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Interviewee: Eddie Collins

Interviewer: Jim Crooks

Date of Interview: May 4, 2007

JC: Friday, May 4. I'm Jim Crooks, UNF Oral History Project, interviewing Dr. Eddie Collins from the Department of Sociology. Let's start talking about your background before you came here, if we could. Where did you get your education, and then what brought you to UNF.

EC: Okay. I attended public schools in eastern North Carolina, and went to North Carolina A & T State University [North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University] in Greensboro for my bachelor's degree in sociology and anthropology. After finishing A & T in [19]66, I went to Atlanta University [now Clark Atlanta University, after the merger of Atlanta University and Clark College in 1988] and majored in sociology, minored in anthropology, where I got a master's degree. Taught at Clark College across the street for four years, and when I was doing my research for my thesis, I ran across the literature of a professor at Georgia State, Dr. Carroll Simms, who ultimately became the first chairman here, who had done some work similar to what I was attempting to do. I called him and he invited me over. Two years later he called me and asked me if I'd be interested in coming here with him, and I came here with him in [19]72 and been here ever since. He went back after three years.

JC: Did he go back to Georgia State?

EC: No. He went to Virginia State. Carroll had some health problems after he left here, but he went to Virginia State, where he became chair until he retired. I had a friend there, interestingly, who I told him to ask about Carroll. He said he didn't know me and he had never been to the University of North Florida. He had no idea who I was, but again that's reflecting on some of the...

JC: What was the university, this university like when you got here? What were the students like, what were your colleagues like?

EC: The students were much older than I was, for the most part. Many of them returning from the work place after the university came so that they could finish work that a lot of them had started and had not finished. And then there were a lot of military people here. Very highly motivated students. Students who had a lot of real-world experience, and very eager to get through. The faculty was very young, and as I recall, this university was not going to become a traditional university. People were out of the [19]60s, most of us came out of the [19]60s era and we were going to create a new world. We didn't quite get there, but at least we started. Faculty were wonderful. One of the things that I have appreciated most at this university is the collegiality and the professionalism of the people who turned out to work here. I've had very good experiences here as a place to work.

JC: Has that changed over time?

EC: Yes, and partially because it is that larger. I think when we first started we were very small. We were pretty much compacted into an area where you had to see each other, and everybody got to know people. As the university has grown, like all institutions, it's become much more anonymous in terms of relationships. You

know those people you work closely with you in your department and those things, and a few friends you kept and you find, you know, even though you have to go across campus. It's a little different than when I first came here, in terms of the atmosphere. I think that people are much more interactive with people in their shop, so to speak, than they are across boundaries. Part of it has to do with the fact that I think we don't have the social spaces where faculty would commonly come in contact with each other, such as a teacher's dining hall or those kinds of things, so, but otherwise it is generally good.

JC: Were the generational changes problematic?

EC: Oh, yes, I talked myself into obsolescence. I talk to students in having a rural background. Most of my stories and analogies and examples of a lot of what I teach has to do with the past and basically rural. My students, I find them sometimes looking at each other saying, what is he talking about, and they have no clue. In that sense, I think the students are much different than the older students who we attracted first. This generation of young people, pretty much what I call the technology generation, and the urban and they have little knowledge of history or anything that's not urban or high tech and that's the differences between our students.

JC: What did you teach in the beginning?

EC: I came here to teach in the social welfare program. I taught the three courses of the social welfare program for about ten years, and I was also an advisor. As you know, we had a different system. After Dean [Willard O.] Ash [dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 1970-1978] left the deanship, we hired a person who thought that people like me were being paid too much to advise so they shifted me into classroom like all of the rest of the advisors. I had to teach courses that I had never taught before, well, except intro. I was prepared in intro and social problems, per human interaction, social structure and personality courses that were not in my repertoire. I was lucky to find some good textbooks and took a couple of other courses at Gainesville and those courses became the courses that I enjoyed most.

JC: You went down to Gainesville for your doctorate. When was that?

EC: Oh, 1974 I think I started, [19]74 or [19]75 because, as you know, I had a master's when I came here and I was told that I'd have six years left for a doctoral degree. At that point, I really wasn't that sure that I was going to stay here, but I went to Gainesville, ran into a very good group of professors who encouraged me to get into the doctoral program because I was just taking courses when I first went there because I had planned to go back to Atlanta. I came here with the notion that I'd stay maybe if I liked it four or five years then go back to Atlanta. Of course, as you know Atlanta is quite a Mecca for us people, but I met a good group of people there, and I enjoyed it, and finished I think it was [19]78.

- JC: You mentioned at the very beginning that there was young faculty out of the [19]60s who had a dream of a very different university. What was your image of that dream?
- EC: My image was probably very similar to theirs. Coming out of the 1960's, it was a very optimistic time, despite the fact that there was a lot of turbulence going on at that time. I saw this university as a part of that new revolution of creating a society that was much more open, much more diverse, and much more optimistic in terms of human possibilities. I think that that climate existed here at this university. I'm not suggesting that it doesn't now, but I think it is certainly much stronger at that time, and I wanted to be a part of it.
- JC: Sure. I agree that most of us felt that. What do you think made it decline or end in terms of that vision?
- EC: Well, I think two things: the political climate in general changed in the [19]70s, [19]80s. I also think that we got older and became more realistic in terms of how much change you can actually affect in a short period of time. I guess we came to the value of some of those things that we thought were so unnecessary, so crude as to be almost like children. I find myself saying to my children some of the same dumb things that my daddy used to say to me that I thought I'd never say, and I guess as you grow older, you become much more conservative in many ways. I think that's probably what happened to us as individuals as well as what happened to the community in general, part of the larger problem.
- JC: Tell me about your department in the early years.
- EC: There was three of us, Carroll Simms, Kumar Kuthiala, and Chris Rasche [charter faculty member, associate professor of criminal justice in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice], and myself. At that time, sociology, coming out of the [19]60's, was one of those hot areas of study at that time. Students were attracted to sociology because at least they had a vision of having some impact on society. So students were highly motivated to study sociology, to kind of see how they could use sociology. That was very exciting. Coming here, my vision was that I was always going to be a teacher, and that's all I ever wanted to do. If I hadn't come here, and the university hadn't evolved, the focus, you know, coming from a traditional African American college and university, they were preparing us to teach, that's what we were going to do. There wasn't a great deal of emphasis on research and writing and those kinds of things, which was unfortunate, but that was the tradition of African American college and universities. Having come here, and having to make shifts and terms of focus and about halfway through my career I discovered that the traditional Anglo university has a very different focus and agenda than the African American college or university had when I was in school, and much more competitive. I think the thing that really distinguishes the institutions, and the traditional African American and traditional Anglo, and maybe, that's just my perception, but I think there is so much more competition in the traditional Anglo university than you would find in a traditional African American university. I guess that's because,

