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Grace Allen oral history interview by Peter Klingman, July 16, 1999

Grace Allen (Interviewee)

Peter D. Klingman (Interviewer)

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ORAL INTERVIEW - GRACE ALLEN 7/16/99

Interviewer: Dr. Peter Klingman

PK: Good afternoon. I'm Peter Klingman, the Mildred & Doyle Carlton curator for the University of South Florida's Oral History Program that is housed in the Library here at the University. And, we're going to do an interview this afternoon with one of the University's most special people. She is, in fact, Grace Allen, who was the first First Lady of the University of South Florida and we're going to be talking about her work and her husband's work, who was John Allen who was the first President at the University. Good afternoon, Mrs. Allen.

GA: Good afternoon.

PK: Well, I'm going to start with the place we always begin oral history interviews. Let's talk about Grace Allen. Where did you grow up, and how, and family life, and things of that sort.

GA: Well, I was born in the cold country. In North Dakota. But then my family had the good sense to move to California where I spent early years. And, then we moved west again and I went to the University of Minnesota where I met John Allen and our married life took us to various places. We went to New York State and were there for several years and then we came to Florida with Dr. Miller who was President of

the University of Florida and John was the Executive vice-president of the University.

PK: Well, I know how many people are going to be watching this tape in years to come are going to want to know an awful lot about you and John Allen and, I want to walk back through some of the things you just did. What was it like growing up in North Dakota and what did your parents do and did you have brothers and sisters?

GA: I had two sisters. They were younger than I and my father was a minister so we moved several times and each move was very difficult because we had made friends but, then when we moved to a new place we made friends again. And, that was always a happy place. And, one of the things we were taught was you be content with the State that you're in. So, the moving from one place to another probably was not as hard for me as it is for someone who lived in one house for 40 years say.

PK: I understand that. When you went to the University of Minnesota, before we talk about meeting your husband-to-be at that point, what did you plan on doing with a career or major field or ...

GA: Well, of course, the thing to do in those days was to think of teaching and that was not obnoxious to me in any way. That appealed and my major was English and so, fortunately,

when I did teach I taught in high school and taught English.

PK: And, where did you teach?

GA: I taught in a town just outside of Minneapolis.

PK: Describe that. How many years did you do that? What kind of students did you have?

GA: In that time it was depression time and the school in which I taught instead of lowering salaries and increasing the student body, they did it the other way. They increased the number of students so each teacher was overloaded with .. I had an English class of 50, for instance. So, it was difficult with the wide range of students from top A to those that were having a difficult time. So, I had to devise ways to occupy the time of the very clever ones and so it was sort of different type of teaching that you would ordinarily do.

PK: Well, let's talk about that. What did you do? And, what kinds of things did you do for them?

GA: I had to work out special arrangements with the principal of the school for these two students to be out of class, for instance, and take extra work out of class, extra reading and extra writing and that kind of thing. But, it was brought into their classroom efforts and graded too. That outside work counted in their grades.

PK: What grade were you teaching?

GA: At that level it was juniors.

PK: Juniors in high school.

GA: Yes.

PK: And, this would have been in the early 1930's, during the depression?

GA: Yes.

PK: Were these rural families or small town families, what was the environment?

GA: Well, they were small town and then students brought in from the countryside too, that were bussed in.

PK: How did .. how did the time .. I mean, it's hard to look back and try to remember being young and doing that in some ways, but if you were reading your own history forward from your growing up years, did it strike you that you were in the middle of a depression as a teacher? Or, did you talk to your students about it?

GA: Yes, you were very aware of it because everybody was in the same boat that you were. It was so widespread and I lived in the territory, for instance, when the request was everybody bring in his gold. And, farmers from the community brought in tin cans that had been buried and their gold coins were there and the bankers had to brush all the dirt off of the coins. So, everybody was aware of the need. It was nothing new.

PK: It's interesting because I remember some folks that I have interviewed before and felt about the depression years always said I didn't know the depression happened because we had always been poor.

GA: Well, we never thought of ourselves as being poor.

PK: People helped each other in a different way and the students, I assume, behaved differently.

GA: Well, you did what you had to do and everybody else did to, so we didn't think we were poor.

PK: Okay. Well, let's change one quick subject here. Was Grace Allen a good teacher, bad teacher, but, more importantly, was she a hard teacher or an easy teacher?

GA: Well, I think I was a .. discipline was an important part and I don't know about whether I was good or not, but we had to get our students through the New York Regent's exams and mine always came through.

PK: Well, I personally can appreciate that because I graduated from high school in New York. I know all about those exams.

GA: Oh, yes, you know the Regent's exams.

PK: And, that's very good. So, you met John Allen. How?

GA: Well, as I told you once before, he was a Quaker and my college roommate was engaged to the son of John's professor. And, they were all Quakers. So, that's how I met John.

PK: This was in Minneapolis.

GA: Minnesota.

PK: Minnesota. Was there a large Quaker community there? How did John Allen arrive there?

GA: Because of this teacher who had been at Erlum where John was an undergraduate and that is Quaker supported. And, so John was studying astronomy under this professor. So, the professor brought him to the University of Minnesota.

PK: So tell me the first time you saw your husband-to-be.

GA: That's for me. He was tall, he was handsome, he would be taller than I was and he was very pleasant. And, of course, my roommate and her husband-to-be were good friends of John so we had excellent times together.

PK: What kinds of things did young people do dating, if that's the right word or spending time, back then? Because you met him very early on.

GA: John was an exception because, as I said, he was working on his Masters Degree in Astronomy so I would look out the window at night and if it was cloudy I went to the library. If it was a clear night I had a date.

PK: That's neat. I like that. And, when you and your husband got married. Was it a big wedding, family wedding, and where did you do that?

GA: It was a big wedding and my father performed the ceremony.

PK: Oh, how nice.

