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Franci Rudolph oral history interview by Suzette Berkman, November 16, 2006

Franci Rudolph (Interviewee)

Franci Rudolph (Interviewer)

Suzette Berkman (Interviewer)

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SB: It's Thursday, November 16, [2006], and we're interviewing Franci due to her being a tremendous arts activist and making a tremendous difference in the community, that is, Tampa Bay. Thank you Franci for being here, and I hope that we have a great interview. Thank you.

FR: Well it's my pleasure to be here.

SB: Well typically, we will start at the beginning. And if you would be so kind as to divulge your age and where you were born?

FR: Okay, I have to think about my age—56. I was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1950. And…

SB: And your birthday?

FR: My birthday is June 16. I have a younger sister and a younger brother, and I worked very hard to get my sister to move here with her family, which is nice. My brother is still in Chicago. And [I] was very involved in the Chicago community, even as a child. My parents really were very generous people in spirit and in deeds, and were very encouraging of us as children to give back to the community and to give back to others. And even at age 13, I was active in SSJP, Southside Junior Philanthropics, and we raised money for mentally retarded children.

SB: That's wonderful.

FR: So it goes back to my childhood.

SB: Your brother and sister were involved as well?

FR: Well my brother and sister were involved in different things. We all sort of, you know, went in different directions, but all involved in the community.
SB: What is the age difference?

FR: Well my sister will say I'm much older, because my children are. But she's one year, eleven months, and eleven days younger. Let me make that clear, on the record.

SB: [Laughs]

FR: And my brother is five years younger. And he's married, and married to a twin, Cindy Lou. Her twin sister is Mindy Sue. I love telling that story. Her mother apparently stayed in the hospital an extra day to come up with the names. And they have four children. I have a niece who actually has cystic fibrosis, their oldest child, who is a sophomore at the University of Illinois Business School, and twin nephews who are turning 18 today, and are busy applying to colleges. And then my youngest nephew, their youngest son, who—if they're 18, he must be turning 15 in January.

SB: And where do they live?

FR: They live in Highland Park outside of Chicago. And their names are, you know, Randall, Jared, Spencer, and the little one is Cameron Drew—followed by "we're through."

[Laughter]

FR: That's how my sister-in-law used to sign her cards.

[Laughter]

SB: And then your sister?

FR: My sister lives in Tampa. She's a labor and an employment lawyer, Gail Holtzman. And her husband Steve is a corporate attorney, and...

[Phone rings, tape paused]

FR: …and she has two children, my niece Whitney who is a freshman at the University of Florida, and probably the biggest Gator fan now in the world! And my nephew, Josh, who is a sophomore at Tampa Prep.

SB: That's great. Your early years growing up in Chicago. Tell us, you know, what your parents sort of gave as a legacy. Especially in regard to the arts.

FR: Well, they used to take—it was interesting because we did a lot of things together as a family. I remember going to Ice Capades and things like that together as a family. But my mother would take the girls, my sister and myself, to the ballet. To Kungsholm Puppet Opera Company, which was a very unusual and I think specific to Chicago place, where these marionette puppets actually acted out operettas. We would go to the Art
Institute. My mother actually painted, I have a couple of her oils in my house. And my
brother would go to hockey games and basketball games with my father.

[Laughter]

FR: So he may not have the arts interest today that we had. But we would go to see
shows, I remember going to McCormick Place and seeing Peter Pan, and musicals and
plays at the Goodman Theatre. So we had a rich heritage of the arts.

SB: Would you attribute that early exposure to your interest now?

FR: Absolutely. And then I know my love of the ballet came from my mother's love of
the ballet and her taking us. I know it did not come from the ballet lessons that my sister
and I took. I think my mother probably cringed at every one of our recitals because
sometimes you can be really better at being a member of the audience than performing.
And ballet was not my forte.

SB: [laughs] But it's your love!

FR: But I love to watch it.

SB: That's wonderful. So from Chicago, where did you go?

FR: When I graduated high school, I went to Syracuse University, had a triple major
there in Special Education, Elementary Education, and Psychology. And in my senior
year I was fixed up with what I would call a "townie," a boy who was born and raised in
Syracuse. And we dated that year, and on my graduation in June we got engaged. And we
got married in mid-August of that year because I actually got a job teaching
neurologically impaired and mentally retarded middle school aged children in Tully, New
York, about 20 minutes south of Syracuse. And you know, in those days you didn't live
together. You didn't, you know…. So you know, he jokes, we had to get married so that I
could live... live with him, and have my job.

[Laughter]

SB: And that was four years?

FR: Taught for about four years…

SB: Four years.

