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## Louis Bowers oral history interview by Andrew Huse, December 15, 2003

Louis Bowers (Interviewee)

Andrew T. Huse (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center  
Oral History Program  
USF 50<sup>th</sup> History Anniversary Project

Narrator: Dr. Louis Bowers (B)  
Current Position: Distinguished  
University Professor Emeritus  
Audit Editor: Lauren Dominguez  
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2004

Interviewer: Andrew Huse (H)  
Date of Interview: December 15, 2003  
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Transcriber: University of Florida  
Final Editor: Jared G. Toney

TRANSCRIPTION

H: Today is December 15, 2003. My name is Andrew Huse, program assistant for the Florida Studies Center. Today we continue a series of interviews in our studio here on the Tampa campus library with USF faculty, students, staff, and alumni in order to commemorate fifty years of university history. Today we'll be interviewing Louis Bowers, who came to USF in 1967 as a professor. Currently your position is...?

B: My title is Distinguished University Professor Emeritus, which means I have an office on campus and I continue to do research and some consulting and I'm writing a book now. I still have a home on campus, although I'm not employed officially, [I have] use of the library and parking and things of that sort.

H: Only the most distinguished of professors get such treatment, so it will be interesting covering your time here and seeing what led you to your emeritus status. First, we'll just start with the beginning. What brought you to USF?

B: Ironically, I first learned of USF when I was teaching in high school in Baltimore, Maryland in 1960. I wrote a letter here to inquire about a position. I read about the University in *Time* magazine and it sounded so adventurous and exciting. I

wanted to be a part of it. I also wrote a letter to my undergraduate alma mater [at the] University of Southwestern Louisiana. I didn't hear from South Florida, but I did get an invitation to join the faculty at Southwestern. I went there for seven years and taught and did research and earned my doctorate in the meantime, which was probably one of the reasons USF wasn't interested in me with a master's degree at the time. I was there at the University of Southwestern for seven years and was enjoying it but having a student there working with faculty who had taught me, I felt a little bit limited in terms of how I was viewed. I was ready for a change. Fortunately, I was on a plane coming from a conference in Richmond, Virginia, and a gentleman got on the plane. [He was] the last person on the plane, [and took the] only seat left on the plane next to me. He sat next to me and we start talking about our professional interest. By the time the plane landed in Atlanta, he invited me to Tampa for an interview two weeks later for a position they had here on campus. It was a twist of fate after having an interest seven years earlier was introduced again to the University of South Florida. After arriving here and meeting the other four faculty members who were starting in the Professional Physical Education Department, a new undergraduate program preparing physical education teachers, I knew this was the place for me to be. It was a very exciting time to start a new program; not to have to break down any barriers but rather to build from the ground up and do what we felt would be the right way. That happened, and I happily joined here even though I was an associate professor at Southwestern and the position here was an assistant. I didn't mind it because it paid me more money. I eventually made up the time

[and] advanced to associate and then full professor.

H: Who was the person that sat next to you on the plane?

B: [His name is] Jack Stovall. He was chairman of the Department of Physical Education at the time. I joined him and Margaret Crickenberger, who was the faculty member that had conceived starting the new program with Jack and Dr. Hall. Dr. Charles Smith and I joined them so we had five people that first year doing a program that was quite different. We put the students out in the schools the first semester when they came in [during] their junior year and they were out in the schools all four semesters until they graduated. I was particularly hard because I had been teaching kinesiology and exercise physiology and they wanted to be courses integrated so students wouldn't be taking varied courses here and there and not putting the information together for what they were preparing to do, to become teachers. I was able to teach a course in biokinetics in which we indeed integrated exercise physiology and kinesiology and even a course in measurements. [It was] a six-hour course; [they came] every day of the week. My assignments to them were to go out in the schools and study children and take measurements and solve problems and so-forth. It was a very exciting time. [In] that program we formed small teams so that students would have a continuous relationship with a faculty member from the time they joined the program. With a professional seminar every semester they would always know what their progress was having seen where they were when they began and where they ended up upon graduating. [It was] a very close-knit program. [The] faculty worked real hard and worked closely with the schools. Over the years we graduated and I retired some

1,200 physical education teachers. A few years ago I did a survey of Hillsborough County and over sixty-five percent of the teachers in elementary and middle school and secondary schools were graduates of our program. [It was] not quite as high in Pinellas [County], but probably around fifty percent of the teachers there [were graduates of our program]. That was a program that still continues. We added the wellness leadership program and the athletic training program over the last ten years. Those are going very well, as well. The undergraduate physical education program was where it all started. My first year here the physical education building was just completed. We were the first group of faculty in the building. We shared that with athletics. The building is still there and we're still sharing it with athletics. They're getting their own building in the spring. They'll be moving out. There will be only physical education faculty in there, I hope. [There would be] more room for the new programs.

H: It sounds like the stereotype of your physical education teacher is miles away from what you've been turning out in this program. You specifically brought more of a scientific basis [to the program]. I was looking through some of the literature you've written. It's very much you were talking about... [interrupted] and all these things and how much grip according to how large the hand is, etc. It sounds like you really have students doing some kind of scientific observations on site.

