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Harriet C. Seligsohn oral history interview by Nancy Hewitt, July 17, 1985

Harriet C. Seligsohn (Interviewee)

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Hewitt: I am speaking today with Dr. Harriet Seligsohn, Director of the Office of Evaluation and Testing, as part of the USF Silver Anniversary Oral History Project. Dr. Seligsohn, could you tell me what your first contact was with the University of South Florida and what convinced you to come here and work initially?

Harriet: Well, at the time I was reading the want ads in the local newspaper because I wanted to go to work. I saw an ad for a statistician. It was through an employment agency, and I responded to it although I really didn't consider myself a statistician in the whole sense of the word because I had a B.S. with a Math major and a Physics minor. I had worked one year in an area where I had gotten a great deal of background and experience and I felt I was really qualified. So I applied. I was the second choice for the job and I eventually got it.

Hewitt: What were your earliest impressions of the University when you actually came out here either to interview or to take the job?

Harriet: Well, my husband brought me out for the interview that day. I didn't know exactly where I was going, and his comment was, "It's a beautiful beach, but it is too far from the water!"

Hewitt: I take it that there weren't too many buildings here or trees?

Harriet: That's correct. There weren't sidewalks. There were three major buildings as I recall and a number of work buildings. Going from one building to the other was quite a chore.
What was your first job at the University of South Florida. What kind of responsibilities did it involve as a statistician?

I worked for three offices. My "home" was the Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation Services and I also did functions for the Business Manager's Office and Personnel Office.

So you actually wore three different hats in your . . . ?

For the first couple of years, yes.

Did you gain any sense of the relationship of University of South Florida to the older universities, like the University of Florida and Florida State University in terms of funding or instruction funds? Anything of that sort?

At that time it appeared to me that we were getting a reasonable share of construction funds, but I did get the feeling that we were not getting a fair share of operating budget funds. In those days I did the first cost study for the University for the business managers office and the first space utilization studies. That gave me a little sense of the fact that, yes, they were giving us all these lovely buildings and these kinds of things, but it still looked like we were a little on the short end of the operating funds.

Now you started out as a statistician, but in talking before we talked on the tape recorder, you mentioned your involvement with Academic Advising. How did you move from one to the other?

I moved in and out of that base office several times. My second move out of that office was in 1969 when as a member of the office, I decided to attack
a problem that I had observed with academic advising. I was finding stu-
dents were very unhappy with the kind of academic advising they were get-
ting, and it occurred to me that we had very few academic advisors and a
fairly sizeable number of students to be handled, so I experimented with a
self-advising brochure. At that time program-techs were just coming in and
were very big and I thought, "Why can't we write a little programmed text-
book for students to advise themselves?" Then they would write down the
answers to certain important questions and then the advisors could work with
them by mail at their convenience instead of having to meet with them in
groups and not really deal with particular students as an individual. As a
result of that experiment, the then Dean of the College of Basic Studies
offered me the job of Coordinator of Advising for the College of Basic
Studies. I was very pleased to take it because it did mean a promotion and
more money. I did feel I had a lot of information about what could be done
with academic advising. So that has always been one of my pet interests and
I stayed in academic advising from January of 1970 until spring of 1977.

Hewitt: Now in that office I assume that the advising structure that we are familiar
with today must have first developed and you also mentioned earlier working
and developing a council on academic advising. Could you talk a little bit
about how those offices developed once you got into this position?