well, for several reasons. I guess one is the resources aren't there. When I signed a contract at Clark with Dr. [Vivian Wilson] Henderson [president, Clark College, 1965-1976], an economist. I walked in for my interview, he kind of put a piece of paper in front of me and said this is what you'll be teaching, this is what you'll be making, \$9000, at that time. Therefore, I thought I was going to go in and negotiate, you see. It's a whole different ball game. So I came here with the culture of my traditional environment in terms of what teaching at a college and university was as opposed to what it actually was. So halfway through my career, I discovered, you know, here it is much more competitive. I had never heard about promotion, tenure and all this kind of stuff at Clark College in the whole five years I was there. I don't know if they had tenure or what have you. You got what the president offered you. In fact, he's the one you negotiated with. That was very different and somewhat eye opening half way through my career because what I discovered at a university like this is you're always striving, in addition to your teaching, you're striving to position yourself for the dollars and those kinds of things. That was new to me, but after I learned, I was alright.

JC: Was UNF the first time you'd taught Anglo students?

EC: No. I had, at Agnes Scott [College, a private liberal arts college for women in Atlanta, Georgia], the year before I came here. I taught a course in social welfare, at Agnes Scott. To show you how the social climate had permeated the larger society, this was the first social welfare course ever taught at Agnes Scott College. I had also taught adjunct at DeKalb County, and there were white students there, but also there was a mixture of students at DeKalb County.

JC: Jacksonville's known as a very conservative town. How did the white students respond to you?

EC: When I came here, the white students were just very open and welcome. That was the thing about the university. I think the university probably impacted the city in terms of its racial climate more than anything that's happened in the last hundred years.

JC: In what way, because of African American students?

EC: No, I think it was because the projected stance of the university. For example, I think when President [Thomas G.] Carpenter [president of UNF, 1969-1980] and Dr. [Andrew A.] Robinson [interim president of UNF, 1980-1982; dean, College of Education and Human Services, 1976-1980, 1983-1987], and those people who were chairs, and people who developed the college, I think in their plan was to make sure that the college was an integrated, diverse population. I look around now, and we have a much more diverse faculty population in the 1970s than we have now. I think it was the University's stance that it was going to have a real university that reflected, and at that time, of course, diversity meant black and white, and now it has broadened. So when you look around, I can go across campus now, and I can hear five, six languages spoken in between one building. I think the students, at that time were very open, and it may be that we had a selected population, I don't know, but students coming here, it was very pleasant.

- JC: Now, I'm sure you have heard whites say things about integration over the years that were a lot of smoke. Why did you believe UNF was different? Why do you believe UNF is different?
- EC: I think, number one, if they had not been sincere, I don't think they would have put forth the effort to recruit as large an African American population as they have intended. For example, Dr. Robinson in the College of Education, Dr. [Grann] Lloyd in the Economics Department, Bob Mitchell was in the president's office and you look at the, I was thinking the other day teachers in the College of Education, they have a tremendous number of African-American teachers throughout that program. Sam Russell, Roy Singleton, Maurice Jones, Amanda Asgill, and you could go on and on and on.
- JC: One of my perceptions of you is you've always had a special relation with African American students. Tell me a little bit about your relationship with them.
- EC: That's one of the things I've been thinking about as I get ready to retire. Not because I think I'm irreplaceable, but I think it's important for any populations of students here to have some person from their group that they can confide in. That doesn't mean that a lot of non-African American professors haven't been strong advocates for the students here. I think they have, but I think it means that if there are these individuals here, then students would feel free to go and confide, for example. I mean, I can't give you an example without getting personal. An African American student came to me yesterday and explained that her situation as it was relating to a teacher who had told her what she could do in relation to her paper. She had broken her arm. When she went back to follow up on the agreement they'd made, the person reneged on it. I did not attempt to intervene because I don't think that's the professional thing to do. It certainly said to me, yes, my instincts about having an African American faculty here is very important. For example, I've been concerned about what has happened with the area, I teach race relations primarily. We've interviewed four people for that job. Neither one of these people happen to be an African American. They were for the most part, people who had studied race, class, and gender. What has happened in the academy is strange. No race-relations, per say, is not very popular any more. So what we've done is combine the three together. Where most of the colleges and universities focus on gender, and most of those people studying, at least half are women, and their focus is women. And that's okay, but I don't think race should have to hide behind gender and class. I think it's a valid subject in itself and because the community finds it more palatable to use a politically correct concept doesn't change the reality. I think that's something that's happened.
- JC: Can you remember any instances when your working with an African American student or being an advocate for the student made a clear difference in that student's progress toward a degree?
- EC: Yes, because what I often do, and some of my wife's colleagues said to me, well, you say things to them I can't say. I guess I could, and I felt that I could, and I

said them. There were times when I had students who just weren't up to par. They'd come to me complaining about a white teacher who gave them a bad grade. I'd say, well, what's his name. They'd say, well, this old gray headed man, dah dah dah dah dah. I'd say, you don't even know his name? Why would he pick you out of a class of two hundred to discriminate against? So there were times, when I said to students, for example, about wearing their pants down and those kinds of things that white teachers feel reluctant to say on conduct. If you're in my class, I don't care if you're white, I'm in charge. Therefore, I think the tendency of some white teachers to not see African Americans simply because they thought they would be viewed as racist, or unfair. A lot of African American students probably have done things they shouldn't have and vice versa. I have white students who come to my class, and I think some of them come just to see how disruptive they can be, but my job is to run the classroom as Nikki Giovanni [University Distinguished Professor, Virginia Tech] pointed out at Virginia Tech. She said I wasn't trying to diagnose these kids, it was just a bad ass little boy. I didn't want him in my class. I take that position with any kid in my class, regardless of what color he is.

