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Richard Wingard oral history interview by Andrew Huse, February 4, 2004

Richard Wingard (Interviewee)

Andrew T. Huse (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center
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TRANSCRIPTION

H: Today we'll be interviewing Dick Wingard, who came to USF in 1983. [He] was working in auxiliary services, was it still called that at the time?

W: Yes. It was part of auxiliary services.

H: Good afternoon. Let's get started by you telling us what brought you to USF originally. When did you first hear about it and when did you apply?

W: I first heard about it through Ray King, who was the director of food service. At that time I was with food service at Auburn University. He was a member of NACA, which is a national food service organization for colleges and universities. Over a period of time, I got to know Ray, and when the position came up here, he offered me the position, and I came down.

H: What was the position originally? What was that called?

W: It was the contract coordinator. It's the same position I have now. My wife and I came down to look for a home here after I'd been down for an interview. We were staying on campus at the guest quarters located in the Argos complex. Sunday morning we got up early. This was in late July. The sun was up, naturally. The first thing we did when we walked outside, we saw a couple of men standing underneath the trees just to the south of the building. They were

wrestling something into the back of a truck. I looked close, and it was about an eight-foot alligator that they had tied up and were putting in the truck. That was our first experience in the wildlife of Florida.

H: Was that your first time in Florida, or your wife's first?

W: I'd been here a number of times. The first time, I guess I was about four or five years old, visiting in St. Petersburg. My aunt and uncle live there. I can remember that we went to an air race and the planes were real short and stubby and they were flying around power lines. [There were] four or five. It was pretty impressive.

H: What were your thoughts when you saw that alligator being wrestled into the back of the truck? That you were in the wild?

W: It was interesting to think that we had that kind of wildlife on campus. I was wondering about the students.

H: You stayed in a dorm room when you first came?

W: No, they had visitor's quarters there located over in an area in the Andros complex. It's a building there. I don't know whether they still have that or not.

H: What were your impressions of the campus when you first saw it?

W: The first time, it was kind of a steer in the thing that impressed us that when I went in to interview with the vice president his desk was similar to the type we had when I was in the military. There wasn't a lot of money spent on furniture at that time.

H: Who had the food contract when you first arrived?

W: SAGA was the contract then.

H: What were your impressions of the operation there when you walked into the cafeteria for the first time?

W: I thought that there were some things that could be changed. Some of the problems that they were having were the typical ones for that particular time. Students were making the transition from eating at home and coming to the campus and having an abundance of food. There was a lot of waste because they would fill their plate up. Their eyes were larger than the stomach. That was typical.

H: What were some of the issues when you first got to work? I remember hearing probably about the time you arrived there was squirrels that were eating the food out of the vending machines. Do you remember anything about that?

W: Oh yeah. One of my other jobs in addition to food service was with vending. There were problems with the squirrels getting into machines. Working with the vendors they were able to put a spring-loaded door so that they product would drop down and you had to move the door to get in to pick up your product. There were some experiences there from going out with the vendors when they refill the machines and they were always telling me about opening the machine and a squirrel jumping out. I never saw that myself.

H: I remember the *Oracle* had pictures of these half eaten snacks. They were trying to document it. What kind of problems [did you have] come up? We don't even have to name whether it's SAGA or whoever was around. Obviously, it's difficult when you've got a contract with an outside organization. I remember seeing things like they were selling products that had expired in the vending

machines. Students really felt put upon about it. What were some of the problems you ran into?

W: Those are ones due to non-attention by the root men not checking on the dates. There were several of those, but that was just manner, really. I think of the number of pieces of product that go through the machine in a year. There are some of them that are going to get overlooked.

H: One thing we were talking about is how much it's changed, food service. Not just the way that food is served, but just the things. You mentioned broccoli the other day.

W: Prior to coming to the University of South Florida I was at Auburn, and prior to that I was at the University of Tennessee. That was back in the 1960s. The types of food that have entered into our services has changed greatly. At that time we were in a transition between the types of products, whether they were canned or frozen or what have you. When I went to Tennessee, my first job there was in purchasing food for the new university contract that we had. Sixty percent of our dollar spent for food was with fresh meat. We had butcher shops and that type of thing. Just within about six months after I arrived there, [there was] the introduction of meat that was processed. It had been broken up into major cuts: ground beef and that type of thing. We didn't have to process it. We had a new warehouse central receiving that had been put into operation. It had already been constructed and the finishing touches were there. We were opening up some of the equipment. We had six chopping blocks, and we never used those, they had been purchased. Just in the matter of six months, things had started to change.

The introduction of frozen foods came in and we had large freezers that were available to us. We had a railroad siding and we would bring in products and put them in our warehouse. We bought canned beans by the carload. One of the big things that happened during that period was that we were transitioning between the canned foods to frozen foods and processed and dried. One of the main commercial lines, I've forgotten the name of the company, but their cans all had real great pictures of the product that was inside of them. Talking with some of the salesmen later on, I found out that the majority of their sales were to the local restaurants and towns. The majority of the people who were in the kitchen could not read. If they had a picture of the green beans or carrots or whatever it was on the outside of it, they could handle that. Some of the other companies that were not as astute had real great labels and they were all great graphics, but they didn't have a picture on it. Their market was kind of limited. That's kind of getting off the subject. Freezers and coolers in the university system consisted of probably about one tenth of the production area. The dry storage was probably maybe a quarter of the space that was used. Today that's turned around. It's the other way. We have more cooler/freezer space than we do for dry storage.

H: You were talking about the issues of frozen food and all these other things. What about changing student's taste over time?