Harriet: Well, initially, as the Coordinator of Advising for the College of Basic
Studies, it was a matter of working with the faculty in the departments of
Basic Studies to help them know what the current policies and procedures
were, to help assign students to them, and to make sure that the process was
in fact going on. There was not much of a change from what had occurred
previously, but the one thing I did find is that since all students were
assigned to the College of Basic Studies for their first two years, and then moved on to their major areas in other colleges, there had been very little communicating between the colleges that the students were moving into and the college from which they were coming from. In particular, Chick Gordon from the College of Education, Ken Davy, and I got our heads together and said, "Hey, we are suppose to be preparing students for you, or you are suppose to be preparing students for us and you don't know what we're doing and we don't know what you're doing," and the three of us started an informal group to keep ourselves up to date on what they expected of the students who were coming into their colleges. As a result of that set of communications we enlarged it to include the other colleges as they evolved. The College of Basic Studies was dissolved in 1971 I believe. Prior to that I had served on several committees that developed what they considered to be an ideal structure for academic advising at the University of South Florida. That is essentially what has come to pass. One result of that was they had, in a sense, a centralized Office of Academic Advising for students who did not yet know what they wanted to major in. There was a need to develop a formal council, and this is something we fought for when the Division of University Studies was born, to have a formal council in the eyes of the entire University. That this is the place where the coordinators of academic advising from each of the units and various other important contacts, such as the Registrar's Office, the Admissions Office, the Office of Community College Relations, and our regional campuses, all had a forum for dealing with their communications, their relationships, and their concerns. I have been very happy. That seems to have been a successful organization.
Hewitt: You've mentioned a couple of times the College of Basic Studies. How would you characterize the early curriculum at USF and what role did Basic Studies have in that early curriculum?

Harriet: I viewed it as a good basis for all students who were attempting a college education. It has always been my philosophy that an educated person is one who has shown the ability to learn. That anyone who has come through a general education curriculum that has been properly designed has shown that ability to learn. Any person who has concentrated too much on job training or career orientation is quickly outdated when that person leaves the institution, and many students who come that route still continue to update themselves, but too many have neglected the basis for their education—the broad general education that helps them to continue to educate themselves through life. I feel that over the years that our general education has been watered down. I think that what we have presently is more of a Chinese menu and of course the student who comes here to be educated, will be educated. But I don't think we provide enough guidance for the typical student who comes to USF.

Hewitt: What do you think were the forces that helped both shape USF's curriculum in the early years and the kind of changes that you see moving towards more vocational and career-oriented education?

Harriet: I think the people who were originally hired, John Allen as the president, people like Harris Dean and Louis Mayhew, came with the philosophy that I have expressed to you. They in turn hired faculty who had the same philosophy. Initially I thought it was fascinating to hear some of the faculty talk to each other and they not only talked in terms of their own discipline, but they related their disciplines to other disciplines. There was
more of a multi-disciplinary approach as I viewed it in the general education courses. Although I wasn't really too involved with classes other than in the mathematics area, I did work with the examiners for the College of Basic Studies examination. They had common examinations in those days. That was part of what I was hired to help with and I was aware from their examinations the kinds of things they were dealing with. I just thought it was beautiful. But then, over time, initially we had, as I said, the extreme emphasis on teaching, less emphasis on research and publication although that was still there. More people with a more single discipline approach were hired as time went on, and I think they developed some conflict between the general education people and what we called the "liberal arts" people. Then further, as the professional schools, which I think have an appropriate place in an institution of this size, developed there developed more conflict between professional school education and liberal arts/general education types. I think also the '60s helped fire that conflict. The students were saying that they wanted courses in this and they wanted courses in that, and the proliferation of courses to meet the request of what we considered to be our consumers helped water down what I considered to be a good academic environment. But the votes aren't all in yet and things keep changing back and forth. I think we are moving back to a more academic orientation. Again, I am not involved in teaching right now, but I am seeing that reconsideration for our general education requirements which I think is badly needed. That issue has been revisited at least five times since I've been here because I have been involved at various points and I don't know what the present deliberations involve, but I do think they need to be reconsidered and they are being reconsidered.
Hewitt: In the early years at USF what would you say were the relations between faculty, staff, and administration? How would you characterize the relations between those groups early on?

