

Interviewee: Lynne Raiser  
Interviewer: Jim Crooks  
Date: December 8, 2006

C: Today is December 8, 2006, this is the UNF Oral History Program. I, Jim Crooks, am interviewing. . . .

R: Lynne Raiser.

C: I'm sorry, Dr. Lynne Raiser from the College of Education. Age catches up with us.

R: It does indeed.

C: Let's start off talking about your background in education, where you grew and what brought you to UNF.

R: Okay, well I actually grew up in Jacksonville. [I] was born in St. Augustine. But my father was born here. I am a third-generation Floridian. I graduated from Dupont High School and went over to the University of Florida to be an English teacher. When I graduated, I couldn't get a job teaching English so I ended up teaching elementary school and eventually decided that I was interested in children with disabilities. Then [I] went and got my master's degree at the University of Houston in special education. I was away from Jacksonville for about ten years and came back and came into the Duval County Public School System as a special education teacher. I did that for about four years, and then I went to the district staff level and became an instructional support person for teachers. That was a wonderful job of going into classrooms and helping teachers who were struggling to make some sense out of what they were doing and improve instruction. While I was doing that, UNF was coming on board. I didn't come to UNF until 1975 as an adjunct.

What had happened, I was working with a colleague in Duval County who was asked by Bob Siudzinski to teach a class. She couldn't do it, and she had heard me saying that I would enjoy trying that sometime so she recommended me. So Bob, on one week's notice, he called me up one night, (I had met him before) and he said, have you ever taught a course at a university? I said, no, I never have. He said, well, how would you like to do that? I said, I think that would be a lot of fun, I'd love to. So he hired me and for two years I was an adjunct. Then in 1977 there was a grant position open. So I came in, quit my lovely tenured job in Duval and came over here not knowing if I'd have a job at the end of the year or not, but the grant kept getting renewed and so for five years I worked on soft money. At that time, there was a cooperative doctoral program with the University of Florida in curriculum and instruction in the College of Education. So Bob told me I needed to get into that immediately. So I jumped into that with Lib D'Zamko, who became my wonderful colleague, study buddy, mentor, everything. It was always, if Lib could do it, I could do it. So I worked on that degree during those five years, and then in [19]77, they were able to hire me as an instructor. So I started out as adjunct and moved through the ranks that way.

C: What grant funded you for five years?

R: Federal Government. It was a teacher preparation grant, and so they hired me to

teach courses and supervise practicum students. When I first came on board, we only had a masters degree in special education and later the bachelors degree was added. But we were trying to get people in the area certified to be teachers because there was such a need. So when I first came here, I was really advising and teaching in that masters degree program.

C: From the time you were hired on a line, what was your area of expertise?

R: I started out in the area of emotional disturbance, because that was the need they had, and I had been working in that program in the Duval County schools. But my specialty area has always really been learning disabilities. So I have worked in that. Then over the years it's kind of evolved into reading disabilities, so I ended my career teaching courses in literacy for children with disabilities. Kind of a generic approach rather than being too concerned about whether the child had a learning disability or a mental handicap, you know. What are the instructional strategies for the lowest kids in those different areas?

C: And your degree was in curriculum and instruction?

R: Well, it actually was and I just lucked out back then. They let me stay in special education!

C: Did you have an area of research that you did?

R: Yes, I did it on the written language of children with learning disabilities. So I focused all my work in special education, but the degree really was in curriculum and instruction.

C: Tell me about what the students were like back then.

R: They were mostly older. Our typical student was usually a white woman over thirty who might have been divorced possibly or someone who was raising children and wanted to get into a career and, for a very long time, that was the population. Because in the beginning we were a graduate program, we had lots of teachers who were coming in either to get certified in special education, or to add on a certification area, or to get that master's degree. So we had a large graduate program.

C: Now you had gotten a graduate, a masters degree in Texas. How did the UNF program compare with the Texas program in terms of quality?

R: It was newer. My Houston program was very focused on some of the early research on learning disabilities, and I got it in [19]68 when it was still a really, really new field. It's kind of interesting to think about that. I actually took some courses here because I had to get certified in emotional disturbance. So I took a couple of courses. The behavior management courses that Bob Siudzinski taught were far superior to what I'd gotten before. I mean he really knew the Skinner stuff. That was his specialty. So I felt like that was really good, and I think, once the program got a little bit bigger and we could kind of put our slant on it, I took some of the things that I thought I had gotten in Houston and tried to put them in the program here when I taught courses, because they had not focused enough on teaching academics to these children.

C: At Houston or here?