W: Back to your question about the broccoli, when I went to Auburn, I had an opportunity to go back through the menus that they had for the last forty years. Some of the staff there at that time had been there for that long. I noticed that broccoli was on there. When I was growing up, we had a large garden and my

father grew a number of different kinds of vegetables. They were all put on our plates and it was mandatory that we'd eat them. I developed a taste over the years for almost any kind of vegetable that was out. Broccoli had been a mainstay in our family menus. I found out that they didn't even appear in the 1950s in Auburn and then going back and thinking about it, in Tennessee. Broccoli, within a very short period of time, probably by the 1970s was one of the top vegetables. If not the first, it was second, the first being potatoes.

H: What about some other changing student tastes? For example, you were out at USF at the time when there were a lot of changes going on. Vegetarianism was just catching on. You see developments that were just hinted on at the time that have culminated now. For example, we have a vegan area at the cafeteria now. There's sushi on campus. These things were probably unthinkable when you first arrived.

W: Sushi, in particular [was unthinkable]. The students coming in today have a more sophisticated diet from the standpoint of types of food they eat. They still are making some changes that I can see, one of them being the introduction of our new Argos cafeteria, the fresh food market. It's interesting, going in there and watching the students make choices [about] the variety of products that are there. I've been with my wife on a number of occasions and she's always commented on how the majority always seem to take a well-balanced meal. That's encouraging. We have a lot of problems with obesity at this time in our society and some segments of that on campus, but I think that there's hope.

H: Let's stay on the subject of changing student tastes for a while. You say that

people tend to take a well-balanced diet. Was that always the case that you observed, or was there more of a meat and potatoes mentality?

W: Here at USF, at the Andros cafeteria, we, I think, had, in comparison with other universities that I've worked with and then visited, the menus were probably as well balanced as anywhere. The service that was provided there, especially on Sunday, when they had the Sunday brunch, was equal to any that you could find in Tampa at that time that you would pay twenty or twenty-five dollars. It was four or five dollars, I forget what particular price it was. The way it was laid out, I think that's something you might want to look into, some of the pictures of some of those events. I don't know whether you have any, but I think we can supply them.

H: There was a tradition there at USF of a more formal Sunday meal. Before you arrived in the 1960s, men had to wear a tie and preferably a coat and slacks and ladies should wear more formal dresses. Did that carry over at all when you arrived?

W: It pretty much phased out by the time I got here.

H: The nice dress did, but there was still a very nice brunch though, right?

W: Oh yes. The other part of that goes with our whole society here in Florida as compared with other parts of the South. If you're having guests in for dinner, other than in Tampa, I don't remember anybody coming that would come in with shorts and without a tie on or something if it was for dinner at night. They may leave the coat off, but that was a norm. It was kind of a shock to see the transition here.

H: Things were much more casual then?

W: Definitely. They still are.

H: Yeah, for sure. We talked a bit about the way things have changed... [interrupted]

W: The other thing that was probably the biggest change is the discipline in the dining facilities. At that particular time, the majority of the students who ate in the dining halls were residents. We were fortunate enough to have good relation with the RAs, the resident advisors. Any problems that came up with discipline were handled automatically by the RAs, who also ate there. If somebody was throwing food or something like that, it wasn't up to food service contract personnel to administer justice. That was taken care of by the appropriate personnel in housing. That was real good. I think the whole time that I was here, we never had a food fight. This is a period when *Animal House* had come out a couple of years before that, and as soon as that movie was shown anywhere around, there would always be an uprising on campus somewhere. Later on, that tapered off, and when it was shown on TV somewhere along the line, there would always be something. It's like some of the other movies that show how to break into vending machines and we had problems with salting of vending machines, jack potting, they called it. [You] pour salt in and it causes the circuit to kick out product and money. Those days are behind us because vending machines are now equipped to take the money to a chute to another part of the machine so that the saltwater doesn't damage the electronics.

H: You said there were a few uprisings from time to time. Can you think of any specific outrages?

W: That's what I'm saying. By the time I got here, they had stopped. They had them before, with food fights and all. That transitioned out of the norm. I'm not sure whether they saw the juvenile part of it or whether the justice system took over.

H: [Were there] any specific instances on your watch, not necessarily of food fighting, but of any major disruptions in the cafeterias?

W: I can't think of anything other than hurricanes that might have affected the food service. We've had several brushes [with hurricanes]. We had one that came the second week of fall semester. It hit on a weekend. Most of the administrators were out of town. It churned around out in the gulf for about three days. We did not get any of the high winds this far inland, but the university was a major shelter and we took care of a lot of people. That was the closest thing.

H: You had people to shelter and you fed them?

W: Yes. Through a mistake, some of the nursing homes brought their clients here and they were not adequately prepared to take care of them. In fact, they were not supposed to be taken care of. They brought none of their supplies. That was a real mess. I was not personally involved with the cleanup, but we were getting the food to them. They were on diets and we were trying to accommodate those, but there were some real sanitation issues that you might want follow up on as a future...

H: Off camera.

W: No, I mean there's some people here who could really tell you some stories.

H: Are there contingency plans in place now?

W: Yes. We had contingency plans up until after [Hurricane] Andrew, when the state

revised the structural requirements for shelters. It pretty much eliminated most of those on campus. We had a shelter that takes care of pre-assigned people who are in wheelchairs and who are living at home. Right now, that particular shelter is the Sun Dome, since we've had the roof replaced and we can accommodate them there, but not in the other buildings that we formerly used.

H: I was going to mention before, we kind of talked about the production and going between canned and frozen [foods, and] changing student tastes. Another kind of change, I guess, is the method of delivery. People expect a lot more convenience now. They expect to get food faster than ever and to as many different selling points as possible. I guess, when you arrived, how many points were that were actual, people could buy food, not just the convenience store type of thing, but an actual eatery?

