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Rosanna Saraceno oral history interview by Andrew Huse, November 26, 2003

Rosanna Saraceno (Interviewee)

Andrew T. Huse (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center
Oral History Program
USF Fiftieth History Anniversary Project

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TRANSCRIPTION

H: Good afternoon.

S: Afternoon.

H: Thanks for being with us. What brought you to USF? When did you first hear about it and when did you apply?

S: I got my associate's in arts degree in St. Pete J.C. back when it was a junior college. From there it was a very easy transition to USF because everything transferred once I had my AA degree.

H: Did you start then in the math program?

S: Actually, no I didn't. I was about three different types of engineering majors first, the last one was mechanical engineering. I just couldn't see myself doing that. That's when I switched to the mathematics department.

H: We know that you got involved in a lot of extracurricular activities. Tell us about some of that. How did you get involved in these different things?

S: One of the things was when I was in high school I really didn't have the chance to get into a lot of stuff. So once I came over to USF and I was kind of on my own, one of the

things that I said I was going to do that I never had never done was get involved. I did that. I joined a sorority. I got involved with student government, and Greek Week, Homecoming. Whatever I could do, I wanted to do. That was how I got started.

H: You got involved in a whole array of different things.

S: Yes I did.

H: What sorority did you join?

S: I was a Kappa Delta.

H: Tell us a little bit about that; how you got involved. What was that like?

S: It's actually pretty funny, because when I was in high school all my friends were boys. I was never friends with girls. They were really catty. It just wasn't my thing. One of my friends from high school who was my roommate at USF had said, you should rush a sorority because if you're going to do anything on this campus, that's a good way to find out about what's happening. I went through and at that time the process was a little bit different and I got cut from about three of them, which was okay. Some of them, I just didn't want anything to do with, so that was fine by me. The Kappa Deltas took me for who I was and that really made a big impression on me. I did not drink. I didn't do any underage drinking or anything of that type. I wasn't really a party girl, and they liked me without that. That's why I went with them.

H: Was that the first thing you got involved with?

S: At USF, yes. That was right away. That was before school started. It's the week before school starts.

H: Did you make a lot of friends there?

S: Some. You generally have about two or three girls that you just bond with and you stay in touch with after college. That's what happened. There were seventy-five girls, give or take whoever graduated. You had seventy-five people you could turn to if you needed to.

H: Tell us how did you branch out from there?

S: When you have your chapter meetings on Sunday, one of the best avenues for getting information outside the campus or around the campus is they have visitors come in and talk to the girls during their chapter meeting. We found out when homecoming was. We found out when they were looking for volunteers. The Alumni Association came and visited us. A bunch of different people visited us. We knew what was going on because they came to us and told us. From there, I guess I had heard about the homecoming getting volunteers, and the first time I got involved with that was the last spring homecoming, which was 1997. That was the last time they did the basketball homecoming. From there I interviewed for the position of director, which was kind of a jump at the time. Normally you start on the executive board and then you become the director, but things just happened differently. I got the job and it was two months later that you had to start planning because they had two homecomings that year, one for basketball, one for football. It was right after another.

H: What was that like, taking that leap there?

S: It was crazy. It was a lot of work and you had to do it fast. The last basketball homecoming had just wrapped up, and they were looking for the new people to do the job. They had to start right away. They didn't have a lot of time. I guess I got it the beginning of summer, when I was taking summer classes at the time. Basically you

planned it over the summer, and a month or two in the fall and you were there. It was short.

H: You planned the fall homecoming. You were involved in the spring one?

S: Yes.

H: Did you know at the time that it was going to be the last basketball homecoming?

S: Not when I first joined the committee. As you get more involved with it, they tell you what's going on. That's when I found out.

H: What was it like planning homecoming? Where do you start?

S: You look at what they did last year. You look at what you like, what you didn't like. We surveyed our committee members a whole lot. We just took some of the things that they did and tried to improve on them. We tried to tailor it to a more traditional type of homecoming. Homecoming, when people think of it, they think football. We were trying to get it to where homecoming was going to be something bigger in the future and we knew that we were setting the foundation for it. We tried to say and do things for we know it's going to keep going year after year.

H: What year was this fall homecoming then?

S: 1997.

H: So the football team was in place?

S: Yes.

H: What were some of the things that you didn't repeat from the year before?

S: Did not repeat?

H: Like what were some of the things that you looked at, now that doesn't work, let's try

something else?