- R: Houston didn't. They would teach you all the stuff about child development and atypical child development. Then we didn't get enough on how do you teach them to read. But it was partly because back in those days there were a lot of very crazy ideas about how to educate children with disabilities, one being psycho-motor development. I remember working in a reading clinic where one of my tasks during my tutoring time was to have my student walk on a balance beam, and at the time, it just seemed like nonsense. I kept thinking, you know, aren't you going to tell me anything about phonics? So I was going out and buying books and teaching stuff to myself [that] they weren't teaching me. Because I knew that we had a missing link here.
- C: And coming from your joint doctorate, how did that program compare with the quality of the program here?
- R: It was excellent. It was really, really good. I can't really compare to this doctoral program because I'm not involved. I mean, I've never taught in it.
- C: But it prepared you well for coming back here to be a full-time faculty?
- R: Oh, my goodness, yes. The real focus was on teacher education. It was like curriculum and instruction with a specialty in teacher education, so I felt very prepared. Then it was on-the-job training, too. Because here I'm taking the courses, and then I'm back over here doing it. I felt like I was very well prepared. Then my time in Duval was probably the best education I ever got, my four years at the district level. Going into so many classrooms and working with so many teachers. I mean, I have always felt like you learn it in the field; that's where you learn it. I still, with my students today, have them out in the field learning, because I think that's where it's at.
- C: Coming back to the students for a second, they were older women, etc. Were they well prepared? I mean, one of the rumors or stereotypes of College of Education masters students sometimes is that they're looking for a quick degree to get the extra money or whatever. Of course, my wife didn't do that, but. . . .
- R: No, I've never felt that.
- C: They are serious, serious graduate students.
- R: I think you always find a student or two like that at every level who's here because daddy's making me go or here because I don't want to work or here for whatever. I've always felt that our UNF students were exceptionally wonderful, very devoted. Well, a lot of them, they don't have daddy paying for it, or they didn't have a husband paying for it. They were teaching all day [and] coming to school at night. It was a sacrifice. I still see that today with many of the students. Not all of them, but back then there were very few just traditional masters degree students who had gotten a degree and they were in the program here full time. They were almost all part time.
- C: Well, when we went to a four year institution in the early [19]80s, did you then teach undergraduates?
- R: Yes. I started teaching the undergraduates when we did that.
- C: What was your experience then?

- R: Again, good. Again, it seemed that they were mostly white, young women with kids, you know, between thirty and forty. Very few men. They weren't really young yet. It took a while for us to really start getting the twenty year olds and the twenty-one year olds that were traditional.
- C: Special education also has, because of the challenge, drawn more highly motivated students than. . .
- R: Oh, I think it does.
- C: . . . maybe elementary or secondary in certain academic aspects.
- R: I think that I've always felt like with our students almost all of them have a story. There's a reason they are there: there's a family member; there's something in their life experience that has made them be drawn to that area.
- C: Did you have a story that led you in that direction?
- R: Sure did. A very old, old friend of my mother's from elementary days had very severe cerebral palsy, and she had just been an inspiration to me all of my life. Then I had a lot of interest in children with emotional disabilities because of family background. As one student said to me one time, "You know, I love working with these kids because they're so familiar." So I've always found it intriguing to work with troublesome children. It's more interesting to me; it always was. I figure let somebody else deal with the kids who learn easily. I like the challenge.
- C: Were there stand out experiences in your teaching years that you remember fondly or not so fondly?
- R: Or not so fondly. Well, I suppose one of the most dramatic things that happened was how our Council for Exceptional Children on campus and Susan Tucker, a classroom teacher, and I started Very Special Arts in Northeast Florida. We put together an arts festival one year, 1986. Susan and I had gone to a conference and we saw a performance done by Very Special Arts out in California. We were sitting in this audience and watching this and Susan said, "Our kids could do that." I said, "Yeah, they could do it better." So we just marched on home and decided that we would have a little arts festival on the UNF campus and we had performances, and we had art activities and everything. Then Diane Gillespie was director of Exceptional Student Education, and she called us into her office one day, and she said, look, "I'm getting a lot of pressure to start a Very Special Arts program here. I like what you're doing, and I want you all to do it." We really didn't want to have any strings attached because we were having too much fun. We didn't want to be part of some group, I mean. But it just seemed like we'd better say yes to her because she really wanted it. So we did. We started it, and it grew in to be part of Arts Mania, done by the Arts Assembly of Jacksonville. I think, for about four years, we were down there on the weekend of Arts Mania for three days. We did all of the hands-on arts activities. Sarah [Crooks] did a thing with us one year; a big nest. Remember the nest?
- C: Oh, yeah, that burned.
- R: That burned. All of those hands-on activities were coordinated by Susan and

Lynne. We'd get everybody in to do them. That was wonderful because, when we did it on campus, we did it out on the green, and so our UNF special education students did the bulk of the work, and then when we moved it to The Landing. They came down there and worked with us. Then, when they became teachers, they brought their kids to it. And now they still are, now that it's institutionalized into the Cummer Museum. So I'm most proud of that work. Susan and I both find that work so gratifying, because for the last eleven years, the Cummer has taken it over and it's the only museum that we know of in the country that does the art activities in the galleries with the art, and it started right out here on the green.

C: Very interesting.

R: So that was extremely gratifying.

C: And the Very Special Arts program continues now under the Cummer Museum auspices.

R: Yes. Now they call it VSA Arts, and it's an international organization that was started by Jean Kennedy Smith, President Kennedy's sister, as an arts version of the Special Olympics. But the Florida Very Special Arts has always been a really active group, and this Cummer now is just one of the premier spots in the country. To think we started it right out here on the green. We're very proud of that.

C: Are faculty and students from here still involved?

R: Oh, yes. All the pre-k[indergarten], primary students every spring go to the festival and work. All the special education students go. It's just a long tradition of starting here as a student, working it, and then becoming a teacher and bringing your children.

C: When does it take place?

R: It takes place in the spring, usually April. They run it for about four days. When we were running it, we did festivals in Palatka, and we started one in Clay County. We did one at FCCJ one year. It was an enormous number of children. I think, by the end of the whole thing, we had fifteen festivals, serving over 35,000 children.

C: Wow. I never knew about that. Coming back to the classroom, when you became full time, how many faculty were there in special education? Do you know, remember?

R: When I became full time, I'd have to, let's see, Bob and Clint and Lib and Lynne and John Venn, about seven. Yeah, about seven.

