

Interviewee: Moser, Rita
Interviewer: Robin Sellers
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Sellers: Rita, would you tell me a little bit about where you were born and where you grew up, please?

Moser: I was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and grew up there until I left for college. And I went to Michigan State University, which is about an hour and a half from there. Graduated from Michigan State with a degree in English Education and decided to pursue a masters degree in Counseling, which I did at Western Michigan University, which is in Kalamazoo. With the masters degree, I began my work in university housing, working first at Northern Illinois University for a year and a half, and then I came to Tallahassee because I had a sister who lived here. And I started at FSU in the Fall of '76 as the coordinator – well, we were called residence counselors then – I was the resident counselor at Kellum Hall. Did that for two years, and then became Assistant Director of Residence Life; had that position for nine years – no, seven years, I'm sorry, nine total here at FSU. Earned my doctorate in Educational Leadership under Dr. Melvene Hardee in 1983, and in 1985 I left Florida State to take a position at University of Georgia as Assistant Director of Housing. And then in 1988, when Sherrill Ragans was promoted to Associate Vice-President, I came back to Florida State as Director.

Sellers: Of Housing. When you came here in the Fall of '76, you said it was because you had a sister here. Was she involved with the university?

Moser: No, she lives in the Tallahassee community and she had a friend who was Director of Personnel at the time who suggested that I write to Sherrill Ragans, the Director of Housing, and inquire about a position, which I did.

Sellers: What made you go into housing for students?

Moser: Well, it was kind of a blend, I guess, from wanting to be an educator and then being interested in counseling, working with students individually. Quite honestly, I fell into it, because I graduated with my degree in December of 1974, and school systems rarely have counseling positions available mid-year. So I saw in Western Michigan's placement bulletin about a vacancy for an advisor for Student Development and Programing at Northern Illinois University, and so I just decided that I would check it out. I ended up going there and I really liked working with students in that capacity.

Sellers: When you came here as Residence Counselor at Kellum, was Kellum still a men's dorm or had it gone co-educational by then?

Moser: It had become co-ed at that point. I was the first female to have supervisory responsibility for the building. That was something that I recalled in coming here that was a little bit of a change. It was not air-conditioned when I went there.

Sellers: Not even your offices?

Moser: My office and my apartment had window units. And of course, we were on the quarter system back then, so the students didn't come until mid-September. So it's a little bit easier to take the heat and you were most discomforted in the latter part of the year rather than the beginning, because students were here until sometime in June. But my second year, it was air-conditioned and it made a significant difference in the building. People were calmer, quieter, and part of that was they had their windows closed. So the atmosphere improved significantly.

Sellers: Where was your apartment in Kellum?

Moser: It was on the ground level on the northeast side of the building, and that is still the staff apartment.

Sellers: And where was your office?

Moser: Just south of the apartment, actually. You could go out the front door and make an immediate left to come in an exterior entrance and then go through another door to get into my office, so in a matter of seconds I could get from home to office and vice versa.

Sellers: Was your office always accessible to students? Or was that not necessarily your duty?

Moser: Oh, I had constant interaction with students. As the counselor of the hall, I had responsibility for all the student staff who worked in the building: the resident assistants, the receptionists. We hired students to help fill in hours that we didn't have a full-time receptionist there, and we have since gone to all student receptionists. We also had security staff at night, and they were students as well, for the most part. So I supervised all those folks, hired them, evaluated them. I advised the hall government, because each building had elected officers, floor representatives, and they had a budget to work with. So I work with them. I spent a good deal of time, I hate to say, on discipline. With a building as large as Kellum, because it's one of the largest that we have —

Sellers: How many rooms does it have? I know my husband lived there when he was here in the sixties.

Moser: Right now, the capacity is 538. It was a bit bigger then because there were some end rooms that we converted into floor lounges that were actually student rooms back at that time.

Sellers: Were they two to a room?

Moser: Yeah. Kellum, I think, has three or four single rooms in the whole building. So in advising student groups, I also served as an academic advisor for non-declared majors, and the students that were assigned to me lived in my building, so it was very convenient for them to have access to their academic advisor.

Sellers: Back up a minute and talk about the relationship between males and females. Was it one floor males, one floor females? How did that work and do you think it worked?

Moser: It was stacked. The men's floors were the lower floors and the women's floors were the higher floors.

Sellers: Kellum is what – eleven?

Moser: Ten stories. And back then the elevators only stopped on 3, 6, and 9. And one elevator, the staff elevator for which you needed a key to access it, that stopped on every floor, but that was the only one. We've since updated a little bit and put new elevators in.

Sellers: Did that meet fire codes back then?

Moser: At the time, yes, because the firemen could have access through the staff elevator, so it wasn't a problem as far as safety. But the co-ed really works; it still does. We right now only have one building that's all female, and that's Jennie Murphree Hall. Dorman Hall was our other female hall until just a few years ago when we moved the Honors Program out of Landis to begin those renovations. Then we made Dorman co-ed, and it was more requested as a co-ed building than it had been as a female hall. Until Broward closed for renovations, it was an all male hall and it was the only one we had for a long time.