W: At that particular time, we had two resident hall dining facilities, Andros and Argos, and the Marshall Center, which had recently been renovated at that time. In addition, we had facilities in the library on the fifth floor. We had facilities in the biology building in the basement, in the lower level. That was phased out for office space and labs. We had, in the students services building, a dining facility on the top floor for faculty and staff. We had a facility over in the faculty office building. [We had] another one across the way there. It was next to an area where you could look out on the roof and you could see the weather station up there. We also had a double cafeteria down at the med center. Over a period of time, those have been mostly taken up by office space that was needed. In the meantime, we've introduced a number of complexes that have been more cost

effective and certainly been more client-effective.

H: There were a lot more facilities at the time than I suspected. How does it compare with today? Do we have more? Do we have fewer?

W: Some of the problems that we ran into was that the employees were well liked by the faculty and staff, and basically, it was because they gave the product away, two-for-one, and all kinds of stuff. It was really never profitable for the contractor. It was a service that they provided, but it was a real pain in the neck, to be quite frank, trying to get product there and trying to break even.

H: I know there were a lot of challenges like silverware alone, I know is a huge expense.

W: That's always been a problem on a college campus. In other campuses that I've been on, a lot of the cutlery and plates and trays would migrate to the dorms. At Christmastime, the staff would go in to clean up and they would bring back large carts of equipment. They did here, also. That's kind of waned, I guess.

H: Why would you say? [Is it because] students are better supplied?

W: That, plus they don't carry the trays out of the building.

H: Oh, they used to be able to do that?

W: Right. When I went to Tennessee, we opened up a large dining facility there. At the time, they had a facility in the student service building and one in the dorms that was run by the school of home economics. I think there were 5,000 students on campus. Within two years, we'd doubled the number of students, and also had built a new dorm that had food operation in it, and their presidential complex.

One of the things we did was we had logoed china, we had logoed glasses and

mugs, and they started disappearing the first day that we opened up. Right after Christmas, we had a mother call and say she would like to get two more of the cups that her daughter had given her. Her daughter had given her a set of twelve but she'd broken two. Needless to say, we didn't replenish the stock with logoed china.

H: It said USF or University of South Florida?

W: No, this was at Tennessee.

H: Oh, ok. [That was] probably not a good move. What about some of the other aspects? For example microwave ovens [were] not available before. How does that change the landscape?

W: Microwave ovens have been an item that's been used on campus and in the dorms for a number of years. One of the problems they had with the microwaves is the dorms were built back in the 1960s, and the electrical services were not geared towards microwaves, hot plates, hair blowers, and curling irons all being on at the same time, plus the TVs and radios. There were quite a few problems that developed for the resident staff in trying to monitor that. [There were] circuits blown out and the lights dropping out. You'd know there was a problem. Some of the other things there was a problem were the hot plates, and people going off and leaving them. We had some fires and some damage. The microwaves in our food operations were basically relegated to the fast food shops that we had around. Other than that, the vending machines all had microwaves. The majority of the microwaves used in the vending area were used to heat up lunches that were brought in from outside, not for the products that were sold. Over a period

of time, we've cut back on the microwaves that we request the contractor to provide, to the particular machine that might be located at that point. Keeping them clean [was an issue]; people would put stuff in there and it would blow up. They'd put popcorn in and it would burn up. It's been a real problem.

Microwave cooking in the dining facility was something that we tried out about fifteen years ago. There were some companies that manufactured a large microwave that is used at Disney World that you could put a frozen turkey in, and it would cook it in an hour. It would thaw it out and cook it. We had two of those at one time on campus. The problem we ran into, in its use, is that the employees were not skilled enough to use the advance technology that we had. There's technology out there that can really speed up production if you can pay for the help. One of the other interesting things about food service, is that the most expensive piece of equipment that we have in our operations costs \$20,000 is the dish machine. Traditionally, we put the lowest paid person on that machine and consequently, we really don't recognize the skill that's needed to maintain it. They can put the plates in and they can take them out, and they're clean and sanitized. That machine suffers a lot by not being properly washed down. The problems are that the water has a lot of calcium, and if it isn't taken care of properly, it gets a lot of scale in it and it becomes discolored. If we're lucky, once in a while we'll find somebody that really takes pride in their work and they'll be on a dish machine. Within a week, that shows up when you walk back there. That's not very regular.

H: There sounds like there's a lot of challenges and a lot of balancing acts. Recently,

we had a bunch of students complain that there wasn't stuff for vegans to eat.

You guys responded really quickly. It was within a week or two. It was pretty amazing.

W: Actually, it was out there the next day. Working with the Aramark Corporation has been a real pleasure. I've worked with the Marriott for a number of years, [they've] been on campus. The responsiveness of the staff for Aramark has really been interesting.

H: Think back over the years, and when you think about it, food service has always been the most common and easy whipping post for students to complain about, particularly the residential students. What were some of the other issues that came up over the years, and different problems that students had?

W: I think the main thing has been the administration's change in the place of food service. Traditionally, when you go back to the Greeks, the type of education was built around a professor or a teacher who met with his students in a courtyard. Usually there was housing around it, and food. Later on, we have the French and the Germans have developed their coffee houses and how the educational process got into that. The English having developed the complex where you'll have people living together, eating together, drinking together, and partying together. We had recognition for that in this country for quite a while. When I first went to Auburn, we had a brand new student center with a large cafeteria and a large dining room. The dining room was basically used as a meeting and studying place where people gathered and discussed their classes. The faculty and staff met there. After about two years, the university decided that the area that was

occupied by the food service out in the dining room that was open twenty-four hours a day should be maintained by the food service department. In other words, the cost of that maintenance had been previously handled by the university at their expense. Immediately, that tacked an expense on to the food and the prices went up accordingly. The university cut back on some of their labor. That's taken place all over the country now. The food service should pay for the study hall or the place where people gather. That's one thing that I can see some cooperation in some of the things that are happening here in the library with the new coffee shop that's opened up down there, sharing some of the maintenance and sharing some of the space. That's getting back to some of the roots of our educational tradition. I think that a lot of people think, well not a lot, but [they] forget that the classroom experience is where information is going out. Where the learning takes place, I think, is where you get people together and they're able to discuss it and debate. Naturally, that takes place around some place where you feel comfortable. When you're comfortable, you're usually eating.

