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Robert Bickel oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, January 26, 2004

Robert D. Bickel (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center
Oral History Program
USF 50th History Anniversary Project

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TRANSCRIPTION

R: Today is January 25, 2004. My name is Danielle Riley. I am a graduate assistant for the Florida Studies Center. We are continuing a series of interviews here in our studio in the Tampa campus library with USF faculty, students, staff and alumni in order to commemorate fifty years of university history. Today we will be interviewing Professor Robert Bickel, who came to USF as a student and is currently a professor at Stetson Law University. Good afternoon Professor Bickel.

B: Good afternoon, Danielle.

R: Let's begin by you taking us to the year you first arrived in Tampa and what circumstances brought you here.

B: I was actually, like many of the charter class students, a local student living in the St. Petersburg area. What brought me here was the closeness of this experience and the fact that the state of Florida had decided to place it's newest university fifteen or twenty miles from my home. That immediately caused me to become interested both in the experience of a new state university and in giving serious attention to going to school close to my home. My parents were anything but wealthy. We had very few resources. To be very frank, the economic opportunity to study at an emerging state university had very little

cost to a family who worked for minimum wage was too good to be true.

R: Let's talk about you taking that risk of coming to a new university like we talked about before. What was that like and what were the pros and cons of coming to a university?

B: I think the obvious caution for anybody to think about was its newness and the fact that while there was a certainty of its eventual success as a new state university, there were none of the traditions and establishments with faculty and curriculum that other universities like the University of Florida or Florida State [University] or, of course, universities outside the state would have. The positives were numerous and in terms of the psychology at the time, simply outweighed that. Most of us got caught up in the excitement of all the positives. Historically, we talk a lot about the 1960s generation. I have heroes from that generation that will follow me through the rest of my life. Partly, it's because many of those heroes were people who inspired young people and who empowered young people. It's one thing to inspire one people. It's another thing to empower them. When you feel empowered, when literally the culture of your time, the 1960s, made you feel as a young person very, very empowered, you very quickly begin to think that I can not only go to this new university, but I can be a part of building it. Its vision simply belongs to the first classes that will go there. That begins, pretty quickly, to be a real reason to go to a place and not just be another student. Danielle, the icing of the cake is that it was little. It was like going to a small liberal arts college of 2,000 students and a faculty of all graduate-degree-holding people. [There were] no research assistants. [There were] no student teachers. The people who had come here [came] with the best of credentials and [there was] a president who was a true academical. [The school allowed] for a tuition, I believe, of about \$90 a trimester. Those things really

begin to attract a young mind. I suppose, looking back, although I'm old and have faint recollections, those are probably the things that brought me here.

R: Tell me about your first experience coming to USF and seeing the campus.

B: Like many people, the first experience was the physical experience of 10,000 acres with three small buildings and sand. I know you've heard that story many times before from charter classes. There was something magical about those three little buildings, particularly the Marshall Union. My memories of Phyllis Marshall will last me the rest of my life. She was a mentor to many of us. That building was a treasure. As the charter classroom, I'm sure have told you, it was at its ground level, where we ate, where we lounged and talked, where our student organizations met, where we recreated, and it was also physical education. It's where we had classes in phys. ed. It's where the Smothers Brothers performed early on, for free, I believe here. On the second floor, it was the library. This building was yet to be built. I say that with some pride in history because my mother-in-law, Mary Sullivan, got her master's degree in library science at this institution later on as her second career and became an outstanding librarian at this institution. My mother-in-law is one of many of your former librarians and was an excellent research librarian. That little piece on the top of that student union was both a health center and our very first residence hall for, I believe, about forty female students. I know yours and Andy's and Mary's research has probably uncovered exactly how many students, but I think it was about thirty or forty female students actually began the residency experience here before Alpha Hall [and] before Beta Hall. I say that as a resident of both Alpha and Beta. That had to be a recollection. You can't ever forget that student union building. It was a tribute to the potential of diversity in one building. Then