Sellers: You think the co-ed works better than all-male or all-female? Is that because it's perhaps a more natural living arrangement for the students?

Moser: It's more natural, and when you're eighteen years old the women are interested in the men and the men are interested in the women, for the most part. And so they like being around the opposite gender. Planning activities for the hall is more fun when you've got a mixed group. I think, too, students form some more genuine friendships when they have that kind of environment than perhaps would have happened in earlier eras when the genders were separated.

Sellers: You said you had some discipline problems. What kind and how did you deal with them?

Moser: Probably the most frequent one would have been noise; behavior associated with

alcohol, which may have been vandalism; people getting into verbal disagreements, those kinds of things. And we had a process that we followed to make sure that students had due process through the discipline that we do. We also wanted it to be educational and not just punitive. Back then, I think we had — we might have charged students financially for certain things, but we really tried to not have sanctions be associated with money, but rather it be something a bit more thoughtful and educational as far as maybe doing something that associated with what the infraction was. So they had to think about it, maybe write a paper, something like that.

Sellers: You were there for two years? And then when on to —?

Moser: Assistant Director of Residence Life.

Sellers: So you kind of went from one cosmos to the whole world.

Moser: To really working with all the halls. At the time, there were two of us who were Assistant Directors. Actually, the Associate Director of Housing had been Carol Ritchie, and she left. And I was hired as interim Assistant Director at the time I was initially appointed because Carol left to go do doctoral work. So there were two of us as Assistant Directors, whereas before there had been an Associate and an Assistant. But Chris McCray was the other Assistant Director, and he and I had full responsibility for the entire residence hall population, staffing, and programs. So we worked with all the halls and all the staff.

Sellers: Where were your offices located at that time?

Moser: We were in Cawthon Hall. We were on the first floor of the south side of the building, and after a short period of time we actually expanded into the west wing of the first floor and took over some of what had been student rooms because we needed space for more offices. So Residence Life offices were located on that west side of the first floor until we moved to the Student Life Building in 2000.

Sellers: And what exactly did you oversee and do?

Moser: We were responsible for all of the student hiring, supervision, evaluation. We were responsible for all student discipline. We were responsible for all of the full-time A & P as well as graduate assistants who had the residence life responsibility for each building. So really, the only part that we weren't responsible for were the facilities themselves. The staff, the custodians and the maintenance staff, they reported to a different part of the housing operation.

Sellers: If you had a facility problem, who did you contact and how were they to work with?

Moser: In each building, or in maybe two smaller buildings, we had a hall manager, and we today have the same kind of staffing arrangement.

Sellers: And this is a member of the building and the –

Moser: The housing staff. And they report to a superintendent for the custodial operation that is a part of Housing, and each of them supervises the people who clean the buildings. Their office in most cases is right next to what we now call the coordinator or the hall director, whatever head residence life person there is. And it's a real collaborative relationship, and we really try to foster that collaboration by having the two go through the buildings every week together and try and foster that.

Sellers: If there's a difference between those two, who does the custodial staff ultimately answer to? Would it be the physical plant people or building maintenance?

Moser: It would be me, ultimately. Because the maintenance and custodial is under housing as well. In our current staffing pattern we actually have an Associate Director for Housing Facility Management, as well as an Associate Director for Residence Life, Associate Director for Administrative Services. And now we have childcare under our operations, so we have an Associate Director for Family Services who works with Alumni Village and the childcare.

Sellers: And was this the way it was going back in the seventies, too?

Moser: Back in the seventies, the Associate Director for Facility position did not exist. There was a superintendent for the operation who had a custodial person superintendent under him and then a maintenance superintendent under him. So those were all USPS positions, rather than A & P and the current associate director is an A & P position. But the staffing is pretty much the same as it was then. They might be called different titles, but the functions are pretty much the same. Of course, the Associate Director for Facilities has a lot more construction responsibility now, because of what we're doing.

Sellers: Had there ever been a man — I realize that going from a women's college moving into co-education and things — was there any problem with you being a female and being in charge of men who were doing that type of supervision and things like that? Were there any conflicts ever? Because there was a transitional period there.

Moser: Right. It's interesting because my dissertation was on gender assignment and performance of hall directors throughout the United States, looking at that. I surveyed operations, and because it was during that time when it was the transition from single sex to co-ed, and there really didn't seem to be any issues with it. I certainly didn't find that. I did find that during the daytime hours I would look more like a professional person when I was living in the buildings. At night, I might respond to an emergency wearing bib overalls, so my level of respect was a bit different because I got mistaken for a student all the time, not just by the students in the building but sometimes the fire department or whoever might be responding. But other than that, I really didn't find any difficulty of the gender, you know, relationships.

Sellers: What about emergency response? Did you ever have any crises or emergencies or anything while you were there that you can talk about?

