

Interviewee: Weidner, Elizabeth H.
Interviewer: Gregory M. Daugherty
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Daugherty: Let's start out with a brief biography. Could you tell me a little bit about when and where you were born?

Weidner: Yes, I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1949.

Daugherty: So can you describe and did you spend much time in Atlanta?

Weidner: My parents probably were there for another year or so after I was born, but I moved around a good bit and eventually my parents did get divorced when I was about two and a half. My mom settled in Jacksonville, Florida, which is where I spent a good bit of my childhood. My grandparents owned a farm in Alma, Georgia, and I did spend a lot of time with them as well. I tended to move back and forth a lot.

Daugherty: So can you describe your childhood growing up in Jacksonville?

Weidner: I probably have a lot more memories of my childhood in Alma, than I do in Jacksonville. I spent summers with my grandparents on the farm. Then as I said, from the time I was in second grade, I actually ended up spending every other year in Alma, and every other year in Jacksonville. That was because my mom had trouble making ends meet. So, she would get her financial situation settled and we would come back to live with her and by the end of that year she would be behind the eight ball again and we would end up going back to live with my grandparents for another year.

I ended up staying Alma, for two years in a row, which was in the seventh and eighth grade, I believe it was. And then high school years - oh, it was the eighth and ninth grade in Georgia, and 10th through 12th grade back in Jacksonville. I really did enjoy both areas but I probably have more memories of the farm life. Real typical farm life. A lot of farming and gardening. The gardening that we did there was more for subsistence purposes, not just for a hobby and even as a child I really liked helping out with that. My grandmother would always give me a little comer in the vegetable garden for my own so I enjoyed that a lot. It was an interesting life. There was division of work duties between my grandfather and grandmother and other household members but when it came time to put the food up for winter, everybody took part in that. Shelling butterbeans or helping to can tomatoes, whatever. That division wasn't as strict.

Daugherty: What kind of crops did they grow?

Weidner: For cash crops my grandfather grew tobacco and then he grew a lot of crops

for the animals like corn, and oats, and millet and stuff like that for the cows, goats [Addition by Interviewee: We didn't have goats. Maybe I said pigs here.] and chickens. The farm was seventy acres.

Daugherty: What were your grandparent's names?

Weidner: Clayton and Welthea Bland

Daugherty: Is that your mother's parents?

Weidner: My mother's parents, yes, and my mother's maiden name. She was a secretary in Jacksonville. We stayed with her in several different places that we lived in Jacksonville. She worked for Smith & Gillespie Engineers. Lot of the time she would have to work two jobs. So, when she'd get off work from her day time job, she'd come and pick up my brother and myself - he's three years younger than I am - we'd go with her to her night job and we would play around in whatever place it was that she worked.

Daugherty: What was Jacksonville, like?

Weidner: It was a big city even then. We lived near our schools so we walked to school when we were in Jacksonville. There were lots of kids to play with, which is different than being on the farm. I was a bookworm, so I read a lot. One of things I remember is great library and bus service. It was wonderful in Jacksonville. You could go anywhere you wanted to go by riding the city bus and it would come by every ten or fifteen minutes. As a young teenager, thirteen or fourteen, I would go anywhere I wanted to go on the city bus.

Daugherty: Tell me about your early education and schools. Where you went and what you thought of it.

Weidner: Okay, first when I was in Jacksonville, I ended up going to several different schools there. In Alma, it was a little strange because every time I would go back to Alma, I would be back in class with the same kids that I knew from one year to the next. Then, when I would go to Jacksonville, it would be a new group every year. But I was a good student. I was a smart girl so I enjoyed school a lot.

Daugherty: What were your favorite subjects?

Weidner: Oh, I loved Math and English. I hated history until after I finally got an interesting history professor in college.

Daugherty: Where did you go to college?