[there was] the science building as an academic center, the fact that John Allen felt so strongly about the sciences. At least that was my inference. It made me see this place in a very academical light. The fact that that science building was so important to this place in the beginning; the chemistry and physics and astronomy and the sciences were important. Then, what is now the Allen building. [It was] the catch-all building. It was the B- school. It was the College of Liberal Arts. It was where all my seminars were. It was all the academic offices and I'm sure some other stuff, general administrative offices probably even the early development office. That was the other academic part of the campus. Then you braved, I'm sure as the others who've talked to have said, we braved the wind and the sand. You always had memories of trudging from one building to another in deep sand and the wind blowing in your face. Danielle, watching this place emerge, the physical emerging of this university was incredible. When you look back at this vision, when you see this campus now, it would be hard for someone of your generation to believe that it all started in three little buildings. I think that it was the smallest. The second thing was the faculty. There was an amazing uniqueness, for a state university, of having a small liberal arts college feeling and culture about the faculty-student relationship. As you know, I am a college professor. I'm a law professor at Stetson University's College of Law. There's much about the student-faculty relationship and the building of a student's intellect and professional growth that means so much to me. We had that. We were nurtured by faculty who were small in number and students were small in number. You could never forget that. I don't envy you guys at all. This big, wonderful 40,000 or 50,000 student-university, in many senses, makes me swell with pride, but I don't envy your educational experience. For me, it was like

going to a small private liberal arts college right here in Tampa. It was just magical.

R: How many people were in your graduating class?

B: I am told, and I think you and Andy have researched some of this, I'm told about 2,200.

I can close my eyes and envision the chairs out in front of the Allen building. I remember graduation. It almost seems like it wasn't that many. I'm told my student number was 183. It seems smaller than that. I'm told [there were] 2,200 [students]. We each got a medal, and I brought that medal for you to see. It was small enough that we each actually got a medallion commemorating our beginning of the place. I'm going to say, lastly, when I say liberal arts education, I don't mean just size. [It was also] the notion that a liberal arts education was valued. As I look back now and watch the disappearance of the importance of learning history, political science, the hard sciences, ethics in the sense of man's humanity, ethics and philosophy at their highest level, our language and the languages of the world, the cultures of the world, the requirements to study the fine arts, and they were requirements, the necessity of completing the study of music and art and architecture, these were required parts of one's educational experience. As I look back and see those things marginalize and as I see the role of the liberal arts college being diminished in comparison to the role of colleges of technology and business, I value that as my initial experience. The fact that I went here when it was a true liberal arts experience. I have a BA degree, and I'm very proud of that.

R: What was your BA degree in?

B: [I got] the BA in the sense that we had a traditional liberal arts background. My principal major was actually business.

R: Did you declare that the entire time you were here?

B: No, I declared that because of the advice of persons who encouraged me in that direction because young men from meager economical backgrounds begin to think of work and I think, at that point in time, the idea of the business major was emerging. I, frankly, did that with little thought. I will tell you, quite candidly, my heart at the time was in the sciences and the humanities. What I value most about this place is that for a child of my background, a background of a family not having experienced higher education, the fact that I met the great composers of the world here, the worlds great artists here, the history of my culture and other cultures, the fact that I studied poetry here, the fact that I began to understand the evolution of American history from European history. All that happened here. That's real important to me. Maybe not as much to folks who have a legacy of liberal arts education in their family, but we invented that in my family and it happened at USF. I could never pay this place back for that. If I had trillions of dollars, I could never put a value on that. When I read outside of law, my principle reading is now history. That happened here. Also, because of that, I always felt like I never had a major. I studied as much sociology and English as business. My principle extracurricular activities were with the speech and debate society here. I'm always proud of the fact that before we won athletics trophies we won debate trophies. We sent representatives to the Southeastern Region Student Congress and debate tournaments in Louisiana and, I remember, in Austin, Texas because we used the Texas senate chambers, I believe, for our legislative debate competitions. Those were magical experiences.

R: It sounds like your background and your childhood were really important and had an impact on your experiences and your progression. Would you take me back and tell me a little bit about where you're from and what your upbringing was like?

B: I was born along the Delaware River in eastern Pennsylvania. [I was] literally on the Pennsylvania/ New Jersey border in 1942 when it was farm country as well as steel country. It's very interesting to look back at American culture when farms were literally next to steel mills. I grew up in a business that was principally a family farm in Amish country in very, very western New Jersey just outside of a place called Phillipsburg, New Jersey in a farming village of about 2,000 people. [There were] few folks who went to college. I stay in touch with one of my elementary teachers and she tells me that two people of my era that she knows of left town to go off to major universities and moved. We actually both became teachers. My other classmate is professor at the University of Michigan, I'm told. My own background is one that's very typical of parents who literally dreamed that the next step in their family's history would be to have a child go to college. Whenever you hear about that first person to go to college in a family, don't ever take it for granted. For those families, it's a leap of life that's unfathomable and it's a dream come true. My daddy had two jobs his whole life. The mill didn't make it, of course, as most small farms didn't make it into the 1950s, so we packed up and moved to Florida where my folks worked for minimum wage the rest of their lives. My daddy got me a summer job at the packing plant. There was a packing plant in St. Petersburg at the time. Just to watch, we didn't have to say anything, I knew what he wanted for me. Above all was an education. He wanted me to go to school. [Here's] a quick economic lesson about today's economy and why the middle class is so important to people of my generation, the true middle class. The fact that a man and his wife could work for minimum wage and send their child to a state university because it only took two weeks of his wages to pay my tuition is magical. I teach at a school where the tuition is over

\$20,000. State universities mean a lot to me, as do private schools. The fact that they could do that for me [that] as a typical minimum wage family they could send their kid to college.

