

Interviewee: Mann, Mike
Interviewer: William Cribbs
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Cribbs: Mr. Mann, why did you decide to attend Florida State University?

Mann: Ah, that was easy. It was close, I had a job, and it was Cheap. I worked my way through school; I never had any help from my family in any way except the first year to year and a half I did live at home and drove back and fourth everyday. I worked nights in motels for most of the time and I had started and graduated from Monticello, Jefferson County High. I had stated work their as a senior at the Georgia-Florida Motor Hotel [---] in that part of town. I think my hours were either ten to six or eleven to seven. It was for all the jobs I had, I believe one of those shifts was about an hour's difference _____ [??] only _____ [??] ends. Anyway, I was able to live at home, did not have any living expenses. The job pretty well paid me enough to be able to afford school. Because it was pretty cheap at that time, I think when I stated it was something in the neighborhood of \$70.00 to \$75.00 a semester. I think by the time I graduated it had gotten up to 150.00 to 200.00 or something like that, pretty reasonable cost. I drove back and fourth everyday. I tried to get all of my class in the morning then I would go home and sleep. At about 9:00 or 10:00 I would get up, have dinner, and go work. Work all night, come back the next morning, have breakfast, and drive over to school. Spend my mornings, basically spend my mornings there.

Cribbs: Where you the first in your family to attend college?

Mann: In my immediately family, now I had a couple of cousins that had gone to college before but I was the first one in my family.

Cribbs: Did they attend FSU?

Mann: No, they were both from Georgia. I think they both, I know one of them graduated, well one or two them graduated from Statesboro, Georgia Southern. Except, I think it changed the name about that time and made its junior college to a full university or something like that. They were from pretty close in and at least one or two of them graduated from there.

Cribbs: What field of study do you have at Florida State?

Mann: I started out in Engineering Science. They did not have a Classical Engineering Program at that time. What they had when I first came was Pre-Engineering with the idea that you would transfer somewhere. Then after about a year they had an Engineering Science program which was not supposed to be, they did not train you for mechanical, or electrical, or

any specific engineering field. Supposedly they gave you a good background in mathematics, physics, and the basic sciences. Then you should be able to go into all of them. They also only wanted top students and I did not fit that category. So about a year, year and a half I was out of that and I became Physics major for a while and I was Physics major for a year or so and finally switched to mathematics and I graduated with a degree in math and a minor in electrical engineering.

Cribbs: Did you have any favorite professors while at Florida State?

Mann: Probably my favorite the one I remember the best maybe it's just because of something that happened was Dr. Elston Roady. He was the Political Science and I took him my first or second, in fact I think I took him both first and second semesters maybe Civics for one of them or something and Political Science for another. I think maybe the first time I got him by accident because the class was just the infamies staff. Then he showed up as the teacher then the second time I think I went looking for him. He was just a very personable, very good lecturer, very interesting and also [---] he gave us a test one Friday and it had some kind of screwy instructions. On an answer sheet we supposed to answer question one on number twenty-five on the answer sheet or something like that and I guess I was a little tired that day anyway I messed up and started answering one and one and two and two did not do that shift which ever way it was supposed to go. Over the weekend I realized what I had done and I raced over first thing Monday morning and waited for him at his office. When he came in I explained to him what had happened. He got out his sheet and he said, "well you got a C do you just want to leave it" [laughter]. I said, "No I know what I did let's go ahead and grade it right" and he did and I got a B. The other professor I kind of enjoyed probably more for what happened later than when I actually took him was Dr. Joe Lannutti. I took an early Physics course from him and enjoyed that, then later took Electricity and Magnetism which was a 400 senior level course and I took that one from him. The problems were extremely difficult. He would come in about every two or three weeks and give this little lecture, "I know some of you are struggling don't worry about it you know I think the ones of you that are struggling or having problems doing the problems are learning a lot more Physics than the ones who are not". I left the class that day and said, I've got this course down I said, "I am spending hours on them every night and not getting any of them. [Laughter] But after I started the Computing Center I did several night shifts there several late shifts anyway and he was a big researcher he was doing elementary particle research and he had Bubble Chained Graphs from Berkley which is where he got his degree. They were plotting those and had several programs to process that data and they ran for hours and hours at a time but I got to know he really well during that time and some of the graduate students too [Microphone knocked over tape was stopped].

Cribbs: When doing research I noticed you happened to attend Florida State during a time of great change. The school had recently become integrated. Was this issue something the student body supported or was there turmoil on the campus?

