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Robert H. Fuson oral history interview by Nancy Hewitt, August 8, 1985

Robert Henderson Fuson (Interviewee)

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Hewitt: This afternoon I am talking with Dr. Robert Fuson of the Department of Geography as part of the USF Silver Anniversary Oral History Project. First of all, could you tell me what was your first contact with the University of South Florida and why did you decide to come here to work?

Fuson: First contact was a letter from then-Dean Sidney French who, at one time, was the roommate of my old department chairman when they were students at Michigan together many years ago.

Hewitt: What made you decide to move from your previous job to USF?

Fuson: I guess I should tell you why I was where I was in the first place. I was at Louisiana State University at New Orleans. Now it is called the University of New Orleans. It was a New Orleans branch of LSU. I went there because I was an LSU alumni. So they asked me to go there to help organize Geography/Anthropology at the New Orleans campus since I was familiar with the system. So I went there. The old department chairman at LSU in Baton Rouge, who had been the roommate of the dean here, thought that I might do better being here than there because this would an independent school. So he contacted Dean French and said that he knew a guy that had great experience in establishing a new university because we had been at it for two years there. So that really had a lot to do with the offer. It was sort of pushed on me, plus the fact that I did know some of the problems involved in getting started in a new university. Most importantly, the decision to leave New Orleans had to do with housing and school for my daughter because housing costs were out of sight. I didn't know a single faculty member that owned a home. They couldn't afford it. There were only two classes of
people in New Orleans. There was the very, very rich and the very, very poor. It was almost like Latin America. I had no hope that I could ever own a home. So I could buy a house in Tampa in 1960 for $16,000 dollars, lot included, that in New Orleans at that time would have cost $75-$100,000. Most of that for land preparation, putting down pilings in the swamp to build your house on, and so housing... And then the very difficult situation with the schools there, I packed up and moved to Tampa.

Hewitt: Do you remember what your first impressions of the campus were when finally saw USF?

Fuson: Well, I had seen the campus before. I had been teaching at the University of Miami. I taught in Miami in '57 and '58. My wife is from Tampa. It's just a coincidence that we are back. That had nothing to do with it. As a matter of fact, that was one reason we almost didn't come back because we made a pledge never to live in either parents' home town to avoid all of the problems that it would cause. We drove up there one Thanksgiving from Miami to see the family and I heard that there was something going on out here. I came out here and got stuck in the sand and there was a guy with a stick in the ground with a yellow flag on it. I went over to him and asked him what the stick was there for. He said that that was where the library was going to be built. That was my first impression. It was the sand, one stick, one yellow flag, and my car stuck out there. I couldn't believe there was anything this far north of Tampa because in those days Hillsborough Avenue was considered the end of town. Nothing was north of Hillsborough.

Hewitt: That's hard to imagine now. Where were all the fast food chains?
Fuson: There weren't any.

Hewitt: Now you mentioned that one of the reasons that you came was because you had this background in starting new programs. When you first were here as a charter faculty member in 1960, how much influence did faculty members have in terms of program development at USF?

Fuson: That's a little bit difficult to answer because on the surface it looked like we had a lot. Everybody was on twenty committees. The committees met eight days a week. They met at night and sometimes until three or four in the morning. I remember the Social Science Council frequently meeting until three in the morning trying to work out programs and arguing courses. So there was a lot of input. But then again we got the feeling that some of this was predetermined and the decisions had already been made. I sometimes felt that way. But I think we really did have quite an input. For example, nobody knew what geography was. They had it established. It existed in the catalogue. But they really didn't know what it was. So I had a lot to do with it. Then I inherited Anthropology by default. During the first two years, for all practical purposes, I was the only anthropologist. I had an input in that. So I think we did have a lot to say in the early days about the structure and which way we would go. But some of it took some doing because many of our deans in those days already thought they knew everything about everything. That was one of the big problems. There was a general education thrust. We were all half in something else. You wouldn't come here, for example, and just teach history. You would have been in history and you would have been teaching a course called the American Idea. It would have been amazing if you could have figured out what anyone meant by that course. I was in first, Geography, and then Behavioral Science. I
taught Psychology and Logic. I taught ven diagrams and statistics plus I had my own rat. I didn't like this, so later on I moved over to American Idea which I didn't like either, but at least I knew where it was coming from. Everybody was split. Everybody was in two departments.

