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# John Grant oral history interview by Andrew Huse, December 7, 2004

John Grant (Interviewee)

Andrew T. Huse (Interviewer)

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**Andrew Huse:** Today is December 7, 2004. My name is Andrew Huse, Program Assistant for the Florida Studies Center. Today we continue a series of interviews in 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 former Florida State Senator John Grant. You came to USF in sixty-one [1961], is that correct? And he was an undergraduate student at the time. Currently he works as a political consultant, and I'm glad to have you here.

**John Grant:** It's good to be here.

AH: Well, I guess we'll just start out at the beginning. When did you get to USF? When did you apply? When did you first think of coming?

JG: Actually, I got to USF in 1958. At that time, Fowler Avenue was a dirt road. There was not a single building on this campus. There were a lot of piles of sand. And I was a sophomore in high school here in Tampa, and they asked a number of sophomores to come out and participate in the groundbreaking, because it'd take two years to build the campus and the then-sophomore high school class would be the class to come in as charter graduates. So I came out here in 1958 and participated in the groundbreaking, and came back out here, actually, when I was a senior in high school, and participated in the opening convocation.

And then I went to the University of Florida for a year. It was interesting. I came back from the University of Florida—I wanted to go away from home to college, and so I went to Gainesville and had a good freshman year. I came back to get a summer job, and I couldn't find a job, so I decided well, I'd take advantage of the summer and come out here to USF and knock some courses out. So I took physics, biology, and speech that summer. And I just had a thoroughly wonderful experience, and I realized what a cherished place this was, because at the University of Florida all of my—all of my

courses had either been mass lectures or taught by graduate students. And here, because we had to start the university from scratch and hire department chairmen to build their programs—and we only had freshmen and sophomores here, so all the courses were taught by Ph.D.s and they were small classes. And it was just a new experience for me, and I loved it. I said, “I don’t want to go back to Gainesville,” so I didn’t. And I stayed here and I graduated.

We had nineteen hundred students, and almost everybody knew everybody else. There were only five buildings on campus, the entire campus, and it was just a wonderful, wonderful experience. I thoroughly enjoyed my time here at USF, and feel that I got a tremendous education as well. I had a unique opportunity to have a university experience in a small college setting with a quality faculty. Dr. Allen was a, he was a wonderful president, and he was a great recruiter. And what he did was, he sold the sunshine.

And I remember, for example, my physics professor was a friend of Dr. Allen’s, because he was himself an astronomer, and he knew very well the head of the physics department at Columbia University, who had just retired, and, uh—Dr. Clarence Clark. So Dr. Allen called him up and said, “Clarence, why don’t you come down here and set up our physics department? It’s a great way to get out of New York and live in the sunny South.” And so Dr. Clark did. And he became a close friend of mine until literally the day he and his wife both passed away.

I developed some tremendous friendships here, and some deep roots, and just had a wonderful, wonderful education experience. It was a university before it became a big university, and I was the beneficiary of it.

AH: So you lived at home and commuted?

JG: I lived at home and commuted. My home was only about seven or eight miles from here. It was almost totally a commuter school. While I was here they built the first dormitories. But it was essentially a commuter school.

AH: Okay. So it sounds like you got off to a running start that first summer with three courses.

JG: I really did, and—but I enjoyed it. The classes were small and the professors took time. I remember my physics professor—we were talking about rocket launches and the space program and so forth, and he says, “Well, why don’t we all get in the car and drive over and tour the Cape [Canaveral]?” And we did. Those were the kinds of experiences we had.

AH: What about—after that first summer, you were a political science major, right?

JG: I was a political science major with a minor in business. And, um, I took all of the core courses in the College of Business, but got my degree in political science because number one, I knew I wanted to go to law school, and number two, I wanted the

flexibility to take a number of different courses. The business program was a little too narrow to allow me to do that, so.

I got a good liberal background, and intended to go right to law school. As it turned out, as a part of being here I made some contacts that—I was hired right out of college as Assistant to the City Manager of the City of Lakeland. So I did that for a little while, and applied for a fellowship at Florida State University, and went up there and worked in the Institute of Governmental Research and got my master's degree in government before going to law school. And then while I was in law school, I had the very unique experience—back then we had what we called the College of Basic Studies here.

