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Interview with Ms. Connie Holt
Director of Student Services of the Hamilton Holt School

Friday, June 4, 2010

Wenxian Zhang, Alia Alli & Jennifer Ritter

WZ: Good afternoon, my name is Wenxian Zhang, Head of Archives and Special Collections. With me are two students, Jennifer Ritter and Alia Alli. Today is Friday, June 4, 2010. We are going to interview Connie Holt, Director of Student Services at the Hamilton Holt School of Rollins College. So Connie, tell us about your childhood, where you grew up?

CH: I was born in Los Angeles, California and I'm one of seven children. I grew up in a very musical family. In fact, my dad was a professional jazz pianist and all of us were required to take music lessons. I probably learned more music than the rest of them, and I've actually been the pianist for the gospel choir at Rollins a couple of times. So, my dad's family had their own band. One of his brothers played with Duke Ellington for years, so they were very well known in the Los Angeles area. I went to public schools there. I went to three different colleges in California. In my first year of college, I went to Cal Western University, it's now called US Western something another – now they've changed names, but what was really interesting about it – this was 1965, I was the only black female in the whole college and there were twelve black guys, so it was quite an experience. I met my husband there and as it was back in those days (laughs) we married. He was a senior and we got married after our first year – my first year there, and he went on to seminary, so we lived on campus at the seminary. He went on and did a master's and then did a doctorate in divinity. He became a pastor of the church and he pastored churches in California for twenty-six years. And we came to Florida – we were in the Methodist church and it's like being in the military; when the bishop says go, you go. We were moved to Orlando, Florida, and we were at a Methodist church here for five years and the bishop said you are going to Bessemer, Alabama. Well, neither one of us had ever heard of that place. At that time, our daughter was a senior in high school and we decided we weren't going to go anymore, so we got out of the Methodist church and he went independent, so right now, he pastors at the community church. Our kids are all grown. I – let's see, we moved to Florida in 1983, and when we got here, it was like culture shock. Los Angeles to Orlando – back then, it was like a sidewalk rolled up at ten and there was nothing to do. Well, there was something to do as long as there was football season, but when the high school football season ended, everybody went home, and I felt like I had ODeD on caffeine for a good while.

When I first got here, I worked for the Winter Park housing authority. It was not – it was kind of sad, yeah. And when you compare wages from California to Orlando - every time I got paid my husband would come because I would just break down and cry (laughs); it was awful, it was really awful. I stayed there for a while and then I went on to a law firm and worked as a paralegal. And I was reading the paper one day and I saw this ad for Rollins. I hadn't really heard much about Rollins, but the thing that fascinated me was my husband had a PhD and I had three years of college that I had never completed and when I read the sentence in the ad about free tuition if you worked there, I decided I would apply because by then we had these kids that were rapidly becoming teenagers and no college plan for them as well. So I came to work here in '85. I needed – I already had three years of college; I was a music major before then, and you can't really do that with kids and practice and stuff, so I switched to anthropology-sociology;

they had a combined degree back then and I got my BA in '88 from Rollins – Hamilton Holt School.

When I got here in '85, I started off working in the registrar's office, which was really interesting. I guess we were like most schools back then. A lot of the processes were all paper and when it came time for the students to register, we would get like seventeen hundred or so – however many students they had back then - more like fourteen hundred I guess – registration forms. And then we would sit there for a couple weeks or so inputting that in the computer. You know, there was no online anything back then – very archaic when you think about the way we do things now. I stayed there I guess about three years or so, and nothing really changed. It was just done that way, and it was done that way and nobody ever thought about doing it any other kind of way. It's pretty sad when you look back on it and you see where we are today. I really enjoyed working in that office, but like a lot of places in academia, you get in a position and it's like a dead end job usually, there was really no place to go.