Weidner: I did not go to college right out of high school because at that time it was

never even an option or not that I considered to be an option. There wasn't money to do that. So, it was probably eight or ten years later, when I came to Tallahassee, with my first husband that I went to school at TCC [Tallahassee Community College] and got an Alumni Association there. That would have been probably around '71 or '72.

Daugherty: What was your degree?

Weidner: Just the ALUMNI ASSOCIATION from the Community College and then I did not go back to school until another ten years or so.

Daugherty: You have a horticultural degree?

Weidner: Right, I ultimately determined that I would like - at first I thought I wanted to be a landscape architect. FAMU [Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University] was in the process, in the early BOs, of - they thought at that time of establishing a school of landscape architecture. So I started a year before the program did come on board to take the prerequisites of drafting and drawing and that sort of thing. By the time they got it all worked out, it ended up being a school of landscape design rather than landscape architecture, which already was in place at the University of Florida. And also by that time, I decided I wasn't all that keen on drawing so I switched over to horticulture. By that time I had a son so I was - I did go to school one year full time at FAMU in horticulture and then the old financial bugger-boo kicked in again, so I did not get back to college until I started to work here at Maclay Gardens. One course every semester for about five years and finished what would have been one year of full-time study [Addition by Interviewee: To get my B.S. in Ornamental Horticulture]

Daugherty: Let's talk a little bit about your previous work, where you worked and what you did. Can you tell me what your first job was?

Weidner: Well, oh -

Daugherty: Very first job ever.

Weidner: My first job ever was at the age of seven on the farm, working in tobacco. The children would be what they called, "handers." You would have a pile of tobacco leaves in front of you and you would gather up two or three, which you would hold in a certain position so that the stringer could take it from you and loop twine around it onto a stick and then that stick of tobacco would be hung in the barn and cured for a week with gas. [Addition by Interviewee: Maybe Burners or Flues]. So, I've been working for a lot of years. We would have to get up about four o'clock in the morning and be on the job as the sun was coming up. We would eat a huge breakfast and I made two dollars if I worked a half a day and four dollars if I worked all day. We would get a good long lunch break in between, so [??]. [Addition by Interviewee: The men ate first and then the women and children]. I worked in tobacco throughout my childhood, up until high school.

Daugherty: We've started back after a brief phone call and Beth was telling me about her first job in tobacco at the farm.

Weidner: Right, that was how I paid for school clothes every year and we did not get paid until the end of the summer. Whenever you would work - on one farm one day of the week and go to another farm another day of the week and not always the same crew at each place. The farm owner would just keep a record of who could work and on what day. Then at the end of the summer, when the tobacco was sold at auction, they would pay all the hands that helped. That's how I got school clothes every year. Once I moved back to Jacksonville, for my high school years, I did work part time - a couple of jobs in high school. I had one job in a photography studio and frame shop. That was kind of fun. But at one point I ended up being a telephone solicitor, probably in the early days of that kind of work. I had a great sales pitch. I would call people from the phone book and say, "Your family has been selected to be models for a photography exhibit." It was held at a fancy hotel, and they fell for it like crazy. So, I did a great job as a telemarketer. I would never dream of doing that again. So after I graduated high school, my first job was working at an insurance agency. I stayed there for nine months. The pay was fifty-five dollars a week. By the end of the nine months, I guess because the pay was so low even for those times and people had quit to the point where I was senior person in that department. So, I was the supervisor. This was in 1967. Then I got better job making seventy-five dollars a week working for a doctor at Duval Medical Center in Jacksonville. That was a lot more interesting. I got married in November of 1969 and my husband wanted to come to Tallahassee to go to FSU [Florida State University] on the GI Bill. [Addition by Interviewee: He studied Marine Biology] We moved here in December, 1970.

Daugherty: So what did you do when you worked for the doctors?