JC: Were there times when you intervened, say with the administration on behalf of African American students to help them?

EC: No. I have fought for handicapped students. For example, last semester, about a year ago, we had this one student here who, if had calculated her grades on the basis of her transferred in grades from junior college plus here, she would have graduated with honors, but if you just started counting here, since her last grades weren't going to be figured in with the former one, she wouldn't have quite made it. She was a very good student, and she very much wanted to graduate with honors. I went to the dean. I said, now, this doesn't make sense. If you look at the formula, it's a technical problem, it's not a practical problem. You know, she has the grades. It's a matter of where she accumulated them. It's this formula and the dean agreed. He said, what have we got, what we are losing. Now the people below the dean I had gone to before and all they could bring out the formula dah dah dah and I'm going this doesn't make sense. I have tried to be fair with all my students. I don't think my role here was to run interference that was created simply because people were African American but to make sure that the university was fair to students regardless to what their race, ethnicity, and all this kind of stuff.

JC: Which is what I'm getting at in the case of the affair...

EC: I don't think that. Now, have I had students who thought that I was here for that? You know, like I used to tell them, I'm not Moses. I wasn't here to part the Red Sea for you. I came here as part of what I thought was my responsibility, as an African American to certainly to make sure the institution is fair to African American students and that African American students learn how to navigate this university because I think some of them had some of the same problems I had,

coming from a traditional. An all African-American community operates very differently.

You see, when I was at A & T, if my money wasn't there on the day, I could go to the registrar, and he'd say, okay, go sign a few papers and take this down to Mr. Siegel. Well, the African American community understood the economics of that student population. Most of us were from eastern North Carolina sharecropping. Our money wasn't regular. If they had run that university the same way that this university's run, half the time, half of us would have been home. This is why you see Florida A & M, for example, often in trouble because they have to manipulate that program and their accounting system is probably very different from this university. I think this is something you see all over the country. When students would come to me, for example, they say the people here are mean, the white people are mean. I'd say, what do you mean? They'd say, they put me out of class. I'd say, that wasn't because they didn't like you, they operate very differently. You can't tell somebody that I'll pay you Saturday. You have got to pay when the contract showed the agreed that you made. They treat you the same way they're treating everybody else about this. So, it's not that they are indifferent to what African American people, and maybe it's sensitive to the economic situations they have here. That's a whole different ball game. All they'll say white students are not very friendly. Well, it's not that they're not very friendly. It's a whole different kind of interaction. At this university here, people they know you, they interact with you, they don't. You see, in an African American college, the language of reference to students is very different. Everybody talks about, hey, homeboy, homegirl. You know, the cafeteria people is mama, you know, those kind of things. A whole different culture and I don't think that the majority of the people here, the Anglos, fully understand or appreciate that there are some cultural differences that we probably don't understand very well, across boundaries each way.

JC: How'd you feel about the advising system that you were a part of for the first eight years or so?

EC: I enjoyed it because I at least got to see the students in the class and we'd also see them as it related to academics and sometimes personal kinds of issues. In that sense, I enjoyed. You could also have a greater sense of how you could help students by seeing them in the context of their advising and also seem them in class.

JC: After Carroll Simms left, Barbara Hargrove [former chair, Department of Sociology] was your chair for a couple of years. Did she follow Carroll?

EC: Yes. Or they consolidated us once. We've been divorced and remarried several times over and departments consolidated, political science, criminal justice, and so on. But I think, and I'm not sure but yes, Barbara was the next one that I remember.

JC: The common-law marriages with departments. Did you feel it was disruptive to how the department worked and how you worked?

EC: Not at that time because we were so small. I think as we grew, you know, when we were with political science, criminal justice, social welfare, anthropology, yeah I think that was not a good marriage because we had gotten too large and we'd also got to competitive. I'd never thought about our department in terms of the subdivisions. I always thought about it as the Department of Sociology or however you want to look at it because Chris Rasche taught sociology. She also taught criminal justice. Kuthiala taught sociology and so early on, I think the fact that we were a multidisciplinary department I never thought about it enough. Later when everybody gets enough power and factions to start conspiring do you see that in our department.

JC: Did you teach in the [Leonardo da Vinci] Venture Program [a program designed to encourage students to broaden their education by taking special interdisciplinary courses at an advanced level outside of their major field]?

EC: Yes.

JC: What did you teach, and what was your reaction to that?

EC: The Venture Studies Program, I liked it. I did a course called "People and Cultures of the World." I thought it was a very good program. In fact, I would suggest that maybe we do have it, I haven't paid that much attention to it. I think today, it would probably be a good idea to offer some courses like venture for non-major students and have a much more general approach to it, than trying to develop the students' majors in those areas. For example, like sociology, I'd like to see a race relations course taught in terms of a seminar-type course, which is more interactive and film, books as opposed to theoretical. I think if the theoretical course goes well for the sociology majors and those folks but I think when you try to bring students from business and other areas without any theoretical background for the theory of sociology it probably doesn't serve them as well and is probably not as worthwhile. They do it but, I'm not sure.

JC: As a faculty member, you were also involved in the Jacksonville Community, both Beaches and downtown. Could you tell a little about that?

EC: Yes. When I was part of that group that started soon after we came here, that led to the Jacksonville, what did they call it, that eventually became the Jacksonville, the group that they do the studies every year...

JC: Jacksonville Community Council?

