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Dr. William Bott

St. Julien: Today I am speaking with Dr. William Bott, Professor of Counselor Education in the College of Education, for the USF Silver Anniversary Oral History Project. Dr. Bott, what was your first contact with USF, why did you choose to come here, and what were some of your first impressions?

Bott: I had been teaching at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, where Dean Battle was dean. He was employed as Dean of the College of Education at the new University of South Florida. He asked me to come as a faculty member. So I was appointed in the spring of 1960 and was a charter faculty member. I first came to the campus in the late spring of 1960 and the first buildings were under construction, got stuck in the sand, and was lifted by a bulldozer who was working at the site. So that was one of my first impressions. And then of course the early offices were located on Plant Avenue and the first meetings I attended were there. It was very exciting during 1960 because the plans were underway and the people who were appointed as charter faculty were invited from time to time to come and participate in the seminars, even prior to their official appointments. So that during that year, during the spring of '60, I was able to meet during a variety of times and for a variety of purposes in the office of Plant Avenue. So the first impressions were ones of excitement and challenge.

St. Julien: What was your sense of community support?

Bott: It seemed to me, at the time, who was new to Tampa that it was very strong. It seemed to me that Tampans wanted this university. They were
very pleased to have gotten it placed in Tampa and were very eager to do what they could.

St. Julien: Did you hear anything about the legislative efforts in getting the University here?

Bott: A little bit. When President Allen was appointed in 1957, when the University was chartered, he spent the first year or two moving around the state to inform the Florida population about the new state university that was going to be built in Tampa. One of the places he came--I guess at that time I had never heard of this university--was on his visit to the Florida Southern campus to talk to people there about the new state university. He had been invited and he came and spoke to an assembly. That must have been in '58 or '59. So that from that point on, it was evident that he was going to the legislature to get initial funding. Anybody who was at all interested was aware of the politics involved, through the early funding that seemed to . . . The state had permitted itself to open this fourth state university. So it was a matter then of recognizing how the legislature plays a part in funding the state universities and so forth.

St. Julien: In your opinion do you feel that the state gave ample funding to the University for its programs in the beginning?

Bott: I guess from one point of view the funding has never been adequate and maybe it will never be adequate. But I think during those early years there was maybe more eagerness to support a brand new university which was the first new university in many, many years. We didn't have the competition among the several universities which have been built since. We were,
of course, then dealing with the University of Florida, Florida State and Florida A & M, but as the only new institution we didn't have as much competition for funds as we came to have later. So I think the early support may have been rather strong both economically and in terms of morale.

St. Julien: Do you recall any kind of debate concerning the specific location of the campus, especially when they decided to put the breweries so close?

Bott: Most of it was after the fact. I know that there was very strong competition between Pinellas County and Hillsborough County. I know that when Hillsborough County was finally chosen as the county and this was chosen as the site, people in Pinellas County nicknamed it "Brew U." as a derogatory term and of course the feeling was strong over there. It was rather a hot feeling. They had lost, in effect, the right to a new university.

St. Julien: When you came to this campus after teaching at Florida Southern, I understand that most of the students here were commuter students.

Bott: That's right. The first dormitory was the upper level of the University Center.

St. Julien: So there were very few dorm students? What was your sense of the difference between the students at Florida Southern and students here?

Bott: There was a very big difference. The students at Florida Southern, because of the kind of institution it was, gave the impression of being much more protected than students here who represented a diverse group. During the early years especially here, we had many "mature" students who
had long wanted to go to some higher educational institution, but couldn't afford to go to a private institution. They never thought they would get to go to a college and then all of a sudden, this University opened and it was relatively inexpensive. So even during the very first year, many of our students were mature in the sense that they were in their thirties and were middle aged. I think that was unusual in 1960.