AH: Um-hm.

JG: Everybody had to take certain basic studies courses, one of which was an extremely unique course called The American Idea. The American Idea was a cross between sociology and history and political science, so that students would understand the heritage of our country. It's a wonderful, wonderful course. And I got a call from Dr. Warner, who then headed up the American Idea program. He knew I was going to Stetson Law School in St. Petersburg, and the year they opened the Bayboro campus they needed to teach American Idea over there. Because I had a master's degree in government, he called me and he said, "How would you like to teach part-time while you go to law school?" And I thought that was a wonderful idea, and so I taught for a couple of years on the Bayboro campus the American Idea course. And that was the way I got back on the faculty here.

Then I was ready to graduate from law school, and interviewing with law firms, and Dr. Juergensen called me. Dr. Juergensen—Louis Juergensen—was the chairman of the Department of Accounting; and business law came under accounting. Dr. Juergensen called me and he said, "John, we need an Assistant Professor in business law. Would you come over here and teach?" And he offered me a great starting salary, with some flexibility to practice law on the side. So I did it. I was actually on the faculty here for about seven years, and I taught business law. And the interesting thing is there are a lot of lawyers in town today that are lawyers because they took my course in business law out here, and got excited and went on to law school.

And I thoroughly enjoyed teaching, and it was a great way to get started. And it was a good experience. Then along that time I also was elected national president of the alumni association. And, of course, we didn't have a lot of national presence back then, but we were increasing in our graduates in Florida. I was also elected to serve on the board of the foundation. So it was a very close relationship with USF, and then after I graduated several years later, they designated me as a distinguished alumni of the university.

Then I got elected legislator the following year, and for twenty-one years in the House and the Senate I carried a lot of freight for USF—most of their appropriations, a lot of their substantive legislation. I chaired the Senate Education Committee when we reorganized higher education in Florida, so I was very much involved in that process.

And then the last several years I've come back to teach part-time in the Department of Political Science, so kind of a full run. I'm teaching a course called Law and Politics, which is very similar to The American Idea except it's an upper-level course instead of a freshman/sophomore course.

So USF has been a part of my heart and my life for many, many years. My son's a graduate from here. We really enjoy the experience. I'm deeply blessed because of the fact that I got an education and a continued relationship with the University of South Florida. And in appreciation of that, a couple of years my wife and I, because of our love for entrepreneurship and the free enterprise system, we established and endowed a chair in entrepreneurship, which is known as the John and Beverley Grant Chair of Free Enterprise. And Dr. Michael Fountain occupies that chair, and he's the anchor of the entrepreneurship program here at USF. So our relationship continues to go on.

AH: Thank you for this great summary, just kind of laying it all out there. We'll rewind back about forty years to where we just started, and then we'll work our way through all that great material. What was campus life like, you know, when you first arrived and were going to school? Obviously the summer, I guess, would probably be a little quieter, but—

JG: Well, campus—it was a day campus, essentially. There were really no night courses to speak of, and since nobody lived on campus they pulled the shades down about six o'clock. Everything was very self-contained. The University Center, which is now the Marshall Center, and of course it's been expanded significantly, but the original building actually had some apartments up on the top floor. And the clinic was up there. Actually, what is—I assume it's still the ballroom—that was the original library of the university. That was the first library, and then it became the ballroom. And in the little—we called them glass cages—the sitting areas downstairs, that was where people assembled. People would arrive early in the morning on campus, and they didn't have a dorm room to go back to, so they kind of hung around the University Center.

And it was really a daytime school. Campus life was totally different because we really knew just about everybody on campus. While I was here they began to build some buildings, but initially we had what is now the Allen Administration building. We had the first part of what is now the Marshall Center. We had the Physics—Physical Science building and the Biology building, and there was one other building, I think it was Liberal Arts. And that was the entire university. So you bumped into just about everybody during the course of the day.

