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Thomas Joyce oral history interview by Andrew Huse, November 19, 2003

Thomas Joyce (Interviewee)

Andrew T. Huse (Interviewer)

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

Narrator: Thomas (Tom) Joyce (J)
Current Position: Chair of Learning
and Retirement Committee
Date of Interview: November 19, 2003
Audit Editor: Danielle E. Riley
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Interviewer: Andrew Huse (H)
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Library
Transcriber: University of Florida
Final Editor: Jared G. Toney

TRANSCRIPTION

H: Today is November 19, 2003. My name is Andrew Huse, program assistant for the Florida Studies Center. Today we continue a series of interviews here 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 Tom Joyce, who came to USF in 1994, right?

J: In 1994, correct.

H: As the chair of Learning in Retirement Committee.

J: I didn't really start as the chair, but I subsequently worked my way up to that.

H: Became the chair. Today he is still the chair.

J: Currently on the chair.

H: Good afternoon, Tom. Good morning, I should say.

J: Good morning.

H: Tell us, how did you get started in Learning in Retirement? When did you first find out about it? What brought you to USF?

J: First of all, we moved to Tampa, Florida from Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1978. That was a business transfer down here. When I retired, I was still assigned here, with Al Coyle,

that's who I work for. We just decided to stay here until there was a better place that came up to move to, and we haven't found it yet. My wife was the first that saw something in the newspaper after I retired. I retired in January, 1994. Shortly thereafter, or maybe shortly before, she saw something in the newspaper talking about the formation of some sort of a Learning and Retirement program that was tied in with the elder, hostel program up in New Hampshire. They had a meeting; I believe it was in the Marshall Center. She and I attended, along with a host of other people. It was to decide, was there enough interest to formulate a learning and retirement type program here at USF? The answer was yes, and we did, and we've been doing it ever since.

H: How do you start a program like this?

J: You get some volunteers that are real interested. I know several of the people that were originally involved in it are no longer involved in it. They did lay the groundwork to get it started. My initial contact as far as working with the Learning in Retirement Program was to be on the committee that wrote the bylaws for the Learning in Retirement. We tried it, and it's grown from there. There were committees formed; the Learning in Retirement Program, as it's defined by our own guidelines and by our bylaws, is a group of seniors learning and being taught by seniors. Initially, because of the fact that nobody knew exactly how to get it started, we did draw on the faculty of the university to do some of the early teaching. Now, we occasionally use them, but it's almost exclusively done by the members themselves.

H: Have you taught any classes?

J: No, I've not taught classes. I've taken several classes. I took several classes from Larry Martin, who was on your nighttime radio show, he does the jazz. He's had several jazz

classes and I've taken those. [They are] wonderful classes, and a wonderful person. I've taken a course in the Civil War, I took a Spanish class, which I unfortunately didn't learn how to speak Spanish very well. [I took] several other classes over the time.

H: Tell us, when you first got started, and the committee was meeting, what were some of the things you were talking about? Over the years, the kind of business the committee takes care of.

J: Let me tell you what it's like today, and maybe that will explain what the Board of Advisors [is]; we call ourselves the Board of Advisors. We originated with the Board of Directors, when I believe someone at the university said that you can't be a Board of Directors because there can only be one Board of Directors associated with the University of South Florida, and you ain't it. So we now became the Board of Advisors. It consists of a chairman, a vice chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, and members of the board are committee chairmen. There is a committee chairman for the curriculum committee; they're the people that determine what courses we will give. There is a committee chairman for what we used to call the core group. Now I believe it's the administrative assistant group or something like that. It's to try to help run the things that have to be run: registrations and manning offices and manning telephones. There's a membership committee, there is a recruiting committee. Who am I forgetting? Anyway, there are a series of different committees that make up the Board of Advisors. Five of the members are elected by the membership at large. The committee chairmen are appointed by the board itself. It's worked real well. We've modified our bylaws as we've gone along. There have been changes in it. More so than just changing our name from Board of Directors to Board of Advisors. We have made other changes in it and we will

continue to do so. We do review that every year or two just to make sure it's on top of everything that needs to be done. The program itself is supposedly self-supporting. It is and it isn't. By that I mean it's right on the borderline of making or breaking the financial situation the way it's set up. We have dues to belong to it, which at the moment are thirty dollars a year. For that, you get the opportunity to sign up for the classes, which have further charges associated with it. You also get to go to the social functions. We have speakers that come in and talk and other items such as that.

H: Tell us about some of the activities that you have. What are some of these social activities?