GA: So, there were a lot of people there and that was in my home town. My family were living in Minnesota then.

PK: Neat. And, did you get to go on a honeymoon or .. and, where did you go?

GA: Honeymoon involved moving from Minnesota to New York State.

PK: Ah, and where in New York? For the first job?

GA: Ah ha. He was .. he taught at Colgate University and we were there about ten years.

PK: And, that would have been what years to what years?

GA: I'm not much good on dates but, from '33 for the next .. about '43 when we went to Albany.

PK: So, you were in New York and your husband was teaching and were you teaching too in New York?

GA: No, I was not.

PK: You were not teaching.

GA: I substituted a few times and that .. they were always surprised when they had to call on a substitute. The school was well staffed.

PK: In that day. And, that would have been during the World War II period that you would have been ..

GA: And especially into Albany days.

PK: How did you .. or how do you remember coping with the war .. you and your husband back then?

GA: Of course, John was a Quaker so he would have been a

conscientious objector, but he was never faced with that because he was always teaching navigation and in Albany he was helping getting the colleges started for the GIs and so those years were active years and we commuted a great deal from Albany to Colgate because John taught at Colgate in the weekends and then was in the office in Albany during the five days. So, it was active that way.

PK: How did he .. that's a long commute. I mean, that's ..

GA: Yes, it was, but cold. Very cold.

PK: That's not a small commute between where Colgate is and the state capitol of New York State. How did your husband get interested in astronomy? Did he ever tell you or do you know? I mean, why of all the science subjects and I know that was his background, but, why astronomy? What appealed to him?

GA: Well, he used to say that people asked him that and it finally dawned on him that in the evenings his father used to take him out in the yard and they would lie on the grass and his father would tell him point out the constellations and the stars and tell him stories about the stars. And, he said he realized that's how he became interested in astronomy.

PK: And, how does an astronomer get to be a college president? I guess what I mean is, how did he get interested or

involved first in administrations kinds of activities?

GA: Well, he realized that astronomy was his first love, but he realized too that an astronomer often had to go up on an observatory and stay there three weeks, come home a few days and go back up to the observatory. And, he just decided he didn't want that kind of a life and administration and that sort of thing had appealed to him anyway. So, he was able at NYU to combine his work in astronomy with an administration degree, so he got his Doctors Degree at NYU.

PK: What was his first job? What did he do in his first administrative job?

GA: That was still when he was at Colgate and he became Head of the Physical Sciences and then he became Dean of the freshman.

PK: Wow, that's a good first administrative job, to have to take care of all the freshmen.

GA: Yes, that's right.

PK: And, he liked it, I assume?

GA: Very much, very much.

PK: When the .. when the time came to leave New York and I assume it came as a result of an opportunity for professional advancement. Is that something that you had talked about with your husband that we were going to .. I recognize you were able to move and used to moving, but is

that a part of what you had planned on in your married life that would be happening if he went into administration?

GA: Well, you just know that education is a roving profession, but, in Albany John was a colleague of Dr. Miller. J. Hillis Miller and he was appointed President of the University of Florida. So, when he went to Gainesville he immediately wrote to John and asked him if he would come as his Executive Vice President and there was just no question in our minds, that was an interesting job. And, not only that, we were glad to get back on a campus where there were students. Our sojourn in Albany had been purely administrative in the big old education building and so the opportunity to go back on a campus was very appealing. We just took that right away.

PK: Gainesville today, I guess, I think, is the largest University. USF being the second largest in the state. What did Gainesville look like in 1940-whatever, '43, '44?

GA: It was a very appealing place. It was a very happy sojourn at the University of Florida. It was expanding. It was an exciting time to be there. The students, it had just gone coed, so students were pouring in. The GI's were coming in. There were advancements in education. It was an exciting time. It was a very happy sojourn there. We had a good time.

PK: And, what did you do in Gainesville?

GA: Probably what I did here. I helped with getting to know people. Entertaining faculty and the sort of thing that .. it was not .. I didn't teach, but always aware of faculty and connections with them and that sort of thing.

PK: I went to Gainesville at the University of Florida as a student in the 1960's, so you're talking about having been there for a good 20 years before that.

GA: After our time.

PK: Gainesville must have been a very small town and ..

GA: It was an attractive small town. Its smallness was part of its appeal. And, so that you knew not only the people connected with the University, but, you knew the town's people which was a very happy arrangement.

PK: And, Dr. Miller, I had certainly always understood that J. Hillis Miller was an excellent president and a man of great vision. Did your husband ever talk or comment about what he thought he learned from Dr. Miller.

GA: I don't know that he ever did. Their association was very close and they had conferences practically every day, so I'm sure he learned a great deal. Though he never spelled it out in so many words. But, I think probably what he learned there, I know, was transferred here, so that when we came here he was ready with ideas of what a college or University

should be, what it should contain.

PK: Okay. So, you were in Gainesville from 1943 ..

GA: 1946 about to 1957.

PK: To 1957. And, in 1957 Dr. and Mrs. Allen are going to come to what will be the University of South Florida and I assume that you've got some very strong memories of what that first impression of this campus was when you saw it. Can you tell us about that?

GA: Well, of course, the decision to come here, at that time, John had three different offers of presidencies and they each were appealing. And, I was drawn to go home to New York. I thought we'd have all the advantages and so on of the city. But, John would say, but if I went to Tampa I would do thus and so. So, after several comments like that I said, John why don't we just pack up and go to Tampa. So, that's what we did. And, of course, when we came here, we were .. no one else. We were it. And, so we were shown the campus which was a vast emptiness and no place to have an office until the Courthouse opened up a space and John could set up with a desk and a telephone and a pencil.

PK: So, his first office was, in fact, downtown Tampa.

GA: In the Courthouse.

PK: In the Courthouse, the old Courthouse.

GA: Yes.

PK: Ah, interesting. How did John Allen become appointed to be President, the first President, the founding President?