Hewitt: What was the benefit of that suppose to be?

Fuson: Well, the idea was that everybody needed a broad, general education and if students needed it, certainly faculty members, people that knew more than students, could teach this to them. So by direct plan the University took people even out of their area. For example, math was taught by biologists, not mathematicians. Mathematicians were maybe teaching chemistry. Geography was teaching psychology. Psychologists were teaching English, by just organizational structure. It was absolutely terrible and very painful because even general education, most of us knew what that was, but we didn't think general education should mean people teaching clear out of their fields. This was absurd. I could have taught in two or three disciplines, but not arbitrarily selected like that. I have a degree in Political Science and I could have done fairly well in that. I could have taught anthropology or geography, but I wasn't equipped to teach psychology or logic. I learned alot, but I had to stay a day ahead of the students. It was a painful year, and I don't think there was a heck of alot of depth to anything that anybody did. It was a very superficial, general program. Everybody at the dean's level and above was brought in for that reason. It was a very vague amorphous kind of education. It just drove us crazy.

Hewitt: What were relationships like between students, faculty, staff, and administrators when the school was so much smaller?
Fuson: When it started you could get the entire faculty and staff in one room. I think we had around 70 faculty. If we had parties, everybody was there. I mean you did see everybody. A lot of things were structured so there would be an intermix with the faculty and students. That was from the very beginning. Students ran all the committees. Students were involved in a lot of so-called "all university" programs. We had something called the "all university approach" and that meant that... We even had an "All University Book" that each semester there was an All University Book Committee that chose the "All University Book" and that book was read by all the students, secretaries, policemen, groundskeepers, and students. There were questions asked on every exam, from physics to Spanish, about the "All University Book." Panel discussions were held with students, faculty, and staff about the "All University Book." Things were scrambled around to force a mingling of the different groups. It was a deliberate attempt to do that. It didn't really work. The so-called "free hour" that you're probably familiar with existed and it might still exist on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays.

Hewitt: They changed it.

Fuson: They did change it?

Hewitt: Several times.

Fuson: That free hour was time set aside to have all university events so that everybody would be free. There were no meetings to be scheduled, no classes, nothing. Everybody was to be free to attend those things. So the relationships were pretty good. Small staff, small faculty, a small student body, and rather small classes made relations pretty good. The biggest
problem was that it was a commuting school. Nobody lived on campus. So a lot of those things were tried to keep them here so they would develop a campus psychology. That was the idea.

Hewitt: Were there any sports in those early days?

Fuson: There might have been intramural programs. Sometimes I wonder if we have any now when I look at the records of our teams. We were much worse then. Mostly intramural sports.

Hewitt: In 1961, the Johns Committee arrived on campus to hunt for communists and homosexuals. What kind of affect did they have on you, personally, and the campus at large?

Fuson: Indeed I did have contact because I was on one of the committees that spent months on one of the investigations. Professor Grebstein was one of the targets singled out by the Johns Committee. Somewhere in my files I've still got that report on the Grebstein Committee. We worked months and months on that really trying to find out if there really was any substance to this. There wasn't. It was absolutely absurd. Charlie Johns is an ignoramus from north Florida that by accident became governor for a short time. I think the governor died, and he inherited the job for a few months. He couldn't have gotten elected dog catcher in any county with more than 5,000 people. He saw ghosts at night and witches behind every door. All a student had to do was make a charge or just write an anonymous letter to the committee and the next thing... Actually it really was a joke. The fact is they took it seriously and didn't take it seriously... Some of the charges were so absurd and just plain ridiculous that it was laughable. But then on the other hand, you get a group of nuts like this and you can take
something very trivial and blow it up into something very big. Not a single thing, to my knowledge, came out of any of those investigations. Although a bit later one of our administrators was removed for homosexual activities, and it looked very much like a set-up. I mean it looked like the guy was actually framed. Whether he was I don't know, but as far as on this campus, I don't think they ever found a thing. We couldn't even find writing on the restroom walls in this University. This was about the cleanest place I had ever seen. I knew of no radical behavior. We were too busy trying to get this crazy thing going and teaching out of our fields to be involved with theoretical Marxism or anything like that. It was a joke in one sense, but it was serious as someone in Tallahassee was down here . . . I've seen that before. I had seen witch hunts like this at Florida State in the '50s. In fact in 1949 or 1950, that was far more serious than the Johns Committee. They were blasting people in headlines in the front page, naming names and calling them communists and hiding behind immunity in the state senate. So a guy gets up in the state senate and says Nancy is a communist and you can't do anything about it. You can just deny the allegation. Well, by then the damage is done. It wasn't that bad. I think it was much worse in Florida State in '50 than it was with Charlie John. He was such a jerk that nobody took him seriously. The people he charged, the one or two, had such impeccable credentials and were such qualified people that when they were really investigated it just collapsed. Some damage was done, though, I'm sure. Some people were personally hurt. Later there was apparently some split left over from the psychology of that.

