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Keith Lupton oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, May 15, 2003

D. Keith Lupton (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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

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Student Program
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TRANSCRIPTION

G: Today is Thursday, May 15, 2003. My name is Yael Greenberg, oral history program assistant for the Florida Studies Center. We continue a series of interviews here in our studio in the Tampa campus library with USF faculty, students, and alumni in order to commemorate fifty years of university history. Today, we will be interviewing Keith Lupton who came to USF in 1967 as the assistant director of Cooperative Education. He later became the director of the Off-Campus Term Program. Good morning, Mr. Lupton.

L: Good morning.

G: Let's begin by you taking us to the year you arrived in Tampa and what circumstances brought you to the University of South Florida.

L: I had spent about fifteen years in industry and working in geological and legal type assignments reflecting my education background in geology and law. After which, I then left industry and went into education at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Antioch is a very well known institution for its experiential education program. I gained a mountain of experience there, and then I decided I wanted to come south and apply for a position here at the University of South Florida. The only thing that they had in

experiential education of course was the Cooperative Education Program, so I came here as that position, assistant director of the Cooperative Education Program.

G: How did you hear about the University of South Florida?

L: Well, I was very active in the national organization dealing with cooperative education and got to know the director here very well through other activities, and I was impressed with the program he had and impressed with him as an individual. It was a strong attraction for me.

G: Who was the director of Cooperative Education when you came here in 1967?

L: George Miller

G: Before we get into cooperative education I want to talk about what the university looked like in 1967. Can you tell me the first time you came on to the University of South Florida? What did the campus look like?

L: Well, compared to Antioch College it looked like a big, massive community. Compared to today, of my memory of it then, it was a tiny little thing compared to today. It was very impressive with all the open grounds of spaces which now most of it is occupied with buildings. One of the things is at one time, I believe, this was part of an Air Force base. The open spaces were still here when I arrived in 1967. The university was only ten years old. Some of the major buildings were of course built by then, but otherwise it was a very lovely well-grounded open space type university.

G: I want to talk about cooperative education. First of all, what is cooperative education, and what were your main responsibilities in being the assistant director of the Cooperative Education Program here at the university?

L: Well, the cooperative education is the type of experiential education, which utilized

employment as the off-campus experience of students. Students leave the classroom; in the case of Antioch they would leave for three, four, five times and go on to their cooperative assignment through their college career; but it's strictly limited to employment. It is a program, which is ideally suited for students, for instance, in business and engineering, but social as it pertains to liberal arts students. What else did you want?

G: What were some of the responsibilities that you had as the assistant director of Cooperative Education?

L: I'm having trouble remembering some of that. I did a lot of development. I was involved in the National Cooperative Education Association of the United States representing the university and various committees and organizations. Here on campus, I suppose [I was] promoting the program to faculty and so forth.

G: What kinds of businesses did USF students work in through your program?

L: This is so far back I don't think I can remember. My career in Cooperative Education was just a little over two years.

G: What happened after those two years?

L: Well, it's what happened during the two years that brings us up to this point. Two of my students, cooperative students, liberal arts majors, became disenchanted with the program because there were many opportunities for business in engineering and science type students but [for] liberal arts students, fine arts students, social sciences, etc., there weren't too many opportunities and the program was limited to employment only. So, they went to Dean Russell Cooper who was dean of the college of what was then called

the College of Liberal Arts and went to him to say that they would like to see the college develop experiential education in other areas besides employment, because employment worked fine in certain areas and was so-so in liberal arts type areas. So, the dean responded favorably and set up a committee of five to study what we may do and make a recommendation. I was one of the five that was appointed to this spot. [I] called his attention primarily to the two students who also served unofficially on the committee. I was also selected because I had this Antioch experience, which was profoundly informative in this time of discussion and research as to what we might do. Out of this in 1970 came the basic, fundamental concepts of the Off-Campus Term Program and was approved by the dean and established. I was made the first director, well the only director not the first.

G: Where was the Off-Campus Term Program initially housed on campus?