R: Did you work while you were here?

B: Not while I was here. That's a really good question. You're very insightful to ask that question. They wanted me to have a college experience. At the turn of the century W.E.B. DuBois talked about a true higher education being the most important legacy for America. They wanted me to have that. They didn't want me working odd jobs and just going to class and going home. I was a member of Student Government here. I was on the debate team here. I was president of my residence hall. I lived twenty-five miles away, but I lived in Alpha Hall and in Beta Hall and I was president of Beta Hall. I think I was an officer in the Resident Student Government. That's how we were hooked into Student Government. To be a resident student was important to me. I know what this school means to commuters. I know that, and I respect that. But to be a resident student here whose family home was twenty-five miles away meant a lot to me. [That] they let me do that was amazing. Because I lived here, the other very important thing in my life that's associated with USF happened here. I met my wife here. My wife came here as a freshman when I was a junior. She walked into that student union one Friday night when we still had sock-hops and when boys your age still walked over to a young woman your age and said hi, do you want to try to jitter-bug. She was a mathematics major. There goes the sciences again. The most important thing in my life happened here. I met my wife who today, as a USF alumni, I might add, is a senior principal in Gen-Air specializing in Crobac system software for Raytheon Corporation. She did her

undergraduate work in mathematics here and her master's [degree] in theoretical mathematics and computer science from Stetson University in Deland [Florida]. We have a big connection for two schools. We met here in 1962, way before your time.

R: Tell me about student life. What was that like? Oh, by the way, did you live at home your first semester?

B: Yes, I lived at home my first semester because there were no living situations here. The minute Alpha Hall opened ... I think I was a sophomore when Alpha Hall opened. [I was] no more than a junior because I had a year in Alpha and a year in Beta. I was probably a junior. I might have lived at home for as much as two years. I remember my commuting group. We commuted here in at 1956 Oldsmobile. We commuted at least for that first year and probably for at least part of the second year if not for the whole second year. Life here was very interesting and has only one minor dark side. The resident student body here, and my recollections, of course, are of Alpha, were that there was both a feeling of excitement about being a residential student body, but also a little bit of a feeling of isolation because the place was so small. We had 10,000 acres. You could go out to the Hillsborough River and you were still on campus. At night, the social life of the resident campus was very, very geared to just going to the rec. hall and shooting some caron billiards or playing ping-pong. I'm not kidding you. Or [it consisted of] going to the drive-in movies or going to May's Sub Shop and bringing a sub and a Pepsi back. My recollections are that it was a simple social life, but one that was very, very built around our humanity. Our social life was each other. It was a very intensive, small residential experience. We saw each other. The whole resident student body could get to know each other because it was just this little group of people. If you could imagine the

entire place just being Alpha Hall, and then Alpha and Beta. That was it. That was the whole campus if you were a resident student. That's small. In a personal way, it was wonderful to just sit around and visit with each other and all recreation was sock-hops and an occasional concert and a social life that Phyllis Marshall and others were building for us. The other part of the resident life that I remember was the literal invention, with support of people like the deans and Phyllis Marshall, of the building of the concept of Student Government. When we became a residential campus Student Government became very lively. We all kind of jumped in and took part in Student Government. Now, I told you there was a dark side. I got in trouble with the dean of students because I remember a meeting at which some of us were very outspoken about the fact that when everybody was off in Carrollwood or Tampa, we were sitting in this little, tiny dormitory or two in the middle of this huge campus. We kept saying, we need life. We need a social life. We need food at eleven o'clock. We don't want to have to go to May's Sub Shop to have food. We need food where we play ping-pong down in the rec. hall. Sustenance, literally sustaining residence life became that first plaint of advocacy with the administration. We had that feeling that you guys get to go home to Carrollwood. We're in the dormitory here. At eleven o'clock we need food, that kind of thing. The memories of resident life are just magical and frightening to look back on. It just wasn't as organized as it is now. The other thing I have to tell you, is the early memories, and I know you've heard this story, is that we were a part of the invention of the co-educational residence life in the state of Florida. When Alpha hall opened, the state university system was in it's first year of co-educational residence living. This thing at the time that was frowned upon was called visitation. We only had one dormitory. The female students

lived on one side and the male students lived on the other side. That was our co-educational residence life. [It] was one dorm, half-female, half-male, with four doors in the middle. It was a hoot because it was a typical barracks-type dormitory [with] a shower at the end of the hall. Again, [it was] a very small experience in this new experience of residence life. We were on that new idea of what residence life should be about. Then Beta opened. Then we really began to get into a Student Government attachment to residence life. That was cool. To really look at what it meant to be a residential university, I think, was very important.