S: From the basketball homecoming, the parade route. I think that we changed the parade route. It used to be on Holly Drive, and kind of in the back of the university, it's not very visible. There wasn't a lot of attendance. There wasn't a lot of community attendance. I think we changed it to be Alumni Drive out here in the front. We had a lot more people come that weren't students. It was a fun thing for the kids to go to. It was right out front where everybody knows the university is, so it got a lot more visibility.

H: Anything else that you didn't repeat from the time before?

S: It's hard to remember back then. They just had Super Bull VII, so it's been seven years. The time just flies. One thing that we regretted was the Midnight Madness with basketball. They came out at midnight. We weren't able to coincide that with the football season. I think they did that one year afterwards, but a lot of people were sorry that Midnight Madness went away. That was something that we couldn't work in with the homecoming.

H: We were just talking about starting points, and you were saying some of the things that you didn't want to continue, some new things. Where do you go from there. That was kind of the starting point. What were some of the other things you do when you plan for an event this big?

H: We tried to look at what other schools were doing, the big name schools because homecoming is a big deal. They have a lot of alumni involvement, a lot of people coming back, a lot of community involvement. It's not just the school doing it, it's the community and everybody there. One of the things that we looked at was the University

of Florida's Gator Growl. We structured the Stampede event, the reason that we called it the Stampede was because we wanted it to someday rival UF's Gator Growl. We can model that after Gator Growl and one day we'll be there, as big as Gator Growl with the lasers and everything. That was thing, the parade, getting the parade to be bigger. One of the things that we tried to focus on was the other student organizations, especially for the parade. My idea was if you're a student organization on campus, homecoming is not just for the sororities and fraternities. It's not just a Greek thing. A lot of times people had thought that homecoming was all fraternity, sorority stuff. We focused on the other student organizations, saying, if you're going to do nothing at homecoming, get a truck, decorate it, and be in the parade. We tried to get a lot more involvement that way, and kind of dispel the stereotype, wherever it came from, from before. That was one thing. The Stampede [and] the parade were probably the two biggest things.

H: Describe the Stampede, the Gator Growl, for the uninitiated. What is it?

S: The reason why I'm laughing is because that was the one event that just didn't go well. Every year there's one event in homecoming that just doesn't go well and the year that we did it, we kind of had bigger plans than what we could actually do. One of the ideas was that we took the digital cameras and we went around campus during the first two days of homecoming taking pictures of homecoming. We were going to have a slideshow presentation. The computers crashed and the files were too big and this stuff, so we had to scrap that. It didn't work at all. Then I remember the football team being on stage and you were supposed to have some military personnel rappel from the top of the SVC. Somebody almost landed on the coach. They went at the wrong time, or

whatever it was. We had the two comedians. I remember that year we had to switch comedians a lot because they kept canceling on us. What we ended up with, the main act wasn't as funny as the opening act. People ended up leaving after the opening act, which just wasn't good. It's basically a comedian and some kind of pep rally type stage.

H: It sounds like it was an interesting event that you had.

S: We survived it.

H: Those were the two main events at homecoming that year then, the parade and the Stampede?

S: Then we had the tailgate party sort of thing which was over at Al Lopez Park before the game. At that time, that's where we announced all the spirit awards; who was best overall for homecoming, the best for first, second, and third place for the parade and that kind of stuff. I like what they've done in subsequent years a lot better than what we did. It rained that day and Al Lopez was really messy and muddy. We had some entertainers and we had some rides and stuff. What they're doing now is just much better where they announce the homecoming court at the game. They announce the winners at half-time of the game. That is just wonderful. If you're an alumni and you're really stressed for time and you just can't make it, you know if you're going to homecoming you go to the game. That way when everything happens at the half-time show, that gets the alumni and community involved and what homecoming is all about. They remember, hey, there's been stuff going on for a full week before the game. I like what they've done with that. Next year they can keep in mind if they want to go see the parade they can plan ahead. It also show me that the athletic department is a lot more cooperative with the homecoming

committee. We had to fight with our little two minutes during the half-time show just to get the court out there. I remember that being very difficult. Now that they have a band and now that half-time is homecoming property, if you will, it's wonderful that they're showing that cooperation.

H: Great. So you kind of stepped in the door when a lot of these traditions and things were first really being formed.