GA: Well, as far as I know, the talk was going around that there would be a new University established somewhere. And, so, the Board of Controllers, it was called then, several members came to John and said we think there will be a new University and we want you to hold yourself in readiness if that opportunity should come along. So, with that, he had opportunity to think about the job and so on. So, when it was finally determined that there would be a University, then the Board agreed and he was asked to become president.

There was no alumni to consult or student body. So, it was fairly simple.

PK: Not a big interview process in that case.

GA: No, none at all.

PK: No round of meetings with the local community folks. It happened. Do you have a sense of or can you help us try to remember what it was like for you and your husband .. do you have a sense of how exciting it was for him and for you?

GA: Oh yes.

PK: Can you tell us about that?

GA: Because it was a new adventure. It was .. you were ground breaking all the time and, of course, it was the only University in this century to be planned as such from the

ground up. And, as somebody said that the University of Chicago they asked Harper how long it took and he said a hundred years. But, of course, we had a University up and going in a much shorter time than that. So, there was .. each day was a new day and the buildings were going up and others were on the planning boards so that it was .. you saw your work come out of the ground. It was usually just teaching. You hoped to see your students profit and benefit maybe in the future. But, at this adventure we really saw the efforts come to life.

PK: Well, let's talk about the very first days of you and your husband being here and the kinds of things you did and the experiences and how you felt about .. you told me the other day in preparation for this interview that your husband had come here for a few days or earlier than you and had already been here when he brought you here. So, here is Fowler Avenue which today, in 1999, is loaded as a six or eight lane highway from one end to the other. And, this campus is lush and beautiful. But, somehow that's not what you first saw.

GA: No.

PK: So, why don't you tell us what you first saw.

GA: No, it wasn't. Of course, Fowler was just a road with a rut. Sandy road with two ruts. We didn't dare stop for

fear of being mired down in the sand. And, the campus, of course, was just a wilderness of sand spurs and palmettos and pine trees. There were pine trees. So, as we crept along Fowler Avenue, John waved his hand to the campus and he said this is it. And, of course, he always claimed, I don't know, but he said my response was is that what we're coming to. But, it didn't stay that way very long because pretty soon .. and he never had any qualms but what there would be buildings and faculty and students. He never had any hesitation that that would come to fulfillment.

PK: Well, getting from palmetto and sandy Fowler road to even the first buildings and students had to be quite a chore. Where did you and your husband live when you first were here?

GA: When we first came here we bought a house in Beach Park and we lived down on Neptune Way. And, we lived there until the first buildings appeared on the campus and we found we were driving back and forth on Dale Mabry so many times and Carrollwood was opening up. So, we were able to buy a lot in Carrollwood and build a house there which served as our house all the time that John and I were at the University. And, it was a very happy place to live. So, and, the house was very .. not spacious in any way, but it was designed so I could handle quite a few people at one time and it worked

very nicely for us.

PK: And, that's .. that's a part of being a president's wife isn't it? That need to be handling a few people in entertainment and connections and community and introduce yourself. I mean, the idea of the University may have been appealing to everybody, but you two were new in Tampa so there had to be a lot of people that wanted to meet you and that you wanted to meet.

GA: Well, that was one of the things we felt we needed to do was to get people introduced to the University. John had to be his own PR man and he spoke, I think, at every civic club in the town and I often spoke to. And, then I joined women's groups that I would get to know townspeople like AUW, and the League of Women Voters, and that sort of thing. And, when we had buildings on the campus then I had a reception in every single building so people would come out and get to know the campus and what was being offered. And, I was able to have dinners because we had a dining room where I could entertain. It didn't have equipment in it, but I could invite people to dinner and then take them over to the theater because our drama department was strong right from the beginning and I was proud of what we had to offer. So, we could take people and they enjoyed the theater. And, that was another way that they .. that we got acquainted

with people in town. And, they were supportive so they were glad to come.

PK: Well, it's a dinner theater. What a wonderful idea.

GA: Yes, it helped. It really did in that people learned after a while when I said dinner was at 6 o'clock, that was it because if we were going to the theater the curtain rose at 8 and we had to be in our seats.

PK: Sure.

GA: But, after they learned, they got there on time.

PK: You tell a great story about the naming of the University. Let's talk about this great University got it's name, the University of South Florida.

GA: Well, the naming appealed to a good many people. It appealed to the townspeople and then, of course, we were ridiculed for being so close to the brewery, the Budweiser Brewery, but Sunshine U and Panama University and University of Tampa and all sorts of names. And, finally John was very anxious though that the word University be in the name because he wanted it known that this was not just undergraduate, but it was going to be a University with professional schools and a graduate school. So, the name University was very important. And, the fact that it became the University of South Florida, there was no school south of us and, then Governor Collins was convinced that since he

was an Episcopalian, this was in the Southern Diocese of the Episcopal Church. So, he agreed and passed the final vote that this was the University of South Florida.

PK: And, I'm sure like a lot of newcomers to the state, I wondered why Tampa got to be called the University of South Florida.

GA: That's the way.

PK: That's how it happened and I think that's a great story. You did tell me one other thing. That there was an actual contest, a naming contest.

GA: There was.

PK: And, who did that and how did that happen?

GA: The paper instigated that.

PK: The Tampa Tribune.

GA: The Tribune. And, of course the names poured in. All sorts of names. And, I began to get very worried because at one point somebody suggested McCall University, named after Mary Coles. That's the Governor's great-grandfather, I think, who was territorial governor.

PK: Right, Richard Keith Call.

GA: But, then they told me that Tampa had an area of the campus had been the red light district for Temple Terrace and I didn't want to be the one who was going to be the head of the call girls from Temple Terrace.

PK: Oh my.

GA: So, that's the one time I objected very strenuously to a name.