R: What are some of your favorite memories in the dorms?

B: The favorite memory in the dorm is probably the pure intensity of the personal relationships in the dorm. That's because we were isolated. We didn't have any distractions. We had each other. Just things like spending evening talking, that's how the Golden Brahman [USF's mascot] came about, was a bunch of us sitting around in the dorm talking about it. We had evenings like that. You could talk into the night about the fact that, hey, it's a new school. We ought to have a mascot. All of those energies, studies, talking about what we were doing in Student Government, just talking about college life, the most important thing was the intensity of the relationship. I think your generation suffers from so many things. Your life is so complex that you can't really enjoy the depth of the college experience. As a teacher, the depth of the college experience, to me, is what's going on outside of the classroom as well as in. When you sit around and talk about whether it's astronomy or Spinoza or Chopin hour or mathematics or philosophy, or whether you're talking about planning the dance for the weekend or what we've got going in terms of programs that we're trying to develop for

students. It felt like a nuclear energy. It felt like you were in the beginning of the social life. You were defining what residence life should be like. I've got to tell you, defining it in an atmosphere presided over, by a true academical, who wanted very much, above all, for this place to become a respected university, a true university. One of the things I was telling Andy before we came up here, [was] that John Allen means to me, is that he wasn't all that much in favor of a Brahman Bull and a football team. I will tell you I had a wonderful personal conversation with him where he talked about the tension between academics and this notion of football and athletics beginning to dominate the university. I never got a chance to tell President Allen this, but let's see, I graduated in 1964, in 1970 I became the general council to Florida State University coming out of the Justice Department in Washington [D.C.]. One of the most meaningful conversations I had with the president of Florida State University after he hired me was that so much of how we were evaluated by our allowance was whether we beat the Gators [University of Florida's football team] on the football field. Dr. Stan Marshall, who was president of FSU at the time and who's corporate council I was used to be disappointed, to an extent, about that. He felt that what we should be judged by is truly that at FSU we were part of the first meteorological team to put a lander on the surface of Mars before this one. We had a tandem vane to wrap generator, and we had Paul Durack, a Nobel Laureate in physics at FSU. We had the best fine arts program in North America. We were the state opera and the state theater. He always said, everybody loves all that, but the thing we love the most is beating the Gators. I will thank John Allen for the rest of my life that he has made me continue to say, yeah, I smile when I think I was part of the game that thought up the Bull, and when I see the USF Bulls now, yeah, there's a part of me that's very prideful

about that. I will treasure that conversation with Dr. Allen when he said that he would rather be a dominate research university than have a football team. He was a little worried that having that mascot would detract from us someday becoming a dominant academical institution. I think his vision was that we could be the UCLA of the southeast. We may be on our way to that. I hope we've never lost sight of that's who we really are.

R: When the gang came up with a mascot, were you thinking about football?

B: Sure, [we were]. You can't go to college without thinking about athletics. You're point of reference is Florida and Florida State. Look at who we were. There weren't many schools in the state university system then. We had Florida [University of Florida], Florida State, and FAMU [Florida A&M University], and us. UCF [University of Central Florida] and FAU [Florida Atlantic University] and FIU [Florida International University] and UWF [University of West Florida] and UNF [University of North Florida], they all came later. We're sitting here and if your point of reference is the Gators and the Seminoles [Florida State University's mascot], you want to be something. You might as well be the pirates, the buccaneers, or the bulls.

R: You have to get into the story about the beginning of the mascot.

