

Interviewee: Palmer, Patsy
Interviewer: Robin Sellers
Date of interview: June 30, 2005
Category: FSU (President's house)
Status: Open
Tape location: Box #50

Sellers: Patsy, when did you first see the president's house?

Palmer: I had seen the house years ago when the Sligers were living here and I had come to a football game brunch. I'd been in the yard and then had come into the house to use the bathroom, and just remember it's being a warren of rooms; I really don't have much recall of that. When Sandy was being interviewed for the presidency, sometime probably in November of 1993, I was taken on a tour of the house and asked whether I would be comfortable living here. Actually, during that tour, I didn't come upstairs because the Licks were still in residence. The person who walked me through volunteered to walk me through, but I felt, really, that that was intrusive. I didn't realize until later that they were probably used to that kind of thing.

Sellers: Were you aware of the situation with the Licks, that the Licks were being more or less "deposed?"

Palmer: Yes.

Sellers: So you were also trying to be very sensitive about that?

Palmer: Well, yes.

Sellers: How awkward.

Palmer: It was awkward, and they have handled every moment of their time with us so kindly and so gracefully and graciously. They made none of that a problem. It was really something I admire tremendously about both Marilyn and Dale Lick, that they treat us the way they treat us.

Sellers: Well, it wasn't your doing.

Palmer: No, but it was a tough situation; they were not treated kindly by lots of people, and it could have been a really awkward thing for them in a community where they had brief roots. But I came in 1993 on a tour. It struck me at the time that when I was being asked if I could see myself living in the house, that it wasn't really for me to say, "Well, I would redecorate it and I would throw out this stuff and I would rip up the carpets." It was really, I think, the one chance that that committee had to look at me and make sure that I wasn't going to

be a real mortification. I had the feeling that I was being examined as much as the house was being examined.

Sellers: You said when you moved, the university took bids and went with the lowest, as usual. But you all had to actually pay for the moving.

Palmer: That's correct; we paid for the moving. There was a university policy, perhaps a Board of Regents policy, that one would not be reimbursed if one came from within a certain number of miles, and I don't remember what the mileage limitation was, but we didn't make it.

Sellers: So you came in in January, 1994?

Palmer: We moved in in January, physically, and moved our things in sometime after the legislative session ended, which would have been late spring or early summer. We didn't have a lot to move, and we did not furnish the public spaces of the house – the first floor. We had to share a kitchen space, but essentially we had the university possessions moved out of the second floor and moved our things in there. Moved a table and some chairs, dishes, cookbooks, things like that into the kitchen, personal things.

Sellers: What was the configuration upstairs when you moved in?

Palmer: There were three rooms and two bathrooms. And the reason we switched what had been the bedroom to what had been the living room was that I was going to take the big bathroom off what had been the bedroom, but I got up early and did things that made it noisy for Sandy if he ever needed to sleep, so we switched things around. But we had a bedroom, a small sitting room, and a room that I used as an office and where we stored a number of our books. We had thousands and thousands and thousands of books when we moved in, and they did not fit into the house. So we had boxes of books stored in the basement. And no one ever told me that the basement had flooded and that our books had been flooded. We did move things into the basement, as well. We moved some furniture into the basement, and we stored things in the basement. But people just threw out a lot of our books, and stacked up some of our other books on places to dry, and nobody told me about it.

Sellers: And it happened while you were living here?

Palmer: It happened while we were living here. It actually happened twice. The basement flooded repeatedly, but we had not been told that. And the idea that people would treat books like that was really heartbreaking to us. I started going through boxes of books, and I cried so hard to see the books that were ruined, that I stopped going through the boxes that had just been soaked through. People had thrown away some, people had taken some out of boxes, and people had just left wet boxes of books of books stacked around.

Sellers: Had you know it, you could have gotten them into freezers and saved them.

Palmer: Exactly. But the house was really – it was in poor, poor repair when we moved in, and it only got worse.

Sellers: The configuration downstairs – I believe it was the Champions who added a sun porch or a family room area to it?

