



Nova Southeastern University
NSUWorks

Oral Histories of Nova Southeastern University

NSU Digital Collections

6-21-2010

Interview with Samuel F. Morrison - Director Broward County Library System

Samuel F. Morrison
Nova Southeastern University

Follow this and additional works at: http://nsuworks.nova.edu/nsudigital_oralhistories

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Public History Commons](#)

NSUWorks Citation

Morrison, Samuel F., "Interview with Samuel F. Morrison - Director Broward County Library System" (2010). *Oral Histories of Nova Southeastern University*. Book 22.
http://nsuworks.nova.edu/nsudigital_oralhistories/22

This Audio CD is brought to you for free and open access by the NSU Digital Collections at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral Histories of Nova Southeastern University by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.

Nova Southeastern University

1

History of Presidents

Sam Morrison

JP= Dr. Julian Pleasants

SM= Sam Morrison

JP: This is Julian Pleasants and I am at Nova Southeastern University and it's June 21st, 2010, and I'm speaking with Sam Morrison. Would you tell me when you first came to Fort Lauderdale and in what capacity?

SM: Okay. I came to work county library system in August 1974. I was hired as the assistant to the director of the newly formed Broward County Library System, which had been established to provide countywide library service by the Board of County Commissioners in June of '74. So two months after this system started, I came on board. The library system at that time consisted of three libraries - the City of Hollywood and the City of Fort Lauderdale, which had a couple of branches, and a bookmobile.

Within a year I was promoted to the assistant director of the library system where I served as assistant director for about 12 years. At that point, the library system had

grown and developed and I went to the City of Chicago as their chief librarian from April of '87 to January of 1990. In January 1990, my former boss had been kicked upstairs, Cecil Beach, former state librarian. We had worked together for years and years and he invited me back to be the director of the library system. Served as a director of the Broward County Library System from January of 1990 until I retired in 2003.

JP: What was the library system like in terms of the commitment of the communities when you first started? Obviously there were not a lot of branches. Did you have sufficient personnel? Sufficient volumes?

SM: Broward County at the time I came in '74 was primarily municipal libraries, and if you didn't live within the municipality, you would have to pay to use some other city library. For example, Oakland Park, which has never been part of the county library system. If you lived in Oakland Park you could use their library free, but if you wanted to use a Fort Lauderdale library, which was the best library in the county, you would have to pay a fee. So in June of '74 the Board of County Commissioners said they wanted to provide free library service countywide. They invited all the municipalities to turn the libraries

over to the county and they would operate them, take care of the employees' pensions, whatever those difficulties were. And from '74 to '78, several cities turned their libraries over to the county.

One of my responsibilities as the assistant director was to negotiate the contracts between the city and the county. So the library system was growing. There was a lot of support. People wanted library service and the cities wanted to unload a few dollars off their budgets, so many of them were happy to turn their libraries over to the county. In '78 there was a countywide bond issue to build libraries. We built about 14 libraries, we placed some existing libraries, renovated others, built the main library in downtown Fort Lauderdale. And all over that period of time it was a great deal of support. The library was growing, the budget was growing, we were hiring more people, et cetera.

By the time I left in 1987, we were probably the maybe 10th or 15th largest library system in the U.S. based on certain stats, number of facilities, for example, or books, dollars associated with the book budget. When I came back in 1990 there was another bond issue to continue developing the library system, and it was at this time that I began

talking with Donald Riggs, who was the Nova Southeastern University librarian. I forget his actual title. Vice president for something, I think. But I had known Don for a number of years through the American Library Association. We had a personal relationship based on both of us having spent time in Arizona. I was born in Arizona and Don was the university librarian in Tucson, I think it was. So we had known each other over the years. And Don was aware of some of the projects the library system had been involved in, providing service, for example, to Broward College, which at that time was known as Broward Community College, an association of all types of libraries called SEFLIN, which Don and I both belonged to as directors of the library system. So we both had an interest in trying to provide as much service as we could to the general public through sharing resources.

JP: What dates are you talking about now?

SM: I'd really have to look, but I think this was probably around '92. I would think it was about 1992 when Don and I started talking about this.

JP: So this started years before the fruition of the project?

SM: Oh yes. Yeah. And it was actually Don's idea. I mean, he approached me about the possibility, and so over the next couple of years, and again I'd have to look back in my wreckage to get the actual time, or Lydia may actually have the timing, the dates. But we both had the responsibility for getting our side interested in the project. I had to convince my superiors that this was something worth doing, and Don was doing the same thing on his side, and then we finally got to the point we were able to both sides basically agree that this was a good thing to do, and it was a very unusual thing. No one had ever heard of such a thing and everybody wasn't convinced that it was a good thing.

JP: Give me a little specific as you were trying to sort out all the details. What was going to be the essence of this that the library would be built here but everyone in Broward County would have access?

SM: Yes. That was the whole idea. This was during the time when Broward County was building libraries throughout the county as a result of that second bond issue.

JP: Now, that was a 1999 bond issue, \$139 million?

SM: Right, right. Exactly.

JP: Well that in and of itself was somewhat unusual.
Was it not?

SM: Well, it was the second bond issue the citizens of Broward County had voted on in a relatively short period of time. Within 20 years.

JP: That's a lot of money for libraries.

