

**Interviewee:** Lick, Marilyn  
**Interviewer:** Robin Sellers  
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**Sellers:** Start out, if you will, by telling me a little bit about how you and your husband got to FSU originally. How long were you here before he became president?

**Lick:** We came as president. We came from the University of Maine, directly here, in July of '91. It was actually July 31, I think was the actual official date.

**Sellers:** Had either of you been to Tallahassee before that?

**Lick:** Other than for interviews, no.

**Sellers:** What did you think of Tallahassee?

**Lick:** When we came for the interviews, it was very pleasing. We grew up in Michigan, so we had trees and things, and Maine had a lot of trees, and we came here – a lot of trees. So it was very familiar. We lived in Georgia, also very wooded with a lot of pines. So that part, the topography and all that, was very normal for us and felt very comfortable, like the size of the university. It was impressive. The downtown, I was a little disappointed. There wasn't much there. But I thought that's like a lot of cities, they live elsewhere.

**Sellers:** When did you actually move into the president's house?

**Lick:** I think it was around the middle of August of that year. When we got here, we had to wait a couple of weeks before we could get in. He was working at the time; I think he started the 31st of July.

**Sellers:** So he was hanging out in Westcott and going to work every day.

**Lick:** Right. We were in a condo that was offered to us through a couple of friends of the university, and we lived there for a couple of weeks – over by the stadium.

**Sellers:** Did you have an opportunity to come through the president's residence before you accepted the presidency?

**Lick:** Yes. I met with Greta Sliger and she showed me around. I think by that time ... I guess we were still interviewing at that time; I think she was kind enough to let people come through.

**Sellers:** What was your impression of it?

**Lick:** Well, we were living in a huge home in Maine, a president's home, a big farmhouse almost. So it wasn't as intimidating as it might have been otherwise, had we come from a small private home. We liked it. We could see things we'd like to change in it, like you do any time you move. But we certainly liked it, and thought it was plenty big.

**Sellers:** Did you bring a lot of your own furniture?

**Lick:** We brought some. Not a lot. I believe the kitchen ... I'm not even sure about the kitchen, it's been so long. The bedroom set, and we had a living room set and a small dining room set we used in the smaller dining room that they had there. But that was about all.

**Sellers:** So it wasn't completely furnished for you to move in.

**Lick:** Not completely, no.

**Sellers:** Did your style of furnishings fit what was here?

**Lick:** It did, because they were tucked away [chuckles]. Our bedroom was upstairs and the living room that we had brought, we'd had for years and years and years ... that sunroom that was off on the side at the time – we put that in there. It was really kind of yucky stuff, but it was ours and it fit that sunroom. The dining table was small enough that it sat in that little second dining room that was behind the big dining room. Really it was a nice size to do some other things in there. So it really worked out pretty well.

**Sellers:** When you did move in, was there anyone here to help you? Did they have a housekeeper, or were you completely on your own? Were there any restrictions as to which picture you could hang where or anything like that?

**Lick:** No, when we moved in, it was just the movers and myself. I think my daughter may have been here. I tried to think back – it's been thirteen years. We didn't have university people helping us move in, particularly. You know, that's not part of their job to do that. A lot of photographers had come and watched him lug boxes. It was just sort of PR stuff for the paper. But it was basically us. There was a housekeeper here at the time. It was changed about the time we came; it was a different housekeeper. The one we had regularly was not actually here at the time.

**Sellers:** But the housekeeper came with the university and the house?

**Lick:** Yes, they had a housekeeper-cook, I think was what they said she was. And we did not feel like we needed a cook, for one thing. So that kind of moved her to a different position, and she took a different position. Then they assigned another woman to here, to our house.

**Sellers:** You're the first one of the first ladies who has said that there were PR people ... it must have been just that time.

**Lick:** Well, they knew we were moving in, and they came – I don't know if it was the local paper, but there was a picture in the paper of Dale walking up the steps carrying a box of whatever, moving into the president's house. And we called it "the house." Everybody else seems to call it "the mansion."

