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Mark Orr oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, March 27, 2003

Mark Orr (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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

Narrator: Dr. Mark Orr
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Year of Arrival

Dr. Orr arrived at USF in 1966 and was hired as both an associate professor of Physical Science & Director of International Affairs.

Circumstances that brought Dr. Orr to USF

According to Dr. Orr, the manner in which he came to USF was rather unusual. In 1966 Dr. Orr was planning to retire from the Air Force and was determined to return to university life where he could teach and be a director of an international program. After locating a directory of all universities and colleges in the U.S., Dr. Orr looked for familiar names of people who could provide entrée into one of the institutions. One of the first names that Dr. Orr recognized was Dr. Herbert J. Wunderlich, who at the time was the dean of student affairs at USF. Having shared an office with Dr. Wunderlich in Tokyo, Japan, during the Allied Occupation, Dr. Orr called him and asked if he knew of any opportunities at USF. Prior to contacting Dr. Wunderlich, Dr. Orr had never heard of the University of South Florida. Not having the authority to hire faculty, Dr. Wunderlich suggested that Dr. Orr contact Russell Cooper, the dean of the charter College of Liberal Arts. Coincidentally, Dr. Orr had also met Dean Cooper in Tokyo serving as one of his consultants during the occupation. Reminded by his association with Dr. Orr, Dr. Cooper asked Dr. Orr to come to Tampa for an interview. Dr. Wunderlich, Dr. Orr Dr. Allen and several faculty members in the department of political science all interviewed him. At the end of the day, in the local Holiday Inn, Dean Cooper offered Dr. Orr the positions of associate professor and director of International Affairs.

Description of USF campus and surrounding areas in 1966

During his first visit to USF in 1966, Dr. Orr was “rather disappointed at his first visit” because he had been accustomed to campuses such as the University of North Carolina. Prior to working at USF, he had never been to a commuter school and was struck by all the open area of land on Fowler Avenue, “It was not a very attractive entrée.” Fowler Avenue had a Holiday Inn, the University Restaurant, and a Texaco Station at the corner.

Associate professor and director of International Affairs

Dr. Orr was hired as an associate professor of political science as well as director of International Affairs.

First office and College of Basic Studies

Dr. Orr's first office was located in one of the student dormitories. In those early days, he was affiliated with the College of Basic Studies, which had nine departments including American Idea and Behavioral Science. Dr. Orr was attached to the department of American Idea where he was responsible for teaching one course in addition to establishing an international affairs program.

Balance between professor and directorship responsibilities

As the International Affairs Program became more established, it became increasingly difficult for Dr. Orr to spread his obligations between teaching and directing a new program. Charged with developing international programs and teaching one to two courses, Dr. Orr found it to be "a difficult assignment." After one year of working under two titles, Dr. Cooper asked to speak with Dr. Orr citing that he had a problem, which he hoped Dr. Orr could assist. Explaining that a department of interdisciplinary social sciences was being developed that only had one faculty member, Dr. Cooper asked Dr. Orr if he would become chair and further expand the department. Initially told that he was to report to Dean Cooper, Dr. Orr found out that he was to check in with the associate dean of social science with his title as chair, while at the same time, report to Dean Cooper as director of International Affairs. This arrangement continued for some time, and eventually caused difficulties as Dr. Orr was trying to meet the needs of both departments and "serve two masters well."

Developing an International Affairs Program

In 1966, a group of faculty members from different departments initiated an interest for the university to have an International Affairs Program. After organizing a committee to investigate the possibilities of developing a program, the group established a goal of creating an international center with a director; Dean Cooper was the head of the committee as he was also Dean of Liberal Arts. Through the efforts of this committee, a recommendation was made to begin a search for a director of an International Affairs Program at USF.

Goals in initiating an international program

The goal was to "internationalize the campus, to provide opportunities for students to learn about the world through the curriculum, development of good resources in the library, through bringing special programs to the campus, through a larger number of international students with whom Florida students might associate and learn about the world, to opportunities [for students] to study abroad. All of these elements were on the table for study and for development."