FR: …until I gave birth to my son, Benjamin, my bicentennial baby in 1976. And three
years later had my daughter, Lesley in January of 1979. And in February of 1979 we flew
down to Tampa to look for houses because we were going to move down here. My
husband had a leased fine-jewelry department in department stores business. Kind of hard
to explain, but Maas Brothers had his jewelry department in it, and that's what brought us
specifically to Tampa. He also had a lot of business on the east coast of Florida with Jordan Marsh stores. He was in the Bloomingdale stores; he was in Hudson's and Dayton's in Detroit and Minneapolis. So kind of all over the country, and frankly, Syracuse had a terrible airport, and all that was in Syracuse was the home office because the business had started as a group of retail jewelry stores that were all along the New York Thruway. And they had sold those in 1964 to Kay Jewelers, so they went into the department store business. So there was really no reason for us to be in Syracuse, and the weather was dreary, and moving down to Tampa was like the promised land. My in-laws had a winter home in Sarasota, and we knew that Sarasota wouldn't really be the right community for us. And I really didn't love the east coast of Florida. It reminded me too much of New York, and I was a Midwestern girl at heart, and this is—this was just the perfect place for us to move. So we moved here in 1979.

SB: What was your impression of—I mean, you mentioned you liked the weather.

FR: The weather—of course it was great.

SB: But culturally?

FR: But we did move here in July, so it was great, but I don’t know how anyone lived here before air conditioning. That's all I'll say. And mosquito control.

SB: [Laughs]

FR: But when we moved down, I think it was the Chamber of Commerce had, as their great motto or tag line of the year, "America's Next Great City." And I think we could really feel the excitement and the growth yet to come. There was a state of the art airport. And culturally, you know, there was no Performing Arts Center; there was no Ruth Eckerd Hall across the bay. We used to drive to the old Mahaffey Theatre for Broadway in the Sunshine, which were the touring Broadway shows. And I was just at the new Mahaffey Theatre last week, and boy—it's terrific! And boy, is that a big change.

But when we came to Tampa, we just felt the excitement that this was a place to be and a place where we were going to see really positive growth and change. And we have not been disappointed.

SB: That's good to hear. And you have been part of those changes, and we'd like to explore what you got involved in when you settled here.

FR: Well, one of the first things I got involved with was the Florida Orchestra, because the neighbor who was living behind me had done ushering for the Symphony Guild at the youth concerts. And she said, I think you would love this. And I said, “Boy, it sounds like something I would love.” And sure enough, I handled the ushering of the youth concerts that year. And the next year I think I was president elect of the Symphony Guild. I really got involved with the orchestra and the Symphony Guild and really enjoyed it. Those were in the era of Maestro Hoffman, and it was just a really dynamic group of women
and an exciting orchestra. I actually have a cousin who plays the bass with the Lyric Opera in Chicago. And he had played with them probably 25 or 30 years now. So orchestra was something I cared about. And again, I'm really excited that we still have the Florida Orchestra in this community…

SB: Sure.

FR: …If you look around the country, orchestras are struggling everywhere. And we've made it work in what I would consider an impossible situation where they have three communities and have to play in three different venues—and I don't know how they do it. And have been doing it all these years.

SB: It's remarkable. It really is.

SB: So from the Orchestra, what else did you do? Your children were in school?

FR: My children were starting school….

SB: How did you make a decision there?

FR: …and it was a very tough decision. I mean I'm really a public school, born and raised person—Northern liberal, grew up in Chicago…. And there were a lot of private schools down here where a lot of my neighbors had their children. I did not have a comfort level with that and I went to look at Dale Mabry, which was the elementary school in our district. And their kindergarten program ended after an hour and 45 minutes, just a morning program. Of course, now it's a full day program. But this was 1982, or whatever year it was, '81, and that just was not enough for my son who was used to preschool until two o'clock. And we looked around at the various schools, and we settled on Berkeley Preparatory School. And I will never forget my first impressions of Berkeley Prep; that they were renting a building that was like a church parish house; that they—later was turned into an office building when it was sold. But it—kindergarten was like, in the basement. The kids had PE under the Crosstown Expressway. On Wednesdays the church auxiliary had meetings, and they used to call it "whisper Wednesday." The kids had to be very quiet and not be noisy.

And it was a true case that program is so much more important than place. And the people. But got involved immediately with the school. They had a very new dynamic, lower division director who had a vision for an artist and residence program for the lower division.

SB: Who was that?

FR: It was Jim Stockdale, whose father actually ran for Vice President with—was it with Perot? I can't remember. He was like the third-party candidate, remember?

SB: I do.
FR: He was the one at the debates that said, “Who am I, and what am I doing here?”

SB: That's right.