AH: Um-hm. Now, had they started the student association, student government yet? Had that come along?

JG: Yes. One of the things that Dr. Allen wanted, even before the university opened up—actually, the great trivia question is, “Where was the first campus of the University of South Florida?” And the answer is, “On South Plant Avenue, just two blocks off of

Bayshore [Boulevard].” There was an old house down there on Plant Avenue, and Dr. Allen, who was the Academic Vice President or Provost or whatever his title was of the University of Florida came down here.

As you may know, there was a great debate initially. A lot of people want to know, “Why is this the University of South Florida, and it’s really not in South Florida?” Well, it was back then. There were two universities, not counting Florida A & M, which unfortunately at that time was still segregated. There were two universities. There was a former girls’ school and a former boys’ school. Florida State College for Women had been historically—it was West Florida Seminary before that—historically a girls’ school. And University of Florida had been a boys’ school. It wasn’t until 1948, post-World War II, that both institutions went co-educational. And all of a sudden, here’s one university in Tallahassee, and one university in Gainesville, and the population building up south of that.

And so the idea was to open up a branch of the University of Florida at Tampa. So initially this was to be the University of Florida at Tampa. And thanks to the work of then State Senator Sam Gibbons, in 1956 a bill was passed to make this a separate freestanding University of South Florida. But there are now, I think, twelve state universities in the system. This was number four, counting Florida A & M. And it was the southernmost university, and that’s why it was called the University of South Florida. Of course, many other universities followed along beyond that.

But when Dr. Allen came down here, he was used to being on the University of Florida campus, and he knew that student activities played a major role. And he was very concerned with the fact that this was a commuter school, and there really needed to be something to knit the student body together that wouldn’t be filled by a campus residency. And so even before they moved out on campus and opened it up, they began to put together student organizations, or at least the framework for it, and people like Dan Walbolt and others were responsible for that.

And we really did have a great program. We had a lot of interests, clubs, and organizations. I got involved politically; I was president of the Young Democrats on campus. And actually, I was kind of in line to be president of the student body, and decided to take an early graduation and graduate a little bit early. I could have stayed another year to be president of the student body, but— We had a very strong program here, of a number of activities that brought the students together. It was like a family out here.

We had what we called the All-University Approach. Every semester there was the All-University Book. I remember one year it was *Lord of the Flies*. And it was fair game on any exam in any course. You’d take a math course and there’d be a question on there about the All-University Book.

AH: (laughs)

JG: It was a different and a very refreshing approach to a, a totality type of education, to educate the total person, to integrate the disciplines together. It was really a university in the greatest sense of the word.

AH: Yeah, it sounds like you kind of got caught up with—a lot of people did when they first came—with the feeling that they were participating in something new. You know, something different.

JG: Yeah, they're building a heritage. They really were.

AH: So any more academic memories, before we get you past graduation? Any professors or classes you want to mention? I know we'd talked a little bit about a few.

JG: Well, I had some tremendous professors here. As I said, there were a lot of older professors that were recruited to come to Florida, like Dr. Clark and others, but there were also some really distinct young hires that were—some of them fresh out of school with their Ph.D.s, and realized they wanted to get on the ground floor of building a university, and they were trying to build their reputation. And they just worked extra hard at doing it.

I found all of my professors here to be just marvelous, marvelous people, who really cared about the students and were accessible, and knew their students and knew their names. And then—no interview of early university life would be complete without talking about Phyllis Marshall. Phyllis—she probably, more than any other person, was responsible for developing the campus life and the heritage of this university, because she found a way to bring everybody together and get them involved and get them dedicated.

I worked hard out here because I had professors that challenged me. I wanted to work hard. I didn't want to just get by. I wasn't just a number. I was a person. And I remember when Dr. Juergensen called me into his office—I took Accounting 201 and I made the high A in the class, and he called me into his office. He said, "I want you to be an accounting major. We need people like you in the program." I said, "Well, you don't understand. I don't like numbers." (laughs)

AH: (laughs)

JG: I did well in the course because I wanted to understand accounting, but I wouldn't want to do that the rest of my life. My interest is in politics and in government. So, I mean, I could just name countless professors that were very outstanding, significant, distinct peop—real characters, like Knokey Parker [John W. Parker] and Tony Zaits and some of those kinds of people that really made the campus come alive.