And I guess at that time I was still working on my B.A., and like in academia, if you don't have a degree you're probably not going to go anywhere anyway. So, they had a position become available in the vice president and treasurer's office, and I got the position and it was really interesting. I can still see the little old lady that was the executive assistant and I went over there. I can't remember her full name, but they call her Noni or Naomi, something of the other. She looked like she was about 4'9 and she wore spike heels this high, and just the liveliest that you ever wanted to meet. She was leaving and the vice president and treasurer were also leaving at that time. Yeah, it was really exciting. I think it was Jesse Morgan that was the vice president and treasurer at that time. And for a few weeks, I was there – I was just there (laugh), I think there was nobody else there. We hired Bob Bowie, Robert Bowie- really nice guy. And one of the first things I can remember him saying, he was like in shock at how much paper. Nothing was stored electronically or – everything, I mean big mounds of those green bar reports with all the information on it, and notes and things like that. So he started it and basically from scratch, moving us into the next century. It was an exciting time working with him, and that office worked closely with the president's office and the Board of Trustees for the College. In fact, we prepared most of the documents and they did notebooks back then for the Board of Trustees meetings, all that took place there. I can't remember how long Bob was there, but I did notice that things were getting really clean. It was one of the things that I observed over the years. You know, when you go in to your bosses' office and all the surfaces are clean, you start asking questions. Are you going somewhere; that kind of stuff. And sure enough he was getting ready to move on.

So he left, and I think around that time, Thaddeus might have left and Rita Bornstein became the president of the College, so we had a lot of transition going on. There was transition going on and the dean of faculty's office, provost's office, I mean everything was just changing. The next treasurer that I had the privilege of working for was Lou Morrell. He was a piece of work (laughs), I'll just put it that way. Very, very interesting, I think they probably brought him in to do a specific job and he did it. He was really equipped to tear down the number of employees or employees of a certain category - whatever; he did a great job doing it. So we had him on board, very smart man; we got Rita on board and everybody trying to get to know each other and how everybody works and we had some interesting times there. When Rita came – Rita had to have come in between Bob and Lou Morrell. She came in and there was no treasurer, that's right, because the first Board of Trustees meeting I asked her: "Well, what do you want me to do?" You know, generally this office sets up everything. And she said just do what you

usually do, so we just learned from each other, which was interesting. We had some good moments and some not so good moments (laughs) while we were trying to get to know each other and work out the processes.

A position became available in the Hamilton Holt School for academic advisor and I applied for that. The first time I applied, I didn't get the position. The person they hired didn't stay here that long, so I got to apply again real soon. By then, I did have my bachelor's degree too, and so they hired me. I got over there and started working as an academic advisor, which was my favorite job. When I was in California, I worked for the welfare department, and I've always been in to helping people as much as I can, so this brought back those things that I value most – helping people move from point A to point B. I got in there and there were tons and tons of work to do. I think my first day there when I walked in to meet everybody the dean had put in (laughs) his notice and was getting ready to go, so we were transitioning again. I think I must have worked for three or four more deans. Since I've at the Holt school, we've had quite a bit of dean transition over there. My favorites have been Patricia Lancaster, Bob Smither; I guess those are my favorites. Yeah, I liked them a lot.

When Patricia came on board, that's when I got the opportunity to basically create my own position because the Hamilton Holt School didn't have a director of student services or anybody in place to just work with the academic advisors and students, so she asked me if I would like to do that. And I said of course, and she said, well then write your description, so (laughs), that's what I did. I wrote my own job description. I think initially the title started out as coordinator of student services. The problem with that was that we had coordinators of records for some of our master's degree programs, and some of the faculty thought that basically, who are you? And instead of working with me for student services issues, they would directly to the dean so we collaborated again and changed the title to coordinator to director of student services, and it's been that since. But that's a quick run through.

During my tenure over at the Holt school, I did the Masters of Arts degree in counseling, which was probably the best thing I've ever done in my life for two reasons. With my husband being a pastor, a lot of times people in conflict would even come to our house and he would hand off one to me, and he would take one and we would calm them down. And I was always afraid that I'd say something to make it worse than it already was. And having the skills from this degree has been a lifesaver both in the church and especially on the job because in Rollins as you probably know, anything that's going out there in the Greater Orlando or the Winter Park community, we get a little taste of it right here and just being able to recognize and know the resources and refer is – it just puts you at so much ease. You know, you're not going to ruin somebody's life, which is always important to me.

