

UNCG CENTENNIAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Brenda Cooper

INTERVIEWER: Missy Foy

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[Begin Side A]

MF: Since we're talking about your role with alumni affairs today, maybe you could start by just telling a little bit of background about—well, I guess also including, since you did attend school here, just a little background information.

BC: Oh, okay. Let me just—I will go back to my student days for a minute because I started working with the alumni affairs office as a freshman in 1961. I was—it was just a regular student job, and I was hired by the alumni office to stuff envelopes and address mail and do filing and so forth. Worked in the office for four years. Barbara Parrish was the director of alumni affairs. And during that time, worked—because I was from Greensboro, I also worked during the summertime full time for the office. They were able to hire a student. Those days the wages were fifty cents an hour, and by the time I graduated in 1965, the wages had gone to eighty-five cents an hour. So we felt like we were making big bucks in the office. An interesting thing was that students were not limited to the hours they could work in those days. So those of us that worked all tried to get in forty-, fifty-hour weeks in addition to going to school. We worked very late at night processing mail and putting on labels and filing and so forth. But that was—it was a good experience.

At the end of my graduate—the end of my undergraduate, 1965, the alumni office hired me for that following summer between my graduation and my going to work full time as a schoolteacher—hired me, and I set up the first graduate student information that had ever been entered in the alumni files. Prior to that time, the only records that had been kept in the alumni files were those of undergraduate degrees. I worked with the graduate school which was at that point located on the second floor of Foust Administration Building. We went through every individual file on every student and filled out a card of the student's name, their maiden name, their married name, when they got a degree, what degree they got. And then all of this information was transferred into the computer ultimately. So I was—for one summer set up the original graduate student files for the alumni. Very interesting experience.

MF: About how many graduate degrees were offered that year? Different programs?

BC: We'd need to look back at the—oh, offered. At that point, we had offered only one PhD program—there was a PhD program, and that was the only one. And we had only had one graduate in 1963, and then we had, like, two in 1964. Three or four in 1965. So we were

very—it was a very tiny—that part was very easy to work up. Master's-wise, we had master's in probably four or five areas. Primarily, master's of education, the Med.

MF: Yeah, what was the PhD in?

BC: The PhD? The very first one was given in child development and family relations. So the School of HES [Human and Environmental Sciences] was really the first to get the PhD program. Education followed soon after. But we had had master's degrees here since—the registrar would know for sure, and I think it's in the little registrar's book. But I think the 19—late '40s, early '50s. I think we'd had master's degrees.

MF: That sounds about right.

BC: And so we had a large number of those. And men had been admitted from the beginning in the master's program. They were just non-resident students, and they were not in undergraduate classes, but we have men going back in the alumni files at the master's level for a pretty good way.

MF: Yeah. I knew that.

BC: I then went off to teach school in Winston-Salem. I had been elected by my class as the everlasting representative to the alumni board, so I served on the alumni board for the next two years and taught school in Winston-Salem. Served on the alumni service awards committee at one point during there for a year. And then decided to come back to UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] and work on my master's in the guidance and counseling area. I did that for one year and commuted between Greensboro and Winston-Salem. And at the end of that time, a position—the first ever assistant director of alumni affairs—was created by the board with the approval of the chancellor, and I was asked—well, I really wasn't. They advertised for the position.

I applied because I had loved working in the alumni office, but I was not hired. Sarah Sharpe Britt in the Class of 1960 was hired as the first assistant director of alumni affairs. She came to work in March of 1968 and was—resigned on April the first of 1968. She lasted one month in the office and just realized that the work was not exactly what she wanted. And I think she realized that in the span of one month, and that was probably pretty wise on her part to recognize that quickly that the job was not what she wanted it to be. Then the Alumni Association board came to me and said that I had been, in essence, second choice, and would I consider coming into the job, which I did beginning June 1st. I started work on commencement Saturday of 1968. I remained the assistant director for—until, let's see, I guess it was 1980, about—when I was named associate director and then in 1991, director. My original duties with the Alumni Association and the alumni affairs office—the two it needs, I think, be known—that the two operated as one office as they do now, but it—even more so in those days.

My job was the field program. I was responsible for visiting alumni off campus and helping alumni plan activities in their home areas. We began with a district committee of a hundred counties which are in North Carolina. We had one alum in every county who was that contact person for that county and the person who helped us organize. They were called

county committees, and we had county chairmen in those days. County chairmen made up—so many county chairmen made up a district and the Alumni Association was divided into districts. They corresponded with the congressional districts in the state. There were twelve districts, and we had, in addition to a meeting in a given county, district meetings throughout the state in which we would invite all the alumni in that district to come to a central location. I think one of the most interesting things about all those days of travel was that I got to take UNCG faculty members with me everywhere. I often said that I had the only job that you got paid for to get an education—where they paid you to get an education.