**Sellers:** It doesn't strike you as a mansion, does it?

**Lick:** No, it never did to us. People say, "Oh, you live in the mansion." I thought, "I don't live in the mansion; the Governor lives in the mansion. We live in the president's house." In Maine, it was called "the president's house," too, and maybe that's part of the reason, that we were accustomed to having it called that.

**Sellers:** Did it take some getting used to?

**Lick:** No, we'd moved a lot. We were pretty good at settling in and being at home pretty quickly. There was a lot going on. It seemed like there was always something to be going to at the beginning, which always is, I think, when you're new. But we knew that. So it was a little hectic, but it wasn't settling in was no big deal. Once we figured out where the bed was and where the kitchen was and that sort of thing, we were fine. We had picked up the few things we needed for ourselves.

**Sellers:** Your children were grown?

**Lick:** They were grown. Our daughter at the time was in Washington and our son was in Georgia. They came and lived with us later, but at the time it was just the two of us. And a cat – we had a cat.

**Sellers:** Did the cat go outside?

**Lick:** No, we kept him inside. He was very old. He moved in about two months later. We left him in Maine for about two months before we had him ... we had him flown down. He was so old – he was about fifteen years old at the time, and we needed to move him because the kids were used to him. Well, we got him here and he did fine. But all of a sudden my daughter comes home from somewhere – she was allergic to the cat. I thought, well, that's okay, you're just going to have to live with it. He'd been with us for so long. So he was okay. He was strange; he was a cat.

**Sellers:** If you're used to a cat, then your house has to have a cat.

**Lick:** It does. Now I don't, because my daughter became allergic, and our two grandsons are very allergic, and my daughter-in-law. So there's no way. He passed away while we lived in the

house; we had to have him put to sleep. But he had gotten very old and decrepit, poor thing. Until the last, he was fine. He just got old at the end.

**Sellers:** What kind of entertaining did you do?

**Lick:** We had dinners often, not a lot. There weren't a lot of good places on campus to always do things for smaller groups. Back then, it was a little different. So we would have small dinners, and we had receptions. We had the ice cream social, like all of them have. We had those outside. We put up tents and we would go in the back, we would have a larger group and we'd bring them through the house. When we let them in, we'd say, "Look around." And they'd go upstairs and all over the place, very surprised, I think, because apparently that didn't happen so much before. We just said, "It's your house, look! See what you want to see." So they did.

**Sellers:** Did you come through it today? Was that the first time you've been here since they remodeled?

**Lick:** No, we were at a hangtime before a previous ball game, earlier this fall one time. Jim Melton met us and he walked us through everything.

**Sellers:** What do you think about what they've done?

**Lick:** I think it's beautiful. I'm glad they've saved the house. It took us a while to look at it and appreciate it, because it always had the wings on it before. So that made it look a little different to us. But once we came in and sort of looked around .... It's a nice office place now; it looks like an office place.

**Sellers:** Was the pool still there when you were here?

**Lick:** The pool was there.

**Sellers:** Did you use it?

**Lick:** Occasionally. We always felt like it wasn't heated well. It had a heater in it, and it never was warm enough for us. It was more of an exercise pool, I suppose; it was big and fairly deep and we were not particularly ... we would never have put one in. So I could see why they would have filled that in. The tennis court they had. I believe it was lighted. We never used the tennis court. I guess in the past apparently some of the presidents had kids over and they would do things at the house, have parties and things going on like that. We did not do that. And the tennis court was not in very good shape by the time we moved in, either, to really use it for much. So we did not use that.

**Sellers:** When you entertained here, did the university send help over? Were you responsible for planning and the menus and everything? How did that work?

