else about them not getting that research paper done in time because you gave them the source that could really help them out.

LJ: Well as a student, and as staff member, and somebody who's taught classes and come in contact with students, how do the faculty and students interact at St. Pete campus?

JS: I think that it—I think when I started here in 1986, one of the things that really was so revealing about this campus was the camaraderie and the closeness of the faculty. I'll never forget the first time I went into Ray Arsenault's office because I had just interviewed Leroy Collins shortly thereafter. I hadn't taken any classes with Ray as an undergrad. I—not that I heard about his notorious reading lists, which are legendary (LJ laughs) and that's on tape now, but because I was taking mostly courses with Jim Swanson and Roy Van Neste and people in Tampa who were European. My background was really more in European history, and I brought a lot of credits in from my AA degree at the University of Tampa, which was in history. So I had a lot of European history.

But I remember coming in to see Ray and to introduce myself as a student. He knew my name, and I was freaking out. How did he know who I was? But just because of the grape vine of campus in very positive way, it was great because we struck up a conversation. And the next thing you know, I was walking out the of the bookstore 20 pounds heavier with books every semester. And it was a good thing. But I think that that was something that really signaled the campus's you know—the commitment of the campus to the students.

I'll say that during the 1980's and 1990's when I was a student here, one of the things I was continually appreciative of was that I had classes with Harry Shaleman, that I had classes with Ray Arsenault. I had a lot of great people on this campus who, not only knew my name pretty early on but also were great instructors and really passed their love of learning on. After class, [we] went over to the Tavern<sup>21</sup> or socializing—there was a real sense of community here. Yeah it was small. Yeah it was kind of quiet during the day, and you could get a parking space real close to the building, but it was wonderful.

I think that that still exists; although, I think that some of the changes that are inevitable as institution grows have moderated that a little bit. And that now we are big enough that we have separate buildings for separate colleges. Those of us who have been here for a while, and again there is no way to predict the future, but those of us who have been here for a while I think worry that one of the things that is going to happen, as you bring in more 18 year olds right out of high school, as you bring in fewer of the over-the-age, so called non-traditional students who were the traditional students of this campus, and as you have compartmentalized colleges, is that some of that cross-disciplinary discussion might disappear. Some of the activities that were a part of the campus, I think, that were, you know, the tie-ins with student activities, the student affairs were so important. I think that as more students come to the campus and the campus grows, I think that there is some of us who fear that that might be affected. Again, Sudsy Tschiderer is a great example of somebody who really looks for students who—and cultivates student leadership. I think that they should name a building after Sudsy for all the work she has done over the years to build strong relationships with current and former students and alumni.

Again, a lot of the former student government presidents, people like Lou Kubler from the 1970s, people like Ellen Babb, the chair of the lecture series in the 1980s. Joe Alvarez, I can name lots of names that I know who are people who went off and did great things as a result not only of the curriculum that they had to—you know the exams they had to study for and pass on campus but also because of the extra-curricular offerings. You know, I think to say that student activities began as the campus grew in the 1990s is totally wrong. I think you can date that back to the work that Sudsy did with Mr. Haney<sup>22</sup> and some of the early people on this campus.

---

<sup>21</sup>There is an interview with John G. Benson, the owner of the Tavern at Bayboro in the USF 50th (2006) Anniversary Oral History Project.

It was a real vision I think, early on, that we had a very special place here. [The] setting is beautiful. Downtown St. Petersburg is beautiful. And over time, I think, what happened is that they really took the opportunity with the students who came here and really made something wonderful out of it. And the professors were part of the equation, but it wasn't like you just go to classes and you leave. When I took classes at St. Pete college, that's pretty much what I did. I went around. I found a parking spot, sometimes less successfully than others. I took classes, and I left. And I'm not saying that in a negative way. That's what that was for at that point. But I think that when I came here, it really started to be getting not only the curricular but also the co-curricular activities as part of it.

LJ: One of the issues we haven't talked about yet is the question of diversity on campus.