J: These social activities, you mentioned going up to Chinsegut. We've had several sessions up there, which we called Wisdom in the Woods. It was a weekend up there. People signed up for it and then went up there. Then there were courses that were given. Not exclusively, but predominately applied to some of the things that would be available up there. There were nature walks. There were all sorts of things. Shirley Petty is one of our members, [and] is a very active person in nature and conservation in the area here. She has given early morning nature walks and late in the afternoon nature walks. They would have bonfires and sing songs. Ted Carwin, who was also on the original committee to write the bylaws, plays the accordion. He will bring his accordion and he will sing songs around the bonfire. It's just a fun time that's had by all. We recently had a spook fest. It was to celebrate Halloween. Most people came in costumes and they gave prizes for the best costume and the worst costume or whatever. Unfortunately, they do a lot of these things on days when I couldn't be there, so I did not attend. The pictures I saw were wonderful and the people that I spoke to all had a very enjoyable time. We've

had some parties out at the, I don't know what you call it. It's out here, further out on Fletcher.

H: Riverfront Park?

J: Riverfront Park. We've had some parties out there. We have what I call brown-bag lunches. I think they're called lunch-and-learn now, where you bring your own sandwiches or your own goodies and they have a speaker. They have that probably once a month or thereabouts. It's becoming more active. We even have scheduled for the second half of this year, a field trip, which we haven't done before. It's growing. Initially, our membership was probably about one hundred people. As of the other day it was up to about 430 and our biggest semester is what we call the lunar semester, which will start in January. We get a lot of snowbirds that come down here and they'll sign up during the wintertime. We'll be well up towards, maybe even an excess of 600 members by the time they all get here and register for the winter courses. Initially, I think the first year, our first class was in March 1994. I believe there were five classes that were given. This winter term, which will start actually in January, we will have twenty-three classes covering a wide variety of things. Two of the classes will be held up in Brooksville. Brooksville is very interested in getting a branch set up there. I think our intent is to eventually get them sprung off on their own so they can run their own show up there. It's a little hard to administer something that is that far away from here. We had a similar situation down in Punta Gorda, where through some contacts that one of the departments had, we got involved with them and we started a Learning in Retirement program in Punta Gorda. They have since gone off on their own. There is a junior college down there and they have associated themselves with that and are doing their own thing. We

gave them the guidance that they needed to get started.

H: Are you the first chapter in Florida?

J: No, there's one in Miami that I'm sure is older than we are. There's at least one in the the Panhandle, around Marianna and that area. They almost all associated with universities or some sort of educational institution. The one up in the panhandle is a Junior College. I know that the one in Miami, I believe, is older than we are. There probably are several others in Florida that I just can't recall at the moment.

H: Do you foresee the possibility of joint events with the people up in Brooksville?

J: Yes, very possibly. This coming course session, which is the January through, I guess it goes through the latter part of March, or early April. The courses that are being given in Brooksville are available to the people down here to go up and attend it. We find that most people don't really want to drive up. The courses typically are two hours long and they meet one day a week for eight weeks. That means eight drives up there and eight drives back. I think that a lot of people here, and especially as seniors, they say, do I really want to drive that far? Besides, there's twenty-one other courses being given. Not necessarily right at the university. We have some in South Florida. Different times we've used churches in South Florida, we've used synagogues. We've used the Women's Club. We've used the art museum. We've used a lot of different things over periods of time to a lot of different venues to hold our classes. We're also looking for more. There's a lot of space here on the university campus. We are fortunate that we can utilize the facilities of the College of Public Health. That's where most of our classes are held. Fortunately most of their classes are afternoon and evening and most of our classes are morning or early afternoon. We don't really interface with them as far as conflicting

for schedule time. That works out real nicely in our relationship with them. As a matter of fact, we have a scholarship that we've started at the College of Public Health. It's actually the Lee Leavengood scholarship. It used to be the Learning in Retirement scholarship. When she retired from LIR, we moved it over and called it the Lee Leavengood scholarship in her honor. She was obviously the driving force. I'm sure you're familiar with Lee. She was the driving force in getting the whole thing started. She led that meeting back in either late 1993 or early 1994. I don't remember when it was. [It] quite possibly could have been late 1993 and I was there in anticipation of retiring rather than actually having retired. Betty Castor was the speaker at that first session that we had. I think she knew less about Learning Retirement then than we did. She had just barely come on board. She had just arrived as president. We have now been through two presidents.

H: You retired in the early 1990s?

J: I retired January 1, 1994. Actually, in anticipation of that, I really didn't do much in the last sixty days of 1993. It's very possibly that it could have been in that time frame that they had the meeting. I don't really remember when it was. Probably in the fall of 1993, [that] would make more sense. I had worked for Alcoa, and the last four and a half years of my life with him was spent living here and working out of an office in Dallas, commuting back and forth. He said, do that for a couple years and we'll find something else. Four and a half years later I said, time out. Enough's enough. I can retire so I will just go ahead and do that. That's fine, I've enjoyed my retirement. Is this a glass of water I can sip on?

H: Absolutely. What drew you to Learning in Retirement?