International students at USF—1966

In 1966, there were between thirty and forty foreign students attending USF. At the time, Charles Wildy was the assistant Dean of Men and was also given the responsibility of advisor of foreign students. Surprisingly, the majority of foreign students who attended USF in the late 1960s came from Iran because the Shaw was still running the country and developing close ties with the U.S. Furthermore, the government of Iran was organizing

generous scholarships for its students to travel to study in American universities. Some students also came from Latin America and Asian countries. At the time, USF had very few students from European countries. Helping foreign students adjust to their new circumstances in America, was the responsibility of Dr. Wildy advisor of foreign students; this function remained in this office for many years. Within the last five years, the responsibility of overseeing and interacting with foreign students was moved from the Office of Student Affairs to the International Affairs Center.

USF students reception of foreign students

Dr. Orr does not recall any instances where foreign students were not well received at the University of South Florida. "I think Florida students welcomed international students."

World Affairs Council/Model United Nations Program

Dr. Orr organized a World Affairs Council, which was a group made up of USF students and international students. Its primary function was to foster social interaction with foreign students through the organization of a Model United Nations Program, which began at USF in 1967. The World Affairs Council sponsored the Model United Nations Program for five years. Currently, the Program is still in existence and is made-up of both international and USF students.

Interdisciplinary Social Science, Chairman

Shortly after Dr. Orr came to USF, he was asked by Dean Russell Cooper to take on additional responsibilities as Chairman of the Interdisciplinary Social Sciences Program and report to the Associate Dean of Social Sciences; needless to say, reporting to two different deans caused Dr. Orr some difficulties.

Dissolution of Basic Studies College

At that time, the university had a Basic College that handled the first two years of the college program and a College of Liberal Arts. Ultimately, the USF administration decided to dissolve the Basic Studies College and assign the nine departments to the "appropriate line college." There was a division of natural sciences, division of social sciences, division of humanities, and a division of fine arts. Each of the divisions had an associate dean who then reported to Russell Cooper who was the overall Dean of Liberal Arts. Once the university dismantled the College of Basic Studies, Dr. Orr's department, Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, was asked to accept faculty from two departments, American idea and behavioral sciences. In addition, courses were terminated, faculty reassigned, and similar departments were absorbed into the Interdisciplinary Social Sciences division. During this period, one of Dr. Orr's main charges was to review courses and decide whether they should be terminated or assigned to other line colleges; faculty also had to be reevaluated.

Accent On Learning--problems

One of the problems Dr. Orr encountered while evaluating academic divisions, was that in developing a university and establishing a Basic Studies program, the emphasis had been on "excellence on teaching. This was the first clarion call. Teaching would be emphasized." While many faculty members were employed in the College of Basic

Studies and came to USF with good reputations as teachers, they might not have advanced past a master's degree in their own academic fields. Once the College of Basic Studies was dissolved and faculty were being reviewed for other academic departments, those that did not have Ph.D.'s, would either have to be terminated, find other positions in administration, or encouraged to pursue their Ph.D. This decision affected many faculty members and became a "serious turning point in their careers and in their plans."

Russell Cooper

"Russell Cooper was a special kind of person." Prior to his career at USF, Dr. Orr had first met Dr. Cooper when he (Cooper) was a professor of political science at the University of Minnesota; Cooper later became an assistant dean at the University of Minnesota. USF hired Dr. Cooper as the first dean of the College of Liberal Arts, while he was working at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Cooper was a very religious person and during WWII, had been a conscientious objector. Despite his religious convictions and his objections to war, Cooper wanted to be helpful and volunteered to come to Japan and serve as a consultant in the development of social science research and curriculum in Japanese schools. At USF, Cooper was the original dean of Liberal Arts, "He was able to exercise a lot of leadership of building the university. His voice was an important voice." Dr. Orr considered Dean Cooper to be a good leader who was always attentive to the needs of the faculty, as well as a good organizer and administrator. Sometimes the faculty complained that Dean Cooper made promises that he could not deliver in terms of the budget. "Overall, he got good marks, I think that accounts for the fact that there was a building named after him today."