FR: Anyway, this was his son, who was our lower division director, and he knew I had an interest in the arts. And I went to the Berkeley Blazers Group, which were the moms of the kids who had graduated in the '60s. And they loved each other so much that they loved to get together once a year. They would pay dues, and they were either 50 or 100 dollars, and they would love to, over lunch, discuss how they could give that money to the school in the meaningful way. And I had a great idea about how to take that money off of their hands with this artist-in-residence program. And I did, successfully. And had a great deal of help from the Fine Arts Department in bringing in a musician, a visual artist, an arts educator, to do programs for the kids. And it really was a very special program. And I actually helped raise money for a hand bell set so that they could get a hand bell choir with Bonnie Gregory at the lower division.

SB: They still have that.

FR: And they still have it. That goes back to me…

SB: Oh, that's great.

FR: …many years later. The next year I found myself president of the Parent's Club…

[Laughter]

FR: And the following year, they announced that the building that housed the lower division was going to be sold. They church was selling it, and there was a big dilemma whether to build a new lower division. And Sandy Freedman, who was mayor at the time but was—but this might have been right after she was mayor. Right before she was mayor, she was head of the board of Berkeley Prep. And she suggested that we shouldn't rush into building a new lower division because tuitions were high, and people were—would we be building a building that would be obsolete. Were people going to pay those kinds of funds?

[Tape paused]

FR: So the board wasn't sure what to do. But said, *if you can raise a half a million dollars by January*—this was October—*we will match it, and we will build a lower division on the Kelly Road Campus.* So I got together with my neighbor, Gay Culverhouse, and we co-chaired a campaign to raise that money. And we were motivated, we were determined. We didn't want our kids with no place to go to school the following year. So we organized a campaign like no other campaign. Our goal was 100 percent participation by the parents. And we actually got 99-point something percent participation. We raised that half of a million [dollars], and the rest is really history. Because they built that lower
division, which actually had two classes for each grade except kindergarten. They've
since added a pre-kindergarten, and now they have three of each class in that lower
division. And there's still a waiting list at every grade level.

SB: Tell us about your involvement in the library there.

FR: When we did this campaign, they said there were no plans to—there were going to be
no plans to build a lower division library because they wanted everyone to use the Jean
Ann Cone Library, which the upper and middle division used. And having been an
elementary school teacher, I knew that the lower division uses a library in so many
different ways, and they really needed their own library. So I said, how much money do
you need to add a library to the plans and build it? And they gave me an amount, and I
said, okay, and I went back to my husband and my brother-in-law and sister-in-law, and
twisted some arms, and said, don't we need to do this? And we now have the Rudolph
Library, "Give me a room whose every nook is dedicated to a book," my favorite quote.
And we now have a place with rocking chairs and places for little kids to listen to stories,
and it's you know—a little bit more of a media center as libraries are in these days. But
it's a lower division, warm-and-huggy library.

SB: That's great. Thank you for doing that! Who said the quote by the way?

FR: I don't remember the author, but I remember the quote, which is pretty good!

SB: [Laughs] That's very good.

FR: I love quotes.

SB: And it's now your quote.

FR: I quote others to better express myself.

SB: That's wonderful, Franci. Well I know you love books, and you have said that you
read a lot. What would you say you consume?

FR: I consume two or three books a week. I'm a very fast reader, but I also absorb a lot.
I'm lucky to have sort of a photographic mind when it comes to reading. My husband has
challenged me a few times in the past. And when he would test me about what was on
certain pages, and I could even tell him where on the page that it was. I think that sort of
sobered him up on that subject.

I'm a member of two book clubs, and I really, I love to read. And I love to needle point,
and it's just hard for me to—I love to multi-task, but those two hobbies are sort of hard to
do together.
SB: Well, speaking of multi-tasking, that's sort of your middle name. And I know while you were at Berkeley you were involved in a lot of other things, I believe the Federation, and the Temple.

FR: Right, those were probably the three things I was doing mostly at that time. I chaired most of the committees at Berkeley, long range planning, committee on trustees, the development committee. And one of my favorites was their 25th anniversary gala, where we were sort of celebrating 25 years of the school, and that was a lot of fun because we brought back all of the parents of the kids who started the school in the '60s when the teams never won anything. It was a really exciting event.

I was involved in the Temple, [I] was chairing the religious school committee, and worked my way up. I was actually Sisterhood President at the Temple. And then chaired a lot of the committees on the actual Temple board, worked on endowment, worked on the college committee—anything that related to kids that I could be involved with, I was. And then [I was] very involved with the Tampa Jewish Federation Women's Division. I actually chaired their campaign and chaired the women's division. And we started some programs welcoming newcomers to Tampa and raised money for Israel and social needs of people in our very own community.

SB: Were there any cultural components? Did you have anything to do with the arts in this?