B: The story's been told as good as it can be told. When I go to my mind's eye, it was sitting around in one of the dorm's rooms just talking about the idea of sports and a mascot. I couldn't give you the details if I had to. One thing led to another. We came up with the idea that Florida was the second biggest cattle state in the country. The idea of a Brahman Bull was both very specific to Florida in many ways. We looked at the color. I remember us thinking green and gold. The Brahman Bull was identified with the

Palomino color. We felt gold and the bull [were] very unique; nobody else had it. A lot of people didn't realize that Florida was one of the nations biggest cattle state. Even if we were going to have a mascot, it probably should be like the University of Texas, or something like that. Off we went. The two recollections are the ones that the other charter class men, I'm sure, have told you. The sill legacy of the chicken story and the difference between Brahma and Brahman, which frankly, I thought was sophomoric and absurd. I didn't care. What I cared about was us deciding, okay, this is a part of school spirit. Let's move down that road. The other part of the story being that there was actually a strong suggestion of either a buccaneer or a pirate, probably because of the association with Tampa and Gasparilla and all the traditions of Tampa. The decision was made, I know not by whom, to have a democratic election. This is my recollection.

You're trading on the mind of an old mind.

R: How did it go from the idea of kids in a dorm to an election?

B: I have no idea. I know that one group proposed the buccaneer, a group of us that were sitting around the dorm room proposed the Brahman bull. At some point an election was held.

[Andrew Huse] It was a contest.

B: It was a contest and we submitted. As I recall, because we had a buddy who didn't vote, and we actually spent some time talking to him about the fact that elections can be won or lost by one vote. Florida, 2000 [Presidential election between George Bush, Jr. and Al Gore, winner was dependent on Florida's miscounted votes] causes me to think back on that. As I was told, the buccaneer or pirate won by one vote, but could not be adopted because it had been registered by either another institution or sporting team or something.

It was not the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, I know that, because they didn't come into the efforts to promote the NFL in Tampa until later in the 1960s and the early 1970s.

Actually, they started later in the 1960s when the Tampa J.C.'s began to promote the NFL, giving a franchise to Tampa. I was a part of the JC group, so I know that's what got that started. So it didn't have anything to do with the NFL, but there was this, you can't use the pirate or the buccaneer thing, so in came the Golden Brahman, which has now become the Bulls.

R: Did you see this before you graduated? Did you see signs of this becoming a mascot? What did you think of that?

B: The early signs were much different than today. While we envisioned a mascot, it was awfully hard to envision a football team. Looking back on that, it seems even more remarkable. We had nothing of the sorts of an athletic department that you have today. I can't remember an intercollegiate sport here when we were here. That's something you know about that I really have no recollection of. I think, what we just saw, was that this idea of the school's going to get a mascot bubbled up. The only recollection I have is that we took some pictures with some little Brahman Bulls and then the cattleman's association brought one over right after that contest and tied him up or put him in a little pen behind the student union. We had our little Brahman bull for a while and probably had a street dance. I'm thinking back on what would we have done? We probably had a street dance and that was it. I can't remember. Maybe the other guys can. I was never a part of any discussion to have a football team or anything like that, except a wonderful discussion with Dr. Allen, who made it clear to me that that would be a secondary, not a principle priority. I'm not sure ever a priority. I don't think he would be dancing even if

we win the Conference USA or whatever we're in. I don't think he would have been dying to go to that first game in Raymond James [Stadium]. Times change. It's probably a good thing it's happened, when you consider the reality of alumni pride. Given where I come from, I hope that it's the education you get here rather than whether you beat the Seminoles someday that'll be important.

R: What did you think the first time you saw the bull on something?

B: I'm going to tell you my personal reaction [of] seeing bulls and that wonderful new logo. [It] reminded me of two things; that as legal council I was part of changing the FSU mascot from Sandy Seminole to Savage Sam and bringing the logo into this new era. I guess looking back I remember when I first started seeing the new Bulls logo, how much I liked it compared to the Golden Brahms. It was kind of hard to envision a football team running out on the field and having somebody saying, here come the Golden Brahms! The fact that it's, here come the Bulls probably makes a lot more sense in the culture of intercollegiate football and basketball. It's cool to see that logo and to see the school spirit side of college life. When I was general council at FSU, we used to go down on Friday afternoons and use, as an excuse to get out of the office, going down to the circus lot at Florida State and listening to the Marching Chiefs get ready for the next day's half-time show. When you hear a marching band play the fight song, it makes you proud to be a part of the school you're at. My later experience at Florida State brought me into the world of valuing both my education and sitting in the stands at the football game when you're playing Georgia Tech or Clemson or Florida. You're blood still pumps when it's Saturday afternoon and that's your alma mater. Here's where you're question is so good, Danielle. It means more to me today than it did then. I just don't

want to forget the then. I don't want to forget that because of John Allen and this place I got the best education money could buy for \$90 a semester. Yet, I'm so proud that your generation is the reason that you're blood gets pumping and tears come to your eyes and you say your alma mater and say, I went to USF. That's a good thing.