L: I think it was the faculty office building. We were housed in several different areas, three or four or five during those twenty years or so that I was as director of the program, I'm just not sure [where]. I think the first one was in the faculty office building, in fact I'm quite sure of that, yes.

G: Let's talk a little bit about the structure of the Off-Campus Term Program in the 1970s. What was the mission and how was it structured in those early days?

L: The mission and structure was designed and set up [in a way] that was followed for the next, in my experience, for the next twenty-five, twenty-seven years. [The mission] was to set up a program that would provide for unlimited possibilities for off campus experience for students, most of them designed by them. Two, it was to be included as a

part of the credit earning process so that college credits were earned. Cooperative education, for instance, students didn't earn credit for their cooperative experiences, that was just simply extra. It was to provide for a complete possibility for anything that a student might want to do, as well as setting up projects that are created for them so that it was sort of a twofold mission. The independent part of it was probably the biggest through the years. The programs like the Caribbean Projects were somewhat limited. The International Student Exchange is sort of an outgrowth of that and the international concept. These were small in numbers. The independent projects, people deciding to go to Israel for some organization through some movement could come and learn how they could earn credit and do projects and research, community based research while they are in Israel for instance; that was the main thrust of the program. The international function was enormous, several thousand students.

G: I want to go back because there were a lot of good things that you said. First of all, I'm interested to know what kinds of students approached you and the Off-Campus Term Program. What were their majors predominantly? Why did they feel a need to come and do an off campus term program?

L: Well, eighty percent of the students I have dealt with in my career were liberal arts students. It was a program that had vast appeal to them versus people in business and engineering. This is not to say one is better than the other, but the interests of students in these different areas differ. They create the differences, not me. Eighty percent of the students I dealt with in my career here were liberal arts majors. They were simply looking for expanding on their education through non-classroom techniques and methods

and to earn academic credit in the process. That academic credit was very essential to the program and approved from the very beginning by Dean Russell Cooper. It had to have been cooperative; you simply couldn't go do it, come back, turn in some papers, and say job well done and have fun now get back in the classroom and continue working towards graduation. The program would not have survived; it would have probably gone nowhere. So, that was the main thrust.

G: Why was the university so interested in pursuing these kinds of off campus programs?

L: They weren't interested, but the two liberal arts students provoked attention and caught the attention of the Dean Russell Cooper who was an outstanding person in my opinion. He set up a committee to study that. The students were the ones who did this, and initiated the original thinking. I happened to be here with all my credentials from Antioch, eager to do similar things at this institution that we did there in Ohio, and I was appointed to the committee. He was simply receptive to a well-developed, conceptualized program that would serve liberal arts students in a superior way.

G: I want to go into the different emphasis in the Off-Campus Term Program. You mentioned the independent part of the program. What kinds of programs were students coming to you about?

L: There's a flyer here that I put out in 1996, sort of the final flyer of the program, which talks about the various kinds of projects designed by students. International projects were by far the greatest. I think I said [there were] 2,000 students earlier; it's 1,400. [The students] developed their own programs on every continent except Antarctica. Urban survival projects were developed by at least 400 students in major cities all over the

United States. Community studies projects, small town and nature, small city and nature involved 600 students in eight or ten states. Rural studies projects involved 500 students in Florida, Appalachia, Indiana, and North Dakota. Service learning projects [involved] at least 2,000 students that worked as volunteers in various social agencies; [it was a] profound experience for them. I've had interns in Florida, Washington, Massachusetts. Students worked in national campaigns of Humphrey, Ford, Carter, Regan, and Bush. I had twenty students establish their own businesses through this program and other unique self-designed experiences.

G: Once a student chose an independent project how did they earn credit from the university?