PK: That's an interesting story. I've never heard that. I like that. That's neat. Governor Collins. Your husband had to work very closely with him in getting all this started. What do you remember about Leroy Collins.

GA: I remember him with great affection and fondness. And, he was challenged by the idea of a new University so he was more interested than I think a political officer would be. And, he gave great support. For instance, in the building when we started building, he was the one who chose the color .. the buff color brick. And, there was a member of the Board who insisted you don't have a University unless it's red brick. And, so .. but Collins vetoed that and said no, we want it to look like Florida and so he made the decision to have all the buildings in the same color. Which, I think, has been attractive over the years.

PK: I do too. The .. the original planning for the University, if I .. I have this image and it's probably not quite accurate and hopefully you'll correct it, but it may not be too far from the truth. And, that is here comes your husband and this vacant piece of ground. There's no staff. There's not much in the way of a plan except in John

Allen's head. And, out of that you have to transfer that to something on a piece of paper. A design, a publication, whatever. How did all the planning start and who did he work with?

GA: Well, it did start with a piece of paper. As I mentioned, we stayed in the old Floridian Hotel and one evening John invited Jefferson Hamilton who was on the staff of the University of Florida in the Architectural School and also, with a specialty of campus planner. So, he invited him to come down here and one evening Mr. Hamilton set up his easel in our room and with that they sketched the plan. That is, they laid out the areas for the medical school. The areas where the sciences would go. Where social sciences would be. Where the playing fields would be. And, they sketched this on a pad in different colors with colored pencil. And, for me the campus just really came alive. I could see what was going to be on those empty acres out there. And, that plan has been followed pretty steadily. For instance, another thing that was included was the big open space in the center of the campus and the roads were planned on the periphery so the main campus and the interior would be a quiet area with no autos or cars or motorcycles interrupting a class discussion for instance. So, those .. that plan was pretty much adhered to over the years. And, of course, the

students objected because buildings were far apart not realizing that you had to leave space for buildings in the future that would be related. So, that .. they objected to having to walk so far.

PK: What happened to that first piece of paper that your husband and Mr. Hamilton worked on?

GA: I really don't know, but I think it's in the library archives, but I've never asked anybody. So, I really don't know.

PK: Well, I hope we have it. In .. then I think we'll pass over the difference between planning a campus in one evening with a friend and a colleague and planning a campus and the way we would do that today which would take years and years.

GA: We had no time. We didn't have that time.

PK: And, that's the point I'm getting at. It seems as though this was an opportunity a little different than most and that is that basically your husband was charged to actually take it out of the ground as fast as possible.

GA: Yes, because the need was so tremendous. The studies beforehand had indicated that the people here were in need of a University and so we were aware always of the need for students to get into college. And, so, but the first year the Ford Foundation gave John and me a grant and we traveled all over the country and we looked at buildings and we

looked at programs and interviewed prospective staff and so that way we were able to get faculty lined up before we opened or at least people who came as deans. For instance, Russell Cooper was from the University of Minnesota and we went to see him in his office and he got up and shook hands with John and he said I've been waiting for you.

PK: Wow.

GA: Because the announcement of the University had been in papers all over the country so when we arrived at various universities we were not unknown. And, as you know, Dean Cooper came and joined us and was one of the early ones in on the planning.

PK: And, who else came as a result of that year travel on the Ford Foundation Grant?

GA: Well, then John knew Sidney French. He was at Rollins then so he came and was an important part in the planning of the Fine Arts. Mayhew who came from Michigan State and the other names I just can't tell right off the top of my head. Mr. Spain came as Registrar. And, we had others, oh, Pat Beecher came as head of Fine Arts and he came from the University of Florida. And, fortunately he was well aware of people in the field. So, he brought in strong people and we had, as I said before, a strong drama department and a strong music department. So, those people came on early and

were part of the planning, besides counselors that were invited in.

PK: Counselors?

GA: Well, various other universities, or the man from Reeves who came from Michigan State and was counselor stayed as an advisor for a few days and so on.

PK: Today, if we were people watching this tape were thinking about college presidents including our own, Betty Castor, we would think about presidents as having lots of public functions like fund-raising and speech making and working with the legislature and working with community groups. But, we wouldn't probably think about presidents themselves as being architects and detailed design planners if you will. But, your husband was that to some degree wasn't he?

GA: He was because there was nobody else.

PK: Nobody else to do it.

GA: You just had to, for instance, when he decided to accept the presidency he pulled out a big yellow sheet of paper and there scratched down what he would have at the University. What would be in the planning, the colleges and so on. You just had to. There was nobody else.

PK: I read in the research that we did preparing for this interview that your husband had some very strong feelings about curriculum and what students ought to know and was

clear in his own sense about what this University could be. What were some of his basic thoughts about teaching and education for students.

GA: Well, he believed in the first place that freshman should have the best teachers on the campus. That graduate students would have reached a place where they could work things out for themselves. But, freshman needed good teachers. He believed also, that each person should have a liberal arts background. That he should learn, be able to speak. You should be able to understand this government. Take responsibilities for it and then determine what his specialty should be. But, he felt definitely that a liberal arts background was essential no matter what your field was going to be. That you had to have those tools before you could be an engineer for instance. Or before you could go before a group and sell your ideas and so he was real concerned that there be a basic curriculum. And, in the beginning we had what was called the basic college and that got changed over the years, but the idea was to have this basic education before you specialized.

PK: And, today we all that general education requirements.

GA: Yes, right, right. And, I think we're swinging more in that direction if I read correctly changes in college.

PK: When I was at Gainesville as a freshman there was something

called the University College and we were called comprehensive courses.

GA: Yes. Dr. Little.

PK: Then Dr. Little. Is that format of what we as freshman at the University of Florida in the 1960's would have called a C-course or Comprehensive Course and they had them in the biological sciences and you had to take them in order to complete this .. is that the format that Dr. Allen was working with?