SM: Yeah. Exactly. And there wasn't much in the way of library service in Southwest Broward. We had two libraries planned that were going to be a result of the bond issue, but from my perspective, the idea of having access to a major university collection for the general public, for small businesses and researchers, I just thought that was a terrific opportunity. And we eventually convinced everybody that this was a great thing to do and ended up with the contract between Broward Board of County Commissioners and the Nova Board of Trustees, I guess who were the literal contract signers.

JP: Was it hard to convince the county commissioners?

SM: We had a fair amount of I guess I'd call it lobbying going on, but on my side I had convinced my boss that this was the thing to do. His name was Larry Lietzke.

He was the Department of Community Services. Well, actually I think Cecil at that time was the director of the Community Services Department. So as a former librarian himself or as the former county librarian, he was certainly convinced that this was a great thing to do and he had more direct access to the county commissioners individually than I did. At the time, George was the city manager, our current present. He was the city manager of the City of Fort Lauderdale when I first met him. So by that time, he was working with the university and I remember several meetings that we had with the attorney, Tom Panza and George, meeting with the various individuals on the county commission before we brought the formal contract to them.

JP: So George was involved in the evolution of this?

SM: Yes.

JP: And supported it, obviously.

SM: Absolutely. Yeah, he's always been and he remains a great supporter of that concept.

JP: Were the city commissioners involved at all?

SM: No, no, no. It was just the county commission because the county was responsible for the library system.

JP: Okay. So could you give me the details on the contract? What did the county provide? What did the university provide?

SM: Well, I mean, we're talking about a contract that's 20 years old I guess. I've been retired seven years. About 15 years old. The basic idea was that the university would be responsible for operating the library on a day-to-day basis and that Don Riggs would be the university librarian, Broward County would have one or two staff members who were responsible for providing the public library service, for being the ones who decided which materials should be available and which programs would best serve the general public. And Don and his staff of course already knew what to do about the university side.

I would say that on both sides, no one was as enthusiastic about this as Don and I. Our respective staffs had concerns and questions and weren't sure it was a good thing to do or whatever, but we came and watched them align, got them to do what needed to be done. And the first several years I think we're pretty successful and people got on board. And I think one of the things that didn't happen is that we didn't promote the use of the

library by the general public as much as needed to be done, I don't think. And probably that's still true to today.

JP: But in the process, the university gave the land.

SM: The University provided the land, was responsible for the actual construction of the library. So Don was in charge on that side. I consulted with Don about the public library side, in terms of where the children services should be. One of the problems that we were able to resolve, we both had different technical systems. The computer systems weren't compatible with each other. We both would have preferred to have been able to have one library card that anybody could use and for various reasons we weren't able to do that. We would have had either to give up the complete county side and revise, buy new equipment and everything to be compatible with the university or vice versa. So we just decided that citizens who were not part of the university family would apply for and receive a library card from Broward County. So basically they had to have two cards - a university card and the Broward County card. That's a little bit cumbersome, but it wasn't a deal-killer.

JP: But as long as you had a Broward County Library card, you could use all of these facilities?

SM: Yes.

JP: To check out books, everything?

SM: Yes. Right.

JP: Now, who paid for the building in the end?

SM: The cost of the library was shared by the -- I don't remember the percentages, but the contract called, for example, the county to -- I think the county was responsible for the parking garage that serves as --

JP: They built that?

SM: Paid for it. The university actually was responsible for the supervision of the construction. But the financing -- and I think that there's still some outstanding debt on the parking garage now that Broward County is responsible for. In fact, that's kind of a bone of contention these days. And as the last couple of years, Broward County Library System has been forced to reduce their budget, and one of the things that they've been wrangling with the university on is payments due for the payout on the parking garage. I'm not sure exactly where that stands today.

JP: At one point didn't the county have access to the assets of the garage? The parking funds? I don't know whether other people were charged to park there or whether it was free for --

SM: No, everyone had to pay.

JP: Everyone had to pay?

SM: Yeah, everyone had to pay to use the parking garage. But presumably, that revenue was going to pay off the debt.

JP: Which it did not.

SM: Well, it's not completed. Right. I don't know how much is outstanding.

JP: But the county got part of that revenue and the university got part of that revenue.

SM: I don't think Broward County received any actual revenue from it. Broward County's contribution was to help pay off the debt for the construction of the parking garage. They had some ongoing payment of a couple million dollars a year that Broward County was giving to the university, which theoretically was helping to provide public access to the university services.

JP: And so the university paid for the library building themselves?

SM: Yes. Yes.

JP: And obviously you're aware of Alvin Sherman and I think he gave, what, like \$5 million?

SM: Five or ten million dollars. Yeah, right. That was again -- Donald Riggs was really responsible for that. I remember when he was cultivating that donation. I didn't know who the party was and he told me that he was working on a major contribution to the library. I don't know who else on the university side was responsible for that. I guess the university development office probably had something to do with that. I didn't become a part of the university trustees until after I had retired, so I wasn't really aware of a lot of the work going on on the university side.

JP: Obviously that was critical to the completion of the library. I guess it had already started construction because it completed in 2001. Is that right?

SM: Yeah, yeah. The library was going to be built with or without that contribution. There's no question about that because it was primarily funded through bonds

the university issued. So those dollars helped to offset the cost. And again, because I'm not on the university side, I don't know if those dollars literally went to help pay off the debt or if it was placed in some other fund for operating costs. I'm not sure about that.

JP: It's a pretty strong commitment on the part of the university though to build that modern library. It's one of the biggest in the state, isn't it?