L: They attended a taped orientation, it was a twenty-minute tape. At that orientation they received a stack of papers that talked about how to earn credit and types of possibilities available, etc., etc., and a detailed syllabi of all the projects that were available to the student to do. It was like looking at a list of courses in some academic field described in great detail what each one was. Law and Society syllabus, for instance, described what a student would be dealing with in the community and individual community based research to gain information about the legal system. That was part of the orientation process. They'd take those papers home, study them and then come back and do a contract. Credit was earned with me under two prefixes, IDS (Independent Study) and SSI because I was member of the SSI faculty. The credit could be earned in three different ways. One, for an approved off campus experience for doing nothing but keeping a journal or diary, turning it in; two hours credit on an S/U grading basis, and

turning in a diary, a journal, that's it, so that I could relive the experience after the fact. Two, to become involved as a volunteer in some sort of an activity which is a social service type of involvement where they could earn up to four hours of credit for 120 hours or more volunteer work experience with that agency, and again maintaining a journal and diary exclusively in that area, different from the two hours. Both of those projects were S/U only. Finally, six different course options were available through those years through me having to do with community-based research like contemporary health problems where they would study the health system in that community. The students followed a very detailed syllabus that had fifteen headings in it, twelve of which had to be responded to in community-based research for four hours credit, nine for three hours credit and so forth. These were letter-graded projects involving extensive field research using the community as the learning base. This was for a letter grade of A to F. A standard requirement for was that for a potential grade of A, a student had to produce a forty-page paper. That paper had to be not only informatively rich in its nature but also writing-wise, because that was an important part of it. Many students, for instance, had rich experiences but were poor writers and ended up with a grade of S because of their written incompetence. So that was the nature of the academic credit that could be earned. This didn't happen often, but a student could create his or her own project, but that did not happen often. Among other things, it was much easier with the variety of six options to pick them out. It involved law, health, inter-cultural interaction in case of someone that's going into a culture that's different from his or her own, community interaction, which is simply general community studies, and then the inter-cultural interaction if

they're dealing with a different culture, etc. It was six different projects, I mentioned five.

G: The community based research that was done, I assume the majority of it was done locally.

L: It was done wherever they were. You mean locally like USF locally? Oh heavens no, oh my goodness no. Most of it was done away from Tampa, ninety percent I would say just as an off-hand figure, and done abroad. Community-based research [was done] in Rome and London [and] Berlin. Some was done locally, but most students took advantage of this to do something to get away from [here]. Of course a lot of our students aren't from Tampa, so they would go home to do their [project]. If they were from Virginia they would go home for the semester and do the project back home.

G: I want to talk a little bit about the students. I imagine you've seen a lot of students over the years. Why were these students so interested in these experiential kinds of educational opportunities?

L: Well, I'm not sure I'm the right one to question about that. Perhaps students themselves should be asked that question. Basically, it was that the classroom was what they were used to. Their whole life had been spent educationally in the classroom. Perhaps they were beginning to understand that education is a two-fold process: one, classroom; one, after classroom, experiential. When people get to be my age, three fourths of what they know came from outside the classroom. I'm getting a little facetious on that, but I'm making a point that experiential education is something that some students sought for, looked for and wanted to augment their education process with life experiences. Students

have been doing this for years, but not for academic credit. They'd have summer jobs that would take them somewhere or something like that, but this was a way of life. To incorporate this into the education system rather than separating it from it attracted the attention of, in my case, over 4,000 students.

G: I want to talk now about the international student exchange programs that you helped to establish through the Off-Campus Term Programs.

L: Instead of just limiting it to exchange, we can just talk about organized international programs because the exchange part is only one. But we'll start with the one that you mentioned, the exchange program. I developed exchange opportunities for students from USF to attend, at one time I had, six universities in England and Scotland where our students would go and spend a semester or a year. Their counterparts would come over here and spend a semester or year. It was a beautiful program in one regard, our students paid tuition, board and room here at USF and went overseas free of charge. His or her counterpart over there paid tuition, board and room over there and came here and occupied my student's place here. So, the total cost of that program extra was the trip between Tampa and England or Scotland. That program started in the late 1980s. It's still in operation I think, and much bigger now. When I came here in 1967 there just was not much at all in the way of international. I'm not aware of anything but I can't say that I thoroughly researched, and I could be in error so I must be careful and I'll rephrase it. I was not aware of anything in the way of international programming planned by the university to support students doing things internationally. So, I began by consulting with two of my former Antioch students. I gave them a mission, as well as myself. [It