I think when I talked to you the other day, I was thinking about some of the changes I've seen here at Rollins over the years. And one of – well, there were two really big changes. I will never forget when I was working on my B.A. degree in the late eighties. This was like a moment in – we really didn't deal with racism and separation and things like that in California – it was covert there. It was there because I had some incidents, but I went in to the career services office one day, unaware – and keep it in mind, I'm an employee too – an employee, student, and we were doing something in the class where we needed to get some information, and I identified myself as a Hamilton Holt student and was basically told that you can't come in here because we don't serve Hamilton Holt students. And it was like being, wow, slapped in the face, you know. But back then, there was an invisible – this is my recollection – like an invisible fence between Hamilton Holt and Rollins; it was like we were two separate entities. There were services and

events and if you weren't a day student, you weren't invited, even if it was something of interest, even if you needed this service, if you were a Holt student you had to go figure it out for yourself. I found that and I know I'm not alone, very demeaning, not just because I was a black female, but it didn't matter if you were black, if you were a Holt Student, you were a Holt Student and this was off limits because this was for that. It just didn't matter. To me, it made us feel like second class citizens at Rollins College, and that went on for a long time. There was just this separation and when Dr. Duncan came to Rollins College it was like he came in and I guess what in my mind equated it to, when the Great Wall of China came down you could walk from this side of the fence to that side of the fence and everything was okay. He took away the stigma – it was almost like a stigma of being a Holt student. Yes, we have these services available in TJ's and career services, blah, blah, blah. We had gotten our own career counselor by the way because Holt students needed career services, so we had a part-time counselor that basically took care of our needs, but still, you got all these resources over here and we didn't have all those resources and they weren't available. But when Dr. Duncan came that was taken away and Holt students could now participate in clubs even though a lot of them don't because they don't really have time for that. You know, they are working full time and they have families and stuff like that, but just the idea of knowing that if I wanted to go across the street and pledge a sorority, I could do that now. You know, and I think nothing gives me greater pleasure than when we are doing our orientation for new students to be able to stand up in front of our students and have people from the different organizations and offices come in and actually spend time telling our new students what's available for you and it doesn't matter that you're a Holt student. If you need this service it's here and you can use it. To me, over the past twenty-five years of being at Rollins, this has probably been the most significant event since I've been here watching that wall go down. Now what else can I talk about?

WZ: Okay, you mentioned that you were here you got your B.A. degree and also your counseling degree. Tell us about your academic work here, which professors you took courses from, which classes you liked better?

CH: I think one of my favorite professors in the anthropology-sociology area – well there were two – Linda Glennon, and Pedro Pequeno. And he was really interesting. Everything – there were words that he said that you would never forget, like when you're getting ready to prepare for an exam, and you know at the end of the day, you're tired and you can barely stay awake, and he was known for very interesting, long essay type exams. And he would run through stuff you should know and everybody's sitting there blurry-eyed and he's saying, "piece a cake, piece a cake." That was his favorite thing, piece of cake. And you would get there to take the test, and oh god, it was anything but a piece of cake (laughs). You're sitting there just writing away, thinking liar, liar! (laughs) Piece a cake?

Linda Glennon, I liked her because – I liked a lot because I thought she was just so cool and collective and her method of delivery. One of the classes I took from her had to do with the sociology of television or something like that, and she was going through all the conventions and when you hear this, this is what is going on, blah, blah, blah. And it's amazing how you can watch TV for years and you just never pay attention to little clues and things like when such and such happens, you know this is coming next. And sure enough when you go back and watch a program, which was part of the class where you had to watch and tell what you saw different things going on in the show, it really was happening. I learned a lot from that, and my thing is

when I learn stuff I like to pass it on, so I take my notes and my shows and stuff and I take it and I do sessions – informal sessions at my church on different topics and that’s another real important reason why I liked being in an academic setting because you’re constantly learning new stuff and then the neat thing about it is when you think about it, the stuff you learn can easily be taken away and presented in another venue. During a leadership for McKnight students, or I do have just an exciting time doing leadership things for adults and children – even older adults – amazing how much they enjoy learning.