Palmer: I have no idea who added things. The house obviously had been taken apart when it was moved from the site of the Supreme Court. It had been added on to. There was a side wing that became Sandy's office; there was a side wing that was the kitchen; there was a sun porch on the back. The seams of the house were not tight, and apparently the electrical work in the house really had never been upgraded. So the house configuration was not historic; it was kind of accidental. It was never really thoroughly modernized at any point along the way.

Sellers: So you moved into a creaking, strange configuration, and I'm guessing you pretty much stayed upstairs as much as you could.

Palmer: I stayed upstairs or I stayed away as much as I could. There was a swimming pool in the back yard, the gift of some very generous alums. I am legally blind without my contacts, and it obviously not anything I would use when I knew there would be people in the back yard, but it was not uncommon for me to try to be out in the swimming pool and have people show up in the back yard. Some of them were university related, and some of them, I have no idea who they were or what they were doing. They may have just been passers-by who thought it was a park. It really was difficult, and there was no way of closing off doors or anything, so if there were —.

Also, at the time we moved in, there were fewer places by far on the campus to entertain, so this became by default the site of entertainment. The stadium was under construction, the old president's box was really terribly cramped, not very functional in itself, so lots and lots of parties took place in the back yard, frequently utilizing the kitchen of the house if not the house itself. We usually got schedules for when the parties would be. That was not always true. But parties would include student parties with very loud music, they would include parties with lots of loud speakers and microphones. It was also expected that if we were here, we would be at the party. It was pretty easy to tell if we were here because our cars would be there, our lights would be on, and anyone who would come in and out of the house would know if we were here. Sometimes people would come up on the stairs and call to us to see if we were here. So we didn't have a lot of privacy at any particular time of the day. Breakfast meetings – one early day (again, being unable to see without my contacts), I got up, bathed, went downstairs to get a Diet Coke, and walked into a kitchen full of people. Fortunately, I had on a robe. But again, I didn't have my contacts in, so I had no idea who they were. So I sort of said, "Carry on."

The moment of my life here that I most regret, really, related to privacy. I want this to be a public apology to this person. We had a housekeeper (we had a series of housekeepers), and one day I told one of the housekeepers I was going to be upstairs, getting dressed, and I would prefer that nobody came up the stairs. As I was wandering out through a hall, up the stairs came one of the people who was connected to all of the buildings, and I hollered at him. And it turns out that the housekeeper had told him to go on up. And I see him still; he is the nicest man.

Sellers: Probably as embarrassed as you were.

Palmer: Yes. Again, I had on a robe, fortunately, but there wasn't a lot of expectation that we really ran the house anyway. I think the housekeeper may have thought that since there was a landing on the stairs that then led into a door to the attic, that perhaps that was not like coming up the stairs. But to me, it was somebody whose head popped into my line of sight and it was really —. Things like that happened frequently.

The second floor of the house was supposed to be our private space, but the only thing that demarcated it from the first floor was a gold velvet rope that ran across the front stairs; nothing blocked the back stairs to the second floor. We were often aware, when we came back upstairs from events that had been held in the house, that our drawers had been opened and things had been gone through. Doors were left ajar, you know, how you know that something has changed from the way you left it. So the feeling was that we were objects of great curiosity. We also had been walked through the house shortly after Sandy had accepted the job by a white collar member of the buildings and grounds staff who wanted to gossip to us about all of the previous presidents and their wives and what had gone on in the house. It really reached the level of "bedroom gossip," and we would cut him off. But when we left his company, I told Sandy I thought that was a very useful experience, because it would tell us that we were not going to be secluded in here at all, that we had lost our privacy.

The configuration was small. It would have been adequate for us, but it just was ill-designed for privacy. After the kitchen experience, I bought a small refrigerator and a microwave and kept them up here so that if I heard any rustling downstairs, I wouldn't go back down again in my robe.

Sellers: You were almost a captive upstairs.