was] a mission to plan to undertake projects of taking students into a foreign country. There were three essential elements to that [choice of] country: One, it had to be international; two, it had to be English speaking so there would be no problems about understanding; and three, it had to be cross-cultural in the concept that my students would be primarily or essentially white. Two of my former Antioch students wrote me about this, gave me ideas, and the answer came out very quickly, Jamaica. Jamaica is a black country, ninety percent black or mixed, Jamaica is English speaking, and Jamaica is close by. That was another criteria, it had to be close enough so it wasn't going to be terribly expensive. So I went to Jamaica in 1970. The very first year of involvement with the OCT program was a trip to Jamaica to interact with government officials. [It was] all set up in advance after I had made some contacts in Jamaica and I had asked them to set me up with various government officials and so forth. [I tried] to set up a program where I would bring USF students, once a year, to Jamaica to interact in a broad area of activities: government, business, industry, education, etc. I got full support. I took the first group of students over in 1971. Fourteen projects were completed before I abandoned the program in 1985, because by then there were three other faculty-lead projects to other parts of the world and Jamaica couldn't compete. Until then there was none, so it was wide open. We had a very close working relationship with the government of Jamaica. I gave you a letter, you haven't had a chance to look at it, from the prime minister of Jamaica making comments about how nice it was to meet with my students in 1973, what a wonderful time he had, and wished us well in the project of 1974. I had a standard policy that I would recommend for anyone doing international projects, and that is [that] I

would send the itinerary to the prime minister every year, a month before we were going to arrive. It was all set up with date, time, [and] location done. I would send a copy of that to the prime minister's office. That simply shows the close relationship I developed with the government to make these programs so successful. There's an interesting story that can be told about that. About 1976 Jamaica was getting ready for an election. There were some political problems developing, kind of serious problems. In fact an ambassador from Peru, I think but I'm not sure, was murdered. There was some unrest and this is like three weeks before all of us were to leave for Jamaica. So, I consulted with US government officials and Jamaican government officials by phone to see whether or not we shouldn't just cancel this project and not go on to Jamaica. Both assured me no, it's not that serious, so we went. [Let me] remind you again that the prime minister always had a copy of our itinerary. Tuesday afternoon of the first week, wherever we were at one of our appointments, all of a sudden there was a call for me on the telephone. I went to the telephone and it was [Jamaican] Senator Maurice Tenn that I had never met, did not know. He introduced himself and said "I wonder if I could come over and meet with you folks tonight after supper, say around seven o'clock. I want to go over this political turmoil that's going on here and sort of share things with you a little bit, and I have a nice surprise for you." So, that night Jamaican Senator Maurice Tenn came to The Olympia where we stayed, spoke about the situation, and then said, "Hey I've got some good news for you. You are to all be ready this Saturday at 10 am to be picked up by a bus and taken to Ocho Rios, which is sort of one of the tourist capitals in Jamaica, to be put up in a lovely resort hotel and be provided with all of your meals on

Saturday and Sunday at the expense of the Jamaican government. This was their way to make us feel relaxed and comfortable, totally unprovoked from my part. I was stunned. He went with us, so we had his company from 10 am Saturday until 6 pm Sunday evening, including all meals at their expense. [It was] fantastic. Our program in Jamaica was extremely significant and there were fourteen projects. I then expanded the program around 1979 or 1980 to include the Grand Cayman Islands. [I] took six groups of students to the Cayman Islands [and did] similar type activities. Now when we went there it was all pre-planned. Monday afternoon, say one o'clock, we were to be at the minister of education for two hours. An official would speak to us about the education system in Jamaica: schools, problems, this that and the other. [At] 3:30 [we would go to] the sugar factory, and this is all that kind of interaction day after day. Weekends we would go off to resort areas on our own, but Monday through Friday was interacting with Jamaicans doing what they do in the broad range: medical, education, social aspects, business, government, etc.

