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Mandell Shimberg oral history interview by Peter Klingman, December 7, 2000

Mandell Hinks Shimberg (Interviewee)

Peter D. Klingman (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Hinks talks about his memory of December 7, 1941

He remembers December 7, 1941 very well. He was twelve years old at the time. He lived in New York City at the time after moving from Kansas. He was a big sports fan. He was at a football game where the New York Giants played the New York Yankees. During the game the commentator kept coming over the loudspeaker saying “Admiral ___ and General ___ report here.” “Everyone was shocked, although there were events leading up to it, that many historians would say it was coming.”

WWII unites Americans

Hinks says throughout the entirety of WWII the country pulled together. He says now the country is in the midst of a presidential election crisis, which has divided the people. “Once we went to war in ’41, there was no division.” He says strangely enough he thinks of the war years, from 1941-45, as happy years.

Hinks was an air-raid messenger

He was an air-raid messenger, because there were warnings about a possible air attack in the U.S. He was too young to join the service, so instead he volunteered to be an air-raid messenger. There were air-raid wardens who needed messengers to do messenger work. There were drills to prepare for a possible air attack.

Movies during WWII

He says the movies, basically propaganda movies, were inspiring because the good guys usually won.

When and where was Hinks born

He was born in Syracuse, New York on February 2, 1929. He was a depression baby.

Moving from one place to another because of his father’s job

His father was a doctor at the time. Hinks’ family left New York when he was two and moved to Morristown, New Jersey. His father became a doctor in the Veteran’s

Administration. He was transferred every few years. Hinks says it was like he was an army kid.

Moving around was a positive experience for Hinks

He lived in various parts of the country, which he thinks was a good thing because he learned to adapt to different types of cultures.

Hinks describes his childhood and family

“I have nothing but happy memories growing up. His father was a doctor. His mother was a housewife. They were supportive parents, and not the kind of parents to say, “You must do this.” His father told both Hinks and his brother, Jim, that he would love for them both to become doctors, but that they had to do what made them happy. His father died in 1950. His older brother Jim went into the service. Talking about his brother, Hinks says, “I’m sure we had our sibling rivalry, and some fights, but in general it worked very well.”

Hinks’ high school

He went to James Monroe High School in New York, which at the time was the largest high school in the world with several campuses. During the war years, the school suspended football. Being a big sports fan, Hinks was disappointed, but he found other interests. He got involved with politics there and become president of the student body his senior year.

Growing up Jewish

He attended sixth grade in Leavenworth, Kansas, where he was the only Jewish person in his grade. Then he went to seventh grade in Bronx, New York, where the majority were Jewish students. “You were [more] aware of the Jewishness in the New York area than I was in Kansas.” He never encountered any prejudices or discrimination during his younger years.

College career

He went to college in 1947 at the University of Wisconsin. He got his undergraduate degree in economics. Hinks graduated from high school in 1947, and started college in the fall of 1947. At the time, all the veterans came back from WWII. Hinks says it was very difficult to get into college at the time. At first he wanted to go to Cornell University in New York. Cornell University admitted Hinks, but he would not be able to start until the second semester, and he did not want to wait that long. He had an uncle that did business in Madison, Wisconsin. Hinks got into the University of Wisconsin. His uncle obtained a legislature’s basketball scholarship for Hinks, even though he did not play basketball. He fell in love with Madison, Wisconsin. He took classes in the school of business. “The business world seemed to be the best, and it worked out well.”

Hinks is drafted into the Marine Corps

In 1950 the Korean War began. Hinks graduated from college in June of 1951. In late 1951, Hinks was drafted into the U.S. Marine Corps. He believes that only twice in the history of the Marine Corps drafts occurred. They were losing a lot of men from “very

bloody battles” during the war. They drafted 100,000 men in late 1951. He had applied for a commission in the Navy before the draft, but it did not come through before he was drafted.

Hinks comments on his two years in the Marine Corps

He says the two years in the Marine Corps was a very valuable and humbling experience. “Everything in life is for a purpose, and I think that [being in the Marine Corps] turned out that way.”

