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## Richard Dutton oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, March 13, 2003

Richard E. Dutton (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center  
Oral History Program  
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

*Year of arrival*

Dr. Dutton came to USF in 1963 as an assistant professor in the College of Business.

*Circumstances that brought him to USF*

When he finished his graduate program at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, he narrowed the schools he was considering down to two: Auburn University and the University of South Florida. He says he visited both schools, and each was very different from the other. He says that Auburn has a long history, strong alumni, and an athletic program. Also, Auburn University is a residential campus, where the students were very involved in campus life. The university was also located in a small town where the university dominated the city. He says USF is located in a large city and Tampa can function whether or not USF is here. He asked himself, ‘Why not choose USF?’ He realized that he might never have another chance to start something from the ground up. “Here was an opportunity to create your own ivy. We created our traditions as we went along. The challenge to do that was enormous. Once I got the feel of that, Auburn as an option faded away very quickly,” he states.

*Dr. Dutton describes the atmosphere of USF when he arrived*

He says there were very few buildings and very few students. He says students first arrived in the fall of 1960. In the summer of 1960 there were no students. In the fall of 1960 there were 1,997 students. “That student increase must have been something to behold,” Dr. Dutton says. He says that in 1963 there was a continuing growth spurt. “The resources that we had, people as well as buildings, never quite kept up with the growth curve. We were always behind. But that was a good problem to have because it meant we were growing,” states Dr. Dutton.

*What did USF and the surrounding area look like in 1963*

He says the USF area was flat. The administration buildings, the original library, and three dorms, Alpha, Beta, and Gamma, all existed when he arrived in 1963. He says the dorms had no visitation rules at the time. The trees were short, small, and few in numbers. Fowler Avenue was two lanes and had very few stores along it. The original restaurant was the University Restaurant, which was where the University Mall is now.

He says the restaurant was a very popular place since there were few other places for people to gather. Also, Fletcher Avenue had very few things along it. “We thought it was a huge growth burst when they built Fontana Hall and Desoto Hall, which is now part of John Knox Village. Desoto Hall was never populated with many students,” states Dr. Dutton.

*Dr. Dutton talks about when the University Community Hospital was built*

The University Community Hospital did not exist in 1963. Dr. Dutton says that when the hospital was built the name confused a lot of people. He says the hospital was given its name because it was in an area that was designated the university area. Many people thought the hospital was related to the University. People thought the hospital belonged to USF or was a teaching hospital.

*Dr. Dutton describes the faculty and student interactions in the early days*

“Those early days were sort of like beginning a family. The classes were small and you got to know those students in the early days. We had no central counseling or advising sections. Every faculty member had a series of files representing the students in his department that he was to advise. It was a very personal relationship. Students would come to you on a term-by-term basis. Those days are gone. We are too large to do that. We were like an extended family,” Dr. Dutton states.

*Dr. Dutton describes the very first faculty to arrive at USF*

He says the people that came in the very beginning, in 1960 and 1961, were from schools around the countryside. They came from schools such as Berkley, University of California, Michigan State University, Penn State University, and University of Illinois. Dr. Dutton says that all of these schools were well established and had their own images. “It had to be a risk to come to a university that had no image, history, or alumni. I really take my hats off to those people in those early two or three years. Those early pioneers took a risk,” Dr. Dutton states.

*Dr. Dutton describes the first president of USF, John Allen*

Dr. Dutton states that the very first faculty member who was hired at USF was the chief librarian. Dr. Dutton says President John Allen believed that the focus point of the university should be the library. Also, President Allen was not a big supporter of football. He believed very strongly in academic work. He thought that having major athletics sports would take away interest and energy in the academic program and would take away financial resources. “He was a kindly gentleman. He was a scholar from the old school. He did not demand respect, but you gave it to him. He was an excellent listener. He spoke quietly, precisely, and thoughtfully. He did not let you wonder where he stood on an issue. But, he was very graceful. You never felt like you were being put down, or lectured to,” states Dr. Dutton. He met him the very first day he arrived at USF because the school was so small. He says that meeting the president was routine. “Every faculty member met all of the administrators. That made you a part of the family. It was a wonderful experience,” he says. Dr. Dutton says President John Allen was very interested in the curriculum. President Allen had an office where the USF golf course is now. It is still there. The office building had a retractable roof. President Allen loved

astronomy. The office also had a very nice telescope. There were not many apartments in those days. President Allen would conduct many research studies in his office. John Allen died due to Alzheimer's disease.

*Dr. Dutton describes where his office was located and what it was like*

His office was on the fourth floor of the original library, which is where WEDU and WUSF are now housed. His office was in a carrel, which is about the size of a large broom closet. Then he moved to an office where two faculty members had to share a room. The office was separated by a partial wall. However, he says if there was a student with a problem, it was hard to have privacy. The College of Business was in Alpha Hall. It was very close-knit. Alpha Hall had colleges and departments along the corridor. He says the different colleges and departments would get to know one another well.