S: That was what we thought about a lot. We're here, we're the first ones. As far as I understood it, the homecoming committee has total creative control. They could have changed anything that they wanted to. At least that's the way it was when I was there. Anything they wanted to as far as the theme, how it looked, all of that. The fact that I can go back seven years later to a homecoming game and see the Super Bull theme and it's got the V and the two I's; seven years and it's the same thing, that's just wonderful. That is wonderful.

H: It sounds interesting too, because on the one hand, you were starting all these new things and it was kind of an air of innovation and optimism. Then at the same time there was a lot of awkwardness. It was hard to get everyone to work together.

S: Yes. And there was some rivalries between the people that had worked at the Alumni Association and the athletic department at that time. Those people have come and gone, and there's a better relationship now. The funniest thing is that the director of the Alumni Association is married to somebody who's really high up in the athletic department. It's quite a different relationship now than it was back then.

H: Sounds like it. The Super Bull theme. Tell us about that. How did it come about? Take

it back to the beginning.

S: The Budweiser commercial for the Super Bowl. They've got the two helmets that are fighting each other. That's how we came up with the logo. Then we took the Super Bowl, you know, because the commercial comes out all the time at the Super Bowl, this time in January, we took the Super Bowl and we made it into Super Bull. As in, this is the biggest game that USF has all year with the Roman numerals. That's how we came up with the idea.

H: Budweiser, NFL don't sue or anything?

S: I knew you were going to ask that question; yes, it came from a beer commercial.

H: It's a college tradition, it's no offense.

S: The beer thing, that's alcohol, that's a stereotype for college. We really took the idea of the helmets together, and the whole idea that you have two different teams fighting and that was our logo. We had the SIU helmet and the USF helmet and they were against each other with the Roman numeral in the middle and Super Bull on the top.

H: Anything more about Super Bull then?

S: I'm glad it's still around. They've changed the look of it a little bit, and that's good. I'm glad it's still there. The idea of the Roman numeral was where we thought, if this is going to stick, the Roman numeral and the fact that you can count how many years it's been is what's going to make it stick.

H: Absolutely. Let's talk about some of your other experiences here on campus. Did you live on campus for a while?

S: For one year.

H: What was that like?

S: I lived in Gamma Hall, which I guess now is Beta and Castor Hall, now that they've remodeled it. What I remember about that is that you had to walk down the hall to use the shower, with your little flip flops and your little baggy thing with your shampoo and everything in it. We shared it probably with twenty-five girls. I remember that you couldn't open the windows because it was a fire hazard. It was very poor ventilation. When I got out of there, all my clothes and towels smelled kind of moldy. I'm glad that they fixed that now.

H: It's a very old residence hall. In a way you were the tail end of a long tradition of suffering at Gamma Hall.

S: Actually, Beta Hall was the male dorms. They took even longer to renovate that one, so that was the oldest one probably for a while. It wasn't as of then, because it was the boys' dorm. On top being old, it was the boys' dorm.

H: Did you ever get the feeling that you were a part of a long suffering tradition at Gamma?

S: Yes.

H: Did you ever hear old stories or anything?

S: Everybody had a story about when they lived in the dorms. When you go to college, and you go away to college. I mean, away to college for me was an hour. When you go away to college and you live on campus, you have to have the, I lived in the dorms story.

H: What's your I lived in the dorms story?

S: I was there when the man with the knife sneaked in and pulled a knife on a girl in the

bathroom.

H: I remember this.

S: It was not my hall; it was upstairs. I was in my room at the time and I remember thinking, oh my God, he was like one floor above me. That left a bad story. The good story is that I'm still friends with one of the girls who lived two floors above me. You get to meet all different types of people. It was just very neat. It was very enlightening for me. I think I remember walking along the Marshall Center, and there was one man that was trying to recruit people to live in his commune. I remember thinking, okay, this is 1997, and I think they did that back in the sixties. It was kind of cool, although I never would have talked to him again. That's the kind of thing that you run into on a college campus because there are all different types of people who have all different types of beliefs. The idea is that everybody's different and you respect that.

H: Any pranks in the residents' halls while you were there or anything like that?

S: We sneaked a bunny rabbit up into my room to visit.

H: A pet rabbit?

S: Yes, we couldn't keep him there, because they do spot checks. I remember sneaking him up in my shirt. Of course, all the girls loved that; they thought it was great. We really didn't do pranks because we were the girls. Now, the boys dorm, oh my God. They steal your clothes while you're in the shower, leave you with nothing but a little washcloth to cover yourself. None of that happened at my dorm.

H: What kind of other activities did you participate in? Even just as attending. Any other things that you remember about campus life?