ED: Community Council. Yes. They did an assessment of Jacksonville in terms of goals and priorities, I think they called it at that time. I was on the committee working with looking at issues with children and I think Jacksonville has grown tremendously in terms of developing a sense of identity and also with the problems at present. When we came here, Jacksonville was so fragmented and you had the beaches and you still have them but not as individualistic as they were. And then Jacksonville was divided by the Atlantic, you know, on the east you've got the Atlantic Ocean then you've got the river, in between two rivers. So when you asked people when you first came here where they lived, nobody would ever say Jacksonville, they would tell you the region. Jacksonville had no

sense of identity at that point. I call it schizophrenic extremia. As a result of consolidation, what you see is Jacksonville begins to think of itself as a unit and the Jaguars probably did more to help create a sense of identity because now can you hear people from Starke and Lawtey and when you ask them where they're from instead of saying Starke and Lawtey they will say Jacksonville because now people identify with the Jaguars. In that sense, Jacksonville since the university has come here has developed a much greater sense of autonomy and identity. I think the university had a great deal to do with it.

JC: Did you have much contact with either Carpenter or [Roy L.] Lassiter [vice president and dean of faculties, 1970-1977] in the beginning years? What were your impressions of them?

EC: At least you could see them and they would stop and talk. I always thought of Carpenter as Pat Boone with his white shoes on and that white belt, blond hair. I was impressed by both of them, in fact. I guess I had more contact with Dr. Lassiter. He was much more of an easy person to talk to, and he liked to talk, and Carpenter was a little bit shy. But they both were people who would stop and talk, and you could see them. One of the problems now is I don't ever see the administrators unless they are in a forum somewhere. They don't walk across campus. You see, Carpenter would just walk across campus and Dr. Lassiter and talk to students and I'm realizing that it was easy to do when it was a small university and you had fewer students. I think that one of the things that I would like to see here is an opportunity where all faculty and students to gather together at least once or twice a year to create a sense of identity. I think that's one of the things that this university lacks is a sense of identity because we have no symbolic representation of unity. I mean, we do the parade every year, but I mean, we have no marching band, we have no football team, all these things that really create a sense of identity. I'm sure that once we get a student union and buildings large enough to gather everybody in that will come. I think that, in terms of the student body, I was watching the... Virginia Tech, you see a Hokie. Everybody now knows what a Hokey is about; nobody knew before. I think our Osprey, you go down to Gainesville, everybody knows what a Gator is, the Gator nation. I don't know where the name came from on the Gator Nation. FSU, the Seminole nation. FSU has a nation. Everybody has a nation.

JC: What about Dean Ash?

EC: He was a very interesting person. I always thought of him as the quintessential Harvard person with dark glasses and dark suits, and he was always very, not stern but just from my point of view, formal. But a very interesting person, a very thoughtful person, a person who was always looking at how he could help to create a more academic climate. I remember parties that used to be at his house. Dick Bizot would always say where we are going after the party. So, we'd have a party after the very formal party that we would have at his house.

JC: How well did you know Andrew Robinson? I'm trying to get a handle on Andy because I think he played a seminal role in the university's beginning.

- EC: I didn't know him well. But I did, I guess in the sense that he was not a person that I socialized with and those kinds of things, but in terms of my working relationship here, in fact for a week or so before he died, I worked on a project with him and did a presentation with him in Tampa through the institute of education that he was in charge of with Mr. Brooks. So I had a very good working relationship with him, and I think I understood Dr. Robinson fairly well. He was certainly a man who attempted to bring about change but in a very non-threatening, non-combative way. I think he worked really hard to try and create an environment where race and those kinds of things were dealt with, but in a way that did not create a scene, to use very obvious language.
- JC: You mentioned being involved in the city in the beginning of JCCI. You've also worked with middle school kids and College of Education kids, too. Is that true?
- EC: Yes. I did a lot of work with Dr. [William] Perky, out of UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro), who was at Gainesville when I was a graduate student. He was on my committee. I have done consulting and speaking engagements all over the southeast and Canada, which is not sociology. Sociology is not interested in what you do in schools, but I guess, in addition to teaching, my pleasure has been that I have been invited to some of the largest school systems in this country to do workshops with teachers and administrators over the years.
- JC: Workshops on?
- EC: Invitation Education, which is a model and theory of education that Dr. [William] Perky and Betty Siegel, who just retired from Kenesaw as president, developed when I was at Gainesville. What grew into a national association, in Canada and China, now. There's a group that has an alliance in China, they had one in Canada, they had one in Australia, and one in South Africa. In fact Betty Siegel is in South Africa now. She's been there, they invited her there for three months to come in there and help implement the Invitation Education theory.
- JC: What is that?
- EC: It is basically a theory creating what they call inviting, for a very simple term. When you look at schools and organizations and institutions, they're either inviting or disinviting, in terms of the quality of the interaction between the people and the programs and the policies, for example. Her group says that if you call a school you can tell in five seconds whether it's an inviting school based on who answers, how they answer the phone. If you call the school and a kid answers the phone and says who is this, you know something is going on and you ask where the principal is and they tell you he is in the toilet. It's just a simple way of looking at programs, people, places, and policies and determining whether or not they have a positive effect on whatever the institution or goal or the organization's goals are, and whether it's inviting to students and whether the school is inviting to teachers and everybody else. It is a very simplistic notion that I think is very important in terms of creating a climate where people are more likely to succeed than not. For example, if I wanted to look at this university in terms of whether it's inviting, and I also think about this in terms of foreign

students more than I do African American students and handicapped students. We invite students here. For example, I have one student here who is from Serbia in my class who's a tennis player. He's very bright, and he speaks English, he just doesn't know the context of race relations in this country, and I think we ought not to put kids in that position, and I think the same thing with handicap students. I think a lot of times we put handicap students in classes, and we don't give them the kind of support they need in order to succeed, and I think that's disinviting because what happens is I see a lot of our handicapped students are treated in the same way that I saw them treated when I was in public school that is oh, you don't have to do this, it's okay. And then when you graduate and this kid takes his diploma out to market, and people just say oh. I think that's disinviting, that's a disservice. I think that happens to handicapped students, I think that happens to foreign students, and, in some cases, but probably less so, in terms of minority students here. In fact, I've about concluded that race relations is so ingrained into the culture, to be looked at until the people that are probably now most neglected are probably old people and children in our society. I think those are the groups that I would feel strongest in terms of needing advocacy as a class.