FR: It was sort of harder to stretch that, but I know that I chaired the Lion of Judah committee, which were the 5000 [dollars] and up donors to the women's division campaign. And for our event, I held it at the Contemporary Art Museum at USF and had Margie Miller do a program on installations at the Jewish Museum in New York. And they were having…

SB: Interesting.

FR: …a special thing on mikvahs, which are the ritual baths. And she did this whole program. But if I can find a way to bring the arts into it, I do.

[Laughter]

SB: I know you do! Well from your involvment in those years, you then—I'm not crystal clear—what came next in terms of your cultural community involvements?

FR: Well, around the same time in the mid '80s, they were talking about building [a] Performing Arts Center, and I was a member of the Junior League of Tampa. And I did as my placement, my volunteer placement in the community, I served on the speaker's bureau for this soon-to-be built Performing Arts Center, which, at that point was a storefront on Florida Avenue. And so I was really involved with the Performing Arts Center from its very beginning. Currently I'm on the executive committee—I'm Secretary.
of the Performing Arts Center, and I'm head of the governance committee. And I also chaired, for two years, their Broadway Ball, which is their big fundraiser, so….

SB: Was that a continuous involvement? Because the Performing Arts Center was built in…

FR: '87.

SB: '87.

FR: It opened in '87, and I actually was involved in a lot of the committees but did not come on to the board until maybe nine years ago. But I kept serving in ex-officio capacity by virtue of chairing certain of the committees.

SB: So it's, but your involvement on the board has been nine years. What is your specialty?

FR: Probably the governance issues—I've served on that committee, and I now chair that committee. And I know I spent—not this past summer, but the previous summer—reading the entire bylaws and coming up with suggestions for improvements. And I found some really obscure things in there. I found some obscure line in there that said that the people who were going off the board should not be voting on the prospective class, or the incoming board members. And of course to me, that's one of the supreme no-no's of boardsmanship. Because one of your responsibilities as a board member is, if you're on a self-perpetuating board, is to ensure that self-perpetuation. So they should darn be voting on those people! [Laughs] And so these are the kinds of things I found. So…

SB: That you've changed.

FR: …right now… Yes, I—they couldn't believe some of the things I found and proposed the changes. And I think it's now with the lawyers, just approving to make sure it's in compliance with the articles of incorporation. That's been sort of the basis of my involvement. And I'm also serving on the 20th anniversary committee. The 20th anniversary was just kicked off with the Broadway Ball, where we honored the three ladies who had shared the grand gala when the Performing Arts Center opened. That was Martha Ferman, Louise Ferguson and in memoriam, Winkie Howell. And it's going to culminate next fall with the Broadway Ball, and in between there are going to be a ton of 20th anniversary activities, and we'll be seeing and hearing a lot about those in the community.

SB: Can we have a preview or is it a secret?

FR: Well there are no secrets that I can share, but I think that we're going to have an exciting Broadway Ball next year. It's going to be very special. And in between there's going to be a timeline history established at the center somehow, giving everybody the sense of the history. And there's just a terrific committee of people involved, and right
now we're sort of generating a lot of the ideas. But there's talk of having an artist do some sort of special work for it, and so… A lot of the stuff hasn't quite been done, but it's starting.

SB: What would you consider your greatest legacy thus far since you're still on the board?

FR: To the Performing Arts Center?

SB: Yes.

FR: Well, I guess the new and improved Broadway Ball. I've been involved in that committee from the start, and I think we've really made it one of the premier social events in Tampa.

SB: Yes.

FR: And you know, we've learned how to make it—the ball—it's an intimate evening for 400 on the stage. You know, to maximize what we raise, and to make it a "friend-raiser" as well as a fundraiser.

SB: And this past ball raised how much money?

FR: Over 300,000 dollars.

SB: This is outstanding, absolutely outstanding. Would you share with us some of the other boards that you're involved with?

FR: Okay. Right now I’m serving on the Florida Holocaust Museum board in Pinellas County. It has as one of its major missions education, so to ensure that there will not be any future genocides and holocaust-type activities anywhere in the world. And I've helped them with governance and strategic planning. And they're doing so much to build tolerance. They send teaching trunks to really almost the entire southeast. Teaching them how to teach children tolerance. There is…

SB: Do you charge for them?

FR: There's a cost involved…

SB: Just for shipping?

FR: …but I think they got them sponsored. Yes, but they do get them sponsored. And I'm very involved with the foundation board of St. Joseph's hospitals. That's again, one of my passions. I had some health issues in the past few years, and I've been well taken care of at St. Joseph's. It's really a state of the art facility, and doing cutting edge things. The NICU takes care of—the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit—takes care of 800 babies a year.
And to hear the success stories of babies born with a hole in their heart, or weighing two [or] three pounds, and you know, now they're 23 pounds at a year and a half and just thriving…. You know, it's just very inspiring. So I'm….

