

**Interviewee:** Shellahamer, Bentley  
**Interviewer:** Robin Sellers  
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**Sellers:** Dr. Shellahamer, tell me please a little bit about where you were born and where you grew up.

**Shellahamer:** I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1944. I grew up in Baltimore until I turned – I guess I was eleven or twelve and my family moved to Miami. So I finished growing up in Miami, went to North Miami High School.

**Sellers:** And you graduated from there in '62?

**Shellahamer:** I did.

**Sellers:** Where you with the band in high school?

**Shellahamer:** Yes. I started in music when I was in fourth grade in Baltimore, Maryland. My mother was very much supportive of music; she wasn't a musician, but she really wanted me to participate in the band, and they started students in Maryland in the fourth grade. So I signed up for saxophone lessons and joined the band in the fourth grade.

**Sellers:** Why did you choose saxophone?

**Shellahamer:** Well, I'm really not sure. They sent home a mimeographed form with all the pictures of the various instruments on it, and I wanted to play trombone – I remember that – but my mother wanted me to play saxophone. So I wound up playing saxophone.

**Sellers:** So it was your mother's choice?

**Shellahamer:** Sort of, yes.

**Sellers:** Did you like the saxophone?

**Shellahamer:** Oh, yes. Very much. I still play.

**Sellers:** When did you move to Miami? What year?

**Shellahamer:** I believe it was '57 or '56.

**Sellers:** So you went into your junior high and high school in Miami.

**Shellahamer:** Yes, I was in the seventh grade when we moved to Miami.

**Sellers:** What junior high did you go to there?

**Shellahamer:** Westview Junior High for a year and a half, and then Thomas Jefferson Junior High when it opened; they transferred us to the new school.

**Sellers:** And then North Miami High School. Were you in the band in junior high?

**Shellahamer:** I was in the band in junior high and high school. In fact, I was the drum major of the band in high school

**Sellers:** So you weren't still playing the saxophone all the time?

**Shellahamer:** Yes, I still was.

**Sellers:** How did you get to be drum major? Was that something that was elective?

**Shellahamer:** It was an audition try-out. Of course, high schools back in those days were just three years – tenth, eleventh, and twelfth. So I went through the tenth grade and then tried out at the end of the tenth grade and I made drum major then, at the end of my tenth grade year.

**Sellers:** The bands in high schools in Miami, as I recall, did a lot of field marching for football games.

**Shellahamer:** Oh, yes, for sure.

**Sellers:** Do you remember any of those? [laughter] Did anything ever happen that you would like to forget?

**Shellahamer:** No — I had a really good experience in high school. I had a band director, his name was Bob Alexander, and he was very unusual because he wasn't the greatest musician, but he was a really good motivator of people. He sort of took me under his wing and let me have all kinds of opportunities to be a leader. It paid off because when I was a senior and drum major, he had a real serious hernia operation and he was out of school for quite a while, and I took over the band. I actually designed halftime shows for the football games and I taught the band the shows. I guess he was out for four or five weeks, and then when he came back he still wasn't real strong. He just let me continue doing most of the work.

**Sellers:** Did you have any problem with the other students?

**Shellahamer:** No, none at all.

**Sellers:** They accepted as the leader.

**Shellahamer:** They sure did.

**Sellers:** You chose Florida State for your undergraduate work?

**Shellahamer:** I did. That was because when I was in high school, Florida State came to Miami to play Miami in the Orange Bowl, and I went to the game. Up until that point, I hadn't considered going to Florida State University.

**Sellers:** Where had you thought about?

**Shellahamer:** I was thinking about Brown or Illinois or — I was thinking more toward the academic end of it. I was a fairly good student, so I was looking at the academic side of it and wasn't really thinking about music until that Miami game. The Marching Chiefs came down with the school and I saw the Marching Chiefs at halftime. I said, "That's what I want to do." Then later that year, the symphonic band from FSU came to Miami on tour and I went to their concert and that just cinched it for me, once I heard the concert band. I knew where I wanted to go to school and there was never any doubt about it after that.