B: Very much so. My background had been, although it was physical education particular curriculum, we took all of our undergraduate courses with the pre-med students. The reason I wanted to teach at the university level was because of

interest in research. I always viewed the kinesiology and exercise physiology and the motor development aspect as the core of the course, the knowledge base upon which teachers would be making important decisions about children and exercises and what was good for them and what they shouldn't be doing at various ages. That part of the program along with the strong professionalism, there's such a high dropout rate among teachers and physical education teachers, particularly because they're out in the sun and they burn out. We made it important that our graduates stayed professionally up-to-date, that they were active in reading and going to conferences and continuing to update themselves and improve. One of the 1,200 graduates, you know we could site some who are directors of physical education here in the state of Florida [or] county superintendents and many principals. The biggest thing to me is the number of teachers now that thirty-five years ago graduated from the program, how many of them are still teaching and excited about it and still doing a good job. [They're] almost ready for retirement but having made that kind of life-long commitment to either elementary or middle school or high school students. That's what that program is all about, to make sure they didn't graduate and drift. We try to keep contact with them; we try to make sure they were continuing their professional growth.

H: It sounds like by continuing that growth, that then keeps them engaged in the profession rather than just sitting under the sun and getting tired of their profession. They stay engaged and interested.

B: Many went on to engage in teacher preparation, which was great to see them doing the same thing we were doing with them. It was very real and very deep.

Margaret Crickenberger deserves a great deal of credit for that as she was the person who was here and sought the others who joined in the program. [They were] exciting years and I'm happy to see that after Mike Stewart's leadership we continue to [have] a good faculty. All of our regional group has retired. The new faculty, hopefully, has picked up the reins.

H: You were kind of a rare case if you consider the entire forty-some-odd years going back that you moved into a brand new building. What was it like moving into your first office?

B: I shared it with Dr. Charles Smith. That was good. Even though we later had individual offices as faculty, to have someone who was starting new here. We had come [and] joined the program at Tampa University, [had the] chance to get to know each other and still [are] very good friends. That was a good situation. In those days, I guess because of lack of faculty space, we had faculty members from the College of Education in our building before the new College of Education building was built. There was a lot of integration there. You rubbed elbows with people outside of your department out of necessity or lack of office space. Gradually everyone was pooled together in their own departments and the university really became a little more traditional in that sense than what we had in the early days.

H: What was it like coming to a program [where] you talked about you're not breaking down barriers, you're building something from the ground up? What did that feel like? What were some of the first problems you tackled together?

B: The first one I can remember, there was an old traditional physical educational

program with the senior class that needed to complete their final semester and their final internship to graduate. Here we were starting out with a group of new students in the new program. It was kind of schizophrenic. You had to be able to differentiate. You couldn't start the approaches that we were using in the new program with the seniors who were not ready for that and had to take it from the beginning, so to speak. That first semester, teaching in both of those programs, you had to remind yourself, okay, I'm going into the senior class here. Let's make sure that what they hear is based on what they've learned before in terms of philosophy and follow through and so forth. That group endured us, the seniors did. The juniors, of course, were very excited about being in the new program. Some of the seniors were actually envious that we didn't start the program sooner because they saw some of the good points of the new approach and they wished they had been a part of it. That was the thing I remembered most. The workload [was heavy]. I was teaching at least six classes there. That would have been eighteen hours or so. It was temporary for that first year. That was the biggest thing for all of us, the workload that first year. Then we got into a natural rhythm of scheduling so it became much easier. Plus, we were developing new courses that everybody loved, really. We had minimal planning time before classes started in fall semester.

H: What was it like, also, coming to a university where the accent was on learning and Dr. Allen discouraged talk about a football team? I realize athletics are definitely separate from physical education, but somehow there might be a bit of synergy between the two. On the one hand he didn't really have much established

athletics. I guess things were just getting started with basketball and so forth in the late 1960s. What can you tell us about that?

B: I guess that's one of the other things that attracted me here. I had been to the University of Maryland, which had at that time and still has a big-time athletic program. Then [I was] a resident at LSU where I did my doctorate as well the University of Southwestern Louisiana. Even though we were in such close proximity with the athletic department for all of these thirty-five years in that building, we got along well together. Partly, I think, because their philosophy was and continues to be under Lee Roy Selmon that these are student athletes. We viewed both the athletes that belonged to the athletic department so to speak as our students. Some of them were our students who were also on athletic teams majoring in physical education. We also had the campus recreation program there. They occupied the downstairs area of offices. We viewed them as our students, as well. I think that's what made it work. We did have a policy that we enjoyed that all scheduling of facilities, academic classes came first, recreation came second, and athletics came third unless it was a scheduled game of some sort. That worked well for many years. Not that there weren't some scheduled conflicts where we both find ourselves in the same room [where] I didn't expect you to be there. I remember one situation where I was teaching a class in the physical education gymnasium and there were only about twenty minutes left in the class. Danny Holcomb and his Louisville Cardinal basketball team walks in early. They were supposed to be there at six o'clock, I think to practice. Of course, they came in bouncing their basketballs. I went over and told them that I

had a class in here that it would be available in twenty minutes. I don't think he had ever been told at the University of Louisville or anywhere that his basketball team couldn't come in. They waited there patiently, not happy, but patiently until I finished my class and we gave them the gym for their practice. Those occurrences were rare. We really managed to support and get along quite well when Dick Bowers was there and Paul Griffith and Alan Cleveland.