**St. Julien:** I understand that in the very beginning there were no evening classes?

**Bott:** There were evening classes. But that posed a problem because knowing this was a commuter institution, people wanted to do everything they could to let students feel some kind of belonging and a sense of identity. So evening classes had to be offered twice a week. In other words it was to get students out here more than once so that they would not come only one night and feel that they had spent their time at the University. I'm not making myself very clear. In our college particularly it was important to have evening classes because some of our students were coming for teacher certification purposes and so on. We needed evening classes, so the early ones which were offered during that very first term were offered two nights a week. Later we were able to persuade the central administration that we could accomplish the same purposes by having a longer period, one night per week, and building in a dinner break. That was the pattern that followed. It had many advantages because students in classes would mingle at dinner, and this wasn't just machines. We would typically go to the dining hall and in many cases we would arrange to meet as a group and the class would continue. But it extended it by at least one hour. So classes were held from 5pm until 10pm. But that was one way that we could
let students feel more at home and feel a sense of identity with the University.

St. Julien: I have talked to a charter student. She was not sure that there had been evening classes, so I wanted to clear that up. I suppose that you advised students?

Bott: When I came as Coordinator of Advising in the College of Education, we didn't have a graduate program. So I had been Coordinator of Advising at Florida Southern, and I think that is the reason that Dean Battle invited me to join the charter faculty. So I came as Coordinator of Advising in the College of Education and taught as well. It wasn't until 1965 that this master's level program was offered. It was a program which I, with cooperative efforts from a variety of people at the University, planned and developed, this program which was then called the Guidance Program.

St. Julien: Did you find a lot of interest even before the program was developed?

Bott: Yes. The first graduate program was in elementary education. That was offered in the fall of '64, and it was the first offered because there was a great demand for that. Then in the fall of '65 several other master's programs were offered including ours and they were all offered as a result of demand. So that the early graduate programs in our college and I would guess, all over the University, were offered as a result of demand. In our college, from public education, the needs as seen by the people in the community, in particular public education . . .

St. Julien: I understand that Education was one of the biggest departments at the University when it first started. Could you tell me in your opinion why that was so important at that time and why there was such a demand?
Bott: Well, I think that we were in a time when there was a demand for teachers for one thing. I think it represented a very appropriate major for many of the middle aged people who came in, in many cases, as freshman. They were, in a sense, realizing goals that perhaps they had set for themselves long before it was possible; for the first time they work toward meeting them. As I say, it was a time when there was a teacher shortage so it was a major which made alot of sense in terms of practicality.

St. Julien: Did you find as many males as there were females at that time?

Bott: At that time, in our college, there were more females.

St. Julien: But you did have . . .

Bott: Yes, from the very beginning we have had males. And the number of males has increased proportionately ever since. But one of the really different things about that early population of students was that many of them were here after having given up hope of ever having a college education because they graduated from high school, they were married, and they would be settled here, and going out of town to a state university was not possible and going to a private institution in the area was too expensive. So all of a sudden here would be this new university to do what they have always wanted to do and never thought that they would be able to.

St. Julien: Did you find them to be eager students?

Bott: Oh yes. They were exciting students in many respects. They under went some real hardships and considerable sacrifices to do what they wanted to do. But they came in droves and during that first year and second year
and even third year, you could spend all of your time talking to perspective students. And then in addition many students transferred from private colleges in the area because this was so much less expensive. So we had droves of people who came from Florida Southern and the University of Tampa because this was so much less expensive.

St. Julien: Tell us how advising was set up at that time.

Bott: In our college it was a matter of assigning advisors from our college at the time students declared majors. I would frequently talk to most students who came on campus and would answer some of the initial questions and early questions and provide the time to advise them when needed. But also any faculty member in the college was a potential advisor and as soon as students declared their majors, indicating special interests, then they were officially assigned to some faculty member in their area within the college.

St. Julien: What do you recall about the College of Basic Studies and John Allen's mission?