*Dr. Dutton describes the first USF graduation*

The first graduation occurred shortly after he arrived in 1963. He says that even though the school had not yet existed for four years, many of the students came by transfer so USF was able to have a graduation. The ceremony took place on the lawn behind the Administration Building. The faculty and students all sat on steel chairs. "It was a very warm day. We were all sweating. We didn't seem to mind. It was a symbol of the fact that the school was one large family," states Dr. Dutton.

*Dr. Dutton describes the classrooms in 1963*

"We had to teach our classes wherever we could find space. There were no designated classrooms, like the College of Business now has its own building," he says.

*How was the College of Business organized in those early days*

Dr. Dutton says the organization was most complete at the dean's level. In the College of Business there was a dean, a secretary, and an administrative assistant. They were housed in the Administration Building. Dr. Dutton says the faculty was so small that there was no need to have a department chairman. The Accounting Department was the largest group. They had an area coordinator because they were larger and had more courses. The Accounting Department had six or seven faculty members. There were more informal coordinators for the other smaller areas. These areas were Finance and Economics, and Management and Marketing. Finance and Economics were jointly run and staffed by five or six faculty members. Management and Marketing, now completely separate, were together, and staffed by four or five people. The group was very small and was located on the fourth floor of the old library. He says a lot of problems got solved at higher levels administratively than currently because the structure is now so detailed, and the different colleges have many administrative levels where things can get solved within the college.

*How many hours the faculty taught in the early days*

Dr. Dutton says that all the faculty members taught either nine or twelve hours because the student population kept growing.

*Dr. Dutton talks about the rewards from teaching*

He says teaching is very rewarding. He sees pictures of former students in newspapers who have gone on to become very successful. He also has received letters from former students thanking him for his influence. He has even received a wedding invitation from two students who met and fell in love in one of his classes.

*Did he intend to stay at USF for thirty years?*

One of his senior faculty members at LSU was a retired army officer. He was a full-time professor in the marketing department. One of things he advised the graduate students about was to try and remain at a school for a long period of time. He said to try and grow with the institution. The professor told his graduate students that there will be strong temptations to move about, because you can often increase your rank and your salary because you are putting yourself on the market. The professor said that moving about damages the sense of watching something grow up. Dr. Dutton says he has often thought about that professor's advice. Dr. Dutton has left USF only once. He became a visiting faculty member at the University of Texas where he got his M.B.A. He knew he would only be there for a year while a faculty member was gone to do a research project. Some people at USF did not think he would come back. He is glad that he has stayed at USF for thirty years. He says that USF was growing so rapidly. "It was difficult in the '60s to think about leaving because there was always so much work to do," states Dr. Dutton. It was not a conscious thought that he would stay here, but he is very glad that he did.

*Interactions among different departments*

Dr. Dutton says interaction in those early days really was not an option. "If you were going to mount a sizable committee you had to reach out and involve people in other disciplines. It became important because you got to know some of the problems, opportunities, and challenges that resided in the other disciplines. You also got a better feel for the talent that existed at USF. I discovered that we had a marvelous embryo in the College of Music. There was a lot of talent over there. Now, we separate people by necessity. We are all little entities here and there on campus. There are some committees still, like graduate work committees and so forth, that do pull people together from different departments. But, it is far different than the early days," he states. Dr. Dutton is very excited about the USF Faculty and Staff Club. He is proud to see that develop. "We talked about it for years. It is strictly a social organization. But, it provides an access point for staff and faculty members from all over to gather together," he says. The club tailgates before football games, has different social events, and even wine tasting. They get together at least once a week on the top floor of the Marshall Center. He hopes the group will get larger and larger. He does miss that chance to connect to people from other areas on campus. On the other hand, he is very proud of the research work and the excellent quality that is on the USF campus.

*Was there community support for the University in those early days being that USF was so new?*

In the beginning, Dr. Dutton believes there was not much community support. At the very beginning, USF had no buildings on campus and used a small house down near Bayshore Boulevard, right next to downtown Tampa. "You would think a new entity

would cause some excitement and bonding. But, that did not happen. It could be because the USF area is far away from the downtown area. There was not much interaction between the city and the University,” states Dr. Dutton. He thinks that possibly the University of Tampa was seen as the city’s school. He says now there is a lot of interaction among the community and USF.

*What were his students like in the 1960s, and how have they changed since then?*

“The students in the ‘60s and the ‘70s were often the first people in their family to go to college. They were eager and awestruck about being in college. They were very respectful and eager to learn. Attendance was not a problem,” states Dr. Dutton. He thinks the students studied harder because there were fewer distractions; the school, the city, and Ybor were smaller. Also, he says there was more time to study. The early students wondered what the background of the professor was. They were very interested to know where the professor came from and what school he or she had attended.