**Lick:** We had a person who helped with deciding on the menus, and I believe it was Marriott (it may have been something else before that, but it was Marriott), they would bring the food over. They did not cook in the kitchen. The kitchen apparently was sometimes used ... all the cooking was done right in the house. We did not do that. We just had the university service. It was Marriott for a while. I think that was the whole time. And they came and did the ... they'd just set it out and clean it up and do that sort of thing. They would suggest a menu and if I saw something, I would just make changes or whatever. Someone through the president's office would help. We worked back and forth together with that. She would make the arrangements with the catering.

**Sellers:** So actually you didn't have to think, "Oh, my gosh, we're having company – I have to do this and that."

**Lick:** Clean and cook, no. The housekeeper was always right there. If I needed her, they would let her come a whole day before if she needed to. Usually she came a half a day. She came every day. She'd come about nine until twelve or eleven-thirty, twelve. And depending if there was something really going on, she would stay longer if she needed to. She vacuumed, because we had put down new carpets, and new carpets always take a little more vacuuming to get the fuzz out of them. So she did that pretty much every day and kept it looking really nice.

**Sellers:** On the rare occasion when you had nothing at all university-wise planned, what did you and Dale do in the house? How did you relax?

**Lick:** He always had something planned [laughs].

**Sellers:** How did you relax in the house?

**Lick:** In the house – what did I do. Well, for the first while we just did things like if I needed shopping for some things, I would go off just to get out of the house. That would be most of it – I'd want to just get out. Because when you're in the house, you're susceptible to the phone calls, everything's going on and people coming by. Usually if I really wanted to just get away, I would just go ... even if I just walked the mall, just to get away.

**Sellers:** And I guess coming from somewhere else, you really didn't have any social activities scheduled in the beginning, so you really had no appointments or network.

**Lick:** No, not at first. So when I had free time, I just .... Or I'd read or I would do cross stitch or something like that, fix my book, whatever.

**Sellers:** Where was your favorite place to sit? If you were doing cross stitch, where would there be good light?

**Lick:** Probably that would be out on the sun porch. It's sort of away from the more formal part of the house. That was kind of our room.

**Sellers:** Were there ever any instances, as the official president of the university, that you felt uncomfortable or threatened or anything like that with things that were going on? We've had some rowdy times on campus.

**Lick:** No, the two years we were here, I thought people were very respectful, students were very respectful and sweet.

**Sellers:** Never had any drunk kids wandering up in the yard or ...?

**Lick:** No. Well, we had an itinerant person ... well, they were living in the bushes for a while; they had little tents built and they had to keep chasing them away. The bushes along the road were pretty thick and it may still be. Every once in a while one would come to the door. I had one come to the door once and had the housekeeper call, I guess, and when I let one in, Security was so mad at me. "You do not ever let those people in!" I said, "Well, he just needed something." So we didn't have any, as far as the campus, no.

**Sellers:** Did you have security assigned to the house?

**Lick:** The only time we had security that I was aware of particularly was when we went to a ball game. There would be a security person to pick us up and take us to the ball game, because there were so many people there. And he always stayed around Dale. I think when Dale was out at other things, there'd be someone kind of around him, too. But as far as the house, we had a security system, an alarm system, and I think we set that off more than anybody else did. But we felt very secure, actually, here. When you look at it now ... of course, it's changed in the last ten years or so. But it was just a very comfortable feeling. We were far enough back from the road that people wouldn't generally come wandering up through there without knowing what was there, without an intent of some sort. We had a student, I think, one time, ended up at the door. He didn't know where he was. But that was sort of expected. You know, that can happen. It happened in Maine. Those things happen. Out of that huge number of students, there's going to be someone that's going to do something like that. You just don't panic, you just take care of it and don't think of it ... I never thought of it as a threat. I was always very comfortable.

**Sellers:** Did you ever have any problems with the house itself? Plumbing or anything like that? Mary Champion tells the story of something upstairs giving way and flooding downstairs right onto the dining room table right before there was a reception. Were there ever any interesting moments like that?