C: How many graduate students and undergraduate students were there?

R: We used to have a lot more graduate students than we have now. But we would. . . . Numbers are not my thing.

C: Ballpark figure.

R: We probably were running maybe forty graduate students, usually about a hundred undergraduate students. At the peak. I always think about it as having two sections of everything, when it had to be taught, so that would be at least

seventy. Then the ones that were always kind of in between.

C: Well, other significant experiences. Very Special Arts stands out. Were there others?

R: Right. Okay, I got to go to Belize three different times to teach down there. That was marvelous. As part of the masters degree in administration.

C: Who started that?

R: You know, Pritchey Smith is the one who spearheaded it while I was involved. Betty Flinchum started it. I went down early in the program. In 1997, I went the first time. I've been three different summers. When I went the first time, it was an interesting experience because we were paid \$2500 and got a place to stay. So it wasn't very lucrative. Being a special education person, obviously not in administration and supervision in the College of Education, there was no reason to be sending me down there, except I did have that curriculum area instruction degree. So I sold myself to Pritchey. I said, "Look." I said, "I can teach your curriculum course." And, I think, the truth was nobody else would go, so I got to go. So I go down there. Pritchey was there and Scott Farber and Lynne. I tried to get my husband to go, but he didn't want to go. So I told my kids, "I can't live down there for three weeks all by myself. You all have to at least come to visit." But the day that I landed and was met at the airport—and I've been many times to Mexico, so it's not the third world is threatening to me, but the idea of being there all by myself—and I'm going. "What in the world am I doing in this place?"

Well, in about twenty-four hours I was in love with it. It was marvelous. I had a terrific time, and, then, when I got a chance to go back a couple of more times, I went. But the times when I went back, I took my daughter, and she co-taught the courses with me. That was just fabulous. She, at that time, was a teacher, and we would take all the books and all the work and divide it up. The first course I taught down there I had sixty-five students and a blackboard, no technology. So I said, well, I'll just be a chalk and talk teacher. I'm not going to depend on any videos or anything. It's just going to have to be traditional teaching, which I did, and it was a great experience, because it really, really tests you. No air conditioning. Fans blowing on you. It's a very hot place.

Then when I took my daughter down to co-teach with me and help me, we only had thirty-five, but we had just a fabulous time. The students had a fabulous time. The students were all like administrators in the schools. Some principals, some teachers, people from the Ministry of Education. So it was quite a wide range of abilities, and that program has, oh, my goodness, something like 250 UNF graduates in the country. The country's only got about 250,000 people. So UNF is a big presence. But to be part of that was exciting. To have that other cultural experience--to be able to look at another system of education and try to see what can you take from here to there that's going to help them. Well, what we found out in the work was they were really into learning things like cooperative learning, conflict resolution, all kinds of group interactive things that they just thought were wonderful, because it was a very traditional system.

C: A British system.

R: Yes. They were very used to reading their homework and holding that little book up during discussions and reading little parts to you. Very, very traditional, which was so interesting. So when it kind of opened up and went in a different direction, they were thrilled. We did a thing that Darby, my daughter, dreamed up at the end of one of her classes. They all developed a metaphor for what curriculum was in Belize. We had all kinds of things. At first they thought it was totally crazy. But we had musical presentations; we had a coral reef that was the metaphor and all these things that they would have to, in a short period of time, describe to everybody what it was. That was the culminating activity, and they just loved it.

C: You said you were there for three weeks. Was the course three weeks long?

R: Yes. The course was three weeks long. You would teach it Monday through Thursday afternoons, three days off and then the next week. So in three weeks they got the whole course.

C: So you'd be teaching like for four hours each afternoon.

R: Oh, yes. Right. Because I like to have a lot of writing in my class, they were writing everyday, and we were reading the papers every night. Every morning, you'd get up, and the first time I went, I'd get up at 5:00 a.m. because I had sixty-five papers to read. You'd sit there and eat and read and mark and read and mark and turn them back. That first one that I taught down there, I sent them the information ahead of time, what the requirement was going to be, the syllabus and all the stuff. The first day I walked into class, one girl had read the whole book and handed me the stack of papers. She'd already done the work. The students there do read and do their work. One of my frustration over the last few years is how little reading I see students doing here at UNF. They rely on your lectures. They rely on whatever, whatever, but they really don't dig into the reading as much as they used to. That's just what I've noticed.

C: Or they try to get it from the Internet.

R: Well, the Internet. I just finished doing a class yesterday, because I'm still working part time, and I thought to myself, how am I going to deal with this? These PowerPoints full of stuff they're pulling right off the Internet, and they're just reading it to us. So, this was the first time I'd ever had it so bad. They're not learning it; they're just lifting, just lifting it.

C: You mentioned you went to Belize in 1996. Do you know how long before 1996 the program had begun?

R: Let me think, I think that first group that we were teaching was maybe the first or second cohort. I know Carolyn Stone had gone the year before and encouraged me to try to do it. Not long. It's not long. I wish I could tell you exactly when it started, but I can't. Pritchey would know, but we've had several cohorts go through.

C: Any other outstanding teaching experiences?

R: Well, the other thing is what I'm doing right now. For the last ten years, I've been

teaching my courses at Woodland Acres Elementary School, which is a professional development school and, until I retired, I was the professor in residence. I teach my reading methods course on the school campus. We meet once a week. As part of the course time, there's a tutoring component embedded into it where we're working with the lowest second graders in the school one-on-one in a very directed reading program that I am supervising. So unlike typical field experience—where you send the students out, they work with the teacher, and the professor's never there—we are all together, and I am monitoring, coaching, watching, reflecting. They do reflective journals; I do it back. We are responsible for teaching that kid together. That has been fabulous. To me, that's the way methods courses should be taught. If you're going to teach a child to read, you need a kid to teach to read.