**Sellers:** Did they offer you any scholarships?

**Shellahamer:** No.

**Sellers:** So as I recall it was \$113 for as many credit hours as you could take [laughs].

**Shellahamer:** Yes. And I lived in the dormitory and I ate on the food plan.

**Sellers:** Which dorm?

**Shellahamer:** I lived in Kellum Hall.

**Sellers:** Do you recall your room number?

**Shellahamer:** No. I had three different rooms that first year.

**Sellers:** You couldn't get along with them or they couldn't get along with you [laughter]?

**Shellahamer:** Well, the first one, we just had such drastically different lifestyles — he was a senior and I was a freshman; he was a golf major or a golf player and he gambled a lot, and he had friends into the room to gamble at night. I just couldn't do that. Then the second one, I forget now why that didn't work out. But the third one worked out good.

**Sellers:** Did you stay in Kellum?

**Shellahamer:** Just for the first year. The second year I lived in the fraternity house.

**Sellers:** What fraternity?

**Shellahamer:** Delta Chi. I pledged Delta Chi in my second half of my freshman year, then I moved in the house my sophomore year.

**Sellers:** What do you remember about your professors and your classes here at FSU?

**Shellahamer:** Well, I remember that everything was very challenging. Back then, there weren't so many graduate assistants, so I had the professors for everything. In fact, I only had one or two graduate assistants the whole time I was here as an undergraduate. So I had really good teachers; they were demanding but fair.

**Sellers:** Do you remember any of them in particular?

**Shellahamer:** Oh, yes.

**Sellers:** Tell me something about the ones you remember.

**Shellahamer:** Well, my mentor was Manley Whitcomb, who was the director of bands. He was a pretty imposing figure. My theory professor was Roy Johnson, who retired about ten years ago. I had him for theory and for keyboard harmony for most of the two years that that program lasted. Joe White was my sight singing instructor for two years. I had Tommy Wright as a freshman. He goes way back, way before me. And probably the most influential professor in my whole life, and he still is, is Clifford Madsen. When I was a freshman, Cliff was a graduate assistant finishing his doctorate. He and I have become lifelong friends. He's a pretty remarkable man.

**Sellers:** So you graduated as you should have in '66?

**Shellahamer:** I did.

**Sellers:** Did you go right on for your master's then?

**Shellahamer:** No. I took a job teaching at Rickards High School. Back then it was a junior-senior high, so I had grades seven through twelve. I interned there, actually.

**Sellers:** You were in music education?

**Shellahamer:** Yes, I was in music ed., right. So while I was doing my internship, my

supervising teacher decided he was going to go back to school, and they offered me the job at Rickards and I took it. Back in those days there were only two public high schools in town — well, there were three – there was Leon and Rickards and then there was the old Lincoln High.

**Sellers:** And how long did you stay at Rickards and in what capacity?

**Shellahamer:** I was the director of bands. I stayed there for five years. One of those years I came back to FSU to get my master's.

**Sellers:** While you were still teaching at Rickards?

**Shellahamer:** No, I took a year's leave of absence. I was on an EPDA fellowship, which the federal government was sponsoring at that time.

**Sellers:** Were you married?

**Shellahamer:** Yes. I got married at the end of my sophomore year in college.

**Sellers:** What did your wife do? Did she stay home or was she in college?

**Shellahamer:** No, she supported us. She was from Miami and we moved up here and she took a job as a dental assistant and helped pay the bills.

**Sellers:** She did that willingly [laughs]?

**Shellahamer:** Oh, yes.

**Sellers:** Even now she says it was willingly?

**Shellahamer:** Oh, yes. Absolutely.

**Sellers:** You came back and got your master's and then went back to Rickards. How long did you stay there?

**Shellahamer:** Two more years.

**Sellers:** Where from there?

**Shellahamer:** From there I was offered a job, brand new high school in Fort Lauderdale – Piper High School. Fort Lauderdale opened five new high schools in one year, and Piper was one of the five.