I had experiences like Dr. Louise Robbins from the department of anthropology, who—I was with Louise on three or four trips. She was the nation's foremost expert in footprints and was called in on many, many cases nationwide where a footprint would be the deciding factor in a murder case very often. And she was the expert that was called in all over the country. Louise spoke to alumni groups for us a great deal and I usually was her chauffeur whenever she was going to speak to groups. Dr. [Richard] Bardolph [history department chair] was certainly one of the people who, after he retired, I carried to alumni meetings and still do. He speaks to lots of alumni groups—loves it.

MF: He's a wonderful speaker.

BC: Oh, he is. And alumni love him. He covers the most historical—historically, he covers the widest span, probably now, of anybody who is still real active. He has been in the presence of every president or chancellor of this university except Dr. [Charles Duncan] McIver [founder of State Normal and Industrial School, forerunner of UNCG] because he came here while Dr. [Julius I.] Foust was still living, and had an opportunity to meet Dr. Foust in the summer of '44 before he started work. But it was fun to be with faculty members travelling. I, of course, worked with Barbara Parrish, who remained the director until 198-, the end of 1989. Worked with Barbara in planning and carrying out class reunions. The forerunner to homecoming, we established and organized and so forth in late 1970s. About 1977-'78.

We did what at that point was called Falderal. And at first—part of Falderal was the very first ever picnic in the quad which the Alumni Association sponsored. We sponsored a tricycle race, all sorts of games and fun things in connection with Falderal. As the sports program grew, folderol turned into Homecoming, really, and the date changed just a little bit because it reverted to the last Saturday in October, which is where it now stands.

In 1971, I had been talking to other Alumni Associations and realized that the tour programs at colleges and universities was becoming an increasingly popular program. And so I established the first UNCG alumni tour program and mothered this along for a while.

MF: Now what is it—a tour program?

BC: Okay. The tour program is where the Alumni Association talks to tour companies all over the world and they select X number of trips which they will offer to their alumni—which we would offer to our alumni during the coming year. Alumni pay the regular commercial rate. We usually have a faculty person on each trip to be sure that folks are taken care of, to give a cocktail party along the way, to remind folks that they're on this trip because of UNCG and it's a friend-building tool for the university.

MF: Yeah.

BC: We have grown—that tour program has grown from 1971, when we had some twenty-five travellers going to Scandinavia. We have grown to—now we have better than 1,500 past travellers—alumni who are coded and have taken trips with us. Many have taken a lot more than one trip. The McNairys probably hold the record. Dorothy [Class of 1927] and Carolyn McNairy [Class of 1925] have taken nine or ten trips apiece with us.

MF: What kind of trips have been offered?

BC: Okay. We have done mostly trips to European destinations for a long time. We offered—originally, we were in the Affinity Charter business so that we would join with other Alumni Associations and we were offering Greece—a week in Greece with meals and hotels for two hundred ninety-nine dollars. A week in London, Ireland, the British Isles for three hundred ninety-nine dollars, and that included breakfast every day.

MF: Wow.

BC: Those kinds of things were possible because of Affinity Charter Travel.

MF: We'll have to talk about this afterwards. [laughter]

BC: That's right. We will. But, we don't—that's not available anymore. What's available now—because the Federal government did away with the CAB, which was the Civil Aeronautics Board, so charter flights went out the window. Now we offer a different line of trips and they are still—they sell out every year. We have five going for the current year. They are usually priced from eighteen hundred to four thousand dollars depending on the destination and the trip. Alumni buy the trip through their Alumni Association. They travel with other Alumni Associations on the trip, alumni of other schools. And tour program has—tour programming has become a real popular aspect. We have now, instead of two hundred people on a trip, which is what we had before—we now have twenty to twenty-five on every trip. And so that's a little bit about the tour program.

MF: And that was 1971?

BC: Uh, huh. We began in '71. Tried some things off and on through the years, such as young alumni travel. Everybody said young alumni need to travel. You need to do camping experiences and shorter trips, less expensive trips.

MF: I imagine that didn't work too well, though.

BC: Young alumni are not ready to travel.

MF: Well, also there's just a lot of apathy among young alumni.

BC: That's right. There is. But this is not their thing. Group travel is not a young alum's thing.

And that's not true here; that's true nationwide. They like to travel with one or two other couples, get a car; they're more adventuresome than alumni who like the security of traveling in a group, I think. Barbara and I continued to work on the alumni tour program together. I mentioned the field program we worked on. We worked on an alumni student relations committee program, which was involvement of students. We had a group called the student alumni associates. Their job was to host alumni reunion weekend—host or hostess—of alumni reunion weekend.

[recording paused]

BC: To—they did activities for all the different classes. I was trying to think just a minute about the—we had a sophomore program in which they did tours of the Alumni House for—excuse me—we had a freshman program in which the student group sponsored tours for the freshman class of the Alumni House, invited freshmen to come here for special events. We had a sophomore friends program in which we matched up alumni who lived in Greensboro with students who had come from other places. We tried to match them by major, by hometown, by religion, different things like that, so there could be a bonding between the sophomores and the alums. That program was really pretty successful to a large degree to the point that several alumni gave the seniors their college rings when they graduated. They have remained friends through the years and so forth—have stayed in touch. It was a good way for alumni and students to come together in Greensboro. The senior year, we did things like—which have now become senior day. We did something called senior suppers in which we had alumni come back and talk to seniors about the areas that they had majored in, what jobs they were doing—career oriented programs to put alumni in touch with students. The student program was run by two graduate students. And they did a good job with it. Laura Pitts [Class of 1974, MEd 1976] and Camille Gallarde Lancaster [Class of 1973, MEd 1974].