S: For the students that didn't have transportation, living on campus was a little difficult because the campus is so spread out. If you need to go to the grocery store you have to bum a ride off somebody with a car. If you were going to go to the football game you had to either use the shuttle that they gave you, which were the purple buses with no air conditioning. I was in charge of that with student government. Or you could bum a ride off somebody. What else for living on campus? One of the things that I did when I was program director for student government was, because I saw that problem, I guess it was about the end of 1998, that was when swing dancing was all the craze. There was some of the clubs in Ybor City that were just swing dancing clubs. You walked in there and it was like going into a time warp because it was totally a different atmosphere. We decided to bring that to USF for one of the marketing things for student government. I planned the student government sponsored free swing dance lesson and swing dance party in the ballroom. We had the dance lesson in one of the other rooms. That was very successful. We had a lot of people show up there. There was probably about 500, which was pretty good turnout, if ever, for a student government event. That was pretty successful. It was one of those things where the appeal was, I don't have a ride to go down and take swing dance lessons, so the swing dance lessons are coming to me. For one night anyway.

H: How did you get first involved in student government? Was this separate from homecoming committee?

S: Homecoming is funded by student government money. The people that run student government, homecoming is it's own entity. That would be the difference between it.

Because I saw the people that were working in student government and worked with the business office, I saw what student government was doing. Once homecoming is over with, you can't go back. I figured I would try to get into that just to see. I liked the people that I was working with.

H: What was your first position in student government then?

S: Program director.

H: What kind of other things did you work on besides this swing dancing thing? You mentioned the purple buses. Did you organize that too?

S: The program director was in charge of the transportation from the campus to Raymond James Stadium. I did the contracts and the funding and coordinated who was going to be on the buses and all of that. We had sign-up sheets to see how many buses to order and that kind of stuff. That was one of the, not daily duties, but more of a duty of the position. The swing dance party was something that I had creative control over. I was only there for probably a semester. Beyond that, that's really the biggest thing that we did.

H: How many people did you have bused out to Raymond James?

S: [It] wasn't as many as we would have liked back then. We probably had four or five buses, and if they hold thirty people each, a couple hundred people each game. That was okay. We would have liked more student involvement of course. As the program takes foot; the very first game was 80,000 people I believe. It was eighty to three. [That] was the score. Our score was eighty to three and there was a lot of people there. That was the highest attendance game and then it really dropped off. Until they started getting really

good people just were not interested, because they would just go watch UF on T.V. It got to the point where we would say; there is no FSU license plates, hats, sweatshirts; no UF license plates, hats, or sweatshirts allowed on this campus. If I see you wearing it, and I remember the basketball coaches saying this same thing. If I see you wearing one I'm going to take it because this is USF, you need to be wearing USF colors and a USF hat.

H: Especially if you're formerly involved in these events. Let's talk about academics. What convinced you to get out of engineering?

S: I couldn't see myself sitting in a cubicle designing cell phone buttons like my roommate was doing for her internship. Now I'm sure once you have your engineering degree you do more than cell phone buttons. Just the idea of having to sit in a cubicle with your plans and your books. It was too isolated for me.

H: You wanted more interaction?

S: Yes. I really didn't know what I was going to do with my math degree. I worked for a construction company for five years, which really didn't have much to do with math. Except I did the accounting and I got into the commercial estimating. That drew on my engineering background more than my math background, which is all theory. I've been teaching seventh grade math for a couple of months now. I taught college math for a year before that. That's what really convinced me that, I need to do something with my math degree so I'm just going to jump right into math.

H: What was it like teaching your first college course? This was at HCC, right?

S: Yes, at HCC. Teaching college was actually pretty fun. The way I looked at it, was, I'm good at math. I was teaching the remedial courses at HCC because that's what you're

able to with a bachelor's degree. These were people who had failed the math portion of the placement test to get into HCC. They were people that needed help. The way I took it was, I'm good at math. I'm here to help you. Let's get you through the course. It worked well for me. They were very grateful to somebody who's really out there to help them.

H: What's it like downshifting and going to the seventh grade?

S: Very different. What's different about seventh grade, middle school, from college is the college kids, well they're not kids. Most of them are older than I am. They are looking to you for help. With seventh grade, they don't want to be there. When you're teaching math, you're really not teaching math as much as you do at the college level. You are disciplining and teaching math. It's probably about half and half.

H: Did you have any pretty good professors that you interacted with here that were especially helpful, inspirational? Anybody notable?