Weidner: Well, I was a secretary. I was a secretary to a Pediatrician and the department grew during the time I worked there so that they hired other doctors: pediatric cardiologists and genetic specialists. I did transcription. I did everything from paying his personal bills to _____[?]. That was back in the days when you were making coffee and getting lunch, that sort of thing. A lot of medical transcription was involved. I would take notes at medical conferences that were held once a week. All of the doctors from around the city would come and they would have a big meeting to discuss particular cases that were baffling or interesting or whatever and they would all consult on what the proper diagnosis would be. Because I was working for a pediatrician, I saw an awful lot sick kids and it affected me really. I didn't think I wanted to have children for a long time after that.

Daugherty: So what year did you move to Tallahassee?

Weidner: 1970 in December.

Daugherty: Tell me a little bit about why you came to Tallahassee.

Weidner: Well, my first husband had went through the Navy and completed his tour of duty and then came to Tallahassee to go to FSU and study oceanography.

Daugherty: What did you do when you came to Tallahassee?

Weidner: I got a job. I worked for an attorney in town named Clyde Atkinson. Mr. Atkinson owned a lot of property, especially on St. George Island. He also owned rental property all around town in Tallahassee. I helped keep track of rent payment. Of course it was all by hand in ledger books. I worked for Mr. Atkinson during-he was-I guess a partner in a group, which was mostly his family members, who owned 51 percent of the land on St. George Island. So the east end that is the big development, they sold during the time that I was working, to a company from Atlanta, that developed it. I remember camping on St. George, when it was all old oak trees, little gnarled trees, shaped by the wind and _____[??] [Addition by Interviewee: Before the State Park was there]

Daugherty: Had you ever been to Tallahassee?

Weidner: No. I had never been here and of course you know Jacksonville, is very flat and Alma, is also a pine flat wood in Georgia. Southeast, maybe about a hundred miles due north of Jacksonville, on U.S. 1. When I first came to Tallahassee, with all the rolling hills, I thought that it was great and so beautiful. Also, I guess during that time, a lot of the land east of town on Highway 90 and Appalachee Parkway was planted in Tung Trees. They harvested the nuts to make tung oil out of. Those trees have really beautiful pink flowers on them so just driving up and down those hills and you'd get to the top of the hill and you would see a huge flat [field] of pink flowers spread out all over the countryside. Really beautiful.

Daugherty: So where did you all live?

Weidner: Well I lived-let's see-when my husband and I first moved here we lived at Alumnae Village. That was like I said 1970, '71, or '72. Then we ended up getting divorced. Let's see-about 1972. Then I just moved to another apartment here in Tallahassee. He and I lived together for awhile on Hillcrest Street, on the corner of Hillcrest Street and Miccosukee Road. After I got divorced from him, I went back to Jacksonville, for awhile and then came back to Tallahassee, and rented a house on Bradford Road. That's off Thomasville Road. That house has been tom down to make room for developments back there.

Daugherty: Let's talk a little bit about the Florida Park Service. Prior to working here at Maclay Gardens, what was your first impression, your first experience with the Florida Park Service?

Weidner: Well, I had been to Maclay Gardens as a visitor, never dreaming that I would someday work here, and I had also been here for a wedding. It was a beautiful place. I remember the first time I ever tried to come to the gardens, it was the wrong time of year, because originally the gardens were closed to the public during the summertime. So I think-let's see, May, June, July, and August it must have been closed or maybe it was June through September, I'm not sure. But at any rate, I tried to come during one of the months it was closed so I had to wait about a month or two for my first visit. I thought it was a pretty neat place. Before I came to work here, I guess while I was a student at TCC, I met a teacher there. I worked in the English Department part-time, and met a teacher who was really into house plants and I guess that sort of took me back to my childhood days when I enjoyed helping out in the garden. I got really interested in house plants and she taught me a lot. I would go over to her house and help propagate plants and she would give them to me. I really got-it really revived my interest in gardening and then when I graduated from TCC I thought, well great, here I have this two year degree, big deal, and I can still be a secretary or a waitress. During that time there was a big building boom going on in Tallahassee, and a lot of focus on women's rights. They were trying to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. There were laws about prohibiting discrimination on job sites. I thought, well I'll see if I can get a job in construction. And I did. I went to a job site and got hired to be a painter. I was painting metal railings on balconies and staircases. That lasted about two weeks and I got caught up with all the painting that needed to be done and they hadn't built anymore railings or balconies yet so. Then I thought, well I'll see if I can get a job as a carpenter's helper. I was decided on what to do and I did it. I bought a hammer a nail apron and I just walked onto a job site and sure enough I got hired as a carpenter's helper. I'm sure that the main reason I got hired was because they did not already have a female on that job site so I became the token female. It was a lot of fun and I really learned a lot.

