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Charles Arnade oral history interview by Andrew Huse, March 25, 2004

Charles W. Arnade (Interviewee)

Andrew T. Huse (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center
Oral History Program
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Dr. Arnade came to USF in 1960 as an Associate Professor.

Professional background

USF interviewed Dr. Arnade for a position in 1959. USF hired him in 1960. He did not begin teaching his first course at the University until 1961 because of a brief leave of absence. He had actually been teaching in the Florida university system as an instructor since 1953. In 1957-1958 he was an assistant professor at the University of Florida when President John Allen invited him to South Florida as an associate professor.

Arrival at USF

“There was a lot of red tape,” Dr. Arnade recalls, when he first arrived at USF. “I was supposed to be teaching Latin American history - that was my field.” While budgetary concerns were delaying his assimilation into the University, he accepted an offer to do social science research for a short time back at the University of Florida. When he informed Russell Cooper, Dean of Arts and Sciences, of his new assignment, Cooper responded, “That’s great, because we don’t have a course for you to teach – so you’ll be the first one to have a leave of absence!” So immediately following the opening of the new university in downtown Tampa, Dr. Arnade was off to Gainesville for a year of research work.

History program at USF

When he returned to South Florida in 1961, they did not yet have a formal history department, and had only three professors teaching history courses. In fact, the office where the program was housed in the early 1960s now functions as a storage room at the University. Dr. Arnade estimates that it was “probably” 1963 or 1964 when history became a separate department of its own at USF.

Civil rights issues

Being a new university in the 1960’s, USF was one of the first to be integrated, Arnade recalls. Though the administration largely failed to acknowledge it, there were instances of discrimination on campus. “We had a couple of what they called ‘colored’ students ... they had difficulty being served ... they were told indirectly, ‘Take your classes, [and] after class – get off the campus.’ I think they got the message.” He was much more directly involved in civil rights issues in Pasco County because he lived there. “Why waste my energy over here when a lot of people didn’t have [anybody] over there.” As a result of their actions, he and his wife received an award from the NAACP. Thus, Arnade did not participate in many of the sit-ins and demonstrations on the USF campus. He did, however, participate in a demonstration on behalf of African-American students who had been expelled from the Soviet Union for challenging racial policies there. Because it was one of the few integrated schools in the South, the U.S. federal government chose USF to host one of the displaced students. Since the government provided the student with a scholarship, they required that he live on campus in a dormitory, a controversial prospect even for an “integrated” university. “We took the initiative and said this is a great opportunity ... This would make world news ... Allen got cold feet and said no ... and I think *The Tampa Tribune* did not support us ... Here was our golden opportunity and we lost it. I was very upset with President Allen ... It was too bad.” In light of recent events at USF, Arnade remarks that, “President [Judy] Genshaft used the same argument in the Al-Arian case,” insisting foremost on the protection of the students. “President Allen ... didn’t want to rock the boat ... he was very afraid that there would be riots ... I am absolutely sure that down in his heart, he was not a segregationist.”

Vietnam War

“I never was involved in the anti-Vietnam [movement], but ... they had the right to do it.” President Allen’s attitude toward the war and campus activism, Arnade recalls, was very similar to his stance on civil rights issues, preferring to avoid unrest and unnecessary confrontations. “Allen was wonderful for the decade of the ‘50s, but he could not adjust to the decade of the ‘60s ... He was not made for that.”

Allen’s departure

Though the official histories tell of President Allen’s resignation from USF, Arnade remembers the exertion of pressure from government officials in Tallahassee that prompted his departure. “He just didn’t fit into the age anymore ... It was a polite thing.”

University Senate

During the 1960s, Arnade was involved in the University Senate, of which Allen was the president. "I was a thorn in Allen's [side] ... although after he retired, he was very, very nice to me." The faculty in the Senate, Arnade recalls, had two primary objections. The first was that the president of the university should not preside over senate meetings. The second issue was the assertion that it should be an exclusive senate composed only of faculty members. "We had what I call a revolution. We voted President Allen out." It was later under President Cecil Mackey that the Faculty Senate was officially created. Mackey also eliminated the College of Basic Studies.