J: My wife. She said, when you retire, I don't want you just sitting around the house getting in my way. Especially since for four and a half years, I got backed up on this whole thing explaining; it's sounding a little weird. I had been down here working in an office here in Tampa for Alcoa, for the mill products divisions of Alcoa, since 1978. In 1989, they came to me and said, this office is getting smaller and smaller and smaller. We really don't even need an office here. Would you like to do to Dallas and work in the Dallas office? I had started my career with Alcoa in the Dallas office years and years ago. I said, oh you mean, instead of handling the southeast, just handling the southwest? They said no, handle the southeast and the southwest. We'd like you to work out of the Dallas office, which is a forty-staffed office. We were down here to a level where there was myself and one other person. He was handling specialty products. I was kind of running the office. We didn't even have a secretary. We dictated things over the telephone to Atlanta and they were typed up there and sent out. I never signed a letter for a couple years there because they would forge my name in effect. I went on down to Dallas and worked out of that office. I commuted back and forth, probably coming back three out of four weekends, I would come back here and spend maybe a Friday or a Monday or both here doing business in the Florida area, of Florida and Georgia and the surrounding areas. My wife, Barbara, had become accustomed to being alone. She was there and was running the whole show and this was her house; this was her castle. She made it very clear that when I retired, the last thing in the world she wanted was for me to come home and take over and run the show. That's why she started finding things for me to do. One of the things that she found, and only one, she found others; one of the things she found was this LIR opportunity, and it's been fun. We've both enjoyed it. She's taken several

courses, and I've obviously taken several courses. She got me involved with other things as well, but this is the one that's associated with the university. I'm not an alumni of the university. Until we moved here in 1978, I have never even heard of the University of South Florida. Everybody heard of Miami because of the football team, and Florida State, and Florida, but I have never heard of USF - till I moved here. It's nice, it's growing, just in the time that we've been here, [there's been] quantum leaps; the growth has been unbelievable. We've enjoyed it very much.

H: It sounds like this is a really great touching point between the community and the university. It's one of those opportunities where the university does reach out.

J: It is, and if you read into the mission statement of the university, it identifies a need interface with the community and not just the students. [To] interface with the community in general. This certainly fills one of the requirements they have outlined there. It's been very good. The university has been good to us. They've helped us a lot. We've had some changes. We've reported through different groups at different times. We currently are lined up with the continuing education group. That really makes sense that it's there. What we have under senior learning, adult learning, continuing education, whatever you wish to call it, is learning in retirement, as I defined it to you. We also have the Senior Net program, which is computers, and this again, is students teaching students, or seniors teaching seniors. Then, the Tuition Waiver program, also falls under there. They administer those. I'm not involved in either of the other two, except we interface somewhat with the Senior Net people.

H: Have you participated much in the Senior Net?

J: No, they are all PC type people, and I'm a Macintosh person. They don't want to talk to

me, and I don't want to talk to them. I wish I could do some of the things that they do.

Their courses would be good. More and more, there's an interface between the two. You can do a lot of Microsoft stuff on Macintosh. We started out on Macintosh, because that's what I had with Alcoa. I left and I said, let's stick with it, at least I know a little bit about it. Not much, but a little bit.

H: Maybe they can offer Macintosh classes at some point.

J: I doubt they will. They would be talking about, what, ten percent at most of the population? It probably wouldn't make sense. It would be down the road a long way. There are other Macintosh opportunities locally here, though. That's not totally lost. My interface with them is more of a matter of trying to coordinate the efforts of both sides, the Learning in Retirement and the Senior Net, so that when we have a social event we include them and when they have one they include us. We have a lot members that belong to both. Several very loyal people from the beginning that belong to both of them. I think it's encumbered us to include them with us. We're all part of senior programs. As such, we should know who each other are and help each other out. We recruit for them, they recruit for us. When we go out to recruit for people, we mention the fact that there is Tuition Waiver and there is Senior Net in addition to LIR. They're doing the same thing, I'm sure.

H: Tell us about the Tuition Waiver. You're able to take USF classes and get the tuition waived?

J: I've not done it, but I think it's fifty-five. If you're fifty-five or older, maybe it's sixty or older, you can take any course, you audit it. You don't take tests, you don't get graded.

You just strictly in auditing of it. The tuition is waived. It is a space-available type

thing. They fill them up with people that want to take it, both the graduate and undergraduate students. Then if there is space available you can audit. I think they've found that that's been a fun thing for both sides. I think the experiences that the seniors bring to it is sometimes helpful for the professor and/or the students that are taking the courses. They get a different perspective on things as a result of that. The seniors have enjoyed it, I know that. We most recently are doing, what they're calling Honorary Seniors. It's a limited number of seniors, and this is a selective thing, it's not open to anybody, attend some of the honors classes going on. The jury's probably still out on that as to how successful that is. They did the first one last spring and they're doing one this fall. I think that the initial reaction was very positive and I perhaps it will be continued. Again, because it is an inter-generational crossover that we bring something to the party, and certainly we gain from them. We're well instructed ahead of time so that we don't monopolize. I'm not involved in one, but the people that do attend them are sort of hand picked. It isn't just open to anybody. It seems to be working well.