Daugherty: What all types of duties did you do?

Weidner: I ended up working for a trim carpenter whose name was Prince. He was from Havana and was a really great guy. He kind of taught me what I needed to know. The first thing he told me to do was to go out to the tool shed and bring back some six penny nails. He had to give me one to take with so I would get the right size. I didn't know a six-penny from a sixteen-penny. But I do now. Then I remember he told me one time to-I guess the frame carpenter had left a 2x4 across the doorway and it needed to get sawed out to put a threshold in there. He gave me a handsaw and told me to saw out that board. I worked so hard on that. I sawed and sawed and thought, my gosh, I had no idea it could be this hard to saw up a board. Finally, I got one side done and of course I was not going to ask for help. When I started on the second side it was like cutting through butter it was just so easy. I couldn't believe it. When I pulled the stupid board out what I had done was to saw down lengthways right through the middle of sixteen-penny nail. [laughter] I just didn't know enough about hand sawing to know that if it was that hard there must be something wrong with the saw. Prince was pretty amazed that I had done that too and had took it around and showed everybody. When he tried to get his saw sharpened, it couldn't

be done, I had ruined his saw. Even with a ruined saw the second side was a lot easier [laughs].

Daugherty: Working all these jobs, these different types of jobs that you've talked about, did you ever imagine yourself working for the Florida Park Service?

Weidner: Well at some point I guess I did, because after-you know I just kind of bounced from job to job. I really never stayed anyplace more than about, I think, a year and nine months was the limit. I had a couple of jobs that lasted that long. I really got to the point of enjoying outdoor work and did not want to go back to office work. So, look at me now [laughs]. At any rate, at one point I took a job with the Leon County Parks Department. I

was doing maintenance work for that job. We would have a truck that the crew would drive around to boat landings. At that point, all of the county parks were boat landings. We'd go mow, pick up trash. I did that for a little while and during that time they built Tom Brown Park, which was a federally funded park, built in cooperation with the Leon County Parks Department and the county took over maintenance of it. They determined that they needed to do the landscaping at Tom Brown Park and because I had an interest in plants, I ended up being assigned to the job of drawing up the designs with absolutely no experience in doing that, and also starting a county nursery. So we bought some plants and started propagating and just had a holding area that we kept to maintain them until we were ready to plant them in the ground. A lot of the work I did, from that point on, was at Tom Brown Park. That's where I really developed my interest in landscaping and landscape design and decided that I would start my own business. I did that for a short while without a whole lot of success, I mean its really hard work. I did a number of jobs, enjoyed it a lot, but realized very quickly that I needed to _____[??]

[Addition by Interviewee: I needed to get more education]. Somewhere along in there I got married. Once my son was born-Lucas was born in 1978. After that I decided that I really wanted to go back to school. It was about '79 that I went back to FAMU to get a degree in horticulture. Like I said, I went for one year and during that time my job was waitressing. I've done a good bit of that. Waitressing is a great job because you get your money right away when you go. No deferred gratification. You just have to be good at saving it for those monthly bills.

Daugherty: Hard work?

Weidner: Yeah it was hard work. Roy worked in construction also and you know we had one vehicle between us. We lived down in Miccosukee at that point. He would come home from work, we'd trade off the vehicle and the baby and I would go into town to waitress. That didn't last very long. Finally at one point, I did get a _____[??]
[Addition by Interviewee: a car].