Moser: My second year in Kellum, we had a series of fires being set in the trash chutes in the building, and it was very serious. We had several fires during that year; none that made significant damage to the building, but it got to a point where we started locking the trash chutes at a certain time in the evening, because it was becoming more predictable that somebody would perhaps do something. We always have students who have mental health difficulties, and so it was not unusual for me to be involved in getting resources to the building to help somebody who was in need of assistance. But it was generally mental health or those kinds of things. Now, as assistant director, when I was in that position, we had a student who tried to climb up and ride the top of the elevator in Smith, and he actually died from a fall in the elevator shaft because he slipped. So we've dealt with death; we've dealt with — we had a student electrocuted in McCollum Hall my first year, I believe, as director. We have had suicides that have been successful. Just about three years ago we had a student who was able to get up on to the roof at Smith Hall and jump. So we deal with very serious things with students.

Sellers: How do you deal with those? What kind of counseling do you give the students afterwards? How do you deal with the parents and things like that?

Moser: Really depends on the situation. In the situation of the student at Smith who jumped, we got counselors over to Smith Hall because there was a student who had been sitting at his desk and he literally saw the person pass by in the window. But the coordinator at the hall — I happened to walk into the assistant director's office when she was talking with the person, and she insisted that somebody had fallen out of the tree, because that's the perception she had from —

Sellers: From the first floor office.

Moser: — because she saw, too, this person coming down. So we got counseling people. Bruce Prevatt, the director of the EAP, came over. Anika Fields, who was director of the Counseling Center for the students at Smith. As it turned out, the person was a former resident of Kellum Hall and it was more complicated and much harder because she had been an R.A. and she had some difficulty and had gone home. And she wasn't currently enrolled, but she had come back up for, I guess, the weekend and this, I think, happened on the Monday. So we had to deal with the staff that, well, had a very close relationship with her. And she had just left, perhaps, a month ago before this happened. So we went over to the building that night. We got a team of staff and we met with counseling center staff upstairs in this building, and they actually went out with us and we met first with the staff in Kellum and then went to the floor that she had been the R.A. on so that we could be the one to tell the students and talk with them. You always want to kind of watch and see the reactions of people. Sometimes somebody dies and they spent very little time in the building and so the students even around them aren't as affected, but there are other cases when they were truly a leader on the floor. And then a lot of people are going to be affected and may need some kind of outreach and guidance. We have helped students arrange

memorial services on campus, separate from perhaps any family services. So we try to find out as much as we can about the student's background and what the students who were affected would like to do, what would they like to see, and then we work with them to plan whatever would be appropriate – sometimes in a church, sometimes in the residence hall. But every crisis is different and we just have to really kind of read the situation and figure out for this particular time what are the important things to do.

Sellers: Do you deal with dorm assignments?

Moser: My staff, well, do those. Yeah.

Sellers: There was a time when if you were a female, you had to live in a dormitory on campus. Was that still the case when you came in '76?

Moser: No.

Sellers: So you didn't have to deal with "Sorry, you can't attend because we don't have room for you."

Moser: That's right.

Sellers: How do you get the dorm request and how do you pair them up and what kind of problems do you have with that when roommates suddenly hate each other?

Moser: Happens all the time.

Sellers: I'm sure it does.

Moser: It's interesting, because now probably about ninety-five percent of our applications come in online. Once a student is admitted to Florida State, they have a code on the admission file that enables them — our computers read that and know to give them access to the housing application system, because you can't have access until you have been admitted. And so once they know they've been admitted — and for example, this year the first grouping just found out just, oh, a week ago. And so that night at midnight they could go in and check through admissions electronically, see if they had been admitted, and then they go in electronically and apply for housing, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. So we literally overnight had a hundred and some applications come in. We don't do very much, quite frankly, to try to match people. There have been dissertations written on how to match roommates, and there is just no foolproof way to do it. So we ask things like: "Are you an early riser?" and "Do you study with music?" knowing full well that Mom and Dad might actually be the ones filling it out, and that increasingly is happening with this generation of students, that Mom and Dad are more involved. And a lot of students' lifestyles change a great deal from the time they apply for housing and the time they actually get here. So nothing is with any certainty as far as we're concerned.

Sellers: How do they know which dorms to apply for, or do they apply for a specific dorm?

Moser: The website gives them –

Sellers: A virtual tour?

Moser: They have access to pictures, descriptions — we have a booklet that we can send them. We are trying to wean them, quite frankly, off print materials because they're going online. After they've been admitted, we'll send them a card that asks them if they'd like us to send them an application booklet; however, we point out that it'll probably week or two before they get it, and they could be applying online because it is first-come-first-serve. So you maximize your chance of getting one of your preferred buildings the earlier you apply. So most of our students, even the ones who ask for a printed booklet, have already applied online.

Sellers: They just want something to back up their choice.

Moser: Yeah, and they can even go in electronically and update their application. We have a Housing Info Account that people can leave messages in that are responded to on a daily basis. So we do a lot more with the computer now.