Palmer: I probably felt that way. I think the house represented a lot of loss to me. It represented the loss of privacy, eventually it represented the loss of a job, because it was just not possible for me to keep working. Though my life here had little routine, it contained a lot of obligations, some of which I didn't want to miss and some of which I knew were obligations. But the house represented just sort of a tyranny.

Sellers: The president's house and the set-up of the presidency itself was more configured to an earlier time when women supported their husbands.

Palmer: Oh, it was so much better for me than it had been for lots of people. People presented me with a book of menus and I was expected to choose menus and do things that were beyond both my interest and my capability. Fortunately, Margaret Benson worked for Marriott and Donna McHugh worked with University Relations, and they gave us the reputation of being good entertainers. The model of the male president and a non-working wife really did not configure with the model of university marriages generally, but it was a lot the way many donors lives worked. I was surprised that we spent a lot of time with donors, more than we spent with faculty, more than we spent with students, more than we spent socially with administrators.

Sellers: The president was also considered the chief fund raiser at this time.

Palmer: Absolutely, absolutely. And it was the point at which I think it really sank in generally that being a state university does not mean that every penny comes from the state and then everything else is gravy. Sandy raised money every day. I think we took very little time — the schedule was a very strange animal here, too. We had either no food in the refrigerator or we had rotting food in the refrigerator, because we were gone a lot. He was gone continuously the first few years. He was on the road, meeting people, putting in place the way he would ask for money eventually, if he weren't asking for money at that point. And the house — one of the shortcomings of the house was that it was really not well equipped for the kind of intimate fund raising that one does with really big donors. I remember some of the things we tried to do here, and Margaret and Donna were wonderful in the way they would make things as magical as they could. But it was, I think, shocking to people. The image, also, of the house was a big, gracious, Southern home, and at times I think it really fulfilled that role. I think Mrs. Campbell's tenure here had made people say this was the epitome of Tallahassee grace.

Sellers: That was also fifty years ago.

Palmer: That's right. I think Mary Champion probably remembers the time here as kind of magical. By the time we came, the house was really struggling just to exist.

Sellers: If you were just here by yourselves, in the few times that might have happened, did you — I assume you had housekeeping help?

Palmer: We had erratic housekeeping help. Initially we had somebody who was part of the university's buildings and grounds staff. Then as Margaret Benson began playing a bigger role, the staff was hired by Marriott. I was insistent that any housekeeper who was hired by me be paid at least \$10 an hour, and Marriott was not happy with that because it was far out of line with other Marriott wages. But it struck me that it was a really — we had never paid people poorly who worked for us.

Sellers: And they were in a position of higher trust that just your run of the mill hired help.

Palmer: All those things. It may have been me, it may have been the house, it may have been just who was available, but it was much easier for me to hire a housekeeper when we moved than it was easy for this place to have a sustained housekeeping staff, and I'm not fully sure why that was. We had long periods of time with no housekeeping. Some of the duties — I think they tried to hire people who would do some other things with Marriott. But we did have some housekeepers, including one who had real ambitions and came to me early on and said that she wanted to ask all of the buildings and grounds people, when they entered the house, to wear white gloves. She prided herself on a lot of professionalism, but she did not mesh well with the existing hierarchy, I believe.

People expected that we would have 24-hour a day housekeepers. One day when I was exercising in the house – Sandy had bought me a treadmill – and there was an insistent ringing of the door. I finally went to the door, and it was an alum. I interacted with the alum, and then later heard from his wife that I was disgracing the university by going to the door looking like that [laughs], which may be why — there was an intercom system here that I never mastered [laughs], and there were also mirrors placed on the outside porch so that they sort of looked down toward the door. But I never figured those out, either. And in order to go to the window to look at the mirrors, you would be placing yourself in full view. It's funnier now than it was then.

Sellers: So there wasn't a maid in a black uniform with a white apron and hat on duty at all times?

Palmer: No, there was not.

Sellers: What about cooking? Did you go into the kitchen and cook for yourself if you wanted scrambled eggs at ten o'clock at night?

Palmer: Oh, yes. We cooked for ourselves. And we had people over who were just friends or family for some meals. But we had such an odd schedule that it was really kind of weird to do some of that.