Boot camp

Hinks was inducted into the Marine Corps in November of 1951. He went on an overnight train to Parris Island, South Carolina, for training. Hinks says there were a lot of men with him from New York who had also been drafted, and some of them were “mighty upset.” He says some did not make it through basic training. He says boot camp was a humbling experience where you learned very fast to be one of many and not stand out. “Don’t volunteer, don’t mess up, just do what they say and get it done.” For ten or twelve weeks it was vigorous training. They lost a lot of weight and got into great physical shape.

Induction ceremony

Even though Hinks had been drafted, he says that when the Marine Corps had the graduation ceremony and he marched to the marine hymn, he was very proud.

Hinks has the choice to go to Korea or Washington, D.C.

Hinks was given the option to go to officer’s training school and then Korea, or go to Washington, D.C. He chose to go to Washington, D.C. where he was an instructor in the Marine Corps Institute, a correspondent school of Marines. He taught high school English to women marines. They were not actually there; he graded their papers and such.

Hinks participates in ceremonial areas of the Marines

He says because he was in Washington, and six-feet tall and did not wear glasses yet, he was in very ceremonial areas of the Marines. He was stationed at “8 and I”, the Marine Corps barracks in Washington, D.C. Every Friday night, spring through fall, they had a parade at sundown. It was a very inspiring parade where the drum and bugle corps and the Marines marched. He was one of the marchers. Later on, Hinks and his wife took their two oldest kids to Washington and attended one of the parades. His children were very amazed that their father had been in the parade.

The Marines are in a movie

At this time, a movie was being made, “John Philip Sousa.” Sousa was the Marine Corps bandmaster. They used all of them in the movie. “My feet are in the movie. My mother always said she could tell my feet.” Later on, in Hinks’ Broadway theatrical career, he produced a show that was the music of John Philips Sousa.

Hinks did not want a military career

He did not think about making a career out of the military. It was a good experience, but I was ready to move on.”

Hinks pursues a master's degree

Hinks decided to pursue a master's degree. He went to Columbia University in New York. He went there for two years and got a master's degree in business, specializing in industrial relations. Several companies interviewed him in the industrial relations area.

Hinks becomes a partner in a building company

Hinks' older brother Jim was a lawyer at the time, and practiced in New York. Jim had a client who was a builder, Charles LaMonte. Hinks needed a job during graduate school, so he worked for Charles in his building operation. On weekends he sold houses and helped with the books. When he was ready for a job, Charlie asked him if he would like to be a partner with him. Jim was also a partner. Hinks decided to become a partner. The company was called LaMonte-Shimberg Corporation.

Hinks and Charlie come to Florida and use the same style house as they did in New York

They had a building company first in New York and then in Tampa. A typical house in the New York area was a split-level because the terrain was such that a split-level fit well into the sloping terrain. When they came to Tampa, even though it was flat land, they adapted the split-level to the flat land in Florida. Many of those were built in Town and Country. He says it gave the customer a lot of space for a good price.

Charlie and Hinks decide to come to Florida; Tampa appeals to them right away

In 1957, Charlie and Hinks came to look at Florida for possible building opportunities. Someone told them of an opportunity in Sarasota. They stayed at St. Armands Key in Sarasota. They looked at opportunities in Sarasota and Bradenton, but it did not seem to be something they wanted to pursue. They flew in and out of Tampa, and Tampa appealed to them right away because it was similar to a northern town. It was a business town, and it was just starting to grow. They went back to New York and both believed Florida looked like a land of opportunity. They decided to try and find something in Tampa, and they found what was to be their first project.

Hinks and Charlie's first project in Tampa

They bought land from the Foster brothers, who were also builders. It was a two-block radius in south Tampa. They built thirty homes. The building took place from 1957 to 1959. The project was near Britain Plaza.

Average price of a house in 1957

The average price for a house at that time was \$15,000.

Project in Town and Country and Jim Shimberg decides to move down

Charlie and Hinks bought land in Brandon in 1958, and started the Town and Country project in 1959. At this time, Jim decided to move to Tampa from New York.