R: Did you go straight from here to law school?

B: No. I worked for two or three years, first at MacDill Air Force Base with an organization called the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, which basically runs military. We didn't have much of a placement office when I was here, so I decided to look for a job and I went to the Florida State Employment Service looking for a job. They were the people who had vacancy lists for the state of Florida. They hired me. They said, we have a job, you could actually work for us. I worked as a management consultant for the Florida Industrial Commission. We were called Industry Services Representatives. We were assigned to companies in the Tampa Bay area to do management consulting. I did that for a while. The decision to go to law school was actually probably an extemporaneous one and was sooner than we planned. Marilyn and I got married while she was still a student here. She had just finished her junior year. Our goal was to finish her education and then to think about graduate school for each of us. As she finished and we were looking at various graduate schools she had a work-study opportunity with NASA, I think in Huntsville that at least she had heard about that was a possibility. We were thinking, okay, what's the next stage? Out of the blue, this charter university, the Florida State University College of Law opens. I didn't know anything about that. It had opened. I was offered a full scholarship, which in those days didn't mean a lot of money.

R: Did you apply?

B: Yes, I applied to several law schools, including finding out about FSU. When the scholarship offer came, that kind of makes the decision for you. We said, okay. We have a chance to go. Let's go ahead and go. Having been a charter class here, this idea of charter class experience began to be a part of history. I said, well, let's do this again. More realistically, it was the idea of just being able to go on a scholarship. The other thing that appealed to me is it was a new law school opening in the state capital. It would be close to politics, the governors office. It would be under the personal mentoring of the Florida Supreme Court. It just makes all kinds of sense that your law school should be in your state capital. We accelerated the decision. Marilyn put her graduate school plans on the back burner and we moved to Tallahassee and she taught at Leon High School. [She] taught high school mathematics. [We] came down here and through the period of my working at Florida State, she kept teaching and then working a little for the state of Florida. When I took the professorial job at Stetson's Law School back here in the St. Petersburg area, then she went back to our graduate university in DeLand to do her master's work in mathematics and computer science. In a way it was just time, the opportunity presents itself and you seize the moment and you go to grad school.

R: Did you learn anything here at USF that made you decide law school might be... did that give you an idea of maybe what to do?

B: Yes, speech, debate, and Student Government [all contributed to my decision]. That's an easy question to answer. There was just an awful lot about the experience I had here that's the kind of pre-law experience that makes you understand why one should go to law school. The interesting thing about law school is it helps you understand so much your constitution and the idea of the democratic model of government and politics and all

of that. I love Student Government. To me, that was part of that growth into young adulthood through the college experience, was the idea that colleges are places where the people who are studying there are the governing model. There's actually governing by students? This is an incredible experience. There was that fascination with law. Then, to be trained by people like Alva Surrant and others in speech and debate. You can't be a part of traditional debate, legislative debate, and parliamentary debate without thinking about law school. It's actually falling in love with those areas that upped my interest in law school. Then, of course, the fundamental importance of law in society. I just look back sometimes and don't understand why I wasn't a political science major or a history poli-sci major. It just makes so much sense. Thank God, coming out of these schools, because of people like Dr. Surrant of the speech and debate program here and Student Government, your thoughts could turn towards law school. The other thing is, my parents told me, my friends told me all the while I was growing up and now my students tell me that I can't stop talking. I'm an absolute motor-mouth. Anybody that talks all the time and is always told [that they do] has wanted to go to school. That actually, looking back, should never be the reason that you go to law school. The speech and debate thing was a treasure. The training I got here in that area [was a treasure]. We actually had, Danielle, a British parliamentary-style debate my senior year here in what is now the Marshall Union here on the second floor with about 200 or 300 people from the school and community there with the University of Dublin. My debate partner and I split up and we each partnered with one of the exchange debaters from the University of Dublin. We did a parliamentary debate on the subject of civil rights in America and that it was the responsibility of a democracy to guarantee and sustain and further civil rights even if the