SM: It is the largest library building in the State of Florida, public or private. Nova has a long history in Broward County. I mean to start off as just a little small two-building operation or something, you know. It's just amazing to me personally how the university has grown over the 25 years - the campus, the opening of that library was a pretty dramatic statement to the public at large about Nova's commitment to providing scholarship and research opportunities for this county. And Nova is probably one of the larger employers in Broward County.

So the opening of that building, I mean, there are hundreds of people out here, all kind of political elected officials and everybody else. I think the average citizen who knew anything at all about libraries, or was interested in libraries in any way or the university, were very proud

because it was unique. It was the only facility of its type in the United States. It brought a lot of publicity, favorable publicity to the community. And the idea that library services were available to everyday citizens at times when generally the public libraries were closed, there were more hours, still are more hours of service here than any of our other libraries. So it was a pretty fantastic commitment I think on the part of the university to provide this service.

JP: And the reason it was so unique, it's one of only two private schools in the country that have public library access.

SM: Right. Broward County Library System was one of the premier libraries in terms of promoting resource-sharing. We had relationships with the three campuses of the Broward Community College. We had a contractual relationship with Florida Atlantic University's operation downtown Fort Lauderdale. We called these joint libraries. And during those years and the early '90s, there was a lot of interest in Broward County Library System because of our resource-sharing interest and developing these contracts with universities to provide library service.

JP: Well, in June 1996, Broward County won the designation of being "Library of the Year," which is pretty unusual considering when you got here where the system was. That was a pretty dramatic increase in 22 years.

SM: Yeah. Yeah. I think in library land this was a recognition of, one, the two bond issues that Broward County had had in 20 years, which indicated the interest of the general public and libraries and their support, tax payers' support for it. Our budget was growing every year and we're hiring more people and our resource-sharing opportunities, this operation called SEFLIN, which was cooperative of public and private university and public libraries garnered a great deal of attention nationwide. So all of those things led to our award of "Library of the Year" in 1996.

JP: Was the key the public support? Obviously institutional support was critical as well.

SM: Certainly institutional support, but I think it was a combination more of political and public support. That is, the elected officials who had to raise taxes or keep the money coming in definitely had to be supportive of this idea. Friends of the Library or whoever could come in and say yes, we want this, we want that, we want the other,

but they had to persuade the elected officials to do this. The bond issue is a good example. Both bond issues. The library folks were anxious for this to happen, but the county officials needed to build roads and parks and other things. So the library was so popular that they were able to provide some of these other services because the themes of the library, as we frequently call them, were get out and get the vote out. I remember specifically, parks and those kinds of services were on the bond issues. There were like 12 or 13 different projects besides library projects that were on the bond issue in 1990. Is that the 1990 bond issue I think it was?

JP: It was 1999 was the second bond issue. I think that one must have been around --

SM: The other one was `78. They were like 20 years apart. 1978 and then 1998 bond issue I think this one is. The `98 bond issue.

JP: Now, what is the status today?

SM: The `98 bond issue?

JP: No, no. For the public and the politicians. Are they still supportive of libraries?

SM: Yes, but the problem is the economy. The last two years, the last two budget years for Broward County government, because the general economic situation aggravated by the value of the property going down, the library has lost close to 300 positions in the last two years, Broward County Library. They've cut hours at some of the branches. And Nova University all during this time, to my knowledge at least, has been able to keep their hours. I think they have over 100 hours of service. They haven't changed anything on their side. Broward County government has been pressing the university to reduce Broward County's contribution each year so that they could provide the other services that they have to do. They've got the same problem again this year.

JP: What's the future of this relationship? Do you think this will survive?

SM: I'd say two things. One, for the project like this to take place you've got to have leaders on both sides who are firmly committed and believe in it and are willing to take a few lumps along with it to get the thing started. And both Don and I had that. For the relationship to continue there has got to be strong leadership on both sides that believe in the service. That's certainly true

in my opinion on the university side. I don't think it's true on Broward County Library side. And I don't know if that's philosophical on the part of the current library director or if it's a reflection of direction he's receiving, because at the time that I retired and the county was in the process of recruiting a director, it was clear to me as the person going out that they were looking for a different kind of person to come in.

I had personally been pretty active in the community, belonged to different organizations and was on some boards. The library was a very visible, viable part of Broward County government at that time. But there were some who believed that there was too much of that. And the person that they hired has had a much lower profile across the board in the last several years, about seven years he's been here now. I can't say whether that's his personal philosophy or whether at the time he was recruited he was given some idea of what the county might be looking for.

JP: Would you say that from the inception to the present that this has been a benefit for both sides?

SM: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. And I think in a different kind of economy this would still be viewed by everyone I think generally as a very wonderful thing. I

think times of cutbacks when you've got fire and police and other services that people deem to be more essential and you've got to cut some place, there's not many places to look. Parks and recreation. I mean, it's not just libraries that have suffered in the last couple of budget years. Parks and recreation have suffered as well.

JP: So, excuse me, in that sense it turns out to be a benefit that it's part of the university because they haven't had to cut the hours or cut personnel.

SM: Yeah. That's a fair statement.

JP: Had this been part of the regular Broward County system, those cuts would have been implemented.

SM: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. And the last two years and this year, basically I think the approach has been, and again I don't have any inside contacts with the decisions being made or the philosophy behind it, but what appears to be is that each year when the library has been asked to reduce its budget by X percentage, whether it's 10 or 3 or whatever it is, they've tried to get the university side to reduce the county's contribution by that same percentage, whatever that percentage might be. And generally the university has resisted that. I mean, they

have contracted everybody entered into in good faith and so forth and so on. But the university is committed to providing the service. So they've resisted cutting the library services. They've done various things related to the financing and parking garage, but they've not cut back on the library service in any way.