Hinks describes Charlie LaMonte

Charlie was of Italian descent. He was a very good technical builder. Hinks' expertise was more in the marketing and selling area. They worked very well together. Jim joined them with his expertise in finance and law. "Charlie was a fairly rugged individual." But, he was involved with the art community in Tampa. The University of Tampa had a LaMonte gallery. Charlie and his wife had three children. Hinks says the Shimberg's and the LaMonte's were close families. In the mid sixties Charlie had a heat attack, but recovered. As the business grew larger, Charlie decided he could not take the strain and got out of business. Charlie continued to build on a small scale in Brandon.

Hinks comments on the building process now and then

In the early days, zoning was hard to deal with, and they had to go through zoning battles. "But as far as the governmental process, both city and county, it was much simpler and less regulated than it is today. It was less rigorous to get building permits and get projects done than it is today."

Hinks is involved with a building company and then a developing company

In his early career he was involved with a company that built houses. In his mid to later career Hinks' company developed land and then sold the land to builders.

Quality of houses now versus then

He thinks because of the competitive factor houses are probably built better today. Although with more regulations and environmental restrictions involved with building now, Hinks says that there is so much planning required now to build that the final product is better.

Number of houses they built in Town and Country

At the height of Town and Country they built 300 to 400 houses a year.

Why did Hinks and Charlie pick Town and Country to build houses?

He says Town and Country seemed like an area that would grow, and the price was right.

Hinks and Charlie decide to build in Brandon

"Brandon was extremely pretty." There were a lot of older trees. "In the early years you tried to save as many trees as possible." The land in Brandon was inexpensive. "You could build a quality project and make it look very pretty because of the natural terrain and trees, at a price that was affordable." Town and Country was more of a mass building. Hinks says Brandon has become mass building today. "Back then Brandon was the bedroom community of Tampa where you could go and get a very pretty lot, [and a] larger lot."

Lot sizes in Brandon versus south Tampa and Town and Country

The homes in Brandon were on 80 to 100 foot lots, whereas the lots in Town and Country and south Tampa were on 50 and 60 foot lots.

Price of various land in Tampa and the surrounding area

The modern equivalent of Town and Country is probably Westchase. Westchase land is much more expensive than Brandon land. The most expensive land is in South Tampa, then North Tampa, and then Northwest. The least expensive land is in Brandon.

Environmentally friendly while building

“We were more environmentally sensitive in those days than I think most other builders. We tried to save the trees, bend the sidewalks so that trees would stay.” He says now it has gone to the other extreme where non-humans are sometimes treated better than humans.

Give land for schools

In the early days they gave land for schools because they thought it was a win-win situation. If they build a school, then more people will want to live in the area.

Hinks' favorite development, of which he was a part

His favorite development is Town and Country. He says he has a lot of pride in that development because they took land that was a pasture and a dairy, and made it into a known area of Tampa. “That gives me, [and] us a great deal of pride.” Hinks also takes pride in areas he has developed more recently, especially a development in Brandon called Fish Hawk Trails, where Hinks says they did a fine job of saving the trees. He thinks it is a beautiful community

Where does Hinks see development in the Tampa area twenty-five years from now?

He thinks twenty-five years from now there will not be a lot of development in Hillsborough County. The county is built out in the North and Northwest. All of the building now is primarily in Pasco County. He says in twenty-five years much of the building will be occurring in Pasco, Polk, and Manatee.

Tampa's success

He believes the Tampa Bay area, because of its location, will continue to be a dominant metropolitan area of the U.S.

Major developers in Tampa

Hinks says in more modern times, there are many national builders who have come to Tampa, such as David Weekly. He says there are some local builders who continue to do an excellent job, such as Suarez Housing. They are big customers. Both Suarez brothers have different companies and both do a good job. Hinks' son Scott and his partner have a company called Hyde Park Building. They do an excellent job both in South Tampa and in Fish Hawk Trails. He says there are many builders who do a quality job, but he cannot mention them all.

Competition among builders

“The competition factor is so strong, and you have almost all of the national builders in the Tampa area that you have got to be strong in your product, otherwise you can't sell.”

Hinks develops a love for the theater and arts

Hinks' uncle was a major player in the New York Theater in the early century, and from the 1920s on. When Hinks' family moved to New York in 1941, Hinks developed a love for the theater as a young boy. Through his uncle's influence Hinks saw all the shows and met many theatrical people.

