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### Oral History Interview with President Emeritus Thaddeus Seymour, February 20, 2009.

Thaddeus Seymour

Wenxian Zhang

Denise K. Cummings

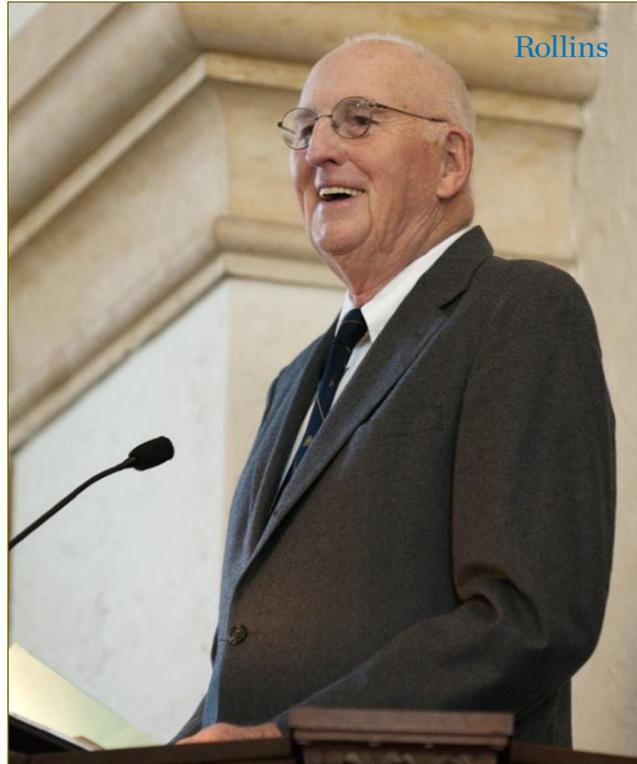
Julian Chambliss

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President Emeritus Thaddeus Seymour, Sr. '82HAL '90H  
(Photo: Rollins College Archives)

### **Interview with Thaddeus Seymour, President Emeritus of Rollins College**

Friday, February 20, 2009

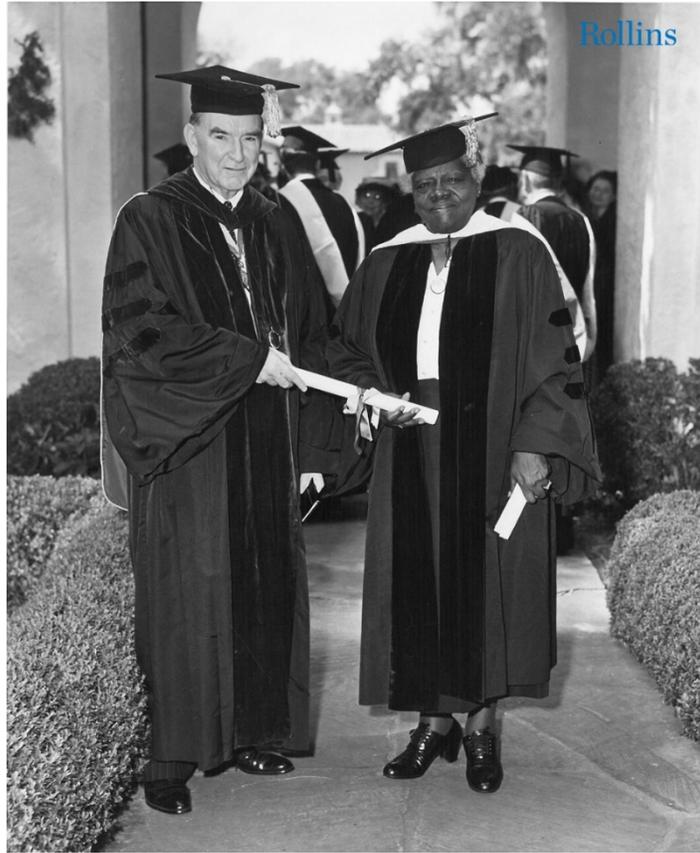
Denise Cummings, Wenxian Zhang, and Julian Chambliss

**TS:** (Looks at video camera) In the picture on the screen, it looks like I'm frowning. But I'm not frowning, I'm smiling; it's just the tape (indicates bandage on his face) that gives me that look.

First of all, I mentioned that in 1948, Hamilton Holt [former President] offered an honorary degree to Mary McLeod Bethune, and the trustees would not let him award it. He went to her and said he was going to do it anyway. I did find an article by her, describing that, and describing his tearful conversation with her. And I thought that ought to be included.