GA: Pretty much so. But, it had also been had at Colgate. They worked out the same idea where there were survey, as they called them then, survey courses in physical sciences, social sciences, fine arts, humanities and so on. So, that he had worked that in his first teaching job with that basic idea that it was important to him.

PK: Well, let's go back to that sketch for a minute that was done in the room. In terms of what the basic courses were and where the different colleges were going to be, how did the two of them decide in an evening that I'll put the College of Medicine in this corner or I'll put the English Department in that corner? Were you there in that room when they were doing that?

GA: Yes, I was. I can't remember just how they did that but, I know they felt that they would plan a program first and then

they would design a building to put over it. They didn't design a building and then try to fit chemistry into it, for instance. They had chemistry in mind and then when they had chemistry they needed biology and so they built biology first because other sciences could be put in there. And, so with each program they decided that's the important thing. The shell is less important. So, they began clustering buildings, for instance, the biology building would eventually need chemistry nearby. And, then would need physics and so on. So, that's how they clustered those buildings. And, then along with the sciences, medicine needed to be by it so that built in a space for medicine. And, then, the same thing when they laid out the playing fields, they put that at the other end of the campus where there could be room for playing tennis courts and swimming pools and so on.

PK: Well, before we talk about tennis courts and swimming pools, there's one building we haven't talked about that clearly is a centerpiece in the campus must have been a testimony to your husband's sense of the importance of it and that's the library.

GA: Well, he felt that the library was the most important building on the campus. And, so, that was first thing was put right in the center of the campus and, at that time, it

was the highest building on the campus. And, it was built with special care because the dirt was excavated. The hole was filled with what they call grout, I guess, and was vibrated and then a grid was put over it, more concrete poured, vibrated, finally they put on that hole the weight of the building and the books so that the library was well built, sturdily built, and was really the most important building on campus. And, the librarian was the first appointment.

PK: There would be some people who would ask, so I'm going to ask, why and if in the planning of the campus your husband didn't consider football, for example. In 1999, the USF Bulls are alive and well in their infancy of a couple of years and the question is where were they in the planning stage of your husband's thought process?

GA: Well, John didn't consider football for several reasons. One was that when we had our appropriation we were given a certain amount of money and that was to build and staff. And, then Florida suffered a disastrous freeze and so our budget was cut drastically. We still had to have the same buildings and the same teachers. So, obviously, there was no room for anything like football. And, so, such an expensive sport and John was interested in having students, as many students as could participate in sports.

Intramural, intercollegiate and so we had, as I say, the swimming pools and the playing fields, soccer team and a track team and basketball team. But, he was anxious that everyone .. as many as could participate in sports. The golf course was built and, as I say, he used to say support .. get a pro team and we'll come and cheer for you.

PK: And that opportunity existed.

GA: Yes.

PK: Tell me about the golf course and why that happened?

GA: I really don't know except that the land was available.

Because we were given the big piece of land along Fletcher and so that nearby became available and it was a sport that John felt was a carry over. That anybody who played it could play for almost the rest of his life. So, they called in consultants and the golf course was planned and laid out.

PK: Let's talk a minute about the first First Lady, as opposed to the first President. Let's talk about the first First Lady, that's you. You have a remarkable place in the history of this University because you are, in fact, that. What was that like? What did it mean to you?

GA: Well, it was exciting, of course. And, I was very fortunate in that John was sharing and, so, I could enjoy the excitement and the adventure. We discussed things and so, I always felt that I was a part of the University of South

Florida. And, that not .. I was here to serve it just as he was and so, it was a thing that I just gladly did and enjoyed it very much. My contacts were always happy ones. I made very good friends and had the feeling that people in town cared about the University. So that my .. my days as a President's wife couldn't have been more pleasant.

PK: You know, it's interesting when you say that, and I'm sure you're 100% right that people in Tampa cared about the University, but still, back then, the University was a long way away from what .. physically a long way away from where most people were living in Tampa.

GA: Yes, they did feel that when they were invited out to the University, of course, there was no interstate at that time.

PK: Yeah, dinner at six meant you had to leave a little earlier than you might leave now.

GA: And, they felt they were going way out to the country, but, as things developed here and they began to go to the University and appreciate what it had, as I say, in the drama and the music, I think it still was a long way away, but they came and I think, as I said, I had a reception in every building when it opened and the people came to those. So, I think they were interested in what was going on out here.

PK: The receptions that you had in every building, how did you

get those managed. I mean, those are not buildings unless you're dealing with the Marshall Center today. Those aren't buildings equipped and designed to hold receptions.

GA: Well, I had to go to friends in town that I had made. I had joined the Garden Club and they were very cooperative. When I had a reception or a dinner I could call on them to make the flower arrangements, for instance. And, they would be spectacular. And, then, as I said, people were willing to come and there was not much equipment in the President's Dining Room. I had \$5.00 a month for flowers.

PK: Oh, that much.

GA: That much. And, I had to bring my own table linen and dinnerware and that kind of thing. But, then the dietitian was very cooperative. We had Morrisons within .. working with the cafeteria and the dietitian that I worked with went way beyond the call of duty to make our dinners nice and tasty and she was a big help.

PK: And, what was her name, do you remember?

GA: I know very well and I can't tell .. say it right off the top of my head. And, I do know and it'll come to me later.

PK: That's okay. While the campus is growing out of the ground, is Fowler Avenue growing out of the ground and what's happening around the campus that you and your husband encouraged with the growth of the University.

GA: The very first thing was the restaurant because there were no eating places out here and that was a handy spot for faculty to go to pick up a lunch, have discussion groups, and so on. And, that was the first building and then other's followed very quickly.

PK: Where was the first restaurant located? Do you remember? Was it a long way from where we are now?

GA: No, it was not. It was Scaglioni's Restaurant and I don't know what's right on the spot now to tell you the truth. But, it was not a long ways away.