Hinks thought about having a career in the arts

He thought about making a career out of the arts. When Hinks was a sophomore in college, he wanted to quit school and go to work for his uncle Mark. Performing was not where he saw himself, but rather producing plays and being involved in the business side of things. His parents did not think that was a good idea, and they persuaded him to finish his education. "They were absolutely right. But, I never lost my love of the theater."

Later on, Hinks still has a love of the theater

His love of the theater has continued throughout his life. His wife also loves the theater. In later life he was able to continue seeing plays, and even produce plays in the New York area.

Hinks' vision of a performing arts center in Tampa

Hinks' love of the theater led to his involvement in helping to get a performing arts center in the Tampa Bay area.

Going from New York to Tampa, where there was no performing arts center

When he came to Tampa in 1957, having moved from New York, the cultural capital of the world, it was obvious to him that Tampa did not have much to offer in regards to the arts. Besides his business and his family, his two other passions are sports and arts. Tampa was not strong in either. Almost immediately he saw the lacking, and when the opportunity arose in the 1960s and later on, he wanted to be involved in those areas.

The steps that led to Hinks' involvement with planning a performing arts center in Tampa

He got involved with the Chamber of Congress, which back then, was the power structure of Tampa was the entity that made things happen. Hinks' friends encouraged him to get involved with the Chamber. Hinks got involved, headed up committees, and later on became president of the Tampa Chamber of Congress. Then he became the head of the Committee of One Hundred, which is the economic arm of the chamber and tries to bring companies to Tampa. Hinks' involvement with the Chamber and the various committees occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. Around this time, Tampa was growing, and his business was involved with that growth, so when the opportunity became available to get involved with the development of arts and sports, he took that opportunity.

How did the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center get the support needed to proceed with building?

One of the political objectives of the then candidate for mayor, Bob Martinez, was a performing arts center. A part of Martinez's platform was that he wanted to build a

performing arts center. There had been talk about building a center many years before Martinez. There had been false and failed attempts to put together a center. Martinez was elected. He then selected a group of people, headed by Hinks and several others, such as Louise Ferguson, to investigate the possibility of a performing arts center. This investigative committee was the group that started the ball rolling. "Once it was apparent that we were going to have the center, many other people got involved, who should receive credit." Louise Ferguson's husband was very instrumental in raising a great deal of the original money. J.H. Williams, who was the head of an oil company in Tampa, was very involved in the process as well.

Design plans and debates

Hinks says the design plans originated from the group who contracted with a firm to do a feasibility study on what Tampa should have as a performing arts center. Russell Johnson, whose firm was Artech, headed the group. Johnson's group did a study in the mid 80's, which said that Tampa is going to be a very major area. The group believed that from a performing arts standpoint Tampa needed a complex that would grow with the growth of the community. They suggested a several complex theater, which was bold at that point. Most people thought of one center as a performing arts complex. There was a lot of debate about the issue. Hinks and others wanted the several complex theater. They stood their ground, and with Bob Martinez's support, they made it happen.

Hinks comments on the success of the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center

He says it is the best complex south of Kennedy Center. It is actually looked at as one of the finest complexes in the U.S. People from all over come and look at the performing arts center. New York producers like to start their tours at the Tampa center.

Time and effort of those involved with the planning process

"We took a great deal of time and effort in planning that theater, once we agreed that the theater should be a multi-theater."

TECO's support

"TECO should be given a lot of credit. They have been tremendously supportive of the center."

Debate about raising money

Hinks says there was a lot of debate about how to raise money for the performing arts center. The first attempt to get the money was through a sales tax. "This was a penny for the good life." Hinks says the sales tax initiative "went down so badly. It was overwhelmingly defeated." Hinks says Bob Martinez deserves a lot of credit for stepping in and helping the situation. While mayor he was still committed to having a center. Martinez said the city will give x number of millions of dollars of bond, if the private sector will raise ten million dollars, which Hinks says later turned into twenty million. Martinez said the bonding would not take place until the private sector raised the money first. With a few phone calls, Chester Ferguson raised seven million dollars.