Mann: A little of both, at least when I was at the computing center we had a couple of

guys that were extremely active in that I was not personally active. But we had a couple of guys that were extremely active. I have forgotten but it seems like that there was some pressure put on us to get rid of them and we would not do anything. One of the guy impiticular was living in one of the scholarship houses and the front of the theater was just south of Park Avenue. Excuse me just North of Park Avenue. There was a lawn there and the Court House not the Court House the Post Office the Federal Building. He was out with a sign or something one night and there was one of the local sitting over there on the grass at the Federal Building a little wall along there. He made the comment to him if I can catch you away from here I'll kill you. I don't know how much he though about it or concerned himself with it at that time but about a week later he was at his fellowship house and the grocery store delivery boy delivering groceries was the guy who had been on the grass that night. He knew the guy was at the fellowship hall that day. There was some tension and turmoil but most of us ignored it.

Cribbs: What was the Gymkana Show?

Mann: Have you ever seen Cirque Du Soleil?

Cribbs: Yes, I have.

Mann: Cirque Du Soleil has been called the Gymkana on Steroids. It's also been called Gymkhana with a decent budget. Gymkana was Dr. Price's idea. Most of the pure gymnast hated it. Because it was showy, it was circus stunts, it was maybe at times pretending a trick was difficult when in Gymnastics the point is to do just the opposite to show how easy and effortless you can more or less make it. Gymkana was counter to their sport. One of the guys impiticular was also a dancer. He choreographed a lot of it. There was a lot of dancing and a queens contest every year and there were gals from all of the fraternities or sororities competing in that. Faye Dunaway was in the court one year [---]. I just realized recently, I was looking through the Gymkana programs for some information and I do not know if your familiar with Beth Switzer or not [Interviewer William Cribbs shook head no] she's kind of a local TV/radio personality. She is on WFSU she host the Florida face to face program every week and a couple of other programs. She has hosted several call-in talk type programs. She married quite late but now she's got a young daughter that's 7, 8, 9 some where along in there that helps her out doing fund raising breaks for public radio. But I got to notice, I saw a face and said that face looks kind of familiar, looked down to see who it was and it was Beth Switzer when she was probably 18, 19, or 20 but she is probably up in her 40s now. She was also part of the

[??]. It was just a light show it was somewhat similar to Circus. The Circus in fact there was a show done in the spring and Gymkana was done in the fall. I did not understand it [Clears throat] but there was fierce rivalry and or jealousy between Price and Haskins, who had organized and coached the circus. They had both been at Illinois and Haskins came down here first and then he started the circus as an activity for both the guys and the gals could do. Then when Price came down he had a Gymkana show at Illinois. When he came down he started Gymkana and they may have initially been trying to do them both at the same time. Because the Circus is in the spring because you want those two semesters of being trained and

leaning tricks and getting proficient and things like that. They probably wanted to do the Gymkana the same way but went eventually to the Gymkana Show in the fall and the Circus was in the spring. When I was at the computing center we had two student assistances. One of them was with circus and the other was gymnast Gymkana and Gymnastic team. They were trying to get something to do together. They started juggling in this office, which was maybe twice the size of this room [room size was 10x10]. Both sides of it had these library type study carols. They were placed so the students could come in between classes [---] most of them were math and science majors. They were in the building anyway, they could come in, they had a shelf they could put some book on, and they could come in and study for their classes wait or for their work shift. But these guys started juggling, with Bowling Pins. Those things, I do not know that they weigh but they are as heavy as hell. They get in the aisle between these carols and they were tossing three of these bowing pins back and forth [long pause] and if one of them said “Opps” or “Oh shit” or what have you everybody started diving under their desk [laughter]. Afraid they were going to get beamed with those things. I do not think I ever asked or never occurred to me why they were using bowling pins but I’m still in contact with one of those guys and he told me recently something came up about it, he said, “the reason they were using the bowling pins was Haskins would not let them use Circus’s lighter pins that they used for juggling”. So they used the bowling pins and then also if you were doing gymnastics and/or Gymkana show you could not be in the Circus flat rule by Haskins. So Carl, his senior year, went over to [---] he did his Gymnastics in the fall and the Gymkana. Then in the spring he went over to the Circus. These guys did a juggling act for the Circus in the spring.

Cribbs: What was your involvement with the Gymnastics team?