Hewitt: One of the things that Sidney French and John Allen apparently were most concerned about was that USF be seen as an urban university. They talked about the urban mission in the first pamphlets advertising USF. Was there
much interaction between people on the campus and people in the community in the early years or was so much time taken up just trying to get off the ground as a university?

Fuson: There was some and, again, this was deliberately planned. For example, the University Orchestra, the University Band or maybe the Orchestra and the Band, involved everybody. They called it the University Community Orchestra. It involved people from town and they came out here and played in it. I played in the University Orchestra and in the University Band. Faculty were in it, students were in it, and people that you didn't know that came in off the streets were in it. There was an involvement with the town, but that always didn't work just right because one time I came up with an international personality that just happen to be a refugee. I came up with the idea that we bring him out, and I was told that we couldn't be bothered with local talent. I said that the man is not local, that he was world renown and he just happens to be here because he is a refugee. They said they if we invite one local personality, the next thing will be the boy scouts and the PTA. They said that we couldn't have local people. I thought that this was a dichotomy. They were saying one thing and doing another. So the community involvement depended on who was doing the involving. Obviously that wasn't in the master plan and so therefore no involvement. There were attempts to work with groups, town and gown type of thing. I don't think there was a great deal of success with this. Most of the community didn't trust us out here. Especially after Charlie John went running around calling us all communists.

Hewitt: By the mid '60s the concept of the College of Basic Studies seems like it was under some challenge from departments or programs that wanted to
specialize and have more work in their own programs. Did you stay teaching in the College of Basic Studies for a long time or was there a shift to kind of move out into the College of Liberal Arts?

Fuson: I worked as hard as I could from the day I got here to whenever I got out of the College of Basic Studies. I mean I could not believe that organization. I also began to see that allot of people really dedicated to it and some devoting full-time to it were people that couldn't hack it in a discipline of any sort. The Basic College, in general, seemed to be a very good dumping ground for people that had prematurely retired. There were a number of people in the Basic College with questionable credentials and, I think, in a couple of cases, false credentials. There were people in the Basic College that found it incredibly easy to teach the same course four times, let everything be done by machine and let guest lecturers handle your class. It was an easy route in many ways. I saw people come into this University that departments wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole. They went right around the corner and were hired by the Basic College. Several of these caused us great embarrassment. The president publicly fired one of them. In a mass meeting of the faculty and students, a public firing, but the person would have never been hired in the department--absolutely not creden-tialed for discipline. In this case it was Political Science. They turned him down flat, and then he went right around the corner to the American Idea and was hired the same day. You saw alot of this. You saw people come in to be interviewed for a job in a disciplinary subject, then be rejected for very good reasons, and then go right around the corner and the next thing you know they are on the campus in the Basic College. Well after awhile you began to see a double standard going. The Basic College seemed to have some good people, but it also had some very questionable people in my opinion.
Hewitt: Now do you remember very much about how the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences was actually set up?

Fuson: First of all we were to have a Director of Social Sciences who didn't show up. Dean Cooper did this in his spare time. He ran the College of Liberal Arts and he also chaired the Social Science group. We had no departments. They were not going to have any departments. They said that departments lead to fences and fences lead to barricades and knowledge stops at these walls. Therefore, we didn't have any departments. By organization there would be none, period. They did concede to have a divisional structure, but there would be no departments. Well, this became unworkable so we more or less evolved into a thing called programs. History, for example, was a program. These weren't departments for all practical purposes. Later they did call these departments. So there was a slow evolution from the social science division to the social science division with programs. Then departments, then an associate dean for the division, then the associate dean became the dean when the (Basic) college flew apart, and we set it up into four different colleges. For a long time we operated as divisions of one college each with an associate dean. It was very confusing.