MF: Laura Pitts.

BC: Laura Pitts now works in the alumni office. She just came back to work last year.

MF: Right. Okay. I knew I'd heard the name somewhere. I couldn't place it.

BC: Yeah. Laura Auman Pitts, class of '74, was the first graduate assistant we had, and then Camille Gallarde Lancaster, Class of '73, was the second one. We produced a slide show during those days, speaking of graduate assistants. We had a—[Dr. James M.] Jim Lancaster [Class of 1972, MA 1974, EdD 1985], who is now in Elliott Center or, excuse me, he's an assistant vice chancellor [of student affairs].

MF: Yeah, assistant—

BC: Okay. Jim—have you done an interview with Jim?

MF: Yeah.

BC: Yeah. Good.

MF: He was a wonderful interview too.

BC: Yes, he is. Jim, during his graduate student days, had an internship with the Alumni House and he produced a film called *Charlie McIver and Friends*, which was absolutely delightful. It was a slide show. It was our first multimedia slide show. It was two projectors long and four carousels, and he did the tape and the synthesizer so that everything changed the slides along with the music and, as I say, we called it, *Charlie McIver and Friends*. And we took that on the road to alumni meetings everywhere for alumni to see what the campus looked like today. Jim Lancaster was one of the first males that I took on the road. I came here in 1968, and Jim was a freshman. We were having a hard time convincing alumni about the name change of the university going from a woman's college to a university. And so we decided that what we would do is we would take out groups of students to show the alumni that UNCG is there, it's alive and well; these young people are getting an education except we needed to take guys out as well as gals. So Jim Lancaster was the guy that I took everywhere to show that UNCG guys were okay and that they were alive and well and smart and so forth.

MF: Handsome.

BC: Handsome, that's exactly right. All-American, the whole bit. Jim Lancaster was one of those.

MF: All-American boy, I bet.

BC: Well, that's right. He was.

MF: I bet he was.

BC: He really was. All-American boy is the best way to describe him. So that was the part of having undergraduate assistants in those days. The alumni office staff really grew very little. We had the director of alumni affairs, we had the assistant director of alumni affairs, which was the position I held, and we had two secretaries and that was the whole operation.

MF: It's not much larger than that.

BC: Well, it's really not much larger. We have a director of alumni affairs; we have a reservationist, who handles the house reservations and keeps the books for the Alumni Association at the same time; we have two secretaries in addition to that and two assistant directors at the moment. Three of those positions I just mentioned are all frozen and are being filled temporarily with help.

MF: Because of the budget?

BC: That's right.

MF: One of the things that I was wondering is—now, is there some sort of overall philosophy about the role of the Alumni Association that the Alumni Association has for themselves, like what they feel their—what the association feels its main purpose is with respect to the university?

BC: Yeah. Pretty well stated in the Alumni Association's mission or goals in the bylaws: the first is to educate alumni, to provide an ongoing educational opportunity for students after they graduate. In other words, for alumni. This is really carried out through us—we feel that we carry this out—by taking faculty members to a given town to meet with the alumni in that town, to deliver a lecture on a particular aspect of something.

Louise Robbins, for instance, spoke to—about her being with Mary Leakey [British archaeologist and anthropologist] when they discovered the big find [a noted robust Australopithecine called *Zinjanthropus*] at Olduvai Gorge. Dick Bardolph's was usually, depending on the location, we held the Dick Bardolph series at different historical sites in North Carolina. We did—the faculty usually talked on their area of expertise, which we hope provided a continuing education function for alumni.

The second phase is to keep the alumni informed or to help make the alumni informed about The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. We hope we do this through the publication of the *Alumni News* [and] through having a speaker at meetings that talks a little bit about the campus today. And—I was trying to think of what else we kind of do along that line. Let me go to the third purpose, and then I'll come back. The third purpose of the association is to—I'll go back before I forget it, and then I'll come to the third purpose.

The other thing we do to help the university is to help recruit students. We—the alumni admissions program is a program through which we identify younger alumni who have been out five years or less, to work with the admissions office in contacting students who are high school—who have been admitted to the university from high schools. These alumni answer questions for the students in their area. They write notes to—they are provided monthly printouts of the students in their area, and they contact them and say, "Are there questions you have?" or "Let me tell you about my experiences at UNCG. Who are you? What are you planning on majoring in? Well, let me tell you a good professor in that area." That kind of thing. Personalizing the admissions process is a part of the goal of helping the university.

The third goal, certainly, would be to provide financial support or to assist in providing financial support for the—from alumni for The University of [North Carolina at] Greensboro.

MF: And has that now become sort of a development office?

BC: Uh, huh. It has. The mechanics of it—it is still a stated goal of the Alumni Association or the alumni body—but the real mechanics of raising money has reverted to the development office, and they're responsible for that.