JS: One of the things that I would like to say about the St. Petersburg campus is that, if you look at the emphasis on diversity, I think it—you saw it really from 1986 when I came on board. One of the organizations that was very important over time was the Association of Black Students or ABS. Many years, we had a very important role of Project Thrust which was a tutoring program that was, I think, available to anybody but really focused on the needs of the African American students, first time in college or upper-level transfer students. Over time, when I was involved in the lecture series, we did a number of programs that were co-sponsored. So for example, they had a symposium—this was a little bit before my time—where they did a week-long international symposium on Nigeria. And we had, through co-sponsorship had ABS involved and other organizations. When they did the symposium on China with the campus lecture series, we did it in conjunction with a group called FACCS, I think. The Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars, FACSS, which was a student group of primarily marine science graduate students who were Chinese or of Asian-American extraction. So, we did a lot of programs with different groups.

One of the symposia that I remember the most about my tenure as chair of lecture series was the South African Symposium that we did. It was the year that Nelson Mandela<sup>23</sup> was taking the leadership of South Africa, and one of the things that we did—and we had a week-long series of programs, of lecturers, of events—I had one of the assistant ambassadors to the South African government, that was from Washington DC, fly down. We had people from a number of different groups who were involved, including some

---

22Donald A. Haney

23Nelson Mandela was an activist and served as president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He was the country's first black head of state. He led both peaceful and armed resistance against South Africa's white minority regime.

different factions within the African community of South Africa, including members of the Zulu party, the Inkatha party<sup>24</sup>.

Some people who were fighting each other on battlefields, who were in an academic forum, and managed through the program—we managed to have a great academic dialogue and really played some great balancing because one of the things that we had to do during the symposium, like with Spain, it was not a celebration of Christopher Columbus's arrival, but it wasn't a total denigration. It was really a discussion of: this happened, here are the cultural and logical historical consequences, and we had a member of the Spanish consulate from Miami come up, named Caridad Clemente.

We had a number of other people who were involved who were representing the Native American community. Russell Means was on campus shortly during this time, shortly around it. I think one of the things we really tried to do—I know many colleges that are small liberal arts colleges—and I know for a fact from Eckerd College from working there—is that with many smaller liberal arts colleges, there's almost an expectation that you have an international experience or a global experience. In order to graduate from Eckerd, you had an exit requirement of a global perspective course. Many of the students who were students on the campus during the late '80s and early '90s were people who were working on a degree in the evenings who had a fulltime job, who may not be the type of student who would take a summer trip to Europe or somewhere else to learn about the world.

So in some ways the lecture series was a portal for that. Again, it was a student organization. Harry Shaleman was the advisor, I think, almost every year that it existed. So having a world renown geographer sitting there giving us guidance and advice, a man who could pick up the phone and call somebody across two oceans and have them come in, you know, for the cost of a cheap airline ticket or maybe a night in the hotel. We had—some of the people who are Harry's colleagues, or colleagues of Ray Arsenault, or others, we always timed the big name speakers to come sometime between November and March. The reason for that is, they probably were faculty members at the University of North Dakota, and they got tired of seeing white that wasn't sand.

So, some of them actually flew down on their own as part of a vacation and as part of the package deal would do a talk or two. We had a number of people who came from the Tampa campus, and again, the cost for their participation was lunch. And it exposed a lot of our students to many diverse views. We had many people from different departments come over. We also had a symposium or a series of lectures that was done through the

---

<sup>24</sup>The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) was a cultural movement established by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to encourage Zulu nationalism and to create a platform for Buthelezi to advance politically. The IFP did not extend past its Zulu base and was later members were involved in bloody clashes with ethnic overtones (Zulu vs non-Zulu).

work of Lisa Wharton, Lisa Wharton Turner, who was a chair of the lecture series and worked closely with me during a number of years that we were together on the committee, which was called the Herstory Symposium, which dealt specifically with women's issues.