**Lick:** Not like that. I think by the time we had come, a lot of those little problems had been fairly resolved. They weren't maybe all complete. But the downstairs was a little scary – the basement – you never knew what was going on down there. But we never had anything like a flood or electrical problems that really caused a lot of concern. One time we were having a reception and bees came into the living room. So we called the people over, the campus people over, and they...

**Sellers:** Which campus people do you call for bees?

**Lick:** Well, we just called maintenance. They found that we had a bee nest up in top of the chimney and they had lit a fire for that day. It was a cooler day, so they had lit a fire. Well, all it did was stir them up.

**Sellers:** So the chimney was working. A working fireplace.

**Lick:** And it came down and they just were all over. So we said, “You’ve got to get them out of here.” So they did. We just closed it all down. It was really quite funny ... well, it wasn’t funny, a little scary. But they’d gotten up there, and there hadn’t been a vent or cover across the top of the chimney, the screen. So they did that; they put that one up there after that. That was the only time we really were a little bit panicky.

**Sellers:** Were there any moments when you wished you could have been almost anywhere else?

**Lick:** Not really. Sometimes the house would get too full of people; there’d be a lot of people. That tended to make me a little uncomfortable, because I tend to be a loner a little bit. So when there are a lot of people, I go see the cooks or check on the food or something. But other than that, not really. It was really a very good time for us. We enjoyed living there; it was a nice home.

**Sellers:** You did your own cooking when it was just the two of you and you weren’t entertaining? You did your own grocery shopping?

**Lick:** Um-hum. I did the ironing for shirts – why didn’t I send those to the cleaners, I don’t know. And we tried to keep our own quarters clean enough. The housekeeper helped. It was just like a normal day, you get up and make the bed and fix breakfast and do the dishes and that kind of thing. It was just sort of a normal life that way.

**Sellers:** The ice cream socials were held here on the lawn at the time instead of on Landis [Green].

**Lick:** Right. They were still held here.

**Sellers:** How did you prepare for those, and describe one of those. I never went to one.

**Lick:** Well, we usually turned it over to a person who was in charge of the entertainment or the ... there was always someone in his office that handled a lot of activities. We stayed the whole time out with them; we’d stay out with them. They would bring part of the circus group, the kids that were in that, they would bring them. And they’d bring part of the band and there’d be music. And always the ice cream. We just were always outside with it. We’d let the kids wander in and out of the house. We just never had anything out that anybody could walk off

with. The only thing we saw one time is we think they picked off a phone number off one of our phones, because we had the *FSView* would always call. They called on our private line one time, and I answered the phone and I kind of chewed him out. I said, “You know, you are not to have that number and I want it destroyed; you cannot call that number. You’ve got all these other numbers, you can’t have that one.” Because that was just too much. We figured that was how they had gotten it. You know, the kids were in, they’re all from papers, they’re talking and they’re little reporters doing their job.

**Sellers:** Did you have to change your private number?

**Lick:** No, we didn’t. They agreed ... they got rid of it. The person we talked to said they understood that and they apologized. Because there were a lot of other numbers they could get, and he always answered their calls. It wasn’t like he tried to avoid them or anything. And I said, “He’ll always call you back. Don’t use this number.” And we never got another call on it, so whoever it was, was very nice about it.

**Sellers:** I know Dr. Lick was the first of any of the presidents (and I was very impressed by this) who actually gave recognition to the women of the women’s college, who saw their value to the university. Did you ever entertain any of the FSCW alumni?

**Lick:** Not as a specific group. I did go to South Florida at least once and spoke to a group and met with them. But generally I don’t remember anything specifically. The Faculty Club would come in once a year; they had their reception at the house. That was apparently a tradition. So we had that group, but we did not have the FSCW women as such. They may have been here like at Homecoming or something like that. But we didn’t do more than that. We didn’t have time to get into ...

