

Southern Voices Oral History ~~Part~~
FloridaSouthern College

Interviewee: Richard Yates, Class of 1952

Interviewer: LuAnn Mims, College Archivist

Date: March 17, 2012

Location: McKay Archives Center, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL

Transcription: LuAnn Mims, April 2012

Mims: Hi Mr. Yates I am so glad you were able to talk to me today and that you are here for our Founder's Weekend in 2012. You and I had been looking at aerial pictures and I wanted you to tell me a little bit about what we are looking at [looks at aerial image of campus]



Yates: This round building you were wondering about, I remember was definitely the art building and
Donna Sto Yates:

And usually, I started at one and was usually through by 3:30, 4:00 o'clock. They paid me seventy-five cents an hour, which in those days basically covered my tuition and room and board.

Mims: And you said that the next year you moved into another position?

Yates: Then I moved into the cafeteria and worked behind the serving line. Mostly it was women who really served the plates of food and I was mostly lifting the hot pans and serving a little, talking a lot to all the students going through the line. That was VERY enjoyable.

I got to know the dietician; I suppose was her title, got to know her fairly well. And one of the workers in the cafeteria developed some serious illness. I don't remember what it was. And I went to the hospital and gave blood for her. And when I came back the dietician had pulled out a really nice steak and cooked it for me.

Mims: When you were here, who was President of the College?

Yates: Dr. Spivey. Ludd Spivey. And as far as I was concerned he had been president forever. He was

my dear friend of mine, the three of us were very close together. We moved down there to take care of him and to live with him.

These had two students in each of the bedrooms and then somewhere from one to four out in the living room, depending on how crowded the housing was. When they had eight in them the one bathroom was very crowded.

Mims: What was your area of study?

Yates: Mathematics. Dr. Reinsch was THE mathematician there. There were quite a few people on the faculty but he might have been the only one with a PhD. Add very, very serious, he didn't joke, but also very concerned, very helpful. And when I graduated, I had been in secondary education with math, and did practice teaching, and when I graduated he called me in and I would have just graduated and become a high school teacher. And he called me in and said, "I have arranged for you to have an assistantship up in Gainesville, if you want to accept." Sure, why not? So then I went to Gainesville and got my Masters and my PhD. And have taught at university level of my life.

Mims: Where did you teach?

Yates: Mostly at Purdue—Indiana. I started at the University of Houston, then moved to State, Kansas State, which is where my wife and I met. She was a graduate student at the time. We were there. I was there seven years, you were there eight years. And then we moved to Indiana, there until I retired.

Mims: When you were at FSC were you part of any of the Greeks organizations?

Yates: No, not at all, no I was. I was invited to join one fraternity, don't even remember their name now, but I simply didn't have the money to do anything like that. Professor Ogden, J. Gordon Ogden started a... I don't remember what it was called.

Mims: It's still like that, the Polk Theater.

Yates: Is it? Uhuh. And there was another theater over farther east over toward the lake, I don't remember much about it it was the Bgrade We would occasionally go there if it was something we really wanted to see otherwise we would go to Polk that was our main form of entertainment.

There was a pizza place on or near Ingraham, up about where, I think [Highway] comes in. And we'd walk up there to get pizza once in awhile.

Mims: You did a lot of walking then?

Yates: Oh yeah, no one had a car. There were a few veterans who had cars, even most of them didn't.

Mims: How about a bus? Would you take a bus?

Yates: No. I was here in the summer of '47 at a Methodist summer camp before Leesburg was built. the boys stayed in Spivey and the girls stayed in Joseph

So at Thanksgiving they served a real banquet too with turkey and all the trimmings. They worked hard at producing good tasting food. Students always moaned about their food ... they're students.

Mims: What about at Christmas as the holidays came around can you recall anything special events that were held on campus?

Yates: No because we all just left. I do remember freshman year I had to take physical and a big part of that was calisthenics. And just before Christmas the coach said, "I want you to continue doing your calisthenics all the time you are gone over Christmas." And you know how much attention we paid to that! And the first day back, we spent a full hour doing rigorous calisthenics. The next day all the freshmen men were walking around, bent over their stomach muscles hurt so!

Mims: Any military impact here with returning GI's, maybe when you were here it wasn't as prolific as it would have been five years earlier.

Yates: There were still a lot of veterans. They had an influence. But if anything it was a maturity influence. They were good.