JP: So in that context, they've kept up their end of the bargain.

SM: Absolutely. Yeah.

JP: Well, I presume at some point they would have to indicate to the county commissioners that they are in fact service Broward County residents, that there would be some intake information, how many books were checked out.

SM: They do that each year. And during the negotiations, which I'm not any part of, but during the negotiations it's frequently pointed out and even statements are made publicly by the chancellor and the president about the number of residents who have library cards. And it's a significant number. It's around 40,000 I think, maybe a little bit more.

JP: That's a lot.

SM: It's more than some of the cities that the public library serves. I mean, there are some smaller cities that have libraries, or let's say branches within local cities.

JP: Now, what impact or influence did Ray Ferrero have on the evolution of the library?

SM: Well, I dealt primarily with Dr. Hanbury. When I was the library director on the county side, usually I was dealing directly with Don and nobody else on the university side. During the planning and construction of course I was involved in some of the meetings and helping to determine what the various services would be. But in general, the contact between county government and the university side was carried on as far as I know by George Hanbury, Dr. Hanbury, and Tom Panza. I was in a couple of those meetings with Don.

JP: And that would have been particularly good for George, who had been the manager, kind of manager. So he knew all these people and --

SM: Right. He had working relationships with them.

JP: So that was a real plus.

SM: Absolutely. Absolutely. George was well-respected, had been the city manager of Fort Lauderdale for

a while, and that's the city/county government of Fort Lauderdale. So he was tuned in to the business community and the political officials. So I don't really know how much influence Dr. Ferrero, I mean Chancellor Ferrero had on that early process. After the library was open, well then he was certainly the face of the library at that point. George was like his deputy.

JP: Well certainly he would have favored it. Go back a little bit. What was Nova like when you first came to Fort Lauderdale? Give me some sense of how the city/county viewed Nova. And then, as you indicated earlier, these dramatic changes over a period of time.

SM: The early years of Nova were -- first of all, Nova is located on the far west part of the Broward County. As far as the east side -- there has always been this divide in Broward County between the east side and the west, and there are people -- because Fort Lauderdale was for many years the largest city in the county and the seat of the business and economic development, there are people who never went past 441. I mean, these were the leaders and movers and shakers of Broward County. Nova was in the hinterlands. So over the years, in the early years, in the '70s and '80s, Nova was -- one, it was a private university

so the general public didn't have that much knowledge or interest in it, but as Dr. Fischler, who was kind of the movers of the early development of Nova, and I think there were a couple of people between Dr. Fischler and the chancellor just for a short period of time--

JP: Feldman was one and Ovid Lewis was the other.

SM: I knew of Lewis and met him a couple of times. I didn't know the other gentleman, although I knew of him. But I think the university began to take off in terms of public recognition and in terms of development of the university physical plant when Chancellor Ferrero came on board. All of a sudden, Nova was very visible in Broward County. There were major supporters of various charities. So the reputation of the university also was changing and growing at some point in the early years. Nova always produced a lot of doctorate degrees, and that's kind of what they were known for in the early years. I'm not sure exactly when the association with what used to be Southeastern University, when that combination took place, but that was kind of the beginning of general public recognition of the importance of Nova.

JP: So when the law school came on this campus and the professional schools, dental school and all of that,

that was sort of the change where the people of Broward County now see Nova in a different light.

SM: Yes, yes, yes.

JP: Because prior to that time, what I've discovered, people really didn't know much what was going on.

SM: No. They didn't even know it was here. If you weren't a student or faculty person, Nova just basically didn't exist.

JP: And if we look at the State of Florida and nationally, people still don't know a lot about Nova Southeastern. You are on the board of trustees. How do you get the university name recognition at least across the State?

SM: Well, I think what has helped propel the recognition of the university, I think the creation and the establishment of the Alvin Sherman Library was pivotal because everybody knows that there is a law school and this and that and all those other normal operations of a university. And even Southeastern University, prior to its association with Nova, if you weren't in one of those professional fields nobody really knew they were around either. I mean, it was a viable operation but it wasn't

something that -- if you mentioned Southeastern University, I mean, you never saw that in the press and you didn't hear people talking about it, didn't hear people talking much about Nova unless you were on either one of those sides, as a staff person or something. General public just didn't have any recognition of that until the library. The library is really what propelled that. On the other hand though, at the time President Ferrero and his development of the campus, starting all the buildings that were being built --

JP: The Commons, the Student Union, the Huizenga Business School, all of the buildings, so that when people come here -- or even the Dolphins facility to some degree.

SM: Yeah.

JP: You come and you see the physical campus that really didn't exist before.

SM: Didn't. No. No. I mean, they went from two little buildings some place. And actually, I think it was down in Fort Lauderdale some place.

JP: That's where they started.

SM: The original Nova. Yeah.

JP: The first building I think was on Las Olas, downtown.

SM: Right, right. So, I mean, it's amazing. And it really is a wonderful campus, I think, as a person, prior to being on the board of trustees, just as an individual who was watching this thing grow and develop. It's just fantastic.

JP: Obviously, you know, as sort of an outside person one doesn't think of Fort Lauderdale as a "library town." Maybe Chicago, maybe Boston. And yet, as we all know, the essence of university should be the library. It's not always, but it should be. And at some point through the leadership of the presidents and the support of the community they made the surge, which in just a very short period of time has changed this from an institution that was not very significant to an important part of this county and the state. So is that due to presidential leadership or community support?