S: Yes, but, she was my professor at SPJC. Her name was Linda Yaykle and I don't know exactly which part she taught because I was in the honors interdisciplinary programs. Our speech classes, our humanities classes, our philosophy classes were all together. The three teachers, she was one of the three, they taught everything. She was a very independent, very driven, very outspoken woman. I just remember the way she was and I was very impressed by the way she was. It was at the homecoming game this year that I heard her name announced over the loudspeaker for some award and she is at USF now. As far as my USF professors, she qualifies because she now works at USF.

H: Do you know what department she works in then?

- S: No, I have no idea. I was going to look her up and find out, and I need to do that. It was just funny how when I knew her she was at SPJC and now she's over here.
- H: We could always look it up before you leave today. Linda Yaykle?
- S: Yes. Probably humanities, I would think. I think she taught mostly that part of the course.
- H: Any other memorable academic interaction, events, classes? Any other kind of special impact?
- S: I have a funny one, I guess. One of the biggest criticisms of my career at USF was that I was so involved in student activities that one of my friends used to joke that I was here for the student activities. Not to get my idea. I got a degree, so I proved him wrong. I did do a lot. That was one of the things where, I made the front cover of the newspaper for the spring homecoming for my little event that I was doing. That was pretty neat. My professors, of course, read the article just like everybody else on campus. The funny story is, when I went to the thirty-fifth reunion for the Kappa Delta chapter on this campus, one of the girls that I had met through work also went with me. We were over at CDB's having dinner. We were in the booth, and there was this big table next to us. Right in the middle of our dinner I realized, those are all my math teachers from college. I'm like, oh no, they're going to recognize me. We're eating like this, and we're trying not to notice them. All of a sudden, one of them recognizes me. They go, hey, you're that girl who was never in class because you were always in the newspaper. I'm like, oh thanks. The way he put it was very funny. There were times that I had to miss class because I was also working. My attendance was somewhat questionable in his eyes. He

put that together with seeing me in the newspaper. Six years later it's just funny that they pick you out of a restaurant and say, hey you!

H: That's what they remember you for.

S: It was good-natured poking fun at me. That was funny.

H: What have we missed here? I don't have a lot to go on the sheet here. What have we missed about your time at USF?

S: With homecoming, I have to say, it was one of the best leadership experiences of my life.

It really helped me to grow as a person. It was probably one of the biggest growing experiences. I list it on my resume. That's how much of an impact it had in my life. I went from little bitty committee member to all of a sudden being in charge of it. Where you had to go back on everything you knew to be professional. You had to work with other areas of the campus where they expected you to act like an adult. [A] professional adult, not the college student. For me, those experiences, and dealing with people in the professional part of being in charge of homecoming. People think homecoming, they think party, they think football. They don't think about, it's a job. You have to take it seriously in order to actually coordinate these events so that other people can have fun. That was the other thing that was great about it. I loved being able to provide an environment where you see a little girl in a USF cheerleader outfit and she's all excited because there's this pretty float going by her on the parade route. That was just wonderful. I felt very alive

H: It was a big growing experience for you?

S: [In] student activities, a lot of people think, you're just a college student doing that. It's

not a big deal. When you're a college student, and you're in charge of a very large budget, and you're in charge of a very large committee, you have to take it seriously. It doesn't come together if you don't.

H: That's a lot of responsibility.

S: Yes, it is.

H: What were some of the difficulties of putting on an event like homecoming? You've already kind of touched on some of those; you're in charge of a big budget, you have to coordinate with a lot of people. Kind of explain some of that to us.

S: As far as the budget goes, when you work for the university, and it's public funds and all that. There's a lot of paperwork that needs to be filled out and you have to document everything because it's somebody else's money. When you're working with somebody else's money you can't just say, oh I need that, let's go buy it. You have to plan ahead of time. For example, when we needed to buy things like scotch tape, or tiki torches for the parade route, supplies. The way that worked was, you had to make a list of what you needed and how many you needed. Then you would go to whatever vendor the university had a contract with, I think at the time it was Target. You make a preliminary trip to Target. You fill out your price list, make sure they have it in stock. You submit it, and a couple of weeks later you get your purchase order and you go back and buy it. It was a very huge thing just to go out and buy a tiki torch. That was difficult. Especially for college students who procrastinate. You have to learn not to procrastinate otherwise you're not going to get what you need.

H: Young people are accustomed to shopping impulsively, too.

S: Credit card.