Hewitt: It sounds very confusing. I'm amazed that you can keep it straight. Once the College was established was there a point at which there was a substantial amount of new hiring?

Fuson: There were new hirings in those early years every year. The University was growing because the student body was almost growing geometrically. It was leaping and there was a great deal of new hiring and, of course,
construction all over the place. The budgets looked good in those days compared to today because there was money. The state was pouring money in and new buildings were going up. There were a lot of new hirings. I'm not sure how far you wanted to go into this because the whole process evolved for a number of years and everybody was hiring during that period.

Hewitt: I understand that this is also the period from the early '60s to maybe the late '60s when there really was a shift in emphasis, although "Accent on Learning" remained the USF motto as it remains today, that there was really a shift in emphasis between teaching and research; that the original emphasis was on teaching and through the '60s more and more emphasis was placed on research credentials for faculty.

Fuson: That is true to some extent, but not completely, because some of the people that came here from day one were very well established in research and had a very good track record in publications and so forth. I had a good research rate when I came here even though I hadn't been teaching long. In my case I could continue my research without a phenomenal amount of equipment. Now someone who came here in chemistry or physics that had a big lab back at Berkeley or something did have to do some wheelspinning until we caught up in the standpoint of material. I would say that there was a fairly good research effort going on in those days. If you go back somewhere in the archives there must be ... Somewhere I have a list of faculty publications of the first faculty. I'm impressed. For 65 of us it is a thick document. It's an immense thing. They were fairly productive people, even in the midst of all this other stuff. As far as anything like doing something that requires massive equipment, that type of research couldn't go on. There were a few people that had that ability that came here and were willing to
gamble that someday we would have it. I wouldn't say it was all teaching. Basic College emphasis was teaching. You were expected to do research.

Hewitt: Did it get easier then for those of you who came with track records in research and publication? Did it become easier to put your time into that as departments, programs, and colleges got more specialized and there was a move away from the College of Basic Studies?

Fuson: It never got easier for me because in the 25 years I've been here I've never really had a significant reduction of teaching for research or anything. I had had two sabbaticals for six months out of 25 years. Most of the time I'm teaching a full load. Even when I was chairman I was teaching more than I probably should have. Maybe it was my fault, but I never saw any reduction in time or available time to do research as time went on. It seemed to get worse. Maybe I'm getting older, lazier, tired and more specialized and now I only do what I want to do. I think I was more productive during some of those confusing chaotic years. Maybe that was an excuse to get away from some of the other problems. I don't believe that it would get easier for me. For one thing the department didn't continue to grow. This building was built in 1969. We designed the space here for seven geographers. That is what we've got with one vacant line. We've got six. We're one down from where we were in '69. They just never replaced a man that we terminated for thousands of law violations and everything else. That is the reward we got for cleaning house. They took a line away from us. I hope somebody hears that comment. We never planned to be a big department. We just never planned and we never worked at it. We knew that we would never have a Ph.D. program because in our profession one in the state is enough. I really believe that. I'm not saying that the one in Gainesville is any good, I'm
just saying that one program is enough. You don't need ten Ph.D. programs in the state of Florida. You don't even need two. So we never planned to offer more than a master's from day one. Some of the departments did, like Anthropology and Psychology, they went after it and when you get 30 or 40 people in the department you can have the luxury of releasing people for research. So one of the reasons I didn't get the time off was that I wasn't an empire builder and didn't build up a big enough empire to hide the release time.

Hewitt: So in some sense even though there is more emphasis on research and publication now than there might have been in those early days, at least in terms of getting tenured and promoted and that sort of thing, it's not necessarily more resources than there were in those early days, depending on which programs...