**Sellers:** Sounds like you were going all the time.

**Lick:** We were. We were going, and there wasn’t enough year-length time to do all the things we kind of wanted to do. We did change the shutters; we did fix the shutters. They were always green, and we made them garnet. We’re kind of proud of that. They’re still garnet, so we’re glad of that.

**Sellers:** What about the decor colors in the formal areas – please tell me they weren’t garnet and gold.

**Lick:** They were in the dining room when we got there. We changed that; we put in different wallpaper, painted differently, made it lighter. The colors were fairly dark for us, so we had the whole downstairs painted a lighter color. We put in new carpet – the other carpet was pretty old so we brought in new. Took a little flak on that. Any time you do stuff like that and it cost money, that gets all in the paper and some people didn’t like that.

**Sellers:** Was the university grudging about that?

**Lick:** Not the people that gave, that did the money, because it did come out of the maintenance fees, I think, rather than ... it was not a private ... it was university housing, and they fixed it up. So they didn't really grumble. The university didn't grumble, it was ... you know, reporters tend to pick on things like that and then they stir things up a little bit. But otherwise, it really was not ... and then those that had been there before came and saw that it did make it brighter and lighter and more inviting – we thought, anyway, and they kind of agreed to that. So it kind of died in a hurry; didn't last. We had to live there. And it needed changing. It needed some things.

**Sellers:** You were here for two years?

**Lick:** Two years, almost two and a half in the house.

**Sellers:** When you decided that you were not going to be president any more, did you look in town? Was there a deadline by which you had to be out?

**Lick:** We did. At the time we had a daughter in graduate school here, in the social studies graduate work, and she had to complete through December for her finals for that semester, and the next semester she was going on her internship. So we asked to stay until ... and his position ended the end of July, I believe it was, or August, September, somewhere in there. I can't remember the exact date. So they allowed us to stay through the end of December. We asked to stay that long partly because it was such a quick thing and we needed time to find a place to live, and that allowed her to finish school without moving her and trying to get all that resolved. So we stayed until then and we bought a duplex unit off Apalachee Parkway and we moved into that. So that worked out very nicely for us.

**Sellers:** And what you had brought to the house, you took with you?

**Lick:** We took with us. [conversation about moving details not transcribed].

**Sellers:** Once you moved out, any thoughts about having spent two years here?

**Lick:** Why didn't I such and such or why did I? No, we were just ... we really felt like we'd have loved to have stayed, actually. It was a hard thing to move, to pack it up and move it all into the duplex. [description of new housing not transcribed]

**Sellers:** Did you ever run into any ghosts of the house or the spooks or ...?

**Lick:** I don't believe in that, so ....

**Sellers:** I've never heard anything about it, but surely there must be something, a poltergeist or something – the house has been chopped in half and moved all over town and renovated and renovated and ... and it's still standing and it doesn't seem to have any tremors or odd little personalities in it.

**Lick:** It doesn't. It just settled; it just felt very much at home. There was a glass wall at the top of the stairs going into the bedroom areas. You walked up the stairs, and at the top ... have you ever been in the house?

**Sellers:** No.

**Lick:** You were not in there. Well, there was a glass wall all across where ... apparently, it may have been the Champions ...

**Sellers:** The Marshalls.

**Lick:** Was it the Marshalls? They had young children and it kept them separated, kind of away from things. When we moved in, there was no such thing as a young child. Our kids were grown, and we wanted it to be open. We really intended for people to go everywhere in the house that they wanted to. Because people talk about gold this and gold that ... you just had to let them see it. So we had that taken out, that glass wall. That's probably one of the bigger things that people went "ahhh!" at, because it'd always been there for so long. It was wonderful, all open, really nice.

**Sellers:** The glassed-in porch that the Champions added ...

**Lick:** On the back – that was still there.

**Sellers:** Everybody from the Champions on seems to have done their living out there.

**Lick:** Yes, that was a nice area. You could see out the back and it was kind of away from the front of the house. That was a nice area. We didn't spend as much time out there. We spent a lot of time in the office. We had an upstairs office, and we both ... I do a lot of stuff on the computer, but just seemed to spend my time at a desk.