Harriet: I think there was a much friendlier environment at that time. I was hired initially as a nonacademic employee which equates to today's career service. And yet I felt very comfortable talking with other member of the staff regardless of their level. I felt very comfortable walking into the president's office if I had something that I wanted to discuss with him. Of course maybe the fact that my office was physically close to his made it a little easier because I would see him coming in in the morning and we would be leaving at the same time in the afternoon on many occasions. But I had no feelings of discomfort walking into anybody's office on campus. I didn't feel any restraints of the channels that we have today. I presently feel restricted whether or not that is a true situation or not. It is something I feel. I think that there is a tendency for career service people to kind of gather together and be afraid to talk to the high level administrators. I think faculty sometimes are afraid to talk to their deans. There is a general feeling of discomfort. I feel that there has been some problems in the past that caused faculty to unionize. I was never involved in any of the politics in that. I felt that that was unfortunate because I think professional groups unionize because of problems with the goals and the missions of the institutions.

Hewitt: Given that it seems that—and several people have mentioned this either as result of the size or of a different atmosphere on campus—that there was more access to various levels of administration, do you think that power and responsibility were actually distributed differently in those early years or
was it a friendlier atmosphere, but power and responsibility still resided only in certain positions?

Harriet: I would say that power and responsibility did reside in selective positions. I felt however that the people that had those powers listened a little better to what others were saying. I feel that now it's so hard to express an opinion and in fact be heard. I may not be accurate on that, but that is again a feeling that I have. I also feel that we have become a lot more top heavy in terms of our high-level administrators. Now it is true that in those early days there weren't nearly as many people, so even though we had a few top-level administrators, maybe proportionately it was the same, but somehow or another now the channels have gotten so complicated and I think a little bit of hardening of the arteries has set in because if I wanted to follow channels and express a concern to my supervisor who in turn expressed my concern to his supervisor and so on. I think that it is expressed, but it is, of course, biased with that person's experiences and opinions, so that my true concern never gets to the point where a decision is made. I think that's not a very positive kind of thing to say for the institution. But on the other hand maybe things are being done to improve that.

Hewitt: Let's hope so. You were on the Planning Committee for the decade of the 1970s. I believe you chaired that committee?

Harriet: For the College of Basic Studies Committee for the planning of the decade of the '70s.

Hewitt: Could you tell me what that committee's mandate was and how it actually functioned in terms of the kinds of proposals it came up with and what happened to those proposals?
Harriet: Well, it had representatives from all of the departments in the College of Basic Studies. I can't remember the exact number, but I think there were nine different departments. The charge of that committee was to look at what the College was doing presently to try to determine what should that College be doing and how should we get there. Part of those considerations were, in fact, a major part of what our general education courses should be. They had already started changing. I talked earlier about what they started out to be in 1960, '61 and '62. Then I talked about the conflict that started to develop between people who were liberal arts oriented and the people that were general ed. oriented, both teaching the same kind of courses. That is where we started to have a little more proliferation of the content of our general education courses. In fact at that time I think the program had changed somewhat when we started to accept other kinds of things in addition to the basics — select so many out of the nine. The group worked very diligently to re-evaluate what was going on. Before they finished their deliberations and recommended any proposal, they were told the College of Basic Studies was going to be dissolved. So that cut everything off.