Fuson: I had more resources, if you mean money, for equipment and for travel in the departmental budget fifteen or twenty years ago than we have now. We could go more places and do more things. We also had a genius in administration at the time. The man, incidentally, that I said was set up on homosexual charges and they fired him, managed to get everybody on the faculty twelve months employment if they wanted it. So anyone that was on the faculty could have the luxury of being employed twelve months and if you worked straight through for a year and a half, then you could have the summer off with pay. It wasn't a sabbatical, it was just some time off to do research. I think there was more free time, more money, and more support at some levels above for the faculty as a whole. Now I would say it is more or less certain units of the faculty get this. I don't want to say that they are playing favorites. I know that in those days everybody could avail
themselves of this. It made no difference if you taught humanities, English, French, or history or so on. You could have full employment and you could have some time off and you had fairly good support for travel. Now my travel won't even pay my meals when I go out of town. I can't go to Miami on our budget. So I fund my own research and travel and to hell with the University.

Hewitt: Let me ask you about the students. I've seen some early photographs of some of the students that were in the first couple of classes. Obviously they look different.


Hewitt: In terms of working with students and the students' attitudes or the students' preparedness for being in college, have you seen any change over the 25 years that you have been here?

Fuson: A lot. The biggest change has been drugs. They didn't exist in 1960. They didn't exist among the student body. Drugs existed of course. There was a gradual increase in that. When they talk about the '60s they would say, well, it was Vietnam. I don't know what it was, all that I know is that the world changed and students changed. I recall sometimes going into class when more than half the class was not able to function. They were really spaced out. That, to me, was the biggest change that I saw. It was drugs and that's it. If I had to put my finger on one single thing I think it would be drugs. I know where drugs are. I was an old, professional musician once upon a time. I never saw it widespread like I did. I don't know why this was. The world changed after 1960 and not just here. You look at
pictures anywhere in 1960. You look at the old yearbooks and see those pictures . . . I've got a picture someplace taken of me with a crew cut and smoking a pipe. A lot of people around here with grey hair had black hair. The world changed and of course, with those things, it became a little more difficult to teach anything that was factual because everybody wanted to rap about something. So we would get students that could talk for three hours on Vietnam, but they didn't know where it was. They didn't know what the climate was and they didn't know who lived there. They had all kinds of ideas. We had people that could talk for hours about the Caribbean, but they didn't know where it was. They didn't know if it was in Europe or in Africa, but they knew it was something to talk about. So we had a lot of people that were quite verbal about things, but you have to have a few facts if you are going to talk about something. I found sort of a sloppy . . . Well, what everybody wanted to . . . They didn't want to get down to the . . . Part of it was the fault of the University. Maybe I'm confusing things here, but the University had been insisting for years that students and faculty be partners in this educational process. Not only partners, but equals. So the students began to believe this after awhile. They would say that they knew just as much about it and that their opinion was as good as ours. My idea has always been that an opinion without any basis is not worth a hoot. That doesn't mean that it can't be different. It has to be based on something. It just can't be thrown out of the air. So we had a period where the students took the attitude that the faculty were there to be buddies. I never really took that attitude because as a faculty member I would like to think that I know more than my students. It's not that I'm not willing to learn from them. I learn every time I go
to a class. But I didn't look at it as a peer relationship because they were not my peers.

Hewitt: Was there actually student activism at USF in the '60s?

Fuson: The first big movement in the '60s was a movement to allow men to wear bermuda shorts. They quietly walked through the administration building patio for three minutes one day to demonstrate this. That was the first series of activism. There was some, but this was a fairly conservative student body. After all, Tampa was a labor town. Most of the families of these kids have never been to a university. Many of the parents have never finished a university. There was a heavy ethnic group identity here that the family almost instilled in these kids at birth, to go on and achieve and get an education. So cigar workers with third grade educations sent their kids out here to get a university education. There was a lot of that. Many of these kids were not into rebelling or stirring up the pot. They were following the wishes of the family. There were activists. We had one major confrontation here one time. One hundred sheriff deputies lined up and the students... I thought that we were on our way to a Kent State scene. It could have really been bad, but cooler heads prevailed and nothing happened. I'm not even sure what it was all about. I don't know what they were protesting, but it was a big event. It looked like serious trouble brewing. Over what I don't know. They might have been arguing over something that was very trivial. I really don't know what it was. I can't remember the situation. I remember the incident of a very nervous night, but I forgot what the issue was.