Sellers: How many student openings do you have on average? At this point, you don't know how many students are going to be coming back, so is it hit-and-miss? Or is there something more scientific?

Moser: Well, actually, we limit the number of returners. We keep separate waiting lists for incoming first-year students and returners, and that is because we know through longitudinal research that it's really important that as many of the new students have an opportunity to live on campus, even if it's just for one year, because it makes a difference in terms of satisfaction, academic success, graduation rate.

Sellers: So it envelops them in what's going on more readily?

Moser: Right, right. Developing the friendship groups, having easy access to campus services is really important in that transition period, so we agreed several years ago to limit to a certain number the returners to make room for the first-year students. Now, we're going to have 1,400 more beds – well, 1,260 more beds – for first-year students in '07, and we may have less need to be as restrictive toward returners. But everybody, all these people who are applying now, they are just getting in line, and we don't actually run assignments until the end of May. So they won't find out until early June where they'll be. And we take a healthy waiting list beyond our capacity because a lot of students change their minds at the last minute. There is some science to it; we keep really good historical records and averages over several years so we can try to predict what's going to happen.

Sellers: What's your relationship to places like Cash Hall? Do you have any supervisory capacity over that?

Moser: No, we have no relationship with the private halls. We do talk with them, because we want to know how they're doing. Cash is now actually called Seminole Oaks and Osceola is now Osceola Village. But they've been around since the mid-'70s, and they have always really helped us because when we've filled, we at least could tell parents there were other kinds of structured housing available to students because they have resident assistants. And Southgate then came online in '93 and that provides another kind of opportunity. But we have no formal relationship. They're always glad to hear when we're full with the waiting list, you know, and that sort of thing.

Sellers: It used to be that if there was no campus housing available, I believe your office also had lists of approved housing. Do you have that anymore?

Moser: Yeah, we haven't had that since I've been here, so when I came in '76, that did not exist. At Florida State there's an off-campus housing office, which an agency of student government, and so those students actually provide the help to other students if they need a place to live.

Sellers: When did Alumni Village open up? Was it the early '60s?

Moser: Yes.

Sellers: So it had been going for a while when you got here?

Moser: Yes, it was built between 1959 and '65. It was built in three phases.

Sellers: And I know it was primarily for married students at the time it was built.

Moser: Initially, yes. Of course that was built in response to the GI Bill and all those servicemen coming to college with their families. The demographics have changed dramatically over time. I don't have the statistics in front of me, but we do an annual census of who is living there; we used to have literally hundreds of children living in the Village because there's 791 apartments, but now it's reversed. We have many fewer children and many fewer married students. We have allowed single graduate and even non-traditional undergraduates to live out there, so it's a very mixed community. Yes, there are still families and we have two of the childcare operations are out there, but the demographics are totally different than they were when you think of why the Village was built.

Sellers: Is that good?

Moser: It works fine, and in some respects the single students who are moving out there

who are just out of undergraduate school, especially if they lived in a residence hall, don't have the expectations for what will be there for them as do families who may have owned a home and then move into this institutionalized housing. So that works. The other thing about Alumni Village is typically we have about sixty countries represented. It's a wonderful international community; and for our international students who long for some connection with home or whatever, it serves them very well.

Sellers: Tell me something about the childcare operations and when you actually took over the supervision of those.

Moser: Well, the one at Alumni Village has always been under housing, and that one's the oldest on campus. It precedes my arrival here. Sherrill Ragans could probably speak more about that. But during the time that Sherrill was director of housing, the Capital Improvement Trust fees, a certain portion of them, were designated to become used for childcare services. So at Florida State, the Educational Research Center for Child Development was created. It was placed in the building that's just east of the Stone Building, and actually it was under Sherrill's supervision as director of housing because she already had the one childcare facility under her, and so it seemed natural at that time for the supervisory responsibility to be part of Housing. When she left Housing, she kind of took that with her to Westcott and it was a separate department, so that department had reported to Sherrill. Then Student Government created the Starlite Center, which is more of baby-sitting operation, that operates late afternoon and evening hours. It's a drop-off kind of operation which is currently located on Woodward as part of the Women's Center over there.

Sellers: Do you have supervisory over that?

Moser: Yes. Then the fourth was just created four years ago. The then director at ERCCD was successful getting a federal grant to have an infant/toddler operation, but she struggled to find a place, an adequate place, to house it, and we ended up housing it at Alumni Village and took two apartments and made them really one big place for that operation. We just learned last month that the grant was renewed for another four years, and so that grant substantially subsidizes that operation and keeps the prices that the students pay at a manageable level. And it's very good quality childcare; it was just accredited, so we're real pleased about that. But the four came under Housing when Ann Levy, the Director of the ERCCD, retired. She actually asked that ERCCD be placed under a larger department and, naturally we had been home of origin and it came back to us. So at that time Nancy Selken had been assistant director for Alumni Village and she has a PhD in Early Childhood and she already supervised the center at the Village, so she became Associate Director of Family Services and moved over here and we hired a coordinator for the Village. So she oversees the housing at the Village and all four childcare facilities.