Sellers: But had you wanted to entertain, despite your schedule, family or personal entertainment, you could?

Palmer: Yes, we did that.

Sellers: So your life wasn't totally given over to the university.

Palmer: No, it was not. One of the grape arbor memories – we had a dinner party for Sandy and Malinda Proctor and Jill Chamberlin and Fred McCormack out under the grape arbor. That was such a charming, old world kind of place – I always thought someone should be out there with an accordion, playing. And in the summer when it was in full leaf, and the grapes were — the grapes were never very tasty, but they added something really charming. That was the one event that we had there; that was just a private party.

We had something that crossed the lines between the university and our private lives every year around Halloween. Sandy's mother's birthday had been on Halloween, and Sandy's mother had been born and grown up in the house that was across from this house when it was downtown. Sandy's mother was a native of Tallahassee.

Sellers: Wasn't she a Whitfield?

Palmer: She was a Whitfield. She had lots of friends; she and Sandy's dad had lots of

friends in town. They were both dead by the time we were here. But we had a birthday party for Miss Eleanor and invited old Tallahassee, many of whom had FSCW and FSU connections. It was my favorite of the events that were in the house every year. People would stand up and tell stories. One year some people told us about going out to Lake Bradford when they were all “flappers” and having a bit to drink and falling asleep in the sun, getting sunburned, driving back to Tallahassee, having to climb in doors and windows secretly, and the great mortification it brought the families. But those were really charming things.

Sellers: Those were more things that your presence elicited rather than the house elicited.

Palmer: Our presence elicited that, but the house also brought forth memories. Sandy’s great uncle, who was a Trammell (he was Sandy’s mother’s half-brother), Wilson Trammell, from Miami, came to this house when he was in his nineties. He had not been in the house since he was a young man, and as he approached the front door, he said to his son who was walking him up the stairs, “When we get into the house —,” and he began to describe the layout of the house. So this was a house from Tallahassee memory. And that was a group of people, when we had those parties, who crossed the line between being our personal friends and people who had been very generous to the university as well.

Sellers: So it was a blending of town and gown.

Palmer: It was. Sandy, I think, did that uniquely. Sandy was a member of all three parts of Tallahassee society. He was old Tallahassee by birth, he was a member of the state government by virtue of having served in the legislature, been on different boards and commissions, and he was part of the university. So he cut across those three parts of town very nicely.

Sellers: Did you ever use the downstairs for anything other than entertaining?

Palmer: Sandy’s office was in one of the new wings. The downstairs was not comfortable; it was not attractive. At one point we had to take pictures off the walls, and when we turned them over, they had come from places like Montgomery Ward and Penney’s, and said on the back, “Blue group” or “Garnet group.” It was the kind of thing people would just buy to put on the walls.

When we first came here, there was a decorating contest being run by one of the shelter or home decorating magazines, and I thought, “This is perfect. I will enter the living room.” They were going to decorate one room. “I will enter the living room, and I will write as part of my application that if they did this, I could use it as a centerpiece of a general fund raising attempt to redecorate the house.” And I wrote to them and said we could involve the different students in the design department, and from human sciences — you would get lots of publicity, we would put a plaque up, you know, we could do all of this stuff. They apparently did not decorate public buildings. But I took lots of great pictures showing the living room. It had a Formica-topped coffee table that was about six feet long. It had one of the old record players – I don’t think it was even a stereo – that the Sligers had brought in as part of the Sliger era. It had a

very long couch that was upholstered in kind of an orange and gold diamond; it had two wine-colored arm chairs. It had a nice piano. We did put a couple of very ancient pieces of Sandy's family's chairs in there. But there was no place comfortable to be on the first floor. Sandy's office was okay, and there was a guestroom downstairs which was where people who spent the night with us stayed. But we really didn't have official guests; we just essentially had family and friends who stayed.

Sellers: One of the wives mentioned that there were a couple of celebrities who came to do a performance and stayed in that guestroom. Did you ever have occasion to entertain anyone like that?

Palmer: No.