H: It sounds really exciting.

J: It's an attempt on our part to give something back to the university in return for what they give to us.

H: The honors college is just making leaps and bounds and really trying some innovative programs. This sounds like it's just perfectly in keeping with the kind of things they're doing. Really some neat related things. There was a gentleman, I took a modern China class in the history department. There was a gentleman there who's Chinese, and he actually served under Chang Kai-shek, a nationalist army. The kinds of things he could bring to the table were pretty amazing. [He was] a very quiet and humble man, but he

was a great help with bringing home to everyone, that this is a reality. Even though it happened fifty years ago, there's still people that live with it today.

J: Interesting you mentioned that kind of experience. One of the courses that I took was one on the Civil War, which was entitled, The Uncivil Civil War. It was a series of eight different lectures that pinned down different things. One of them was given by a retired general James Gary, who is a retired Marine general. He's a member of Learning in Retirement and gives courses on military things. He gave one on the generals of the Civil War and highlighted some of them. Interestingly, Laura and Don Meade are students, who live here in town. His great-great grandfather was General Meade in the Civil War. He spoke a lot on that. This is where we get this interchange. Most of the classes that we have are open to give-and-take discussions, and it's encouraged, between the instructor and the students. Everybody benefits from it.

H: Another thing that sounds so exciting about the program is, by far, this is not a lightweight type of program. It sounds like these classes are diving into real interesting subjects. When you're talking about Mideast relations or the Civil War, or I know there are some science classes that are coming up, and the computer training, and things like that. These are all kinds of things that are really in-depth. This isn't the kind of thing that you come and just sleep through.

J: They decided early on, that part of what we would do would be to, mostly limit ourselves, but steer ourselves towards, what I'll call, academic subjects. No basket weaving, no pottery making, these sorts of things. There's been a demand. There's been a request for these sorts of things. In the last session and in the session that's going on right now, I believe there is a yoga class done at the yoga institute down on Fowler

someplace. That probably isn't what you would call an academic type of subject, but still it fits in with people getting balanced and learning to relax and do all the things that they need to do. For the first time they're getting one that sort of leans towards the non-academic. In the spring session they're going to have a golf one out at your golf course out here, whatever it's called out on Fletcher. Generally speaking, they are strictly academic courses. They are music oriented, they are art oriented, they are history oriented, they are drama oriented, they are geographic oriented, I'll call it, they'll zone in on a particular part of the country and they'll study that. In one instance they actually did that and some of the students actually went to that country afterwards and visited and took the knowledge and learning experience that they had gained in the class with them. Really, it's amazing the wealth of talent that's out there that can speak on many, many subjects. Some of them, there's literature that's available. There's a Great Books one that's being held right now. I think it will probably continue in the winter session, but certainly in this fall session. There is a guideline for that. They decided most of what books they will study. They study on them, I'm not exactly sure how that one works out. They've had just plain current event type things where they'll come in and the leader of the class will say, now, this was in the newspaper today and what else can we talk about? They'll just bounce all over the place and they talk about current events. [It] needs some guidance. It needs to keep it a way so one person doesn't capture all the time, or one subject doesn't capture all the time. That's what the instructor is for, to guide the discussion so that it covers a wide range of subjects. I'm trying to think if there are any other that are not academic. I think basically we've limited ourselves to pretty much the academic. We have a wealth of talent available to us. They know about opera, we have a

man who is an opera enthusiast and real knowledgeable. We have musicians. We have lots of things that all go together to make up for interesting courses. They would normally try to tie it in; if they do one at the art museum, they'll tie it in with the display that's going on down there and they get one of the dozens from the art museum who happens to be a member of Learning in Retirement to conduct the course. They will tour the art museum as part of the class. Not the entire part, but one of the eight sessions will be a tour of the art museum.

H: That's one of the things that sounds so exciting about the program, and different. It's really democratic with a small 'd.' It's very much, you're a part of something. You're not showing up once a week and having things just fed to you. You're interacting and you're learning from each other, not just the instructor. There's an awful lot of seniors that have something to bring to the table from their own experience in their lives. It sounds like what's going on, is you've got the social side, the academic side, and the fact that everyone feels like they can ante-up, everyone has something to add. Especially in certain specialized subject areas like you were talking about.