Sellers: What kind of facilities are there now in each one of the dormitories for the handicapped students?

Moser: We have made, I think, excellent strides in all the halls. DeGraff Hall was the one building that was truly unaccessible and it's now gone. It had no elevator, and literally there was no way to get into the building without steps. So a wheelchair-bound person, that would have been a real problem. In all of our projects as we've renovated buildings and had new construction, we have made ADA accessible spaces, and even Alumni Village, we've renovated a few apartments so they're totally ADA – up to ADA standards.

Sellers: The old dorms that have been renovated and are now “new,” what's the average capacity? How are the layouts?

Moser: All of the old neo-Gothic buildings – Landis is the last to be done and it will reopen next summer – all of them have been changed from community bath style to suites with semi-private baths. So now three to four students typically share the toilet and shower room which is located between the two rooms. And we were able pretty much to maintain the same occupancy level that we had before, and in Jennie Murphree we actually enlarged it because we added a floor. The attic had not been anything but storage until we renovated and we got an extra floor out of it. The average size of those buildings, they range from – Broward and Bryan are the smallest – Bryan is 131 and Broward 135, but Cawthon has 297 students; Gilchrist, 229. Jennie, 326; Jennie's the largest, but when Landis comes back online I think it will be 402 and it was 401 before it closed.

Sellers: They house a lot of students. I'm assuming the dorms are a lot more popular now that they've been renovated and have air-conditioning. [chuckles]

Moser: They are, they are. And, you know, the students that we have now, a lot of them – probably about a third of them – have had their own bathroom at home as well as had their own private room, so just having a roommate is a huge adjustment. We've known students who have absolutely broke down in tears when they learn they are gonna share a bathroom with thirty people. You know, we're blessed with a great economy in the United States and more affluent than just about any other country, and with that comes some changes and challenges as far as working with students.

Sellers: If there is a conflict between roommates or people on a hall or something like that, their first resource is their Resident Advisor?

Moser: Resident Assistant.

Sellers: Now how are those Resident Assistants selected?

Moser: They are selected the year before. We're getting geared up for RA selection in January and February. And then they go through an application process, then they are individually interviewed and then we observe them in group dynamics. We give them some problem to solve and then we see how they interact with others. And they have references,

reference letters, from different staff within the department so that we know about them before we make a commitment. And then we do some Spring training for a weekend in April, and then we bring them back over a week before the halls open.

Sellers: Are they generally a particular class level or age group? Juniors or Seniors or graduate students?

Moser: Usually not graduate students, it's pretty rare. Most of our graduate students are the head staff members, and Florida State has a really strong Higher Education Administration/Educational Leadership program so we get students from all over the country – and we've even got a couple of Canadians this year – who come here to study and work, so that helps us a great deal, strengthens our program. It's usually sophomores, juniors. We like to have a blend and have some seniors, but a lot of students, by that time they're ready to move off and have more privacy and less responsibility, because we expect a lot of them.

Sellers: You have men as well as women in those positions. Do the men work with the women students?

Moser: Uh-huh. Yep. They all work together.

Sellers: There's not a problem with your advisor or your assistant being a guy and you're a freshmen or something like that?

Moser: No, and we're pretty clear with people about it's not probably a good idea to have a dating relationship with somebody that you're on staff with. However, if anybody in any part of the organization is thinking about that or wants to talk about it, they need to talk with their supervisor. So that comes up when you've got a mixed group.

Sellers: What's basically the hierarchy in a particular dormitory? From, I guess, the Resident Assistant, and then if the Resident Assistant cannot solve a problem, who do they go to and on up?

Moser: Well, if it is a big building, say it's Kellum Hall – Kellum now has a little different staffing than when I was there. Kellum has the coordinator, full-time person like I was, but there's also a graduate assistant. And so there are two possible people beyond the RA who can work with the students and try to work through their difficulty. We actually have a roommate contract that we use, and we have the two people (hopefully before anything starts going amiss) at the beginning of the year sit down with each other and fill this out and talk very specifically about borrowing things, about cleaning, about just the most mundane things that you can imagine, because we found we pretty much need to do that. And the students today are very much less likely to speak their mind until they get to a point where they can't really do it appropriately.

Sellers: That surprises me. I would think they would be more outspoken.

Moser: No, because they haven't had to do it. If you've got your own room, if you've got your own bathroom, and your parents likely take care of a lot of stuff for you, this is a whole new world, much more so. I mean, I'm from a family of six, so to just to have had my own room eventually was a big deal. But it's very different these days.

Sellers: The Resident Assistants, is that like an assistantship? Does that pay for their tuition or do they get paid monetarily? How does that work?