PK: That's okay. Well, there's been one or two restaurants added in the years since.

GA: Oh, many, many.

PK: To say the least. The first First Lady role matched up with, it seems to me, with your own personal wonderful qualities of caring about people and liking to share. What kind of advice would you give, if you had to, and I'm sure you wouldn't want to necessarily, but what kind of advice or learning lessons did that experience .. if you had to give that advice to somebody's incoming president's, first time First Lady of a campus, what would you tell her were the most important things a First Lady, as the wife of a President of a major University to know, do, believe, value?

GA: Enjoy what you're doing. Be a part of the University. That

is, for a president's wife, she must be a part of the University and she must care about it. And, I did. I cared deeply and I think that's been true of every president's wife we've had here. They've been fortunate and they've been very caring of the University and it's programs and it's students. And, so I think that would be the most important thing you could do.

PK: And, there were some concrete examples or illustrations of your caring in these early days of the University and I'm thinking of a couple of things. So, we'll sort of take them one at a time. Let's talk about the fact that you established a Women's Club here at the University, which, still by today for our viewers should know exists and they're still awarding scholarships.

GA: Yes, and I'm very proud of that. I'm proud of that that it still exists and that they care to keep it going and be active. But, the reason I did it was that I knew everybody coming here was new. No one knew anybody else and there was no contact. So, having a Women's Club, we reached all the wives who came and so they didn't learn just the people in their department, but they learned to know everyone else who was scared. And, so, we just started that right at the beginning and the women who were here came to my home and we talked about what a University women's club would be like

and what it could do and those who were there volunteered various jobs. One said I'll be treasurer and another said I'll be secretary and somebody said I'll send out the notices and I volunteered that I would be Chairman for a year until we had a constitution. And, the first president then could be elected under a real constitution. So, that's the way we got started.

PK: And, who was in the we? Who was there besides Grace Allen?

GA: You mean in the Women's Club?

PK: Yes, ma'am.

GA: Well, all .. any .. everybody who came as a part of the staff and each .. they were all members of the Women's Club. And, when the student religious centers were set up they were invited to become members as well. So everybody who had any part with the University could become a member of the Women's Club.

PK: Including students?

GA: Students didn't join, no.

PK: But all staff members and faculty members and all that?

GA: Any who was interested could come. And they did.

PK: Was it your original intent that that Women's Club should, in fact, do scholarship fund raising or support scholarships for students.

GA: I think it was just a general consensus that we should have

a purpose and that was discussed as we formed the Women's Club. And, it soon .. we soon felt that scholarships were something that we could do and begin in a small way, raising money. And, we had bridge benefits, and we had theater benefits, and that kind of thing we could do in a small way but could set up a scholarship fund. And, then when we retired, the Women's Club gave me as a gift the scholarship in my name which, I have been very proud of because it has helped a good many students.

PK: It sure has from what I have read about it.

GA: Yes, it has.

PK: In the .. if the original .. your original purpose in bringing the groups together because everybody coming here was new and didn't know anybody or everybody else, I think that's a wonderful idea. Did it, did it do that? Did people come here and become a part of the spirit of the new University? Of the growth and feel connected right from the beginning?

GA: I'm sure they did because on the faculty itself, all of the people who came had .. they came here and laid their careers on the line and they were anxious to see this thing be a success and they worked very hard. And, that enthusiasm and that hope to make this thing go carried over to the wives and into the Women's Club. So that I think they caught that

feeling of excitement and of being a part of an adventure.

So that was in the group I think, right from the beginning.

PK: Great. Well, the second perhaps interesting story for our viewers and listeners to hear from you is the comment you made to me the other day when we were preparing for this about trees. And, the planting of trees. I was sort of struck by the number. Can you tell us about that?

GA: Of course, they used to say this was the worst possible soil in the state, maybe in the country, I don't know because it was really very barren. But John invited the state forester to come down and analyze the soil, decide what kind of thing we could put on it and, of course, in the meantime they had found a peat bog on campus. And, they went up to Blanding ..

PK: Where was that peat bog. Excuse me for interrupting.

GA: Down where the dormitories are. The one story dormitories down in that area where there's a cluster of pine trees. So, anyway, they got the bulldozer from Blanding and spread that peat all over the campus and we were then able to plant grass. And, then the forester sent people down here and they planted 100,000 pine trees. And, then later on we were given magnolias too and palms.

PK: And, the attention paid to the horticultural and the landscaping of the campus was a part of your husband's high

priorities or yours or both or ..

GA: Well, yes and immediately he hired a campus engineer who was Clyde Hill and he planned the plantings and the shrubbery.

We had a greenhouse and we grew our own shrubs. And, we had an azalea walk from the student center down to the theater.

And, he planned all of those things as a part of the design of the campus. So, at least we began to have an appearance of grass and trees.

PK: It's a beautiful campus today and I'm sure ..

GA: It is. It's lovely.

PK: And, I'm sure ..

GA: And, I'm so happy to see the center be landscaped so beautifully.

PK: I am sure that it doesn't look at all the way your first view of the University of South Florida looked way back when.

GA: Well, no, of course it's changed and grown and beautiful and I'm happy to see the trees that have been planted and added. It just adds a great deal.

PK: Your husband was president of the University for 13 years. From 1957 to 1969/1970.

GA: 1970.

PK: Thirteen years is a long time to be president in this day and age of presidents don't typically last that long or want

to be president that long in the same institution. Did your husband think that 13 years was too long, not long enough? Did he worry about that?

GA: Yes he did. He didn't want to stay too long. He didn't want to outstay his term. And, so he thought of early retirement and it worked out that we could retire early and that was fine because the University of North Florida invited him to come as a consultant when they were established, because he'd gone through the planning and hiring of faculty and he had lists and names that he could suggest. So, we had two years there and then we came back to Tampa because we felt that's where our roots were and where we wanted to be near the University and see it grow.