people didn't want it. We took the experience of the Mississippi Delta and the hostile resistance in the south to *Brown vs. Board of Education* [court case in 1954 that resulted in the desegregation of public schooling in the United States]. We used that as a basis for a debate proposition that was, it's the responsibility of a democracy to do the right thing, even in some cases when there are pockets of vehement resistance. We used civil rights as an example. Boy, was that a neat debate. I remember that night. Boy, does that make you think about going to law school. I'm co-chairing next month, a fiftieth anniversary symposium celebrating *Brown vs. Board of Education*, what I consider to be the most important decision education. If you love education, it's got to be the most important case for higher education ever decided even though it was a K-12 group of cases. Those nights made me think that either debating in the legislature or the court system or something like that had to be cool. It's just an example of the law's work. It gets you turned on about law school. I've thought about law school since I was in the eighth grade. That was basically elementary and secondary teachers who thought I was a good student of English, I was a good writer, [and] a good public speaker. The combination of the speech and debate and oratory training I got here, coupled with that liberal arts attitude that this school found and insisted on that made me study history and government and the humanities. That really then gets you thinking seriously about law school. I'd already majored in the social sciences anyway. I hadn't followed my other dream, which was the hard sciences. That's where that distance observation of John Allen comes in, the fact that we all kind of revered him, or held him in awe. I never felt personally real close, but to say that he inspired me is the truth. I'm in awe of my wife because she's a scientist. She's a mathematician. She's the bright person in our family. I'm just in awe

of her intellect and her study of the sciences. Definitely, the speech, debate, and Student Government [contributed to my decision]. Don't ever undervalue Student Government.

R: How did you get involved with that?

B: [I got involved] accidentally. We were here. You could count us on the fingers of two hands, you felt like. If you're going to be a residential student body, you've got to get involved in establishing your way of life. You know, people like Phyllis Marshall just nurtured us. They were mentors.

R: Did you have a real good relationship with her?

B: Oh yes. None of us who ever worked with Dr. Marshall would ever forget her for the rest of our lives. With each other, too. Again, you've got to remember, Danielle, the times of J.F.K. [John F. Kennedy, president of the United States, 1961-1963] and Bobby Kennedy [United States Senator, 1965-1968]. Robert Cole writes about it in *Lives of Moral Leadership* and the children... If you read books like John Lewis's *Walking With the Wind* or David Halbertson's book *The Children*, you understand the empowerment of that era. Being young was not any sort of a badge of secondary citizenship. You could be a part of the politics of the country. If you just look at the world you were living in, you said, I've got to be involved in Student Government because we're supposed to be involved in politics. Danielle, we're talking about days where one hundred percent of the people in a precinct voted. One hundred percent! The idea of involvement in government was something that was natural.

R: What about your relationships with your professors and that community?

B: It was too good to be true. We were small. There were folks that served as debate coach and English professor, that sort of thing. You had dual roles with professors and

students. It was small, so the idea of faculty-student relationships was accessible. When I look at big state universities now and I contemplate 400 students in an auditorium, it's hard for me to envision what you've lost in terms of a faculty-student relationship. When my wife did her master's at our undergraduate university, if you want to know why people go to Stetson University, her largest class had seven people in it. The contact with the professor is daily. You're speaking in class every day and you're talking with your prof after class all the time. That's the way it was here. I'm not saying it was every problem we were hanging around in their office, but you remember, these were personal relationships. You were sitting in a class with thirty-five or forty people. It was really cool. The other thing, of course, was it was a charter school. Not in the sense we think of today. It was an experimental university. You've got to remember, the faculty had a stake in it building that academic relationship, building a strong intellectual student body was vital. Traditional members of that charter class, people who you would consider the traditional and classical graduate of that early school, people like John Samand, who spent a career over at Manpower International at their world headquarters in Milwaukee. My buddy, the best man at my wedding and my classmate here, who lives in Inverness today was trained. Look at the strength of that training, that a guy that goes to a small school like that ends up with a thirty-year career at one of the most important Fortune 500 companies in the country. We trained good people. Nobody knew who we were. You go out and apply for a job, John worked in Pittsburgh at USF? It's not that we were known, but we were well trained. We were well taught. I think faculty understood [that] they'd better do a good job with us because if the first folks that come out are not good, that isn't going to be a good future for the school.

R: Were you ever concerned about how people would view this degree from a new school?

B: No, and I think it's because in our day, if you were well-trained, the career took care of itself. We got calls for job offers in Beta Hall when we were just the beginning of our senior year. Do you want to interview for such-and-such a job? We didn't have to worry about [it]. You didn't have to prepare a resume. The world would come to you if you had a college degree. The world would come to you. I'm sure other people have answered you that they were concerned. The other reason I wasn't is my daddy had to quit school in the eighth grade because his daddy made him so he could work on the farm. My daddy wanted to be a pole-vaulter. The coach in his high school said, I want you on the track team. His daddy said, no, you've got to come home the minute the school bell rings. My daddy said, if I can't play sports I don't want to go to school, and besides, I've got to be home to work on the farm. When your daddy had to leave school because his parent demanded it, and your mama finished high school, but women were not imagined in that part of the country, in that culture, in that little township, as going to college ... There were teachers in my day who had two-year college degrees and they became school teachers. Four-year liberal arts educations were not the norm. You go back and look at your history, you know what a small percentage of Americans had college degrees in the 1940s. When you think about the idea of being that first-timer, you're not worried about a job. Your whole focus is, my God, I'm going to go to college. I'm going to study. I didn't even think about what was going to happen the day I graduated. My whole focus was the school, the educational experience. Sure, you start thinking about it. I started thinking about a job when Marilyn and I decided to get married. That's when I started thinking about a job.