Daugherty: Tell me about the events that led to your becoming an employee here.

Weidner: Okay. Well I guess I have to go into the next job that I had and that was working at Goodwill Industries. A friend of mine named Danny worked at Goodwill doing repairs to washers and dryers that people donated, then he would refurbish them and get them ready for sell. Goodwill had at one point embarked on a hydroponic tomato growing operation that didn't last very long but they had a huge greenhouse. They wanted to refurbish that and start growing and selling plants. My friend knew that I enjoyed gardening and always had a vegetable garden where I lived and lots of house plants. He called me up and told me about that job. I applied and got the job and really started fresh in terms of having to build the infrastructure. The shell of the greenhouse was there but it was set up for hydroponics and not for growing anything else. They didn't know what they wanted to grow so I did some market research really by just going around town and talking to people and we started growing annuals, trees and shrubs. I had Goodwill clients _____[??] [Addition by Interviewee: Goodwill clients as helpers in the greenhouse]. So, I did that for a couple of years and during that time the job at Maclay Gardens came available. Somewhere along the line I had also gone to Lively Vo-Tech, through their horticulture program. Actually I never finished that either because I became pregnant and basically got kicked out because they decided that a pregnant woman should not be around all the chemicals. There were no adjustments made for that during that time. But anyway, I heard from-and it was actually from another person that had been in that program with me who was working at Maclay Gardens. When she got married and left her job _____[??] [Addition by Interviewee: The position at Macaly opened, so I applied for it.]

Daugherty: What was the application process like?

Weidner: Well it was very interesting. It was a normal State application not a whole lot different from what it is now but I'm trying to think-I applied for the job probably in late August, maybe September —

End Side A

Daugherty: Beth was just telling me about the application and interview process for Maclay Gardens State Park before the tape ended.

Weidner: Ok, I interviewed with Wes Smith, who we called Captain Smith because at that time they had military rankings in the Park Service. Much of our job interview was done walking around through the gardens. I mean he had a set of formal questions and then we went and walked around and he would say, "I just want you to tell me what you see that you think needs to be done." So off the top of my head I would say, "Well I think those Azaleas should be pruned and do this, do that." After the interview was completed, I just did not hear anything back for a really long time and I figured, well, I was not the one chosen, but finally I did get a phone call and was told that I had been the person selected, probably about six weeks later, and wanted to know when I could start to work. Because I felt really responsible for the greenhouse operation at Goodwill, I asked to give

three weeks notice and he agreed to settle for that. In fact, I was put in charge of hiring my replacement at Goodwill. I started here on December 9, 1983.

Daugherty: What was the position?

Weidner: At that time the title was Nursery / Landscape Supervisor.

Daugherty: What were your duties?

Weidner: Well it was-my first day of work was interesting. I have to tell you about that. I showed up and expected to see Captain Smith. When I got here I was told that he was on vacation. There was no one to greet me, introduce me to the other staff members, or anything. I felt really odd to drop out of the sky and have to introduce myself. I got a clipboards and a notepad and just started walking around, looking in all of the sheds to see what kind of equipment we had and making a list of all of the equipment I could spot. I got teased about looking really official by carrying around a clipboard. There was no one here to give me any idea of what to do and he wasn't here for at least a week. I think the first week I was here I was just kind of on my own. I was hired to supervise four people and all of those people had been working here for a very long time. It was Thomas Brown, Willie Pope, Eugene Bailey, and I forget the fourth person's last name. The first three were fairly elderly, middle age to older men. Considerably older than me. I was about thirty-five at the time. Michael was younger than I. Between the three of them, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Pope and Mr. Brown, they probably already had about 70 years of experience working at Maclay Gardens. They had all been here twenty years, so, it was a little odd that I was hired to be their supervisor. Obviously I had an awful lot to learn when I started. We had a few growing pains but I approached it in light of it helped me to learn what I needed to know. At that time, I did all of the administrative duties that were required and they understood that they didn't want to do that. It worked out pretty well.