Sellers: You talked at one of the old-timers dinners about coming downstairs one time and falling over some sneakers – can you tell that story?

Palmer: Yes. This was in the period of the white-glove housekeeper, who was also very euphemistic. We were having rats in the house. It was also the time that the house smelled of mold and you could watch the big bubbles of water move down beneath the plaster as they dripped from the attic to the basement. But the housekeeper was very careful in her use of words about the rats. So one morning Sandy and I came down for breakfast, and a chair had been pulled out from the dining room table and there was a pair of Hush Puppies in front of it. I said to Sandy, "This is odd. The housekeeper is so compulsive that I'm surprised that she would leave her shoes like this, and I am compulsive enough I'm surprised I didn't notice these yesterday." So we had breakfast. I went upstairs, Sandy left for work. The housekeeper showed up. I came downstairs to go out to something, and started telling her my schedule or something, and she said, "What about the visitor?" Which I thought referred to vermin [laughs]. So I began talking, without using the term, about the vermin. And she got increasingly puzzled looking and then she said, "No, no, I mean the young man in the guest room." I said, "What young man in the guest room?" Her eyes got real big. It made no sense to me. The only thing I could think of was that maybe Sandy's son had come to visit us – he was in school at Suwannee – and I thought maybe he'd come down, but that didn't make sense, either. So we went back to the guest room, and there was a kid lying fully clothed on a twin bed nearest the door, and he didn't have his shoes on. I said to the housekeeper, "Go outside and I'm going to call the campus police." So I called the campus police, and they said, "Get out of the house! Get out of the house! We'll be right there." The housekeeper and I were standing on the porch, and the phone started ringing. We cut it off after a certain number of rings because it was a university phone that went into an answering machine after four rings. I finally thought, this is going to wake up that kid. So I went running back in the house. It was the police, saying, "What are you doing there still? We wanted to make sure you were gone." So they came over and they came out — a bunch of them came over, and they came out and said, "He has a record." Well, he had a record for underage drinking. The story, as we were told it, was that as they said to him, "Wake up. How did you get in here?" He said, "I don't know even know where I am." The last thing that he remembered was that he had put \$20 in his pocket to go get drunk. And he still had money in his

pocket. The theory of the campus police was that he had been slipped a “roofie,” and that so many people had keys to our house that somebody thought it would be fun to put him to bed in the president’s house. There had been muddy footprints on the porch and the housekeeper had washed them off. But nothing else. It was that porous; that many people had keys to the house that it was no trouble to get into the house.

One morning, as I came out to go some place (there was nobody else in the house), there was a man sprawled in front of the door. He was not facing me, and I was worried that he was dead. I didn’t want to get in front of him and put him between me and the house, so I watched for a while. He was breathing – I could finally tell. I went back in, called the campus police. It was real early in the time we lived here, and I was worried that they would be “bubbas” to this guy; I didn’t know what campus police would be like. This is like the first lady walks out onto the porch of the mansion and there’s a man who obviously was homeless sprawled across the door. So I stayed inside to listen, and they were wonderful. They were real models of community policing. They got him to whatever amount of help they could get him to.

But this place was just here, and it was an oddly disjointed part of town for a residence. So we got people who came through like that.

Sellers: And the land surrounding it did look like a park.

Palmer: Absolutely. The first year that we lived here, on Parents’ Weekend, there were hundreds if not thousands of people in the back yard, and tents set up for the food and tables. A rainstorm, just a huge, huge storm, came up. People rushed into the tents, which were very crowded. I rushed over here onto the porch, which was already full of people. And all I could think of was these people have been out in the mud and the house has sort of almost white carpeting in it. I thought, “As soon as I open the door, these people are all going to come in.” I didn’t know what was the right thing to do, and nobody knew who I was. People were saying things like, “You think they’d let us in!” And I tried to look equally disgruntled. I felt so bad, but I thought, “As soon as I open the door, everybody’s going to come storming over here.” I didn’t know the etiquette for how to be a good first lady.