Bott: I think it was one of the most exciting things in which I have ever participated. It was tremendous challenge. I think a part of the appeal to most people who came as faculty was this mission. It was a time I would not have missed for anything. It meant hard work and all of us who were here during the first, second, and third year, I would say were totally committed to that concept. And many people were hand picked because of their commitment to general education and to the kind of mission which Dr. Allen was very effective in describing. All of the early staff and faculty were effective spokesmen. So I would say many
people who came, came because of the challenge, excitement, and the enthusiasm of the people who had been building the program. It was an exciting time. You see then, the faculty was small enough that every faculty served on some major committee. With the "all university approach" that was emphasized, a point was made to include representatives of every part of the University on every committee. On our college, which had a very small faculty, it meant that all of us were on several committees because the College of Education needed to be represented as well. So each of us had maybe three, four, or five committee assignments and were involved as were representatives of all the other parts of the University in all of the major plans.

St. Julien: I understand that you had an "All University Book" that everybody was expected to read?

Bott: We did some exciting things. We had the "All University Book." Faculty read it and students read it. There was no requirement to read it. But it was sort of advertised and publicized as something that would bring this kind of cohesiveness to the University community. So there would be picnic lunches at which we would discuss the book. The faculty would discuss it in classes. There would be informal discussion groups that would be scheduled and anybody who wanted to could come and there would be a book discussion. Each semester there was an "All University Book."

St. Julien: What was that book about?

Bott: It could be about anything. People were invited to make suggestions. I think there was an All University Book Committee that would pick books that were stimulating and perhaps some that represented a view point that
could be debated. One of them, for instance, was *Animal Farm*. One of them had to do with a deserter from WWI. There were things like that; books that were typically controversial or had something in them that was controversial.

St. Julien: How was that affected by the Johns Committee, or was it at all?

Bott: Everything, I think for a little while, was affected by the Johns Committee just because it was such a dismal period in our history. There was strong feeling among most of the faculty that they were doing what they had no business doing. It represented a real invasion into academic freedom. It was viewed as just about the least desirable kind of meddling.

St. Julien: How did Dr. Allen react to the Johns Committee?

Bott: I think he and most people reacted very appropriately. There was nothing we could do. They were here, they were bringing in people to interview, they were trying to get records and they were doing what nobody could stop them from doing. So it wasn't a matter of giving into them, it was a matter of trying to deal with them and proceed as usual. It was a black period in the history of USF.

St. Julien: Were you questioned?

Bott: No, I was not. I don't know of anybody in the College of Education that was. Of course, the College of . . . It wasn't Language and Literature then, but the college which included literature and things of that sort just because of the subject matter which they used. Some pieces of literature that were questioned were viewed as works of pornography.
St. Julien: Did you all continue to have the "All University Book" during the . . . ?

Bott: I know the Johns Committee didn't put a stop to it. It may have been because we weren't active in programs like that when the Johns Committee came. But it didn't put a stop to it. If the program was still going, it didn't stop.

St. Julien: In your opinion how did the Johns Committee affect the interaction among the students and the faculty?

Bott: From my own point of view, it didn't affect the interaction at all. It may have in some cases, but it seems to me that in some cases faculty were more determined than ever to exercise what they viewed as academic freedom. I would say most people proceeded just as they had been. It was almost a matter of trying to disregard this committee.

St. Julien: You have been here for quite a while. How would you describe the changes that have taken place through the different administrations?

Bott: As a charter faculty member, I saw great strength in Dr. Allen and I saw it in very appropriate and positive ways. You can't deny that it takes great strength and courage to start a new university. He provided the leadership and tended to provide the stimulus for everybody to give all that they could give. There was no question of it. I think the "all university approach" was of tremendous value. I think the general education mission was of tremendous value and I think we lost something in time as we began to de-emphasize some aspects of the program. From my own point of view, Mackey's administration was an unfortunate one and it may
have been just that: it was the beginning of the new and the ending of
the old. I think those of us who had been here since the beginning, or
since the very early years, value what had gone on and a new administra-
tion comes in and perhaps the values are not the same. So I think that
was an unfortunate period. And then there was a span of time when we had
an acting president and it was evidently a very positive time. That was
Harris Dean. I'm getting my chronology mixed up. Dean was right after
Mackey. But we also had Smith. He was acting dean I believe. I was on
leave at that time so I was not here. That evidently was viewed by many
as being a very positive time. And then, of course, we began to settle
down and we had the longer lasting administration which we still have.