Hewitt: A lot of planning and no where to go. You mentioned the change in the College of Basic Studies and the dismantling. Some people have tied that change to the change in presidential administrations from Allen and interim president Dean to Mackey. Other people have suggested that those kinds of changes were almost inevitable with the growth of the University. What was your own sense of why these changes occurred and what the crystallizing factor was in the shift away from Basic Studies and the decision to dismantle it?
Harriet: That was the period where the job orientation, career orientation, and business orientation toward managing the University came into being. That was with Cecil Mackey. All this conflict that had been brewing among the different faculties I think led to the dissolution of the College of Basic Studies. One of the things that was happening was a sense of conflict. The College of Basic Studies faculty were not being properly rewarded. The emphasis was no longer on teaching. These people were hired because they were good teachers and now they were not getting salary increments because it was being said that you are teaching and that is fine, but you're not doing what we consider to be meaningful research or you're not doing enough publication. Well, they changed the rules on these people, from my perspective, and from what I believe from talking with individuals from the College. I think that Mackyes' solution was just to do away with the College of Basic Studies so that all of these people would then be absorbed into appropriate departments. It was easier to change the rules on them than to say ok, such and such a percent of your responsibility is teaching, such and such a percent is publication and/or research and/or whatever some of the responsibilities might have been at that time. It was an easy way to quiet a large group of people. There wasn't anything anybody could do about it. Now I'm not saying that it wasn't an appropriate move. Maybe the College of Basic Studies had seen its day. But what really bothered me about the whole thing was that when the College was dissolved, so was any reasonable attempt at a broad general education for our students.

Hewitt: As we moved toward a structure that was more of a traditional university and perhaps more like that of the University of Florida or Florida State University, do you have any sense whether that changed the relationship between
the University of South Florida and the State Legislature? Would it some-
how, in moving towards a more traditional university, have made us more
popular with the State Legislature once we weren't that kind of unique,
distinctive university?

Harriet: I don't think so. Again I had had very little contact with that issue. But
from my experience I would not say that that had too much to do with it.

Hewitt: Also in that shift towards a more vocational oriented, business oriented,
and professional oriented programs, did your job . . . Well, you were hardly
a statistician anymore, but I assume that this is the period in which the
University started implementing the use of computers so that some of the
things you may have done by hand originally at USF were now being shaped by
computers. Did USF in this period, with all these other changes going on,
start to implement the use of computers in its programs in any significant
way?

Harriet: Well, USF had a computer when it first opened its doors. They had a unit
called the Data Processing Division and the primary function of that unit
was the bookkeeping kinds of chores that these initial computers did so
well. One of the problems that occurred, in my initial position of statis-
tician, was that I was told that I could go to the Data Processing Division
and ask them to run what I wanted for my projects. When I went to them and
told them that I needed a mean of this variable and this standard deviation
and so on, when I got back my data I found that it couldn't have been
correct. The reason was that the people who were doing the programming were
from a business orientation. In those very early years people in business
didn't have a good background in statistics and they didn't know how to
compute what I needed. They would include a missing value in the (n) and
count the variable as a zero amount and in my frustration I decided that I would just do my own programming. I went out and borrowed a program text on Fortran. It was supposed to take thirty-five hours on the average for a person to get through that. Well, I took it home on a Friday night and that Monday I came in and started writing the second most complicated program I have ever written in my life, and I have done a lot of programming. In an effort to get what I wanted out of the computer I found that I was going to have to do it myself. This was in '63. Then I continued to do my own programming, and I was very much involved with the Data Processing Division to the point where in 1965 the director of that unit came to me and said, "We would like you to come work for us. Our faculty had needs that were not being met because of their business orientation and you have shown that you can communicate with the faculty, you can use the machine, you know the machine language so to speak, and we want you to come and be our research consultant and programmer for the faculty needs." In that sense I was the first computer research center. I found that the work load grew terrifically. Once the faculty knew I was there, they were there! I can't even remember all the different projects I worked on. People now even come to me and say, "You remember you did that for me?" I really couldn't remember. One of my first projects then was to develop a series of what is now call "canned programs." To do basic statistical analysis for the faculty where all we had to do was feed in the variables and we could get out means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients, the simple analysis of variance, all these kinds of things. And this was before they had packaged programs as such. So it was interesting for me to watch the development of the SAS package, the SPSS package, and the Biomed package because I was responding to a need for the faculty. I couldn't program each project
separately, so I tried to do something that would meet the needs of a lot of people. One of the interesting things that I did was I decided to develop some chants computer music. This was done strictly using a table of random numbers and defining by code notes of the scale, expressions, and these kinds of things, and I talked with Dr. Theodore Hoffman, who I think at that time was with the Humanities department, and he is a composer as you may or may not know, but I said if I do the coding of all of this and develop a piece, will you convert it to a score? He was kind of excited about it. He thought it would be a lot of fun. This was really just a lark and something we did just because it was fun. I did it. Then he did it and he even got the University Orchestra to play it for us. I sat there and listened to it and some of it was terribly discordant. Then when I sat back I thought, well that's not different from a lot of modern music today anyway. Some of it was quite melodic. It was a fun thing to do. I had forgotten about it for many years until you had mentioned you were coming to see me and I ran across this old article from the newspaper.