H: Not planning ahead like that.

S: You have to plan ahead. You definitely have to plan ahead. As far as planning ahead, to plan ahead with your vendors. For the carnival, you've got the Ferris wheel, the jumping thing. All these people are their own businesses. They have their own paper work to do, their own calendar. You have to plan ahead. For college students, that was pretty challenging. Well, for the director it was challenging to get your college students to do that.

H: What kind of staff did you have?

S: The way the committee was set up there was you had the director, then your executive board had a marketing person. You had a programming person. Then you had two other people as support roles. Then the other seventy people were divided into committees according to the event that they were planning. You had an event chair and then people underneath them. The hardest job probably was the marketing person. She had to be the most professional because she had to get the radio commercials. She had to get the budgeting for it, she had to do all the desktop publishing for the ads, she had to coordinate with the newspaper, the newspaper sponsor. All this stuff. Very paperwork intensive, very phone intensive. You have to be very professional to be the marketing person. Everything else was kind of working with the students. Then the director was the liaison between the rest of the university and the students.

H: What was that like, this coordination effort which must have been maybe a little overwhelming? Tell us about that.

S: Dealing with people's personalities is always challenging. You have to be kind of diplomatic to work your way around that without really offending people. If you're very blunt and you're very, I don't care what you think, as your attitude, you're going to be putting people off that you need to work with you in a nice way. If you're diplomatic about things, that is really something that gives you an edge. That was probably the most challenging part about being director was keeping everybody happy and still getting the job done.

H: Besides alumni and athletics, were those the two main people you had to work with?

S: Student Affairs. We pretty much knew them already because they were based in the Marshall Center. We had seen them from sorority rush and all the other things that we were doing already. We knew them the best. Then we knew the Alumni Association because the Alumni Association is probably the biggest part of homecoming because they're getting people to come back. Then the athletic department was doing their own thing, so we had to work with them.

H: You've been to many homecomings since that first one?

S: Almost every one. This year was different because they changed the game, I believe. The original schedule that I got was not the same, but I made it to the game. I wanted to go to the parade, but I didn't know when they had it. I like to bring my parents to the parade if they can make it.

H: So what else? What else are we missing?

S: There's been a lot of changes since we started. We can talk about that.

H: Tell us about that.

S: The first homecoming, the crowning of the king and the queen. That happened on the intramural fields at the carnival. It was kind of on a little stage that wasn't really high enough for that to happen. Looking back on that, I think we probably could have done that in a better way. The crowning of the homecoming court is a big deal. The next couple of years that we went I saw that they had changed it to, they had the court out on the field at half time. They crowned the king and queen there. Now what's happened is they've got the other campuses involved where the main king and queen is the Tampa campus. The duke and the duchess, and the prince and the princess and all that other stuff. There were homecoming kings and queens for each campus. Homecoming is not just the Fowler Avenue campus anymore. Homecoming is every USF campus which is just incredible. That is wonderful. That's the greatest change; the biggest and the best change that I've seen so far. I'm so glad that somebody thought of that.

H: I know that the students on the other campuses probably feel much better to be involved too.

S: I would say that. That's the evolution of homecoming. The way I see it, when I started with homecoming, the stereotype was that it was a Greek event and that fraternities and sororities won homecoming and that was their thing. Then we started to change that. It's changed even further so that there's more students and more types of organizations involved. Now it's other campuses involved. I just see that as having gotten bigger and I think it's wonderful.

H: In your mind, one of the big missions of homecoming is to be more inclusive as time goes on?

- S: Yes, because homecoming is for everybody. If you're a student here, and you graduate, you're alumni. Homecoming is for you to come back, and remember your memories. No matter what kind of alumni you were.
- H: Getting the football team was a really big event for USF and now on the Big East. There's more success and the same thing seems to be happening for the homecoming events.
- S: Homecoming is just following the growth pattern that's been here at USF ever since they got football. To me it looks like football was the starting point for USF to become what they [call] a more traditional school. Not only being a major research university up there with FSU and UF as far as that type of ranking, in the students' minds, or the prospective students' minds; when I was in high school, [it was] oh, USF, whatever. That's just USF. Now people want to go to USF because USF has a lot to offer me. Whereas before, UF and FSU are the real school. Now USF is a real school.
- H: You might be able to have as much fun at USF as at the other places.
- S: I think they offer the total collegiate experience now, whereas before it was more of a commuter school. I'm sorry, but football is part of the collegiate experience.
- H: Now with the buses and so forth, you're able to include even the people that are usually just campus-bound. It ends up being a good experience for many many more people than it originally was.
- S: The growth here is just amazing. They've had to expand to accommodate the number of students that now want to go here whereas before enrollment was kind of a little bit smaller.