**Sellers:** And this was what year?

**Shellahamer:** '71.

**Sellers:** Where did you live when you were down in Fort Lauderdale?

**Shellahamer:** In Lauderhill.

**Sellers:** Children?

**Shellahamer:** I have two boys.

**Sellers:** In what stage of your career were they born?

**Shellahamer:** Both while I was still teaching at Rickards. They were born in Tallahassee.

**Sellers:** How about you – do you have any siblings?

**Shellahamer:** I have two sisters, two older sisters.

**Sellers:** You came back up here in '77. So you stayed in Lauderdale for six years. What brought you back up here?

**Shellahamer:** Well, I guess it was fate. I'm not quite sure. FSU had hired a man, his name was Bill Raxsdale, to direct the Marching Chiefs, in 1976. They did this at the same time they hired Carl Bjerregard to be the director of bands. Up until that time, the director of bands had been Dick Mayo, and he did everything. He did all the concert groups, the jazz groups, and the marching band. So when he left, they hired Carl Bjerregard to be director of bands, but Carl didn't want to do the Marching Chiefs, so they hired Bill Raxsdale to do the Marching Chiefs. Raxsdale had a really big reputation. He was a high school band director from Louisiana, and he had a national reputation for an outstanding high school marching band. He made the classic error that a lot of people make when they're hired into a job where they have a lot of responsibility – he decided to change everything too fast. College marching bands are steeped in tradition, and a lot of the things that the band does, the band members believe that you can't change that. He came in and tried to change everything overnight, and took away all the traditional things and put in the new style of marching which was just coming into vogue back then. Needless to say, it didn't go over very well. By the end of the season, over half the band had quit and it just was not a happy situation.

**Sellers:** That was about the time that the football was not a very happy situation either.

**Shellahamer:** That was Bobby Bowden's first year here, and he was going through that turning-around stage. So he really didn't have it turned around yet, but it was much better than it had been. Up until that time, the Marching Chiefs had always been at the top of their game. So when Raxsdale came in and tried to change everything, it fell apart. So by the end of that year, that

year that he was here, the college had pretty much made up its mind he had to go. I had been hired to come up in the summer time and teach in the music camp, be the band director for the music camp. While I was here, a couple of the professors at FSU approached me about applying for the job. I hadn't considered it, because I didn't think that I had enough experience. But I did; I went ahead and just left a letter when I left for the summer. About two weeks later they called me for an interview, and I came up and the interview went fine – they offered me the job. So I took it.

**Sellers:** How did your wife and family feel about coming back to Tallahassee?

**Shellahamer:** My wife was very happy. She was very pleased. We were all excited; it was a great opportunity.

**Sellers:** There's such a difference from the Lauderdale area and Tallahassee.

**Shellahamer:** Oh, yes. We were really happy to be back up here. We didn't like Fort Lauderdale. I liked my job, but I didn't like living there.

**Sellers:** So you came in, and your first year, what was your teaching load and what did you do?

**Shellahamer:** The first year I did the Marching Chiefs, I conducted the second jazz band, and I don't believe I taught any academic courses that first year, that I recall. Oh, and I did the concert band after Marching Chiefs was over. I was supposed to run the music — you know, the Circus goes to Callaway Gardens every summer — well, we had started a music program there also in the summer, and I was supposed to take that over and run that in the summertime. But during that first year I was here, they decided to discontinue it and they didn't do it any more.

**Sellers:** Did you continue to do the summer music camp?

**Shellahamer:** I did the music camps for — actually I took over the administration of the music camps for about three years.

**Sellers:** But you didn't actually do the teaching like you had in the past.

**Shellahamer:** No, I did just the administration.

**Sellers:** How did you find the band members, as far as they had just had a bad experience with one new leader and now they were, I'm sure, wondering, "Now what are they doing to us?" – how did you deal with that?

**Shellahamer:** I had kind of an advantage in that regard because first of all, I was a Chief – I was a former Marching Chief – and I immediately brought back most of the traditions that Raxsdale

had eliminated. So in most of the students' eyes (except for the freshmen, who didn't know any better), I was bringing back what they really wanted. So I got a lot of positive support that first year. There was a small group of students who had been in the Marching Chiefs under Dick Mayo, and I was sort of always being compared to the way Mayo did things. It never was a problem, but it was sort of that little undercurrent about, "Well, that's not the way Mayo did it." But you get through those things – in your first year, you put up with that kind of stuff.

**Sellers:** How much contact as a band director in those early years did you have with the new football coach, and was there any interference there – from either one of you [laughter]?

**Shellahamer:** No, no interference whatsoever. I didn't have a lot of direct contact with Bobby Bowden, but I did have significant contact with Anne, because back in those days Anne was working as feverishly as Bobby was to get things turned around and establish things. I got a call from Anne Bowden one day, that she would like to meet with me and Bill Durham. We went to Bill's office. I didn't know what the subject was, but once I got there they laid out this proposal that they wanted to have a horse as a mascot for the team, and how would that fit in with what the band does, what would be the problems, how would it work, and that kind of thing.