AH: So when you graduated, was it in Curtis Hixon Hall, or—?

JG: (laughs)

AH: Where was graduation?

JG: Look, I'll tell you—you know where I graduated? I graduated in my mailbox. (laughs).

AH: Oh, okay. (laughs)

JG: I graduated in my mailbox because I graduated in the middle of the year, and they didn't have a graduation at the middle of the year because there were so few graduates. And, you know, you were welcome to come back at the next graduation and participate. They sent me my degree in the mail, and they didn't put enough postage on it, and I had to go to the post office and pay stamps to get it! (laughs)

AH: (laughs) That's a great story. How did the early graduation work? Did you—was it that you had enough credits, or—what was it?

JG: It was a matter of saying, "Hey, I'm going to go to summer school, and I'm going to take a higher load and get out of here early."

AH: Okay.

JG: And I knew that I wanted to go on, certainly, to law school, and maybe even to graduate school, and I just had a lot of territory to cover and wanted to get on with the program. So I actually graduated totally in two and a half years. I took heavy loads and went year-round, and was able to get out early. I wouldn't advise somebody else to do that. I think I missed a lot by doing it. I was in too big a hurry to begin my career, and I missed out on some things. I wish I'd taken a little longer to get through.

AH: Well, of course you had plenty of academic experience still in front of you—

JG: Absolutely.

AH: —by the time you graduated. So, let me see. The next thing you mentioned was coming back to teach the American Idea course, right?

JG: Um-hm.

AH: You described it a little bit, but let's talk about it a little more, because you probably know it better than anybody else we've interviewed. What were, you know, the kind of things that were being taught in that course?

JG: Well, let me back up and give you a little—

AH: Sure.

JG: —what was the philosophy of the university at the time, and that was that anybody that graduates in any discipline should be a well-rounded person. And if they're going to be an accounting graduate or a physics graduate or a biology graduate, they ought to know those disciplines and know them well and be prepared, but they also ought to have some appreciation of fine arts and the English language and basic mathematics and understanding the heritage of our country. And so we had a lot of students, they'd take a course in humanities—I remember I had to be able to listen to thirty seconds of any part of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and know which movement it came from. And you know, a lot of students, including me, said, What does that have to do with understanding political science?

AH: Um-hm.

JG: But it had a lot to do with understanding—it had a lot to do with understanding the arts and things that make you a well-rounded, liberally-educated person. If there's anything wrong with our educational system today, it's that there's so much focus on academic excellence in a particular area that people tend to get pigeonholed and compartmentalized. They get out and they know a tremendous amount about one thing, and virtually nothing about a lot else. So the idea was, a college graduate needs to be a well-rounded, educated person.

Bear in mind that the job market's changed since then. There was a time when business and industry were very anxious to hire liberal arts graduates, because they said, We want a well-rounded person who understands how to learn and understands the world that they're in, and we'll train 'em what they need to know to work for us. Well, American industry's now gotten lean and mean, and they've said, We want a person to be able to be productive from the time they draw their first paycheck. And so the demands are a little bit different.

But it was a part of making somebody a well-rounded person. And in order to be a well-rounded person, you need to understand, what does it mean to be a citizen of this country? You need to understand the heritage and the history of this country. You need to understand the politics of this country. You need to understand what are the basic moral and social foundations, and understand American government, encouraged you to be a participant, and so forth. It was a wonderful course. It was sort of like a ninth grade civics course on steroids.

AH: Yeah. (laughs)

JG: It was a great course, and I thoroughly enjoyed teaching it, I really did. And I found the students very interested in it. One of the things that I left out in talking about my involvement with USF—in addition to teaching the American Idea, we had, through the university, we got a Peace Corps contract to train volunteers who were going into the Peace Corps in Venezuela. And it was a physical education program; they were going down there to teach sports to disadvantaged people in Venezuela.