Moser: They get a discount on their room and they get, if it's a single or a double, they just live there by themselves, they don't have a roommate, because they talk with students individually and it just is better if they have the privacy if somebody wants to have a conversation with them. We also pay them for twenty hours a week, and that's the paycheck that they get every two weeks. Starting next year, we're going to be giving them some meal dollars also each semester, because when the Suwannee Dining Hall reopens, students in living-learning programs will be obligated to a meal plan, and so in trying to figure out how to handle the RAs, the equitable thing seemed to do to just do it for everybody regardless of where they're assigned and treat them all the same. So they'll have that next year.

Sellers: The RAs aren't going to have a problem not only living with but eating with the students?

Moser: Actually, I missed that when I came to Florida State, because my first work experience was in a residential setting where the cafeterias were part of the residence hall. It really provided a great opportunity to mix and mingle with students. We had staff meetings in the cafeteria —

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Moser: So anyway, the opportunity to just sit down and visit with people over food helps with community building.

Sellers: The residence hall learning communities – we have Bryan. Do we have another one now?

Moser: Well, we had one in Broward, but that's shifting over to Cawthon. Cawthon currently has two programs, education and music. Education is going to share it's space with what had been the Broward program, and the Broward program will now be for majors within Social Sciences. So we'll have three programs there. We have a Women in Math, Science, and Engineering floor in Jennie Murphree. Reynolds Hall is a Wellness hall, students committed to a lifestyle free of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, and within that building we have a floor that is part of the Human Sciences and they have some classes associated with that. When we open the

Wildwood halls, we will likely have a few more programs over there.

Sellers: What about Bryan Hall? What is its focus and how has it worked out, since that was the prototype?

Moser: Right. The planning for Bryan actually began several years before the building reopened. The building reopened in '97, and I think probably as early as '94 there was a planning committee working on that. Walter Moore from Religion, who has since retired, Jim Smith was on the committee, Ken Goldsby was on it. There was a female faculty from Religion who unfortunately left Florida State while we were involved in the planning, but Sherrill Ragans and myself. It was really Bob Glidden's idea. He was then Provost and he kind of got us started on it. And then probably about a year before the building opened, George Weaver came onboard as the head – the first director. Because there was so much time planning, I think it's particularly well thought out. It is meant to help introduce first year students to a large research institution and all the resources they have available. They take courses that meet liberal studies requirements. There are several courses offered in the building each semester, and each student is obligated to take one class each semester in the building. And then they have a colloquium on Monday nights where the whole building comes together and they bring in faculty from various parts of the university to expose the students to different areas. And they do some field trips. I think they've been out to the Mag Lab, and each year it's a little bit different. But then the second semester, they have an opportunity to work in small groups with a faculty member on a topic of interest, and they advertise it with the topic in mind – “psychology of dreams,” you know, things that are pretty interesting I think for students – and not all of them do it and they don't require that they do it, but I think for those that do, they get to know a faculty member very well and they get that more individualized attention because of that. The other nice thing about the program is the capacity of the classroom is only 22, so you're in small classes, and – oh, I forget the faculty member who teaches Biology to like 1,000 students – he has taught over there. Can you imagine that class transformed?

Sellers: It must be a dream come true.

Moser: But he had to really revise his teaching for that. So it's a really good experience for those students. And everybody has to vacate; after the first year, they move on. But it's worked very well, and we've looked at it over time and we find that the retention of the students is better, even controlling for their entering characteristics, SAT scores, ACT scores – don't look at those, don't look grades to get selected to the program, it's the quality of the application, which is an essay. And there are a group of people who read those and hand pick the students.

Sellers: What, not necessarily the names of the people who read them, but what are their fields?

Moser: Well, some of them are students in the program, or students who *were* in the program. There's Student Affairs people. I read each year. Tim Quinnan up in the Vice President's Office. Sherrill Ragans used to read when she was here. Somebody typically in

Resident's Life and Housing will be a reader, and then there are faculty members. They might be from Classics, English, Math, different areas. So there's one faculty, one staff, and one student reader on each application.

Sellers: And what type of characteristics do they look for, since you've been a reader?

Moser: We really look for somebody who gives evidence for a curiosity and desire to learn and who will maybe step out of the comfort zone of a first year student and be willing to admit they're interested in intellectual pursuits. And there are only 131 students in that building, so it's really kind of neat.

Sellers: Do most of them complete the full year?

Moser: Um-hum. I remember early on we had somebody transfer out of FSU, but he was going to the Naval Academy and we figured that's pretty good reason, you know.

Sellers: But very few of them leave by the end of the first semester?

Moser: That's right. And the music program is thrilled with — most of the music freshmen now live in Cawthon, and Jane Clendinning says it's made them competitive with Yale for students, because they have a residential program, too. We're very proud really of the different programs, and they're all different. We have no cookie cutter approach, and they meet different needs. But they're all geared toward the first year student experience.

Sellers: How many dorm rooms or students can we house on campus at the current time? Ballpark is okay.