C: And you've been doing this how many years now?

R: Nine years. I started about nine years ago.

C: How has it worked?

R: Oh, beautifully.

C: Because you say that you take the lowest second graders.

R: Lowest second graders. So what we're trying to do is keep him from failing or help the teacher decide that maybe he does need to stay back.

C: Or helping him to succeed.

R: Or helping them to succeed. We do get some that just move right on through. We're only with them once a week, but we think even in that once a week, because we're concentrating on certain skills—like we're working on phonics and we're working on sight words and we're working on fluency—we're doing the one-on-one things the teacher doesn't have time to do. By doing that, we're seeing the scores on their DIBELS Test go up. It's a test that they take on—

C: From August to December.

R: Right. Well, they get tested in August, and they get tested in January and December. So what happens in January, I teach the course again. We'll test all those kids, and then some of them will test out.

C: These are the same kids that were here the preceding semester?

R: Yes. So they'll be tested again, and then we'll decide which ones we keep and which ones don't need it anymore. Then we'll pick up some others because the school is transient, so there are a lot of kids in and out all the time. You're always finding somebody that needs it. Then if we don't have enough second graders, we'll dip down and take some first graders. But we try to be sure, with my twenty-five students, we're working with the twenty-five children most in need, because we know that if we don't get those second graders in shape, when they get to third grade, they're going to fail the FCAT. Then they fail third grade.

C: Have you done any tracking of the kids from second grade as they go up?

R: Yes. It hasn't been as systematic as it should be, and unfortunately, because they are the lowest kids, some of them are not doing well later on, because they are the lowest, but some are.

- C: But, without the program, you could predict ninety percent would fail FCAT, and with the program only forty percent would fail, that's a big accomplishment.
- R: It is. It is a big accomplishment.
- C: That's why I asked that kind of a question.
- R: And the focus is two-sided. It makes for really tricky teaching because you've got the commitment to the UNF student who you've got to teach the content of the course to; you've got the commitment to the kid who's got to learn certain things, and you're teaching it at the same time, so it's always on two levels. Like sometimes I might do a demonstration lesson, which they implement. Typically, I teach them the strategies, and then they implement the strategies, monitor, report back, I report back, and we constantly are problem solving over Blackboard about what we need to do next with that child. It's extremely time consuming. Apparently, a lot of faculty must not think it's of much value because there are not too many of us doing it. I do it, Sue Syverud does it, and there are five faculty that I know of right now that do this model. I started it at Woodland Acres and then Donna Keenan took it over to West Jacksonville and did it, and then we've got some other people, about five. Those of us who do it don't understand how anybody could do a traditional class. When you've got something for the UNF students, who say, "Oh my gosh. Look what he learned and look how hard it was to get there, but he's got it." I have English majors, special education majors, and physical education majors who also have to take a reading course. Well, it must be okay because I keep getting more and more of them. They have a choice of which reading course to take, and many are picking this one. I think it's because they get to work with a child.
- C: With one of your five teachers?
- R: No. With me. This is my class.
- C: Okay.
- R: This is just this one class that I teach that the English majors take. I call it "my" class; it's the class I teach. It's kind of an orphan class. We kept it in the catalog for the special education students, and then the English people said, oh, well, let's have the English majors take it because they get some special education stuff, and then the PE majors are taking it.
- C: I would think the elementary teachers. . . .
- R: They have their own. They're taught in schools too. So the elementary education people, if they get Donna or Katrina or Wanda, get one in a school. The special education people get one with me. Then there are two more that are taught by Sue Syverud in special education out there at that school.
- C: That's a great experience for your education students.
- R: Oh, gosh. It's fabulous. It's absolutely wonderful. They're in a low-income school with a very interesting mix. It used to be about half black and white. Now it's probably about 40 percent white, 60 percent black. But it's so neat because you're in there with low-income children of both races, plus some Russian children and some Bosnian children. It's not a big population of English

language learners, but to go in to this little neighborhood—and it’s a neighborhood school—and see that you’ve got all of these kids doing so well and working together so well, it gives them a great introduction to working in an urban school, because, when they get hired in Duval County, that’s where they’re going to be is an urban school. Our College of Education deliberately picked urban schools for these professional development schools to prepare them. That has just been a fabulous experience.

C: Who initiated picking urban schools for this?

R: I would say it probably started with Cheryl Fountain, back when she was the assistant dean. I think Kathie Kasten was dean when we started this project. But the project has been going on for maybe fifteen years. But the new version is in its tenth year. This is not grant supported. This is supported by the university and the school system, and it allows for a person in each of these schools to be hired half-time by Duval County, half-time by UNF. That person supervises a large group of interns in the school, and the one at our school, Christie Stevenson, is also the science coach, and so she does some science work with the children and the teachers. Then the model at our school just happens to be this methods course thing. It doesn’t have to be that. That’s just something that I thought, if I’m going to be out there, this is what we need to be doing. I thought to myself, “Why did it take me so long for me to figure this out?” But it was scary. You know when you get away from it for a long time it’s like, I don’t know if I can do this anymore. Am I going to be able to do this? Work with the children.