MF: But the development office is not—it's actually part of the university. And I guess that's part

of the problems that were going on just the past, I guess, couple of years.

BC: It is.

MF: Because—well, I don't quite understand the whole—what was going on.

BC: I understand that. [laughs]

MF: I just know the bits and pieces of it.

BC: Okay. The university or the college graduated its first class in 1892. In 198-, excuse me, in 1893, the Alumni Association was formed, so the Alumni Association will be one hundred years old the year after the university is one hundred years old. The Alumni Association, from the beginning operated as the alumni arm of the university. There was not an office of alumni affairs, per se. It was simply, the Alumni Association did this or the Alumni Association did that, and the Alumni Association handled all the programs there were for alumni. That was the whole way alumni stayed in touch with their university or their college was through their Alumni Association.

More and more through the years, and this is from very much just my personal viewpoint, but more and more through the years, the Alumni Association was the primary thing that happened that made contact with alumni. Everything that was done for alumni was done through the Alumni Association, I guess is what I want to say. About 19—well, and up through 1963, the Alumnae Association, which it was then, raised its own money, had a dues program. Anything left over from the dues program they gave to the university as an outright gift to be spent however the university wanted to. There was no university development and university relations program.

In 1963, the office of development was established. The first director of development, as it was called then, was hired, that person being Mr. George Hamer. His job was to consolidate all the fundraising that was being done, and he came to the Alumni Association and said, "We want to do a university development program. If we—but we don't want to be in conflict with the Alumni Association, which was raising its dollars too. If we promise to fund your budget every year, would the Alumni Association consider joining forces with the development office and giving up your fundraising functions?" The Alumni Association said—yes, they would do that in return for having their budget approved every year or having their budget funded every year out of gifts the alumni gave to the university. That worked well from 1963 until about 1980—the early 1980s. At which point, the chancellor said, "I don't think that as my fiscal responsibility, I can really take money that's given to the state of North Carolina and put it into a pot or write a check to fund the Alumni Association out of that. We need an office of alumni affairs that will handle programming and events for alumni and assist the development office in raising money for alumni as well." I guess the real dissension came in the mid-1980s when there was a vice chancellor—by this point, it had become—when there was a vice chancellor for development who said, "I want to run all the programs." At that point, the alumni Association said, "Wait a minute." Oh, and "I may cut your budget." And that always gets people's attention.

MF: Oh, yeah.

BC: And so, at that point, the Alumni Association said, "Hey, wait a minute. We don't think so." And that's the point at which the whole negotiation business began to decide several factors. The issues were: number one—who controls the Alumni House. The Alumni House was built in 1935 for alumni at this university by alumni of this university. As time has changed or as time has passed and events have changed more and more, it has become a university building, which it is. It has become a university building in which the offices of alumni affairs are located and the offices of the Alumni Association are located. So management of the house was one of the things that brought about the great debate. The university said, "We have the right to manage the house." The Alumni Association said, "Wait a minute. We built the house, gave it to the University with the understanding that we would always be able to manage the house." By managing, they mean deciding who gets space within the house.

MF: Yeah. Right.

BC: Now there's more to managing than that. There's washing the curtains and dusting the floors and so forth, but the real control issue was that the director of alumni affairs—the whole personnel was the second issue that was at stake. The university said, "We hire the director of alumni affairs. We pay that person. They are considered a state employee. Therefore, they really work for the university and if they have any time to work for the Alumni Association, that'll be all right. But they really do the university stuff first." [pause]

The third issue was the *Alumni News*, which is the magazine which goes out four times a year to alumni who give to the university—money, personnel, the Alumni House.

The fourth issue was programming. Who should be programming for alumni? It was the consensus of the development office that the alumni office could certainly do some programming and so forth, but that the real programming ought to be done by the development office. [pause]

With the passage of the agreement in the late—well, I guess we could say—winter. Actually, it could have been summer. It was in October of 1990. It was agreed that—or the agreement states that the Alumni Association and the office of alumni affairs should really be two entities—that the Alumni Association will go back to a dues system. They will raise their own funds and support their own programs. [pause]

There are some transition teams in place at this point. There are four transition teams. There's one to handle funding—how the [Alumni] Association will fund itself. There's one to handle programming. There's one to handle communications, and there's one to handle publications. There is a three-year transition period, and I think it remains to be seen if this program can be successful for alumni. I think it can be. I think it's very exciting.

MF: What if it's not? Then it's back to the drawing board?

BC: It probably is. The worst that can happen is that the Alumni Association says, "Hey, we can't raise our own money. Not enough of these people will pay dues." And so, we can't. It has been projected that we will need to raise close to a million dollars.

MF: That's a hefty sum.

BC: Ideally, a two million dollar endowment would be what the folks would hope for. We need about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year—or two hundred seventy-five thousand dollars a year to run the Alumni Association. The director still has the dual reporting relationship. She reports to both the vice chancellor for development and university relations, and she reports to the president of the Alumni Association.

MF: And now how—is the director still chosen by the Alumni Association?