SM: I think the growth and development of Nova University is a result of the charisma and the forcefulness of Chancellor Ferrero. I think a different leader at that time would have made all the difference. I don't think we would have Nova University as we have it today if it had

not been for the leadership, who is now Chancellor Ferrero, president at the time. The board of trustees when they made that decision, he had been on the board of trustees, but he was a well-known lawyer in the profession in the state. I'm not sure if he was ever a president -- I think he was president.

JP: He was, of the Florida Bar Association.

SM: Right.

JP: He had been chairman of the board of trustees.

SM: Board of trustees, yeah.

JP: But he was someone, and this is an overused word, but he did have a vision for the future of this campus. And prior to that time they really didn't have the resources to expand. I mean, they were just trying to keep the doors open. So he comes in I guess at just the right time for expansion.

SM: Of course, I mean, I wasn't personally aware of this at the time, but it's like Nova University and Broward County Library are similar in my mind in that they both had leaders, and I'm speaking now of my predecessor who had vision and who had commitment and who had the political savvy to develop the public support for what needed to be

done. Cecil Beach on the county library side from '76, I think is when he came on board, had the vision of developing Broward County Library. And Ray Ferrero, when he came on board whatever year that was, the university began to become a more visible and viable entity in Broward County. And the physical plant grew and developed, the programs of the university developed. Of course the library in terms of public view was critical to that.

JP: I want to ask you about that. I don't know, you might not know from your perspective, but I would have assumed that this new library was pretty significant in terms of accreditation for this university.

SM: Oh yeah. Yeah.

JP: Because prior to that time, the library was in various buildings.

SM: They didn't have much of a library. There was a law library and maybe one other kind of a general library.

JP: I think there was one in Parker or something, but it wasn't what we would call an adequate university library.

SM: No. I didn't have anything to do with it at the time, but I think probably when Don was hired, and Don was

a well-known figure in library land, and I think his hiring intended to bring the university library and to provide the foundation for accreditation of Nova Southeastern University.

JP: So he would be critical in the evolution of all of this.

SM: Right. Yes.

JP: I understand that at some point sort of after it opened he became ill?

SM: Yes. Yeah. I guess we opened in 2002 and I retired in 2003. And I only became aware that he was ill I think after he had been ill for a year or so before then because he worked for about a year after he had a serious illness. In fact, he was attending a conference or something when he became seriously ill. I think he actually had an operation in California or wherever he was at the time. So for a couple of years there he wasn't at full force.

JP: So that would have to some degree hurt the development of the library? Obviously it was able to go ahead and expand.

SM: Yeah. And I think that as an example, the relationship between Nova University and Broward County was damaged by that. Don, being the person that he was, had he not been ill probably could have forged a better and a stronger relationship with a new director. I retired in 2003.

JP: So it came at a really sort of an awkward time.

SM: It did.

JP: Because you were his main --

SM: I was leaving and then he, you know. So the whole relationship, and I alluded to that earlier, if you've got strong leaders on both sides then things move in one direction. I think even had I remained, had I not retired when I did, might have been able to continue strengthening the relationship as opposed to when the new person who either had no interest in the relationship or was directed not to take an active part in supporting it. I don't know which of those two cases, but it's clear it's not that strong kind of relationship that Don and I had. Without that, then things slowly drift apart.

JP: Talk a little bit about your time on the board of trustees. You were appointed by Ray Ferrero, I assume, or

by the board. Give me some sense of the composition of the board today. What issues are you dealing with?

SM: As I had mentioned earlier, I had worked with George Hanbury during the time he was city manager of Fort Lauderdale and I was the director of the county library system. So we had frequent contact. And George is actually the person who recruited me to come on to the board. I was retired at the time.

JP: So you were vulnerable.

SM: Well, when I retired I was still working in my mind. I had been on the chicken dinner circuit for 12 years and I wasn't out looking for ways to participate and/or give back. I really wasn't. And one day I was downtown with a friend of mine and we happened to see George and his wife walking along and I slowed the car down and waved at him, and he just kind of casually asked me if I would be interested in the board of trustees. I was kind of flattered. Not kind of; I was flattered because in my mind it was a very prestigious opportunity. I mean, I had my share of recognition in Broward County because of the library, but I hadn't been involved in anything at the level of the university board of trustees. I mean, these are the movers and shakers of Broward County. To be

associated with people like Ron Assaf and Huizenga and, I mean, all these big -- I mean, that's -- you're way out of my league financially and socially and everything else, but I think my association with Broward County, the "Library of the Year" thing, business people really understood what that meant and appreciated it.

A project that I was involved in, Mr. Huizenga gave \$1 million to that project. So I could understand that when George asked me about joining the board of trustees, I just kind of had a vague idea of who the various members of the board of trustees were because the names were in the paper and I had met them or seen them at various events of the years. But I had never even thought about being on the board of trustees. So when George asked me anyway, I told them that I would think about it because it was a major commitment. You don't want to make a commitment to do something like that and not be prepared to do whatever is required or needed. In a couple of weeks I agreed for him to submit my name and then the board took its action and I was actually invited to become a member of the board of trustees.

JP: My presumption is the board has not changed very much over the years.

SM: It hasn't changed a great deal. During the two or three years that I have been on, there have been three or four additions to the board. At the time that I joined, there were two African American members of the board and there was a couple of Hispanic members, and that hasn't changed much. It's still pretty much the same board with the exception of a couple of people who have passed on.

