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Joyce Nader oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, August 12, 2003

Joyce Nader (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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

Narrator: Joyce Nader
Current Position: Tampa Lawyer of
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Year of arrival

Joyce came to USF in 1969 as a student. In 1973 she received a B.A. in communications and French literature. She returned to receive her master's degree in communications in 1975.

Joyce and her family's early encounters with USF (her father captures them on film)

Her family arrived in Tampa from New York when she was two years old. Her first encounter with USF occurred when she was very young. USF invited her parents, Elias and Vivian Nader, to the groundbreaking ceremony. Her parents brought Joyce, her older brother Bob, and her younger brother George to the ceremony. Her dad captured the groundbreaking ceremony on 8-millimeter film. Her family came to the first day of classes, which Elias also captured on 8-millimeter film.

Her father's films and photographs of the groundbreaking ceremony and the first day of classes

"He loved to have his camera around." He recorded a lot family history, and even Tampa's early history. Elias recorded the groundbreaking ceremony at USF. From the film, Joyce says it is noticeable that USF was in a big sandy area. The Florida governor, congressman Sam Gibbons, and other notaries from the area attended the ceremony. Her younger brother, two at the time, was asked to stand with the governor and put his foot on the shovel. Her father also took pictures of USF's opening day—the first day of classes. Joyce says one can see the administration building in the film. (She went to school with a girl whose uncle did the artwork on the administration building). In the film there are cranes in the background behind the administration building. The film shows that USF was a work in progress.

After her dad died, no one films

After her dad died in 1968 no one took up the camera. No one filmed anymore of USF or Tampa. The films laid around in storage for years. In 2002, for a Christmas present to his family, Bob had all of the 35 millimeter restored and put on a DVD.

Joyce recalls her first recollection of USF

Her first real recollection of USF occurred when her fourth grade class went to the planetarium. She remembers being awestruck when she saw all the stars and the moon.

Why did Joyce's parents get invited to USF's groundbreaking ceremony?

Her family lived in Temple Terrace. They were members of the community. Her dad was a builder in the area and a supporter of education. He attended UF for two years before he left for WWII. He was a real strong advocate of his children attending college because he never got to finish his college career. She thinks he got tied in quickly with USF when it was announced that there was going to be a new university in the area. Joyce thinks the Nader family could have been invited to the groundbreaking ceremony because of Elias's staunch support for higher education and because of some of the activities he was involved in with the growth of the new school.

What does Joyce recall about USF from her dad's films?

She recalls things about USF from pictures and films. "It was a very sandy area, not a lot of trees or grass. It was a vast open space."

Why did Joyce decide to attend USF?

She was supposed to attend UF like her older brother. But, unfortunately, her father passed away when she was a junior in high school. She wanted to stay close to home in order to be with her mother and younger brother, George. She decided to attend the local university.

Joyce at first regrets attending USF

At first, she was unhappy about her decision to attend USF because she liked football and USF did not have a football team. Since she had two brothers, she grew up around sports.

The first day of registration

Students registered in a big gym. When she registered for the first time it was a very soggy day. She remembers getting wet and then not getting half the classes she wanted. She sat on the floor of the gym and tried to mark off what classes she needed. "That was all pretty unnerving."

Joyce describes the USF campus when she was a student

She recalls the vast open spaces of the early campus. She had to trek from one side of campus to the other, sometimes with ten or twelve minutes between classes. Sometimes it was really hot or extremely cold. The really cold days surprised a lot of people. She says students walked all over campus from one end to the other, attending classes in buildings that one would not expect them to be in. For example, English classes were taught in the engineering building.

USF becomes important to Joyce; she develops relationships with her professors

"USF became really important to me very early on." Although she wanted to attend UF, she began to have a great experience at USF once she arrived. Early on, she developed relationships with a lot of her professors. She felt like USF became a family to her; especially after the loss of her father it became a really important family. Her professors

were all very nice and warm. “It ended up being a fun place to go to school. I was happy that I came to USF after all.”

Joyce decides to double major

Joyce decided to double major in French literature and communications.

What made the early professors so great?

She was a very shy person. She signed up for communications and French courses. The professors “opened a whole world of new ideas.” They encouraged students to speak up and voice their thoughts and opinions. Joyce ended up taking a class in performance communications. She says it was a shock to her that she would ever get up on stage, let alone feel comfortable doing it. “I think they [professors] created a positive environment of learning. They were fun [and] relaxed, but very driving. It was a time when the teachers wanted you to learn, encouraged you to learn, were very tough on you, but at the same time very optimistic and encouraging.”

Why did Joyce decide to get a master’s degree and why at USF?

Joyce says she stayed at USF for her master’s degree because she loved the university so much. Joyce says that after students received their degrees, a lot of them wondered, “What am I going to do with my degree?” She thinks universities have changed a lot in regards to career guidance. She says institutions now have more career counseling and mentoring. She says there really was not any career guidance then. After receiving her double degree, Joyce did not know what she wanted to do. She tried to decide between going to law school or becoming a college professor. Since some of her professors really inspired Joyce, she decided to become a college professor.