SB: How long have you been on that board?

FR: I've been on that board about five years. I was actually asked to come on that board to help build that board. The board was small and I think it's come a long way. We built it qualitatively and quantitatively, and just been able to sort of make it—instead of this adjunct to the hospital board, now it's sort of something to attain after you've been on the hospital board. So we've sort of tried to make it a model board. All the boards I work with I try to make models of best practices. And the foundation board has a new president, sort of slash, executive director, and I think there are some exciting things planned. They're sort of planning a new patient tower at the original hospital because the original hospital I mean, it was built, and now the needs are so much greater. The population is so much greater in this community. And people want private rooms, and the emergency room is so busy. We're lucky if we can get them a bed in a room with two beds! So that's a great need. They're building a new north end hospital because of the growth in the north end, and they're planning to build a new NICU, so…

SB: How did you get involved at St. Josephs?

FR: The president of the foundation board called me and said—he had worked with me on two other boards in the community—and said, I really need help in building this board. And I looked at this board and said, oh yes, you do need some help in building this board! And of course it's been a process. We couldn't fix it in a year or two, but it's come a long way and I think it's really—it's really doing well.

SB: How do you set about changing the aura of a board?

FR: Again it's a process. It's not just something you can do quickly. But I think you look at what is the mission of the board. And then you try to make sure that the board is full of people passionate about the mission and able to get that mission accomplished. You know I, a lot of boards, really a primary responsibility is fiduciary and fundraising. And you'll hear people say, Well I don't want to do any fundraising.” Well, then you shouldn't be on the board. And let's be—I’m really big on contracts with incoming board members—This is what we expect of you, but in turn this is what you can expect from us: financial statements in a timely fashion, and any information and help you need, and support from the staff in doing your job as a board member. But yet, there are expectations of you. You know, it's giving, it's getting other gifts, it's coming to meetings, it's reading materials in advance. I mean, meeting time should not be spent in listening to reports. That's not a good use of your time.

Right now I'm working with the Community Foundation board, and I have to say that Bill Starkey is doing a wonderful job because I went to a workshop—it was a retreat, actually at the community foundation last year with someone from Harvard who had written this
book that said, you know, traditionally boards used to be good-ol'-boy networking groups. You know, kind of fiduciarily inclined. Let's make sure, you know, the numbers look good. And then '80s and '90s it kind of moved to—it's also important we be strategic and do planning. And now the new buzzword is "generative thinking." And you want boards to be thinking outside the box and you know, using their great minds to do things beyond just the strategic and the fiduciary.

SB: Is “generative” synonymous for creative?

FR: Well, it can be, but it's also just you know, what else do we need to be thinking about in the community? What else can we as an institution be doing? Spending time at board meetings, just sort of—you know, where do we want to be, let's say in five years if there's a newspaper article about our institution, what do we want it to say about us? So it's taking some time to do that. So they've been great. I'm big on index cards at everybody's place so that if you have something—information that you want, to do your job as a board member, it should be given to you.

One of the things you can probably see my touches on boards that I've worked with, because I tell them I want the mission statement at the top of the agenda. I want everybody to remember what they're there for. And at the bottom of the agenda, I want there to be three things that each board member can be doing between now and the next meeting because it's not just about coming together to talk at a meeting, it's also about what we need to be doing.

SB: That's terrific.

FR: And you can see that on about four of the boards that I'm on now.

[Laughter]

SB: Well let's sort of transition into the museum board.

FR: Tampa Museum of Art. I came on that board—I'm in my 6th year, so I know this is going to be my retirement year. It was very important to me as I looked at what the museum was looking toward, which is building a new facility—since they're going to be demolishing the current building, it's become a priority. And I worked with them on changing the bylaws to increase the board size. It had been scaled down, and maybe ten to twelve years ago for whatever reasons that were relevant then, and they were no longer relevant. They needed a big board. They needed to be able to get things done. They needed people, movers and shakers with access to things. And I really worked to build that board. They had one vice chair, and I changed that to three vice chairs so that there would be a lot of leadership development in there. And I always liked the idea of three not two, because then sometimes people see it as a winner or a loser in terms of who goes up. But this way it's, not everyone's going to maybe move up, but you're always building future leadership. So that's a change that you can see under my governance. And
I've been the Governance Chair for four of the five years that I've been on the board. This will be my fifth.

SB: Would you like to share your feelings about the status of the museum?