Hewitt: Let me ask you some questions about the quality of life at USF. You mentioned that in the early years there was a more personal, friendly atmosphere on campus between staff, faculty, and administration. You also served here as a teacher at various points. What would you say the students were like or how might the students have been different in the early '60s from what the students are like today?

Harriet: I can't speak for today since I stopped teaching approximately three or four years ago and my later teaching was all graduate level. But I did see a difference from very early years when I started to teach in the mid '70s. I personally felt that my students in the very early days were more
serious-minded students. More of the students were really there to learn. Over time I got the feeling that the students were there because somebody else said they ought to be there. It became a challenge to try and teach them. I felt that I was having to force the issue with them rather than having them come to class with an eagerness to learn. I also felt that in the latter years grade inflation had taken such a toll that ... I thought that I was a fair grader. But I had a lot of people that were very upset with my grading because they felt that they all deserved A's and my feeling is that a C is a very good grade. If you are exceptional in my class, you got a B. If you are exceedingly exceptional you will get an A. My students didn't agree with me on that. My decision held.

Hewitt: You mentioned earlier that you were involved in academic advising and obviously you were concerned about students getting information on campus and the quality of life for students. I understand that you also worked with a local sorority on an attempt to get a local sorority national affiliation. Could you tell us a little bit about your involvement with that activity?

Harriet: Phyllis Marshall at the time was Director of Student Organizations and I knew Phyllis because we played bridge together as a group. We had the same game going, in fact, until very recently. She said she had a group of women who wanted to start a local sorority and they needed a sponsor and would I be willing to sponsor them. So I did. As it turned out that group decided to go national and since they chose the national that I happened to be involved with, I stayed with them. That group was on campus for 11 years. I enjoyed that, but I saw some of the same differences in students through that 11 years, from mid '60s to the late '70s, that I saw in my students in
the classroom. I think part of the reason that that sorority did not last on campus was because of the emphasis on job and career orientation that society, in general, was dictating and the need for the students who have to work, want to work, put work before their education. Anyway, I did enjoy the group. I had a lot of fun with it, but I think that the group that I was involved with just didn't have the commitment to a sorority and there was no point in continuing with it when it wasn't doing for them what they should have been getting out of it. That is not really what I looked to it for.

Hewitt: Your involvement with women on campus has gone beyond working with the sorority. I know you were a member of the Status of Women's Committee at one time. How would you describe the conditions that led you to be interested in being a member of something like the Status of Women's Committee and then what do you think were the results of things like the Status of Women's Committee?