JC: Beyond the classroom, in your own experience, have had any involvement in the college or the University, faculty association, that are memorable to you?

EC: Now that's interesting because one of the places that I felt most awkward in was in those Faculty Association meetings because I think they were too geared toward the technicality of parliamentary procedure. I'm of the opinion that nobody knows it but some people are able to argue that they do, and those of us who don't, don't know that they're not correct. I always thought it was too formal and too technical. Let me give you an example. I was reading my student papers in my race relations class, I had them to review Lillian Smith's book *Killers of a Dream* and I could tell you, without knowing or seeing the names, or even if I could be able to read them without seeing, Ray Charles could do this. I can tell my African American students' papers. They get the content and the context of what Lillian Smith is saying in her book, but they write about it in a way as if she was writing it for them so that I get concepts such as I can't believe, or I can remember when this happened to me as opposed to the more formal analyses of the context and the theories that they're supposed to be looking at. Now, a non-African American person reading these papers would probably say this doesn't conform, and if I go through, I can almost delete enough of the verbiage that's filler and personal, and you come out with a perfectly formed sentence if you take that stuff out. I look at the content, how well they understood the point. It's all there, but if I simply graded there papers on the basis of, and this also true sometimes of the white students who are more folksy in their communication, you could probably flunk half of them. But the question then becomes what is more important here. I want you to conform to this more standard form of writing, but I'm also happy that you understood the content of the literature here. I think

these are the kinds of things that are racial or culturally bound that we often don't think about in terms of seeing what's important and whether the student gets the idea or simply forgetting about the idea because the writing doesn't conform to expected standards. If you work with the student, he could probably improve their writing skills, but if you flunk him out, they won't be here. I think that these are the kinds of issues for me that are very important. In the school system, for example, a pupil sitting in front of a teacher from nine to three is less likely to be in your house when you're not home, even if they don't learn a damn thing. Schools serve dual functions: they're institutions of control, but also they are institutions of learning, but they serve both of those functions. For example I look at Duval County ...

JC: We talked about discussing . . .

EC: Yes. The round table, Weatherby and that group. I don't know how we keep expecting the test scores and academic performance of the lower socio-economic kids to be equal to that of the middle- and upper-class kids. It's not going to happen. That's the consequences of the stratifying of our society. We either have to accept that, or we have to change, or we're going to continue to have this I-can't-believe-it syndrome every year. There is no way kids who are outside of the cultural milieu that schools test and examine are going to be able to compete on the outside.

JC: Back to UNF. Various presidents have included Carpenter, Robinson, [Curtis L.] McCray [UNF president, 1982-1988], Adam Herbert [UNF president, 1989-1998], Anne Hopkins [UNF president 1999-2002], before [John A.] Delaney [UNF president, 2003-present]. Do you have any particular impressions of any of those presidents from your personal experiences?

EC: Not really. I guess after President Carpenter and McCray, and Robinson was the interim, then they had another one. After that, I kind of lost focus with the president. I mean, it's just like the presidents here now. I see him every now and then. When Herbert was here, people would say oh, do you get to see the president as if somehow now that they had a black president he would make it was possible for all of us to make sure we got in to see him. I didn't see him any more than I saw the rest of them. In fact, I didn't see him as much as I saw the earlier presidents. I've never thought about the president as somebody that I needed to know well or that needed to know me well, to get to interact with me well. I think he has enough to do with his job up there and I'm not a very good politician. I had no agenda. I had just always thought that the president and hoped that the president, as it were, were within the law and faculty and everybody else the same way. That's his job. I never saw the president as someone who was for or against me or anybody else. I just saw him as the president. The same reason I didn't expect anything from Herbert just because he happened to be African American. Now, a lot of people thought that he was too aloof from African Americans. But, I don't know if he was any more aloof from African-Americans than he was from anybody else. It's just as president,

you have a group of people who are very much a part of your working group, and you're going to talk to those people more than do to anyone else.

For example, I noticed when I was the faculty chair. I used to see Hank and certain of the deans and things walking around saying well, why don't they ever ask me? Well, the dean needs to be in contact with the chairs more than anybody else therefore he's going to see the dean and the activist chairs more than the faculty members. Once I got to be the interim, I went over a couple weeks later, and I said to the secretary, Susanne, I want to speak to the President. And she said, this was after my interim was over, she said, do you have an appointment? And I thought, how quickly you lose favor.

JC: How long were you interim chair?

EC: Three years.

JC: In the [19]90's?

EC: Yeah.

JC: What kind of experience was that?

EC: It was interesting. I hired more people than anybody else in the chair. I also had to get rid of two, more than anybody else.

JC: Oh, really?

EC: Yes. We were consolidated then. It's interesting because you begin to see a side of the coin that you don't see before. A lot of the deadline issues, for example. I was amazed at the number of things that would come down from the administration saying, we want this back, now. Well, part of the reason was because they didn't get it earlier because it came from somewhere else on high. This notion that somehow you could call people and get reports and all kinds of the done right now was very interesting. That was compounded by the fact that secretaries; we had some good ones, we had some good ones, and we had some lousy ones. When I was interim chair, I got my annual reports typed outside the university because the secretary couldn't do it. She either didn't or claimed she didn't know how to. Being away from work and not working when she was there was absolutely horrendous.

JC: You were interim chair during [Lewis J.] Radonovich's [dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 1993-2000] tenure?

EC: Yes.

JC: What were your impressions of Lew?