BC: The director of alumni affairs is chosen by the university. This year, there was a committee of university people chaired by Dr.[Cheryl] Cherry Callahan out of the vice chancellor's office and those people—that committee then looks—conducts a national search, hires a director of alumni affairs. The alumni board then meets the director, sees if they like that person and if they do, then—or think the person's the right person for the job, they hire the—they appoint that person to be the director of the Alumni Association.

MF: If they did not, then they would appoint somebody else?

BC: Uh, huh. Yeah. There is the potential of having two people.

MF: So, conceivably, you could have two people working in the same office doing the same thing?

BC: That's exactly right. You could have, indeed. I think that would be the worst thing that could happen.

MF: Oh, certainly, it would. Yeah.

BC: But so far, they have chosen to have only one person in that capacity.

MF: It's still kind of a sticky situation to be left in.

BC: Uh, huh. It is. A little stickier than that, Missy, is the whole funding business—how alumni will give to the university, who gets the credit, what pot does it go in? And this will go on for a few years.

MF: Alumni are still very upset about it too.

BC: Are you getting that a little bit?

MF: Yeah, because they want to earmark their money. If they're going to send any money, they want to say, "Well, this money is going someplace." And some won't send any money at all because they're afraid that it won't go where they want it to.

BC: Uh, huh. I think we'll face that for a few years, so we'll just see.

MF: Yeah. And how does Chancellor [William E.] Moran seem to like the agreement?

BC: I think he does. The agreement was essentially written by the alumni. It was—[Dr. Richard L.] Skip Moore [vice chancellor for development] worked on it from the chancellor's standpoint, the administration's standpoint. But the chancellor was certainly a proponent of the agreement. He passed the agreement, so it did pass unanimously.

MF: But this was sort of worked out over at the Center for Creative Leadership [Greensboro organization that focuses on leadership development, training and research]?

BC: Uh, huh. It was.

MF: Was Karen McNeil-Miller [Class of 1980, MEd 1982; executive at Center for Creative Leadership] involved?

BC: Well, she was not, but she is a delightful gal.

MF: Okay.

BC: She was not—Gordon Patterson was the person from the center who was responsible for the—

MF: I wonder if he would—well, I guess he's probably be bound to be—to not talk about it. I don't know. Maybe he would.

BC: I don't know. It might be interesting to see if he would.

MF: I'll see. Because that would be nice sort of—probably, an objective—

BC: I think that would be wise.

MF: Chancellor Moran doesn't really want to.

BC: Oh, he doesn't?

MF: Well, he gave an interview, but it was a half an hour, so I guess you can't really get into much.

BC: Have you seen the letter that went out to the alumni membership?

MF: No, I have not. I've heard about it, and I've—

BC: Okay, I'll get you one of those before you leave. I have plenty. Which explains the agreement to the Alumni Association.

MF: Okay. Yeah, that would be nice. And I guess Barbara Parrish [former director of alumni affairs] is the one really to ask this to, but what seems to have—what events seemed to have had taken place to culminate in her—with her resignation?

BC: Oh, her resignation. Barbara felt—and she did resign—Barbara felt very strongly that when she was hired in 1955, that she was hired by two people. She was hired by the alumnae association, and she was hired by the chancellor. At that point, it would have been—Dr. Ed[ward Kidder] Graham [Jr.] would have been the chancellor in those days. He's no longer living. In a meeting—more and more, it became clear that the—that Barbara's interest was in the Alumni Association, not in the director of alumni affairs position. As she went around—let's see. How do I? Barbara felt a stronger loyalty to the Alumni Association than to the university. Not to the university, but then, she felt the Alumni Association and the office of alumni affairs were all one and the same.

MF: Yeah.

BC: The university saw them—subsequent administrations from 1980 on saw those two as very separate identities, and that there could be an office of alumni affairs and a set of programs, and then there could be an Alumni Association. In other words, if the Alumni Association, which is a privately supported—not privately supported, but privately incorporated company. If the Alumni Association dissolved, the university was still going to operate an office of alumni affairs. I think Barbara increasingly became weary of walking the fence between the two. She most often came down on the side of the Alumni Association in things

And so it was—in a meeting in October of 1967, it would have been, right? That's hard to believe. She couldn't have been gone that long. That Barbara—it was in a meeting with the chancellor that—we asked the chancellor if the Alumni Association had any staff in the alumni office, and he said no. And we said, "But then, you tell me that the alumni—" I said, "You're telling me that the Alumni Association—none of us work for the Alumni Association?" And he said, "That's correct." Well, that was a real blow at that point because I had been hired by the Alumni Association, interviewed by the Alumni Association. I never saw the chancellor or any committee or anything else. Barbara felt, as I said earlier, that she had been hired by both groups. Therefore, she felt if she could no longer work for the Alumni Association in addition to working for the university that she would just choose not to work at all. So with that, she decided to turn in her resignation.

