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# Lorie Miros oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, August 15, 2003

Loretta Miros (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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

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Current Position: Administrative Assistant to  
the Vice President of USF Lakeland  
Date of Interview: August 15, 2003  
Editor: Danielle E. Riley

Interviewer: Yael V. Greenberg  
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Abstractor: Mary Yeary  
Final Editor: Jared G. Toney

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

*Year of arrival*

She came to USF St. Pete in 1980 as a grant secretary at the Florida Institute for Oceanography.

*Circumstances that brought Lorie to USF*

Lorie and her husband lived in St. Petersburg. She was interested in going back to school to get an MBA. In 1978 she applied and was accepted. They offered classes at the St. Petersburg campus and she began taking classes there. She realized that St. Petersburg had a lot more to offer than just classes. She found that she really was not interested in being an MBA and doing what MBA's do. She became interested in looking for employment on campus. When the opportunity arose at the Florida Institute for Oceanography, she was hired as a grant secretary there. "It just looked like a great place to work."

*What did the St. Petersburg campus look like in 1980?*

The Florida Institute of Oceanography and the Marine Science Department were housed in what used to be merchant marine living quarters. "They were partly renovated to facilitate our institute and the department." The campus itself did not have much in the way of accommodations for a library or academic affairs offices. They built Bayboro, which has now been renamed Davis Hall. They had no student services to speak of at all.

*What kinds of people attended USF St. Petersburg?*

It was a campus that was opened to the residents of St. Petersburg and there was an older crowd of students attending it. "It was a really warm and friendly place." It was right on the waterfront so "you couldn't beat the views." "It was really a pleasant place to be."

*Responsibilities as a grant secretary*

She was responsible for making sure that the grant functions were carried out, travel was arranged, and payroll was done, all according to state regulations. She wrote other grants to utilize there as well.

### *Lorie moves to another position*

She worked at the Florida Institute of Oceanography for a year and then transferred to academic affairs in Bayboro Hall. She worked there for a year.

### *Lorie becomes office manager and assistant to the chair of the Marine Science Department*

In 1983, Lorie began work as an office manager and assistant to the chair of the Marine Science Department, Dr. Peter Betzer

### *Lorie's responsibilities as office manager and assistant to the chair*

As office manager for the Department of Marine Science she worked with the chair and her responsibility was to make sure that the department ran administratively, which involved work with personnel payroll, student inquiries, student recruitment, and admitting graduate students. Fortunately, she says, she did not have to deal with budgets. "That position was really a good one for me because I interacted with everyone in the department at some point."

### *Lorie's interactions with students*

She did student and personnel payroll. Students came to her when they had problems. "We were like a family. I've been known as mother to many students."

### *Structure of the Marine Science Department*

It was not as large then as it is now. "We didn't have as much grant funding, but we were still way up there, I think next to the College of Medicine in terms of grant funding at that time." The department was divided into four disciplines: physical, oceanography, biological, and geological. There were fifteen to eighteen faculty at the time. Each of the disciplines had their own secretary or program assistant who Lorie supervised.

### *Peter Betzer*

Peter Betzer came on board the Marine Science Department in 1983. The marine science program grew because of Peter Betzer's vision. "He was very astute and understanding of how funding developed and had some real wonderful interactions with the legislators who understood the need for various things." He brought the U.S. Geological Survey to St. Petersburg. He was very active in that process. "When he came to the office, there was a different kind of energy. It rose to a different level. Everybody was excited and bought in to the vision. He felt like the department needed to be its own school, and it turned out to be its own college, which is close. He felt that was the way to move the Marine Science Department into the top ten marine science institutes or schools across the country. And it happened." He has done a wonderful job and has succeeded in getting the Marine Science Department to become a college. He is now the dean of the College of Marine Science.

### *Where is the College of Marine Science located?*

They now are housed at the Studebaker building, which has become a part of USF St. Petersburg.

*What is different about working at a regional campus as opposed to the main campus?*  
“When you work at a regional campus you tend to wear many, many hats. So your job really involves a great many responsibilities. In Tampa it appeared that the positions were more confined to particular areas and often times, one area didn’t necessarily talk to another area. So I think when you work on a regional campus, you have an opportunity to learn a lot more because you’re responsible for a lot more.”

*How large was the campus in the mid-’80s?*  
It was probably half the size of what it is today.

*Why did people and students come to USF St. Petersburg?*  
They came because of special programs the campus offered, such as oceanography. “At that time, we [oceanography] weren’t quite in the top ten, but I think we are now. Students sought the program. We had a good enrollment of excellent students.”