EC: Well, my surface impression wasn't very much more than surface. I don't think I got to know this man. I was disappointed in the fact that he left after he said he wasn't going away, he wasn't looking, then the next day he was gone, which further raises questions about what kind of person he was in my mind.

JC: You said you had to get rid of a couple of people. Were they faculty?

EC: Yes, and these were technical things, we hired a woman, in the summer, to teach anthropology, she had gotten a degree at Gainesville. And she showed up on campus mentally unbalanced. That happened in between our interviewing and hiring her. So the first couple of days as soon as I look up and hear a few of the

students say Dr. Collins, this woman, dah dah dah dah. Well, what do the students know, maybe she's just one of those in your face persons like that woman, what was her name, that we had here that time. From the New College, you remember that woman.

JC: No.

EC: I gave a presentation one summer in a program and this woman ended up suing Dan Schaefer [professor of history, UNF Department of History].

JC: Okay, okay, yes, I remember. [Ellen] Cline.

EC: In fact, you were the dean, I think.

JC: No, I wasn't yet.

EC: You weren't dean? Okay. Well, at one point, I said something to somebody. And they said, oh, that's the way she was, she was just in your face. Anyway, this woman was mentally unbalanced. What I did was I went in and observed. She didn't even know I was in the classroom so I knew that there was something going on. I called her parents and told them, and asked them if they would come down here. They did, and we were able to get the school to pay for, she just moved here from Gainesville, for her apartment and to pay actually her salary for that summer. Later, I got a letter from her and her parents that she had recovered. It was all about the guy she was engaged to was doing his work in South America and wanted her to come there, and her assignment was someplace else and then he broke up with her and so she just lost it. The other one was an African American woman, who was teaching a large section of political science. I hired her through the recommendation of Chris Rasche and from the recruitment. She walked into the classroom and she would not open her mouth until the students stopped talking. Well now that's just what some students wanted; they just kept talking. She would pass out the papers in a class of 200 one by one. If anybody talked, she would stop. It was just a mess in between her and the students. Everyday, I'd see these fifty students come to my office. Finally, I told her, I said, you need to do one of two things. You can resign, and you'll get paid for the rest of the semester, or you can not resign and I will fire you. She agreed to write the letter and I signed it and she went away and she died a few years later. So she probably had some problems. Those were the two cases.

JC: You mentioned not much contact with the president. The various vice presidents and provosts we've had besides Lassiter, John Minahan, (vice president and provost, 1978-1982), Bill Merwin [interim & permanent vice president, 1982-1985], John Bardo [vice president and provost, 1986-1989], Ken Martin [interim & permanent vice president, 1989-1993], David Kline [provost, 1996-2002, interim president, 2002-2003], Alan Ling provost, 1994-1995]. Did you have any contacts with them, and particular impressions of them as provosts?

EC: Not really. In fact, I think the person who is the provost now is the person who was dean when I was faculty chair is the only provost that I have had any mutual interaction with. Not that Kline wasn't good, I think the current provost is a very

broad person in terms of his own scholarship and understands the broader issues.

JC: The various deans have included Will Ash [dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 1970-1978], Jack Humphries [interim dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 1978-1979], Peter Salus [dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 1980-1983], Ed Healy [interim dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 1983-1984, dean, 1984-1987], Rich Weiner [Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 1987-1989], Afesa Adams [dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 1989-1992], Lew Radonovich, and as you mentioned Mark Workman [dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 2001-2005]. Any of those stand out?

EC: Um... Not necessarily except maybe Dean Ash.

JC: The key to the interview is your memories, your experiences. It's not important what somebody else said about them. What are the most important changes that have taken place in your career at UNF over the years? It could be in terms of housing, or lower divisions, collective bargaining.

EC: Well, I guess, when you put it in that context, it is the fact that we went from a having no students on campus to now having a significant number. You begin to notice quite drastically because on the first week of class you can always tell that the freshman students tend to stand in a huddle in the middle of the walkway. The climate changes because you begin to see students, for example, out on the green playing or they are out there sunning where you never saw that before when we were just a campus without students. You also begin to hear of things that we had not had to deal with before because we didn't have students on campus. Social problems...

JC: Like drinking and drugs?

EC: Drinking and drugs. It was interesting, the other day, a couple weeks ago, the paper a senator came out with the an article that said counselors were noticing more drugs and alcohol on campus, which the police countered, but we don't think that's a big problem, and I was going, no. So do we have a problem or don't we have a problem? I suspect that we do have. But again probably not as bad as some others. Anytime you have young people, you are going to have probably problems.

JC: So having student housing has been a major change. Any others stand out? Have you been involved with any of the extracurricular kinds of things, whether it be sports or fraternities, or black student union?

EC: I organized a fraternity when I first came here, it was the Alpha Phi Omega. We got chartered the first couple of years we were here and after that group was of students, who were for the most part who were transfers in from other colleges graduated, there was no opportunity and not having a student life. That's the other thing. You can't very well have student organizations on campus where there are no students. I think that's been one of the problems. I miss that perhaps more than anything else, coming from a campus that had student life. In fact, I lived on campus the years I was at Clark in a faculty apartment. You don't

have the kind of contact with students that you would have. For example, we would often go to, there were coffeehouses, we would go and have discussions, before and after class and those kinds of things. That was very difficult. This is why trying to run student organizations or to have good attendance, we bring very good people on to this campus to do lectures and other events. Nobody ever showed up, except for the faculty who set the thing up and a couple of the students. And that's because students weren't here. That's changing now. Too many of our students work now, full time. I think that's the difference from our first ten years here and a lot of years. Most of our students were professionals or really into their occupations or retired in some cases. The first ten years here Ruth Flanagan and that group, Maggie DeLoach. Too many of our students are working full time and I have students who sign up for classes, and they are at work. And when you confront them with that, then, well, I have to do this and do that. But you can't have it both ways. I think some of our students are working more than they should have to because they want to live at a level that is very different from the level that I felt I would be able to live when I was in grad school. You know, we had oatmeal, miss meal, and no meal. These kids want to have the latest car, six, seven hundred dollar a month apartments, wear the latest fashions. They do a disservice to the quality of their work. But again, I think we may encourage that to some extent by being too sympathetic to the fact that a student has to work. It's one thing if the student has to work. It's another one if he's working because he wants to live a lifestyle that he can't afford. Now I think that class attendance when I was in school versus class attendance now is worse. When I get on to students about coming to class they are like, okay, none of your business, what you worried about? I paid for the course and they go on and on. Anyway...