Joyce was inspired to become a professor because of her undergraduate experience with various USF professors

Joyce says her professors “were so inspiring to me that I [knew I] wanted to teach one day.” She wanted to be a professor.

Joyce is offered a fellowship to study at USF

Since Joyce did well in undergraduate school she was offered a fellowship to stay at USF and continue her studies in communications. She did not have a lot of money so it was great to receive a fellowship. She says USF basically paid her to study there.

In what area of study did she receive her master’s degree?

She received her master’s degree in communications.

What courses did she take as a graduate student?

She started taking courses in performance communications, which she loved. Then she got into organizational communications and the study of political rhetoric.

Joyce’s first experience teaching

She ended up signing on as a graduate teaching assistant, which gave Joyce her first experience in teaching. She taught two basic communications courses, one was called

introduction to speech communication, and the other one was a phonetics course. She was scared to death because she was not much older than some of her students.

Joyce's first students

Most of her first students were hard working and happy to have a young teacher.

Changes in USF from Joyce's undergraduate career to her graduate career

When Joyce was in graduate school, Cooper Hall had just been built. The Languages Department was on the second floor and the Communications Department was on the fourth floor. Joyce says the Communications Department had its own snack bar. The growth of the physical campus was becoming apparent during her graduate years. The current library is something she recalls being developed and opened while she was in graduate school. About the library opening, Joyce says, "It was exciting to have a lot more available to you when you did research studies. A lot larger of a collection."

Joyce's teaching career

She taught as an adjunct at USF and then got a full-time job at St. Petersburg Junior College, now St. Petersburg College.

What courses has Joyce taught at USF?

She has taught environmental science and policy as well as some communications courses.

Joyce decided to go to law school, but always had teaching in her heart.

She has remained at USF as an adjunct over the years.

Her husband Adrian works at the physical plant at USF.

Joyce gives law students advice and stays in touch with former students

She often stays in touch with students through e-mail. Some students ask Joyce for letters of reference. Some students who are attending law school seek her counsel and advice about which books to buy. She offers a shadow day to students at her law firm. If students are interested in a career in law she invites them to come spend a day at her law firm and talk with lawyers in order to find out what being a lawyer is all about before taking that step.

Joyce and her brothers all have educational experiences at USF

Her brother George received his undergraduate and master's degrees from USF. Her brother Bob received his master's degree from USF. Joyce received her undergraduate and master's degrees from USF.

The Vivian Nader and Elias Nader Scholarship

Joyce and her two brothers remain involved with USF and have established a scholarship in honor of their parents.

Why did Joyce and her brothers want to set up a scholarship at USF?

She wanted to do something to honor her mother and father, Vivian and Elias Nader, and what they had done for their children, and also to give back to USF, which had given the Nader family so much. Most importantly, they wanted the story of their mom and dad told. The parents' photograph is on the brochure, and the story of how the two met and how they came to Florida is also on the brochure.

When did the scholarship begin?

Joyce and her brothers started the \$500 scholarship when she got out of law school. It started in the early 1990s.

In which college/department is the scholarship?

They decided it should be in the College of Arts and Sciences. They have recently endowed it and with the endowment they made it more specific. Now every year, it rotates between the departments of communications and environmental science and policy. Part of it goes to undergraduate students and part of it goes to graduate students. They decided to put it in those two places because Joyce and her brothers were involved in communications as part of their degrees, and communications is important to them. They placed part of the scholarship in the environmental science and policy department because Joyce is an environmental lawyer and she became involved with the environmental department by teaching courses. Joyce got to know the people in the department and was very impressed with the department and program.

Scholarship requirements

The requirements are academic and merit and financial need.

Courses that stand out to Joyce as a student

She enjoyed her French literature and communications classes. She really enjoyed the music classes she took, including a piano course.

Where Joyce lived while she was a student

She lived at home while she was a student at USF.

At first, Joyce thinks about joining a sorority

At first, Joyce thought she would join a sorority in order to make friends and find her niche at the university.

Joyce finds her home in the Communications and French departments

Instead of joining a sorority and finding her home there, Joyce found her home in the communications and French departments. In the languages department there were rooms where students could congregate and practice speaking in the languages they were learning. They had a French room, a Spanish room, etc. She was a part of the French Society, which was the name of the group who met in the French room to practice the language. The rooms were in a very 1960s and 1970s design. The rooms contained beanbag chairs and incense candles. "It was a place where you would sit around and

drink coffee and converse in the language.” In the communications department she found a home as well. Every Wednesday afternoon the department had coffee hour and Reader’s Theater, which included readings from great novels and short stories. Students came to hang out on Wednesday afternoons. Also, once a month the department had Chamber Theater productions, which were more elaborate. Students from all over would come and watch the productions that the communications department conducted. She recalls an outstanding production of *The Catcher in the Rye*. Joyce wanted to stay and learn more after the outstanding production. She ended up being in a few plays after that.

Early on, USF and the community

She recalls that USF was just trying to get going as an institution and did not focus on the community. “It was almost like it was a place out here unto its own. I don’t think there was a tie in with the university and the community like there is today.” She thinks USF’s emphasis on community relations began more in the 1980s and 1990s under the leadership of the various university presidents.