PK: So, from 1970 to 1972 you were in Jacksonville?

GA: Yes.

PK: Planning the University ..

GA: The University of North Florida.

PK: What was .. what are your memories of what that kind of work was like as opposed to starting here and doing your own University.

GA: Of course, not nearly as active, but we did have a comfortable house for entertaining and so I could be of some help to the president's wife, because she had a job. So, I could help her with the entertaining and getting to know

people and the town, the same as I had here. But, not nearly as active, of course, as here, and, John too, with his role was not as active.

PK: Did you guys enjoy that, you and Dr. Allen?

GA: Oh, yes, it was a nice place to live. Jacksonville is a pretty city and we had family there. John's sister lived there at the time. So that was a happy arrangement too.

PK: And, what .. what caused or how did it happen that Dr. Allen and you got to do that? Was that something as an invitation from the first president ..

GA: Yes, it was.

PK: Who was that president and his wife?

GA: I don't know where he is now. His name was Carpenter. And, he had moved to several other presidencies since that time and since we've been here.

PK: And, here we sit in 1999 and you've seen a succession of presidents and I'm going to hope and assume that you have met personally all of them and wished them all well and they've all done very well up till now. But, there's nothing like being the first in the process is there?

GA: Well, all the presidents and the president's wives who have been here have been very kind to me. They've just been most gracious so I've had a happy relationship with each one.

PK: The importance of being Grace Allen and the importance of

your role and your husband's role of this University can't ever be minimized, but I think it's important and I'm really not making a joke as I promised you before we started this I was going to. I think it's just important for our listeners and viewers to know that this University and you graciously accepted as this University offered you an honorary doctorate and I want to be, for one of the very few times in your life I'll bet, anybody has said this to you, but I'm glad you're here today and you've had this interview time, Dr. Grace Allen. I think that's really a nice sound. And, I just wanted you to know that.

GA: There's only one Dr. Allen.

PK: I can appreciate that.

GA: But, the University was very kind and gracious to me and I was proud that they thought that I should have the degree.

PK: Well, I think they did a very right thing. In the process of being the president of the University and the first First Lady, you had to see an awful lot of new experiences and growth in community and institutions in Tampa and Hillsborough County while the University was growing because that sort of walked arm in arm or hand in hand. You mentioned to me that your husband and you were active in the founding of University Community Hospital, for example. Can you .. what was that all about?

GA: Well, John along with some of the doctors realized we needed a hospital in this area, so he was on the founding board. And, in fact, at his insistence the hospital is in the location where it is, which is now, of course, central for the Carrollwood area, the Temple Terrace area, and so on. So, he served on the Board and while he was on the Board I was able to set the wheels in motion to found the Women's Auxiliary, so that we got that .. the Pink Ladies were soon a part of the hospital and doing a real good service. And, then, later on, I served for six years on the Board of the Community Hospital.

PK: Wow.

GA: Saw it grow and flourish and then I also served on the Board of the University's Gerontology Center. And, saw that expand and, of course, I was especially interested in what they were doing in research on Gerontology. So, that was an interesting place to be too.

PK: How did Dr. Allen and, I presume, think through the idea that there would be a Medical School on the campus and a private hospital across the street? What kinds of conversations about balancing those two ideas happen?

GA: Well, when we first came we were told, the first thing you're going to have to do is plan a Medical School. And, he said no they were not in the position to plan the Medical

School immediately. But, it did come into the planning. Oh, I would say about '63 and Dr. Lawton came as the first Dean and then he was succeeded by Dr. Smith. So, the planning was in the early stages for the medical school. But, .. and it was obvious everybody in this town were anxious to have a medical school here. They had hoped, for instance, when the University of Florida got its medical school that it would be here instead of Gainesville. But, it didn't work that way. But, the interest continued so that we had our delegation, legislative delegation, was interested and the doctors were too. So, the planning of the Medical School received support right away.

PK: You mention the delegation and that's an important subject and we kind of skipped over it about the founding. Who were the people you think of, some of the people because you can't obviously remember everybody ..

GA: Well, we had a strong Hillsborough delegation. There was Terrell Sessums. There was Louie Deleparte, Sam Gibbons who walked the bill through the legislature which enabled the establishment of the University. There was Jim Moody and they were all strong members. And, later Helen Gordon Davis in the Senate. So, we were very fortunate to have a strong delegation that other people listened to. So, they were able to walk the bills through and get the enabling act

passed in '56, December of '56.

PK: And, the delegation back then, as you point out, was strong.

The names that you mentioned are some very, very accomplished individuals and still remain to this day, we hope, to be good friends of the University.

GA: Yes, they are.

PK: I've been very privileged to know some of the people that you've mentioned. The .. well, let me ask the question this way. If Dr. Allen could be alive today and could look at this University as it is in July 16th, 1999, what do you think he would think of it?

GA: I think he'd be happy with the development of the curriculum, the growth of the liberal arts, the strength of the fine arts. He would not be amazed at all at the size. That he kept saying always that we would be about the largest in the state because we were right in the heart of the population. The demand was here and so the size of the University would not surprise him at all. But, he would be pleased, as I say, with the academic growth and the functions of the Medical School. The position of the Moffitt Center and all of those things would please him mightily.

(END OF SIDE ONE)

PK: .. student body. Did your husband recognize going in that

the University would be .. need, require, a student body of international flavor?

GA: Oh, definitely. From the very beginning he always said, you don't have a University unless you have foreign students. That it's essential for our students to have that close contact with foreign students and we must prepare and make room for them. So, right from the beginning they were very welcome.

PK: In 1958 for your husband to say those things, that would have been perhaps difficult for some people to hear in Tampa, don't you think?

GA: I don't know. I can't recall that there was any objection. That I think they realized that foreign students came to a good University and so I think that, as far as I know, I never heard any adverse comments on that.