H: That's a great historical perspective, too, that you provided us, going all the way back to the Greeks. You mentioned the drinking. When you arrived here on campus was there a bar slash rathskeller?

W: The Marshall Center, at that time the Student Center, had a large rathskeller, I guess you'd want to call it. At that particular time, the legal age for drinking was eighteen. It had a reputation of being a place where people in this whole end of town gathered. Students, when they graduated, they didn't leave. They just stayed in the same neighborhood and stayed around the Marshall Center for a number of

years, at least a great number of them [did that]. Even if they lived in town or worked in town, they gravitated back here. The sales of beer at the Student Service Center was the largest one location in the whole city. I'm not sure, exactly what the percentage was, but I don't think there was any place even close to the amount of beer that was sold there. It was supported by two breweries being within walking distance of the campus, and their policy of allowing students to have access to those facilities at no cost or a very low cost. Beer was quite a part of the campus scene. When it [the legal drinking age] went to twenty-one, there was an immediate drop-off. About the same time, the Marshall Center went under renovation and it was out of operation for two years. During that period of time, the pattern of meeting and eating and walking on this campus was disrupted. It's taken almost ten years for that pattern to start, at least from the walking and meeting in that building, to come back. I don't know that it will ever come back to the same degree.

H: About what period was that two-year lull there?

W: [It was in] 1989 and 1990. It was during the renovation.

H: About the same time, that's when the drinking age went up to twenty-one?

W: [It went up] just before that.

H: Were there any drawbacks to having so many outsiders come to campus to drink?

W: No. There had been a tradition of being a place where law and order existed. It didn't change. The majority of people, as I understand it, were former students. They had respect for the property. They had instances later on where groups would come in that were not really connected with the university as guests and

- riots and other things occurred.
- H: It's an interesting phenomenon that you had so many students coming back to the area to live and go to the, it was called the Empty Keg at the time?
- W: That's correct. The sign for the Empty Keg, I think, still exists.
- H: Yes, actually, they have it in the alumni center. They may be incorporating it into an exhibit there. I don't know if they actually physically have it there, but I know they want it.
- W: I had it put aside. When we opened the place back up, we used the same sign downstairs.
- H: As I understand it, there are plans in the works to bring it back? At least there was talk about it.
- W: The only thing that's stopped it has been the cost of it and the thought that we're going to renovate the Marshall Center, and we couldn't see putting a large investment in the renovation that was only going to be there for a short period of time. That time has stretched out a little bit, and may still stretch into the future. I think that we will use the funds that are available to us through our recent contract to expand facilities on campus.
- H: There's some real major changes. Let's talk a little bit about those recent changes under Aramark. I know by the time Marriott had left, they kind of had a bad reputation, at least among students.
- W: When we put the request for a bid out, we asked the vendors to outline their proposals. Basically, they were pretty much the same. The differences, I think, on the final analysis of the bid was that Aramark opted to put more money into

the infrastructure up front. The proposal that was made by the previous vendor was just under funded.

H: We have all kinds of new things. We mentioned the sushi before; we designed several different selling points on campus. Fresh food markets, certainly, is very responsive and offers a really big variety for students.

W: The fresh food market concept is unique to Aramark. The concept of being able to eliminate a kitchen was stretching my imagination. I couldn't see it how that could really work. Seeing it in operation is really something with all the food up front. One of the problems that we had originally in food operations is that food was prepared in the kitchen, then brought out and served on the serving line by either students or employees who were not familiar with the product. In other words, they didn't know what it was made of. They didn't know how it was made. In trying to educate a changing population that was providing our service was difficult. Also, having somebody else preparing a food and then sending it out, the cooks didn't actually ever look eye-to-eye with the customer. We have tried in a number of areas in the past to develop lines where the product was cooked on the line, the hamburgers and what have you. Trying to get a person who had worked for years on a grill back in the kitchen to come out and work in front of somebody who was watching them and looking them in they eye and saying that's burned or that's raw was really upsetting to the employees. It was just a real shock. When Aramark brought this concept of having everything cooked out front or prepared and washed, there was a change in population in the kitchen. Needless to say, there were a lot of people who just couldn't cut the

mustard. The employees who are working there now are very customer oriented, they're friendly, and they are actually competing with the other stations in selling their products. It's really been an interesting phenomenon in seeing the change.

H: I've noticed the same thing. If you go to one station called Accents, they brag that they're way outselling the diner area or the Mediterranean kitchen at the time. There's a certain amount of pride there.

W: Yes, definitely.

H: Of course, you also have the students and they can ask for specific changes in the way things are served or even cooked. It's a huge change from the traditional cafeteria where people just pile things on your plate.

W: We've come from a society prior to World War II, where colleges were not as available to the numbers of people that we have. There was a very formal dining, living, the decor, the manners, having people come in and sit down and be served. It was just a standard. I recently had an opportunity to visit a small college in Alabama that had been in existence prior to the Civil War. It was really an experience to see the silver and the things that have been used for years were in glass cases. Just before I got the opportunity to visit the school, they had gone from the table service to a line service. It was more cost effective and you just couldn't afford it. That transition has really phased out. I'm sure that someday it will come back. We make a circle. When World War II came along and we started the colleges expansion after the veterans started returning, that was the transition that took place and growth that also, the GI's were used to the serving line and using the trays. That was the start of it. We've gotten away from the

trays, so we're at least halfway back to the plates.