G: I want to go back. There was a lot of really good stuff. You mentioned the political turmoil that was taking place in Jamaica in 1976, were there instances where USF stepped in and said Mr. Lupton we're concerned about our students going overseas, we hear that there are political upheavals going on? Were there ever times when the university stepped in and said wait a minute?

L: No, there was no occasion for it except in 1976; and in 1976 I did the logical thing, I consulted with US federal government people and Jamaican government people by telephone to ascertain whether or not we should cancel our arrival in three weeks. Both

agreed, no. It was not a serious thing. It looked like it could get serious. I don't want to go into too much detail about this because it never amounted to a hill of beans, but for a while it was rather tense. I just don't have much interest in going any further into it. It was thoroughly researched and the university was involved in it too. I consulted with people here and they said well why don't you contact Washington and contact Kingston and get a feel for this. It wasn't a big deal but it could have been. The only thing that happened while we were there that made us aware of the fact there was even a problem, we did not witness anything whatsoever, we were not in an area ever where that happened except once [when] we were traveling on the road somewhere. We got stopped by Jamaican police [to] show identification papers, etc. That was it. [He was] just being sure we weren't troublemakers or something I suppose. It wasn't a big deal, but when it started it was about three weeks before we were to leave. I did not want to make it a big deal with us down there, and so it had to be thoroughly researched. We had a marvelous experience that year. That extra trip to Ocho Rios was a blessing.

G: It seems that, in this kind of work, establishing relationships is an integral part of establishing programs. In preparation for this interview you mentioned that these relationships really blossomed to the point that some of the daughters of the minister of Jamaica came to USF.

L: Yes, we had a very extensive [relationship] as a result of the Jamaica initiative that I established for taking our students down there. We had a reciprocal process develop, that is that a lot of Jamaicans became interested in the University of South Florida because our young people would meet young people, and because of my extensive involvement

with various people in government, including the prime minister [and] the deputy prime minister. The deputy prime minister, David Coore, actually came to this campus [and] spoke to students. We had a reception for him at my home, with all sorts of university personnel involved. The involvement was so extensive that we set up a program to encourage Jamaican students to come to USF and to make it possible under the most favorable financial terms. One of them was to waive the out-of-state tuition. We set up a tuition waiver program for Jamaicans about 1975 or 1976. [In] 1980 we expanded that to the Cayman Islands. A little later it was expanded to anyone in any Caribbean country, because at that time the state of Florida was involved in initiatives supporting doing things with other Caribbean areas. I was responsible for getting a program created that did this. The amazing accomplishment was the fact that at one time in Prime Minister Michael Manley's first regime there were twelve to eighteen ministers of government, these are cabinet level in our society, in 1976 or 1977; there were twelve [ministers] and the daughters of three of those ministers of government and the step-daughter of a fourth minister of government were students at USF through this special Caribbean program that included waivers for incoming students. I was very proud of that. I knew their families. They entertained my students every time we went down there. We were treated first class. It was marvelous; it's almost difficult to talk about, it's so special.

G: How long did a student go to Jamaica for? What was the length of the program?

L: [The program was] about twelve to fourteen days. We all went. I went. Everything we did was done together. Then, they came back and they spent two months writing papers.

G: I want to move on to some other projects, particularly some projects that didn't make it

per se, that was the project in Venezuela.

L: [There were] two projects in Venezuela.

G: Can you talk about that?

L: Yes, in the late 1970s, somewhere around 1978 I would guess it would be, I had a student staff member [who] went into Caracas, Venezuela to be involved in a project called the International House of Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela. It was a school designed to teach young Venezuelans English, that was its purpose. It was the English speaking institution for Caracas, Venezuela, and it was operated by the wife of a US businessman, she was US too. [She was] the wife of a businessman who was in Venezuela engaged in business of some kind, I don't know what kind it was. And [there was also] a schoolteacher from Texas who decided that she wanted to be involved in this program in Venezuela. [She] quit her job in Texas and went to Caracas to live in International House and to essentially run this program, teaching Venezuelans to speak English. Then, we set up a program to bring students from the University of South Florida to Caracas to assist in that program as teaching assistants, to be involved working one on one with their counterparts and to really give an intense English training [and they would be] living at International House, which was a huge, very lovely facility. It's described in one of the papers here that I left with you. They lived there and ate there free of charge, so their experience in a sense, other than outside expenses, was to fly to Caracas and fly back. This was such a fabulous program and they were so impressed by what the University of South Florida was doing that the two women who directed this operation requested that I go back home and develop a corporation to raise funds, and I did. International House of Caracas Legal