In the counseling program is probably where I learned most of the techniques that I take away and use outside and with my staff and with students. If you ever go to a counseling program, you will easily become the king or queen of icebreakers. And from my staff, my office, my church, I am that queen (laughs). You need an icebreaker? No problem. But the neat thing about icebreakers is that they are learning experiences. You can take that icebreaker – I was doing a thing on conflict the other day with some women, and I took an icebreaker that we used in a leadership class, rewrote some of the questions and used starbursts and depending on the color of your starburst you had to answer a specific question. Yeah! And it opens the dialogue and it gets people talking to each other, and when I’m doing orientations and it looks like people are getting tired or they need a break or – it’s always an icebreaker that gets things moving.

My favorite instructors were Dr. Bertram and Nancy Cruz. They just had a way of teaching that just made you want to learn more and more and more and ask question after question after question. Back then, they had a couple professors that were interesting. In fact Bob Bowie, the vice president treasurer of the College, asked me, “Don’t you think something’s different about them?” They were a husband and a wife team. He was a doctor and I guess she was a PhD and they were the zhiffers. And what would happen would be – I think I took abnormal psyche from them. She would do the book stuff, and he would do the pharmacology stuff, and just the way they related to each other and to the class was just almost bizarre, but you kind of look (laughs) forward to it because you didn’t know what was going to happen from week to week. And amazingly enough, even though it was a different way of conveying the information, to this day, you still remember some of the facts that you learn, especially with the abnormal stuff. Unfortunately, we have abnormal behavior all around us, and thankfully for classes like that, when people present and something’s not quite right, you at least have a starting point for trying to figure out what you need to do with the person. All and all, that program to me was probably the best thing I ever did in my life, especially for what I do at Rollins, what I do at home, and what I do at church.

WZ: Could you tell us about your work with the black student union here at Rollins?

CH: Yeah, that was many, many years ago. I think it was when my daughter was a day student, and it was during – it must have been in the early nineties or late eighties. I worked with the BSU and at that time, they had a black gospel choir, which was not connected with the music department. Later on, I did do a gospel choir for two semesters with the music department, but what I found during that time working with the BSU was separation that I mentioned earlier on how I felt even as a student and an employee here, those students really felt it. They felt alienated, disconnected from most of the students, and even in their events, it was just them basically. There was no connection – no real connection with people from the Greater Orlando – not Orlando – Rollins community connecting with them. I think if we were go to back and look

at records during that time, we lost a lot of minority students because they came here and they basically could not find especially one faculty, one administrator, one staff person to even connect with, and without some type of connection, they were lonely and isolated. Yeah, it was pretty sad. We did enjoy the choir events and I think one of the highlights for them was during one of the Board of Trustees dinners, the choir was invited to sing for the trustees. Yeah, it was very exciting. That was probably one of their big highlights at that time.

I did also remember – keeping in mind that my daughter was a student here at the same time too, that it was hard for them to feel like they could just walk up and get into organizations. And a lot of it probably had to do with socio-economics, because even with my daughter, she did live on campus, but you could see the difference between where she came from, you know her folks and what we could afford to do for her. And I think her first roommate was a student on the tennis team here at Rollins, and it was I think that was probably one of the most difficult times for her as a student because she always took it personal, that particular student was her roommate for probably for less than a few days, and she felt like it was because she was black. So she had the room to herself for a little while and then she got another roommate. But as parents we tried to play that part down, but in thinking about how things were at Rollins at that time, as a parent I was hurt for her, as an employee, a staff member, I was hurt for all of us because it was us. We, the employees, the administration, there was no shame, there was nothing out of the ordinary - that's my perception once again – that if something like this happened to one of your students, somebody ought to do something. Somebody ought to sit down and let that student know, you know, that this is not acceptable, blah, blah, blah, blah, or maybe even your perception is wrong, that's not why. None of that stuff was done, you know. It was just the way it was, and to me I felt like the entire Rollins community was responsible.

