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Kerine Black oral history interview by Danielle E. Riley, May 4, 2004

Kerine Black (Interviewee)

Danielle E. Riley (Interviewer)

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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Growing up

Ms. Black grew up in Jamaica, where she did one year of high school and ran track and field. She decided to move to Ft. Pierce, Florida and live with her father because she wanted to see the world. After finishing high school at Ft. Pierce Central High School, Ms. Black decided to come to USF. She didn't know anything about Tampa at the time, nor did she know that USF was here until one of the school's representatives came to her high school. While she was accepted at other universities, she decided to come to USF because she was able to begin classes during the summer.

Ms. Black also considered Florida A & M. She had been offered track and field scholarships for schools up north, but did not want to do track anymore. She was invited to the U.S. Juniors Track and Field Championships in California. The event was to take place at a school that offered her a scholarship, but because this was around the time that there were frequent earthquakes in the area, she decided not to go. She had been doing track since she was nine years old and had grown tired of it.

She wanted to go into business. Her parents are both business owners: her father owns a store and her mother owns a business in Jamaica. While growing up, Ms. Black's mother had about three businesses; she was put in charge of some business aspects of her mother's entrepreneurial pursuits because her mother wanted her to learn about it.

First Time at USF

She came here with all her stuff and was ready to move in. Initially, Ms. Black went to the wrong side of the campus and got lost. It was very hot, which was good because she is not very happy with the cold weather up north. She was supposed to be at the orientation at Argos and she had to walk all the way there, which was a long way.

Ms. Black stayed on campus the first year and spent the summer prior to her freshman year living on the campus. They stayed in Delta Hall over the summer and the program was a lot of fun and was a "great experience." The first day there were a lot of people who were upset and wanted to go home. Everyone had a roommate and suitemates.

They all ended up being best friends and they stayed close throughout school. They went to movies, clubs, and parties together and had a lot of fun. She loved going to the lobbies and playing card games against different suites. They also enjoyed having cookouts in the kitchen. This was fun because everyone was from different cultures. This changed a little when the fall rolled around because the number of students rose considerably when school started.

Classes

Her classes were good because they were relatively small. She declared her major sophomore year. She graduated with two majors, Management and Information Systems (MIS), and finance. Ms. Black finished her first degree in 2000 with the MIS degree, but she had another year of eligibility on track. She had taken finance classes and only needed about six hours to finish that degree, so Ms. Black decided to stay and finish the extra degree and run track.

Track and Field

She had decided to not do track in college. In her sophomore year Ms. Black read an article in the Oracle concerning the track team. She had not realized that USF had a track team. This particular article said that one athlete had done very well at a meet at FSU. The girl had triple-jumped a little over thirty-eight feet and this was a new school record. Ms. Black realized that she had done better than that in high school. She called her father and told him about the track and field team. He encouraged her to join.

Ms. Black went to the athletic department and approached the head coach. When she told him that she had done better than that in high school he told her that a lot of people think that they can do better than the people on the team. She decided to not bother with the idea any further. Ms. Black called her father again and he encouraged her to go back one more time.

The track and field team was going to have a December trial. The coach decided to have Ms. Black train with the team and then go to the trial. If she did well at the trial, she would make the team. No one paid much attention to her during practice because she did not put too much effort into practice. On the day of the trial Ms. Black was nervous because she hadn't jumped competitively since high school. Her first jump was measured at forty-one feet. The jumping coach then had her do the long jump. The record was just over seventeen feet and Ms. Black jumped eighteen feet. In both events she broke school records on her first jump. They allowed her onto the team. Once she went to a few meets and got into a competitive mindset her interest came back. Many of her friends from Jamaica were recruited to go to U.S. schools, so Ms. Black got to compete against them as well.

Practicing was different for her than anyone else. The coach would send everyone for a run and Ms. Black would feel tired so she would stop. She "just hated practicing" and "didn't work hard." Ms. Black feels that she only "put fifty percent" into her practicing. When she first came here she didn't lift weights or run. She has always hated practice. They had practice every day from Monday through Friday and they had races to run on

the weekends. The coaches know your schedule the whole time. She started as a jumper and ended up sprinting as well. This was a lot of work, but it was fun.

Ms. Black had been a runner in high school, but didn't tell her coaches in college because she hated running. She preferred to jump. They needed some sprinters and she tried out for the 100m and the 200m. She went to the conference championships. She may have not practiced very hard, but Ms. Black hates losing and works "110%" during the competitions. She did the 200m and the 100m and broke both school records. Once her coaches knew that she could run and jump they had her do both events. Her coach wrote a newspaper article after he left about turning her down at their initial meeting. It was something they could both look back at and laugh about.