Harriet: In the very early years, if a woman felt she was being discriminated against because of her sex, she kept her mouth shut. One of my first experiences here was in the spring of 1960. I had been told by my supervisor that he wanted me to teach the functional mathematics course the following year and to be the examiner for that course. I felt really good about that since here I was only with my little BA degree and I was being given an opportunity to teach at the college level. I was thrilled. He suggested that I sit in on a functional math course to see how it was going and so on. But I was not to say anything to anybody about why I was sitting in on the course because there were some political problems in regards to staff, and he didn't want to make an issue of it at that time. So I was given permission to sit in on one section of the functional math course. My first day in
class and here I am a mature women sitting in a freshman class with all
these freshman students and the male instructor said to me, "What are you
doing in this class Mrs. Seligsohn, a woman's place is in the home."
Literally! Well, I kept my mouth shut and I thought, OK, I had been there
before and other things and I didn't let it bother me. Having been a math
major at a time when I was one of two women in my math classes and the only
woman in any of my physics classes, I kind of got used to being a little bit
different. Then, over time, in terms of my other situations, little things
occurred that I felt were, well, "She is a woman." I had at one point
started in a graduate program in mathematics. After I had been here awhile
with only my BA degree I felt inadequate and I had been teaching regularly,
and I thought that I really ought to do something for more certification
with what I am doing. And I decided that I didn't want to go on in mathemat-
cs. I had to go back and take several undergraduate courses before they
would accept me in a graduate program saying that my math background was so
out of date that I really needed to almost start over. So that was ok. I
felt it would do me some good. I took all the undergraduate courses. I was
taking my first graduate course and had done very well on all of the exams
during the term. Of course, I knew more about test writing than the profes-
sor. That had been my business for a long time. His final exam was really
very poorly done. I fell apart. I suffered from test anxiety all of my
life. In fact I did my master's thesis on it ultimately. But when I saw
that exam I fell apart and it probably took me the equivalent of one problem
to pull myself back together. And by then the time had almost disappeared.
Anyway, he made us come by to pick up our test papers. He wouldn't just
leave them for the secretary. I went to pick up my paper and he called me
in. I sat down and he said, "You know Mrs. Seligsohn, if I were you, I
wouldn't consider going on for a doctorate. It's hard enough for a single young male, let alone a mature married woman with a family." I looked at that man, unbelieving, that he was so direct. He said that he was going to give me a B out of the goodness of his heart. What had happened was that I made a D on the final, although I had made A's on all the class exams. I couldn't respond to him, I was speechless, which I rarely am, but at that time I was, and I left. Well, I had already been accepted into the master's program in math and to get out of it at that point I had to get permission from the dean of that college, but I thought, OK, I am going to take one more course. Up to that time, working full-time, taking one course at a time, a B was fine for me. That's all I worked for. That's what I generally was able to get. This time I am going to take another graduate course in mathematics. I am going to prove to myself that I can do it. And then I am going to leave the program and get my master's somewhere else. It so happened that I broke my foot that summer and I was on crutches. But I took the math course in the fall and I taught a course at the same time. I was teaching Social Science Statistics then. I was on crutches the whole time. And I went to the blackboard everyday. Just really participating. I got my A. I knew I could do it which was important to me. Then the dean didn't want me to change my major. He said, "You don't want to go to a soft area." Of course, I don't consider what I went to "soft." I went into psychology and at that time there was a field of mathematical psychology that was evolving and although the program here was in general psychology, I did have ample opportunity to get into the mathematical aspects and I felt it was a very good program. The funny thing was the day I defended my thesis, I ran into that faculty member who had made that comment to me. He knew why I had left the program. I couldn't help but say that I just defended my thesis in
such and such a program today. Of course he belittled the program that I was in which is his right. And the funny thing is is that I didn't see that man for many months and years on end. I also got my doctorate here and wouldn't you know the day that I defended my dissertation that man called this office for some information. Of course I had to say, "Hey, I got my doctorate today!" It gave me a certain good feeling. I could never say to anyone in those days what was happening. Nobody would have cared, nobody would have believed it, and that was fine. I also had applied for different positions on campus where I felt I was the better qualified. And other people felt the same way, but not the people doing the hiring. And so I have made some enemies. I did file a petition with the HEW at one point because I thought I had been discriminated against. I did not win the case and I think there were political pressures brought to bear because they, the investigating group, would not even listen to the witnesses who had something to say in my favor. In those initial days, getting back to your initial question, I feel that lip service was paid to yes, we must not discriminate against women. People were hired to deal with the problem areas. But these people didn't have any power to do anything. They were listeners. They were allowed to listen, but the minute they tried to do anything meaningful, their cords were cut. Their telephone lines were disconnected. They couldn't really accomplish anything. There was a lot of people who suffered a lot in those days. Maxine McKay was another one who worked very hard to try to improve the conditions of women faculty. Attitudes are hard to change. We all recognize that. And I think a lot of these things that occurred, even though people were hurt along the way, I do think a lot of progress has been made. But, then I didn't mean to give quite as much background as I did. But because of the kinds of things that happened
to me, I felt I had a good basis for working with other women to help avoid those kinds of things happening to other women. I do feel that the Status of Women's Committee was an appropriate way to move. At that time, that committee was directly under the president. We could take our concerns directly to the president without going through many channels. I thought that was important. I think that committee has continued to do good work to deal with these kinds of issues. I think it is important for that kind of activity to be ongoing.