*In 1988 Lorie came to the Tampa campus as an executive secretary*  
She had an opportunity to work with Dr. Mandell, the dean of the College of Natural Sciences, while she was still with the Department of Marine Science. She became aware of the position in Tampa, which involved working for that dean. She applied and received the position. It was a promotion for her to come to Tampa. She held the position for a year.

*Responsibilities as executive secretary*  
She was responsible for the faculty. She worked with Dr. Mandell on annual reviews and faculty assignments. She worked with the associate dean as well. The associate dean was the academic piece to the college. Lorie handled tuition waivers, teaching assistant contracts, and anything else that was needed.

*Working at a regional campus helps Lorie to assimilate into the main campus*  
She says the knowledge she gained working at a regional campus helped her to better understand how Tampa functioned. By that time, she knew whom she needed to talk to in order to get something done or to answer a question she had. “I think the experience helped me to assimilate myself better into Tampa.”

*College of Natural Science’s structure*  
The college contained chemistry, biology, math, and physics—all of the hard sciences.

*Was it different to go from a regional campus to the main campus?*  
“It was different in that you wore many hats at a regional campus, but on the Tampa campus that was not the case.”

*Were there any differences in departmental interaction on the main campus?*  
“Because the College of Natural Sciences was small, the interaction between departments was still very open and easy.”

*Was there a difference in the study body makeup on the main campus?*

“The student body population was different because now we are at a four-year, where regional campuses are basically the last 2 years of a student’s [college] career. On the Tampa campus, we had young students at the undergraduate level, and of course graduate students. So you needed to understand the differences, and if you didn’t understand them, you learned them. The differences in the populations of the students wrought different problems. You learned how to deal with that.”

*College of Natural Sciences moves to the College of Arts and Sciences*

The College of Natural Sciences was moved into the College of Arts and Sciences. This move occurred under President Borkowski.

*Effects of the move*

She thinks the move brought a lot of pain to a lot of people in the small college because it the move broke up a fairly close-knit group. There were a lot of political issues as well. The dean of the College of Natural Sciences, Dr. Mandell, lost his position once the college was assimilated into the college of arts and sciences. She says that was unfortunate because he was an excellent leader.

*In 1993 Lorie became a graduate advisor for the graduate program in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering on the Tampa campus, where she stayed for one year.*

*Lorie’s responsibilities as graduate advisor*

Her responsibilities involved interacting with new graduate students interested in computer science and engineering. She handled their admittance and folders throughout their career there. She was responsible for tuition waivers, and the students’ appointments and assignments. She worked with Larry Hall, the coordinator for graduate studies.

*Lori enjoys changing job positions*

She liked moving to different positions because of the challenge of a new position and learning it. She always looked for something new. Changing jobs motivated her to continually observe what was going on not just in her area, but campus wide. When an opportunity came up where she thought she could be of some benefit to someone, she looked into it. She thrives on a new challenge and new responsibilities.

*What was a major change on the Tampa campus that Lori witnessed?*

“Building, building, building, and no parking. Basically that was the main issue that we had. Every time a new building went up we would lose a parking lot. There was a lot of concern about that, and of course the population of students was growing as well as the faculty. The question was where are we going to put everybody. Then as the buildings aged, there were the questions of, well, here’s a building that needs renovation, the money had to be appropriated. Then we had to find other places to work while that renovation was going on.” She says that was another challenge that people had to face.

### *Technology changes*

In St. Petersburg, Lori's office had an IBM word processor, which was not a computer. At the time, that was state of the art. As she moved into the 1990s, she found software changing, and personal computers were more in demand. She says e-mail and voice mail started coming into the forefront. "The more we use it the better we feel about it because it saves us so much time."

### *The vision of the Computer Science and Engineering Department*

Dr. Kandel was the chair. He tried to build the department and bring in people from various disciplines that would augment what the department already had. Robotics was something that was on the cusp. He secured faculty who were working on robots and robotics. He started the robotics area in the department.

### *In 1994, Lori was promoted to the College of Education into the dean's office.*

She worked for the associate dean, Constance Hines. She worked in the dean's office of the College of Education as an administrative assistant until 1997.

### *The associate dean's vision for the College of Education (getting accredited)*

"Accreditation was key in Constance Hines' vision. We were always working towards getting that accreditation." Accreditation was a fairly big process because it came every four to six years and teams of people came from all around the country to examine what the college was doing, how they were doing it, and what the results were. It was important to Dr. Hines to make sure that accreditation was always approved and a part of the college.