And so there were three parts to the course. There was the language component, because obviously they had to be able to communicate. There was the technical component, because they had to know what they were going to deliver when they got down there. But there was also the American Idea component. And so I taught for a while in the Peace Corps program, the American studies portion, to help—they didn't want anybody going down to another country and not understanding the country they were coming from. And so I taught in that context as well.

AH: Oh, interesting. Yeah, and then USF was a pretty heavy Peace Corps recruiter in the early days, at least proportionate to its population, right?

JG: Yeah. And we did a lot through the Department of Continuing Education. We did a lot of the training here.

AH: Okay. So did you teach classes specifically for the Peace Corps people, then?

JG: Oh, yeah.

AH: Or was it mixed up with—?

JG: Oh, no. No, no, no, it was a fast-track program. They would bring them in and instead of a course where you would go three days a week for four months, it was a course where you'd go five days a week for two months.

AH: Okay.

JG: It was a compact, intense couple-month program, where we would take the students in and they did nothing but that, five days a week, and equipped them to go to the foreign fields.

AH: Okay. So let me see, you taught that course for what, several years, then?

JG: Yes.

AH: And so then the next step for you was law school, but you taught through law school. And then at that point—it was 1980 that you were first elected to the legislature?

JG: That's correct.

AH: Now did I skip over anything between all this?

JG: Well, I—nothing particularly relevant to USF. After I left the faculty—and I left the faculty simply because I'd started a part-time law practice, and my part-time law practice just got so demanding that I had to finally say, "Look, I can't do the faculty thing and the law practice at the same time." And I just made an economic decision, and went into full-time practice of law, and also became an assistant state's attorney, where I was a

homicide prosecutor. I did that for several years, and developed my practice. And then in 1978 ran for the legislature and lost, and ran again in 1980 and was elected to the [Florida State] House, where I served six years, and then served another fourteen years in the [Florida State] Senate.

AH: Now, before we continue with the political career, what were some of the—maybe, the lessons you learned at USF, maybe that either helped you through your graduate studies or—you know, things you remembered while being a politician?

JG: Well, I learned how to learn, for one thing. I had always kind of been an easy study in high school, and never really had to study very hard. I could just kind of take a glance at something, and made pretty decent grades. I never had been academically challenged. I came out here and I was academically challenged. I had to learn how to study. I had to learn how to learn. And I had some terrific encouragers, you know—and I had a difficult time my first year at the University of Florida. I didn't do well academically, because I was just thrown in a big pot. My professors didn't know who I was, and didn't really care. And it was very, very tough.

But when I came back here, it was almost a tutorial-type of experience in the classes that I had. We had some classes with as few as ten students. And so I really learned how to learn. I really don't think I could have made it through graduate school and law school, had I not had the USF foundation. So that was very, very important, and it helped me to understand my community. It helped me to interrelate with others. It helped me in an organizational experience. It was just a wonderful, all-around good education.

AH: When you served on—was it the education committee? Higher education?

JG: I chaired the Senate Education Committee, yes.

AH: Okay. And so you learned a little bit about education—

JG: Absolutely.

AH: —in the course of being at USF and seeing the contrast between the UF style at the time and the USF style. Unfortunately, inevitably, USF grows. Now we're at about forty thousand, and we have some of the big arena classes too.

JG: Absolutely.

AH: But it's really interesting to look back on that. So, you were successfully elected in 1980, and—you know, you talked about hauling a lot of freight for USF legislatively. One of the things that a lot of people at USF felt—and, and local politicians—was that USF was kind of the red-headed stepchild of the university—

JG: Oh, it was! This was always my big problem. I was the first USF graduate to be elected to the Florida Senate, and for a while was the only USF graduate in the Florida

Senate. And, you know, there are just a whole lot more alligators and Indians up there than there were bulls. (laughs) There wasn't an appreciation for USF. I think part of it was the fact we didn't have a football team; that's sort of a way of identifying. But, you know, every year the legislators would be invited to go to the Florida/Florida State game, wherever it was played, and other games as well, and they got to the campus. And here's poor USF down here, and they just didn't have a seat at the table. And it was very difficult to get that message across, even—and of course, in the early years, they didn't compare with those other schools. But then we got to the point where we had greater full-time enrollment than FSU. We were the number two—and still are—in the university system. We had the second number of endowed chairs, second only to the University of Florida. But getting that message across has been very, very difficult over the years.