Hewitt: Several people that I have talked to have said that one of the biggest changes in the history of USF in the first decade was the shift in the
retirement of President Allen and the arrival of President Mackey. Other people that I have talked to claim that the changes that occurred under President Mackey were actually changes that were very gradual and were almost inevitable, like the dismantling of the College of Basic Studies and the reorganization in terms of deans, colleges, and programs. I'm just wondering, from your perspective, was there a big change from one administration to the next or did it seem as though things were inevitable?

Fuson: John Allen was not committed to no change. He had his ideas about general education, but he let the University evolve. We did go into the programs and then into the departments. Things that he might not have wanted appeared; certain things you can't stop like the law of gravity. So the change over from Allen to Mackey... Actually there was a little interim there. Harris Dean filled that spot. He was a good administrator and an easy person to work with. Mackey came in to move the world. Mackey was a mover and a shaker. He made a statement early on in his administration in a public gathering that he wasn't going to be here very long anyhow. That as soon as the administration in Washington changed he was going to be in the cabinet. He definitely would not be here more than five years because he was positive he was going to be a cabinet officer. He went through this University with an axe, hatchet or a buzzsaw. He rolled heads that many times looked like he was just doing it to roll heads. He got rid of some people that I would have gotten rid of a long time ago, but in doing that he got rid of everybody. He threw the baby out with the bath water. I mean, when he cleaned house, he didn't just remove administrators at the dean and director level, he went right on down into the departmental level. He removed department chairmen and shifted things around and literally destroyed some people. I don't mean that it just destroyed them in one sense,
I mean in of couple cases I think actually led to their death. He was vicious. I had no doubt about it. Mackey was vicious. The Tribune ran a story with about 20 photographs of the people on Mackey's hit-list. Mackey was a very vicious person. Apparently that reputation followed him to north Texas, to Michigan, and I understand that he has just been blocked in Hawaii by the legislature from going there. He is not going there to ruin Hawaii. He has ruined three universities. I think he is the worst president that we have had of all the presidents. I think we were better off for a short time when we didn't have a president. I never understood what he was trying to do. I mean, whether he felt that a new broom has to sweep everything out. He moved people out before he even bothered to find out who they were or what they were doing. In some cases the changes were needed and I think that Allen would have made some of the changes. I generally was not on Mackey's side at any point along the way. I thought it was a very troubled time at this University. I didn't like his style. John Allen, even when I disagreed with him and that was frequent, I always respected him and I always understood why he said no to one of my requests. I didn't always agree with him, but I understood why he thought he should say no. With Mackey, I sometimes didn't like it when he said yes. I didn't like Cecile Mackey.

Hewitt: From the late '60s to the early '70s, through Mackey's presidency, were there new programs developed in this college or in your department or was it basically carrying on what it had already been set in motion?

Fuson: I think it was what was set in motion. In this department, no, nothing really changed. As a matter of fact, as strange as it sounds, there was a much greater opportunity for innovation in the Allen days. At least those
people . . . In fact, if anything they did things just because they were new. If it was new they would do it. They didn't want to do anything that had been done. That is where we got alot of crazy programs around here. Alot of things didn't work like the "all university book" and things like that. But if hadn't been done, it was worth trying. So they would try it. The crazier the idea, the more of a positive response you would get. They tried everything from scrambling the schedule around so a student would take a three hour course and the first class would meet at eight o'clock on Monday and six o'clock on Wednesday and two o'clock on Friday just to try that. They tried one time when a student would make a list of all the times they couldn't come to school, then all the classes they wanted, and then the University told them what their program was. That was something. If you had a brand new idea that had never been done, a curriculum idea for instance, and you went to them and said that we should try teaching History of War or something. They would say that no one's ever taught that and that course would go through right then. You would get a History of War. You might even have a department of the History of War. I'm serious. You can combine courses, you could interchange teachers, and you could flip-flop course numbers. We did this with Geography and Anthropology. We had four shared courses. We had one shared course with two programs, with geology, one with zoology, one with botany, a couple with political science and all that changed after Mackey. There are none of these in the catalogue anymore. Not even within the College. They were all abolished. We once had a course with Anthropology called Anthropogeography and a student in either field would get credit if they took that course. It had its own prefix. We would share these things, but not anymore. So Allen and those people would listen to an idea and the crazier it was, the better the chance of getting
it through. So if you had ideas that were innovative, that was a good group to work for. The only problem is that if it was somebody else's idea you often thought that it was the craziest thing you had ever heard of and you sometimes didn't want to partake of it. I think they were more innovative in the early days to the point of self-destruction.