Daugherty: What was the staff makeup at that time?

Weidner: There were about 16 full-time employees at that time. A Manager, an Assistant Park Manager, the Nursery/Landscape Supervisor - One interesting thing about it too is that the title, Nursery/Landscape Supervisor, at that time, was a higher pay grade than the Assistant Park Manager. I felt like that was recognition of the fact that it was such an important job for the park.

The four people who worked in the gardens were, I believe at that time- they were either Semi-skilled Laborers or Park Attendants, I think it was Semi-skilled Laborer was the title. We had Park Rangers, one Park Secretary, and I'm not sure how that all adds up, but as I said, I believe that we had about 16 full time employees. As the years went by, at one point my title was changed from Nursery/Landscape Supervisor to Groundskeeping Supervisor because that was really the only way to get a raise. [Addition by Interviewee: It was a higher pay grade]. But Groundskeeping Supervisor was a higher title so they were able to justify having my title changed. And also, then the people who worked in

the gardens were changed to Grounds Keepers in order to be in a higher pay grade. At some point their title got changed again to Park Attendants also a [Addition by Interviewee: In order to get a pay raise].

Then the park service went through a time period where there were several, what they called, Critical Class Adjustments, made and a lot of positions were increased in pay grade. Park Rangers were increased. Assistant Park Managers were increased. At that point, the Grounds Keepers and the Groundskeeping Supervisors all got left behind because it was only those positions that had the word 'park' in the title that got the critical class adjustments. Other changes went along during that time and I was at some point able to get my title changed to Assistant Park Manager because my duties were very similar to the duties of the Assistant Park Manager in that I had a lot of the same responsibilities, although not the ones for the Ranger Station. But a number of parks have two Assistant Managers so at that point; Maclay also had two Assistant Managers. That was the point at which we got the garden staff titles changed to Park Attendants. That put them in line for future critical class adjustments because they had the word "park" in the title. [Addition by Interviewee: I thought it was important to give the people working here the chance for future advancement, if possible.]

Daugherty: So when you first started working, what was the makeup? How many males did they have?

Weidner: We had one female Park Ranger. My predecessor, the Nursery Landscape Supervisor, had been female. Let's see, and the secretary was female. Everyone else in the park was male.

Daugherty: As you became familiar with the Park Service did you see that as the usual trend throughout.

Weidner: Yeah, right from the beginning of my career I went to an annual meeting, the statewide meeting of Assistant Park Managers even though that was not my title yet. I don't know what the percentage of male to female would be, but we were a pretty small fraction. I'd say about ten percent. In those early days, there were not female uniforms. I remember at one of those managers meetings, during the open discussion period, I complained about that. We would have to alter the men's uniforms to fit. After that we got female uniforms, so that was nice.

Daugherty: Were there many, at the time, as far as female park managers, such as Sandy Cook from Wakulla Springs. She was in early.

Weidner: Yes. Sandy, I think Sandy started working for the Park Service as a young teenager and has spent her entire career with the Park Service. She really has paved the way in a lot of ways and was I'm sure the first female Park Manager. Still today there are not a lot. I missed the past annual Park Manager's meeting, but the year before that, I think there were eight female Park Managers. We have 160 state parks, not all of those

have separate managers. Some of them have several different parks under one manager. So I don't know how many park managers there are but [Addition by Interviewee: I think the female to male ratio is still ten percent or less.]

Daugherty: With that in mind, when you first start working did you face any kind of discrimination or were you aware of others who faced discrimination?