Through some of my work on the Johns Committee<sup>25</sup>, which is a topic that deals with witch hunts that attacked many people who were African Americans but also gays and lesbians, I also was involved with Jerry Notaro for a number of years as a student member of the committee on the issues sexual orientation or CSO, which is a Tampa-based committee. And probably my highlight of that involvement as a student leader is that right in front of the Marshall Center, with Betty Castor introducing, I gave a keynote speech to kick off a gay and lesbian awareness week for the Tampa campus. And it was just again, there—diversity in its many ways is a big part of the campus here that I think we really strive toward it.

One personal example of diversity is that one of the students that started to work in the activities center while I was in the library was a guy, a student named Kahn Ta, and Mr. Ta, T-a, became a friend of mine. And over of a course of a couple of months, I met his family and after about a year and a half, I ended up marrying his sister. So diversity actually springs to the home where I now have a wife who was originally a native of Vietnam. So who would have thought that, and again it's one of those things that just happens. So it is in some ways a great place to meet people from all over the world. You do see a number of students who are from China. You also see a growing number of students who are international students, I think, as American society generally becomes more understanding of diversity, and I think as Pinellas County becomes more of a diverse area. It's a good thing.

LJ: So, in the course of a lot of your activities on campus, you've been working with faculty back and forth and (long pause) um (LJ laughs).

JS: In terms of the faculty, I think one of the things that you see, and again to emphasize what I said earlier, is that there is a lot of interaction between faculty. And you see great communication again—the first time I—and again, I actually have talked to some people about this. You could probably get some great psycho-biographer to do a dissertation on the architecture of the Tampa campus buildings. I'm not talking about the newer ones, but what was going through people's minds when they built Soc and Cooper Hall and all that. I mean, if there was ever an easier way to say, “avoid this place like the plague”, just put

---

<sup>25</sup>The Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (also known as the Johns Committee) was established in 1956. Similar to the investigative committees during the McCarthy period, the Johns Committee conducted wide-ranging investigations; they focused on academics, Civil Rights Movement groups, suspected communist organizations and homosexuals with an aim to expose what they believed to be subversive activities.

a picture of Cooper Hall on the front of all university literature. I feel so sorry because Russell M. Cooper was such a great guy and to have such an ugly building named in his honor.

The Human Services building is another one, which I think was originally the College of Business, before they built the earthen bunker over there. So, but thing is, I think, that there are so many—one student experience that I'd like to relate because, and again this talks to the difference of the campuses. When I was doing my undergrad in history, a lot of my classes were in the Soc building over on the Tampa campus, and it might be hard for people today to believe that it was actually uglier back then than it is today. And my one memory that serves me well, was I was once taking a graduate seminar with Steven Lawson who is now I believe at Rutgers University with Nancy Hewitt, his wife, who also was a member of the USF history department faculty.

We were in this seminar room in the basement of Soc, which actually had on this wall, this 1960s meter system or something. I guess they did some type of psychological experiments in there. It used to be one of the old psych testing rooms, and so I'm thinking, you know, here you have this brick room that's probably about 20 by 12 with about 10 students sitting in it, in this brick basement building with this thing on the wall that make you look like you're going to get a lobotomy if you say the wrong answer. And I'm thinking, if this—if it could get anymore uncondusive to learning, I couldn't figure out how.

And then I compare that to taking a class on the St. Petersburg campus where we would, you know, often you'd walk out of the classroom and go sit down there and watch the Bayboro Harbor at nighttime or with the sun going down during the break. And just what a different environment. It's not to say it's a way of bashing Tampa. I think that when the Tampa campus was constructed and the land was made available, they did the best that they could with the budgetary situation that they had. But I think that something that the St. Petersburg student should be very happy with is that, the piece of land that we had to—for our campus was just the most beautiful place in the earth.