Hewitt: When you were first involved with the Status of Women's Committee, was the group of women who participated in the committee sort of self selective in terms of women who were willing to deal with these issues and talk about them, or was it the administration who kind of asked people to be on it? How was that originally organized?

Harriet: Well, the committee process is such that the people in these university-wide committees are appointed by their various senates and councils. For example, any faculty member who is appointed to these committees comes through the faculty. Although I have always been in a position where I didn't belong to any particular group, since I became a faculty member, I'm not affiliated with the college and I'm not represented by the faculty senate, but the A&P Council has nicely opened its doors to people who hang loose so that we do have a group to affiliate with. In fact I served as chair of that group too. But, what the A&P Council does is send out a memo every year to its constituents and asks if you are interested in serving on any committees and if so, check which one. Then they have a committee get together and make recommendations to the president or whoever appoints whatever the committee is and that's how I got on the committee. Now I
would assume that the other units ask for volunteers up front and then they have to make a decision from among those who volunteer.

Hewitt: When you were involved with women's issues on campus and the Status of Women's Committee, did you also have any involvement with minority issues or race relations on campus?

Harriet: Yes, as a matter of fact when I first went into academic advising in the College of Basic Studies, there existed at that time a Faculty Senate program where members of the faculty were appointed to serve as mentors to the black students on campus. By then, which was 1970 or 1969, it was realized that the black students who were coming to campus were having some difficulties and people really didn't know why. The feeling was that if there was a mentor that that student could turn to for help in getting through the system, so to speak, we had already grown a great deal by the late '60s. So that program was initiated by the Faculty Senate. But it wasn't working very well. Either the faculty were unable to contact the students, the students were unable to get back to the faculty, or communications were not taking place. So when I became the Coordinator of Advising for Basic Studies, we decided to use academic advisors to serve in that mentor function because we felt that the academic advisors had a better understanding of the culture from which many of the students were coming, the needs of the students, and maybe that would work a little better. We still continued to have communication problems. It was later when the Division of University Studies was born and that was in 1972, that we developed a more formal program called Special Services Program, where we identified the black students on campus and had an academic advisor and a group of student assistants that helped that advisor in working with that
particular group of students. We also, prior to that, had made some recommendations in order to recruit such students. We were going to need money for the recruiting effort because a lot of the people who might otherwise have come here, could not afford to come here and if we had some dollars to offer in terms of loans and scholarships and so on. We proposed a lot of beginnings that we were not in any kind of position to carry through. We did not have the money per se, we did not have the staff to write up the proposals for grants whereby the money might have been forthcoming. But at least we planted some seeds that we felt grew very well. We presently have what appears to be a very successful Special Services Project program and I am pleased to see that progress is being made. I still think that we need to make a lot more progress in terms of the environment for the racial minorities. Oh, I remember some of the early days where we had retreats. Faculty and staff would go somewhere. It was some kind of a camp. I remember going to a camp ground with a lot of people and I remember particularly Troy Collier was there. The purpose of those retreats was to talk about how can we improve the environment for these students. How can we help them with what they need and how can we help them respond to that. And I think a lot of positive things did grow out of that. I still think there is a long way to go. I think progress is being made.