Foundation was established [and] I was secretary. [It was] a non-paying job, volunteer. [It was] incorporated [by] the state of Florida; I have the corporate papers today. I decided not to throw them away, but it disbanded almost within six months after I got the thing incorporated and set up. It disbanded because the two women had a falling out. Nothing ever came of it. I canceled the corporation and it's a done deal. Then, the second Venezuelan program was in the Andes, Merida, Venezuela. It was a program operated by a man and a woman from the southern part of Florida who had set up a program to get students from Florida to Venezuela for experiences, like through experiential programs like the University of South Florida. We became the flagship university. Students would be coming from other universities, but register for credit here, transfer the credit back home, and they would be involved in this program in the Andes. That wasn't developed until about 1988 or 1989, a year or year and a half before I went on phase retirement. I really had no long-term involvement with them. It was turned over to, I think, Continuing Education here at the university. In a year or two a problem developed. Tuition waivers were given to those people from other states who registered for this program, non-resident tuition waivers I'm talking about. They paid the local fees, but not the state fees. About 1992, if I remember correctly, the state decided that waivers couldn't be waived for that kind of a program. So, our involvement terminated and they moved the program to the University of Minnesota. Then, the two people I worked with who got all those things started, I worked with them intently and was part of a team. They had parting of the ways about 1994. I don't even know if that program exists anymore. My involvement came just before I went on phase retirement, so it was about a

year and a half that I was involved with them.

G: Over the twenty plus years that you directed the Off-Campus Term Program what significant changes in the program occurred?

L: I don't know that there were any significant changes. The syllabi that I developed at the beginning lived throughout the entire twenty-eight years. Changes occurred, I don't know if they were significant. The Jamaica program died out because in 1985 it couldn't compete with three other programs that had by then been created. When I created it in 1970 there were none, zero, no competition. [In] 1985 there was three other programs. It was just too many for that period of time. That was a significant change; in that sense I think you would call it a significant change. Really, what I created in 1970 is pretty much what sustained me for twenty-years full-time and seven years part-time.

G: What is the current status of the Off-Campus Term Program today?

L: It doesn't exist. However, I want to say that there is a person who is involved who in effect replaced me as an individual faculty member, who is involved in similar off campus activity supporting independent research, etc., by the name of Robin Jones. I don't know where her office is now, but you would have to find out from her. She probably still uses the ideas prefixed, I don't know that for sure, but that may be the only connection at all between Off-Campus Term and the current handling of these kinds of things. I don't think she's involved in group activities like I was.

G: Why is there no official Off-Campus Term Program today?

L: I'm not sure it's fair to say why is there no official Off-Campus Term. The title Off-Campus Term no longer exists, but the concepts that I developed here and managed for

several decades goes on in one form or another, but under a different heading. I met with her once. In 1997 I guess I had lunch with her to wish her well here and to share something of what I've done, etc. I cannot speak for her.

G: When you came here in 1967 did you think that you would be here for thirty years?

L: I suspected that, [and] I hoped so. I didn't know that I would be able to bring all the Antioch experience into birth here that I didn't know.

G: What are you most proud of, Mr. Lupton, of your thirty years here at the University of South Florida?

L: Oh boy, I haven't really thought about that. I would say that it's definitely my involvement in the lives of young people, providing experiential education and making it a viable part of their educational process, and my involvement on the national basis with experiential education, organizations, publication, etc. The concept of working with young people to help them develop a much broader scope to their education is most gratifying. That, I guess, is what I'm most proud of.

G: Mr. Lupton, thank you very much.

L: You're very welcome.

End of Interview