AH: Um-hm.

JG: But I think we've been very successful with it. The fact that you see what you see on this campus is in large part because of the fact—and I certainly don't take the credit for it. I was glad to carry some of the water, but it took a tremendous amount of community involvement, and some very strong lobbyists, and very strong administrators and deans and presidents to get us where we are. I think now people understand that, you know, we are a major university.

And one of the things, too, that a lot of people don't understand, even many people in the legislature, is that public universities—that's a misnomer today. I mean, some of them—you take University of Michigan, they get zero funds now from the state of Michigan. They're essentially a private school in many respects, and certainly in terms of funding. You look at this university, and I don't know what the current ratio is, but everybody's shocked to find out the very small percentage of the total budget that comes from state funds.

Now there was a time when state universities were—there were only two sources of funds for the university. There were tuition and state subsidies. But now, we're almost like a private school out here in many respects, and particularly with the reorganization bill that was passed a couple of years ago to provide for separate boards of trustees and autonomy and things of that nature. So people need to understand the nature of the university, and the nature of the state's funding.

AH: So how does that, how did that process happen? I mean, in a relatively short time, you know, the kind of—purse strings are coming from other places. And of course with a story like USF, success begets success. You get a medical center, and then you get money to build the cancer center, or whatever. How did that process work? I mean, obviously there was tight budget times regularly here in the state of Florida, so I'm sure that had something to do with it. But what's your take on it?

JG: Well, there's always a tight budget situation.

AH: Sure.

JG: I mean, it's like sleeping under a short blanket on a cold night; whichever way you pull it something sticks out, one end or the other. There's never enough money to do everything. Do we have enough money to do some things good? Yeah. We just don't have enough money to do everything good, and so you gotta pull it from education, transportation, criminal justice, whatever it may be. And that's not an easy thing to do, but it's a matter of telling your story. And I think most people realize that, maybe second only to public safety, the most important function of government is education. And you have to tell the story of why it needs to go to one university as opposed to another, because they're obviously in competition for dollars.

And, you know, we didn't win every battle here at USF, but we won a lot of them. It, it really took a lot of fighting. I think one of the great success stories of this university is the success story that was fought and won in Tallahassee. We—you know, we had to be the tough kid on the block. We didn't get any handouts. We had to fight for everything that we got. Of course, as the only USF graduate in the Senate, I ended up in that fray more often than not. And I was glad to do it, because it was my way of trying to help my alma mater and my community, and also help higher education. You know, Florida needs what we have here on this campus.

AH: Oh, yeah.

JG: Not only are we educating forty thousand students, or whatever it is now, but when you look at some of the research that's going on here, it's unique, literally, around the country. We don't have enough tape in the camera to talk about all of the various unique research programs here in medicine and science and technology and business and humanities and things of that nature that are, that are recognized nationwide, even some of it worldwide. It's very, very significant. And some of the scholars that we have here on this faculty are well-known names in their circles far and wide. You know, not bad for what is still essentially a young university.

You know, fifty years is not a long period of time, in terms of building a university. You know, to come from the sand piles—which incidentally, we got stuck and had to get pulled out when we came here for the groundbreaking. Literally; the white sand piles and scrub palmettos that were here back in 1958—what's here now, it's just an incredible thing. Every time I come on this campus, I see something being built somewhere.

AH: Oh, yeah.

JG: What really is significant is not the bricks and mortar being built, but what's being built inside of them. You take the Moffitt Cancer Center—I serve on the board over there, [of] the center. And every time I go to a board meeting, they make a presentation on some new stuff that they're doing over there, and it's leading edge.