Now, I explained that when the trustees prohibited him from giving her the degree, he awarded the Rollins Decoration of Honor to Susan [Susie] Wesley, who was the custodian of Cloverleaf [Cottage], and had been for twenty-five years. And that was what Hamilton Holt could do without consulting the trustees. So there was an African-American woman on the Commencement platform when Mary McLeod Bethune could not be there.

And then the next year, he awarded the degree to her [Mary McLeod Bethune], and that's Hamilton Holt's retirement. His sort of last official act was to complete that circle. I've always been very proud of that, and that's an important story.



President Hamilton Holt and honorary degree recipient Mary McLeod Bethune, 1949 (*Photo: Rollins College Archives*)

We talked about Paul Wagner [former President] a little bit, and I left those notebooks. I thought you might want to have a copy of the fact that Paul and I had lunch together last summer. And this (holds up document) says, on August 13, 2008, we shared a delightful luncheon with Paul and Jeanette Wagner at their home in Sag Harbor, so that's probably the last Paul Wagner photograph we'll have in the file, but I thought you might like to have it. So that's a bit of old business.

Now, if I may, I was talking about the condition of the College when we came. I think I told you about the little envelope that had my paycheck handwritten as part of the confidential payroll. The fact that our accounts were in such bad shape on campus that we had twenty-nine separate checking accounts in the Barnett Bank, because that's the only way they could be reconciled.

I met through the summer, and at the end of the summer, prepared a memorandum for the staff I was working with. And one thing I thought might be kind of interesting was who they were. This was the people trying to make Rollins work: Ed Cohen, who was President of the Faculty; Dan DeNicola, who had been Dean of Education, Professor of Philosophy, who became really my intellectual and spiritual guide, and we'll talk maybe more about that. Don Griffin, who had been Vice Provost and was on leave from the faculty, (inaudible) that.

And these now are names you will not know: Cindy Grubbs, young alumna who was Director of Admissions; Fred Hicks, administrator who was Assistant to the President; Don Hill, Professor of Economics, who was the Dean of the Crummer school; Ed Jucker, who was Director of Athletics and former basketball coach; Dwight Ling, who was the Provost; Ron Pease, who was the Dean of Students; Dan Riva, who was the Dean of the Hamilton Holt School and the School for Continuing Education; Wanda Russell, who was Director of Placement Services—she was

Assistant Dean, but then went into Placement Services. Don Webb, who was the Comptroller; Tom Wells, who was the Director of Physical Plant; Arnold Wettstein, Dean of the Chapel; and Randy Xenakis, who was in charge of public relations/media.

The point is that almost every one of those people did not serve out that first full year, except for those faculty-based people: Ed Cohen, Dan DeNicola, and Don Griffin. So we were working with a very thin crew. Indeed, and that's now August.

I made some notes for myself dated January 2, 1979, which is the middle of that year. It's called "1979 New Year's Resolutions"—I crossed [that] out and said, "Opportunities." I had a friend who always used to say, "Don't say 'teaching load,' say 'teaching opportunities.'"

**DC:** (Laughs) I'm going to use that.

**TS:** It says, "Personnel." These were the positions we needed to fill as of January 1: Treasurer, Dean of the Crummer School, Director of Libraries, Director of Development, Dean of Education, Director of Computer Services, Director of Theatre, and Comptroller.

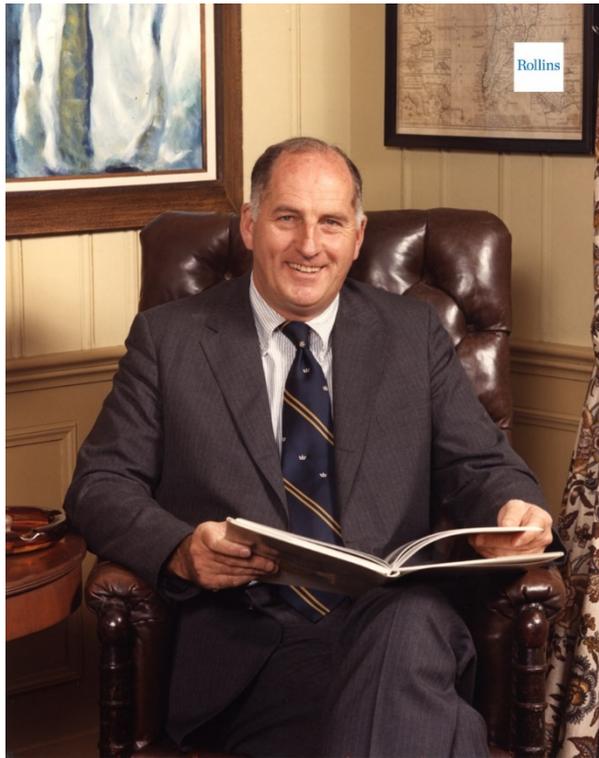
Then I listed the sort of work we needed to do: planning; getting organized (laughs); use of consultants; '78-'79 budget—the current budget, ways to save money; '79-'80 budget—tuition and fees and so on. Anyway, this was the sort of nuts and bolts of the new president coming aboard.