H: That's a great story.

B: I was looking up at most of them. They were all at least a foot or two taller than me, the players, that is. Danny Holcomb was my size.

H: Tell us, what were your impressions of the campus when you first came on, looking around physically at the campus?

B: The main difference is the trees. They were little scrub oaks, a lot of sand, not many sidewalks and few buildings. There were not parking problems, but there wasn't that much here. This library used to be, of course as you know, what is now the student services building. I can remember the day that we carried all the books over from that library to this library. Students volunteered and so forth. The campus has grown. I can remember saying, what are we ever going to do with all this land. It wasn't too long before we started saying, you can't put a building there because it's already spoken for. It's gone to now where it's hard to find a space on campus that you might put a building or plan a building with the parking garages and everything else that [have been built]. We couldn't have foreseen the tremendous growth in a short amount of time. When I came here we had probably 12,000 students. I was leaving the University of Southwestern

Louisiana with 12,000 students. I recently went back to the University of Southwestern Louisiana and they still have 12,000 students. We have, what now, 36,000 [students] or more? The growth was unexpected by those of us in the early days.

H: You started your climb from assistant to associate in 1969?

B: Yes.

H: Tell us about becoming more involved, of course you're always involved, but as time went on, soon after 1996 you were chairman of the physical education department. Tell us about getting more involved in actually running a department. What was it like?

B: I've never aspired to be an administrator. Our faculty asked me if I would do it, and I agreed to do it if we would set it up on a three-year rotating basis. I took that responsibility and then passed it on to another faculty member because I realized very quickly that being a full-time administrator and teaching full-time, which we did and I continued to do, was going to get in the way of my research interest which was the reason I got into higher education to begin with. It was quite different to have to be responsible for all the scheduling, to make sure that all the faculty knew where the rooms were and the students were and there was no conflicts or overlaps and so forth and grades were in and all of the other payrolls and everything that goes with it. That was quite a learning experience for me to have that part of it. In those days, things were very much more simple than they are now. There were not as many forms to fill out. We didn't have time forms to account for how many hours we spent doing what type of activity and so forth.

We were trusted. They knew they hired good people and they trusted that they would do the job. It was only later when the legislature got involved and started putting all these added requirements that took more time to report that we could have been doing more valuable kinds of activities. While I was an administrator, I also had an interest in grant writing. I had written these two grants at Louisiana. I wrote my first grant to start my master's degree program to adapt to physical education. The first year was a planning grant. The second year was a start. We were [one of] five in the country that were awarded. These were the first programs to compare teachers' specialty to work with children with disabilities. Several were at the doctorate level. Ours was one of two, I think, on the master's level. I was able to bring in Dr. Steve Klesius at that time from Wake Forest University and his background was adaptive physical education, as well. The interest I gained as a graduate student the University of Maryland [was] working with children with disabilities. The grant started out at \$20,000, that first grant and it kept going and going for some thirty years. We were funded uninterrupted by the U.S. Office of Special Education. We prepared many of the first teachers of physical education and most of the teachers of adaptive physical education in the state of Florida. I remember in the beginning we were preparing more teachers than Florida could use so we had a pipeline with Los Angeles city schools that they would hire any graduate that we could send them. They were a large school system and they needed teachers and adapted them. We have a west coast contingency out there that went out there because that's where the jobs were and remained there. Most stayed in the area. Students would come from all parts

of the country. First semester they couldn't wait to graduate to get back home. Then when January came and they enjoyed the warm weather and the spring time year-round, they started to think, you think I might possibly get a job here in Tampa? Most of them stayed. We were happy about that. We were able to attract good people at a graduate level, prepare them, and have them stay on. The graduate program had many of the features of the undergraduate program, particularly with the idea of getting out and working with the students in a year-long program. From the very beginning they were out working with children with disabilities. They gave a lot of service to the Hillsborough County schools. It was an additional help coming from us, free of charge, of course, the pre-internship that they did the first semester. By the second semester they were ready to start teaching. They already had degrees in physical education, but we had specialization for all types of disabilities that children might have. Other special education teachers would be a teacher who was [skilled to teach] mentally retarded [children] or a teacher with [skills to teach children with a] learning disability and so forth. Our teachers had a wide spectrum. All the kids came from different classes but to one physical education classroom. That was a program that I felt real good about that we were able to provide so much funding. Later we did the undergraduate preparation in adaptive physical education, as well.