And for years and years we've had the diversity committee, the student life committee. I've been in and out of that for years, over and over and I think one of my biggest pet peeves with the diversity committee for instance, is that you can be on this committee and you talk about all this stuff, all this training, all this stuff we're going to do. You get off this committee for a few years, come back, and you're back on the committee again, and they're still where you left five years ago. None of that stuff that you talked about five years ago has been implemented, tried, or talked about past this committee. The diversity committee - I am actually on it right now – kind of a sad member because I am so busy and I'm not giving it the attention it deserves, but what I've noticed under Kathryn Norsworthy, for instance is that actual training has actually taken place; there is dialogue going on now. We haven't always just marched forward. We're still, you know, pressing for and sometimes there's a pushback, sometimes you still doing the training that you did three years ago, three years ago we're bringing the same trainer back in, hopefully this time more people are going to come up for the training, then they're going to take it back. I guess the good thing about whole process is that it's out there and because it is out there, there is a level of awareness. For me, for years, that was one of my just really peeves and disappointments about being here and just talking about it and never really doing anything. That has changed. We are making some strides now, absolutely.

WZ: Based on your observations, have you noticed any changes of the student body over the years here, especially Holt School students?

CH: I think probably Holt school students are one of the most diverse populations in Rollins. We've got probably more minorities; we have a good number of international students there as

well. I'm not over here as much, and in the conversations that I have with people that are over here, my understanding is that there are still some problems with retaining minority students. I guess to me, one of the – part of the answer would be to have more faculty of color and to figure out a way how to get that faculty of color to stay too, because there is a retention problem there as well. We need to figure out how to get them to stay, and then if we got them to stay, to figure out how to get them connected to students of color so that they do have that connection with at least one person that they feel comfortable talking to, going to. Without that, I don't know how we're going to really do much better in retaining our students. They just need someone they can connect with, and we as a community need to figure out a way how to make that happen, if our goal really is diversity, and if we are really interested in retaining.

Now, Holt students are highly motivated, so there's a difference. When a Holt student comes in to take classes at Rollins, they're for the most part, paying their own tuition, which puts them in an entirely different category. If they didn't want to come here because they're, weren't minority students or there wasn't enough this, that, or the other, they would take their dollars and go somewhere else. They have selected Rollins College. I don't think that they are that concerned about diversity. If we were thinking – I am not saying that we are not thinking – but to me, one of the ways that we can connect with our day minority students since we do have a nice number of minorities in the evening, would be to figure out some kind of way to have to mentorship between that evening student and that day student that needs a connection. I think that would do a lot to help save them from just taking off at the end of the first year, the first semester. I am thinking about the diversity of the Holt school. I am sure that we can do better. One of the main problems we would – that I see over there is not – say for instance feeling isolated because of your race or anything like that, because we're dealing for the most part with an adult population. We run up against some of our students feeling more isolated because of ages and they feel like maybe they're treated differently or looked at differently in certain classrooms, because the professor shows favoritism towards the younger students, and we do have a wide population range. Our range goes from seventeen up to seventy. So, I mean, there is a real nice age mixture in each classroom, and some of the older ladies will say that they felt like they've been treated differently because of their age. I think one of my funniest stories is that I had a student who came in who was just over it because she said this professor divided the class in to groups and he put all the old people in one group (laughs). Okay. Yeah, she felt totally – her word was discriminated against because all the old people were in a group and all the religious people were in another group, and all the young people were in the third group (laughs) Yeah, but that's one of the beauties of working in the Holt school. Every time the door opens and a student walks in, it's an adventure. I think of Forest Gump, life is like a box of chocolates, you really don't know what you're going to get until that student sits down and starts talking. And when you're sitting across somebody whose obviously upset and you're trying to empathize and show that you understand, but there's a side of you that just wants to roll over and laugh, not to minimize their situation because to them it's real, it's absolutely real, but the way that they come in and they tell their stories, it's just wow, it's fascinating. It's what we live for over there as advisors, it really is.