Hewitt: When you think back over the 25 years, what do you think are the most positive developments at USF and what do you think are the most negative developments?

Fuson: Over a 25 year period? Well first of all, USF has evolved into your average, run-of-the-mill university. It started off with all these great ideas and I see very few signs left behind. I think the catalogue still says "Accent on Learning" and I think that's still there. Really, other than that, I don't see much left over. There are still a few interdisciplinary things like whatever that is down the hall, we have a few of those. Alot of those courses disappeared when Henry Winthrop died. That is why they existed. Nobody knew what they were. Henry was the only one that taught them and so they decided to call them Interdisciplinary Social Science and he was the entire department for years. I don't see that we're really much different from any other university, except that we don't have a football team. I mean we have evolved right down the line and in 25 years we have become just about like other American universities. No better and no worse considering the time we've been on the plan. I don't know whether that is good or bad. It proves that some things are bigger than anybody and one is the institutional. It's almost like a university organization has a being of its own. No matter what you start out with or what ideas, eventually its going to become the same thing. We had ideas like ending ranks. We were
going to eliminate all rank and therefore nobody would be jealous of anybody. The structure would be just like a press - nobody would be jealous. They thought that was a good idea. They started with no departments. They thought that was a good idea. Well, many of us have been around . . . We just sit back and let time pass, and you will have rank and you will have departments and we'll do what other universities do, whatever that is, and that is what we are doing. We are not much different. We're not as good or as bad as some, but we are about sort of average. So we just evolved into another American university regardless of all the time we spent in meetings, all the plans and all the crazy programs, we still have these departments, colleges and we still got just about everything except football.

Hewitt: Is there anything from those days that you would like to recapture at USF now?

Fuson: I would like to return to the size we were in 1965. That could be easily arranged. I am going to help with this set of exams I am grading right now. If we could rid of about ten thousand students . . . Yes, I enjoy the smaller university. I meet people in this building and ask them how long they have been here, and they say they have been here since 1972! And I have never met them before. That's bad. We really don't have alot of ways of meeting people across the campus. In those days we did. Some of it was structured, but alot of it was just because we were small. I miss that aspect. We've never had a faculty union or club which would have helped with that. I think things like that . . . We argued that from day one. Can we have a club to get the faculty together? Well, no. We've never had one even though we tried a couple of times. The one thing that I would like to go back to is to some better interaction in all the colleges with all the
different people and to know the students a little better which we did know them better because there were so few. Now there are so many... We have more students in this college than we had in the whole University, or almost as many. Some departments have almost as many majors as we had in the whole University. I'm talking about departments with 600 or 700 majors in this University. So I miss those things. I miss the smaller, more informal, structure. Now I hardly know anybody out of this building unless it was someone I knew in the old days. I haven't met anybody new recently in Engineering, Chemistry or Physics, but I know some that were here. I don't see them. I don't run into them socially unless they live on the same street or something like that. That I miss and the interchange of ideas because sometimes you can actually learn something from an engineer.

Hewitt:  Well let's hope the engineers listen to this tape and learn something from this.

Fuson:  Incidentally we were in that building once. We were their guests when this building was under construction. They didn't have any place to put us, so they put Geography and Anthropology in the basement of the Engineer building. Then they had other people in the dorm, over in Gamma Hall. We had a real bad budget year that year. There was a crisis. So to save money, I removed all the telephones. I thought I could save them a couple thousand dollars. Not only were we on the other side of the campus, nobody could even call us. So after awhile they forgot where we were. That was one of the best years we have ever had because the engineers didn't know what we were doing. They were very nice fellows. Dean Cox was a wonderful man. He was a good landlord. They let us use their auditorium for teaching, which was better than anything we had. Our dean couldn't find us. He lost track
of where we were and we were just left alone. That was the best year that I've ever had, I think, sitting over there in the basement of the Engineering Building in total isolation with no telephones.