I've teased her subsequently, wondering if she had not had thirty-four and a half years, would she have still resigned? And she says that she probably would have. It was just a difference in philosophy that she couldn't justify anymore within herself. I think I do see the—well, I know I see the difference between the Alumni Association and the alumni affairs office. The association has certain programs that it will fund. The alumni affairs office will be funded through the vice chancellor for development's office. And it will run a different set of programs. It's going to be a little difficult to begin with to decide which letterhead to use for which thing.

MF: Right.

BC: But, ultimately, both groups are after the exact same goals.

MF: Yeah.

BC: Servicing alumni, education to alumni, continuing education to alumni, alumni support for the University, and so I think that eventually, it will shake out and we'll be over the flack that we're getting from everybody. But she did resign.

MF: Barbara Parrish, she came in while Ed Graham was here after, I guess, [Alumnae Secretary] Betty Brown Jester [Class of 1931] had had kind of a blow out with Graham. I guess that's putting it mildly?

BC: Uh, huh. [laughs] Have you gotten any tape on that—on the Graham era?

MF: No, well, Dr. [William] Link [history professor] has talked to several people about Graham. He talked to May Adams [Commercial Class of 1935]. I had interviewed her, and afterwards she had started talking about Graham, so he went back to talk to her. But I want to talk to Betty Brown Jester about her role as alumni director and she keeps scheduling some interviews with me, but then has someone call me back to tell me she can't do it. So, I don't know. She's just too polite to tell me no when I'm talking to her on the phone.

BC: She's very ill and that could be—her eye sight is very bad. But that really wouldn't affect that.

MF: Yeah. I've interviewed her about—as being a former student.

BC: Oh, you have? Oh, okay.

MF: But not about her role as alumni director. So, I don't know. I think that she's just—she's such a nice person, I think that she just doesn't want to tell me on the phone that she doesn't want to do it.

BC: Well, it may be. I don't know. She was here for eight years. The first alumni director was named Ethel Bollinger [Class of 1913], and Ethel's job really was to travel and she did the field program for the association. She went to alumni meetings all over the place, raised money at those meetings for the Alumnae Scholarship Fund and was a real trooper. We recently found all of her books where she kept up with her travels and so forth—where she went, who came to the meetings, where the meetings were held and so forth. It became apparent by the early '20s, that the Alumni Association really had to have some help and that it had to be more than just a director and a secretary. And so that's the point at which they hired Barbara as director of alumni affairs to—they hired—excuse me, they did not hire Barbara. They hired Miss Byrd, Clara Booth Byrd [Class of 1913, honorary degree 1980].

MF: Oh, yeah.

BC: As the director of alumni affairs. So there was Ethel Bollinger. Then there was Clara Byrd. Miss Byrd was here for more than twenty-five years. She was instrumental in getting the

Alumni House built.

[End Side A—Begin Side B]

BC: Ed Graham would have been the one. And Barbara often tells the story—although she can tell you this too on tape—that she—Dr. Graham sought her out, asked her to apply for the job, met her one night at eleven o'clock on a train coming through Greensboro and said, "You've got the job." And she never once saw the alumni office. The chancellor was not ready to let Mrs. Jester know that he was asking her to resign.

MF: Oh, so he had hired Barbara before—

BC: Along in there.

MF: Okay.

BC: Now. If you have—and did you say you did have tape on the Ed Graham era?

MF: A little bit. Not much. A lot of people are pretty hesitant to talk about Ed Graham. I guess people who are still associated with the university. I'm not sure where the hesitancy comes from.

BC: Dr. Graham was the only chancellor who has ever been fired from the university—or asked to resign.

MF: Yeah. Well, asked to resign. He was allowed to resign.

BC: Allowed to resign. That's correct. And you know then that one of the reasons for this was his personal conduct.

MF: Oh, sure. I've heard stories about the campus police—

BC: Okay. He was carrying on an affair with Miss [Elvira] Prondecki [director of Elliott Hall].

MF: Yeah, and the campus police picking him up drunk on campus and stuff like that. Yeah, I've heard the stories.

BC: Okay. Some of the things he did were—he and Miss [Prondecki] were having an affair. I think it was probably more scandalous because: number one, he was the chancellor; number two, he had both a wife and two small children in the chancellor's residence.

MF: See, and May Adams' son and his son were in school together and everything, so it was—

BC: Okay. So she—okay.

MF: She knew what was going on.

BC: There were two sides. The faculty was divided between those who supported Ed Graham and those were against Ed Graham. Miss Katherine Taylor [Class of 1928, dean of students, dean of student services, director of Elliott Hall]—who has Alzheimer's and can't be interviewed, I'm sorry to report—but Miss Taylor was a very good friend of Miss Prondecki's. Miss Prondecki was the director of Elliott [University] Center.

MF: Yeah. They shared a house or something.

BC: Uh, huh. They did. And down here, it was the dean's house, which was what—I guess it's most recently the home management house. But it's the big white house right down next door to the School of Home Economics or School of HES [Human Environmental Sciences].

MF: Yeah.