JR: Do you feel like some of the programs that are being implemented or that have, over the past couple years – the multi-ethnic student society started this year, they're trying to start the interfaith house, do you think any of that might have an impact?

CH: It could, I don't know what the set up is, but once again, if there's no real feeling of sense of belonging or connecting with the person running it or the students involved, it's a starting point, but I think when we're thinking about starting up new organizations and groups that keeping in mind that having a meeting or getting together and then throwing a part without any real connectiveness still leaves especially a shy person or a person who feels like a fish out of water disconnected. I am really pleased with the way Mahjabeen has come in and gone around introduced herself and the programs and all of the – what I really love about her is when something happens, she's like right on it. And I was really proud of Dr. Duncan too. I can't remember what the incident was that happened right at the end of the spring term, but he sent out an email to everybody saying what had happened and that this was not going to be tolerated at Rollins and if anything happened, you know, who to contact, and that kind of thing. Years and years ago, and I just happened to know because I worked at the office where everything happened to go through, depending on what it was it was just like shoved under the rug, dealt with in secrecy, and nothing else was basically done, and generally no one knew that anything even happened. When you got something going on like that and coming from the top down, and you're hiding and covering up, that's not good. So, this more open atmosphere where in her case and in Dr. Duncan's case, and even the dean of students have sent out notifications to the Rollins community about how different events are not going to be tolerated. It puts us in a new position.

AA: Because of the lack of diversity that you've seen here, how was it like teaching gospel to students at Rollins?

CH: (laughs) Well, the gospel choir back in the eighties was totally all black. You know, even though, you know the students went out and announced it to their friends in their classes, no one joined. Now with the choir that I did in the music department – totally different thing, it was totally mixed. We had students from all races in the choir and I think what they found – and it's not because of me, but it was because they were getting together and talking together and learning together and singing together, it gives students another opportunity to get to know people from different races and cultures and what you find out is that they're people just like me. They have the same kinds of desires and they want to go to the same places, and without getting together and in relaxed atmosphere, you know just getting to know each other, you don't know that.

WZ: So after your twenty-five years at Rollins, what are some of your most significant events or memories that you will always have and cherish?

CH: I think one of my most significant events in the Holt school, I had a young lady – and I brought the little article, who was in a children's home, and it's well known now, and she came in to the Holt school office one day and I thought she just had the most tenacity and it was almost outrageous. I was like wow, she's really brazen, she is a bold young lady. She was about eighteen years old, she walked in and she said I want to go to Rollins and I want to work here. And you know, you just sit there and say okay. Okay, this is great. I was so impressed by her tenacity and when she came in to the Holt school, she had a few credits from another college. I brought her in as a peer advisor in the Holt school and in that position you get a scholarship for being a peer advisor. She's trained to do some of the same duties as the professional staff, and then we had a vacancy in the office and one of the administrative assistants left, and I hired her

in that position. She's working full time, going to school full time, and she got her B.A. degree and then she went – she always wanted to work in non-profits because she wanted to give back to the children's home and organizations like that, so she went over to PNLC and went to work there. To me, it was just so rewarding watching this young lady who had grown up almost all of her life in a children's home become a productive young woman. She's married now with two kids, has a great career and I'm not saying it was my doing, but here's the part that will always be a memory to me. After this article came out, I was sitting at my desk one day and I got a really lovely bouquet of flowers from the Bush Foundation – the Edith Bush Foundation with a card thanking me for taking the time to work with her and to give her a chance. You know, to me, when you're doing something like what I do every day with students, you don't think about doing it so that you can get your name in writing or be in the newspaper or anything like that. It's just like wow, I mean, I didn't realize that it was making that big of an impact, that big of a difference because it's something I enjoyed doing and I like to watch people blossom. I like to watch people walk into the office, and especially with older students, and they're not really old, old, but students who have been away or they did that party 101 and they have a bad GPA, they're embarrassed to come in and they are scared, and when they get to their senior year, it's like they've become a new person. They're confident, they've learned all this knowledge, they are ready to go out and tackle the world, and that to me is the most rewarding part of a job. Just watching people move from here to walk across that stage.