JP: How many on the board altogether? Do you know?

SM: I don't know the exact number, but it's somewhere between 25 and 30 I think. And I'm not sure how many they're authorized to have.

JP: Now, that's larger than it would have been 15, 20 years ago.

SM: Oh yes, yes. I think in the early years there were a couple of trustees on the board then who are still on the board or were on the board until their --

JP: Well, in the beginning they were all businessmen and there were only about eight or nine of them to start out.

SM: Yeah. I was trying to think about who they were.

JP: And over a period of time they finally got some women on the board. It's much more diverse now than what it was.

SM: It's still heavily male. There are only three or four women on the board. There are three African Americans and three or four Hispanics or people with Hispanic names at least.

JP: What influence do you think the board has on Ferrero? Does he present issues to you and ask you to discuss them? Do you get to vote on them? Do you make your own recommendations?

SM: Well, you know, this is my perspective. I'm not a businessman, I'm not a wealthy person, so in some ways I'm kind of an outsider. Franklin Smith and Milton Jones, two other African Americans, are both businessmen and certainly in a much higher economic situation than I am. I'm just a former public employee. But in any case, Ray Ferrero is a very, very strong personality and it's his vision that has driven Nova to be where it is at this point in time. I think he has had able support in the form of George, and I think recent action of the board in terms of the transition from Ray to Chancellor and George to president is some indication on the part of the board of

their view that George as the era parent is the person who is going to continue to move the university forward. I don't think there's anybody on the board of trustees who would not agree that George is the person to do that. But in terms of the day-to-day operations of the board, I think what has happened is, my guess is that most of the newer members of the board of trustees preceding me were probably recruited by Ray directly and support Ray and have pretty much in my views that this guy knows what he's doing, do it, and we're here to support you.

JP: Is it a rubberstamp organization?

SM: In my view, until the recent changes, pretty much yes. I don't know what others would say about that, but I think those other trustees are so busy with their own operations and businesses and things, they have confidence in Ray. He has proven to them up to this point that he can do what they think is important and necessary. So there haven't been any questions. Pretty much if he said do it, there was no real reason to question it.

JP: As long as things are going well, there's no reason for the board to intervene.

SM: Right. Right.

JP: And as I understand it, there has been no cutbacks, there have been no people fired. So the financial status of the university is solid at least.

SM: Right. Right. So there has really been no -- I guess Ray at some point became concerned about transition. And I'm sure he wants to be sure that this university continues at the level that it is and goes forward and we don't have any bad things happen. I'm not sure when he began discussing transition with the board of trustees because that was done with the executive committee and not with the board as a whole. So this may have happened a couple of years ago, but in the last year the board actually formally decided to move forward with the transition.

JP: Which is probably a good idea to have somebody in place so that there is this seamless transition.

SM: Right. And I think that, as I said earlier, that there is some discussion on the board I think about doing a national search. That would have occurred probably with the executive board. But when it came to the board of trustees, it was a plan that was recommended by the executive committee with little dissent. I think there are

a couple of people who suggested or thought maybe there should be a national search, but that kind of disappeared.

JP: It's interesting that this university in its entire existence there's only been one and that didn't turn out very well.

SM: Right. We're predisposed, you know. And George was a known quantity. He was a known quantity to all of these business leaders. He was known to them before his association with the university. He was a successful city manager. So he's clearly the person to go to.

JP: And nowadays it seems to me that university presidents are CEOs.

SM: Yeah. Yeah.

JP: And so you have to run a university, it has to be economically viable.

SM: Has to be. Has to be.

JP: Let me ask you about a couple of issues. One thing and still the history of the university was it started as a graduate program. And one of the areas that seems to be a focus of the future is to get more undergraduates. Do you see that as critical?

SM: That's one of the issues that the board, in fact I think it's basically the strategic planning committee of the board that raised this issue. And I think it's also some concern in terms of accreditation. But the problem for the university in terms of the future and the growth is that the professional programs basically are oversubscribed. The growth can't take place there. They either don't have the space or the various schools have three or four times the number of people applying for those positions than they can accommodate.

So the growth has to take place at the undergraduate level. I think also in terms of the long-term future and the view of the university as the real university has to be with the growth of the undergraduate program. And I think the board of trustees is committed to making that happen. The other piece of that has to do with -- pretty much the university has had what I'd refer to as an open admissions policy. So the academic level of the undergraduate students that we've been attracting needs to be moved up, and I think there's a lot of interest in that.

There have been some programs that have been established by the university. There's a program they have with Broward College, for example, for dual admission and

that kind of thing. So the university is taking, and again I think it's through the leadership of the president and the chancellor, taking steps to raise the academic standing of the undergraduate programs.

JP: Which of course affects all these ratings, U.S. News and World Report, all those things. The standard is the admission standard of the students. Now, in order to get there they're going to have to make more money for scholarships because this is a private school and you're competing with state schools and the University of Miami and others, FAU. It's hard to attract students who can go to Gainesville at, what, a tenth of the cost.

SM: Right. Exactly. Exactly. So part of that, from the point of view of the board of trustees, has to be what are the selling points the university has. For example, three or four years ago we had little or no housing. So we've got housing now. The Student Center is another example of the foresight of the university officials, and creating a campus that would be attractive to undergraduate students. So you've got to have housing, you've got to have things like the activity center, the Don Taft. All of those things are necessary. But in the end, you have to have the financial side. When you're trying to attract the

top 25 percent of graduating seniors or something, those kids have got their choice. Florida struggles to keep them in the state to some degree. So the challenge of providing financial support for the undergraduates, I think we're making progress in that area. I think there's more to be done, but certainly have the idea that this needs to happen.