Weidner: I don't know quite how to answer that. I don't know that discrimination is what I would consider to have been happening. I think there is a certain amount of prejudice that has been towards [Addition by Interviewee: expressed by] some individuals, but as far as a female type of discrimination, I don't know that I feel that I've ever experienced that. There are a lot of questions about why there are so few women in the Park Service and it may just be that not that many women enjoy .doing outdoor types of labor. That could be a natural consequence of the proportion of men to women. I don't know that I have felt that I was held back in my career for being a woman and in fact, very early in my years with the park service the executive secretary of DEP [Department of Environmental Protection] was a woman. We've had two female Division Directors, Fran Mainella and Wendy Spencer [??. I really feel like from [Addition by Interviewee: I think the Park Service has been open to women.]

Daugherty: In discussing females in the Park Service, how would you say that the Park Service is different today then it was when you first started?

Weidner: You mean specifically in light of —

Daugherty: You know, professionally, as a woman.

Weidner: I'm not sure I know how to answer that. I think that women have probably equal opportunities today that they had then. We have recently had the first woman district bureau chief and I think that a person who [Addition by Interviewee: I think that a person who works hard will have opportunity for advancement, if they want to do that.]

Daugherty: Just to go back to when you first started, what were your initial impressions of Maclay Gardens?

Weidner: Well I used to get lost in the gardens all the time. [laughs] It was kind of fun learning my way around and I think that was one of the things that I really loved about it. I even remember one time finding a plant in a little bed and having to go look it up and realizing, my gosh, I've been here fifteen years and I'm still finding new things. That's what I like about horticulture in general. You'll never know everything there is to know, there's always something new. My initial impression of the gardens was that Mr. Maclay [Alfred B. Maclay] had created a real haven of serenity. I hope that we are able to keep it that way. Some of the gardens I see as losing ground and [Addition by Interviewee: That disturbs me.]

Daugherty: We are back. Beth, tell me a little bit about becoming the Park Manager here at Maclay. Describe the process.

Weidner: I worked under the supervision of Wes Smith for many years and then Wes moved onwards and upwards and Paul Riggs came here to be the Park Manager. I worked for Paul for probably about seven or eight years. He was transferred to Letchworth Mounds and at that time I applied for the job. I did have really stiff competition. A couple of other people that I knew who were very highly regarded in the Park Service also applied for the position. So I was a little surprised that I was the one who was selected. It's not usual for a park manager to be named from among the ranks within that park. Generally speaking, it had been that people kind of transferred around to work in various areas of the state. I was really happy to have been selected. A little surprised as well, even though at that time I guess I had been here for about, oh gosh, about seventeen years or something like that.

Daugherty: So whenever you started what were some of the early challenges that you faced as the new Park Manager.

Weidner: Well, and I think maybe this is another reason that they don't like to promote from within the ranks because people that I had worked with on more of a peer basis then came to be under my supervision. Although, you know, I had been, at one point, I mentioned earlier that my title was changed to Assistant Park Manager and we had two assistants. Before being named Park Manager, the other assistance had also been transferred away from the park so I was the only Assistant Manager for awhile. At that point I just supervised all of the people who worked under that position. So that wasn't that much of a change. You know there were some people who resented it but by and large I think most people accepted it fairly well. Maybe I'll go back a little bit to your previous question about discrimination because I mentioned that I don't know think that formerly has been such a factor but you know throughout my career there have been times I have experienced some feelings of prejudice against women in a supervisory position. Really I think it has been more of a factor from [Addition by Interviewee: a very few] people who were under my supervision more so then from an authority over my position. [Addition by Interviewee: But for the most part I've gotten along well with everybody I've worked with.]

Daugherty: What were your duties as Park Manager?

Weidner: Well, that, luckily having been Assistant Park Manager eased me into that as well. Of course budget management is a big part of that. Just helping to track the budget. We do have an Administrative Assistant whose job it is to keep track of that but the Park Manager has to keep a pretty close eye on it. The Assistant Manager does as well. I had to learn how to balance books, SAMAS [State Automated Accounting Management Accounting System] reports, which is like if you had a bank statement that was about 50 pages long. That was what that would be like. And dealing then a lot more with visitors,

[Addition by Interviewee: User groups] complaints when they're received. Just helping to balance out the whole business of recreation vs. protection of the park. It's a really big issue. There are people who want to use the park for their own purposes who really don't want to hear about why we are trying to protect it from them. [Laughs]

Daugherty: You have the distinction of being the first female Park Manager here at Maclay Gardens?