WZ: So, can you tell us about some of your community activities?

CH: Most of my community activities are related to church. I did work with the children's home, in fact the same one that she was in. I did not know her at that time. That particular home is no longer in business; it was the Kat Cadogan Home for Children. Wow, if you've ever dealt with delinquents, I mean really, it's quite an adventure. You didn't know from moment to moment what you're going to get when you walk in that door. You know, either they were glad to see you, they were ready to talk about whatever could, whatever goals, or they were so angry, your job at that point is to try and work through that anger to see if you could at least have a moment of civil conversation and not just get angry and give up. But I worked with the girls at this home for years and absolutely rewarding once again, watching them because they come in with all kinds of issues from abuse to runaways, to you think it, name it, they've done it, all of that, and watching them and it's usually a slow crawl, you know, just to be able to walk in the door and instead of them walking out and slamming it without saying hello or anything, you know, just to have them say hello in a civil tone is progress. So that's the kind of baby steps that you take when you're working with delinquents. And didn't mention that, but when we were in California, my husband has always loved delinquents. He was working for a boy's home in California that went out business, and he had these six absolute hardcore delinquents who had no place to go and one night he came home and brought them with him (laughs). So, I guess that's got introduced. Oh, they were horrible, but it was a real learning experience, you know. It was like having your own lab right in your home (laughs). Well, I absolutely learned a lot from working with them, and some of it, just like working with these girls, there are some successes and there are some downright failures. You know, they turn on you, they go out and they commit more crime. We had one that got caught stealing from the blind operator at the post office. I mean, come on, you know, and then he goes away, and of course my husband brought him back when he got out. And it's like he was like this from day one; he was in, out, in, out, in,

out, but even the baby steps of progress – well that was one where there was no progress, there was absolutely no progress there. It just makes you feel good when you can help somebody become something.

WZ: Now, you mentioned a few names, Dr. Bornstein, Dr. Duncan, any other people you worked – I wonder if they had any impact on your professional life here, that you'd like to mention?

CH: I would have to say Patricia Lancaster. She was the dean who took a chance and gave me the opportunity to take a roll in the Hamilton Holt School, own it, and develop a real student service entity. Had she not been willing to take that chance with someone who – I'd never done anything like that before. I immediately became the supervisor of the people that I work with, which can be interesting, you know. You're friends one day and it's like the next day there's something there that's not the same. The joy that I had and memories that I really look up to her the way she taught me to deal with problems and issues and I'll never forget and I pass it on as much I can, you got a problem, you go in and you talk to your supervisor about it. You say, that's the way you're going to do it. You know, she didn't quite work it that way. You had an issue, she expected you to come in there, state your issue and tell her what you propose to do to fix it, so you learned right from the start that if something's going wrong, you need to figure out what could make this better before you go in and bring it to her attention. So there's like immediate, immediate growth right there. You find yourself consulting reference books, colleagues, your colleagues at Valencia, if you had this going on what would you do? No, it makes you grow. If somebody sitting there spoon feeding you and telling you what to do, you're not growing, you're not going to remember, well how did I figure that, what happened? If you got to figure it out yourself before you ever bring it up, it makes a total, total difference in how you grow and how you pass that growth on to the people that work for you. My goal as a supervisor is to make sure that all of my people can do anything that I can do. I don't want them to think that I'm threatened that they can do what I do better than I can do it, and I say wow, you can do that? You know, there's nothing wrong with that. I want to make sure that whenever I get ready to leave Rollins that there are people in place that can keep it going, and if you insulate and don't share the knowledge, we die. I learned she's probably really my favorite director.