Director of International Affairs & Chair of Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science

A year after Dr. Orr arrived and became the Director of International Affairs; he was appointed Chair of the Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science. According to Dr. Orr, this new appointment is an important part of university history because it diverted him from his original mission and was being pulled in two different directions. The department of Interdisciplinary Social Science began to grow rapidly and took more and more of Dr. Orr's attention in hiring additional faculty, development of new courses, and accepting new students into the program. Consequently, Dr. Orr spent less time in the International Affairs department.

Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science--nurturing home to other disciplines
Happily, Dr. Orr notes that the International Affairs department became the "nurturing point" for Women's Studies, International Studies, Black Studies, and Interdisciplinary Studies. Today, International Studies has become a special program in the department of Government & International Studies, Women's Studies as well as Africana Studies (formerly called Black Studies), are both independent departments. All of these departments were "born and nurtured" in the department of Interdisciplinary Studies.

Frustrations with serving two positions

Frustrated with not having the time to work with international affairs, which was his "primary mission," Dr. Orr served 1967-1984 as Chairman of Interdisciplinary Studies

while also serving as Director of International Affairs. By 1984, Dr. Greg O’Brian was the Provost, who Dr. Orr was reporting to as director of international affairs; Dr. Orr also continued to report to the college of Arts & Sciences as chair of Interdisciplinary Social Science. Distressed with his situation, Dr. Orr met with Dr. O’Brian and told him that he was not fulfilling his main mission of working with international students. While Dr. Orr did enjoy chairing the department of interdisciplinary studies (total of seventeen years), he asked Dr. O’Brian if he could give up the position and focus full-time on directing international students. Dr. Orr resigned as chair in 1984 and he now turned his full attention to developing international activities on campus.

Major accomplishments—Chair of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences

While chair of Interdisciplinary Social Science, Dr. Orr helped to develop faculty in the disciplines of Women’s Studies, Leisure Studies, International Studies, and Black Studies. Providing a home for these disciplines, Dr. Orr managed these new programs, and helped faculty pursue their research interests.

Lack of support for the Leisure Studies Program

Out of all of the new programs begun by the department of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, Leisure Studies was the only program that “fell by the wayside.” At the time, Leisure Studies was thought to be one of the more advanced disciplines as more Americans had increasing amounts of leisure time. How Americans were using their free time and how might they use their time more effectively, were just some of the issues that Leisure Studies attempted to address. With the dean’s help, Dr. Orr put together a Leisure Studies program with three faculty members as instructors. Despite his efforts, the dean never fully accepted the program as being a “priority area” and eventually faculty members who taught leisure studies courses, moved to other areas of the university.

Programs in Interdisciplinary Studies become full-fledged departments

Aside from Leisure Studies, Women’s Studies, International Studies, and Black Studies (later referred to as Africana Studies) all became full-fledged departments at USF. Dr. Orr is extremely proud of the Africana Studies and Women Studies programs.

American Ideal and America’s Role courses

The American Ideal was “a very forward looking course/program,” which varied depending on the university’s decision to move from a quarter to a semester system. The course focused on two main areas, first, America’s role in the world and second, social problems within the United States. One semester was directed toward teaching students about social problems in the U.S. and how they might deal with these issues when they enter the “adult world.” America’s Role in the World was another course offered in this area to students. This course focused on U.S. foreign policy and interactions with other countries.

Structure of the Basic Studies College—development of International Studies

Within the Basic Studies College, nine departments were set-up to be the core courses for all undergraduate students. The American Ideal course helped students learn about the

“outside world” and social issues. Out of the nine departments within Basic Studies, students had to take courses in seven departments. Once the college was dismantled and Dr. Orr was asked to terminate programs and find new assignments for faculty members, he looked at the America’s Role in the World course and found that five to six faculty members were teaching it. Interested in international affairs, these professors became the first faculty in the department of international studies.

Passion for international affairs

Dr. Orr became first interested in international affairs when he was a college student studying at the University of North Carolina. Majoring in English with a minor in political science in the 1930s, Dr. Orr became increasingly interested in topics dealing with international affairs. Additionally, during this period, the U.S. was becoming more engaged with the world in Europe and later with the war in Japan. Attracted to the courses dealing with the world, Dr. Orr became an assistant to one of his professors in the discipline and worked for him for a number of years directing a program on public education about international affairs in the southern part of the U.S. Southern Council of International Relations was the name of the organization that headed this project; its goal was to provide public education in seven southeastern states about America’s place in the world. Through the Council’s efforts, citizens were encouraged to take the world more seriously, join in study groups and learn about the world and enroll in college courses to learn about world affairs. *The South and World Affairs* was the official publication of the Council, which Dr. Orr edited on a monthly basis. He began editing the magazine in 1938-1941, when he entered military service.