I have a friend from Virginia who had surgery there yesterday, who got a very serious case of a very rare form of cancer and called me. And he said, "John, do you know

anybody at the Moffitt Cancer Center, because I'm told that there's only two places in the country they'll even treat my form of cancer, and that's one of them." So you know, it just shows you the kind of stuff right here, within a baseball's throw of where we are.

AH: Absolutely. So, you know, leading that fight in Tallahassee—obviously you said we lost our share of battles, we won our share. Was that, you know, frustrating? Did you feel like you were just constantly having to repeat yourself?

JG: Well, sure, it was frustrating.

AH: Yeah.

JG: Because I mean, people'd say, "Well, you got yours last year, and now it's our turn."

AH: (laughs)

JG: And well, yeah, we got ours last year. We want it this year, too. But I've never walked away from a good fight, didn't walk away from that one, and over the years we got it done. And I just want to make sure I don't try to take credit for all that that got done, because there are many other people that worked as hard or harder than I did.

AH: Oh, sure.

JG: But I was still part of it, and glad to do it.

AH: So what about—you talked about strong community involvement, and really community involvement is what got USF on the map in the first place, just got it here in Tampa. And then we're also talking about funding, and how that—you know, those sources are shifting. What kind of a role does the local community play?

JG: Well, first of all, there had to be a creation of an awareness when USF came here, that this was a big deal. Now, I don't think anybody realized how big a deal it was. If anybody had said that this university would end up having forty thousand students, people would have looked like a deer in the headlights. But at the same time, I think University of Florida at that time maybe had twenty thousand students. And so institutions have grown, this one included.

But one of the things that—and again, Dr. Allen—it was not by accident that he established the first office of the University of South Florida two blocks off of Bayshore Boulevard on Plant Avenue. He could have found a much more accessible place on the north side of town, but he realized he needed to be downtown to be intermingled. And even before the university accepted its first student, they established what they called the Town and Gown Program.

Believe me, in 1960 this was a long ways from downtown. Fowler Avenue—once the university opened up. they did pave it, but it was still a two-lane road. And between this

campus and Nebraska Avenue there was one building on the road, and that was the University Restaurant, which was torn down a couple of years ago and now they put the new Walgreens there. But that was the only thing out here. The mall didn't exist. I mean, it was all cow pasture and scrub palmetto. People coming out here was like going to outer wherever.

Dr. Allen realized that he needed to get the people from campus downtown, and he needed to get the people from downtown out on the campus. And so they went out of their way to create opportunities for intermingling. And it paid off, because USF is the largest employer in the Tampa area, and a tremendous, tremendous economic power. And this town wouldn't be nearly what it is without the university being here—as a matter of fact, the whole Bay area. The chambers of commerce and various business organizations and large companies have come to realize that this university is a source of talent for them to hire. It's a source of resources for them to call on. But it's also a source of economic development that builds a customer and client base that allows them to expand their business. And so therefore they have as much interest in helping the University of South Florida as they do in helping anything else in the community, or helping their own business.

We've done a pretty decent job of that over the years. It still could be better, and has a long ways to go. I know that Dr. Genshaft does a marvelous job of carrying on that tradition, because she understands—it's like Willie Sutton said. Somebody said, "Why do you rob banks?" and he says, "Because that's where the money is." I think as a university president, you have to understand where the money is, private money and the public money, and you have to go after it. You know, when you have the luxury of being the University of Florida or Florida State, over the years you may not have to work quite as hard, but when you do have to work hard, you roll up your shirtsleeves and you do it. You get it done.

AH: One of the things, before we move on from the whole idea of—you know, you being an advocate for USF and everything. For those that think that by 1980 USF was well-established and it was in a stable situation, it was the years leading up to that that—you know, there was all kinds of talk up in Tallahassee about taking all of the graduate programs away from USF and transferring them all to UF. So there were some very serious threats to the university at the time that would have made it—basically a community college, a glorified one. Any comment on any specific close calls?