JC: What achievements of the University are you most proud?

EC: The achievements of the university that I'm most proud? I think the fact that we have most of our academic programs, professional programs are accredited. I think our college of health and business and engineering simply brought credibility and status to the University with these special programs that they focused on. The fact that we have grown significantly over the twenty years. If somebody told me we would have a population we have here now twenty years ago I would have said where are they coming from. So I think the growth in size and in scope of the academic programs has been quite good.

JC: You mentioned earlier some confusion of identity the University has with students and perhaps faculty. How would you characterize us? Are we any different than FAU [Florida Atlantic University] or Central Florida or Georgia State?

EC: No, I don't think you are. I think that's part of the problem that needs to be addressed, and that is I think the dominant culture has a very difficult time except in the possibility that African Americans, or any other group, including women and handicapped, can have a different point of view that is as valid as theirs and thinking about it long enough to come to a conclusion that it's a stupid idea or

perhaps there's something there. Let me give you an example. We hire people here, everyone talks about diversity. Yet, when people come in for interviews, we start seeing how well people merge with who's here in terms of how they think, what their areas are, and that's not diversity to me, that's university, and I think there's the same problem that women had for years. Men knew what women were like or weren't like.

JC: Or thought they did.

EC: Yes, well, it didn't matter that they didn't since they defined the definition of the situation. I think it's the same thing here. There is another way of seeing the world simply because you have lived in a different zone, and I think that's the critical point. I don't think that the dominant culture has come to the conclusion that there can be any other perspective that has any validity.

JC: I think that statement probably applies to almost every university, every predominantly white university.

EC: Yes, any predominant culture. In the same way that I think you find the same kinds of misunderstandings within culture. I think if you look at the middle-class African American and the lower-class African American, you have the same kind of disjuncture in terms of how they experience the world. I think middle class people are much more likely to experience the world as an Anglo person and have a similar point of view than the African Americans of lower socioeconomic person. For example, when you listen to discussions about hip hop after the [Don] Imus case. I heard some very valid arguments in terms of the hip hop culture. Now I don't like hip hop because I can't understand it. I'm from another era and the music just doesn't resonate. But I think for the dominant culture to basically not see some of the rational or logical explanations or at least perspectives of the hip hop culture is to simply another way of saying you have no validity and nothing that I need to even think about in terms of a possibility. I think hip hop culture, for example, they were blaming that Imus kind of case. Imus is supported by the main stream media. He's not a hip hop fanatic. Now I can understand the drug folk and the other anti-social groups, but he's a mainstream media guy, and he's paid to do this. Now it seems to me the issue is money. The hip hop culture group, most of them come out of the ghetto. They make some money. Are they going to stop making money because the dominant culture doesn't like the language? I don't think so. In the same way that the corporate America makes money. They're not going to stop and become ethical about business practices simply because somebody thinks they ought to.

JC: Come back to the university and its characteristic, you said, it's clearly middle-class white dominated. Are we any different than other universities, or are we just a generic, regional, state school?

EC: No, I don't think you're any different, and in fact, I would argue in some cases, you're probably more closer to what I'm trying to get at than some of the other universities. I think Ivy-League universities, for example, posture a great deal about what they are and what they're doing simply because they have the money

to do it. I'm not sure if they are any more sincere or authentic in what they are doing. I don't think it's a conspiracy. I think it's a failure of people to talk about differences long enough to come to a conclusion that there may be some validity on both sides, you see. I don't argue, for example that African Americans' world is so different once you pick it apart from white America. It's just that it operates in a very different climate.

JC: What mistakes has the university, in your opinion, made over the years, any sort of sins of omission, sins of commission?

EC: If there's been a sin, I think it's that we used to hear from the faculty about larger social issues. People would discuss it. You don't hear that anymore. Maybe because we're too damn old to be involved in what's going on out there in the world. I think back of the Dale Clifford [charter faculty member, founding director of the UNF Honors Program], Jane Decker [charter faculty member, former professor of political science], Bill Slaughter [professor, UNF Department of English], Al Tilley, days when you used to hear things happen out here. You could hear people discuss it. I was shocked. You know when I was on campus all day the day of the Imus case. You know when I heard about it when I got home. I taught a race relations class and I said the next time we met for my students, hadn't anybody heard about and they said yes. One student said I was going to bring it up, but I didn't know whether to bring it up or not, but you did. I'm thinking these are the kinds of social issues you would think that would be informing, people would sit down and talk about it, faculty and students. It doesn't happen. It didn't happen. Now, as soon as the kids get killed, then we hold a vigil. Now why it is that part of the turbulence of our society is significant and the other part is not? Others are not diverse. The university became very conservative, very conservative, and not necessarily the faculty. I think the student body. I said to somebody one day, I don't know if you was in that group, Schaefer, Courtwright, and maybe you were sitting at the table. About three years ago, I was just coming through, and I said, I'm going to ask you all a question. Do you think that schools, colleges and universities, and the public school system, might becoming the theater of where the social problems of America gets acted out? And all three people, I can't remember who was there but I know Courtwright was there and I think Schaefer. Courtwright became very angry. Oh no, I don't think so. Almost to say, where'd you come up with this stupid idea? That's not what he said, but the essence of the tone. Now, I go on to watch what happens in the public school systems, and how many lock downs you hear about every day, and threats every day, and then you have the Virginia Tech. And I go maybe I'm not so stupid. Why is it that the kinds of perceptions that some people have aren't thought about long enough to even determine if there is validity there. As far as I'm concerned, the most dangerous place you could send a child is to a public school and it's even become to a college and university. Yet, somehow, people walk around as though schools are safe. For example, I'm surprised, at this university you can come out at anytime in the

night and walk into all these buildings. Now, that's wonderful, but that certainly does not take into consideration how vulnerable those of us who work here are. I certainly regret having to see schools become fortresses, but I don't know if somehow we can keep denying. We are part of the larger system.