We’ve had, you know, some very interesting experiences with kids. A funny little story\_\_ That first year I was out there, I didn’t do the tutoring program. I was trying to get to know what was going on and meet people. One of the teachers was doing a writing program after school, and I said, “Barbara, can I come and just help you?” “Sure.” So I did. Well, one day she was absent. Here are these kids. I couldn’t control them. I absolutely couldn’t do behavior management. I never was any good at it. But they were just completely out of control. They were writing on the board and they were being silly. Then the teacher of the children who were emotionally handicapped walked by the door, Nancy, who was a fabulous teacher, looked in, and she didn’t see me at first. She started to say something to the kids, and then she says, “Oh. Dr. Raiser. You’re in here. This is very good for you.” I knew after that the word got around the school they’d know that I was for real. But they got a huge laugh out of that. So I always have to tell that story whenever we’re gathered together, because I had a lot of learning to do in just getting refreshed on just being a classroom teacher again so that I could be a good model for my students. So they’ve seen good things and they’ve seen bad things, but we’re in there solving those problems together. I just love it. I can’t quit. I’m still doing it.

C: Going back to the [19]70s and [19]80s, before this program began, were you in the schools a lot then?

R: Yes.

C: Doing what?

R: Well, in the beginning it was supervising graduate practicum students, and we still have students coming from everywhere, but we really did back then. You would drive to Palatka, Lake Butler, Lake City, you know, just hours and hours away to supervise these students and then back again. So I was in lots and lots of schools. Then when we got the undergraduate program, of course, I was supervising student teachers. So I've always spent a lot of time in schools, usually supervising student teachers.

C: Do you think the special education program in Duval County has improved over the years, particularly, as a result of UNF?

R: Yes, I think it has. I'm thinking way back to when I first came in [19]69 to the county. Our special education students have a really good reputation, even outside. One time I was with Cecil Mercer's, at the University of Florida, wife Anne and she just paid us a great compliment. She said that every UNF teacher that she met was so good. I think we're doing a really good job, and I think they're doing a really good job. By the time they graduate, they're very professional. We're always having to stay on top of things. Duval County is pretty much phasing out the direct instruction program in reading that I think used to be a very, very good program that was really helping kids. I'm kind of wondering how our students are going to be adjusting to the inclusion. I mean a lot of things need to be restructured to meet the needs of these counties that are moving towards this different model. But the teachers that I know of that have been through our program that I still keep in contact with, I think are excellent. I mean one of the best ones I've ever seen is at Woodland Acres right now. Shannon Wine. She's just incredible.

C: One of the questions that I ask all the College of Education professors that I interview, is you have, from everything I hear, a very good College of Education, better than many in the state or the nation.

R: Oh, I think it is.

C: Why are the Duval County schools not better than they are?

R: Truly? You want me to tell you really why? Because all the research tells you, the most important thing for academic achievement is who you live next door to. I mean, we have a huge number of children living in poverty who are not living in homes that are stimulating literacy. We see it at Woodland Acres, schools where they are exposed to books, schools where they learn about language. At home, people aren't listening to them; they're not talking to them; they're not taking them to the grocery store and saying go find the Campbell's soup. So a lot of it is you've got to work with what precious children they send to school and take them from where they are, and I think that is a big part of the problem. I don't think that the best trained teacher in the whole world can make up those first five years of lack of stimulation.

C: So you're saying that the cultural impoverishment in kids. . . .

R: I think it's our serious. . . .

C: Is it worse now than when you started in the late [19]60s?

R: That's a good question. I didn't work in schools like this, so it's really hard for me to know that.

C: But when you were in curriculum or when you were a mentor. . . .

R: People out in schools and stuff.

C: It's because you were in different kinds of schools?

R: I don't know. I think there's a tendency when you get older to kind of look back on things and think they're worse now than they were then. Is it really worse? I just feel like the present stresses on these families that live in poverty are just enormous. There are no extra resources emotionally or any other kind of way to do as much as they need to do. We have parents at Woodland Acres who can't read either. You send them home a note; they can't read it. They can barely write their names. I think the teachers at the school I'm working with, that is a D school, it goes D, C, C, D, C, D, it just goes up, and it'll go C again because it will go up. I look around at these teachers, and I think, they're working so much harder now they did nine years ago. They are working as hard as they can work, and the school got a D grade last year. The principal is fabulous. They are getting so much professional development. I don't know how anybody could work any harder than they are. But they're not getting the scores out of the kids that you would think they would get. So, I think it's more than just excellent teacher preparation.

I just think it's a critical, terrible problem that we live in a country like that, with so many people living in poverty, with so much lack of support. It just really bothers me because of the effect on the children. The attitude of middle-class and upper-class people, that say, "Oh, well. Who wants to pay for school and all that kind of stuff?" Well, who do they think is going to pay their Social Security check? They're all going to work at McDonald's. It's terrible for the economy. It's terrible for the moral values of the community.

One of my students, who is teaching at Woodland Acres, lost a former student last Easter morning, when murder number forty-nine happened, little Radarius Jackson. The next morning, I picked up that paper, and I'm going, oh, my god, that can't be Radarius. It was Radarius, and it was one of Shannon's kids. My UNF students had tutored him and worked with him, and we had a connection to this child. Shannon was working over in Pensacola, and she called me. She said, I can't go by myself, so I said, I'll meet you over there. She drove in, and we went to the funeral home. It was like this waste. You know they were after his big brother, who was in some kind of mess with this gang or whatever, and it's like, all these murders are the symptom of this thing that's affecting the literacy of these children. I don't know how to get a handle on it, but it's a monster problem. That was not a bad kid. That was a good kid in the wrong place at the wrong time. Shot by a bullet intended for his brother. But that's still pretty horrible.