Weidner: Here at Maclay

Daugherty: How's that make you feel?

Weidner: I don't know that I've ever thought of it in terms of being the first female Park Manager. I like the place a lot, you know, so I am glad that I was able to stay on in that capacity.

Daugherty: What do you think is the most rewarding about working at Maclay Gardens?

Weidner: The most rewarding is just the joy that it brings to people. A lot of people have really special feelings about the gardens. We got a letter just this week. I saw a letter from a couple who were married on September 4 of 1976. They came back on their thirtieth wedding anniversary, this year, September 4 and sent photographs of their wedding pictures and their thirtieth anniversary photograph. The wife was in her wedding gown in both pictures. That just was really neat. I just think that a lot of people have really special feelings about the gardens and about the park and it is really rewarding to take care of it.

Daugherty: So what do you feel has been your most important personal contribution to the both the Florida Park Service and specifically, Maclay Gardens?

Weidner: Ok, personal contribution to the Florida Park Service, I guess would just be to be effective in my job and to show that as a woman, that women can be effective in the job. And again, I don't know that I really ever made that distinction between being female or just being good at doing your job. But to the extent that I do think about it, I'm glad. I feel that I've represented my sex well. My contribution to Maclay Gardens: I've often felt that Mrs. Maclay [Mrs. Louise Maclay] especially is kind of looking over my shoulder and I want to make her- if she were really around or really looking over my shoulder, I would want her to be pleased with what she sees. So I try to keep that in mind and do the best I can. As I said we don't have the resources to do everything that needs to be done. Sometimes it's really hard to pick those priorities and figure out what you really have to do and what you might have to let go because you don't want to let go. I just feel like that balancing act has been done fairly well. We do have a lot of people who come and enjoy the park. Our visitation just increases every year. Last year, we had 147,000 plus visitors. The year before that it was 122,000. As you can see we are really bringing in a lot of

people. To me, it's more about the quality of the experience than it is quantity, but of course you know revenue is an issue and we have to bring those visitors. So balancing that quantity versus quality issue I think is what I would be happiest about. Another of the changes that I feel that I have made and that I'm really proud of, is that, we've really increased our outreach to the community and our presentations of interpretive programs, to bring more people in. Or, not so much to bring people in, but just to let people know why we're here and why this park matters and what they can do to help to preserve it and to increase the appreciation.

Daugherty: What do you think the future of Maclay Gardens is?

Weidner: I would like to see us go farther into having exhibits of different things that would attract children especially and help people again to find a way to appreciate the gardens. We do have plans in progress right now to build a new visitor center and to me that would just open up a wealth of opportunity for us to reach more into the community and [??]. [Addition by Interviewee: have the gardens serve as a vital place for learning about protection of the environment.] I would like to have art shows. I think that there is room for a lot of innovative thought and ways that we can further serve the community and then engender that feeling of caring for the gardens. I just hope that the basic feeling of the serenity is something that we can all enjoy.

Daugherty: What are your plans?

Weidner: At one point I thought I probably would like to promote or move somewhere else. At this point, I'm really happy right where I am. I plan to stay here. I still have a lot of ideas that I would like to do, right here at Maclay Gardens. I will say that when I first started my career here my thought was that when my son graduated high school I would try to move to another public garden someplace. Because I really considered myself working [Addition by Interviewee: I really consider myself, first and foremost to be a horticulturalist.] When that time came, my mom needed me here and I wasn't ready to move on or away from Tallahassee, so I stayed at that time. Now I just feel like that I'm not done here yet. I have a lot of ideas that I would like to try to bring to fruition. I am happy here for right now, for the seeable future.

Daugherty: Beth, thank you very much

Weidner: I appreciate it.