**Sellers:** Nice of them to consult you.

**Shellahamer:** Yes, it was, very nice. So I was in on the initial planning stages for Renegade.

**Sellers:** What was your first impression? What did you think about the idea?

**Shellahamer:** Oh, I was all for it! I thought it was great. The only thing we had to work out was where the horse would be at pre-game when we came on the field, because I knew that we would most likely spook the horse with our drums and all that. So we had to just work out that. But once that was over, I thought it was great.

**Sellers:** Did you ever have any unexpected moments?

**Shellahamer:** No. Oh, and the other part of that was that Anne, every once in a while, would call me with an idea for a halftime show. She would be thinking of things that we might want to do on the field for halftime. Some of them were okay and some of the ideas were not okay.

**Sellers:** How did you deal with the ones that were not okay?

**Shellahamer:** I just told her that we'd consider it. She never pushed; she never got pushy or expected to see anything. She was just offering suggestions.

**Sellers:** How do students get into the band?

**Shellahamer:** The Marching Chiefs? It's an audition procedure. They have to go through a

week of training, and they're evaluated along the way both on their playing and their marching. At the end of the week, the band is selected.

**Sellers:** How much involvement do you have in the selection?

**Shellahamer:** None any more; I don't have any. As the director? From the standpoint of overseeing the process, you have the final say. But in reality, you let the student leadership make their decisions and you just make sure that everything was done properly as far as procedures go.

**Sellers:** So what exactly are the duties of the director of the Marching Chiefs?

**Shellahamer:** First of all, to design and teach the shows that they do at halftime.

**Sellers:** So you actually create the shows.

**Shellahamer:** Yes. Second is to rehearse the music; do all the rehearsal of the music and teach the drill with the help of the student leadership. Then administrate the program. It's a huge undertaking. People think that the Marching Chiefs only exist in the fall, and in truth that is true. But the business of the Marching Chiefs is year around. It just takes a lot of administrative effort to do that.

**Sellers:** How many shows did you need to create each year?

**Shellahamer:** One new show for every home game.

**Sellers:** So it didn't have to be a new show for an away game.

**Shellahamer:** No.

**Sellers:** Did the Marching Chiefs always go in full complement to away games, or were there cadres of them that went?

**Shellahamer:** No, the Marching Chiefs always went as a total unit. It wasn't until Dr. Dunnigan, who's the present director, that the Athletic Department experimented with taking pep bands. I never took a pep band anywhere. We either went — all of us went or none of us went.

**Sellers:** But you didn't have to create a new show for an away game.

**Shellahamer:** No. Normally I would take one of the shows that we had already done at home and take that on the road.

**Sellers:** Tell me a little bit about the logistics of moving the full Marching Chiefs to an

away game.

**Shellahamer:** [laughs] Well, it takes ten buses.

**Sellers:** What time did you leave, how did they get on the buses, where did you house them, things like that.

**Shellahamer:** I usually wanted to travel as close to the game time as I could. In other words, I didn't want to go and spend the night in a hotel somewhere, because if there's going to be any trouble (and most often there isn't) – but if there's going to be any funny business, it's going to be at night in a hotel. So I always had the philosophy that it would be best not to travel or spend the night in a hotel before the game. So I would do things like, if we're playing at LSU, we would leave at midnight and travel during the night, get there early, have a rehearsal, have lunch, and then go to the game if it's an afternoon game. If it was an evening game, we could leave maybe 5 AM, 6 AM. Of course the students didn't like that very much. And then we would spend the night after the game at the hotel. Like I said, it would take ten charter buses, usually 125 rooms, 130 rooms —.

**Sellers:** And how many band members were there?

**Shellahamer:** The last four or five years I had the Chiefs, we were 435 in the band.

**Sellers:** That's like moving Congress.

**Shellahamer:** Yeah. And it's stayed pretty much that same number now for a number of years. I think one year Patrick dipped a little below 400, but it's back up over 400 again. It's one of the largest bands in the country.

**Sellers:** Obviously you were not the only person supervising the 435 or so —

**Shellahamer:** Actually, I was. I was the only adult. I had one graduate assistant that was appointed to me, and that was his job or her job. Then we normally would have two or three other graduate assistants that volunteered their time to help with the Marching Chiefs. But that was it. It was really just me.

**Sellers:** So your discipline had to be pretty firm.

**Shellahamer:** Yes. And we had an outstanding leadership program, student leadership, where a lot of the responsibility of inner discipline, holding the group together with discipline, came from that student leadership group. We had a staff, and Patrick still uses the same system; it's still in effect.