H: What else? Any aspect of your time at USF that we haven't touched on? Any other leisurely activities. Any electives that you enjoyed especially?

S: Electives, no. I had my AA degree when I came here. I had to take my core major classes right away. All my electives I had already gotten out of the way. By the time I got here, six to one, half a dozen to the other because your electives are kind of the ones that are like your easy courses, your fun courses to take your mind off the real heavy major stuff. I didn't do that. I got all my electives out of the way and all that was left was the heavy major courses. I worked really hard while I was here at USF. It was very intensive. Especially with the math degree. The last two years of your mathematics degree you don't touch the number. It is all theory. All theory.

H: What was the hardest class for you?

S: I don't remember the name of it. It was my last year at USF and it was one of the more theoretical courses where we went into proof after proof after proof of very complex mathematical theorems. The way I explained it to my students is, math degree is just this: if you've seen the movie *Good Will Hunting*, and you're talking about combinatorial mathematics and the janitor guy who parties way too much to be good at math is good at math; that's the stuff that I did. *Good Will Hunting*.

H: You've since expunged the name of the course from your memory?

S: It's a blur. I didn't get much sleep that semester and I worked my tail off. The good thing about that class was I discovered a study technique that got me through that class that I just happened to figure it out. What it was, I killed a lot of trees doing this. I would take a proof, and they were page long proofs. I would write it and write it and

write it. I would write it over and over again ten or twenty times. Each time you wrote it you'd go through the thought process and after you write it and think about it twenty times in a row you remember it for a test. You don't remember much else, but you remember it for your test.

H: That's good advice no matter what your subject is. Whether you're running by definitions of words.

S: Yes, repetition. For me, the act of writing it down helps my brain remember it. It's a specific individual thing. To me I think, why did I wait till my last year in college to figure that one out? It would have helped me before.

H: By writing it you become an active participant rather than just reading it and just kind of close over.

S: I never was a flash card person. I don't memorize it that way. If I write it over and over again I'll memorize it.

H: Some difficult times there at the end.

S: Yes.

H: I'm trying to think of some other things that we might have missed.

S: I never had an accident on campus.

H: What do you mean?

S: Parking is very very tight on the first day of school. I saw several fender benders over the years and I never had one.

H: Well that's good. Even when you were living on campus you were never campus bound? You had a car?

- S: For the first four weeks that I was on campus I left my car back in Clearwater at my parent's house. I told them, look, I'm not going to bum a ride off of somebody when I need to go to the grocery store so we're bringing my car over.
- H: Good call. Then you could help out the people living with you.
- S: There was one girl that broke her leg the year that we were living in the dorms. I remember driving her to her physical therapy appointments. The car was actually a good thing. I didn't know her that well. She had no way to get there. Something had happened where her normal circumstances where she couldn't get there, so I drove her a couple of times. That's what you do.
- H: When you don't know her all that well it makes it more of a gesture.
- S: If you have the means, well why not?
- H: If you could give a message for students in the future. People whether they're just starting out or transferring or whatever, people going to college, what kind of sentiments would you leave for them?
- S: Enjoy the time while you are here because it goes by so fast. You will never again have a time like that in your life. College is a very special, very unique, very privileged time, and you need to treat it like that. If you stay in college too long, it's not a good thing. I had started to get the letter saying, you have too many credit hours to be able to qualify for financial aid. That was the last semester, so it wasn't that bad. There is nothing like the time when you are in college. You will never be able to recreate or repeat it even if you work at a college or a university. That's what I think when I look back at my college career. There is no way that I'm ever going to feel like that again, there is no way that