St. Julien: If you think about the quality of life at USF, such as the housing, do you
recall any kind of student protests here at this University?

Bott: Certainly not strong ones like other universities had. In fact I think
most people thought it was a result of the fact that the larger part of
the population here was a commuting population. But when all of the
difficulty was going on in the '60s when there were mass protests and
students protests, we didn't have that. We had maybe just a little bit of
that during the '60s. The contrast was rather remarkable. It was almost
business as usual here. But certainly there have been some student
protests through the years.

St. Julien: When you started out, was this an integrated college?

Bott: Integrated in what sense?

St. Julien: As far as race.
Bott: Yes.

St. Julien: So there was never any segregation?

Bott: No, but at that time most of the students were white.

St. Julien: Were there black students at the time?

Bott: Yes.

St. Julien: Do you recall any other minorities?

Bott: Well, we have always had a very large Latin population because of Tampa's location.

St. Julien: Was there any kind of women's liberation movement on campus?

Bott: There were very responsible feelings here. I don't remember any protests or any movements. But there were certainly people who took very responsible positions and stood with them and made points very effectively. I remember the first salary study. It seems to me it was done very responsibly and the leadership made a very strong case and they did it in a very effective way.

St. Julien: Do you recall the formation of the union or any of the incentives of why it was formed?

Bott: Well, I think it was formed just because people wanted to think in terms of what they deserved relative to what, from time to time, the state is willing to give. I was never a union member. I have been tempted many
times to join the union. I really think, to a great extent, the membership came as a result of salary issues and other benefit issues.

St. Julien: I understand there was a salary freeze?

Bott: We have had freezes and, of course, most people would say we have, never been, in all levels of education, there has not been the recognition of work that you find in a similar profession. But there have been times of salary freezes. Very rarely has there been times of very large salary increases. They haven't even kept up with the cost of living increases. I think there have certainly been those who very responsibly thought that we needed to get the case across and we needed to help get the state . . . our education is valuable and it is going to cost.

St. Julien: What about sports? With Allen, the issue came up at the very beginning, whether USF would have . . .

Bott: He made it very clear from the very beginning, he and the central administration, that there would not be varsity football on campus. He made that clear and he never varied from that position.

St. Julien: What kind of reaction came from the community?

Bott: At that time the University of Tampa had a football team, and it was a fairly active program so people could direct their efforts there. I think many other people had ties with the University of Florida, Florida State, and Florida A & M so it was not as though they were living in a sports vacuum. But there was certainly some feeling and there continues to be some feeling with the University of South Florida that it needs football. It was rather remarkable how that issue was put aside very early and never
became a major focal point as I remember. Others may see it from another perspective. But basketball was supposed to soothe any feelings of neglect.

St. Julien: Was Dr. Allen the one who let basketball . . . ?

Bott: Yes. I'm not sure. But I think our varsity basketball program was started under Dr. Allen.

St. Julien: So he wasn't totally opposed to sports?

Bott: No. It was mostly football. It was the basis of cost and the need to spend money or to put resources in other places. His point was that we could have an outstanding university without having football.

St. Julien: I understand his emphasis was on teaching rather than on research?

Bott: On the original applications which we used here for some time, I don't know what they are now and I don't know whether it has been changed, but one item had to do with the applicant's feeling towards teaching and how he viewed teaching in a university situation. Tremendous weight was put on the response to that item when applications were looked at simply because an emphasis was put on effective teaching. That was not to de-emphasize research or to put it aside, but it was recognized early in the history of the University that teaching was going to be extremely important. So tremendous effort was made to get people who were committed to teaching. I think the early faculty was. They loved teaching. Another thing that was interesting during those early years, when we just had freshmen, then sophomores, and then juniors, everybody here taught freshmen so that freshmen here, during the early years of the history of
the University, were being taught by some of the highest powered people on the faculty. That was considered extremely important.