JC: So, one of the problems, I guess you could say, the increasing violence in the society is creeping on to campuses.

EC: Yes. I make the argument in my race relations class that schools are not any different from any other institutions, and people now get killed in church. I told my students, the only reason we don't kill more people in church is because church doesn't hold as long. If people had to stay at church as long as we had to stay in school, you'd probably see a much larger increase of violence in church, but the fact that they just go for a few minutes people can manage to suppress until they get out. Wherever people spend a great deal of time, if these people come from an environment where there are these kinds of fermentation of issue, they are going to be acted out. This is why we see at work places. Look at the number of people in work places that are killed. If I work there, and I'm angry, I'm likely to kill somebody one day here. So wherever people spend a great deal of time doesn't matter whether it's in church or whether it's in the schools. Where most people spend most of their day, is where most of the social fermentation is going to take place.

JC: The committee overseeing these interviews wanted me to ask this question. Who are the two or three most colorful characters you've known at UNF.

EC: Bill Brown [UNF charter faculty member and renowned operatic tenor] and Grann Lloyd.

JC: Explain each of those.

EC: Well, Bill Brown was the quintessential, always upbeat. I used to see him, he'd say, we have to get together, we have to get together and have dinner and dah dah dah dah. I'd say, Bill, how are things going? He'd say, oh, I think it's going so good I think I'm going to give up my place in Heaven. That was his way. Grann Lloyd, in the sense that Grann Lloyd was from the old school. He's just a kind of old professor that I remember back in my undergraduate school. He was always very seriously attacking some issue. I think that his ties that were so old and his suits. I think Dr. Lloyd had these suits that he wore from back when he first started teaching. He used to teach at my undergraduate. When he first got his bachelors, he taught at A & T. But I thought his demeanor of the old professors that I knew and his ties, which were always very soiled and suits that he'd worn for years. Interesting old fellow so I would say. Now who else? The dean that we had who used to wear the pink socks.

JC: Peter Salus.

EC: Peter Salus taught in a very different way. So I would say Grann Lloyd and William Brown.

JC: What about Tom Mongar?

EC: I don't know if I would say colorful. Yeah, Tom was interesting in a sense that he was one of those people who never thought he was happy unless he was unhappy. Tom was always after something. He could always find a cause to fight and he was very unhappy unless there was the fermentation of something. In terms of intellectual quality, a good person who I think students would enjoy, he took the devil's advocate role. So I always thought from the teacher's point of view very good. And contradictory in many ways, Tom had shown himself as a socialist. Yet when you looked at what he was doing, he was a quintessential capitalist. He was investing in the same thing that all other Americans were investing in, houses and those kinds of things. I think in that sense, he was a contradiction. But, intellectually, one can be a communist without having to live as a socialist.

JC: Either that or we're all contradictions.

EC: Exactly. But if he liked you, he liked you. If he didn't, he would make your life miserable. Oh, I know who I left out. This was the guy who was in charge of the technical...

JC: Jack Funkhouser?

EC: Jack Funkhouser. Jack was very good person, would work with you, but, if you ever crossed him, you were in trouble. He didn't care who you were, what your status was, or role, but he was a very interesting fellow.

JC: How would you describe him?

EC: Always thought that he was a person who had a technical job but he more strongly identified with the academic side. I always thought that Jack felt much more of an academician than a technician, which was what his job was. I think that he did not like the fact that people didn't see it. He was always a little defensive. You look at some of the things that Jack taught here over the years. Jack was a very strong academic person. But I don't think he ever felt appreciated. Therefore he was always very defensive towards certain people. He was very sharp, and very helpful as long as you didn't cross him. I also felt the librarian, what's his name?

JC: Andrew Farkas [charter faculty member, most senior employee, creator of the library system at UNF].

EC: Andrew Farkas was an interesting person.

JC: In what way?

EC: Librarians are usually very in the background. You don't hear or see them. I feel that, in a sense that he too demonstrated technical as well as academic skills. He was very much into the operatic and music area and other areas that you generally don't think are librarian areas, you need to. I think that since he was an intellectual librarian as opposed to just a technical librarian and he did a good job in developing the library for UNF.

JC: Is there anything I overlooked in asking you? Any thoughts that you had before coming in that you wanted to share?

EC: No. Well, there is one and that is, and I think you can relate to this. I think the University has to create a very different climate for dealing with the faculty who retire. I think it's almost embarrassing that people leave here... One faculty member, for example, they had taken her computer, number, email, and the whole nine yards. I think that there needs to be a much more humane treatment of people who leave this university. I don't think that they do anything inhumane. They don't do anything. I think that's the issue. I think a person who has been here for thirty-something years, forty-something years, certainly we could have a more formal departure than the kind of things that we do or don't do here. As I get ready to retire, it's almost like I felt when I went to college. Kind of like college because I felt that I was being put out. Not that I was being put out, but I felt that way so I needed to be attended to that way. I'm retiring, and I announced my retirement, and I'm going to retire, but nobody said, well, would you consider staying? No, I wouldn't, but I'd love to be asked, so I think that that is an area that we really ought to look after. I don't think people need to feel like they're leaving the university, they're moving to another level in the university. I think the University ought to, and I think they will, find places where people ought to be able to come back on campus and do some things that they want to do. Or they ought to be able to park. I think seriously that parking for retired faculty should not cost them a thing. Some students have to walk farther, but what the hell.

JC: When will you retire?

EC: July 1.

JC: Not far away. Okay, anything else?

EC: Nope. I think we've covered the water, probably too much of it.

JC: Okay, well, thank you very much.