R: What other experiences do you remember having a huge impact on your life that you can think of, or what you're doing now?

B: I'm trying to think of any we haven't touched on. None that are remarkable. I think we've touched on everything about this place that motivated me to take that next step. Frankly, all the other stories are Florida State University connected; they're not USF connected. How I got from a charter classman at FSU and involved in Student Government at Florida State University as an officer of the honor court, and then into the practice of law, and then started writing and started thinking about becoming a teacher myself. Why don't we close that thought with the idea that I'm probably a professor because [of] the people that I always held in the highest esteem and that started here, is the notion of the college professor. I'm in awe of people who teach the next generation. To be able to get to do it is really remarkable. One of the hostages at the time of the Iran Crisis was a college professor. When the hostages were rescued and they were taken to their first safe-harbor before they were eventually delivered back to total safety and got back to the states, some of them had press conferences. The college professor of the group was in tough shape physically after that ordeal. I remember at the press conference, you could see that they wanted to try to get him out of the room and take care of him so that he could recover as quickly as possible. On his way out of the room he looked back and said, are any of my students here? That's that thing that happens in college, that bond, the fact that education, at that point in time, for that four years, you understand why education is the most important thing.

R: Do you feel like you still have that with students now as a professor?

B: Absolutely. My students tell me we have that every day. My students tell me that more

than what we're coving in the classroom, what means a lot to them, is how important education was to me, and how important I remind them it is to them. I teach in our evening division program that's just opened here in Tampa. You're looking at second-career people who have a tendency, already, to see more education as a career step. What I tell them is getting that education and going to school is the most important thing they're doing with their life. I'm sure that's an overstatement, but you've got to realize my age and my own background. When W.E.B. DuBois said at the turn of the century that there are three things that really matter, and that is true higher education, economic opportunity, and direct participation in democracy through the right to vote, the important thing to me is that I never forget that trilogy and more importantly that he said the education thing first. When I had the honor of lecturing in the dome room of the rotunda on the lawn of the University of Virginia about fifteen years ago, I actually saw Mr. Jefferson's first library, [I] stayed at Pavilion Seven. What came home to me was the state university system of America is probably, other than the pure notion of the democracy experience that [Alexis De] Tocqueville wrote about in *Democracy in America*, a young Frenchman, what matters more than anything else is higher education as a part of that democracy experience. Probably the reason I'm doing what I'm doing today is that whole idea is who professors are and what happened here. It's different for me and other people. For my family, it was the dream. It was the realization of a dream. I can't criticize someone who takes it for granted. It's hard not to expect it when it's been a part of your family's legacy. For me, it was like dying and going to heaven to be here.

R: What was it like to graduate?

B: [It was] really, really special, because you felt the sense of accomplishment that we made it and that the first step of the journey, of that charter class experience really happened. You clung to that little medal and you said okay, step one, we graduated, that first class. There we were.

R: Was your father there?

B: My mom and dad were there. Marilyn was there. We were engaged. Two years later we came here for her graduation. When I worked at MacDill, we rented a little apartment in Tampa while she finished here. It's just happened ever since. I guest lecture for one of your add-term faculty, a dear friend of mine, Judge Ray Gross, every semester, and every time I pull in here and just look at this place, it's amazing. I'm sitting here at a building, at my library. You want to talk about graduating and understanding what was happening, this building was the first library actually built. When we graduated, to see that little piece of the student union building had become a wonderful library with that big seal on the front of it that said 1956, yeah, that was something. It was the first step. That was our little moon-landing. It was really cool. To go out into the world and say, here we are, USF, deal with us, was interesting. I thank you for the opportunity to reminisce and reflect and come back and talk about it. What you're doing to commemorate that fifty years is a good thing. The fact that you can do it, that you're interviewing folks that were the first people to come through here and you're not 130 years old, or 250 [years old].

R: Is there anything else you can think of that we missed or anything else you would like to add?

B: No, I'm fine. Thank you.

R: Thank you so much for being here today. We really appreciate it. Thank you.

B: Thank you.

End of Interview