H: There's the other aspect that before the GI bill and especially during the depression, only the most privileged people got a chance to go to college and they were much more accustomed to being served. Then you talk about the mess halls in World War II right about the same time when a friend of yours, Bill Wharton was talking about the rise of the cafeteria during the depression. It became a much more accepted, normal idea than it was before.

W: I remember when I was growing up in the 1930s and the 1940s that the only places in town where you could really get a dinner or a meal was a hotel. We had the William Preston Hotel in Blacksburg, Virginia, and the big thing for us was my father's boss was a bachelor and he used to come and he'd have dinner with us three Sundays in a row, and then the fourth Sunday we would go be his guests at the hotel and have dinner there. The other place was a boarding house. That was the only other place in town. There was a bar called Greek's Bar, and you could get hot dogs and hamburgers there. Other than that, that was it. [You could] go to Roanoke, Virginia, which is forty miles away, and they had Morrisons. That was a great treat to go there because they had all these foods that you could go down the line and pick out. Morrisons has run its course, too, finally.

H: Another thing worth bringing up that's had a really big change, obviously more since it was the first food service provider here, or at least one of the first.

W: It was the first. I think they had a contract from 1966, I believe it was, until 1970. I've forgotten the name of the company that was here for several years, and then SAGA came in. [The company was called] Eastern Food Service. They were

here in 1973, and then SAGA came here. SAGA was formed by a group of students who had worked in a college food operation up north, and when they graduated, they formed a company. Most all of the campuses in the country had self-op units. There were a few that had contracts. Let me go back to the reason that Morrisons was selected and the university here did not go to a self-op. unit was, when they built the student service center there, they did not have enough funds to build enough storage space for it. Nor did they have enough funds to properly provide the equipment for the kitchen or the flatwares [like] coffee pots. They didn't have enough funds for that. They selected Morrisons because they could come in and provide funds up front to outfit the facility, but in addition to that, they had the infrastructure to provide the food locally. They didn't have to warehouse like we did in Tennessee. When we opened up there, the closest places up there were limited. We had one good food service company in Knoxville, and they put the next one in Marstown. That's another story. Anyway, that same thing existed here, that Morrisons was the only company that had their own operations. There were not any large food distributors at that time that could compete. Morrisons was selected and the contract, I believe, covered two or three years where they didn't pay anything to the university. The university started with a contract that asked for money up front.

[End of Side A]

H: We continue our oral history with Dick Wingard. One of the things that I wanted to bring up about changing food services, and normally you had companies and corporations that are running the food service itself. These days there are brand

names and logos all over the campus. Rather than it just being Aramark or Morrisons, you have Burger King, Subway, Pizza Hut, Chick-Fil-A, all these other [brand names]. When did that change start coming about?

W: I think it started making the impact on college food service probably about five years ago. Brand names has been something that has been going on for quite a while with products. Campbell's Soup had a program for colleges for a number of years where they had their big Campbell's Soup pots of soup that were on the line. There were other things. The cereals, specifically, were great for that. The Coca-Cola Company has brought in their line. We have a tradition of that. I think five years ago, the major contractors in colleges have started introducing the brand services like Pizza Hut and Subway on campuses. The advantage of it is, that the standards that these organizations tie in with their name are brought on campus. They are monitored by the corporate office. The disadvantage is that they take a heck of a lot of money. Another disadvantage is that they will tie in with their contract that the signage and everything has to meet and the equipment has to be their equipment even though it may be something you could buy less expensive, but you have to buy theirs. Contractually, you have to go through their package. They also take a lot of money back out that wouldn't normally come to the university as part of their service that they're providing. One of the things that they do when you get locked into a long-term contract, or want to renew it, is that they have changed their logo. It might be that the four-and-a-half-inch lettering has been changed to five or reduced to four. You have to replace all of your signs. All the signage, which is purchased from them at elevated prices. That

goes into it. We ran into that recently when we contracted with Subway that had been initiated by Sodexo, the...

H: Marriott? They kind of bought them?

W: Yeah. That's interesting, and we'll go back to that in a minute. We had been entered into with Sodexo, not Marriott at the time. They had to have all of their stuff changed. We had to actually go in and gut the place and start all over.

H: That includes new equipment?

W: [We had to] use their new equipment. There were many items in there that really weren't that far out of date. When we were talking about Morrisons being here and then they were out and SAGA came in, SAGA was a company, as I mentioned earlier, was a company that had been formed by some students. Their philosophy was that they believed in educating their employees. They had a great program to develop managerial skills and technical skills of their staff to promote them from within the organization. They also had a lot of expertise in handling, ordering and money, and their accounting system. They believed in a spree and they frequently had sessions with their staff at break that were work place-type-things. SAGA was purchased by Marriott. They bought their systems for their accounts. They bought them for their expertise that they had. Morrisons had phased out a lot of their accounts or had been beat out by the competition. Morrisons was purchased by Sodexo, a French company. They bought Morrisons for their expertise in this country. In the meantime, Marriott had purchased SAGA, and the reason that Marriott bought them was for the managerial ability that they had. Later on, Sodexo, who had purchased

Morrison's for their management, who really was not the greatest, bought out SAGA, so the Morrisons people came in and they started managing the organization. In my opinion, that's why Sodexo has gone down and has lost a number of accounts. It's really been a change in philosophy. The French disregard for some of the niceties that our managerial staff had accepted and their belief in being up front with the customer has been passed over. It would not surprise me that in the future that some of this philosophy of the original SAGA people did not come back and take over. I think that there's been a lot of unhappy accounts that we'll find out that it could be done in a better way at more profit for the universities.