Differences in USF from other institutions

One of the most obvious differences between USF and the University of North Carolina is that UNC is a residential school; USF was also a commuter school. This aspect of USF in particular, was difficult for Dr. Orr to adjust too considering his previous exposure to universities such as UNC, University of Virginia, and University of Michigan, which were all residential schools. “I was accustomed to being apart of the university twenty-four hours a day. You’re involved-- evenings, late afternoons, weekends, twenty-four hours, seven days a week activity whether it is the curriculum or sports; you feel apart of a large family. This feeling is missing in commuter schools where students come to take the course and leave the campus...come to get the degree and go to work.” Among students who attend commuter colleges, they do not have the twenty-four hour commitment as “full-fledged” university students. Happily, Dr. Orr has noticed a trend to build a larger student population at USF.

President John Allen

Dr. Allen was a very formal person who was generally addressed by everyone as President Allen. “He was reserved and somewhat aloof, but always patient--always willing to listen.”

Beginnings of study abroad programs at USF

In the early years of USF history, Dr. Allen personally appointed department heads, including Dr. Orr to interdisciplinary social sciences. Within his first year as director of

interdisciplinary social sciences, Dr. Orr planned a study abroad program to Spain; this was USF's first formal study abroad program. At that time, the Chancellor and the Board of Regents in Tallahassee closely monitored all universities in Florida. USF, like other institutions, were not authorized to establish their own study abroad programs. The Chancellor's office had to approve such programs before they could be formally established. After writing a proposal for a summer study abroad program to Spain, Dr. Orr first went to Dean Cooper and then to President Allen. The next step involved Dr. Allen going to the Chancellor for final approval. A few weeks later, Dr. Allen met with Dr. Orr to tell him that unfortunately the Chancellor had not approved his proposal. Charged with creating international student programs/study programs at USF, Dr. Orr immediately asked President Allen what were some of the reasons for the rejection of his proposal. The chancellor concluded that USF was "A new university that needs to develop its programs more fully on campus before it develops a program off campus." Unfortunately, President Allen told Dr. Orr that all study abroad programs would have to be put on hold for a few years. Needless to say, this was one of Dr. Orr's "first great disappointments." Doubting whether he would ever be allowed to initiate study abroad programming at USF, Dr. Orr was finally given permission two/three years later. The summer program to Madrid, Spain, would be USF's first study abroad program.

Interaction with students

Through teaching and the creation of the World Affairs Council, Dr. Orr had many opportunities to interact with students. He eventually became the advisor of the Council as well as the advisor to the Model UN program until he retired from USF in 1999.

Iranian students at USF

In the early history of USF, there were many Iranian students who came to study at USF. With no resident Iranian population or Iranian Americans in Tampa, Dr. Orr speculates that many Iranians attended USF because of the climate and the reasonable tuition the university offered, "They felt that this [USF] would be a congenial place for Iranian students." In terms of political views, Iranian students who apposed or supported the Shaw were equally accepted into USF's international student program. These students were very vocal until the Iranian Revolution, when they no longer began attending American universities in such massive numbers.

Characteristics of USF students—early days

Students were much eager in those early days, in part to their older age (average twenty-seven years old). In addition, many of the first students who attended USF, were also the first in their families to pursue a college education. Being an urban university located in a growing metropolitan city, also encouraged local residents who might not have given any thought to pursuing a higher education. "Here, overnight, was an opportunity for hundreds of students who otherwise had not dreamed of going to college until one state university was established here [in Tampa] and available to them for the very first time.

International Student Program becomes a priority for USF

In 1984, Dr. Orr became the full-time director of the International Student Program. Over the years, Dr. Orr has seen the program go through many changes including, a

significant change in the university's position on international programs, which took place about seven/eight years ago, "International programs became a priority in the university's list of priorities to internationalize the university and the campus."