Again, look at the St. Petersburg campus library, the Poynter library. And there was a conscious decision made early on to put lots of windows in the 1996 building. And one of the toughest things for students, I think, to do is to research is they are on the upper floors because the views are so distracting. And you know, is that a good thing, is that a bad thing? I think that only time will tell as the exams roll around the corner but yeah. It's the aesthetics, and I think that's a big part of university experience: the aesthetics of the physical plant of the buildings, the aesthetics of the culture of the institution, and also the aesthetics of the relationship or the dynamics of relationship between faculty across discipline and faculty within disciplines with students. It's very important. There's a lot of good karma on this campus.

LJ: Well, it may seem like that there's not time for play but there has to be. So what sort of social gatherings do the faculty and students have?

JS: A lot of them in the '80s and early '90s revolved around Sudsy's herculean efforts to really turn student activities into something that was, again, above and beyond the—just the curriculum. Through—also another person who was very involved was Cliff Bayer. Cliff was a student here who later came the director of Watercraft. And Cliff in the 1980s and early 1990s was responsible for the swimming pool and also the sailing classes. Again, one of the things I remember about my first student orientation here, when they did it all in the lobby, first floor lobby of Davis Hall, and it was, you know—this was before this kind of tour guide orientation that a lot of schools have today.

You showed up for this orientation. You took your photo. You did this and that and that. But I looked at this booklet that they gave me, which had all the different clubs and organizations, and I said, "My gosh, you know, I can with this ID that has all these holes punched in it now, I can take that and go and take a sailboat out." I mean it was really great. Of course because I was a history major, I never had time to take the sailboat out, but, it was nice knowing that it was there.

Above and beyond that, there were a lot of things to connect and especially since we had a lot of students who had children or youngsters in their family. One of the things that the activities office did for many years was something called family fest, where they would have a number of things like clown face paintings and balloons and things like that, often done on a Saturday when parents didn't have class. They could come down and park on campus and go and take the kids to do all kinds of great things. And Sudsy and the others in the activities office were behind a lot of those types of things. So you had a lot of things that were geared towards children.

Probably one of my less notable moments in history was, when we had a program on campus where they—we doing some environmental program with one of the local organizations, and I was put into the costume and became Drats, the Blob of Pollution. (LJ laughs) So, I'm dancing around the campus activities center as Drats, the Blob of Pollution. Of course, I was the Evil Blob of Pollution, and they basically kicked the pollution into the garbage can. So, they had to wheel me out of the building I think. But it was great.

But that same campus activities center would, at other times, be converted into a place where when we had our symposium on Spain in 1992, we had dinner for 250 or so people, and we had dancing that went on. Again, the core of the activities center really

was a kind of commons for the university throughout much of the 1990s. There were programs that were academic there, the Monday night lecture series that started in the early 1990s. The classes that were there. You had huge numbers of people who came to those events, and a good mix of town and gown. A number of students who signed up for the classes and had no choice but to attend mixed in with students who would have been there anyways, like myself, and members of the community who were there because this campus was really a great place to meet and—meet and greet with great minds and a great center of learning.

So there were a lot of those types of those things that went beyond the just pure academics or even the pure lectures. There were a number of programs that were done with students who—in mind with students who had families or other things like that. The fitness center and over the years, the people in charge of the fitness center have done things to encourage different programs—you know, around New Years' time often with resolutions. So they've really tried to build around the idea of the university experience being much more than sitting in a classroom taking notes. I think that because of the size of the campus during the '80s, and during the early '90s, and to the same extent today—although, in the future it will depend on how quickly we grow—you see that students really see these co-curricular opportunities. You know, students during the '80s and early '90s, and especially during the '90s when I was involved, I can speak on a firsthand experience.

Again, I never received any compensation or any stipend for being involved with the lecture series. The reason I was here, sometimes late at night, sometimes running things to the printing shop and all that was because of the real love of wanting to do it and because I knew that it was much more than something that would look nice on my resume. It was something that gave me some real world skills. When I graduated here, I had my degrees that the university gave me but I also had my degrees in project management from the university of hard knocks, from really putting it together. And I think that those types of opportunities are really what drove students. Now did the free pizzas at the student government meetings help? Yeah, it sure did. But you know, it was just part of the overall picture.