JP: And the campus is much more attractive, the central campus. Even when Feldman was here, one thing he did, he put in trees and fixed up. When people come on to a campus, they want it to look nice.

SM: It does.

JP: And it's always good for the people that work here. I mean, it'd be nice to have a pretty environment in which to work. So apparently that has made a difference as well.

SM: I think it's made a great difference even just to the general public, the people who come out here for the various programs. And we've had internationally known people here. Bishop Tutu was here.

JP: Dalai Lama.

SM: Dalai Lama has been here. They've had some international -- the law school, for example, had a program three or four years ago with some university in Spain and brought some artifacts, papers. So when members of the general public come out and see the campus, I mean, some are amazed. I was out of town when Dalai Lama was here the second time and so I gave some tickets, my tickets, to two or three friends of mine who had never been here and they just raved about the campus. So the campus itself is attractive, and I think the university did a good job in making opportunities available for future students.

I've forgotten the exact term, but they have like open houses for prospective students to come visit, they've got a pretty good website, plus the kids today are so tuned into electronics, they do a lot of their research about where they're going to go on the internet before they even show up to look. I mean, they might even decide not even to look at a place because they don't think much of the website.

JP: Well, also the university with this help for autistic children, with all of the clinics, with all of the activities, psychology, you know, it has been more intertwined with the city. Therefore, it seems to me the

town-gown relationship is better than it was when you first started out.

SM: Oh yes. Yeah. I mean, there's a lot more interaction because some of the board members are very active in various charities, and various activities that those charitable groups have involve the university and the university supports them financially. So the town and gown relationship I think is a very positive one and I've not heard anything that's negative or detrimental in that respect. Even in the current economic climate, I think for the most part the general public is very supportive of Nova University. They are proud of the university. They recognize its contribution financially and as a major employer, and the recognition. I mean, even on the athletic side, the university's -- I'm trying to think is it golf or --

JP: Women's golf won couple of championships.

SM: Yeah, women's golf. Right. Right.

JP: Is that essentially -- people talk about the spirit of the university, that the graduate would like to have some connection to the university. Do you see

athletics expanding? Do you want a football team, for example?

SM: I think there are people who think that the university would be more recognized nationally if there was a football team. And I think that's probably true, but I don't know if the university financially can support that right now, not at the level where it would be meaningful on a national level. I think it would create more buzz so to speak, you know.

JP: Well, Central Florida, South Florida. You know, South Florida is the Big East now and all of a sudden is on national television.

SM: And there was a time when nobody had ever heard of Central Florida.

JP: Oh yeah. Now they got them a new stadium.

SM: Right. Exactly. So in the long-term, the university has probably got the land and so forth, but again you've got to have a good undergraduate program to start.

JP: Seems to me that that would be a bad investment at this point for the university.

SM: It would be because --

JP: I think it's a bad investment for Central Florida but that's another issue.

SM: Well, there are probably people who are on both sides of that, but I would say that this is certainly not a time for the university to be considering football.

JP: But basketball and other sports are doable.

SM: Yeah.

JP: What about if you look at the evolution of this university? What have been the advantages or disadvantages of being a private instead of a public institution?

SM: I don't know. That's a hard one for me to figure out. On the one hand, if it were -- I don't know how it would have been a public institution to start with because looking at Broward County, what happened in Broward County in the '70s was that from the political point of view the elected officials were saying we've got 600,000 people, whatever it is here, and no university. And Nova existed at that time, but the political forces brought FAU to downtown Fort Lauderdale. So if Nova had been a public institution at that time, the whole development of education in Broward would be different. Nova was so far--

I guess they started down, as you said down on Las Olas, but for whatever reason they moved out west and all the impetus was in trying to get a state university system in Fort Lauderdale. They brought FAU downtown.

JP: Well, at one point when things were pretty desperate here, they had talked to FSU and they talked to the state about making Nova a public university and the state wasn't interested because they saw we already got FAU, we don't need another one.

SM: Right. Yeah.

JP: And I presume not at any high level from my perspective, but being a public university you're free to sort of do your own thing and you don't have to worry about getting approval from the legislature. But on the other hand, you have to own your own money. So there's always a pro and con, but it seems to me for this university, this environment probably benefits that it was a private university.

SM: Yeah. I think so because as you see, basically the legislature and in terms of tax support had made the decision to go with FAU. So Nova had the opportunity not to have to deal with all of the political ramifications,

could go ahead, sell bonds and build a campus and develop programs as they saw a way to support them financially.

JP: Have you got any -- I've covered most of the things I wanted to talk to you about. Is there anything you'd like to discuss or something that's important to you that we have not brought up?

SM: I guess I would just summarize, you know. I think where we are today, one, in terms of the library, I think they've got a good person running the library. So I think there are opportunities there when the economic climate changes. I think they have a person who has the political skills and the belief and the joint library system to be able to work with the county and strengthen that relationship so that that can continue because I think that's a really -- I think it's a great service to the citizens of Broward County, to businesses to have that relationship. I certainly want to see that continue. So I think there's a person there to continue that.

I think the transition in terms of the leadership of the university is a good thing. We've got George as the president, and I think there will be a different relationship between the board of trustees and the president as we go forward and I think that's a good thing.