J: We just recently moved our offices. They were over there. We now are adjacent to where the old swimming pool used to be, if you know where that was. The one that is now filled up. There were some empty offices there and they gave them to us. Now we have a little place, we have a little conference room there where we hold our own meetings; we don't have to impose on someone else's conference session. It also gives us a place if seniors just want to come in and there's nothing going on. They'll sit down in there and have a cup of coffee. This is what we're trying to do, is make it more of a home-feeling type. Where people will feel free to come in and just stop by and visit for a

while and exchange thoughts and ideas. Not just strictly leave home, go to class, go back home again. At the end of each session, we try to have a luncheon where we ask the members if they would like to go. It's a Dutch Tree type thing. Everyone pays their own way. We'll go to a place for lunch. It was initially started as a way of saying, we'll take the instructor. This was when we had a lot of the instructors from the university, and buy them lunch as a way of saying thank you for donating your time to do this. They were not paid for putting on those classes. It was so popular that, Earl actually heard someone say, why aren't you taking a course this time? He said, none of them have lunches associated with them. They're going every day after each class. That's once a week, they're going to lunch someplace. Everyone doesn't go. One of the Larry Martin classes that I took met on a Thursday, and I do some work down at the Performing Arts Center. I am down there every Thursday afternoon, so I could never stay to go to lunch with them. A lot of the people would go, and they would say, okay today we're going to go out here on Bruce B. Downs to such-and-such a restaurant. [They would] give the directions to anybody who wanted to go there. They would give a show of hands, and I guess the social coordinator, we have a social coordinator for each of the classes as well as a class assistant who keeps the record and takes attendance and whatever. The social coordinator, probably during the break, they normally go for an hour and then they take about ten minutes and then go for another hour. During the break will call up to the restaurant and say, today we've got eighteen people that are going to be there, or fifteen people and try to set a section aside so that we can visit amongst ourselves and not be thrown in amongst everyone else. It really has become quite a social sort of thing. As they say, these things are growing to a point that many of the classes will go to lunch

after each of the eight-week sessions. What started out as once during the eight weeks has now becoming eight times during the eight weeks. This is what we want. This is the drive we're looking for; to be better able to be a place where the seniors can feel they can go and relax and be with their peers. I think having this new office facility will be a help in that regard. It's a little bit out of the way, but once people find where it is, they can wander in and out and visit with people. Which is obviously nice to do, and at the same time is a detriment to the people who are in there helping to run the show. Ara Rogers is the director of the senior programs and then she has three people that work under her. Joseph McCalla is the one that coordinates all of the Learning in Retirement and Tuition Waiver. Ken, and I can never think of his last name, whoever the other man is, does the Senior Net. Then there is Mary-someone who is sort of like the secretary and the helper-person. They are trying to get other jobs done and people are in there saying, Hi Joe! Let's visit for a while. He's always saying, oh, come on in! So we sit and chat for a while. I'm sure that hurts the flow of the jobs they have to get done. It's all part of being social, and that's what we're trying to do, really. It's a fun sort of thing, and that's what we want it to be, is fun. If you're Orin Polaro on A&E, I think he's a Belgian detective, and kind of a weird guy. He keeps talking about having to keep the little gray cells. That's what we're trying to do. Some people retire and they think that as soon as they retire they're just supposed to give up. More and more I'm hearing people say, I don't know how I had time to work. I'm so busy now I don't have time to fit work in. In addition to this program, and I just dropped it because I didn't have time, I was a master gardener helping out at the extension office in Zephyrhills, I was over there about one day a week. As I mentioned, I do work down at the Performing Arts Center. That started

as a volunteer thing and now it's become a job. I'm there for two afternoons a week plus several evenings a week. I just manage to keep real busy and my wife keeps saying, when are you going to retire? I said, you don't want me to retire retire. Then I'll be around here getting in your way. She said, you're right.

H: She was the first one to push you out the door.

J: She pushed me into the Performing Arts Center. She was a volunteer down there. She was in the second class that started in 1987. She was in the second training class that they had for volunteer ushers in 1988. She ushered down there until I retired and she said, now you're going to have to join this and usher with me. I did, and they came to me and said, would you be a head usher? I said, well, I guess I could try that. She and I both became head ushers. Then a little while later they came and said, would you be a house manager? That really is a lot more involved than just the other things. She played around with ushering for a little while and finally she said, I'll retire from it. She was the driving force behind getting me to go down and do that. Nobody to blame but herself.

H: Besides keeping the gray cells active, from the social aspect, studies have proven that sustaining social activity late in your life can lengthen it.