H: Is there anything else about food service that you want to mention before we move on? Chinsegut Hill, of course, is something that we've discussed at length. For the benefit of the viewers, what was your first visit to the Hill?

W: When I first came here, part of my job with food service was the managerial responsibility for Chinsegut. At that time, they had just completed the dining facility up there. It had just been occupied for a couple of months. Prior to that, food had been prepared in the Manor House kitchen, which is a building attached to the Manor House, and served in the lower area on a closed portion of the porch on the north side. The customers were delighted with the additional space that they had, and if they didn't know it, the sanitation was certainly improved. It was something that was long-needed and we need to take that step in the future, if we can afford it.

H: The present dining facilities were built in the late 1970s?

W: No, [they were built] in 1981 and 1982 and occupied in 1983. The buildings there had been occupied for about ten years at that time. We used [them] as quarters for people who were staying overnight. Prior to that they had been living in the Manor House, but because of the possibility of fire, the new buildings were built out there. They were just replaced within the last five years.

H: When was your first visit to the Hill?

W: [It was] probably within two weeks of me arriving on campus.

H: What were your impressions when you first saw the facilities?

W: Being from a farm background, or at least an agricultural background, I was delighted with the prospect of getting back to the soil, so to speak. My major in college was animal husbandry, so I had an affinity for the aggie experiment station next door. It was delightful.

H: [What were your impressions] when you first saw the house?

W: It looked like it needed a lot of work. The process of trying to maintain a facility like that was limited by the amount of money that was available. The hundred-year-old building was certainly in need of a lot of work. Through Ray King and the housing staff, we were able to put money into the facility, but basically it was just on maintaining it, not trying to renovate it. We were just trying to keep the roof on, keep it from leaking, keep a coat of paint on it, and keep the insects away. Through Rick Fender's support, then and later on, we were able to at least be able to bring it back to some degree of its original building, strength, and condition.

H: You mentioned some of the challenges. I guess the biggest one would be fighting

for funds.

W: It still is. That's our biggest funding. We need to be able to keep the facility. I think it's a real jewel, and as soon as we lose it, the university and the state will realize that they've lost a great opportunity there. With the tremendous growth that we have in Florida in population, and Hernando County is one of the top-growing areas in the state, there are not going to be very many places that are in fifty miles of the university that you can find a pristine piece of property that doesn't have buildings all around it and smoking around it. We're really lucky to have that. It would certainly be a shame to see it lost.

H: I couldn't agree more. It's also a great fact that the USDA surrounds the property and provides a buffer around it.

W: If you were to look at a map that shows the area, you would be surprised at how extensive that area is. Not only the USDA, it's a forestry. There are about four different agencies that have property in that area and are controlling it.

H: When you first arrived, who was utilizing the facilities? How did that demographic change from the way it is now?

W: Basically, we had a pretty close relationship with the university from the standpoint that you had to have a reason to be there. It had to be of an educational nature. A group that wanted to just go up and spend a weekend, that wasn't allowed. The facility's main support at that time was housing. The RA's and programs were one of our main occupants up there. The next one would have been classes that were being conducted. Some of the early retreats had been very frequent up there, but they had pretty much phased out by the time I got here. It's

used by all of the departments on campus practically. I think it's not being utilized at all right now by the botany area. That's something that certainly should be pushed. Now, we've got a number of church organizations. We have groups of consultants who use the facility from time to time that bring groups there. We have a number of weddings. We're practically giving the service away, and that needs to be addressed. The people that come there, I think there are two types. One is that they realize the uniqueness of it and its beauty, and other are just looking for a cheap place to get married and bring a large group of people.

H: What in your mind, if there's any brief way to break it down, makes it so unique?

W: Just being close to nature, I think. Being up there, there are very few places that you can get a large group together and have it pretty much to yourself for the least cost. There's nothing else just from the bottom line.

H: We were kind of joking about the old cabins the other day with the caretaker there. I recalled opening a window and the window falling out of these doublewide trailers. Tell us about the process of replacing those with the new ones, because it's a major upgrade.

W: At that particular time, we were associated with housing that had a maintenance staff of carpenters, plumbers, and painters. So we were able to maintain those, at least in some degree. When I got here, the floors had started to go, and we had a number of rooms that were taken out of operation over a period of about three years. We had to go in and physically tear the whole floor out and rebuild a whole floor back there. Plumbing was another problem. As you mentioned, the

windows, because they were under the trees there, there was a lot of damage to the siding. There was a constant problem of trying to keep the roofs in shape and keep them treated. We had Elderhostel as one of our large groups that we traditionally accommodated during the year. They would usually have two or three sessions there a year. About 1995, the Elderhostel organization upgraded their requirements for facilities, and they wanted to have any place where their guests were housed to have adjacent private bathrooms. At that time, those buildings had four bedrooms, but they had two bathrooms at the end of the hall. To use the facilities you had to go out in the hall and go down the hall. Needless to say, the thinness of the walls and the floors in their particular age didn't add too much to your privacy. That was one of the major drawbacks. Lee Leavengood, who was in charge of the Elderhostel program on campus, worked with the administration to upgrade the facilities for Elderhostel. That pretty much sparked our vice president's, Rick Fender, at the time, and later on, his title was changed, but he was a very strong supporter of Chinsegut. He had been raised here in Tampa as a young fellow. As a Boy Scout, [he] had spent a number of trips up there. The place was kind of dear to his heart. Through their support, we were able to fund seven new facilities up there. The first three cost us about \$90,000 a piece, that's completely fitted. The last cabins cost us over \$100,000 a piece. They were built to state specifications, and they can take a 200-mile hurricane, the way they were built. They should last quite a while.