C: Let's come back to UNF. I'm very sympathetic to what you're saying.

- R: Oh, I know you are, but it's a big issue.
- C: Yes. Have you been an administrator at all at UNF?
- R: I did do the special ed program director for five years.
- C: When to when?
- R: It was, actually it was six years, 1994 to 2000. I did that really because nobody else wanted to do it. Tom [Serwatka] had gone off to the president's office. John Venn had moved up. There was Lynne left to do it. That is not my idea of a good time. I am not an administrator. I am a teacher.
- C: Now you say you were in charge of the special program, does that mean you were like a department chair or a program director?
- R: Program director we were called because at that time we had this division that included special education, counseling, and education leadership. So we were like program directors, and they would give us a course release and an enormous amount of work to do. It was impossible.
- C: Who was your supervisor?
- R: John Venn was right above me.
- C: Okay.
- R: And then Kathe Kasten. There was no budget. You never knew how much money you had to spend. You had no evaluation of your faculty. It was just a gut-wrenching, do all this work for very little...
- C: What kind of work? What does a program director do?
- R: Oh, my goodness.
- C: Schedule classes?
- R: Yeah, I got pretty good at that. Now, I kind of like doing that. All the course scheduling, coordinate all the curriculum development, all the program work that you do—like writing your NCATE reports and your SACS reports and your whatever—dealing with student issues that come up, coordinating the advisement that different people did. It kept me pretty busy. Admitting students. I did everything that a department chair would do except do the evaluations and control the budget. So it was pretty much like being a department head. It really was. It always made me feel kind of tied down. The only way I could ever get away from it was to leave the country in the summer. So that was one reason I went to Belize. One summer I went to Africa. I mean really get away for a month because it just was never-ending with not enough reward. One course release to do all that work. Nah.
- C: Who were the various chairs that you worked for over the years?
- R: Bob Siudzinski was the first one. After Bob it was Tom Serwatka. Then after Tom it was John Venn and then it was me.
- C: Did any of them stand out particularly as chairs, as academic leaders?
- R: Tom.
- C: Serwatka?
- R: Oh, yes. He's one of the smartest people I've ever known. The most ethical. Fabulous leader. Bob Siudzinski was good, too, but Bob's talent was

delegating. He would have the vision and then delegate. But because he did that, he trained us so that Lib, Tom, John, and I learned how to do everything. I learned how to do the schedule, and Lib was doing curriculum development. We all had our little specialities. So then when Bob stepped down, Tom took over. Tom and I used to kind of do it together in the summers—I'm not sure why we did that, but I know one summer Bob was gone somewhere and he and I were doing it together. The department has always been a very close department with a lot of collaboration, and I think that was because of Bob Siudzinski. He just had this way of just throwing it all out there; let's all do it together, pulling it all back in, and we were a really good team. So we learned a lot, but Tom just had that way of taking it just a step further. He was one of the best leaders I've ever worked with. John Venn was wonderful, too, but it was like John and I kind of learned from Tom. I mean Tom was definitely the mentor. I hated to see him leave our department.

C: Were there any major changes in the philosophy of special ed over the years. You mentioned in the beginning, some of the kookie ideas that were floating around.

R: Of course, that was the University of Houston. It wasn't here.

C: In terms of time here, any special shifts?

R: Actually, Bob Siudzinski had a real vision about what special ed should be from the very beginning. He was very much into a generic approach rather than a disability approach. He had this philosophy that if you figured out what the problems were and you tailor made the child's program to meet those problems, it didn't matter what the label was. Well, that just kind of wasn't the way it was for a long time. But that kind of philosophy kind of got into my head and even though we still have courses. . . . Even though federal guidelines and state guidelines still make you label a child learning disabled or mentally handicapped, we all kind of know that whether you're teaching one or the other you're still going to do some of the same things. So I would say over the years, his vision, which was not in vogue at the time, is now the vision of everybody. That excellent teaching should be happening for all children. I think we've kept up very well with the times. I think we pride ourselves in excellent teacher education. I think that's where we are and what we're trying to do.

C: Yes. I understand that. What I'm trying to get at is how has teacher education changed over the last twenty-five or thirty years.

R: There's more field work. Students get out into schools sooner and more often. That has really been something important at UNF that we've done and all over the nation. But UNF was ahead of the times. We were doing that before the University of Florida was: giving students a lot of field time. Working closely with the counties, so that you're in tune to what their needs are. That's how this professional development school thing evolved, working at urban schools, because they're saying this is what we need and so we're listening to them. We try really hard not to just stay in our little area, our little territory, and not realize

that we need to listen to the people on the outside about what the needs are. But I think we've always done that. I think we've always had a great relationship with our counties.

C: Except when Herb Sang was superintendent.

R: Well, I was working for the county then, so I don't remember that one.

C: There was a term that Bob and some others have used, I'm trying to remember, a method of teaching that you set certain performance objectives and the student had to keep working on them until she or he passed it.

R: Mastery learning? Or prescriptive teaching maybe?

C: Performance-based objectives. Does that ring a bell?

R: Oh, I know what they're talking about. Competency-based instruction.

C: Right. Competency-based instruction.

R: Right. I'd forgotten that. The College of Education was set up that way, to do that. Then over the years it sort of faded out a bit, but in a lot of ways. . . .

C: What replaced it?