**Sellers:** Some of the bowl games that we went to – did you ever have any problems

rounding the students back up afterwards to come back home?

**Shellahamer:** Only one game, and it was the first bowl game (maybe it was the second) — anyway, it was the All American Bowl in Birmingham. It was like '84 or '85, I forget which year it was. I don't know why, but for that particular game we didn't get the response — we normally got great response, the students wanted to go to the bowl games. So we really didn't have trouble recruiting students to come back. But for that bowl game we did, and I still don't know why. And not only did we have trouble getting them to come back, but some of the students that said they would be there didn't show up. So we had like thirteen or fifteen no-shows, which was highly unusual. That's the only one we ever had trouble with. I went to a bowl every year that I was the director of the Chiefs.

**Sellers:** Any memorable ones?

**Shellahamer:** Yes. The Fiesta Bowl, the first time we went to the Fiesta Bowl and played Nebraska. That was a wonderful trip. And the Sugar Bowl; that was 1988. That was a really, really good one. That was, I think, Deion Sanders' last year. We played Auburn and beat them. That was a great bowl. But I always liked the Sugar Bowl because they don't have a parade, so we didn't have to march in the parade [laughs].

**Sellers:** You do have to march in the Orange Bowl parade, don't you?

**Shellahamer:** We did have to do the Orange Bowl parade.

**Sellers:** So you almost had to go down early, because that was usually the night before.

**Shellahamer:** Yes. Bowl trips were different. We needed to be there early because we would not have marched for about a month. So we would have to get back together, travel to where the bowl was, and have a couple days of rehearsal to put the show back together. It worked fine.

**Sellers:** How do you start — take me from the beginning of an idea for putting together one of the game shows.

**Shellahamer:** Okay. It normally starts with a musical idea, either a theme for the whole show or a particular piece of music that I really want to do on the field. Then I'd build the rest of the show around that, perhaps. Sometimes it's a concept that I want to try to make the halftime show — for instance, I did a show one time that was called TV Detective Theme Shows and I played the music of the popular TV detective shows — Perry Mason and Peter Gunn — and those various TV themes. I did a country western show one time — cowboys and Indians type show. And there were a few shows where I had music specially composed just for that show. My most memorable show that I did was a show called Seminole Saga, where I had Charlie Carter, who was our composer-arranger — I had him write original music for that show. And what the show was, it depicted a day in the life of a Seminole Indian tribe. So we had dawn, the tribe was

waking up – the village. We actually created a village on the field with a chickee hut; I had the Opera Department build a chickee hut for us. The second scene was the braves go out hunting. And of course, they hunted an alligator [chuckles] – and they got it. Then it was the attack; they got attacked by white men and there was a battle. Then the last movement was the victory dance, because the Seminoles won. So it was a pretty neat concept.

**Sellers:** Did you take that one anywhere besides the home team?

**Shellahamer:** No, because nobody else would understand it [laughs].

**Sellers:** You don't think the Gators would have liked it?

**Shellahamer:** They wouldn't have liked that one, because we did kill the gators.

**Sellers:** How long were you here before you decided to go for your Ph.D.?

**Shellahamer:** Five years.

**Sellers:** What made you decide to do that?

**Shellahamer:** I needed to for my professional advancement. I wanted to be promoted and I wanted to stay around.

**Sellers:** Were you getting pressured?

**Shellahamer:** No, no pressure. Just good advice.

**Sellers:** You went to Ohio State for that. Did the whole family go?

**Shellahamer:** Yes. I took a leave of absence and put everything we owned into a U-haul truck and drove to Columbus, Ohio.

**Sellers:** How long did you stay there?

**Shellahamer:** Two years.

**Sellers:** What is involved in a music Ph.D.? Is it performance?

**Shellahamer:** No. The Ph.D. is a dissertation; it's a research degree. So you do course work and then write a dissertation.

**Sellers:** What was the topic of your dissertation?

**Shellahamer:** Mine was an examination of the national standards that schools of music all over the country were using to admit students to the music ed. degree. How they went about admitting students. So I did a national survey.

**Sellers:** You had a position waiting for you here, obviously, because you were taking a leave of absence. When you came back, did you automatically get a promotion?

**Shellahamer:** Not automatically; I had to go through the process.

**Sellers:** You went through the tenure process. So you still had to jump through the same hoops.

**Shellahamer:** Right. Exactly.

**Sellers:** Were you teaching courses by this time?

**Shellahamer:** Yes. Teaching music education courses for students that wanted to learn to become band directors – which was a great love of mine.