### *How does a college prepare for accreditation?*

Hopefully the college has good records. Those records are then accessed through departments to assemble the materials that will be examined. The materials are faculty records consisting of their specializations that allow them to teach in the area that they teach. The syllabi and its contents are examined because there is certain information that has to be there. Also examined, are the outcomes of teaching the students. "Do we have the outcomes, are they being achieved, and if not, why not, and how are they being fixed. Then the team comes and examines that and determines if in fact you are on the correct path, and then gives their approval for accreditation. If you don't have accreditation then you don't have anything."

### *Lori's responsibilities in the College of Education*

She was the administrative assistant to Constance Hines. Constance's area of responsibility was academic affairs so Lori assisted her in terms of faculty, which included tenure and promotion issues. Lori helped with the annual reviews for the college, graduate student master's thesis and dissertation processing, and the tuition waiver process.

### *Lori's experience with the tuition waiver process helped the College of Education receive more tuition waiver hours*

Since Lori had experience with tuition waivers in the Computer Science and Engineering Department, she became responsible for the program in the College of Education. Through doing that, she realized that the other colleges she had worked for were receiving nine credit hours of waiver, while the College of Education was receiving six or seven a semester. To improve this, Lori worked with the graduate school, whom she had developed a good relationship with, and by the time she left the dean's office, the College of Education had improved the tuition waiver program so that graduate students were receiving the same number of tuition waiver hours as other colleges on campus. Lori says receiving more tuition waiver hours added a lot to the college in terms of support for graduate students. "We increased our budget during the two years [by] about 100,000 dollars more to support the graduate students."

#### *Construction of a new College of Education building*

During the time Lori worked for the College of Education, plans were implemented for a new building. Shortly after Lori left the dean's office, and after the new building was completed, students, staff, and faculty were required to vacate the old building so that the renovations of it could take place.

#### *USF's growth*

"We [USF] were always growing." She does not know of a place that has grown anymore than USF. Whenever she has been working in any department, it has always grown. "And that is great; it [growth] comes from the leadership."

#### *From 1997 to 1999, Lori worked in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department in the College of Education*

She left the dean's office in the College of Education to go to a department that had lost an office manager. The department was in upheaval. Their faculty numbers had decreased while the student body had increased, which caused organizational problems. She moved to the Department of Educational Leadership in the College of Education and took the position of office manager. She worked there for two years.

#### *From 1999 to 2001, Lori was assistant to the chair of the Marketing Department in the College of Business*

Lori looked around campus for a new challenge and saw a position available in the Marketing Department in the College of Business.

#### *Responsibilities as assistant to the dean*

Lori says she kept the chair of the marketing department, Bill Locander, in line. "He is a dynamic, energetic, [and] exciting leader. He was always going off in a hundred different directions." Her responsibilities were to make sure everyone got paid, run the department, supervise the office personnel, and work with the graduate students. "I enjoyed that [my job] very much."

#### *Bill Locander's vision for the Marketing Department*

Bill and Lori worked on developing a leadership center, which was Bill's vision. The leadership center is housed at the Marshall Center right now. His vision was to create a

center where students could come and learn leadership skills. Also, Bill Locander wanted the center to serve the business community. The center puts on workshops and seminars for the business community. The Marketing Department had a round table for business community leaders. Once a month the marketing department put on a program for business leaders. The business leaders came together to a place downtown and speakers from all over the world came to talk about issues that the business community had. This was also one of Bill Locander's ideas.

*In 2001, Lori moved to the Lakeland campus where she currently is the administrative assistant for the vice president of USF-Lakeland, Dr. Preston Mercer.*

*How did Lori find the job at USF-Lakeland?*

The Marketing Department had expanded their faculty base on the St. Petersburg and Lakeland campuses. The Marketing Department had faculty members who chaired faculty search committees for Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Lakeland. Lakeland's chair was Alice Murray. Alice Murray worked with the department to interview and find a particular faculty member that suited the Lakeland campus. Lori helped with the faculty member search. By helping with the search, Lori got to know Alice Murray. At the time, Alice Murray developed the Lakeland campus administratively and tried to work out the logistics of putting together the academic affair's area for the vice president. Lori told her she was interested in another challenge. A position came up. Lori applied for it, and got the job.

*What was the Lakeland campus like in 2001?*

"It is a very pretty campus. It is small." There are four buildings surrounded by a courtyard. USF Lakeland has parts of those buildings because it leases space from PCC. "We are [quickly] outgrowing that space. Lori says USF Lakeland is very small and very comfortable. When she arrived, Lori says the atmosphere was one of community, family, and teambuilding, which appealed to her.