H: It sounds like, too, that you furnished a lot of help to the community that way by all these people doing internships and going to these schools and learning, but at the same time, providing some help, too.

B: Yes, that was a big factor. Of course, it also helped the students in that once they were known and seen by the schools in Hillsborough or Pinellas County, because we weren't limited just to Hillsborough, it was easier to hire them. You knew what they could do for you by that point.

H: Was there any connection with the Special Olympics at all, over time?

B: Yes. For many years, the state Special Olympics was held here on campus. During that time, our students took an active part, usually under the supervision of Tony Jonaitis, who directed the games and the Special Olympics on campus for many years. He moved to Gainesville for a while and I think recently maybe came back to Tampa. He decided to spread it out around the state to include more volunteers. There were other types of activities, as well. There were wheelchair games and other things that our students participated in. We had, I'm sure, the first graduates of both our undergraduate and master's degree program, Karen Jacobs and George Murray were wheelchair athletes, and marathon runners and so forth. They enrolled in our undergraduate program and both graduated in two years. Karen stayed on for her master's degree and then went on to Tampa General Hospital to head up their sports program for persons with disabilities. [She] did a fine job with that. George took a semester off to be the first person to roll his wheelchair from Los Angeles across the country to his hometown in Maine, along with Phil Carpenter, another wheelchair athlete. We let him come back and finish his degree after that semester off.

H: It sounds like it would take much of the semester to make it across the country.

B: It took quite a while. He wanted to do it while it was cool, but not cold, so he

started in the spring as I recall. Sometime, later in the summer he finished it. I think he missed a summer semester. He had his picture on a box of Wheaties, the first wheelchair athlete to accomplish that.

H: Then he came back and finished his degree?

B: Yes. He didn't go into teaching. By then, he had become so involved in designing faster wheelchairs for athletes that he formed his own company and was very successful. As a matter of fact, he sold lightweight racing chairs for athletics.

H: Is he still in business today, do you know?

B: No, he sold it to a Belgium company a few years ago. Last time I talked to him he was state chess camp. He had gone from a racing to intellect in a chess competition.

H: That sounds like quite an alumnus there. We talked about your time as chair. We talked about some of the challenges during the course. You became chairman during a more simple time with less forms to fill out and such. Was there anything else from your time as chairman that you'd like to share?

B: I was chair the first time for three years. A number of years later I came back and did four years. I let the faculty talk me into doing one more year, which I think was a mistake, but I did that. That was a total of seven [years]. The following time I was chair after we became a school of physical education and wellness and sports studies about ten years ago. I started as chair and somehow we had lost sight of the rotation principle and I stayed for ten years until my retirement. I think maybe being in that position for ten years kind of hastened my retirement. I

was teaching full-time, I had one or two grants going each semester and I was full-time administrator. I guess if I had any regrets, it's that I didn't take any sabbatical leave or time off during my thirty-three years here that may have refreshed me during the process. I enjoyed every minute of it.

H: It certainly sounds like a full thirty-three years.

B: It's a full plate, the teaching and the grants along with the administration. The administrators normally at that time were teaching one class, but they expected you to. I had the kinesiology that I was the only qualified person to teach the kinesiology. I was telling someone that my entire career of forty years of higher education, I taught kinesiology every morning of the week at eight o'clock. They said, well that wasn't too smart. Who is making that schedule? I was usually the one who made the schedule. I felt that I wouldn't be able to ask somebody else to do that if I wasn't willing to be the one there at eight o'clock. I had to be there anyway as chair.

H: Except for the students. You were asking the students to be there.

B: Exactly.

H: I saw an old cartoon that said, Mr. Spain – I'm referring to Frank Spain – no matter what I do I always get an eight o'clock class. Maybe yours was one of them. During your time as chairman you became a full professor then?

B: Yes. [I became a full professor in] 1971. During the time I was chair I applied my credentials for teaching, research, and service at that time and reached full-professor. I thought that was the end of promotion-type things. I remember I used to say one of the good things about being a full-professor is that you don't

have to prepare all of those materials for evaluation and so forth. Now they're in a higher rank of distinguished university professor. I applied for that and was quite fortunate that I was able to receive that rare honor. Just a few of the university's faculty [receive that].

H: You were given tenure then, with your full professorship or did that come later?

B: Actually, tenure came with the promotion to associate. At that point you go from assistant to associate and get the tenure along with it.

H: Before we leave the early 1970s, let's talk about the late 1960s or early to mid 1970s as kind of a unique time for American history. What was the student body like? Obviously there was social reverberations going on around the country. The way students looked was changing and [the way students] acted [was changing]. Of course, not all [of the students], but some. What were your observations? You came in 1967. Through those early times do you remember anything interesting [or] strange going on around campus at that time or in your classes or events around campus?