Growth of International Student Program

Gradually, the office has grown and able to add staff and dream of larger expansions. One of the wishes for the program is to build an international house, where international activities could be the focal point. With the increasing interest in international affairs around the world, individual departments have also been hiring faculty members who specialize in the international scene. More study abroad programs, speakers, and seminars are being held on campus for international and non-international students. Within the last few years, many international students have also organized themselves into groups based on their country or origin. Over the years, the International Affairs Center had been working closely with the Office of Student Affairs, with the goal that the international students would eventually be apart of the International Affairs Center. This relationship did not become solidified until about five/six years ago when the Office of Scholars, which was under the Office of Student Affairs, was transferred over to the International Affairs Center.

Deanship established for the International Affairs Center

As the program continued to grow, the director position of the International Affairs Center became more necessary than it had previously. At the end of President Borkowski's term and the beginning of President Castor's, a Deanship for the International Affairs Center (IAC) was established; Joan McCarthy was the first dean (1999). Under McCarthy's leadership, the (IAC) continued to expand rapidly and began including new programs such as international admissions, the Office of Caribbean & Latin American Studies (currently on the fourth floor of Cooper Hall). Dean McCarthy "Will carry the torch for international education at USF."

International students residences in 1966

International students were given the same rights of non-international students in terms of housing and could live in dormitories. Dr. Orr believes that at one time, there was a wing in one of the dormitories for international students, although they were encouraged to have a roommate from Florida, "We did not want just an enclave of foreign students, but they should meld into the student body." Many international students also lived in apartments or with relatives' off-campus. Within the local community, many international populations would encourage their relatives who were living in other countries, to attend USF and live with them off-campus.

Composition of international students at USF since 1984 and 1966

Over the years, the main change in the composition of international students has been in their numbers and attention given to them by the university. From just a handful in 1966, there are more than 2,000 international students who attend USF at the present time. Chinese, Indian and Japanese students make-up the majority of international students here on campus, with other international students representing nearly fifty countries. "We are beginning to feel their presence [international students] more and more and this

of course, this has drawn other students to learn more about those countries and this has enhanced our study abroad programs as well.”

Increase in USF students attending study abroad programs

The demand for study abroad programs has increased so much, that the university decided to employ a full-time director who oversees setting up new programs, supervising existing programs, advertising the programs, and seeking scholarships for students. Ideally, every student who attends USF should have the opportunity to experience a study abroad program. This model is only possible in small private schools and not in an institution as large as USF. “The public institutions must do their best to provide economical worthwhile opportunities for our students to have a study abroad program of some sort.”

Future direction of International Students Program

The future of the program has already begun with the trend towards greater unity between the international program and international studies side. International programs involve international students and study abroad programs while on the international studies side, some students are able to be international studies majors and simultaneously learn a foreign language or have a study abroad experience. Students who might want to pursue a career in international studies or learn about the world as a responsible citizen can benefit from the diversity of the international programs offered at USF. Along with the original goals of the program, Dr. Orr sees more opportunities for students to study abroad, richer curriculum programs to learn about the world, and opportunities to produce “world citizens.” We need to engage students and give them opportunities to learn about the world. Certainly after the War [invasion of Iraq], there will be a time when the U.S. will be reestablishing relations with other countries around the world. “We want our students to go out into the world with a better understanding of it.”

Dr. Orr retires

Dr. Orr retired from USF in 1999.

Final thoughts

“It is not a new song, but an old song, Internationalize, internationalize, learn more about the world and your place in the world.” When President Borkowski was at USF, he gave a fundraising/birthday party (75th) in honor of Dr. Orr to create a fund. Each year, students can apply for three \$1,000 scholarships for rising seniors in the international studies program. Dr. Orr hopes that the fund will continue to grow and that there will be more scholarships for international majors to experience international experiences. This experience abroad is particularly important for students who want to pursue careers in the international arena (government, business, and in journalism). “My parting words are to keep moving ahead and enriching the curriculum an international curriculum, have more international students, more opportunities for our students to learn about the world.”

End of Interview