Moser: We've got — I round up a little, because at Alumni Village there's 791 apartments but there are a lot more people that live there. So it's 58-something when we're at total capacity, but I round it up to 5,900 because of that factor, that I know we've got more students out there, and then I've got take out Landis. So right now, about just under 5,400 students. When we reopen with Landis and then we add — subtract DeGraff and then we add 1400 —

Sellers: Wildwood will house 1400?

Moser: No, DeGraff will house 700 and Wildwood at 700.

Sellers: Okay, with the rebuilding of DeGraff.

Moser: Uh-huh. We'll house just under 7,200 students.

Sellers: So that's about what, five percent? Little more than five percent of our population?

Moser: Oh no, that's more than that.

Sellers: Don't we have about 40,000?

Moser: Yeah, but I think that's headcount. And we've got Panama City, we've got Study Abroad. That's why I always kind of challenge people when they report that we house, like, fifteen percent. It's actually more than that, because –

Sellers: There aren't that many students on this campus.

Moser: Right.

Sellers: Okay, I understand.

Moser: And then there's the Greek housing, you know, so it's deceptive. But if you just took 40,000 — it's about 18 percent.

Sellers: How does that compare to other state universities?

Moser: [University of] Florida is very similar in terms of percentage of students housed. In the state of Florida, unless it's a small private school – like Central Florida's, I think, even bigger than we are, and they house fewer students.

Sellers: Well, Central Florida, USF, those are more commuter campuses, aren't they?

Moser: They wouldn't say that. [laughs] But none of the schools in Florida house that high a portion. Now, you go to a Michigan State, they have probably the biggest housing program in the country. And they actually had to close — they overbuilt back in the '70s, so they might house, like, forty percent. It varies, but I think nationally the average is about thirty percent of the total college population lives in a residence hall.

Sellers: So we're about in the middle. What do we have down the road? We have a new dorm that will be finished in a year and a half or so?

Moser: Well, actually DeGraff and Wildwood will open at the same time.

Sellers: But isn't that Fall of 2007?

Moser: Uh-huh.

Sellers: Do we have other plans on the board?

Moser: Well, we had to sell \$70 million in bonds.

Sellers: To do those two?

Moser: Yes. And we just opened the new apartment here in '03, and that's 555 spaces. By the way, those are private bedroom apartments. Each student has their own bedroom, two share a bath, four share a living room and kitchen.

Sellers: What do those run? How much?

Moser: They are comparable to a single in a renovated hall. Last year – we don't have our new rates in here – but last year it was \$2,350 a semester and this year it is \$2,470 a semester.

Sellers: And a semester is four months?

Moser: Uh-huh.

Sellers: Now the time between semesters, they pay for that because those are closed down, aren't they?

Moser: It's annualized. No, the apartments don't close and all of our rates are on annualized basis, so the student who lives in a building that closes during the year at Christmas and spring break, their rent for the year – the set rates – is different. But the apartment facilities all remain open; they're twelve month. Now, we have closed McCollum for a summer or Rogers for a summer to do some special work, but by and large they're open twelve months a year.

Sellers: Is the university losing money on their dormitory housing or making money or are we breaking even?

Moser: We're are not-for-profit. So any net revenue in any given year goes back to improving the halls. We're independent, so the rents carry everything, including all the renovations. And Landis is an \$18 million project, so none of it is inexpensive. No, we are doing very satisfactorily. In order to fund a lot of what we've done, back in 1990 we started a reserve fund and we set aside a certain percentage of the replacement value of the whole housing operation. Every year we set a certain amount aside. And as the insurance value has gone up, the amount that we've set aside has gone up, and that's helped to subsidize these renovations projects, because renovations are very expensive and you're not generating new rent dollars, because your just reopening beds you used to rent anyway. So that was the only way that could get ourselves with the financial footing to do what we've done. But you asked if there are things on the horizon. What we've got to do is stabilize ourselves once we add these new buildings for, I think, a few years. We have a very good credit rating. Moors, Standards and Poors, Fitch, they all look at our housing system and at Florida State and rate our bonds and then give us a percentage rate accordingly, and we've done well. But putting this many new beds online at one time is a lot to do, so I'd rather see us wait a couple of years before trying to go back with

another big project. We also have the challenge of land here. You know, DeGraff was an easy decision, because there are only 140 students housed on that parcel of land and there will be 700 students in a very nice two building complex there. But you know, what we do with Deviney and Dorman, we've got to figure those out.

Sellers: That was going to be my next question. What will be the future for them?

Moser: We probably will raze Deviney, because it's not a very big building and the space isn't used very efficiently, and the condition of it would not suggest that we want to renovate it. It currently houses 243 students, and I think we could do much better if we start over again over there.

Sellers: You've got enough space if you could do it in a different style.

Moser: And not sure what to do about Dorman. Dorman is actually in better physical condition.

Sellers: Dorman came online, what, about '57 or '58?

Moser: Ah, I know Dorman and Deviney were the friends. I think you wrote about that, didn't you in your book?

Sellers: Well, I know Deviney was originally Florida Hall.

Moser: Okay, but the two female faculty members were good friends. Deviney was in '52 and Dorman, '59.