Sharon Carrier came in and she yet again had a different way of managing. Patricia let you try to figure it out yourself and if you could solve the problem without her involvement – she just didn't like surprises, you know, you solve it, let her know what's going on, and she's happy. When Sharon came, it was like a reverse. She liked to be in it from the start, you know. She wanted to know what's going on, how you're going to do it, let me help you do it, blah, blah, blah, blah. So that was a big adjustment too. Jim Eck, we only had for a little while, but he was almost like a renaissance man. He came in, and he sat down and I guess as any statistician or math based person would do, laid out the numbers, this is where we're at, this is where we're going to be, and we're going to be there by x-date. This is what you've got to do to get there by x-date. How are you going to do that? (laughs) It was like wow, what happened here? Bob Smither, when he was the dean, he had this famous way. You always knew you were in for something. When you got called to his office and he said come on up, we've got a problem or come you're in a meeting. And would look at you and he would say, "I have an opportunity for you." That was the key word for oh boy! (laughter) And we still laugh about that. An opportunity, oh I don't know (laughs).

WZ: So what are some of the challenges that you experienced here?

CH: Here at Rollins? Honestly, I look back over my time here, I would say my greatest challenge is when I talked to other minorities in the eighties and when my own daughter was here, listening to the pain in their voices when they felt like they had been treated unfairly, looked over – back then, and I remember this when Bob Bowie was here, he handed me a brochure from the I guess advertising the food service at that time, and he said, “Well, tell me what you think about this, what do you notice about it?” – and it was a sign of our culture at the time. It was a beautifully laid out tri-fold with a picture of workers or employees or whatever on the cover, and it was food services. There – all the people on the picture were minorities. You know, and I told him it just doesn’t send the right message, but it was something that they hadn’t even thought about, and that was just the time that we lived in then. And it’s probably still true here at Rollins, most of our minorities do work in facilities and in food services, but just the idea of out of touch we were. We’d done this nice beautiful print job, I can still it. It had this blue background on it, and this picture sitting right there, and everybody on it were people of color. You know, man, they didn’t pay it any attention. But that’s a sign of time.

WZ: So, last Friday you were recognized as the most recent recipient of the Helen Crossley Award. We want to congratulate you on that.

CH: Thank you.

WZ: So now looking back, how do you view your Rollins career of twenty-five years?

CH: Wow, it – wow is the word. I was so shocked. In fact, I was standing there and not really paying attention to the dialogue, and then they said something if she didn’t direct the choir on Sunday, she’d probably here on Sunday’s too. And I said, wow there’s two of us here (laughs). I guess the only thing that I can say about the twenty-five years that I’ve been here, is that it flew by, and I’ve never really thought of myself or what I do in a sense that it would be recognized as all that. You know, because it just feels good to do what I do. It feels good to make a difference in a life. And I think I’ve mentioned, I’m just so proud of where Rollins has come from in the time that I’ve been here because honest to me, it felt like – and I admit, I didn’t live in any states that were segregated, but I did read history and see the movies, but I just felt like we had our own little segregated place here at Rollins College back then. That’s just how I felt about it. And when we broke that wall down it was like three different units became one whole and to me, if I ever really see any other big change at Rollins that was the big one for me – watching that happen. And when we first heard about what Dr. Duncan was doing, it was like disbelief. You know, is this really going to work? You know, it’s like wow, amazing.

WZ: Yeah, that’s great. Anything else you would like to share with us?

CH: No, I can’t think of anything else.

WZ: Great, thank you so much. We appreciate all your contributions to Rollins College over the last twenty-five years, and for your contribution to the oral history project in helping us to preserve the College's history. Thanks a lot.

CH: You are welcome, it was nice meeting you ladies.