FR: I'm very excited to say we've finally, I think, have found a home for the new museum. I think there are so many people who felt passionate about keeping that museum on the river. I have to say you know, "who moved my cheese?" You know, that whole sense of, "Change is never good." People did not like the idea of moving at all. They really wanted to like, tear it down and build it in the same place. And it's just very interesting, the process that we went through. And you know, Vinoly was brought in and did a seven million dollar design for what probably would have been a very signature trademark building, but maybe was a little too elaborate for Tampa Bay, and certainly too expensive for us at our current state. And I always say, it's not the building, it's what's in it, and the programming that you do in it. So as we were looking at alternative sites, the mayor did propose we look at the old courthouse. But that really was not a suitable museum site. It wasn't even the location that bothered me. It just would have been dangerous to the collection. A lot of people thought that maybe we should consider putting it near the aquarium. The cruise ships come in, you know, that certainly wouldn't have been a terrible choice. But I'm really excited. We're going to be by the children's museum. We're going to be on the river.

When they talked about putting it in the cubes, next to the round building…

[End Tape 1, Side A]

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[Tape 1, Side B]

FR: …back to the “beer can” building—I want to point out to everyone, the space was probably not suitable for a museum. But there has been a lot of negative press about that round building. That round building was designed by architect Herbert Wolf, who won a national award for the design. He was thinking of that as being a lighthouse on the river entrance to downtown Tampa. He built it keeping in mind the Moorish architecture across the river with the University of Tampa minarets. And it was very purposeful, that design. And whether you like it or not, it should not be the joke that it's really been in this community. Because it really is a signature, award winning design. And if you've ever been inside, the whole thing with the Fibonacci numbers—and there's so much that's been strategically done in that design that is majorly impressive…

SB: You're talking about the cubes?

FR: Well the round building itself, connected to the cubes.

SB: Yes, connected to the cubes.

FR: So I would urge everyone to go to Herbert Wolf's website, [laughs] or….
SB: How do you spell that? [Laughs]

FR: W-O-L-F. The other thing is, even if you—I think even if you even go "Google" Nation's Bank, because it was the Nation's Bank building…. But it's been sort of the subject of jokes, but if you understand the purposeful design, it's really meaningful. And that should have somehow been included in some of the press. But no one asked me.

SB: Well I'm glad I did!

FR: And I'm now getting my chance...!

SB: Yes, thank you!

FR: Forever, for people to know that it shouldn't be a joke.

SB: Well stated. Really, I don't know that I've ever read or heard that.

FR: I'll get you some further information about it.

SB: Okay, that would be great. You're happy with the location of what will be the new museum?

FR: Very happy, I think…

SB: Do you have any thoughts about the design?

FR: I have no thoughts about the design.

SB: Okay.

FR: You know, I love art, but I'm not creative personally, I couldn't design a building. You know, I know what I like and what I don't like, but I also can appreciate things. You know the new Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, [Spain]. When I look at pictures of it, I have not had the pleasure of seeing it in person—I look at the pictures and say, that's a strange looking building—but yet it's attracting visitors from around the globe. And the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg attracts more visitors from out of the country than in the country. Their museum store does multi-million dollar business—it's like a record. And if I asked people what the outside of that building looked like, they would be very hard pressed to describe it. And that says to me it's not as significant as what goes on inside, so….

SB: Well said, well said, indeed. I would love to talk about your professional job, which was Head of Tampa Bay Business Committee for the Arts.
FR: And you said that so well. It took me about a year before TBBCA rolled off my tongue!

[Laughter]

FR: But I actually parlayed all of my arts experience into that job. That's an organization dedicated to bringing business and the arts together. It was started in 1967 by David Rockefeller in New York. There's a national BCA. And there are nine affiliates across the country. And actually I was not looking for a job at the time, but my sister knew the retiring founding director, and she said, *this sounds like so perfect for you.* And I went to meet with them, and I thought, *this really does sound terrific!* I mean, it was something could be very passionate about. It's a membership organization, it sponsors a Business in the Arts Awards every year, and I was very fortunate to be a recipient this year. It was very exciting for me, especially an organization I cared….

SB: Congratulations.

FR: Thank you. It was very exciting to win that. I normally don’t talk about myself…

SB: Well deserved.

FR: …and awards, but it was exciting…

SB: I would have asked you!

FR: …and touching to have won an award from them! But the organization is really about, you know, motivating [and] educating businesses about the importance of the arts in our community. And when you think about Tampa Bay, and you think about the industries in our community. If I asked you, *what do you think the leading industries are*—and I don't mean you, but one out there—generally, the responses are, *it's the port, it's phosphate, it's citrus, it's construction, it's tourism.*… Those are what people look at as major industries. And I'm here to tell you, one of the most major industries is the arts.