Hewitt: You are now Director of the Office of Evaluation and Testing. It is quite easy to see how coming in as a statistician you could end up the Director of Evaluation and Testing, but since you originally came you have obviously gone through a number of transformations. How did this office get set up or how did you become the Director of Evaluation and Testing?
Harriet: Well, that is a long story. This is an offspring of the original office I came to when I started at USF. At that time Louis Mayhew was a big name in higher education. He brought to this institution a lot of strength and a good reputation and at that time institutional research had a major portion of responsibility for the scoring of standardized tests, the administration of standardized tests, the test construction and evaluation; and grading for the common examinations in the College of Basic Studies was part of that responsibility, it was all there. Over time when Louis Mayhew left, eventually the responsibility for institutional research was pulled out. First it became part of a committee responsibility and now there is an actual office of Institutional Research. This office has continued to deal with the test coordination for national, state, and local testing programs and the scoring of the machine gradeable sheets. In fact we are on our third machine that does that. But the experience that I brought to that office, initially, is a lot of what I am still using today and over time with attrition and those kinds of things, though I started out as statistician, I now have moved to the director of the office.

Hewitt: You have been in many positions at USF. You've had contact and experience as career service, faculty, and administrator, which is rare. You've also been a student here. Given that wide range of experience here, how would you summarize, if it is possible, the best developments at USF over the course of your career here and those trends that maybe you see less optimistically.

Harriet: Well, I think the best development stems from the fact that the University was put here in the first place. I think there was a need in this area. I think there was a lot of foresight in determining how this area was going to
be growing. And, of course, in turn we have even contributed to that growth. I think the idea of a metropolitan university was a good one because there were a lot of needs in the community and I think we could scratch each others back so to speak. I think we have gone astray periodically in terms of our mission. I think also periodically we are pulled back to the straight and narrow, if you will pardon the trite expression, but I do think we do serve the community well and I think the community serves us well. There are always going to be the peaks and the valleys and the changes and so on. I think putting the institution here and the services that the community has given to us and we have given to the community have all been very valuable in the growth in this area. The worst trend, I'll have to go back to my original statement, I do think there has been an inadequate emphasis placed on the general liberal education core of students. I see too many students who have left this institution trained for a job who didn't either attend to the other kinds of education that they had, or chose to bypass it. I think that the latest developments on the implementation of the Gordon Rule and the college level academic skills test are proof of the fact that we didn't put enough emphasis on some of those basic skills if you will at the university level. I am sorry that the state has had to go to so much expense and trouble to implement these, but we didn't do it ourselves. And so now they are forcing us to do it. And I think this institution is a great one. I think that there are a lot of people here interested in improvement, in developing what I think would be a proper educational environment. I do think that we do have some problems in having our views heard by the level of people who make the decisions, that is our opinions, not our watered-down opinions after they have gone through channels. And I would hope that we open the forum wider so that we can talk to
people informally with our opinions. I know the president does have his regular forum, but perhaps one of the reasons I don't go to that is that it is representing too many diverse interests and I don't feel that any particular interest is going to get adequate attention. I suppose on occasion I have written letters to the president because I feel that if I want to say something to the president, by god I am going to say it. And in some cases I have gotten responses and in some cases my requests have gone to other channels for responses and have gone without responses. I think that is unfortunate, but I can understand the nature of priorities and that sort of thing will happen. But I have a positive view. I think that there will be times when we will get the attention that we want and very often we do. And sometimes we get overlooked and that is the way it is.

Hewitt: Well, thank you for putting your thoughts on tape. Hopefully in the next 25 years the thoughts of those of you who were pioneers, faculty, staff, administrators, and students of this university will help implement some of those changes that you would like to see.