B: Not so much in my classes, my students I found to be fairly non-political. [They were] interested more in physical activity in their courses. It's funny that you should mention that. Maybe my second year here I was appointed to a student-faculty committee that approves student organizations. A group came before us called Students for a Democratic Society. At first glance, I said, well, we're a democratic society. Our students want to be a democratic society. There were other faculty members there that had been here for a while or maybe more knowledgeable than me who were concerned about the group. Whenever we'd

ask them a question they gave you all the right answers you wanted to hear.

When it came time to vote whether they should receive it or not, I voted yes. I couldn't see, what I knew, anything wrong with them. They were Students for a Democratic Society. In the paper the next day there was a quote by the president and not a quote by me so much, but they pointed out that I voted for this group. It turned out that right or wrong, they caused a lot of problems on campus. Here I was in my first committee, a new university for me, that I made the headlines for voting for the Students for a Democratic Society. It all eventually blew over.

H: Would I be right in saying this was 1969?

B: Yes, it was about that time.

H: I've been studying through the *Oracles* and they followed this story and of course that SDS was known for violent protests around the country and college campuses.

B: Later, I learned that.

H: You never would have known from the answers they gave?

B: No. They seemed like they were very well mannered and a serious group. I didn't want to be against democracy in the students or a democratic society.

H: Were you the only one who voted that way?

B: I'm pretty sure I did. I don't know why the vote would have been made public, a show of hands or something. That was my first taste of campus politics.

H: [Is there] anything else you remember from that time?

B: I can remember some times that there were some student gatherings, but mostly in the evenings and so forth, when I wasn't on campus. With a family I tended to be

involved in activities with my four children when I did manage to get home about six or six-thirty.

H: You probably counted yourself lucky to get home and leave campus behind. We have a long period in between you getting a professorship in 1971 and then you becoming a distinguished professor in 1996. Fill us in. What were some of the progress going on in the department? You mentioned adaptive physical education. Were there other specialized programs that were coming up? What were some of the things going on in the program at the time?

B: The main thing was that we added a program for wellness specialists. There was a growing need within private industries and corporations and such that they were becoming conscious of the importance of their employees being well and in a state of wellness in order to be more productive and in order to lower their insuring cost and so forth. There weren't people prepared for that. We began to get physical education majors who were interested in wellness. They would get the physical education degree rather reluctantly and then go and get a job in wellness. It didn't take us too long to realize that what we need here is a program of wellness for these persons. We started that program about fifteen years ago, and it was very successful. Students graduated from that program, maybe because they were the first ones out there, they quickly made a reputation. [There were] a lot of requests for jobs at that time. The internship that students would do could be mostly within this area, but many went out of state. We would leave it to the ingenuity of the student to arrange for an internship, as long as we had appropriate supervision. We've had students go to the Aerobic Institute in Dallas. One

interned at the White House at the gym there. Most of the hospitals in the area let our students serve as interns. We had that contingency that as it grew it became equal in number to our physical education majors program. The athletic training program more recently, of course, is also a smaller program, but one in which joined forces with the athletic department so that we provide experiences for them with the athletic teams close at hand. [We can] provide them with some free service at the same time giving our students some experience before they went out for final internships with other teams in the area and so forth. That program, I think, is coming up for accreditations this next year. I had started that program and then turned it over to Dr. Mike Stewart. He replaced me as the director of the School of Physical Education, Wellness, and Sports Studies. Accomplishing that was quite a challenge, too. To get recognized as a school you have to show not only that you're unique but that you have a high enough quality to get that because it goes all the way to the Board of Regents for approval. We worked a few years to get that done.

H: Were you working in that program in anticipation of getting football? Was it before football?

B: It was really before football. Do you mean the athletic training?

H: Yes.

B: Football didn't really enter into the equation so much, although it's helped give more variety and experience, but more the need in high schools for athletic trainers. So many high schools are using student trainers. While they may be good people, they're very young to be in that very responsible position to be

looking at injuries and making decisions and so forth. At games they have positions and attendants, but practices is where a lot of people get hurt. They have five days of practice and one day a week [is the] game. If you don't have the qualified personnel there for practices it's not a good situation. In terms of the programs, when I first came here it was a K-12 certification, which meant that we prepared students for teaching either elementary or high school – both, actually. In the program there were individuals who knew the day they came in that they never wanted to see a small elementary child. They wanted to be a high school teacher or perhaps even a coach. As they went through that part of the program dealing with young children they were getting by until they could get to the real stuff that they were interested in. Dr. Hugh Hoffman was the person who let this action. He convinced the State Board of Education that we should have certification for elementary, K-8, and secondary, 6-12, with the middle school being the overlap. [He] got that passed as a state requirement. We changed our program to two tracks where students coming in would study in depth young children, elementary grades and those who were interested in high school would study only the older age group and so forth. That makes such a difference in the morale of the students. They weren't stuck learning something that they thought they would never use. The reality is, when they graduated, they many times took a job where they could find it, and that was in the elementary. They'd come back and say, I wish I had paid more attention. When you had K-8 [and] 6-12, you couldn't have a person who was six through twelve teaching young children. Unfortunately, within the last two years, the state legislature, in their wisdom,

have seen fit to go back to K-12, something that was working beautifully, and I remember testifying when I was still a faculty and still director of the program in Tallahassee and anywhere else I could find them why it was important to maintain that certification K-8 and 6-12. [I explained] why it was important to keep the adaptive physical education specialist that we had also gained. For efficiency, basically, is where they explained it, they eliminated [the program]. There's a shortage of teachers and we want to make it easy for anyone coming from out of state to get a job here. There's not a shortage of teachers in either adaptive physical education or regular physical education teachers. It was like, why bother to leave that little stuff there? It's unfortunate when politicians are making educational decisions without proper information.