*Was there a dress code when he arrived?*

He says there was a dress code for faculty and it was much more prescribed than it is now. The dean and his assistants always wore a jacket and a shirt and tie. He says the other faculty members looked at that as kind of a model. It was not explicit, but it was implicit. Students were expected not to wear shorts. Tank tops were not allowed. He says beyond that there was no detailed prescription about what students should wear. Students dressed casually and comfortably because it was warm. Dr. Dutton says that very gradually the dress of both students and faculty became more informal.

*What was the political climate like on campus in the 1970s?*

“Since we were a commuter school so much, our political activity level was always very modest. The demonstrations were energetic, with cards, bullhorns, and marches. There was a sit-in in the Administration Building, but it did not last very long. It could have been because the administration was not that distant from the student population. There was enthusiasm, but not a lot of anger,” states Dr. Dutton.

*What were students interested in during the 1970s besides politics?*

“Students were interested in trying to grow the University in terms of more things to do. Phyllis Marshall was always the mom in the building. She was a strong champion. Students always felt like they could go to her and she would listen to their suggestions. She got a lot of things started, like places for students to gather and talk,” he says.

*How was USF changing in the 1970s?*

“The ‘70s was also the time when the community around us—the neighborhoods, Fletcher Avenue, Flower Avenue, and 50th Street—began to become really convinced that USF was not going away and that it was a viable institution that was going to be a really big university one day. Businessmen and women realized that they needed to prepare for that by building more homes, and apartments,” he states. Dr. Dutton says they realized they needed to build especially because USF was not expanding at the same rate in the number of residence halls like it was in the number of other physical buildings. He says this is why there are so many apartment buildings around the University.

*Dr. Dutton talks about the John's Committee*

By the time Dr. Sutton felt like he was settled in at USF in 1963, the John's committee had decreased in its influence. However, he felt like the after effects were still evident. It reminded him of the McCarthy era—looking for robbers that were not there. He thinks it was a very difficult time for the University. “So many disturbances created with so few results. I think it slowed down the image of the University. Other people did not have much to go on about USF but what they may have read in the newspaper or seen on television. I was glad the major impact had occurred before I really got settled at USF,” states Dr. Dutton.

*What is his opinion about USF becoming research focused?*

Dr. Dutton states that most growing schools that have momentum, talent, and funding want to go the route of research. “In academic land, we have a holy trilogy—teaching, research, and service. That is true for all colleges and universities. As you move through that, the balance of energy and funding shift among those three entities. It's a growing up process. As you travel along the path, service remains important. The research versus teaching formula is the thing that changes most. The Ph.D. is not a teaching degree, it is a research degree. You can gain notoriety for a university faster in research grants and outstanding publications because they are broadcast so quickly throughout the areas that are important to research than you can in having the longer run slower impact of outstanding graduates. Good research usually generates a spin-off in good teaching and an advancement of knowledge. The fact remains that it does take resources, dollars, equipment, space, and people to mount that successful effort in becoming a research institution. And we are there. It is almost impossible to stop us now, the momentum is there and it builds year by year,” states Dr. Dutton. However, his heart is with the students, because that is how USF grew in the early days. “But, I understand where we are now, and I applaud that. It is kind of inevitable that we move in that direction. FSU and UF are receiving a challenge from us. They sense the inevitability of USF becoming larger and larger and more powerful. One day we will be the largest university in the state system, because we are in a growth location,” he says.

*Growth of College of Business over the years*

The College of Business was first in the old library then it moved into the first College of Business building, which is the building that now houses the ROTC and is adjacent to SOC. In this building the offices were small and located on the top floor. There was a central area where all the secretaries from different departments were located. Dr. Dutton says this was very efficient. We each had separate offices. In 1979 or 1980, the College of Business moved into the building where it is located today. Dr. Dutton says the Business Building has won several awards for energy efficiency. The sun's rays never touch the interior of the building. “We have out-grown that building already. We have classes in Cooper Hall and CIS. We have plans drawn for an expansion of the building. It will improve the area by about sixty to seventy percent. We will have space for graduate study carrels. It will relieve the overcrowding,” states Dr. Dutton.

*Any last words that Dr. Dutton would like to leave behind*

Dr. Dutton mentions the movie Pay it Forward. “That would be my request. For faculty and students to devote resources of all kinds—skills, talents, advice—to the institution, to a department, a program, or a scholarship at USF wherever their heart leads them. The tremendous growth of resources is very valuable. The whole notion of pay it forward is a wonderful legacy,” states Dr. Dutton.

*End of Interview*