J: I think you're right. I've not seen the studies, but it doesn't surprise me in the least to hear that. Anyone who just sits in the corner and just stares at the wall is going to fold up and go away in a hurry. That's my opinion, anyway. The more you can do, and keeping not only mentally, but physically-fit as well. That's why that yoga class is a real good [idea]. I've been tempted to take that. I haven't got time to do it. That's the problem. I think you would find most of the people who are in Learning in Retirement would have the same thing; that they're real busy people. There are people who will take a different

course every day. As I mentioned early on, we charge a fee to take the courses. What we do now is say that you can take a second course at no cost if there's space available. You still have to buy a parking pass for that day. You still have to pay the university to park. Other than that, there's no cost for the course itself. What we typically have is session of eight-week courses in the fall, which is just completing now. Then we have one in the winter. Then we have three four-week sessions, or sometimes a six and two fours in the summertime. We didn't do any in the summer for the first summer years, and a lot of people said, I don't go away. We assumed everyone left Florida in the summertime, and they don't. Some people stay here. We stay here sometimes and sometimes we don't. We started having courses. There's not as many, there might only be four, five, or six, during a session. They are well attended. It does fill a need of our members.

H: What is the size of the typical class?

J: We try to cap it at forty. Only because if it gets beyond that now, the instructor has the option of saying it can be less. We have a series of courses entitled Writing Your Life Story. I think they cap that one at fifteen. I think that's where people write their story and then they read it and then it's critiqued and then they rewrite it. They end up really writing some neat stuff. Some of which has been published, some of which has been in the newspapers. That has grown from Writing Your Life Story I, to Writing Your Life Story II. Now a lot of them meet and just write even though they're not taking a class. They have their own little session going over here. The poetry group, I can't think of his name. A lovely gentleman who's passed away. [He] was a professor here, and he was retired. He did the poetry group. Hans...

H: Gergenson?

J: Gergenson, exactly. I think that group continued after he passed away when there was no longer a poetry class. I think they continued to get together and write poems and do things. They published a book of poems as a memorial to him. As I said, the Writing Your Life Story people have published in both the newspaper and in other forms. It's becoming quite a broad-based sort-of-thing. Some of the classes take the course and that's it. Not much else you can do. You take a Larry Martin course on Louis Armstrong, and at the end of the time you know more about Louis Armstrong, but you can't go talk to him, and you aren't going to write about him. You might buy some of his records, which I did. Other than that, you can't do too much about him.

H: I was curious about that. Normally the typical college class you have to write term papers and do research and things. It sounds like there are certain classes where people are becoming actively involved in the writing process and things like that. Are there any other examples besides the Writing Your Life Story and the poetry? Where there is actually writing and such taking place?

J: Actually, it was a tuition-waiver class on acting, or something that had to do with theater. Some of our people then went on and they put on a play. Ted Corwin was involved in it, that's how I remember that one. They put on a play of some sort that was given here. No, I don't know of any others. Typically they say, there are no tests, there are no exams. We take attendance only so we know who's there. You don't get a diploma when you graduate. Interestingly, initially, we started to give little certificates to people. I went in one day and I said, why do we do this? You give this to me, I carry it home, and throw it away. I don't have a whole folder of these things. I don't care. I've got the information up here, I don't need the piece of paper. We surveyed the people and a lot of

people felt the same way. Several of them said, I like having that diploma. Now, we ask, as it gets towards the end of the eight-week course, we ask, how many people would like one? We make a list, and then they get one and the other people that don't want one don't get it. There's no sense in preparing the thing and then throwing it away. A lot of people like the recognition that goes with getting a diploma. The fact that they have attended, they've taken the course, and they contributed by their conversation during the course. Some classes lend themselves a lot more to interaction with other students and with the instructor than some. Some become almost strictly lecture classes. Others, by the nature of them, become an interaction-type thing. Certainly anything having to do with current events, anything having to do with books or literature, [anything having] to do with plays or operas or things like that, is a lot of interchange there. They say, what does that really mean? What are they trying to do? Why didn't they do it this way? It's a lot of that question-and-answer type thing. The only ones that I think they actually produced something, as a result of the class were the poetry and Life Story. I'm probably overlooking something that I shouldn't, but those are the only ones I can think of at the moment.

H: The Life Story sounds real interesting.

J: It's amazing. Some people had some really fascinating life stories. Living all over the world, people who live in different places. One of the ladies, her husband was with an Arabian Oil Company, Iranco. They lived over in Arabia. She talks about living over there and being a woman in that society, where they wear veils and all the other things. It was very interesting. That was one that was printed in the newspaper. It was just a short story. Some of them are short, and some of them are longer stories.

H: How many people in your program are college graduates in the first place?