BC: Okay. The faculty over in the—they were apartments—where the science building, where the Eberhardt Building is now. And little houses along there and that was a lot of faculty—where a lot of faculty lived. The faculty would hide in the upstairs of those houses with binoculars, the stories go. I only know this through stories. But would hide in the upstairs, and they would document Dr. Graham's comings and goings, knowing that Miss Prondecki was inside the house, and that he would arrive at nine o'clock at night, and leave at seven o'clock in the morning and this kind of thing—which for the 1950's was pretty scandalous. You know, it really was. And for a chancellor, it was pretty scandalous.

The president of the Alumni Association would be an interesting person to interview from that era. She lives in Winston-Salem. Her name is Annie Lee Singletary [Class of 1931]. Annie Lee would be a good person to interview, I expect. She has talked lots of times about trying to keep the lid on with the Alumni Association during those days.

Ultimately, the chancellor's personal conduct came to the attention of the board of trustees, and the board of trustees met in a closed session. I'm sure it's documented. Well, of course, it would be documented. The stories I have heard is that they were going to meet in the Alumnae House. The Alumnae House has soundproofing doors that can be pulled over all the sets of double doors. And so they thought this would an appropriate place to meet in a confidential session to talk about the chancellor's behavior. But it soon became evident that the possibility that the Alumnae House could be—people could hear through the windows and all this kind of thing. That was before the days when the house was air conditioned. They decided to move that board meeting to the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant. And so, the board met at the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant and voted to accept Dr. Graham's resignation. He did resign. He subsequently left his wife and children, and he did eventually marry Miss Prondecki. And they moved to Long Island where he became president of a small college in Long Island. Or on Long Island. And he died there not too many years ago. He's buried in Chapel Hill. And Miss Prondecki still lives on Long Island.

So kind of a shady era in there, with a lot of gossip and so forth. But he did hire Barbara Parrish. A lot of folks felt that Betty Jester was on the wrong side of the fence, was

not a supporter. And here again, this is hearsay, but I've been told that because Betty Jester was not a supporter of Ed Graham's that he did not feel she was giving good enough leadership, and so therefore she was allowed to resign.

MF: How can anybody be "allowed to resign"?

BC: And then he—that's right—and then he called Barbara Parrish and hired her to come to work as the new alumni secretary. So that's kind of the Graham era.

MF: And shortly after Barbara Parrish came that he was out of here.

BC: Oh, yeah. She was hired in '55. And she had graduated in 1948, and she was hired in 1955 and Graham was gone by what? '56? '57? Somewhere right in there.

MF: Couldn't have been more than two years at most.

BC: That's right. So—

MF: Yeah, it's kind of interesting. I believe that—

BC: [laughs] I've rambled all sorts of places.

MF: —his first wife lives in Durham or Chapel Hill.

BC: I have no idea.

MF: Somebody told me that she still goes by the last name Graham.

BC: How interesting. Okay. I did not know what had happened to Mrs. Graham. There are three chancellors living. Two former chancellors living at the moment, and there are only two. You may have picked this up somewhere but Dr. Singletary—Otis Singletary—is living.

MF: Right. I believe Dr. [William] Link has interviewed him.

BC: Oh, good. Oh, I hope so.

MF: I'm not sure, but I remember there was talk of that and I'm not sure, but he may have.

BC: Okay. That would be very good. The other is Dr. Gordon Blackwell who lives in South Carolina and retired as president of the University of South Carolina.

MF: He was here—he was chancellor when we had the sit-ins in Greensboro [Beginning February 1, 1960, a series of nonviolent protests which led to the Woolworth's department store chain reversing its policy of racial segregation in the Southern United States], right?

BC: That's correct. And he's the one on that tape, if you have seen it. Have you seen the

videotape that is *To Be Rather Than To Seem*?

MF: No, I haven't.

BC: Okay, I'll send that home with you today. I have several copies.

MF: Okay.

BC: You might find that interesting. It's a documentary that was done by a student film class, and it's on file in the library archives, but it would just be interesting for you to see. It is a documentary of those [sic] era—of the UNCG participation in the sit-ins in Greensboro, the Woman's College [of the University of North Carolina] participation.

MF: There were three students from here, I think, that participated.

BC: There were. JoAnne [Smart] Drane [Class of 1960] being one of them. [Ed. note: JoAnne Smart Drane did not participate in the Greensboro Sit-ins]

MF: Oh, okay. And they really got called on the carpet for it too.

BC: They did. And mostly—and this is made clear in this videotape—what they were really called on the carpet for was not their personal conviction, but that they were—had worn their class jackets.

MF: Their class jacket. Yeah.

BC: And, therefore, they were representing the university—the college. And felt they had been poor representatives of the college. It's not one of our brighter moments.

MF: [laughs] Well, everybody has some of those somewhere.

BC: [laughs] That's one of those—that era and the Ed Graham era are kind of the skeletons in the closet that you go to pull out.

MF: Yeah, well, I guess the cafeteria workers' strike too.

BC: Well, that's true. Yes, I had just come to work. That was in 1968-'69.

MF: '69, I think.