LJ: So where do you see USF St. Petersburg going in the next decade?

JG: There are two ways that it could go. It's at another fork in the road. I'll tell you where I hope it goes and I'll tell you where I hope that it doesn't go. And we'll go with negative route first. One of the things that I really hope I do not see happen is that I hope I do not see us erect more barriers between us and the Tampa campus. I do not want us to be the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg at the expense of the University of South Florida. I do not want to see us become St. Petersburg University. I think there is something to be said about being part of a larger research institution. And although there

are some people who would never, who hope and pray that never have to set foot on the Tampa campus, I'm not one of them. Again, as a student I took a lot of classes over there.

As a person who works here, I hope that I continue to have them as colleagues down the road. I think the university as an organic body is very important. So my big hope is that we do not become so autonomous or so independent that we lose being a part of that picture because I think that if we do that we risk the possibility of becoming a senior, a good senior college but not part of a great university. Where do I hope that we are? I hope that 10 years or 20 years from now, I hope that we, along with the university, grow. I think that one of the things that this university on the whole struggled with during its first 10 years, 15 years, aside from the Johns Committee assaults on its existence, was that it had no alumni to fight for it in the legislature. I mean, if you look at USF from its opening in 1960 through the Mackey<sup>26</sup> years, the early Mackey years. John Allen had great ideas about creating a kind of city on a hill, a city on an ant hill over in Tampa, with lots of potential.

The first faculty that this university hired were just amazing people. The people that I've met with or researched on, the all university approach that was talked about, the all university book. These are ideas that today people talk about. Now in Pinellas County public libraries they have one bay, one book. And this idea, this kind of coming together to talk about ideas which is so important. I think that if you look at our campus, one of the things that I hope is that we, in many ways take the best of being a smaller campus with the liberal arts type of setting and mix it with the resources that the full university has to offer.

Should we offer every degree that is in Tampa? Absolutely not. We should build upon the programs of distinction that we have. We should encourage our faculty, I think to work closely with Tampa. I hope that just because we now have a separate college structure and we now have a vice president of academic affairs, associate vice president of academic affairs that we don't see ourselves as being separate from the provost in Tampa, that we continue these relationships. Because if we get to the point where St. Petersburg is so independent from Tampa that there really is no communication, if we get to the point that you have to get transient student forms to take a course in Tampa, we've lost what we really were. And at that point, we aren't going to be part of that big university any more.

You know, one of the things that does happen is that know that we are more autonomous, we can't point the finger at Tampa all the time anymore, that sometimes we have to look at ourselves and try to make ourselves work better. And with challenging financial times,

---

<sup>26</sup>An interview of Cecil Mackey is available as part of the USF 50th Anniversary Oral History Project collection.

sometimes that's not as easy said as done. But I think that this campus holds great promise because it has a heck of a good alumni. We have great people who have graduated from here. Not all of them are big names but people who have gone on to do wonderful things. And, I think that the campus is going to benefit from their guidance, from them coming back, from them rediscovering who we are. And really, we are going to continue to be an important asset for the Tampa Bay area.

LJ: Well Jim, do you have any final sentiment that you would like to share with future colleagues, students, staff?

JS: Probably the most important thing for future generations is for those of you who are students here, appreciate what has been done over the years. A lot of people have learned how to crawl so that you can break speed records. And I think that that's so important. And I think that for people who come here to the campus, hopefully the legacies of projects like this, of the Special Collections department that I'm helping to build will help them really in the future have some good resources to work with so that somebody who, you know, comes down the road 15 or 20 years from now says. You know, it's not just that they have a great Florida studies program or a great environmental sciences program but man, they've got the greatest campus around. And they're part of the best university in the world. So that's what I hope.

LJ: Well Jim, thank you for sharing your thoughts with us today.

JS: It's been a pleasure.

*End of interview*