J: We run a survey, we try to do it once a year to glean that sort of information. I didn't bring that with me. My guess is that it's well over half. I'm trying to think. It's broken down into how many have a doctorate, how many have a master's, how many have a bachelor's degree, and how many have a high school degree. I should have looked at those figures before I came over here. There's a large number that have graduate degrees, and an overwhelming number that have college degrees. We want everybody to graduate, and there's no requirement. There's no age requirement to Learning in Retirement. There's no educational level. You don't have to have a certain something. You don't have to have a background of any sort. Even the Learning in Retirement, the retirement part is a bit of a misnomer, because a lot of people maybe do part-time work like I do. I mean, I have truly retired from my full-time job, but I do part-time work here. I'm sure other people do part-time work occasionally. They're still available, I mean the programs are still available to them. We even have a program that isn't very well publicized, but we don't want anyone to be excluded for any reason. If someone just feels that they'd love to take a course and they just can't afford the \$30 to sign up, and the courses typically run \$46, and then you have \$6 to park, so that's \$52. If you can't afford that, there's even a little fund that's set up to give scholarships to people. It's handled very quietly off to the side. We don't talk about, nobody knows about it, but if somebody did go in and talk to Rogers, the director, she's the one that makes all those decisions. [We] let her have that authority because people are embarrassed, perhaps is the right word, to go in and say, gee, I just don't have the money, but I'd like to take the course. She can make those decisions. I don't even know if taken it in yet, but it's there.

We're trying to make it open to everybody and anybody that we want without any constraints at all.

H: The nice thing is that if they do take advantage of it, it's probably kept quiet so they're not embarrassed.

J: Absolutely, it's kept quiet. The fact that they're there is a plus for the program itself. I'd hate to lose somebody just because they couldn't afford the \$47 or whatever it may be. That may be the one individual that contributes so much to the class because of his or her experiences.

H: What do you envision for the future of Learning in Retirement?

J: We wonder, where do we want to go? Where do we want to grow to? We have a long-range planning committee. That's one of the committees that I failed to mention. I was the chair of that for a while. It's probably why I forgot it. A Freudian slip; trying to get it out of mind. One of the things they do, is they write a long-range plan. A long-range plan for them is one-to-two years, and then three-to-five years. Two sections to it. We used to have three sections, and when I was on board, I said, it's hard to differentiate between three different sections. Lets just break it down to two. So it's one-to-two and three-to-five. We're looking out there and saying, what if? What if we grew to 1,000 members instead of 600 members? Do we have the space available to plan? Do we have the people available to teach them? Do we have the people available to administer the paperwork that is necessary? As you know, any university, government, anything else, there's a lot of paperwork just in signing up for a course. Whether it's a little, cheap course, or a big, fancy, doctorate course. There's a lot of people. There are people involved in that. This is one of the things that we're studying. We'd like to see it grow.

We are trying to incorporate more social activities to fill a void that some seniors feel. I think there's lots of them that do. There's a lot of single seniors around that are looking for a social outlet. This is one of the things that we're trying to fill for them. In the survey that we put out every year, it's asking background information: are they male, are they female, are they this, and are they that? We also want to know, what would you like to do? What courses would you like us to include? It doesn't mean that they're going to get them included because, one, you can only have so many, and two, you've got to get someone who's knowledgeable enough to conduct the course. That's sometimes more difficult than other times. I think that most of our instructors appear by coming in and saying, I know about the ABC subject. Would you like to have a course on that? We'll kick that around a little bit, or the curriculum committee will, and they'll go back and say yes, but can you narrow it down to this area or something like that? They'll tailor it to the individual instructor's interests and demands. Other ones you know of someone who's a music professor and he's retired, and you say, hey, we would love to have someone give a course on symphonies and Beethoven. Could you do that? He'll say, yeah, I guess I could do that. A lot of people, after they've given the course, say, that's more fun than I've ever had before. I'd like to do that again, so we have repeat-people. Sometimes they'll do the same course over again. Sometimes with our forty-person limit to it, we can't accommodate all the people that want to take the course. As a result we will actually run it a second time. It's basically the same course. The Civil War course that I took last spring is going to be given again in the winter session. I told them, I was in the same course? They said, no, it really isn't. It's different aspects of it. I said, well change the name. Don't call it the same thing. Don't call it the Uncivil Civil War.

Everyone will look at it and say, I just took that. I'm not going to do it. I said, call it the Uncivil Civil War II, or call it Civil War Revisited, or anything you want, but make it sound different, so that people will take it. We wandered off into that area.

H: No, it sounds neat, too, because you were talking about the what-ifs and if you get a 1,000 people you may get a dozen or two that are qualified to teach courses.

J: You get a lot of teacher-type people. You'll get a lot of people that don't want to teach. The problems we have, and this is where we have a sub-committee. We've got an ad hoc committee right now set up to study the desirability of off-campus sites. Someday, USF is going to come to us and say, you can't have those classes as the College of Public Health. We need them for something else. They haven't said it yet, I don't foresee it in the near future, but the possibility exists. You play a what-if. What-if they do that? That's where the bulk of our classes are held. What-if they do that? Then where do we go? I've got this committee set up, and they're due to report to us sometime. I hope by the end of the year. The board will actually formulate a policy based on their report as to what we should do as far as off-campus sites are concerned. You're limited where you can put it. Since we charge for it, a lot of the people say you can't put it there. You can't put it in libraries if you charge for it. You can't put it in a lot of public buildings because they say, that's open to the public. If you charge for it, you can't have it there. That rules out lots of pretty good places right off the bat. We used to do classes down at the High Park Methodist Church. They said that their insurance carrier said you can't do it anymore unless we carry some sort of big provider. USF said, we can't afford that. We had to give that one up. There's a lot of problems associated with off-site locations.