Mann: Very little, the way I got involved when I moved to Tallahassee about 1958 and started working at the Tallahassee Motor Hotel. That not longer exist, but it was a huge motel one level where the Golden Coral and there is a Mexican Restaurant there and up on the hill there is a Sonic I believe. That motel and there was a wing along where the Sonic is that went all the way down across the back and then a wing at the other end, way on the other side of that Mexican Restaurant. When I first started there were also a bunch of little cabins that had been the original Motor Hotel. They finally tore those down but this was a big new modern complex. The Lake Shore Motel was right across the street and those buildings are still there, they are the cottages on Lake Ella. There is a bicycle shop and there use to be a home brew shop and there is a Gymnastic dance wear place. [---] Anyway, I was working the Tallahassee Motor Hotel at night and Jack Miles started working at the Tallahassee [---] the Lake Shore across the street. We were both divers, so we were taught diving and other things and it eventually it got around that we shared an apartment. [Clears throat] I also went out and took from Dr. Price a basic Gymnastics Course, just learning tumbling and a few things. I started going over and working out with the guys in the evening. I learned more from them than I did Price but I think everybody will _____ [??] that. Price was not known as a good coach although Dick Gutting disagrees with that. He was a good promoter, he was a good P.R. man, he was good with a lot of things, he was good with you know, Gymnastic Organizations and a lot of stuff like that but hands on coaching was not his thing. [---] I got to where I was fair at some things. I did some

flying rings which is no longer a competitive event [deep thinking]. I did still rings although I never competed. I did rope climb which they had about a one inch, two inch, one inch and half diameter rope [gave indication of rope size by putting thumb to fingers] and you started out fanny and legs flat on the floor and went hand over hand. No use of legs no use of nothing until you had passed a ring at the top. It was a speed event, how fast you could get up. I got a couple of trophies up there [points to two 3" trophies in a glass cabinet]. I think 1961 Florida AAU competition that they had at Tully Gym that I was able to go to. I got one of those as a second and the other one is a third. One of them is on rope climb and the other is on flying rings. I do not know which is which we could get up there and look [William got up and looked Mr. Mann received 2nd in Rope Climb and 3rd in Flying Rings]. The reason I have those was there was nobody else competing, I mean there was two of us in the one I got second on. One guy took first I took second and the other one there were three of us competing there wasn't a fourth person. So we got one, two, three [laughs]. I was not that great _____[??] my one kind of success [---] I also did some Vaulting. I never did any High Bar work, I never did any Side Horse work. But I did do some Vaulting and I was trying to learn this particular Vault that was called stoop from the croop. That's where you hit the spring board, you hit the Horse and this is length wise along the Horse they use for the Pommel Horse. You hit the Horse with your hands once on the near end. Then you go all the way over it in a pike position and land on the mat on the other side. You never touch it other than giving yourself a boost with your hands again. There was one of the team members that was his specialty. I asked him one day if he would help me learn it and watch me to see if he could given me some tips or something like that. His reaction was like hell no. That was unusual I had never gotten that from anybody else there before. Later we went to Georgia Southern, they were just starting up I think as school and a gymnastics program. We went up there for a couple of training sessions with them and a couple of competitions with them. I did that vault, the stoop from the croop and beat the guy that wouldn't help me and he walked off the floor and they needed him for other events he worked, they didn't need me [laughter]. That was about all I could do but he worked everything. I mean he did everything. He did Still Rings, he did Side Horse, and he did High Bar. So they needed him for team points. He walked off the floor to the locker room and started getting dressed. Several of the guys had to go in there and beg him to come back. Those were like my kind of three high points [laughing while saying].

Cribbs: I noticed in many of the pictures that the gymnast seemed to be practicing outside of what is Landis Green is there any reason why they are outside in most of their pictures?

Mann: Well I think part was just there may have been very good facilities. When Florida State first started they didn't have any place for the men. The old air field [short pause] trying to explain where that is. The old air field, do you know where Rose Printing Company is where Lake Bradford?

Cribbs: Yes Sir [shook head yes].

Mann: Ok. That was the old airport. During World War II there had been an Air Force

training facility there. I do not know what they did. But, there were a bunch of barracks out in that area left over from World War II. That's where the men were, that's where they lived, that's where the gymnasium was, their primary gymnasium. There was the one in Montgomery, Montgomery Gym. It had an indoor swimming pool and there was a gym over there. [---] Most of them lived out there and they practiced out there. Then I don't know if you have seen that movie but its own our web site [coughs]. A movie called Gym College that they shot in 1955. A lot of that stuff was done outside but I think probably that was done strictly for lights and you know probably not have artificial lights and to have lots of room and things like that. A lot of the area the stuff out there at the old Mabry Field [---] all they had you know they had barracks with a cycling maybe not that high [approximately Eight Feet] they didn't have anyplace to hang sets of rings [laughs] and if they had tried to go around the high bar they would have put their feet right through the cycling.

Cribbs: Were their activities you liked to do off the campus? That are still available like maybe night clubs or anything of the sort?

Mann: No and I did not participate in a lot. Because again I would tied to get my classes in the morning, I would go home and have some lunch, I would crash until Eight or Nine o'clock get up and fix myself some breakfast or dinner and go to work. I worked all night. When I first came to Tallahassee I was doing that seven days a week. I got no vacation, I got no night off, and if I got sick I didn't get paid. So I was doing that seven days a week and I was tired.