Sellers: And those were both upperclass dorms at one time, when the freshmen row – Bryan, Reynolds, and Jennie – were strictly freshmen.

Moser: Yeah, and I think even when I came here there were more returners in those buildings than new students.

Sellers: Well, we have the new building and another new —. Now, I'm assuming that the one across the street, is that going to be Ragans?

Moser: The apartments, the single bedrooms.

Sellers: Yeah. That is going to be named after Sherrill?

Moser: Uh-huh. It's been approved at all levels of the university; the trustees approved it. We're just waiting for the naming bill to get passed and they haven't passed it for three years.

Sellers: I know they resisted naming buildings after living figures, and then they went with the police station with Tanner.

Moser: After the naming bill got passed. See, if your living — if you're alive, it has to be approved by the legislature. And that's why Tanner's got delayed, because for a couple of years they didn't pass the naming bill. They'd take all the requests, all the naming requests, from the state and put it in one bill, so if there's any one thing that people don't want to approve, they just don't have time. Last year, they even tried to pass a bill where they didn't have to get approval anymore, and they didn't act on that either. So we have the plaque.

Sellers: Everything's ready to go except we've got to boot it through the legislature.

Moser: And we don't want to dedicate the building until we name it. We do it at once. So we threw a party for the first year students, and they actually have a cup that says Ragans Hall, because we didn't want them to not have anything, you know, because they were the first ones to live there.

Sellers: How is Sherrill dealing with that?

Moser: Oh, you know Sherrill. I mean, she's fine. I hated to have to tell her that last time it didn't pass.

Sellers: So she's looking forward to it?

Moser: I think, yeah, I think so. I think she was pretty thrilled. And you know, Steve Edwards, Sandy D'Alemberte, everybody was very enthusiastic about it, so there was never — no ripple of controversy at all, which I can't imagine there would have been.

Sellers: As far as naming dormitories, does your department start the ball rolling?

Moser: Well, that's a good question. I did initiate the naming for Sherrill, with some other people, because I believe strongly that we should do that. But that's been our only opportunity, because we've kept — and we're going to keep the DeGraff name. What this ends up, I don't know. I haven't even gotten to the point to even talk with anybody about that. But at least we can call it Wildwood for now because it is on Wildwood Drive.

Sellers: Well, it's kind of like Deviney was Florida for a long time.

Moser: So at some point, somebody, you know, some donor — but most of our buildings have been named for faculty here at Florida State.

Sellers: Where you here when Magnolia Hall was still here?

Moser: Uh-huh. I remember the t-shirts the students did.

Sellers: Tell me a little bit about the abolition of Magnolia.

Moser: Well, you know, it was one of those things — it had been built as a temporary building, from what I understand, and it was always a men's hall. No, it wasn't?

Sellers: No, it was a women's hall originally.

Moser: Oh was it? Okay, well, I stand corrected. Well, when I came, it was a men's building. That's how I knew it as, and I think it was around 1980 that it was razed for the library science building which is currently there, the Shores Building, but it was really pretty crummy facility.

Sellers: It lasted that long? It was always pretty crummy; it was like a bunker.

Moser: Yeah, and I think sometimes the behavior matched the quality of the facility. I actually didn't go in there very much, as I recall. But I remember the year that it closed, the men, – of course they had a very tight community because it was a very small building – and they had these t-shirts where they had a picture of Magnolia Hall and it said "Remember the Mag" on it. So when we closed DeGraff this past year, we had a party for the students and put all their names on the back of this t-shirt.

Sellers: All of them? [Rita has gone out of the office to get a t-shirt to bring back to show us]

Moser: We wanted them to have something special.

Sellers: Oh, the Last in DeGraff.

Moser: So we had a big catered dinner for them.

Sellers: This is a garnet and gold t-shirt. Gold with garnet printing and it says "The Last in the Original DeGraff, Class of 2004-2005." Wow.

Moser: So each student got one of these and they all had a group picture taken in their t-shirts after the dinner, so we sent them out in style.

Sellers: Did you have a lot of opposition to taking down DeGraff?

Moser: No, it was a very easy decision. The architecture wasn't significant, small building, not ADA compliant at all.

Sellers: Was it originally built as a graduate dorm, it seems to me? I don't remember.

Moser: I don't remember, but you know Sherrill Ragans was the live-in staff member there.

Sellers: Well, I'm sure Sherrill will know. [chuckles]

Moser: She and her husband, when they were first married, lived in DeGraff, so I got them each – they have t-shirts, too.

Sellers: Rita, can you think of anything else we should add to this? Have I covered your career here?

Moser: Uh-uh. This little sheet, I don't know if this will be useful to you and I couldn't find the one that goes to '05, but we've tried to chronicle our different buildings and what've done to them over time, so that might be helpful. I also have a brochure on the new one we're constructing that I can give you. But it's always fun to talk about FSU and the Halls.

Sellers: Okay, terrific.

End of Interview