There's one person within our group who is quite outspoken in opposition to off-site

things because he says that fractures the whole thing. You don't have the continuity of a particular central location. You've got people going here, you've got people going there. It may become a necessity that we go to those places if we suddenly lose here. With 600 people, and the classes that the university now makes available, predominately, as I said, in the College of Public Health, we're in good shape. If we grow to 1,000, which is approaching doubling our numbers, and/or we lose some of the available space here, then we have an entirely different situation. So we study those, and we look at, what are the pluses, what are the minuses? We'd like to grow. We would like to grow from a controlled growth. We don't want to grow so fast and so far that we end up not being able to be anything to anybody. Then we lose out in the whole thing. Growth is good, growth is necessary. Growth, strictly as a replacement. As seniors, we're not going to be around forever. You young people, you're going to be around for a while. Some of us are going to be leaving, to go wherever. I don't know what our attrition rate is, but it's pretty high. As a result of that, we need to renew the membership every year with new people, and younger people. We continue to recruit. We have a recruiting team that goes out to different places. They recruit elderly people, they recruit newly-retired people, they recruit a whole host of different types of people. With the thought that we get across sections of people.

H: Of course, the biggest push for growth is that there's just such a demand for this. There really is.

J: There seems to be. A lot of people don't really know about it. We try to publicize it. We've had real good luck. I can't think of the lady that was with the *Tribune*. She actually taught one of the Life Story classes, I believe. She is a writer for the *Tribune*, in

the Seniors section. She did a lot to publicize it. I mentioned tying in our efforts with the Senior Net people, they have a person who is an ex-publicity person and photographer. He has expanded his area to include not only the Senior Net, but the Learning in Retirement as well. He puts out a lot of good information and publicizes it and mails the press-release type things to the publications. Someone told me the other day there are like, five different small newspapers in New Tampa, alone. There's the *Carrollwood News*, I live over in that area. There's the *Carrollwood News*. They try to get things in all of those. He's doing a good job of that. [We're] trying to get the word out that we do exist, so that people will know about it. A lot of people will say, I never knew you were there.

H: We've talked about problems, growth, and everything else. Did we miss anything?

J: It's fun. You've got to include that. It is fun.

H: Absolutely. I've talked to several other people and heard nothing but great things.

J: I think that pretty much covers it.

H: Do you have any closing thoughts then? What would you tell a retired senior? What would you even tell a younger person? What kind of lessons would you pass on to future generations?

J: Basically, I would tell them, don't think of retirement as the end of the road. It really isn't. It, perhaps, is a fork in the road. We even have talked about renaming this, instead of Learning in Retirement; we talked about renaming it something that would imply that this is a third-life. You have your growing-up, and you have your education, and you have your working. Maybe this is your fourth-life or your fifth-life or something. It can be a full and rewarding life to which you can contribute and to which you can absorb in

return. Plan on doing something like that. A lot of people that I know are golfers. They come to Florida because they like to be golfers. They golf for the first couple years they're here. Then they suddenly say, golfing is great, I enjoy it, but there's got to be more. I think this is one of the things that could fill the Agot to be more void that they're looking for. It keeps you mentally alert, it puts you in with people that are interested in the same sorts of things that you're interested in. I think that's one of the biggest pluses of Learning in Retirement; are the people that you interface with. They are all stimulating, exciting people that have had full and interesting lives. They're willing to share with you. I would encourage people, whether it be Learning in Retirement, or what it is, to continue stretching your imagination, continue learning, continue developing. Don't give up just because retirement has come. Approach retirement with that attitude in mind. A lot of people, certainly if you lived up in the Pacific Northwest and had been a Microsoft person, you're thinking about retirement at thirty-five or something like that. That's one of the reasons we called it Learning in Retirement and we took the age requirement out of the thing. All you have to be is retired, so that people could retire at thirty-five. Not very many do, but thirty-five or forty, or forty-five and still be eligible for this program. I don't know anyone in the program at the moment that is only thirty-five or forty, but the possibility does exist and there is not age limitation. I would encourage people to think in terms of doing something after they retire. Don't just plan on folding your tent and going away. That's about it.

H: You're one of the people who hasn't folded his tent and gone away, and you've certainly contributed a lot here. We thank you for your contributions and we thank you for sharing with us today.

J: [It was a] pleasure talking with you.

H: Thank you, Mr. Joyce.

End of Interview