St. Julien: Was there any kind of institutions or associations that were established for the maintenance of community interest or support? I have heard the theatre mentioned.

Bott: That was actually quite early and even though the first performances were given in the Chemistry building, it was well received from the beginning, and I would guess was one of the early programs to get specific community support. I think the music program was another one. The person who developed that program was the dean of that college, the College of Fine Arts, who was very popular in the community and he had tremendous support. So very early those programs got community support. I think Dean Battle was very effective in the College of Education in getting public school support and I think in that college that has continued to be one of our great strengths. We have always worked closely and had very strong cooperation from the public school systems and the counties nearby. That was started very early. So, yes, I think various aspects of the program were valued by many parts of the public from the very beginning.

St. Julien: What kind of competition did you have with the University of Florida or Florida State? If the competition wasn't so strong, what kind of cooperation have you personally received, for instance, in the Education department from these different state universities?

Bott: Again, Dean Battle, in the early years, spent time developing relationships with counterparts at the other state universities. I remember, for instance, when we were developing our advising program. He arranged for
me to visit the Director of Advising, I don't remember his exact title, at the University of Florida's College of Education. I went there and we met all day. I got all sorts of help from them relative to knowing what their program was like and how they had set it up. So I think we got help from them and some support.

St. Julien: So they didn't give you the impression that they were afraid that you were draining their resources?

Bott: Not in those early years. I think we were so young and they knew we were no threat. I think that threat has come much later as we have grown.

St. Julien: Do you find that relationship has changed over the years?

Bott: It would seem that it has. It would seem that there is more competition simply because there are more universities and the resources have to be spread more ways.

St. Julien: How did the branch campuses come into being as far as funding?

Bott: I'm not sure. I have taught off campus in branch campuses, but I have never been involved in the administration or in the specifics of support. My guess is they have fared relatively well. Again because we wanted to develop them and we wanted to give them every chance to get off the ground.

St. Julien: When you were teaching those classes, did you find any difference in the environment on those campuses as opposed to this campus?

Bott: Only in the sense that we are a large campus and when those campuses were started they were using make-shift buildings and really making do. But
typically in those new little campuses there was always tremendous enthusiasm and help and cooperation for all aspects of that.

St. Julien: What role can you recall that local or state politicians had in developing this University other than the fact of getting the University started?

Bott: Some of them have been very active. Representative Gibbons, for instance, is viewed as one who never missed a chance to provide support to this University. If you talk to people in the library you know that he was influential in getting a depository library program here. I think through the years, locally, representatives and senators from this area have been extremely helpful. It is in their territory so it really hasn't been a problem.

St. Julien: In summarizing your years here at the University, what would you say were some of the worst or some of the best developments that you have seen take place over the 25 years?

Bott: Well, I think the first real down period came with the Johns investigation. That knocked morale for a loop. I think some of the best times came during the early years when there was such enthusiasm and there was such commitment and there was such challenge. I think moving away from the general education program ... It represents a new direction. I think that it was unfortunate that general education was ahead of its time, but I think it represented a very valuable dimension in university education. I think in more recent years some of the low points have come as a result of what we have felt has not been adequate support in the legislature. I think the time when President Mackey was here, from my point of view, represented a relatively low point in the history of the
University. Maybe that had to come. Maybe it was a period that we had to move through in the process of growth and development.

St. Julien: Do you see any good developments taking place now? Any innovative ideas?

Bott: I think in our College, for instance, there is much innovation. I think the dean we have now has been very active. I think he is creative. I think he has some exciting ideas going on in the College of Education, particularly in relationship with the public school personnel.

St. Julien: Well thank you very much for speaking with us today.