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Steven Oscher oral history interview by Danielle E. Riley, June 7, 2004

Steven Oscher (Interviewee)

Danielle E. Riley (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Mr. Oscher came to USF in 1975.

Early experiences

Oscher grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1969, he made the decision to join the U.S. Navy's Submarine Service, where he spent six years on active duty. In late 1971, he had come to Florida while on leave from one of his patrols, and again in 1972 with a friend who lived in St. Petersburg. "I came down and fell in love with the area."

USF; Academics

At that time, he was thinking about studying engineering largely because of the experiences that he had working for the U.S. Navy. The Armed Forces had a program called the G.I. Bill which allowed Oscher to return to school when he did. While initially applying for the engineering program at USF, he decided instead to study business as an incoming freshman, concentrating on accounting.

First impression of USF

His impression of the USF campus was much different than those northern universities he had been accustomed to seeing. "Here ... it looked like a pasture. There was a lot of empty space. There were buildings that dotted the landscape, and they were all yellow and not very attractive. But, Tampa was still a wonderful community."

Impressions of Tampa Bay area

When he visited Tampa in 1972, he recalls, "There wasn't a cloud in the sky, the temperatures were in the mid-seventies, and it was just a beautiful place to go to." Though he had been considering a move to California, he instead decided on South Florida. His first semester as a student at USF was in 1975.

Living arrangements

When he moved to Florida, he first lived in Temple Terrace. By the time he had enrolled as a student at USF, he was living in an apartment in the Carrollwood area.

Extracurricular involvement

Initially, he does not recall having any interests at USF beyond his academic involvement. After spending six years on active duty, “I was trying to get out of this place as quickly as possible,” taking fifteen to seventeen credit hours each quarter. As a result, he was able to finish his studies in just over two years.

VA assistance

At the time, there was “a pretty large contingency” of veterans on campus. While the VA provided on-campus jobs for many of the veterans, Oscher’s academics soon took precedence and he chose not to work while completing his studies at USF. Instead, relying on student loans for additional income on top of the G.I. Bill subsidies.

Beta Alpha Psi

Oscher remembers one faculty member, Professor Harris, who “started prodding me along and suggesting that accounting might be an area I might want to pursue.” He was later accepted to an honors society, Beta Alpha Psi, where he was exposed to more of the profession and work of accounting. Ultimately, that was the organization with which he was most exclusively involved at the University. He was elected President of the Society, a position in which he served for his final two quarters as a student.

The Honor Society, according to Oscher, had several functions. Foremost, “You were introducing the accounting profession to the accounting students,” thus there was an important exchange between the “academic world” and the “real world.” Secondly, they were involved in a number of projects on campus, such as tutoring for students struggling in the program. Occasional fundraisers were also held with the intent to raise scholarship money for the accounting students.

Classes

While the accounting classes started out large, Oscher remembers that there was a “pretty high attrition rate,” and by the end of the term, the numbers had decreased significantly. Because he had spent a number of years in the military, he felt that he was always one of the oldest students in the classroom.

Social experiences

The University Center, he recalls, “Was probably the dominant place for gathering – probably like it is today.” Otherwise, as an older student, he did not spend a great deal of time socializing or spending time on or around the campus. “It was just not a part of my routine to stay on campus any longer than I had to.”

“I came for an education. At the time, I was truly feeling that I was being challenged in the courses, and the professors that I had were pushing ... in a way that I wanted to be pushed, and so I was very positive about the experience.”

Graduation

Oscher received his B.A. in accounting in 1977. Upon graduation, he “had a vision of getting out [into] the business community. The accounting degree gave me the basic ability to sit for the CPA exam and give me that professional credential.”

After graduation; National Alumni Association

After graduation, Oscher to work at an accounting office in Minneapolis for a couple of years. When he completed his two-year tenure with Alexander-Graham, he returned to Tampa, where he has been ever since. All the while, he continued to maintain connections to and involvement with the University community in Tampa. In the early eighties, he served on the National Alumni Board at USF for some time. A couple years later, in 1984, he was elected President of the National Alumni Association.

Alumni Association activities

On the Alumni Association, he began working on USF’s “Capital Campaign” under the direction of Joe Busta. The intention of the program was to generate recognition and support for the University on a national level. “While the University had received gifts of varying sizes ... there still was not a focus in our community on what USF meant to the community, specifically or generally. So, there was an education process that was needed.”

Continuing involvement

Oscher is currently serving as the President of the Board of Directors for USF’s Sun Dome, a position he has held for nearly fifteen years. Asked what his responsibilities are in that position, Oscher replied, “I don’t do anything ... I show up at meetings when I’m told to show up.”

When asked if there are any other experiences he would like to share, Oscher replies, “Not on camera.”

End of Interview