H: [They're] constantly looking at the bottom line and thinking of ways to save money rather than to make it a better experience for the children.

B: That's right. Efficiency.

H: What else can you tell us? What led to you becoming a distinguished professor?

B: It's based on teaching, research, and service. My teaching has always been good, I think. I pride myself in teaching. I enjoy it very much. I've won a number of undergraduate teaching awards for outstanding teaching. I think the area that really separates people is the research area. There, I mentioned the initial grant and then thirty years of grants where we provided funds for students. I also was fortunate to be able to get grants that led to my initial research in designing playgrounds for children with disabilities. The first grant I called it Play Learning Centers because that was more desirable for the granting agencies to see that there

was a place where children played but were also learning. We did that initial research and was the first research done regarding accessibility, playgrounds for children with disabilities. What we discovered is children with cerebral palsy, for instance, could engage in meaningful play on a playground if it was designed properly to provide them with access such as ramps and handrails and things of that sort. We also found that play behaviors was not really different from that of other children of the same age. These children had the same desires and need to play as everyone else given an environment that they can play like they want to. I kind of like to think that that really started the notion of the attention nationally that accessible playgrounds are not only possible for children but that they don't have to separate. That's what I was hearing at that time. You've got to build a separate playground for these disabled children. Now they're saying build a playground for children, which includes children with disabilities and it's not going to hinder children without disabilities. For many years it was moving so slowly. I shared it with all the playground manufacturers and they all said the ideas here and the design principles are sound, and I know it would benefit kids, but the bottom line is, will I make any more money than I'm currently making? I'm currently doing pretty good. I really couldn't guarantee that the profit [would change]. With the advent of the ADA, the American Disabilities Act, included in that were playgrounds. That got people's attention.

H: It suddenly became necessary.

B: Then California might be able to build new playgrounds without accessibility factors and other states have joined in. Now we're seeing some real progress in

that area. I guess I learned that you don't see change overnight. Nothing seems to happen that quickly, whether it's gas mileage in cars being reduced or accessible playgrounds or restaurants or whatever. It certainly came faster than I thought it would when the ADA came to affect. After that study and publishing the results and so forth, I continued to design over a hundred different custom design models here in the Tampa area, throughout Florida, and even nationally for different groups. I did this free of charge as part of my professional service that the university expected me to do as a faculty member. My rule of thumb was if a money making corporation approached me I would charge them a modest fee, and public designs for their day care centers or corporate centers I let them pay me because I pay them every time I go in for my groceries. If it was any non-profit group I didn't charge for it. These were wooden structures that I designed and that built usually by them or by a contractor. That was gratifying to see the number of playgrounds that have been built and children were able to use them even before the American with Disabilities Act came into affect. That's probably what I'm best known for. It's unique and there's publicity associated with it. It's really been a relatively small part of my professional activities. With Dr. Steve Klesius, we teamed together and we did the "I'm Special" videotapes on a grant from the U.S. Office of Education. Those were usually designed to prepare teachers of physical education to become adaptive physical education specialists. The fifteen tapes, which were fifteen minutes a piece in length, were highly successful. [There were] over 400 copies out, promptly after the grant. Then we started getting requests from people to help them use the videotapes in their

classes. We got a second grant to do training on a regional basis nationwide.

There we were able to include representatives from 44 states and 350 people from universities and from state departments of education. We would provide training on how we use the tapes in our program here. [We] gave the state department a copy of the tape with permission to make as many copies as they needed. That 400 copies grew multiple within each state. They were used and still are used extensively in the United States.

H: When were those made?

B: These were made over a three-year period from 1980 to 1983.

H: It's impressive that twenty years later...

B: Sometimes it worries me, but I check them once in a while. Fortunately, the information is still correct. The clothes styles and the haircuts are no longer in vogue, but if they can get past that, I think it's still useful. We gave the Brazilian government permission to convert the narration into Portuguese. I was invited down to visit five of the universities to present to their faculty how to use the videotapes. Of course, they're translating my English into Portuguese and back to me because I don't know any Portuguese. I spent a week there and went to five different universities helping them use it. They were just starting their teacher preparation program in adaptive physical education at that time.

H: We have five minutes left, we should probably just keep going onto another tape.

I'm sure you have more [to talk about]. We've talked about the research that you've done. We talked about two of the big ones. What are some of the other things you've been engaged in?