JG: Well, we had to fight those battles, because—I think what happened is that USF posed somewhat of a threat to the University of Florida and Florida State, because there's a limit to what you can do in a small-town environment. There's a limit to what you can do in Tallahassee, Florida, and in Gainesville, Florida. Historically, universities have been built in small, out of the way places to keep students away from the influence of the big city, but historically, you look at—well, probably the best example is UCLA. It was established in Los Angeles not that many years ago, and we used to keep saying that because of the fact that we're in the Tampa Bay area, the University of South Florida has the potential of being the UCLA of the South. And I think we're moving in that direction.

I—We've already significantly surpassed Florida State University in most all categories. You know, I think eventually—the University of Florida is somewhat stabilized—I think we'll bypass the University of Florida in terms of research dollars and endowed chairs, and even student body enrollment, simply because we offer what we have in a community that can support that size of an operation, providing jobs for our students, providing housing for our students, and our students providing a lot of things for those businesses. And more and more there's an emphasis on internship and on-the-job training under academic supervision, and you don't have those opportunities in a small town.

AH: Definitely. Well, would you care to comment on the proliferation of the branch campuses? That's very significant. Gainesville, like you said, relatively isolated. We're surrounded by a big metropolitan area.

JG: We are. And we have actually the largest service area of any university, simply because of how we're located and where we're located. As you know, we cut off the Fort Myers campus and created a separate university in southwest Florida, which was probably a good move, although I think in the long run, probably—maybe a drawback, even, for that local community, because it will be years before that university on a separate, stand-alone basis will have what USF has. But eventually they will. It's a rapidly growing area, but never will support the kind of university that we have here.

And I haven't looked at the figures lately, but I remember when we cut the Fort Myers off, which was, I think, six years ago, we lost eight thousand students, or whatever the number was. But we've more than made that up now, and we're bigger now than we were before we separated. We have—of course, New College is a tremendous asset, a totally different kind of experience down in Sarasota. We have the Bayboro campus, which has been very successful over in St. Petersburg, and Lakeland campus.

And of course, one of the things that has just totally changed the whole educational experience is online learning and distance learning, and those kind of things. I know I went over to England when I was Chairman of the Senate Education Committee to look at what they were doing with distance learning over there, because they were really ahead of us in the United States. It's incredible. And now there are several universities that offer a complete online degree.

And you know, it was interesting—of course, the argument's always made—well, okay, you can get the academics online, but you miss the classroom experience and the socializing and those kind of things. And it was interesting—one university, and I've forgotten which one it was, recently had their first graduation of the people that had done the online, and they came back and participated in the graduation with everybody else. And they found out that those that were online were much more in tune with the other students than the ones that were on campus, because they all got together on chat lines or chat rooms on the Internet and did their homework together, and learned each other's family history and those kind of things.

So the computer has just been totally revolutionary, because let's face it. The major expense—and I've educated three children through college, and I can tell you that the major expense of a college education are not the educational expenses. The tuition, the books—that's the minor part. It's the dislocation, the lack of ability to earn alternative income, you know, all of those types of things. And now with allowing Internet, and maybe you spend a minimal amount of time on campus, which is designed to allow you to come in for two or three weeks at a time every six months, and have a jam-packed forty hour a week classroom experience, has allowed—particularly in the graduate area—a lot of students to pursue further education that never could afford it otherwise.

AH: Sure. Yeah, the cost of a fast internet connection. No need to move into a dorm—

JG: Exactly.

AH: —the housing costs, all that stuff. So, let me see. You mentioned a bunch of other things as we got towards the present. What have we not covered?

JG: I think we have pretty well covered the waterfront. And my relationship with the university goes on now. I enjoy supporting the athletic events, and supporting the university financially. And, you know, if they ever call on me to do anything else, I'll be glad to do it. My heart is here. There's an awful lot of my life out here on this campus, and a lot of this campus in my life. As long as I'm drawing breath, I'd like to continue that kind of a relationship.

AH: Um-hm. Well, thank you for taking the time with us today.

JG: Well, thank you.

AH: It's been very pleasant. Appreciate it.

JG: Great! Thanks for asking me.

*end of interview*