Hinks deserves a lot of credit for getting the performing arts center built

Hinks says if he takes credit for anything he takes credit for sticking to his guns so the performing arts center would be like it is today. He became the head of the technical committee, which was basically the committee to get the center built. He did not want the center to be scaled down to a one-theater complex.

Criticism during center's first few years of existence

There was criticism during the first few years of the center's existence because it was not a financial success. Hinks' says that is a normal occurrence. He says it usually takes about five years for a theater such as the Tampa center to come into its own. "We suffered some losses during the early years. There was a lot of flack, such as 'what did we need this for?' But, we stuck to it." Hinks says things really started improving, when after two heads of the theater, they were able to secure the current head, Judy Lisi, who was from the northeast. "She was the right person and she came in at the right time. Now everyone says how could we have ever done without the performing arts center. It is now part and parcel of the fabric of Tampa." He says everything that is really worthwhile goes through questions of "do we really need it?" He says USF and the Tampa airport went through the same questions and debates.

Hinks' love of sports

His father loved sports. When Hinks was young and lived in Kansas, his family traveled to Kansas City to see the Kansas City Blues baseball team, which was a Triple-A team and a Yankee franchise. When he moved to New York he was a big New York Yankees fan. He was always a football fan, both college and professional. "I have always loved sports from an early age just as I have loved theater."

Tampa sports life much different than New York's

When Hinks moved to Tampa there was not much in the way of sports in the area, just as there was not yet a theater.

First stadium in Tampa and Tampa gets a NFL team, the Buccaneers

Even before the Buccaneers, the NFL chose Tampa to be a site for a new NFL team. Tampa needed a stadium to even be in contention for anything. Hinks says credit for that first stadium belongs to many people including, Leonard and George Levy, Tom McEwen of *Tampa Tribune*, and Mayor Dick Greco. Hinks was not involved at that point, but was on the sidelines cheering. They got the stadium built for five to seven million dollars. Hinks says the actions of the men who helped get a stadium in Tampa "at least put us [Tampa] in the picture to be considered for future situations." The stadium held some exhibition and college games. UT had a good football team before the college phased it out. The framework was there and then Tampa got a NFL team, the Buccaneers, with the help of Hugh Culverhouse. Hugh did not need a new stadium at that time because there was already one in Tampa.

Hinks describes Hugh Culverhouse

"He was a Jekyll and Hyde situation." "He contributed generously to many causes." He was one of the million-dollar contributors to the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center. He

owned the Buccaneers. “I’m sure he wanted the football team to win. He didn’t necessarily know how to have the football team win, namely to turn it over to football people to run it. I think he stayed so involved in the running of the team, that maybe in the long run, that hurt it.” He bought the team for thirteen million dollars and sold it for 192 million dollars. Hinks says had Hugh lived and not gotten a new stadium he would have moved some place where he could have gotten one.

Baseball in Tampa

Hinks says people were always pushing for a baseball team in Tampa.

Hinks comments on Tropicana Field

He believes baseball would have been more successful if it had built a stadium in Tampa. He also sees baseball as an open-air sport.

Legends Field

He thinks Legends Field is a beautiful field. When George Steinbrenner asked to have Legends Field built, Hinks was chairman of the Tampa Sports Authority. He thinks Legends Field is very important to the Tampa area and is the finest spring-training field in the U.S. “The amount that was spent on it in the end it all pays off.” Legends Field was not that controversial.

Sports Authority’s relationship with the city and county

Fiscally, Sports Authority is totally dependent on the city and the county. Any deficits it runs, the county makes up two-thirds, and the city makes up one-third. Politically, Sports Authority can only do what the powers in the city and the county want them to do.

Building Raymond James Stadium with sales tax revenue

Hinks was a very strong supporter of building the stadium and a strong supporter of the sales tax. Hinks says they went through a lot of attempts to get the money in different ways, all of which failed. The sales tax was the last possible way to get the money. “The question was how do you present it to the public. How do you have a chance to win a sales tax election?”