B: With Dr. Klesius, we did an interactive videodisc project. We got an additional grant from the Office of Special Ed, we got help from IBM to instruct an eight-hour course that would allow teachers or perspective teachers the opportunity to analyze the basic skills of running, jumping, throwing, and kicking. There's a touch-screen approach where the videodisc would show the child perform the... they were asked then to identify correct and incorrect performance of the individual. They could play it back in slow motion. They could stop action. They had full control over it until they gave ninety percent correct answers before they moved onto another practice. Once they were successful in reaching ninety percent correct in their practices they took a test to move onto the next skill. On average, it would take about eight hours to finish a course. I did a study and found that indeed, undergraduate students who used this were able to successfully learn how to analyze running, jumping, throwing, and kicking skills. We distributed about 200 sets of the large videodisc, as you remember. The unfortunate part of this research of this project, in terms of distribution, is that IBM, shortly after that, quit making the equipment and moved onto the next stage of CD-ROMs and later to Digital Video Disks. We took our experience from that, however, and we decided to look at producing a DVD, which was our last project, physical activities for all DVDs. That has some twenty-five hours of information on a DVD disk that's used by teachers in presentations if you're teaching adaptive physical education, or an individual teacher can go to a menu and find out and see in action a child with certain types of disabilities and what kind of appropriate activities would be for that child. It's a real rich database of short video clips and

still pictures all with narration for teachers. We distributed some 2,000 copies of that to the physical education population. Now it's being sold by a publisher. That was a five-year project. All of these productions we did with WUSF television, a subcontract with Bill Buxton, the station manager there to produce the "I'm Special" videotapes, the material on the video disc, and the digital video disc. This technology advance, we've tried to stay ahead of the curve with our instructional materials that we're producing. Both Steve and I ended our career with the physical activity for DVD.

H: It sounds like perhaps it was a good thing that the videodisc went out because you had to make a newer, more complete... it sounds like this next project really superceded the last in its thoroughness.

B: Yes, very much. In fact, we put some of the throwing, catching, kicking skill material on the DVD just so we would have those images to work with, but not the programming that went with the first interactive laser disc that we had. I still have hopes of taking the material that we had from the laser disc and somehow transferring it to a DVD along with the programming. It's a very viable way to learn if you have the equipment to get the feedback.

H: Should we take a quick break here?

[End of Side A]

H: We're continuing our oral history here with Dr. Louis Bowers. We were just talking about some of the programming and research you've done. Surely there's stuff that we left behind over the past thirty-three years that we haven't covered yet. What are some of the things we haven't talked about that you'd like to

mention?

B: One that comes to mind is the opportunity of being a faculty member at a university. Years ago we were contacted by the Department of Defense dependent schools. They wanted us to submit a proposal for a summer workshop for American teachers who were based in military bases all over the world to come here to Tampa for Steve Klesius and I to do a two-week workshop for the teachers in adaptive physical education. Of course, we had the “I’m Special” video tapes at that time so we built pools around the idea that we not only prepare them in adaptive physical education, but we would give each a set of the video tapes to take with them so they would have that to share with other teachers in their school. We were awarded that grant and it was a very good experience working with those teachers. [They were] very eager. They only get to come home about every two years, so they were anxious for what’s the latest, what’s up-to-date, what’s going on? They were very fine people. About two years later the government figured out that it would be a lot cheaper rather than flying home fifty people and flying them back to their bases if they brought me to their military bases. I was able to get a contract in between semesters in spring where I did nine workshops in twenty-one days in six countries. [I] started off in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which was the most interesting place because of the unique situation there. They took us out to see the fence between the Cuban soldiers and our Marines. [I] had to stay there a few days because there was only a military plane in and out once a week. [I] enjoyed the teachers there and went on to Bermuda, the Naval base there, then to London, five Air Force bases circling

London and then on to NATO headquarters. My wife was able to join me in Bermuda and travel with me and assist me with all my handout materials and equipment we were traveling with. It was really an enjoyable experience, being able to see all of those countries and stay on the military bases there and the people there. It was challenging, endurance-wise.

H: It sounds like a real whirlwind tour, twenty-one days.

B: [I did] nine workshops.

H: In three weeks.

B: We pulled it off.

H: Was this adaptive physical education primarily for soldiers who had been injured?

B: No, it turns out that for many years they told me that if you were in the military and you were assigned out of the states and you had a child with a disability, you couldn't bring the child with you. If you did, there weren't any special education services on American bases. Someone finally stood up and said, wait, this is hurting my career. I'm being discriminated against; I have a child with a disability and a family I'm not going to part with just to go overseas. They said, yeah, we'll have to train our teachers to do this. This was the beginning of the special education, including adaptive physical education at those military bases. Once again, it was with an eager group. [It was] something they wanted to do and needed a lot of help with, information about [it] and assistance with starting programs in those American schools on military bases.

H: What year was that?

B: It goes back to about 1990.

H: How did it feel to become a distinguished professor?