And when I was head of the TBBCA, we conducted an economic impact study. There had been a previous one, but we had this one done by Price Waterhouse Coopers, and they had a very special Atlanta Group that basically does economic impact studies for municipalities for sports organizations. And we had them do it so that we would have credibility. And they surveyed over 200 arts organizations and were able to determine just what the economic impact was in the Tampa Bay area. And it's interesting because they talk about bringing the Super Bowl to the area, and it, you know, generates, you know, 65 million dollars in economic impact. Or they bring the World Series to an area, or you bring the Final Four. And the arts are here 365 days a year, and they generated, in our study, which was 1999-2000, 402 million dollars.

SB: It's extraordinary.
FR: Which is extraordinary, but let me tell you, that number is now 521 million…

SB: Oh my goodness.

FR: …according to the most recent study.

SB: That's amazing.

FR: And the number of visitors at the time we did our study, it was 5.5 million visitors. I mean, you touch and reach so many people with the arts in the community. And I’m probably married to one of the most passionate sports fans in the world. And I’m not saying it's arts over sports, but people think of sports and what sports have brought to the area. And I think people—hopefully this study has brought credibility to the fact that the arts not only are as important as the sports, but really, they bring in usually two times the amount of money the sports do to an area.

SB: In terms of financial impact, it is extremely clear in this study. What types of numbers of people… Did the study get into that at all? Versus, say, sports? In terms of…

FR: Yes, for comparison purposes, I said 5.5 million visitors for the arts. And if you include attendance for the Bucs, the Lightning, the Devil Rays, the Mutiny, USF Football, USF Basketball, and the Outback Bowl, which is a one day event—in the 2000 study, that was 3.3 million people, versus 5.5 million for the arts.

SB: Isn't that incredible. That's just significant. And obviously this is important for businesses to know.

FR: Because an investment in the arts really pays great dividends. Because not only—I mean the arts are good for business, because of what—they're really an engine for economic growth and development. But when you ask people why they want to move to the Tampa Bay area, you know, they talk about the quality of life, the arts offerings in this area. And it's very important. And for businesses, the people—the arts bring out the creativity and are very motivating to their employees. So it really helps with their own work force.

SB: But that was really your job then, Franci, to make the businesses aware of what was going on the arts?

FR: Educate them and motivate them to support the arts. The other thing is we ran a program—“Leadership on Board”—and we actually trained business volunteers to serve on arts boards. We did a program where we had various speakers come in and talk about you know, liability and boards… We taught boardsmanship skills to business people.

SB: I see.

FR: And then we placed them on arts boards.
SB: Oh, that's good. Wonderful.

FR: So that was another way that we brought businesses and the arts together.

SB: Terrific. How long were you with Tampa Bay Business…?

FR: 1996 was when I started, in the fall of '96. And in January of 2002 I retired, at the peak of my career. To serve on various other boards.

SB: I just can't even imagine, what's in the future for Franci Rudolph?

FR: Well I'm still doing dispute resolution as an arbitrator for the National Association of Securities Dealers. But I've been doing that since the early '90s. I had served on the Creative Tampa Bay board as they were forming. They've since gone to a different format, so I'm more in an advisory capacity for them.

SB: Would you like to comment on that organization? What it is, how it began?

FR: Creative Tampa Bay, I think it came out of the vision of four women [laughs]. But the point of that is that Richard Florida came out with this whole thing about Creative Industries, and these are the people that you want in your community. You want the young people attracted to your community, and what's meaningful to them? It's arts offerings and those kinds of networking opportunities and they're the organization that's motivating that in our communities. So I'm so happy to see it take off. I served on the Arts Council as an ex-officio member when I was head of the TBBCA, but they invited me back to serve on the—not on their board, but they're developing a new community cultural plan. And I actually headed up a subcommittee about our arts organizations so that we could vision what this community needs for its arts organizations. And frankly, you know, the big organizations are doing great, the large organizations. The problem comes in with the smaller ones. They're needier, and we almost don't have any midsize ones because either the small ones fold or stay small, or disappear. So you know, we listen to what the needs would be to help build those things up. So there's a draft of a plan that's—you can get on the website of the Arts Council of Hillsborough County.

SB: Is that called the Hillsborough Community Cultural Plan?

FR: Plan. That's it.

SB: Great.

FR: That's it, so I was on that committee.

SB: Right there on the web.

FR: Yes, I was on that committee.
SB: And it's finished? Or it's…?

FR: It's finished, it's been drafted, but I don't know that…

SB: Has the public been exposed to it?

FR: I think they've been exposed to it through the website, but I don't think it's been brought to like, the County Commission yet, or….

SB: Been implemented?

FR: Right, it has not been implemented. It's just sort of….

SB: Is it a grand design of sorts?

FR: Well I guess you could call it a grand design. I mean it's things that, objectives that need to be accomplished and I think prioritized. And I think it's a great…

SB: Are you still on the Arts Council?