I think there would be more participation and interaction with George as the president. And again, honestly I think that's a very good thing. I think the board has no reason not to do so, but the board has not been involved as I think they should be with the decision making for the university.

JP: Well, how many years in a term you were appointed for?

SM: Three. I have two more years left on my current term.

JP: Okay. So you've been reappointed?

SM: Yes.

JP: Okay. To a second term. I don't want to quit the interview without asking you about the things that I know is dear to your heart, the African American Museum.

SM: Yes.

JP: Talk a little bit about that.

SM: Well, this is another one of these vision things. When I came back to Broward County in 1990, I came back with a view that I had another opportunity because I had been with Broward County from the '70s to '87 when we were

building libraries with the bond issue, when I was number two man in the system. And the way Cecil and I operated, he was the outside and I was the inside. So I had a lot of opportunity to influence what was happening in the growth and development of the library system. And from my perspective, I hadn't done enough to see that service to the minority community. The libraries that were built with local tax dollars were built strategically, but as they were built, where there were people who were going to go out and vote for the bond issue, that's where those libraries were located. And the only libraries in predominantly African American communities were built with federal funds.

And I had hired a guy to come basically do that for Broward County and he had a program he called Library in Action, he wrote grants and got federal funds to build three or four libraries in predominantly black neighborhoods. When we were trying to decide on the site for the main library from the 1970 bond issue, there were three or four different locations that were considered, two of which were much closer to the largest segment of black population in Broward County, one of them was I-95 and Broward. There was a site there. But anyway, we ended up

being downtown and I think that was the proper site and so forth and so on. But when I left in 1987 to go to Chicago, I was proud of what I had been part of, but I still felt like I hadn't done as much as I should have or maybe could have.

So when I came back in 1990, one of the things that I personally was committed to do was to see that local tax dollars were used to fund libraries in African American communities. And I spent two or three years working on that. When I came back, there was a plan to build a library with county tax dollars. It was smaller than I thought it should be. I spent a couple of years convincing people that it should be the same size as other libraries we were building in other parts of the county, and eventually decided because of something that was happening in Atlanta, I had a good friend who was a library director in Atlanta, and he was in the process of building a library there that was going to have the same kind of focus that our current library has. And I was saying to myself, "Well why don't we have something like that here in South Florida, in the middle of four million people?"

I knew of course about the Schomburg Public Library in New York and the library in Atlanta. And so I spent the

next couple of years trying to convince people that we could do this in Broward County and they would be beneficial and so forth and so on. So finally, the Broward County, my superiors agreed that they would donate the land for the African American Research Library and Cultural Center, and that they would commit \$6 million for its construction. And there were two things there.

JP: But you had to raise some money too, right?

SM: Yeah. There were two things. One was that for various reasons there were people who wanted a location different than the one that I felt was appropriate. And so I had to kind of squiggle my way through that. And eventually I got the county to donate the land at 27th and Sistrunk, which is where the library is currently located. And the idea in my mind there was that as Broward County was developing, Sistrunk Corridor used to be the major business corridor for black businesses. And the first library in the City of Fort Lauderdale and the black community was located on Sistrunk Boulevard. So I talked about the library as kind of -- and thousands of people coming in to Fort Lauderdale to work and leaving to going home west and north came along Sistrunk Boulevard.

So I saw that corridor as kind of a bridge and it was the theme that I used to promote the library. So having gotten the county to agree to build a 30,000 square foot facility for \$6 million at the current site, and because I had a vision of doing something larger than that, we agreed that I would help find the money to build it. And we did. We raised another \$6 million to build the facility, it's a 60,000 square foot facility.

JP: This is not just an operating library. It also is a research --

SM: No. It's a library and cultural center, research. And this is another first.

JP: But it does operate as a lending, right?

SM: Absolutely. Yes. It's a traditional library in every sense, but it has two other components - a cultural component, a 300-seat auditorium which was the same size as the main library auditorium. There was a full auditorium with the fly and whole back room, greenrooms, the whole thing, so that we could do major programs, attract traveling exhibits and major speakers and so forth. So anyway, with the help of the community we were able to convince citizens of Broward County that this was a plus.

We raised \$6 million. All of the major corporations in Broward County basically contributed. Huizenga contributed \$1 million. We had federal grants, and we raised close to \$600,000 in the black community with clubs and organizations giving \$5,000 or \$10,000 and buying bricks. So it was a true community effort. I mean, everybody got behind the facility. At the time, it was the third public library of its kind in the U.S.

JP: And once again, it demonstrates the commitment that Broward commands generally for libraries.

SM: Yes.

JP: I mean, this still seems pretty unusual. And it would seem to me that if you're going to invest, wouldn't you want to give kids an opportunity to read?

SM: Yeah.

JP: I mean, isn't that what it's about?

SM: Yep. That's exactly what it's about.

JP: I mean, the culture and all that's important.

SM: You got to learn to read.

JP: Yeah.

SM: And you have to promote it and put it --

JP: If it's there, they'll get to it.

SM: If they build it, they will come.

JP: Is it used?

SM: Absolutely. It is.

JP: And the other thing about it is that because it was the third public library of its kind, there are busloads of tourists who come and visit that facility even today. It's been open almost ten years now, eight years now.

JP: Is there anything else that you would like to discuss before we finish up?

SM: No. No.

JP: Okay.

SM: If you've got your questions answered, I'm good to go.

JP: Well, on that note I want to thank you very much for your time.

[End]