B: My life didn't change very much. Certainly, my family was proud of me, and I had all my children in. That was a big highlight, along with my wife and a party with my family. I guess the age difference was being a member of the Distinguished University Professor group. They're still a very active group. We meet and discuss university issues, research, otherwise, meet with the provost, with the president in luncheons we have throughout the year, at least quarterly, if not more. That was neat, to be able to meet those people which come from all over campus that I didn't normally get the chance to be associated with in meetings and research council I served on and faculty senate council and those groups. Those groups were not necessarily distinguished university professors, but real fine people. This was a different focus. I have met with the group since I retired, when invited. I hope they'll continue to be a group that gets together with the concerns of the welfare of the university. How much advice they listen to [I don't know], but we give advice. [They like to] put their two cents in.

H: How many people are in the Distinguished Professors group?

B: When we get together there's usually not more than fifteen, which over the history of the university, I don't know how many total they've given out. When I received mine there were about ten that had been awarded at that time, the Distinguished University Professors.

H: Then and now you are among the elite.

B: There's one good thing. It's a title that they can't take away. I hope they can't. [It's something] you carry with you.

- H: You really have to go that extra ten or twenty miles to get something like that, it sounds like.
- B: It does take a lot of effort to be able to do all three. I had administration thrown in mine, seventeen of my thirty-three years.
- H: Of course, your interest to begin with was research and in the course of doing all these things you weren't thinking in the back of your head, I want to get that distinguished professorship, right? It just happened over time.
- B: I really didn't know it existed. There's another award given for university service. Someone told me to apply for that, or they were nominating me, and I prepared the materials. In the process of doing that, I said, wait a minute, I've got all three areas. I won the Distinguished University Service award. The next year I had the materials already prepared, very similar, same three categories, [I said] why not? All they can do is tell me, no, you're not worthy. I was very honored that they said, yes, you get it. I guess I've been particularly proud because physical education is not at the top of the food chain when it comes with academic areas. We think we're quite accomplished and good, but not everyone else does. I was able to earn that here. It was very special.
- H: It sounds like it's definitely well deserved, the kind of depth you brought to that profession and all the exciting projects that you've worked on over time that we got to learn about today. [Is there] anything else that we've missed? We ask some closing-up questions, but I'm just trying to see if there's anything that we left unturned that we didn't talk about.
- B: Not really, except I wouldn't want to leave the impression that I did this all alone.

With the grants, my partner was always Steve Klesius. He and I wrote grants together. We did projects together. For thirty years we worked together in close form along with Bill Buxton over at WUSF television. [It] made us really look good in terms of our production with the "I'm Special" tapes and the videodisc and the digital videodisc project. With this talent and this staff there, we're always cost effective on grants. Because of the subcontract we could do with the on-campus station versus what it would cost us out in the commercial world for the same quality. Other than that, I wanted to point out that a lot of people helped me along the way. It was a lot of fun doing all those projects. They were important and also enjoyable activities.

H: In case of the process of winding down, usually the first thing I like to ask is, we kind of covered this, but what are you the most proud of when you look back at your career here at USF? It doesn't have to be a single thing.

B: I guess the most proud I am of everything that went into my teaching, my research projects via grants, and the service that I was able to provide for the children with disabilities in particular as it culminated and being recognized as a Distinguished University Professor. That brought it all together for me. While I'm continuing to do research and writing a book on how to write grants, I really felt that when I retired I was at the top. I felt that if I retired then I wouldn't be on the down side after that.

H: It sounds like even now you're not in the down side. You are writing a book then?

B: Yes.

H: [The book] is to help other people to write grants and things like you've done?

B: Yes, by a national association.

H: How is that coming along?

B: [It's coming along] very well. They gave me four months to write it in.

H: You already have a publisher in mind and everything?

B: Yes, the American Alliance for Health and Physical Education [will be publishing the book]. I'm only halfway finished and I should hopefully meet the deadline.

H: [That's] great. The other question I usually ask to wind down is if you had a message for future generations, people coming along, whether someone just thinking about getting into college or someone thinking about getting into physical education, what message would you transmit to them? What would you tell them?

B: [I would tell them to] get into a field that you really are interested in, [that you] want to do, [that you] have a passion for, [and that you're] committed to. That, to me, has been more important to me than all the money I may have earned in other fields. We used to say for many years, the faculty, they're actually paying us to do this. We enjoy what we're doing so much. If they only knew, we'd do it anyway. If we had a way to get food and a house to live in, we wouldn't bother about the pay. We're sincere about that. Our work was athletic and vice versa. I don't know if people in all fields feel that way. I know a lot of researchers in other fields [do]. I've heard them talk about their work [being] what keeps them going. That's the key. Don't look at the money or other factors. If it's what you really want to do, that's the important thing. That's the thing you're going to

really excel in because you want to be in that field doing that thing and enjoying it.

H: I guess the only thing that you could say that's more positive than your work was your play was that you helped an awful lot of people along the way. You contributed an awful lot to this university. I want to thank you for being with us today and for everything else you've done.

B: [It was] my pleasure. Thank you.

H: Thank you.

*End of Interview*