R: I think, we're still doing it. We're just calling it something different. Well, I think we're still doing that, because the State of Florida has a big long list of professional objectives, The Florida Educator Accomplished Practices. There are twelve domains, and when they graduate from the program, we have got to show that they have met all of those objectives, so we've got a pretty good tracking system on these students about that.

C: Did you work with the deans at all, in the college?

R: My first dean was Andrew Robinson. I never had a real close relationship with him, but I really respected him and thought he was a wonderful man. I was very fond of him. Probably the one I have known best has been Kathe Kasten because Kathe was our division chair before she became dean. So I knew her for a long time. I thought she was a remarkable administrator. I thought she was really, really good. I was sorry she stepped down but it was time for her to do something different.

C: You also had Donna Evans and Carl Ashbaugh.

R: Donna Evans, Ashbaugh, right. Ashbaugh. I really didn't know him well at all. Donna Evans, I felt like I got to know pretty well and enjoyed working with her. She didn't stay very long, went someplace else. But under her, I got promoted to full professor so I was most grateful, because I had always believed that I would have never gotten it under Kathe Kasten.

C: Why?

R: Well, because Kathy is much more traditional, and it would have taken me a little bit longer with her. With Larry Daniel, I worked with him just the last year pretty closely, but that's not long ago. Working with the Gladys Prior Awards, which I'm coordinating now.

C: Oh, George Corrick.

R: George Corrick did that, right. And he turned it over to me last year. So that's my new little project.

- C: You retired in what year?  
R: 2004.  
C: And you've been teaching half-time ever since?  
R: Yes. Two courses a term. I'm a half-time visitor this year, but last year I was an adjunct.  
C: Did you work at all with any of the academic vice presidents?  
R: Not really.  
C: Or have direct contact with any of them? Well, I'll just read you the names of people: John Minahan, Bill Merwin, John Bardo, Ken Martin, David Kline, Charles Galloway, Alan Ling.  
R: Well, for a very short period of time, Bill Merwin lived next door to me. That day I got promoted the first time, he popped over there with a bottle of champagne. Again, he was in the College of Education. He interviewed me when I went for my job. I haven't been involved in any committees or anything where I really had that much to do. I've always just, I don't know.  
C: Stuck to yourself?  
R: Yes, I just sort of stick to my job.  
C: And this is probably true in terms of your knowledge of the various presidents.  
R: Yes, it really kind of is. I did do a promotion and tenure committee with Minahan, and I do remember I thought interacting with him was quite good. He was a very fair man. I felt like he listened to what the recommendations were and took it all very seriously. I felt like the work we did was not lost. Kline too. I was with him one time. I did that committee twice, and I felt the same way about him. He was a good man. I liked him.  
C: Did you take from your teaching in its various forms scholarship or publications, or did you have a record of doing that?  
R: Yes. I did a lot of publications from my work with Very Special Arts, playwriting and various things in arts education, even though I'm not an arts educator. So, yes. We did a lot of presentations, but we haven't gotten a lot printed about the professional development school. I'm still hoping to do some there, too.  
C: Professional development school?  
R: That's these schools that are like Woodland Acres where we put a lot of time and energy in to teach courses and work with teachers.  
C: Are they all elementary schools?  
R: No. Lakeshore Middle School has just been added. I think we've got five of them.  
C: All urban schools?  
R: Yes. All urban schools. At West Jacksonville, Lakeshore, North Shore, there's another one.  
C: Okay. And your sense of the university. Have you seen major changes taking place?  
R: It's bigger and more beautiful, a lot more students, a lot fewer parking places. Oh, I think it's exciting. Both of my children graduated from here, and I think they

got a fabulous education. Absolutely. One in biology and one in liberal studies and it was like having them go to a very fine private school. I was thrilled with what they got. They were thrilled.

C: What do you mean by it was like going to a very fine private school.

R: They knew their professors. They didn't have graduate assistants teaching him. The professor was really teaching them. The classes were small. I felt like they got lots and lots of individual attention if they needed it. Darby got to go on two wonderful trips to Ecuador because of being here. Unlike, going to the University of Florida or a large school, where you're in a great big group and you really don't get to know your professor. I think that's one thing that's really good about UNF. Students are really important to us.

C: Did you ever teach students who were transfers from University of Florida or Florida State University to get their impressions?

R: Yes. And they love it here. They would drive from Gainesville to go to this school.

C: Is that right? Because of?

R: Yes. I had one. Well, one thing, Gainesville's got a five-year program, and she sure didn't want to do that. But she said she liked it a whole lot better here. My children, one child started at the University of Florida, and one child started at FSU, and then they came back here and were much happier.

C: That's interesting. Did they live on campus?

R: No. Lived off campus. That was years ago. But Geoff was, for a long time, was the manager of the UNF science labs.

C: Are there any things that UNF has not done that it might have done in your experience, what I call the errors of omission as well as errors of commission.

R: I think with as large an African American population as we have in Jacksonville, there should be many more people of color on this campus. I've always felt that way. It's still too white. I don't know why. I'm hoping with [Nat] Glover now having that special ambassador thing that that's going to help, but I've always felt like there was not enough diversity in that respect. But over the years it's gotten better. Over the years we have more students from other countries here, which I think is wonderful. Other parts of the country are coming in. But the diversity, I think, has always been a challenge. I still have classes where I look around the room and see mostly white faces. I just finished one yesterday, there are twenty-five young women in that class and one African American. I'm saying there's got to be more than one African American who wants to teach little kids. Where is she? Where are they? Other things about this school? I think UNF is absolutely wonderful. I really do. It's hard for me to pick at it because I think we are unique.