**Sellers:** What did you teach them? What advice did you give them?

**Shellahamer:** I tried to bring a sense of realism to what the job involved. So I was a very practical-oriented teacher. I gave them projects to do that were the same things that they would have to do when they became directors. It wasn't all theoretical; it was some theory but mostly practical stuff. So I would have them do arranging, I would have them go out into the schools here in Leon County and help band directors in their classrooms —

**Sellers:** On a volunteer basis?

**Shellahamer:** Yes. And get a real — you know, get their hands dirty, so they know what they were going to get into.

**Sellers:** What did you enjoy more between the teaching or the band directing, or is it all wrapped up together?

**Shellahamer:** It's sort of all wrapped up together, because I view the work that I do as a band director as teaching. So it's really all one thing. If I had to choose between classroom teaching and band conducting, I'd probably choose band conducting. But I'm a teacher at heart, I love to teach. It doesn't matter what I teach. I just got back from London. I spent two months there, teaching. I was teaching music history to non-music majors. I just love to teach.

**Sellers:** Isn't that Tommy Wright's course?

**Shellahamer:** Yes. In fact, I was teaching Tommy Wright's course in London.

**Sellers:** My information says you've also taught in Spain. When did you do that?

**Shellahamer:** Yes. 2001 or 2000. Not too many years ago. There was kind of a trial run. Jim Pitts had an idea about starting a summer band camp there that would involve students from Spain and students from America, and mix the two and let them make music together, and in the process learn each other's language. It was a great experience. The problem is that the very next year, 9/11 happened, so we had to suspend it. It sort of lost its momentum, so we didn't go back to it.

**Sellers:** You wrote a textbook.

**Shellahamer:** I did.

**Sellers:** What brought that about? I know Pete Spencer said he wrote his because there wasn't another one out there he'd use. Was that the case with you?

**Shellahamer:** Sort of, but it's a funny story how that textbook got written — I was taking my comprehensive exams for my doctorate at Ohio State, and one of the committee members, the question that I got from him for my comprehensive exam was: Outline the content of a textbook for marching band techniques. And the reason he asked me that question, because there wasn't a good marching band techniques book on the market. So I did; that was my question. So I sat down and did this outline for what I thought should be in the textbook. When I was done, it was seventy pages long [laughs]. So I went in to do my defense and this one professor that asked me the question, after I answered everything, he said, "You know, you might as well just go ahead and fill in between the lines and go ahead and make the book happen." So I said, "I'll do it if you'll help me and you'll be a co-author with me." He said, "Okay." So we did; we just went ahead and finished it while I was still there.

**Sellers:** Is it still used?

**Shellahamer:** Absolutely. It's still the only real general purpose marching band techniques book.

**Sellers:** It's used here, too?

**Shellahamer:** Yes, it is.

**Sellers:** What other things do you do at the moment? Do you still actively participate with the band, even though you're not the director?

**Shellahamer:** Yes. The marching band? Not the marching band. But I still actively conduct

one of the concert bands in the College of Music. It's called the Wind Symphony.

**Sellers:** What's the transition from marching band to a symphony band? Is it difficult?

**Shellahamer:** The transition for the director? No, that's not difficult. It's just an entirely different thing. It would be like being a coach, and you can coach basketball but you also coach swimming. Two different things completely, but as a coach you wouldn't have any trouble going between the two. And that's the way band directing is. The marching band is a completely separate animal. The symphonic band work is what I really, really have concentrated on the last eighteen, twenty years of my career.

**Sellers:** When did you leave being director of the marching band?

**Shellahamer:** 1988. And that was to become Assistant Dean.

**Sellers:** So you've been part of the administration as well as part of the faculty. You can see both sides. How do you think administration has worked for the College of Music over the years?

**Shellahamer:** I'll tell you, we are one of the happiest, most collegial and productive Colleges of Music in the country. I know that from firsthand experience. We've had wonderful leadership. When I was hired it was Wiley Housewright, and then we had Bob Glidden, and then Jon Piersol, and now Don Gibson. All those gentlemen have just been outstanding leaders; they let the faculty do their job. They don't micro-manage, they don't get in your way. It's a great environment.

**Sellers:** How about administration above the College of Music – president's office, provost, things like that – any particular ones that you remember in different instances?