The students’ feelings about no major sports at USF

There was relatively little activism concerning USF’s lack of major intercollegiate sports.

Political activism on campus

She remembers activism about the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement. Joyce says there was some activism in the form of student protests that centered on political issues.

Why did fellow students decide to attend USF, and what were students like?

She thinks students came for different reasons than today. “I think a lot of it was access and convenience.” There were a lot of students like her that needed to stay close to home for whatever reason. Joyce says for her and others it was nice to have access to a major university. She says most of the early USF students were commuters. She says there were few dorms. She felt like there was a light-hearted spirit among the students in those days. But, the students were extremely serious because they wanted to get their education.

The importance of football at USF

Before USF acquired a football program, Joyce always felt like it would be a good thing for the university because it brings alumni back to the school. She thinks it helps generate money that one might not normally have access to. She says it creates a spirit at the university that needs to be there in order to attract alumni back. “We [her family] were real excited when we found out USF was getting a football team.” Joyce and her husband are green jacket supporters and season tickets holders. “I think it has brought us even closer to the university because it gives you a tie in to the university every single year.”

Joyce in the Oracle

Her picture appeared in the *Oracle* a number of times. She wanted to earn extra money so she became a fashion model for Lerner Shops. There was a Lerner Shop ad and four different pictures of her during her undergraduate days.

Did Joyce read the Oracle?

She read the *Oracle* because there were a lot of interesting articles about what was going on at the university and in the nation. She thinks other students read the *Oracle* to get news about the university and the nation. The articles were well written.

Focus debates on campus

When Joyce was a student, USF had focus debates on Monday nights that the speech communications department sponsored. A lot of interesting speakers came to the university, including Dan Rather, Bob Woodward from “All the President’s Men,” and a great Russian poet who became a dissident and defected. Students came to campus for focus debates.

Joyce’s jobs during college

She worked on campus as an undergraduate in the bookstore, which was in the basement of the old UC. She worked in the language department as a student assistant. Then on weekends she worked in the old Maas Brothers Department store downtown, which is no longer there.

USF presidents

She says each president took the university to the next level.

John Allen

“[He was a] man of great academic stature, much admired. I recall that he was known as a great academic, very reserved.” The slogan or motto of the university at the time was “Accent on Learning.”

Cecil Mackey

“Cecil Mackey was a bit younger and viewed as a progressive that would take the university to the next level, academically and also being more involved with the community.” Referring to John Allen and Cecil Mackey, she says, “Two great starting presidents.”

Betty Castor

Betty Castor was president during Joyce’s involvement in setting up the scholarship. Betty Castor and her husband live in the same condominium as Joyce and her husband Adrian. They know each other pretty well.

Difference between students now and students then

She says there is a lot more energetic pace among students now. A lot of the current students have much more going on in their lives. Some are working full-time as well as going to school full-time. She thinks the average student is a little bit older than when

she was there. There is a lot more that the university offers now since it has grown over the years. There are a lot more programs for students in terms of career and academic counseling. There are a lot more disciplines than there were, including majors that she had never even envisioned when she was in school. She says the students have a lot to juggle but are equally enthusiastic. “I have had some wonderful students and I really enjoy being able to mentor students, much like the mentoring I got from my individual professors when I was here [who] inspired me to become a college professor.”

Where does Joyce see USF in ten years?

“I see USF as a great academic institution. I have read that we are one of the top 100 research institutions in the country. I see that growing under the leadership of the current president. I see that we are going to become more and more involved in the community, which is where we should be developing partnerships and disciplines that are going to help the community in areas that we need help, such as growth management, biotechnology, and environmental policy. We have a wonderful medical school here. I just see nothing but positive growth and development and interaction between the community and the university.”

Joyce’s favorite memory of USF involves professors’ warmth and encouragement

Joyce says the loss of her dad was unexpected and tragic for the family. She is very grateful for the warmth and encouragement she found at USF. One of her fondest memories of USF involves coming to the university and getting involved with the communications and French departments. “The people were very warm and welcoming. My fondest memory is going to the coffee houses on Wednesday afternoons.” The professors and the students interacted a lot. She still loves performances and comes out to the university to see plays. She recalls an overall warm feeling about the professors and how they really encouraged the students to learn in a way that centered on vision and optimism. “There was just wonderful encouragement.” She found the professors’ warm encouragement like an extension of her family. Her parents always wanted them to succeed. Her parents were children of immigrants who came through Ellis Island. Her parents valued education and quietly encouraged their children to pursue an education. They were never mean about it.

Any last words about USF

“It is a great place to go to school. Talking to students, Joyce says, “You need to stay involved, whether it’s in your college program or athletics. She says that in order for the university to keep growing and continue to be the wonderful place that it is and has become, alumni need to come back. She encourages students to become a part of the alumni association when they graduate. She also encourages people to set up a scholarship, even if it is for \$100 a year. “You can’t imagine what that [scholarship] means to the students.” She gets letters from students who say that the \$500 Vivian and Elias Nader scholarship meant so much to them. She says staying involved “helps everybody, the university, the students, and ultimately the community and the society in which we live.”

End of Interview