Academic positions at USF

While Dr. Arnade first began working in the history department, he later moved to the American Idea program, where he became a full professor and later chairman until the abolishment of the college. He then went on to interdisciplinary social sciences, where he served in a joint appointment with the history department. Finally, he transferred to the department of international studies.

American Idea program

The American Idea program, Arnade remembers, was required by all students, and was basically a synthesized study of history, government, and international affairs. Arnade denies that the program had anything to do with the espousal of American democratic institutions, but rather was very critical of them. "I hired three African Americans ... [and] we had a woman for the first time."

Robert Stevenson

Robert Stevenson, Dr. Arnade recalls, "was a very arrogant guy ... very brilliant ... he was a very difficult faculty member." He renounced his American citizenship as a result of policies of the U.S. government in Southeast Asia. Stevenson, a veteran of World War II, moved to Iran after being fired from his position at USF. He lived in Iran for some years before returning to the U.S. when he was diagnosed with cancer. "Three days later I went to visit him. He was in bad shape. That was around 1:00. At 6:00 he died."

"You know ... why I survived? I survived because I knew how far I could go. I had a very good nose."

Cecil Mackey

Arnade recalls that, "The faculty hated Mackey ... but I stood up to [him] ... He began to have respect [for] me." He remembers one occasion when Arnade hosted a meeting at his house, and Mackey told the assembled group that, "I respect professors who have the courage to stand up for their convictions," later telling Arnade that he was "surrounded by ass-kissers. That was Mackey."

Arnade asserts that Mackey changed USF from "basically a Tampa Bay university" to a state university by emphasizing research. "His three or four years are very important. He changed the whole nature of the University." "With the exception of Mackey," Arnade asserts, "we never really had a great president."

John Lott Brown

“He didn’t talk to me for two years,” Arnade recalls. “He had a terrible thin skin ... He was an average president ... took easy offense ... I think they treated him very badly after he left ... I was very upset, because he served for a long time ... I don’t know why. This has always been a very cold university. This is not a warm place. After you leave, forty-eight hours later you’re forgotten.” Eventually, Arnade became a very good friend of Lott’s wife, who was later active in anti-nuclear war demonstrations.

Francis Borkowski

“I got to know him. I think he was better than people made him to be. He was not very happy here.” Arnade recalls that he and Borkowski clashed over the prospects of a football program at the University.

Betty Castor

“Betty Castor and I were friends. I know [her] from a long time ago. [We] got along very well ... I knew her when she was a teacher here ... Why she suddenly left – that’s a mystery too ... I haven’t seen her since then.” In part, Arnade believes it had much to do with politics, because while Castor was highly involved in the Democratic Party, the state government was overwhelmingly Republican. He told her, “I think you are making [the] right choice in getting out.”

Interim presidents

Arnade favorably recalls most of the interim presidents at USF over the years. Following John Allen came Harris Dean (1970-1971). “I don’t know why they didn’t make him president,” says Arnade. When William Reece Smith served for a year after Cecil Mackey’s departure (1976-1977), Arnade remembers that he had wanted him to become the permanent president at the University. Instead, John Lott Brown was hired to fill the position. He also became “very good friends” with interim president Carl Riggs (1977-1978), though “he would not have made a good president.” Following Francis Borkowski came Robert Bryan (1993-1994). “I’m much indebted to him. He approved my distinguished professorship ... I knew him from Gainesville ... He was very good.”

Early visions for the University

“When we started this university, the idea was that there would be three items which will never happen at the University of South Florida: We only will have intramural sports ... We will never have sororities and fraternities ... We will never have military presence on the campus, and never ROTC – that’s out.” Arnade then added, “And I’m still against football,” which he believes compromised academics at the University. He remembers presenting a case against the proposed football program at USF during a public hearing on the issue.

Phi Beta Kappa

Arnade admits that the struggle to get Phi Beta Kappa recognition has been his “greatest failure” at USF.

End of Interview