Sellers: What about any physical changes that were made either at your behest or despite your desires while you were here? Any at all, other than keeping it alive?

Palmer: Nothing aesthetic, nothing architectural. Your term, “keeping it alive” – it was really a triage situation. The second time there was a natural gas leak, the chancellor, Charlie Reed, saw me that day at lunch and said, “You are so stupid. If you had just lighted a match and left, all of your troubles would have been over.” There were just constant efforts to salvage the house, and people would declare victory and —. The basement flooded, a basement wall caved in repeatedly. People brought backhoes and dug down and reinforced —. We were in Canada once and got a call, “Basement’s gone again.” The house reeked of mildew. It was finally my freedom, so I think it may have been conspiring with my desires to live elsewhere. But finally John Carnaghi sent a team of people in to assess what it would take to really fix the house, not just to occasionally put bandages on it. The estimate ranged close to \$1 million, which made it obvious that that was not doable.

At that point — you know, we had been required to live here. The contract required that we live here. We were excused from the contract at that point, and that was in late 1998. It was wonderful; it changed everything about the way I felt about the university. Curiously, I began making mad lists of all the people related to the university that I wanted to entertain at our own personal house, but it became clear that the schedule was too busy to do most of that. But this house just was in very unhealthy condition. It needed what Jim Melton had done to it – it needed to be stripped down and it needed to be re-wired totally, the dysfunctional parts of it needed to be taken away. A number of people suggested to me that it would have been much cheaper if the university just built a facade that looked like the old house and then put an entirely new building behind it. This just looks so much more substantial a building from the inside.

Sellers: So the decision to leave the house was financial.

Palmer: It was a financial decision, but I didn't fight it a minute.

Sellers: Had you already located somewhere else? Had arrangements already been made for a presidential stipend or something like that, or did you all just say, "Hallelujah!" and go buy something.

Palmer: That's right. And at some point along the way, a stipend was settled on Sandy. We got \$20,000 a year. But it didn't begin immediately, and it was really okay. It was nice to have the stipend —

Sellers: But it didn't matter if you had it or not, you were out of here.

Palmer: We were gone.

Sellers: At one time there were tennis courts. Were they still here?

Palmer: They were. They weren't in great repair. Some people used them. Sandy used them – I bought him a tennis ball machine and he used them some. Every other year when the University of Miami came to town, two of the Miami board members played tennis – Len Miller and Chuck Cobb played tennis out here. Sandy and Charlie Reed played tennis some out there.

Sellers: You said strange people walked through – did you think that it was mostly from curiosity or did you ever feel, especially with people going upstairs at parties, that there was vandalism?

Palmer: No, we never had a reason to believe there was vandalism.

Sellers: It was not knowing how to behave in someone else's house.

Palmer: Yes. It had never occurred to me what a public life was like. The week after

Sandy was named for this job, but a month before he took it, we were eating at Trio's Restaurant and a family came up to us and said it would be such an honor if you let our children eat with you because we want them to grow up and go to FSU. We were so stunned, we said, "Oh, okay, sure." Then the parents went off and had this nice meal by themselves and we at there with the kids. People came up to me and said, "I know who you are!" One days, years into this, I had been at a breakfast meeting and was very nicely dressed, realized we needed some milk or something, went to a grocery store, bumped into the wife of a university official who had been to the gym. That night I got a phone call from her, and her husband had told her she should apologize to me. To be treated as a thing, as a role, rather than to be treated as people, was really beyond anything I had ever experienced. It makes sense of a lot of the things that happened here. This was a place of curiosity. It's easier to say that now and be comfortable with the sociological aspects of it. But in a small town – I can only imagine what Ann Bowden goes through. I don't know how you would live with that sort of fame, and with the constant — all sorts of people must have that happen to them.

Once shortly after Sandy had taken the job, but long enough after it that I realized some of that, I was waiting in a beauty salon and there was a copy of *Tattler* magazine – it was before Princess Diana had died. There was a profile on her that I was reading, and it quoted someone saying, "to be famous without talent is to be driven to the brink of madness." I thought, "I'm sort of like that. I'm sort of known for this role that doesn't really exist in any way —

Sellers: — "but I'm expected to fulfill it."