Hinks’ involvement with new stadium and working with the Bucs to get the team to stay in Tampa

He first got involved with the building of a new stadium when he was the football representative of Sports Authority. When the Glaziers bought the Bucs, they made it a point that they wanted a new stadium, and that staying in Tampa was going to be conditioned on a new stadium. Mayor Dick Greco, County Administrator Dan Gleeman, and Hinks were involved in negotiations for a new lease with the Bucs to keep them in Tampa. Sessions with the key negotiators occurred in Hinks’ conference room. He says at one point it really looked like the Bucs were going to leave Tampa. Rich McKay always wanted the team to stay in Tampa. Hinks remembers calling Dan and saying, “We have got to work this out; we all want the same thing.” They did work it out. Hinks says the Bucs, McKay, and the Glaziers really wanted to stay in Tampa, but in order to do so they needed a new stadium. In regards to the Bucs staying in Tampa Hinks says, “It

has worked out extremely well for them financially, and I think it has worked out well for the community.”

Concept of a sales tax benefiting schools, roads and a new stadium

The idea came primarily from a successful tax in Cincinnati. Hinks and others found out from the NFL what cities had been successful at a sales tax, whose revenue would pay for the cost of a new stadium, roads, and schools. Cincinnati had been successful when it tied those things together. Hinks says it then became obvious that the Tampa sales tax should model the Cincinnati one. The idea appealed to Dan Gleeman and Dick Greco. The schools were in desperate need of money, and the infrastructure was in desperate need of money. They realized that tying schools, roads, and a new stadium together and spending a small amount of the tax revenue on the stadium was the way to get the public to vote for a sales tax. Hinks and others brought in a political consultant from Texas who conducted focus groups. Hinks says people that may have been against the stadium, but were for the other things, voted for the tax. Fifty-three percent voted yes and forty-seven percent voted no.

Benefits of having a NFL team in Tampa

“Tampa is a much better community because it has an NFL team.” Hinks says there are many benefits that come from having an NFL team, such as companies being more interested in the Tampa Bay area, which is very important in the overall community. “You are either a major-league city, or you’re not. We are truly a major league city in sports, culture, transportation, and university, in the areas that are truly needed.”

NBA in Tampa

No one stepped forward in Tampa to get the (Orlando) Magic here. There was no effort. “Sports is an unusual situation. People stretch their dollars. I would love to see an NBA team in Tampa. I believe it could do well.”

Hinks’ commitment to progress at USF, instrumental in fine arts programs

Hinks and his wife’s first involvement with USF was in the theater department. They helped to create the Brit program, a British international theater program. Hinks had done some producing and investing in the London Theater, and met a leading producer who retired in the early 1990s. Hinks talked to the then president of USF, Frank Borkowski, about setting up a program where British artists, directors, writers, and actors would come to USF once a year and work with the theater students. President Borkowski thought it was a good idea, so they set it up. “It has been a very successful program. And I think it has helped the theater department at USF to become quite nationally prominent.”

Why is Hinks involved with USF?

He believes USF is the prime catalyst for growth and economic development in the Tampa Bay area. “There is no great area of the country that has become a great area without having been involved with a major university.” He believes that USF is an integral part of the community and the growth of the community.

Hinks is chairman of a capital campaign at USF

Many were involved in a capital campaign to raise money for USF, including Hugh Culverhouse. President Castor asked Hinks to head up the capital campaign. He said yes. It was set to be a 220 million dollar campaign. In 2000, the campaign had six months left and they had raised 230 million dollars. Hinks says there are an enormous number of people who have been involved in this.

What are the elements of a successful campaign?

Hinks says it is important to have a staff that works hard and puts it together and makes it happen. "Without that you won't succeed." Hinks says the USF staff, including Vicky Mitchell and Kathy Stafford, did a fine job. Hinks says then it is important to recruit the lay people to dedicate their time. Hinks and Gus Stavros were two such people who worked on the campaign.

What will Hinks do in the future?

"I'm sure I will continue working for USF." He continues and will continue to work for the Tampa Bay Performing Arts center. He continues to enjoy his afternoon of sports at the stadium. "I will continue doing development work, which I think will slow down in the next few years."

Importance of family to Hinks

"I certainly enjoy my family. I have a wonderful wife, five children, seven grandchildren, and two on the way."

Importance of sports at USF

He is a big supporter of sports at USF. "The basketball team is right up there in the national picture. And the football team is becoming such. I believe sports is a major part of the university. With a successful sports program it makes the university work better."

End of Interview