*Her responsibilities as administrative assistant*

She started out with the major responsibility of helping the Lakeland campus with faculty searches. She is also liaison to the USF Lakeland campus board, which is a governing body for the Lakeland campus, much like the university board of trustees is for the entire university. She helps develop the format of the meetings of the campus board. Additionally, her responsibilities include supervision of the academic affair's support group. There are five program assistants in the group. She also supervises the receptionist for the academic affairs area, and the custodial workers. When Lori first came on board she worked for the assistant vice president, Alice Murray. "She is a very busy lady. Her calendar is a real challenge." Six months after Lori arrived, they saw a need for an additional staff member in the academic affair's area. Lori hired an assistant to Alice Murray. Dr. Mercer is involved in many things, so his calendar is full and complicated, as are his workdays. She helps organize things for Dr. Mercer.

*USF Lakeland's uniqueness (Involves a family-like atmosphere and team-work)*

“It’s unique because it is so small and because we are in a fantastic growing phase. Our campus has grown faster than any place else in terms of enrollment, budget, faculty, and support staff. Dr. Mercer understands the need for support staff to help the academic area and the students. We are very much interested in our students. That’s what we’re there for. We work very hard to make sure that the needs are met. In fact many students come from Tampa to get questions answered and even take classes because the atmosphere is one of “If I don’t know the answer, I’ll find it for you.” The USF Lakeland community is very supportive and team driven. “People don’t worry about what’s in their job description, they just worry about getting the job done. It’s a lot of cooperative effort between different areas on campus. We all really feel very strongly about the growth, and the vision that Dr. Mercer has. The atmosphere there, I think because of Dr. Mercer, is comfortable. We care about each other. We developed a secret pal kind of thing where each one of us has as secret pal for a year. We things happen, we’re there for them.”

*What is Preston Mercer's vision of the Lakeland campus?*

Number one, he is interested in students. “Whatever it takes to get the students happy, he is willing to do. He is willing to try a program to see if it works. It may not, but he is not afraid to try it.” Lori says the programs he has tried have worked. He comes to the campus with a lot of university experience, and he understands what has to happen in order for a campus to move forward and grow. He has developed contacts in the community. He has brought the community into the university, and he has taken the faculty out into the community. “We have partnerships in the community that are very valuable.” Lori says Dr. Mercer is concerned with the welfare of the faculty and their needs. He makes sure needed resources are available for the students, faculty, and staff. He believes strongly in research and is interested in that path as well.

*Major emphasis of the Lakeland campus*

USF Lakeland wants to serve the needs of students and the community. “Where we see a need we develop a program. USF Lakeland has research grants for the elderly and is developing that area. Also, the campus is developing information technology. The only information technology department in the entire university is housed at USF Lakeland. It is an undergraduate program, and is very much in demand. USF Lakeland is looking to develop nutrition into a viable department. “What we are doing is dictated by community needs.”

*Development of a joint use facility with PCC*

USF Lakeland is working jointly with PCC in developing a joint use facility, which should open in 2006. It is in the developmental stages. It has been ninety percent funded by the legislature. The planning is in process, and the construction managers have been hired. The joint use facility will be a technology building because USF Lakeland is interested in moving forward in technology. It will be built right next door to USF Lakeland on the same land.

*A USF Lakeland campus will be built in the future*

“Since we are running out of space right there at PCC, and although the joint use facility will be useful, we are still going to need more space.” In three to five years, the student enrollment will be around 5,000. “We have to have a place for students to come.” That will be a new campus, the USF Lakeland campus. Five sites were under consideration. They have narrowed it to three. A board meeting will occur very soon, and a site will be chosen.

*What is Lori most proud of in her twenty plus years affiliated with USF?*

“The continual development in growth of USF, not only personally, but as a university. Seeing that and all of the positive moves towards meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century; our presidents, our college deans, and our vice presidents, who have had that vision, have helped to make it all come to fruition.”

*Where does Lori see USF in ten years?*

“If the legislature will cooperate and allow us to continue to do what we are doing, we will be bigger and better than ever.”

*Lori’s last words about USF*

“USF has given and continues to give people an opportunity to grow and to meet the challenges that are out there. I think you need to think outside the box, [and] understand that there are options we haven’t even thought about yet that we need to take advantage of. Keep your mind open, and accept the changes and challenges, because for the most part, they are beneficial.”

*End of Interview*