**Shellahamer:** I remember Bernie Sliger very well. I did a lot of work with him. He was very supportive, always supportive of the School of Music, and very appreciative. Larry Abele – you couldn't ask for a better supporter of what we do as a College of Music. He is always on our side as far as giving us what we need in the way of support. He can't always give us the money we need [chuckles], but he's always there with the support that we need. Sandy D'Alemberte was very supportive. You couldn't ask for a better administration. The College of Music is very well thought of, and we work hard to maintain that.

**Sellers:** You mentioned some of the faculty members that were here when you came as a student. How about some of the ones, other than Cliff Madsen, that you have worked with over the years as a colleague – any of them in particular that you have any anecdotes about – that you'd like to talk about [laughter]?

**Shellahamer:** Larry Gerber, who's still on the faculty, is a wonderful colleague. I don't have

any anecdotes; we've had some good times. He was teaching in Valencia when I was there and we had good times. He was just in London. In fact, he's still in London; I came back early. And he does a wonderful job with the teaching that he does.

**Sellers:** Tell me a little bit about what you thought of Wiley Housewright.

**Shellahamer:** Housewright? I always really respected Wiley Housewright. I really liked him as a person. He was always nothing but a gentleman and almost fatherly with me. He really looked out for me as a person. When I was in school as an undergraduate, he was the choral director, the director of the choruses. So I remember him in that role, also. Now in between the time that I was in school and the time that I was hired on the faculty, there was some friction between Wiley Housewright and some of the other faculty members. I remember when I was hired that there were several of the faculty members that had a grudge against Wiley, for some reason. I never saw any of that, I never experienced any of the harshness that they seemed to feel that he could unleash on them. He was never anything but a gentleman to me and a great person.

**Sellers:** What about Joe White?

**Shellahamer:** Joe White [laughs]. Joe White was phenomenal. He was at his desk every morning at seven o'clock. Even after he retired, he might come a little bit later, but he still came to work every single day after he retired. He died in his office, on a Saturday. He had his heart attack and died in his office on a Saturday morning. He was 100% committed to the College of Music and to that lifestyle, academia and music. I do have one anecdote about Joe White. When I was an undergraduate, I had sight singing from him for two years. Back in those days, it was not unusual for college professors to smoke in class —

End side A

**Shellahamer:** He would light a cigarette and he would start talking in his lecture, and the ashes would start to burn down, and burn down, and burn down. The students would sit in class and we were all sort of like taking bets on when the ash was going to fall on the floor. I don't know how he knew, but he would always — just as the ash would fall off the cigarette, he'd put his hand out like that and catch it. Every time. Ashes never got on the floor. I don't know how he did that.

**Sellers:** Where were your classes? Which building?

**Shellahamer:** In the Kuersteiner Music Building. It wasn't called that then; it was just the Music Building. We only had one music building.

**Sellers:** Tell me about the symphonic band. What do you do with them, when do they do their performances, who are they?

**Shellahamer:** The group I conduct is called the Wind Symphony. That's a group of about eighty-five music majors. They meet only in the fall; they only meet in the first semester. We really have a good time. We perform two full concerts in the fall. Then what happens is that at the end of the first semester, all the students re-audition and they're placed in either the symphonic band or the concert band, and other people conduct those. So I just conduct the Wind Symphony in the fall.

**Sellers:** Do they do this as volunteer in addition to their courses, or is it part of their course work?

**Shellahamer:** Both. It's a requirement for all the music ed. majors; they have to be in one of the concert groups. But some of them voluntarily play in more than one ensemble. So you get students that are in two or three different ensembles.

**Sellers:** You're also a champion of town and gown – you do the Tallahassee Winds.

**Shellahamer:** Absolutely. That's the love of my life.

**Sellers:** Start talking.

**Shellahamer:** Ten years ago I got the idea to start an adult band (I don't call it a community band, I just call it an adult band) that would be dedicated to performing challenging concert music, symphonic classical music, in formal concert settings. What led me to that was we have a community band in Tallahassee, and it's the TCC Capital City Community Band. I played in that band for a couple years, and I really enjoyed it. Saxophone, and clarinet, but mostly saxophone. And I really enjoyed it. And I knew that some of the players in that group were really talented players, but because a lot of the people in that group were not the kind of people that practiced a lot, they hadn't played their instruments in a long time, the music that that group performs is a little more general, it's a little less. They did things like play Fourth of July in the park and play at retirement homes and out in the community, which is what a community band should do. What I was interested in was starting a group that would be dedicated to just performing formal concerts of a very challenging nature. So I put the word out that I was interested in having this group come together, and the first rehearsal had seventy people and perfect instrumentation.