C: In what way?

R: Our focus on teaching students and wanting to be the best teachers we can be. I mean I think we're all proud of that, that we're good teachers. That we're not hiding behind our research and our fame. We have to do the research, and

- we've got to have all that balance, but we put students first. I think we do. That's the way I feel about it.
- C: One of the issues that has come up in the interviews, particularly with regard to special education, is there a reason why the St. Augustine School for the Deaf and Blind has not had a closer research relationship or closer institutional relationship with the College of Education? It seems like there would be a natural partnership between special education and this school.
- R: Well, I mean we do work with them a lot, but so does Flagler. Flagler has a deaf education program and part of the problem, I think, is that when you have this school with a limited number of teachers and students and you've got a bunch of Flagler students and a bunch of UNF students that all want to be in there for field and internship. I don't know. I thought it was close, but maybe it's not.
- C: It is close in terms of individuals working together.
- R: Working together but not research.
- C: Yes, or like a more formal institutional connection, such as the University of Florida might have with some state agency or something like that. Because it is the natural, in the beginning this was the natural, institution, UNF, to be the Deaf Education school.
- R: Well, that's why the deaf education program was put here is because of that school. I really can't answer the question. I don't know. Maybe one of the reasons is over the years we've had a very hard time hanging on to deaf education faculty. You've got one, and then that person has to be also running the program. Deaf education faculty are scarce as hen's teeth. There are very few people in the field that you can even recruit.
- C: It's also a matter of priorities of the top administration, where dollars go.
- R: Well, I mean they're advertising for a position right now, and I don't know what they're finding. I know, when I was running the special education program and Len Roberson came, we hired him and the first thing I said is "You are now the coordinator of the deaf education program." He didn't have time to be doing a whole lot more than just holding it together, because for a couple of years, we were running it with adjuncts. But I don't think it's been because the dean doesn't want to fund it. I think it's because faculty have come and gone. I think they're lured away.
- C: One of the questions that the oversight committee wants me to ask everybody. Can you name two or three most colorful characters that you've met at UNF?
- R: Oh, Bill Brown.
- C: Explain why Bill Brown.
- R: Bill Brown. Well. . . .
- C: Give me a word description, a word picture of Bill Brown.
- R: Colorful. Enthusiastic. Full of life. Brilliant. Down to earth. When I got my doctorate, I was forty-two years old, and one of the things I had always wanted to do was learn to sing. So I called him up, and I made an appointment. I said, would you listen to me? Anyway, for two years I studied with him. So I had the

joy of having him teach me, and then we did some scenes from *The Magic Flute*, and I got to be in that. He became a wonderful friend. He was just full of the joy of living. He always made me feel up and fun when I was around him, and I just still can't believe he's gone. I just cannot believe he's gone. I mean maybe he burned himself up, he was so full of life. He was definitely the first one that popped into my mind when you said that. Bill Brown.

C: That was a quick response.

R: Oh, he was just awesome. Just a wonderful friend. Colorful characters. Who else would I say was a colorful character? Wow. Well, always my role model for retirement was George Corrick. You know, George, again, is just one of those wonderful personalities. He's so friendly and fun. I would kind of watch what George would do, and I'd say, I want to do that. So, when he asked me to do the Gladys Prior, I'm going, I just can't believe this. You've been my role model for retirement. Now you're giving me that little job, and I love it. I think George was always a lot of fun. I'm trying to think of people in the other departments that. . . . There are so many wonderful people here. That's another thing about UNF. People stay. Now why do these people stay here? They stay here because they love the place.

C: And the job market?

R: And the job market, I suppose. But I suppose if you really, really badly wanted to go out and search far enough, you might find something else. I can't think of anybody that tops Bill for me.

C: Okay, that's fine. You're not unique in choosing Bill. A lot of people have.

R: Oh, he just popped right into my head.

C: Anything that you brought to this afternoon that you wanted to share about your experience, and we haven't covered.

R: I think we've covered it. I think we've covered it pretty well. The high points of what I think my career were and being here and loving it.

C: Your relationship to the institution.

R: Oh, yes, I just feel it's just a big part of my life and always will be.

C: We talked very briefly, a little before. How has the institution changed? How has UNF changed other than growing in numbers?

R: Growing in numbers and programs, it still maintained that very unique little niche that maybe we don't see in other places. I think about the College of Health, how that is looking at community needs and trying to do what needs to be done. Just like the College of Education is trying to do and the business school. I mean, we're all very in tune with what really needs to be happening out there when our students graduate, and I hope we don't ever lose that. I hope we won't grow to be so big that we'll lose that, because that's important. But it's grown in a good way. It's maintaining quality.

C: And if you were describing UNF to a newcomer to the region, what would you say?

R: Which I've done.

C: What do you say about it?

R: If I were talking to a potential student, I'd tell them, you go to UNF, [and] you'll know your professor. You are not going to be in very many big, auditorium classes. Thank goodness our classrooms are small. I'm sure they'll get bigger. I mean some of them are way too small, but that you will find that the students are for the most part serious learners. That's changing a little bit. We're getting a few more kind of traditional college students that do a lot of goofing off. That you'll be in a place where you're going to feel like people care about you.

C: An adult comes to town. What do you tell them?

R: I just tell them it's just a wonderful school, and they should consider sending their children to it.

C: Okay. Well thank you very much, Lynne, for sharing.