H: Absolutely. I'll just make the comment that they definitely are high quality and complete opposite of the facilities that were there before that which were trailer-

type things. These are very solid.

W: The cabins are named for appropriate areas around there. We've tried to introduce, as part of the name, a large picture that had a collage of pictures that were taken back in the 1920s and earlier with the same view taken today. I think that's a little bit unique, too.

H: What are a couple names of the cabins, just to give us an example? Do any spring to mind? If not, it's no big deal. Of course, the previous owners had special names for a lot of the areas, so there's a certain amount of...

W: They all were Indian names. Chinsegut was the Inook Indian name, an Alaskan Indian. Colonel Robins, who was the person who developed it from 1902 to 1955, had an Indian name. I think his name was Ho Chi, like Ho Chi Minh Trail, but not quite.

H: What other things are we missing? I know there were a lot of changes over time of the facilities there.

W: Something that we've had to do up there is the building had started settling on the east side. We had to go in and do some major renovation and support. It consisted of going through and putting in concrete pads underneath the building, and erecting on top of them, steel eye-bars that went all the way up four stories practically, to the peak of the building to reconfigure the support for that whole area. We were able to incorporate those supports within the walls and in so doing, we had to replace some of the walls. The wood had been planed or milled in a manner that was not available today. We had to have the replacement wood all specially milled to match the existing structure there. We had to jack the thing

up very carefully. While we were doing that, we found out that the porches that surround [the building] on three different sides at two different levels were unsafe on the south side. We had actually put some plywood over some holes to keep people from falling through and restricted any access to that area. We took the porches off and we found out that their structure was such that they just had a three-by-nine piece of wood running around that they just nailed up against the side of the house. It's a wonder that those things had stayed up there that long. We went back and properly hung the porches in their proper area. We replaced all of the under painting on it. When we completed the job two years later, we had some other damage that was caused by termites, and the west side of the building started sagging, so we had to go under and put an eye-beam that ran the width of the building and jack it up.

H: Was this the last incident a year ago?

W: Yes. What happened was that they misplaced the eye-beam support. When they started jacking it up, it started ripping the building apart. They had to go back and re-engineer their support under there so they actually lifted the building and not part of it. In so doing, they cracked a lot of the plaster that had been previously repaired.

H: You can see some of the fresh cracks, especially in the office right now.

W: One of the other problems we had was that there was no air conditioning or no heat in there. They had a number of fireplaces, which had not been used in thirty years. The heat originally for the conference room on the second floor were gas-fired heaters that we exhausted out through the side of the building. They have

been replaced and over the last several years we've introduced air conditioning and heat through the good graces of Richard Mason, who had been an engineer on campus and was assigned up there for a year to oversee some of the construction and renovation. He was able to get in the air conditioning and heat there. That makes it much more marketable and a much more pleasant place to go and certainly keeps down the humidity in the summer.

H: Yeah, definitely. It gets very hot up there. You're just starting to show the audience some of the complexities of preserving a building this big, too. You've got foundations sinking and having to replace things to make it as much like it was before. Of course, there's a lot of times, especially with short money, that compromise is inevitable.

W: Back when the university really was turned over to the state, the University of Florida had the facility. The intent, originally, was to use the law library that was there from Colonel Robbins, and they quickly found out that to use that library, it wasn't very practical. Then they thought of other ways they could use it. It ended up that they finally sent somebody down to live there for a while and transfer the library to the university. At that time, there were a lot of the antiques that had belonged to the family were moved up there. In the era between the time that the property was turned over to the University of South Florida and its use, a lot of the items disappeared because of the tremendous amount of traffic they had through there. They had a large grandfather's clock that was up there and apparently that was taken one night. Somebody came in and put it in the back of the car and somebody else saw them going out the driveway with it. That was the

last of that. Consequently, a lot of those items were brought down and put in the archives here. A lot of them were locked up in storage on the third floor. Over the last couple of years we've been able to run through my contacts here at the archives. I got a lot of the items back, items like the Colonel's hat and some other items that we put back up there. We've carted off one of the bedrooms to prevent people from going in. So that we could display some items, we put a lexon door there so that people can look in. I think that there's some shelving that's in that hallway that could be also utilized for display if we properly protected the items. The second floor conference room was a library. There's shelving in there that could be used also. We've thought about being able to do something there. I'd like to see that happen in the future.

H: One of the most difficult things about preserving a piece of property like that is that time is often of the essence. If you just let the foundation sink, the building is going to fall apart. Another example of something that happened recently [is] last year, I guess right after the foundation was sinking, one of the landmarks, the sunrise oak started to split. It's this massive oak [tree] that's going off in all these different directions. It's especially valuable because it has Colonel Robbins staircase and a platform that he used to meditate in the mornings. Obviously, you guys had to scramble pretty quick to try to react to this.

W: We've not really reacted to it other than to raise our hands and pray because we haven't the funds to properly maintain it. We're still scrounging for that. I think it can still be saved, but it will have to take a lot of money that we don't have.

H: At least it was addressed and one of the really huge limbs was cut off taking the

weight and much of the strain off of the crotch of the tree there. That's just another example of the things. The cow dip had been taken out recently.

W: They have, as part of the original facility there, and it was probably put in by the USDA back in the 1930s. It was a dipping vat that was used to treat the cattle. They used arsenic in it and they also used DDT. There's been a major effort to clean up these chemicals throughout Florida and in Hernando County in particular. That being property that belongs to the USDA which we rent for a dollar a year for access to the lodge. They were mandated to remove those chemicals from the ground there. That being land marked, but it didn't really go back to the Colonel's era.