Palmer: Exactly. I'm sure it's projection for a lot of people who — you know, somebody came up to me at an early football banquet and said, "I don't want any dowdy first ladies at the university and I'm going to keep my eye on you." I never knew if that was like a compliment, like "you're not dowdy, honey," or like "I can see that at any moment you will slip into dowdy, and I'm going to make sure that you don't." People just had this need for — not everybody had that need, but a number of people, and those tended to be the people who made those needs known [laughs].

Sellers: Was there security around the house?

Palmer: Because we're not accustomed to such security, we didn't remember the security code here, and walked in one day after a housekeeper or somebody had turned it on. It was early enough that the campus police showed up and said, "What is your name?" I told them, and they said, "Who are you?" No, I never felt at risk here. Even the advent of the kid in the bed and the guy on the front porch did not make me feel like that.

Sellers: But did you ever get told by the university that whether you felt that way or not, you had to employ security of some kind, whether it was an alarm system or guards or whatever?

Palmer: People were very okay with us —

End side A

Palmer: The people who worked for buildings and grounds were remarkable overall. They couldn't fix the problems with the house, but that wasn't their problem. They were so loyal and so responsive to any appreciation. We had an annual lunch for them in the back yard, for the people who worked in and on this house. People talked about it with pride, this was a place they could point to. The yard people just – once Hal Walton was hired, especially – were unleashed to make the yard nicer and nicer. One day we came home and they were so glad, because we had come before they left and they wanted to show us what they had put in. They'd put in bird baths and new landscaping. And everything they did in the yard required extra maintenance once they put it in.

The electricity went off in the house during a hurricane-related storm and the building guy who came to work on that actually lived at the coast and didn't know what had happened to his house. He acted as though he could not have been doing anything that mattered more than to be here. Blue collar work at the university is a blight – blue collar work is not a blight – the legislature blights these people by paying them such low wages. The people who work on these jobs often have other jobs, sometimes two other jobs, and they put their heart into it and it is hard work in a setting where there's a lot of snobbism associated with wearing clothing that has your name embroidered on it or has FSU embroidered on it. You know, the hierarchy of a university is not — but these guys were great, and I never felt at risk from those people. I felt my privacy was gone, but I never felt —

And we never had any demonstrations here. Nobody ever sat in on our yard, parked in on our yard. We didn't get crank phone calls. Sandy was president at a time of very limited radical student activism, and that may account for some of it. But nobody ever saw this as a place to focus their grievances. So it was pretty much left alone.

Sellers: The years that you were here, it wasn't a focus on the campus for anything.

Palmer: Well, it was early on. It was for two or three years, maybe three or four. If I'm understanding your point correctly, because there were just so many activities here.

Sellers: I mean, as far as discontent with the administration.

Palmer: Oh, I think that's right. The only two protests I ever witnessed were one, the freshmen who didn't want to leave the freshman dorm, at the dedication of one of the dorms. All the kids were sitting on the floor, crying, and it really hardly counted as a demonstration. Then the one I saw that did count as a demonstration was the students against sweatshops demonstration. But that was the first real sign of campus activism.

Sellers: And that didn't have anything to do with the president's house; that was all on Landis Green.

Palmer: That's right. So I saw nothing. Really, Sandy's tenure, I think, was remarkably peaceable.

Sellers: Greta Sliger said they had a bomb threat at one time, that they didn't know whether they should take it seriously or not. And of course, Stan and Shirley Marshall went through all kinds of aggravation.

Palmer: And the Sligers and Marshalls raised children in the house. As did the Champions. So they had lots of reasons to be very concerned.

Sellers: Ice cream socials were here. I don't remember if there were any still here the first couple years that you were here or had they moved to the front of Westcott or to Landis? Do you remember?

Palmer: I can't remember. I think the student parties in the back yard sort of run together for me. I do remember them on Landis Green.

Sellers: Can you think of anything else about the house?

Palmer: No.

End interview