FR: No, no.

SB: I see. Any plans for involvement on other boards?

FR: Possibly….

[Laughter]

FR: I've been trying to say no to new boards. I'm still involved with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation board since I have a niece with that. In fact, my sister and I started—we did several fundraisers for them. We started with the "All Sports Spectacular." And then we moved to a New Years Eve gala, I think we called it the 65 Roses Gala. And that goes back to—Mary Weiss had, who lives in Palm Beach, had three sons who were all born with cystic fibrosis. In fact she's lost one of those sons. But the youngest, who lives in Tampa, actually heard her—overheard her talking about it, and he says, I know what you're talking about, 65 Roses. That's what he thought "cystic fibrosis" was.

SB: Oh, I see.

FR: That's where that comes from.

SB: Wow.

FR: And you know, I was just sort of thinking back to the some of the things that I initiated. One of my favorite programs that I started, and it's no longer still being done, it
was called, "Lectures of Note." And it was for the Florida Orchestra. And this is going to date me, because it was at Aunt Hattie's restaurant, which is now, I think, condominiums…

SB: It is. [Laughs]

FR: But we used to have luncheons, four per year, and we would bring in some of the great musicians to speak to members in the community in the Westshore area for lunch. And my favorite was—we had Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, who is a violinist.

SB: Who will be playing with the Orchestra this year?

FR: Oh good. Well, she was a fun speaker. But she's a big Yankee fan. And we presented her, through George Steinbrenner, a Yankee jacket. And I still remember that was one of my most…

SB: Oh my goodness.

FR: …exciting "Lectures of Note."

SB: That is great. Well those are vivid memories that you've got. Do you have any other favorite memories that you want to share?

FR: Well I enjoyed being Broadway Ball Chairman, and Pavilion. I can tell you the start of Pavilion. Pat Harvey, who was then the wife of Frank Harvey, who was the Head of Maas Brothers, grew up in Nashville, and she had a dream to bring Nashville Swan Ball to Tampa, to have it be this really major white-tie, the social event of the year, event. And I was part of her original committee, and it was very exciting because she gave birth to Pavilion. And I remember we had a patron's party at the new country club in town that opened, Avila.

SB: Oh my goodness.

FR: That's where we had our patron's party.

SB: What year was that? Do you remember?

FR: I'd have to look it up…

SB: I can't remember.

FR: I can't remember either but I could probably find out. We had one patron's party on the porch at Fletcher Lounge, at Plant Hall at the University of Tampa.

But my favorite job, which I took on twice—I say my favorite because it was something I could do with my husband—I was the dinner—we were the Dinner Chairmen for
Pavilion. And it was the first year, it was 1985, and they were going to move Pavilion out of—it used to be at Curtis Hixon Hall…

SB: Yes.

FR: …which used to block the museum's view from Ashley Drive. And they were going to move it out of there, and we needed to bring in an outside caterer. So we had, it was Chavez, it was Mise en Place, and I can't even remember the third one. And we had them cook dinner in my house and serve it on china the way they would do it for Pavilion. So I remember my husband saying, *sign up for this committee again!* And we actually did it again in 2001. I can't remember who was the Pavilion Chair that year, but I was happy to do it yet once again!

SB: It strikes a very vivid memory, thank you.

FR: And I think that was the year we moved—were you Chairman that year?

SB: Yes, yes.

FR: And isn't that the year we had Hans Hickel, chef of the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay and…?

SB: Yes, yes.

FR: And we had…

SB: Yes, thanks to you. They've been….

FR: …and the Grand Hyatt Tampa

SB: …doing it every year since.

FR: And they've been doing it every year. So, that was one of my…

SB: Good job!

FR: …favorite jobs and it was fun working with you!

[Laughter]

SB: It was great. Well, speaking of fun Franci, this has just been great. And I, you know, just one last “ask” if you have any other memories or anything you would like to share with our potential listener. I can only tell you that you are an amazing individual. And if one person listening to this tape is inspired to give of themselves in the community, I think this would be really worthwhile.
FR: Well that's very sweet.

SB: You're an inspiration.

FR: And I'm trying to think if there's one memory that—there really aren't, but I think this is such a good idea to archive this because there are so many memories that we'll never be able to go back and recapture. So that if we don't get them down, you know, they're gone.

SB: Yes.

FR: I know this—you know, I've lost both of my parents, and there are so many questions. I want to go back, like, who is that a picture of? You know, I needed to write it down.

SB: Sure.

FR: So this, doing this, is just such a wonderful idea. And I'm happy to be part of the project.

SB: Well, again, thank you so much. It's just been a pleasure.

FR: The pleasure is all mine.

SB: Alright.

FR: Bye-bye.

[End of interview]