I'm ever going to have that experience again. I thought of a funny story now. It's kind of embarrassing but it's silly. In 1999, I was in charge of the rush counselors for sorority rush for the Pan-Hellenic counsel, which is the government body. Sorority rush was in the evening that year. The computer took into account the girls' choices and also the sorority's choice. It was like a mutual, I'm picking you, type thing. Occasionally they wouldn't match up. Nobody would like anybody. The rushee wouldn't like the sorority and the sorority didn't like, all that. They would get dropped from the system. As the rush counselor, the person in charge, you had to call all the rush counselors and tell them which girls that happened to. Because this was in the evening, and you had to process everything, it was about one in the morning when we had to do this. I remember sitting in an office in the Marshall Center. I made a call out to a girl who's number was like, 659-11 something. I dialed it wrong so I hung up. The phones in the Marshall Center have voicemail. If you get a call in while you're on the phone it goes to voicemail. I had inadvertently dialed 911. It's one in the morning. When the 911 called back they got the voicemail because I was on the phone with the girl. The USF cops decided to make a visit up to the Pan-Hellenic office. It was no big deal and all of a sudden the lady asked me for my birthday. I thought, what does she need my birthday for? All I did was call 911 by mistake. We had had no sleep for three days and it was just too much for me. I busted out crying. I was bawling. I was like, she's going to take me to jail because I won't give her my birthday. One in the morning, getting no sleep, things tend to get a little out of perspective. That year, they gave me the 911 award at the end of sorority rush. The paddle that the girls made for me has 911 on the bottom.

H: That's very nice. You'll always remember that. Do you still have the paddle?

S: Yes, I do. It was just funny. That is a direct reflection of how I handle stress. When it just gets too much for me and when something is happening that I just could not imagine beyond my wildest dreams; I was bawling. They're all sitting there laughing at me. It was very funny.

H: That was an unexpected stress, too. This wasn't anything you were prepared for.

S: I was totally not prepared for it.

H: Did you finally give your birthday?

S: I don't remember. I don't think so. I think the cop saw me crying and she's like, I understand. You take care of her.

H: I'll let myself laugh.

S: I remember, they were just laughing at me. Which made me cry worse. I don't cry. I really don't cry that much. It has to be something big for me to cry like that.

H: At least you're going to have to by that night.

S: It was very funny.

H: I don't think it's too embarrassing.

S: It's silly. I mean, you have so many memories like that from the time that you're in college that you really need to learn how to laugh at yourself. College is the time to do it. You grow so much when you're in college. You don't realize it from where you started. I'll come back on campus now and I'll go to football games and say, those girls look so young. Did I look like that? I know I look young, but you look at them and you think, they look really young. You don't realize when you're in it how young you really are.

H: It's just like growing physically too. Until you look at a grown picture of yourself.

S: It's like going back to elementary school. You look at the lockers and you realize they come up to here on you. When you were in elementary school they were like this.

H: What else? We still have a little bit of tape to work with. You've done pretty good. Is there anything else, we've got a couple minutes left. We don't have to use it, but I always like to ask.

S: I like the growth that's happened on campus. The parking garages are a very good thing. I like that when I drive by here and I come back to possibly look at getting my master's degree I see all the facilities that are available now. I see all the classrooms and all the progress that they've made academically and research based. It's a wonderful place to be. There's a lot of opportunities. When you hear on the news that USF is sending some disaster robots up to the 911 site to help look for victims, you think, that is wonderful that they're able to do that and that I was a part of that. I went to the engineering department and I know the room where they keep those robots. I've seen them before. You can relate to world events when you have stuff that's involved.

H: Now there's this big Bulls Country campaign. Do you try to bring it out to the community a little bit more?

S: Yes, they need to do that. I really agree with that. I went to visit UF once. They've got Gators wrapped around the tops of the columns in the mall. They've got Gators everywhere. They have alligator mailboxes on the houses. You know it's Florida Gators. It would be wonderful, in Tampa, to see Bulls everywhere. You start to see signs up in the local restaurants. It's getting there. That sign says, this is Bulls country,

that's the way it needs to be. No UF hats, no FSU hats, no sweatshirts. You have USF sweatshirts. I am very glad to see that.

H: We have our work more cut out for us here. It's a much bigger community to try and saturate with that sort of thing, than Gainesville or even Tallahassee.

S: The better that they get at football, the more that they have at this university. I hate to say so much rides on football, but it does. Especially where the community is concerned. Football is a big draw. For the donations to the university, the attendance, the marketing of the university. You hear about the football team, it makes you wonder what else the university has to offer you as a student.

H: I want to thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

S: It's a great honor to be here. I was very excited when you all called me about it.

H: It's a lot of fun. We try to get a lot of different perspectives. I think your perspective is an important one. Someone who previously wasn't very involved in her school and became involved and really got something out of it and gave back at least as much as you took.

S: That's been wonderful. I'm glad that I did the things I did.

H: I'm glad you did this, too.

S: Yes, definitely.

H: Thanks a lot.

S: Thank you.

End of Interview