BC: Yeah. February of '69, I guess. And I had just come to work in the alumni office in the June of that year, and I remember well the day that—of course, the cafeteria workers were marching with placards and so forth up and down College Avenue, but we brought back—we brought the competitive scholars to the campus on that particular day. It was cold, and it began to snow just a little bit. The cafeteria workers were striking. They had been joined by a large number of A&T [North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College] students, so

there were a whole lot of folks. And the then business manager, Henry Ferguson, who—for whom the dining hall people—to whom all the dining hall people answered. They burned him in effigy on the front lawn of Foust [Building], on the side lawn of Foust, in front of all these mamas and daddies bringing these students up here for competitive scholarships. And I'm sure it must have given a lot folks pause about coming to this university, even with a scholarship. But I remember well the burning of the—

MF: Yeah. I guess they thought they would have been sheltered from that here, but no.

BC: No, this was not the place for shelter. It really wasn't. But, yeah. Those are kind of—and somewhere, you've been told about the spaghetti incident? Do you know about the spaghetti incident?

MF: No.

BC: The student's name was Pat O'Shea [Class of 1971]. That's our most notable. We received the most national publicity, this university did.

MF: No. I don't know about this.

BC: Pat O'Shea. And she had a friend whose name I honestly don't know. Robin. Robin somebody. I've forgotten what that girl's name was. They were art majors and this was in the era—this would have been the middle '70s, I guess. It was the era of—or the fad of participatory art in which the artist became a part of their work. Pat decided that her work would be a child's swimming pool filled with cooked spaghetti noodles—not the sauce, just the noodles. And so she put this exhibit on in Weatherspoon [Art Gallery]. It was a time for all students to exhibit their senior projects. It was like a senior thesis kind of show. Pat exhibited hers, and at just the moment—in the old gallery—at just the moment that a tour of alumni and friends of the university were coming through the gallery, Pat chose to walk out into the gallery absolutely naked and jump into the bathtub filled with spaghetti. So that was the spaghetti incident.

It made every newspaper in the nation. It made every—it made every newspaper in the nation. It made *Stars and Stripes*, which was the [United States] Army newspaper. It did a great deal of notoriety about the spaghetti incident. It did get her expelled from school. And you remember the spaghetti—you've heard of the spaghetti incident? Okay.

MF: She was a senior, and she was expelled?

BC: That's correct.

MF: She did not receive her degree?

BC: That is correct. Great "to do" about the naked jumping in. There was another incidence pertaining to sex or nudity, I guess is what it is. And I don't know whether this one has been documented or not, but back in the '50s, I guess. Let's see. Lee Hall [Class of 1955, honorary degree 1976] was the student, who, as a senior, was the editor of *Coraddi*. And Lee allowed,

as that editor, to be published in one edition of *Corradi*, which I've been told is wrapped in brown paper in the library. I've never seen this edition. But, anyway, she allowed to be published the first drawing of a frontal view of a nude male. It caused great "to do," and she was suspended from school for allowing this to happen. The *Corradis* were burned, and so I think there are very few of them in circulation at this point. But they were recalled and destroyed. When I say "burned," I'm not sure that's the case. They were destroyed. I always heard, as I say, that there were copies of this particular edition in the library.

Lee did eventually—was allowed to come back and finish her exams and graduate, but certainly in disgrace. And it was only with the pleading of a number of faculty people because she was a brilliant student that she was allowed to go ahead and get her degree.

Lee Hall—a little interesting note about Lee—she went on to become president of the Rhode Island School of Design—our first college president; our first alum who became a college president. And she is now the director—the newly-appointed director of the Woman's Museum in Washington DC, the Woman's Art Museum. And some years back—I guess it's now been—Jim Ferguson was still chancellor, so it goes back that far, this university awarded her an honorary degree. And we always wished that the chancellor, in awarding her an honorary degree, had referred to the fact that she was at one time on the verge of not getting a degree at all from us. But it's interesting that she became such a distinguished alum and came back in that way.

MF: That's interesting. You have a wealth of information.

BC: [laughs] Good stories?

MF: Yeah, good stories.

BC: Are you going to be around alumni reunion? This is not recordable, probably. But are you going to be around alumni reunion weekend, do you know? May 10, 11—your commencement weekend?

MF: Yeah.

BC: There are going to be a couple of people here that might be very good for you to interview. One will be coming in—I'll know soon how early that week. But she'll be staying here in the Alumni House. Her name is Margaret Coit Elwell [Class of 1941, honorary degree 1959], and she is this university's only Pulitzer Prize recipient. She did receive a Pulitzer Prize for her biography [1951]—she is an author—for her biography of John C. Calhoun which is being reprinted this spring, and she will be bringing the blurbs on it for us to share with alumni. But it might be that since she will be here that she would be an interesting person to interview. And, as I say, as our only Pulitzer Prize recipient, she—

MF: Last year during alumni weekend I had that horrible cold.

BC: I remember. Yes. Well, this will be kind of a wild weekend, as you know, but we could certainly could set a place—find you a little place, as we look at the list of alumni who are coming back.

MF: Oh, sure. If we could schedule any, like, hour slots with anybody, I can give you a list—well, let me turn this off.

BC: Yeah. Go back. Go unofficial for a minute.

[End of Interview]