People on the team today

She is still in touch with Greg Theil, the current head coach. She goes to meets from time to time and keeps in touch with some of the current players and some national qualifiers who might go to the Olympics. When she watches it on television there is some desire to get back into track and field, but once the television program is over that desire goes away. She has always been nonchalant about track and there are a lot of people that put everything they have into it, it is their one desire. She was an alternate on the Jamaican Olympic team, which was a neat experience. This built her confidence. At first, it was intimidating to go against Olympians, but when she was successful it was a great confidence booster.

Olympians are very serious and Ms. Black doesn't think that lifestyle is for her. If she cannot have fun with track then she does not want to do it. She respects Olympians a lot and appreciates that they all work very hard. She didn't travel with the team because she was an alternate.

USF Records

She was always so nonchalant about track that whenever someone made a big deal about her records it didn't seem like a big deal to her. She has a lot of plaques and medals at her house (under the bed). At the time Ms. Black was focusing on going through school and because she wasn't 100% dedicated to track and field she didn't get as excited as someone who had dreamed about it. She is proud to be part of USF history, but track and field was a part of her life then and not now.

USF Community

In 1996 the school started the football team but Ms. Black did not pay attention to athletics very much then, until she read the track and field article in the Oracle. Her friends weren't involved in sports. But when the football team began playing a lot of people got involved in athletics. Some of her friends played intramurals but they were pretty uninvolved.

Once she got involved in track and field people became very supportive. When people found out that she was going to try out they were a little skeptical, but they became less skeptical over time.

When she walked on to the team, she was the only walk-on; everyone else was recruited. There were only a few walk-ons that actually made the team. This might be the reason that so many people didn't take her seriously at first because so many people try out and fail.

In the time between 1996 and 2001 people on campus started paying more attention to athletics campus and got more involved.

Family

Her mother's side of the family is still in Jamaica. Her mother only came to visit on a couple of occasions. Her father came to a few track meets. He always wanted her to start track and field again. In 1996 Ms. Black was nominated to be a torchbearer for the Atlanta Olympics and he was very proud. He was very proud of her again when she made the team in her sophomore year of college.

Dorm Life

Ms. Black lived on campus until her senior year. She lived in the village, she lived in the co-ed dorms, and she lived in the single dorms. She "absolutely loved" living on campus because it gives you a chance to learn to live with other people and understand other people's cultures and perspectives. This was a "great experience."

Academics

Because she had a double major and a student-athlete, it was difficult for Ms. Black to keep up with her academics. This taught her time management because she had to go to a lot of track meets while keeping up with her schoolwork. Many weeks she would leave for a track meet on Thursday and come back on Sunday, so she would take work with her and have to meet professors on their office hours when she missed class. She didn't get extensions, because an athlete chooses to do athletics and so they are expected to keep up with school, but the professors were very helpful. The athletic department also has required study halls for eight hours a week that she was required to attend from the Monday to Thursday that she was on campus. This cut into social time, but it helped out a great deal, and her time management skills are critical for her job now. Her senior year was difficult because she went to the Olympic trials and graduated in the same summer. So she was taking classes and doing the Olympic trials at the same time. She missed the first two weeks of classes but the professor helped her keep up with her work. Her advisor was very good and helped her keep on track and keep focused on everything.

Graduation day

She was out of town just before graduation day and was very tired during the graduation ceremony. It was such a big deal for everyone, but there were so many people there that her family could not find her. They didn't see her until the next day. She was very tired, but it was really fun and "exciting." At that point she was really looking forward to finishing school. A lot of athletes prefer to not walk because during spring there are track meets on the weekends, but this gave her family a chance to get together and celebrate.

Her family in Jamaica was sad that they didn't get the chance to go, but she got to visit Jamaica in the fall and shared pictures with them.

Best experience at USF

The first summer that she was here was a great experience. They were supposed to have a counseling meeting every Thursday for summer classes. They tried to avoid it however they could. The counselor would try to get them there on time, but they all purposely tried to be late. The counselor was so upset every time, but they thought that it was funny. Staying in the dorms that summer was a lot of fun. They played Spades and Truth or Dare all the time. She would recommend any incoming freshman do this program because there are so few people on the campus over the summer and you get the chance to spend time with other people and make new friends.

Her current job

Now Ms. Black works for JP Morgan Chase Bank in the Treasury Service. She stayed in the Tampa area because she spent a lot of time traveling during her years in track and field. While on the track team, she saw the entire United States but always loved coming back to Tampa. Ms. Black does not intend to leave any time soon.

End of Interview