Cribbs: Did you live in the area or near the campus?

Mann: There first place I lived when I moved over here was Willis Dairy on Centerville road. They are renovating a house out there right now if you drive out Centerville road from the hospital about the first house you come to on your right there an old house about the last time I was out there that was pretty well striped they are rebuilding and re-finishing it. Behind it you can see the old dairy building. There was a dairy there and I shred an apartment in front of that with Nolan Humphreys. He was gone all week he was there only on weekend so I practically had the place to myself. When he left, we had moved in together for about a year. He left to go for a MBA at Harvard. I moved in and took a room with a couple of old maid school teachers that had a big two story house out in Los Robles through the arches out on Thomasville Road. I was there until Jack and I started rooming together. We started rooming together in an apartment on South Adams Street. I do not know exactly when we did that but I do know we were there in 1960. The reason I know that is that we were sharing that apartment with a female and that just wasn't done in those days. She was a friend of Jack's and she had been in an apartment with five or six other girls at a very expensive place way more than she could afford on her own. They up and moved out on her one weekend and the rent was due. [---] We were both working nights. She was just trying to make out the year. So I know in the spring of 1960 we were there. Because the census taker came around and she came back two additional times because of two guys sharing a house with a gal [laughs].

Cribbs: Where there a lot of other activates male students could do on the campus while you were there?

Mann: Yea there things at the student center. Bowling allies and billiard halls over there. You could use the bowling allies in Montgomery Gym at night. There were alot things like that but I did not have the time or the energy to participate [wife cleaning kitchen in background].

Cribbs: Recently Florida State honored the Gymnastic members at halftime of the Chattanooga game how did they get in contact with you and other members of the team?

Mann: [Stands-ups/provide paper list of events] I was back here in town back in 1984 and there was reunion in 1984 and I attended that. There were three other 1998, 2002, and 2003. I did not hear about those at all. There was another in 2005 that I did not go to because I did not get [---] I was communicating quite regularly with both Bill Beavers and Jack Miles. They told me on a Tuesday that there would be a reunion that weekend and they were both coming for it. I got kind of ticked off waiting to the last minute to let me know they tried to get me to attend and I wouldn't. After that year Jack started a news letter. We got address, phone numbers, e-mail address for almost 100 people. They basically contacted Jack to get the address.

Cribbs: Do you keep in regular contact with every member of the Gymnastics team?

Mann: Bill Beavers and I have been friends after Jack left. I started rooming with Bill. I roomed with him in 1961 and we have been very close friends every since. I eventually had to get out of trying to be a roommate with him because of my guilt feeling with finances and not being able to pull my weight. We have been friends for all these years, Jack and I have been friends for these years. I have some communication with some of the others but with those two pretty regularly. Basically, Jack, with his news letter has gotten to be the communication hub. Everybody writes to Jack and he puts it in his news letter and that goes out generally twice a month. So we keep pretty much in touch that way. Now you mentioned the Chattanooga game, did you go to that?

Cribbs: Yes Sir I did [shook head yes].

Mann: You saw me on the field I was on the field in a little scooter. I was trying get; I wanted to get video of that. We had not been able to get any video or find out anybody that was shooting it. The athletic department just treated me fantastic get me on that field. I have never been treated as well in my whole life. The gal when out of her way to get me a handicapped parking placard. One guy that I had not even heard about until he showed up at my seat before the game apparently had been coordinating all this stuff. They got me a ticket with a handicapped spot and I did not even have to go get it I was able to print it here at the house by e-mail. The one guy just blew my mind he came by my seat before the game to make sure everything was going ok. Then guy that actually got my out on the field I met him before the game and then met him before the half time to get me out on the filed [can hear wife cleaning kitchen in background]. Just a fantastic treatment but we got that video captured on the field

from my scooter. We later got another video they did not the half time and Jack Miles son shot some from the stands so we go those three videos. In addition was a party Thursday night that a bunch of us attended at a gal's that normally host the reunion and their was a reception at the varsity club for them Friday night. There was no video of that but we do have some still shots. There was video from the party Jack had video from the field. He stayed with Carie Zimmermann. I do not know if you know the name or not but Carry and her husband own a multi-million dollar advertising and PR firm. She has a mansion out north of town and they stayed with her. So there is video of her and she flew them back to Fort Lauderdale in her private jet. So there is some video of that so I made up a DVD of all of that. Also, nine of the guys turned 80 this year so there was an 80 in 08 party in south Florida this year. There was video of that so I made a DVD of all of that and just mailed out nineteen of those this morning. One to everybody that was on the field and one to some other guys that should of been that didn't make it. We sent a copy to the current the FSU gym team gals and I sent them a copy they had come to our party.

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