PK: That's great. And, the Tampa Tribune was a strong supporter of yours.

GA: Very. Always, always a strong supporter from the very beginning when they urged that the University be placed here in Tampa. They carried on a crusade to get it here.

PK: Well, in 13 years of a Presidency and all of the positives and the accomplishments and the great goods that happened as a result of your husband's work and effort, there's at least one period I know in his time here, which was less than

perfectly pleasant and that was his difficulties dealing with the Johns Committee. And, I think we should explore that in as much detail as you can remember.

GA: That was a trying time. A difficult time and it reflected, I think, the attitude of McCarthyism and so on. And, in some instances I think it resulted because people didn't fully understand what a University could do and the freedom of expression that should exist on a University. And, I think, some people got unhappy with freedom of expression. Maybe the type of books that were read and discussed. And, then, I think, there was always someone who was worried about communism. You know how that existed in the McCarthy era. So, the Charlie Johns episode had begun in Gainesville and it spilled over to a period here that was unhappy and difficult.

PK: Can you describe it?

GA: Well, from my point of view, of course, it was worrisome. Very worrisome, and, I was always concerned that John was carrying this extra heavy load of trying to explain to people what a true University was. And, it eventually ended when he was invited to speak before the Joint House .. the Legislature of the House and the Senate and described the University and tell what its ideas and its purpose and the freedom of expression what that meant to a University and

what it meant to Tampa. And, the legislators when his talk was finished gave him a standing ovation.

PK: Well, but before that happened there were some .. there were some serious encounters with the Johns Committee by your husband and students here. What do you remember about those?

GA: I remember that we first heard that the Johns Committee had come to Tampa and students were being wakened in the middle of the night and taken to an inn on Dale Mabry where they were questioned without any warning or without any help beforehand. So, John then invited the Committee to come to the campus and conduct their interviews in the open, which they did. A room was set aside and the members of the committee there were able to have students and faculty come in. And, eventually they ended up with a report that became sort of the laughing stock of the state. And, that was the end of it. Nothing came of the investigation. Nothing came of the interviews. They found no communists. They had nobody under the bed.

PK: Right. But, while all that's going on it had to be either an angering experience or a saddening experience or a scary experience perhaps, for both you and your husband to go through that.

GA: I think it scared me more than it did John. His Quaker

training came into evidence here and his calmness and the steady plodding along without panicking. I think he called on all his Quaker training and background and he could be more relaxed about it than I. I was the one that sweated.

PK: It .. this is a question I asked you the other day and I think it's an interesting question and only in terms of how you choose to answer it. What struck you most about that period about Charlie Johns himself and about the Committee and all that activity? What's the thing that seems so strange sitting here today looking back on it that ..

GA: Well, that a personal prejudice could reach such heights because I think there was personal prejudice in the head of the committee. And, that that prejudice could reach such a pinnacle that he would stir up members of the legislature, members of the community and so on. It was always a source of amazement to me that it could reach that height because he was prejudiced. I'm sure he was in feeling that there were communists around and so on. Just because new ideas had come to the fore. So, it was a source of amazement to me.

PK: But, he spoke and people listened.

GA: And concerned.

PK: Yeah, but people heard him and people listened to it and responded. All over the country, not just to Charlie Johns.

But certainly to McCarthy in much the same way. Did you very meet Charlie Johns?

GA: Only, only casually in the days when we were at the University of Florida. When he came as a guest of the President for football games and alumni meetings and that kind of thing. He was not a person that I met on a regular basis, but as coming and going as he came to the University of Florida.

PK: Can you tell me what you thought about him?

GA: Well, I don't know. He was .. he was a different type of person and I remember his wife especially as being a very charming sweet lady and, as I say, he was just one you shook hands with as he came to visit.

PK: A classic politician in other words.

GA: Yes he was .. well, I don't know whether or not, but he was political yes.

PK: Well, certainly, he got elected governor. Well, we know John Allen would have been very proud if he could be here today to this University and I assume we can say the same thing about Dr. Grace Allen, is she very proud of this University?

GA: Oh, very definitely. I am just so happy where I live cause I live just across the street and it's just a joy to me every day to see the progress and to read of what's

happening in the growth, in the financial support and all of the support for the University. It makes me very happy and very excited for it.

PK: You must be very proud of our President.

GA: Oh definitely. Oh, she's doing a beautiful job. I'm very proud of her and she's been very gracious to me and I'm just very grateful to her for being so aware and considerate.

PK: Well, that's nice. I think that this is a special time in the history of this University as it was your special time in getting it started. In some ways, all of the growth and the success that this University has as we approach this new arrangement of tiers in the State of Florida that USF has gotten to be a tier one institution so early, if you will. In many ways it's a credit to your husband and to some very good foundations. You can't build a real good house on a poor foundation. And, it must have been a very good foundation.

GA: Well, I agree with that. I think it was a good foundation for the expansion of the University. It had to .. it could grow and expand. I think that's true, it did have a good start.

PK: What would you like to talk about before we close this interview. Are there things that we haven't brought up or talked about that we need to.

GA: I haven't anything special. It's just that I can't emphasize too much how happy I am with the growth of the University and how the community keeps on supporting it and is interested in it and feels that they are a part of it and it belongs to them. So, that's just a wonderful accomplishment that's been done in Betty Castor's regime, I think, beautifully. So, I'm just very happy and grateful for that.

PK: Well, let me suggest to you that I think that one of the things that this University seems to be most proud of and justifiably so is that it's first First Lady is still here to be proud of it. And, that's important.

GA: Well, that's a gift to me.

PK: Well, I must tell you how much I appreciate the time that you've spent to do this interview and I know that there are an awful lot of folks who want to understand what it was like, and it was a special time, but it was a special time because you and your husband were special people too. And, I thank you very much for the opportunity to do this interview, Mrs. Allen.

GA: Thank you.

HSS/lmv (5-28-00)