**Sellers:** There were three bedrooms upstairs?

**Lick:** There were three bedrooms upstairs. The one we turned into an office. Then one was like a guest ... then there was an extra bedroom downstairs also.

**Sellers:** Did anybody ever stay as a guest?

**Lick:** We had one ... I think we had one person stay one time downstairs. I don't remember who that was.

**Sellers:** I guess Tallahassee had grown so much by then that you really didn't need to do that.

**Lick:** We usually set them up in a hotel; they'd be more comfortable and more free to do

things, too. By the time we got here, it was kind of easier for people and more comfortable to do that.

We had to have the bathroom tub enclosure replaced. Some things had been here for such a long time that somebody just finally had to say, "It has to be done." So you just do it.

**Sellers:** Can you think of any other wild experiences (or tame experiences) that might help us with the history of the house? Nobody ever fell out of an upstairs window?

**Lick:** No, no one fell out of windows, nobody fell downstairs, no accidents that I can think of. Thank goodness, no shootings. Our son lived in the basement for a while, so it was still very liveable at that point. I think all the water leaks, the bad ones, happened after we had left. It may have just been on the verge of when the D'Alembertes moved in, they were starting to have leakage in the basement. When I hear what happened to them, I always say, "How could that have happened? We were down there all the time." It wasn't a great place. Our son actually had his bed down there for a while, so he could come and go. He didn't stay very long, but he was down there. But I was sorry to hear when things did happen, when it got so bad. And I knew Patsy [Palmer] was very allergic to molds. And we were concerned because we had a cat in the house, and the carpets, once you have a cat .... I don't like going into a place where there's a cat, and now that we're without them, I can see why that would be a problem. But he was too old to leave behind. I felt badly for that, and I thought well, if they have to, they'll just have to pull up the carpets and change them, if that really is a problem. And next time people come in to live, no animals. Can't bring your dog, can't bring your cat.

The only thing we thought we were going to have problems with was my husband decided to do one of those exercise treadmills, so he decided to put that up in the bedroom because he said, "I can do this while I watch the news." Good idea until I realized I was downstairs once and he's upstairs and it was over the dining room and you could just see that floor – the chandelier's moving .... "You have got to get that out of there; you cannot do that because that's a wood floor, and old floor, and it just isn't going to handle that." So we could have had the whole bedroom floor down in the dining room. Did not, but it was things like that. You kind of had to be a little careful.

We did move a couple pieces of furniture out. There was a desk that I think was a real blow to a couple of the past presidents – because it just didn't fit. We needed room for something else and it didn't fit our feeling about it. They said, "We'll put it in storage and keep it there." Well, the problem with storage is things don't always stay in storage, and it may be gone – we don't know. And it was apparently a favorite piece for some of the people and they thought it belonged to the house and should have stayed in the house. But nobody told us that at the time. So that was something I thought was probably a mistake on our part. We could have put it somewhere else in the house or done something with it to preserve it. But we had come from another place and we kind of moved things around a lot and we just figured we could do the same thing here, I guess. So that's probably the one thing, thinking about ...

**Sellers:** There should have been a plaque on it.

**Lick:** There should have been. It could have had something on it. And no one ever told us. If

the people knew, they didn't tell us that this is kind of a special piece.

**Sellers:** This university has come very late to recognizing its heritage, and things like that are probably contributing to that recognition.

**Lick:** Right. If they had a painting that was really special, it needed to be marked on the back or somewhere.

**Sellers:** Were there paintings over the fireplace or places like that?

**Lick:** There were things there we pretty much left there. I can't remember ... nothing spectacular. Anything we saw that looked like it should be kept, we didn't toss it away; we tried to keep that. We added some things, but not too much. But anyway, it was a good two years. Everything went very smoothly and we enjoyed it very much. A great place to live.

End