H: Yes, but it was still on his watch when it was installed. That new deal work wouldn't happen without him. That's just another example of all these issues that come up later, whether it be arsenic or splitting trees or settling foundations. [Are there] any other examples of things like that? I know there was a tree that was just taken down because it was threatening one of the cabins.

W: It had already died. That thing had been hit by lightening and been killed. Those are going to be continuing problems that you have up there. Access to the property and maintaining the security of it has always been an issue. It's so large and we have so few people on the property and it's accessible through climbing over the fences in certain areas and crossing a public lake onto the property. We've experienced the vandalism of the lodge over a number of years, people coming over there. One of the problems that we had under my watch were people who are associated with the university naturally consider it part of their area and

they have access to it. We were fortunate to have had a resident manager who happened to come on a group who was picnicking on the property there from the university. It had started to rain, so they moved up on the porch. They had a little hibachi there that they were cooking on and they had this up on this tender dry porch and it was dripping coals down on the thing. He just happened to get up there and see it. Naturally, he asked them to leave. That's the kind of thing that can wipe out the place there very shortly through somebody's carelessness.

H: People just not thinking at all, that you've got this 160-year-old all-wood manor house.

W: That place would have gone up in a second.

H: Of course, now, there's not even any cigarette smoking allowed on the porch, never mind a hibachi grill.

W: One of the things that we found out when we were working on a place there and we were chipping the paint off of some of the areas, that early on, I'm not sure who painted some of the colors there, I think some of the greens were painted by the university, but there were banisters and other things that were painted battleship gray. Eddie Money, who had been our manager up there for a number of years had talked with Lisa Von Browsky, who had been part of the staff. He was told by Lisa that right after WWII, they had been able to purchase a lot of battleship paint very cheap. A lot of things were painted with that paint. That's where that brown came from, if you're ever looking for it. We chipped off the paint off of the pillars out front. We found that there were a number of coats and it had been painted a number of times. The base coat was a kind of yellow. We

chipped that further and it flaked off and we noticed that the brick underneath it were yellow. It turns out that the brick were fired on the property down at the bottom of the hill where the nature center is located. I think there's a chimney down there now. The basic material was sand that they used in the brick so it's a yellow brick under there.

H: That's a good example of there's still a lot to learn about the property. There never has been an archeological dig, for example, which of course isn't the responsibility of auxiliary services, but really falls to the academic community here to motivate themselves to do something.

W: In walking to the east of the property from the platform of the tree down to the lower area, you can run across a number of roadways that had been in there. There are concrete culverts that run through there. There's quite a network of roads. There was a home down in there when I first came here and still may still be there. People were using it to tie up there dogs inside of it. It had been occupied probably up until 1960. I don't know exactly what the story is, but there were some little ponds there, I think there's a little spring, and somebody had built a walkway around it. There's some interesting things that can be excavated by just cutting brush away. I hate to say it, but a good fire would show up a lot of things in that area. The grove there had been in existence from back early on in the Colonel's watch. [It was] probably about 1915 and on. The citrus grove; it had suffered a number of freezes over a period of years. Just before I came here, the housing department used to go up there and harvest the oranges up there and sell them as a cash crop and bring them down and use them in the dining hall. Ray

King had purchased a machine that was kind of a gold berg. You wash the oranges off and you drop them in the top and they'd roll down this chute. It would actually cut them and mash them and juice would come out. The students could put an orange in the top and the glass underneath it and orange juice would come out. [In] 1988, we had a freeze, and it knocked out all of our citrus grove and it knocked out probably the majority of the groves adjacent to the property. The next year probably about a third of them were replanted. Two years they froze again. Most people quit the orange juice business in Hernando County. We had equipment for washing and processing. We got rid of that, too.

H: The 1980s were a bad year for citrus here. It was a big citrus canker outbreak, too, right?

W: I don't think it affected Hernando County.

H: What about Shangri-La? Did you have any business with that facility?

W: The only contact that I had was that it was part of housing at the time. We had one of the staff members from housing lived over there.

H: Tell us about that site.

W: Apparently, the property was donated to the university by a former professor who had lived there. It was a large log cabin-type building. It was quite extensive, if I remember correctly. [It was] near the Lake Thonotosassa. At that time, the sailing club used it as their major facility. They had quite an operation there. By the time I came, the lake had started to be polluted. The termite damage to the building was extensive. Vandalism was quite a problem. The couple who lived out there, it finally wasn't really safe for them and even though the rent was free,

they decided to move. As soon as they moved, the drug people started taking over. It was just covered up with needles and all kinds of paraphernalia. The university elected to make some kind of transactions for trading the property for some property here as I understand it.

H: There wasn't any food service there?

W: No.

H: That's close enough to civilization.

W: The only time that I went out there was just, I can't remember now why, but it was only three or four times that I was ever out there. I never used the boats.

H: Did we miss anything on Chinsegut?

W: There's a lot to Chinsegut, but I think that'll be for another day.

H: Ok. [Is there] anything else that we missed that you want to talk about?

W: It's been an interesting experience. When I came here, my plans were to only stay a year. We had rented a home here. Previously, I think we moved probably about fifteen times in our married life. We always were fortunate enough, at least in the last four moves, to have bought a home. Since we were only going to be here a year, half of our stuff was packed in the garage in boxes. Finally, I think we recognized that we were going to be here for a while so we bought a home and finally got in to opening up stuff that had been packed up since we first got married. It was interesting to find out what was still in there. My experience here working with the staff has been really great. I've really enjoyed it. It's been a pleasure to come to work.

H: It must be, because you're still with us. I see people sometimes ask you, you going to work forever?

W: I guess it'll probably turn out to be something else.

H: Thanks a lot for spending the afternoon with us, Dick. I really appreciate it.

End of Interview