**Sellers:** Are any of them from the campus group, or are they mostly all from town?

**Shellahamer:** It's about 80% adults from town. About 15% are college students that just choose to – they want to play. The other 5% are high school students. The rules that I have for high school is that they have to be all-state quality players; they have to be people that could make the all-state band. And they have to be recommended by their high school band director. So they have to perform in their band at school; they can't use the Tallahassee Winds as an option for not playing in high school. The same with the college people. It has nothing to do with their

curriculum; it's not a college group. If they want to play in it, they also have to play in the college band.

**Sellers:** So it's just completely extra-curricular.

**Shellahamer:** Completely. And we've had a wonderful ten years. The group is very, very good. In fact, they were on the radio last night, WFSQ broadcast a concert.

**Sellers:** When do they practice and what kind of performances do you do?

**Shellahamer:** We practice four Tuesday nights in a row, and then we do a dress rehearsal and then we have a concert. Then we take off for a while. Then we come back and do four rehearsals, a dress and a concert. We do that four times each season. The season starts the end of August and it ends at the end of April. So basically, the academic year. And then we don't do anything in the summer, usually.

**Sellers:** Where do you practice?

**Shellahamer:** We practice in the College of Music.

**Sellers:** And your concerts are in Opperman?

**Shellahamer:** Either in Opperman or Ruby Diamond, whichever one we can get into.

**Sellers:** If they're in Opperman, are they outside or inside?

**Shellahamer:** They're inside.

**Sellers:** I understand that we had to grab you real soon because you're leaving?

**Shellahamer:** I'm retiring. One week from today [laughs]. Next Monday's my last day.

**Sellers:** Have you plans for post-retirement?

**Shellahamer:** Well, I'm going to keep the Tallahassee Winds going. That's a lot. I do a lot of adjudication of band festivals, and I'm going to continue to do that and maybe even a little bit more of that, because I enjoy that. And I do a lot of guest conducting, where high school band directors will ask me to come into their school and work with their band. I'm going to do that. Most of the things that I've been doing, but I've also had a job. Now I won't have a job.

**Sellers:** So you'll be doing them with less money.

**Shellahamer:** I'll be doing those things with less money, right.

**Sellers:** Can you think of anything else that I haven't asked you that you'd like to put on the tape?

**Shellahamer:** Just that I got to take the Tallahassee Winds to Australia two summers ago. We had a wonderful concert tour. It was a wonderful trip; it was the best trip I've ever been on with a group. We flew commercially and spent eleven days there and played a marvelous concert in the Sydney Opera House – and just about filled the place – it holds 2,300 people and it was almost full. We played another concert in a little town outside of Sydney with one of their adult bands, and we played two concerts in Cairns, up on the northern end, and just had a wonderful time. Experience of a lifetime.

**Sellers:** How long did it take you to get there from Tallahassee?

**Shellahamer:** Well, we had to fly to LA first, and then from LA to Australia was fourteen hours in the air. It was a non-stop flight.

**Sellers:** But you were with adults.

**Shellahamer:** Mostly adults; we had a few of the high school kids with us. It was fun; it was a great trip.

**Sellers:** Anything else?

**Shellahamer:** Just that I've given my whole life to FSU.

**Sellers:** Did you ever consider going somewhere else?

**Shellahamer:** You know, about ten years ago I thought I might want to become the dean of a school of music rather than an assistant dean, and I applied at a couple places and got one offer. But after I really thought about it real hard, I really didn't want to leave FSU, so I turned it down. But I thought about it for a little while.

**Sellers:** As an assistant dean, if something happened to the dean, would you step in as an acting dean, or are there several assistant deans?

**Shellahamer:** There are several assistant deans, so it's not automatic that I would have stepped in, but one of us would have, yes.

**Sellers:** What are your duties as assistant dean?

**Shellahamer:** I'm the Assistant Dean for Operations, so my job is overseeing the budget, all the facilities, the maintenance and all of the buildings, all the equipment – the physical aspect. I schedule all the classes, do all the scheduling of the curriculum. It's a pretty demanding job.

**Sellers:** You're young to be retiring.

**Shellahamer:** Thank you. I've been teaching forty years, so that's enough.

End