But in that meeting in August, I said a couple of things that were very important (inaudible). And in a way this—even at this point in my life, I concluded everything I know about management. I'm so mindful: I was trained with a Ph.D. in English; I never, never took a single business course; I never studied management. I went to a couple of training sessions with people with flipcharts, but it's just not my thing.

(Reads from memorandum) "So I do not perceive myself as a manager, and I recoil from the jargon of management training. Nevertheless, my first months on the job have been devoted largely to management issues, leading to the reluctant conclusion that my first task at Rollins is to help us get organized. We need to define and coordinate structure, responsibilities, and relationships. My own credo is a simple one and I recommend it." How about this: "Good management is a combination of common sense and consideration for others."

There's a lot of other stuff—but there's a couple things: this talks about communication, teamwork, wide-spread participation in decision-making, strong support for faculty and staff. (Reads) "The whole purpose of the enterprise is good teaching and learning, but we cannot escape the reality of the bottom line." This is very important: "Financial management is a means, not an end. In the best of all college worlds, the educational program determines the budget, not vice versa. I expect that to be the most difficult concept to interpret and implement in the years ahead." And of management, I say, "Good management is the development of people, not the doing of things."

And then—I don't want to bore you—but picking this up in my inaugural thing. (Reads from Inaugural Address) "Every action and every decision should be measured first by the extent to which it improves the quality of Rollins College. The future destiny of the institution depends on its excellence: the quality of the educational experience, the quality of students and faculty, the quality of individual performance, and the quality of our life and work together. High standards will enhance both self-respect and satisfaction."



President Thaddeus Seymour (*Photo: Rollins College Archives*)

I say that because, going back to where I felt the College had sort of drifted—and again, I do apologize; that sounds very self-serving, when I don't want to be that way. But the place was *luffing*, as they say in sailing. And it was sort of making up for that by focusing on generating as much income as they could from the School for Continuing Education, which was generating \$750,000 of unrestricted income to help meet the budget. But, I felt—we felt—that if the quality of the place is diminished, nobody is going to want to come here. It may be able to continue and have income and keep people on the payroll, but for what purpose?

So the whole point of my inaugural speech—I'm just going to leave this [copy of speech]; thought maybe putting this in a packet might be of some value—was to say: Look, the key, good students and their families will pay what's necessary to go to a good college. Bad students will pay what's necessary to go to a college they can get into, but that's not what we're talking about. And I cited a study by a guy at Princeton who was the provost there (reads): "Institutions placing the highest priority on preserving and strengthening their academic programs during a time of financial constraint"—bear in mind, 1979 were tough times; this was when everybody was saying, Will the liberal arts colleges survive?—"should have more success attracting qualified students than they would if they concentrated on cutting costs in an attempt to minimize tuition increases. The evidence suggests that if an institution is perceived to be providing education of high quality, able students from a wide range of economic and social backgrounds will apply."

And that was really the whole strategy. That was the game we played. And what I said was, "His conclusion emphasizes educational excellence. Colleges will be strong and serve best as they commit themselves to the quality of their education. Some will not be up to the task and they will fail, others will be timid and will falter, but Rollins College enjoys a tradition of academic excellence, which has characterized education here from the very beginning, and that's what we should do."

I said one other thing which—this is pretty good, I must say. I read it, and I said, "Hell, that was

thirty years ago” (laughter). (Reads) “I’ve spoken of hard work, rigor, and excellence. I certainly would not do justice to the occasion if I seem to suggest that college should not be fun. I believe in the balanced life. I believe in matching hard work with fun. You’ll miss the point completely if we do not enjoy this place and each other. There’s hard work to be done, but if we have any sense at all, we’ll have fun along the way.”

And then finally, I had said—I had some fun with this. I’d been talking about the Centennial—(reads)“I return to our Centennial,” and, fortunately, it was just seven years away. That became the sort of fulcrum for lifting this place up. (Reads) “I return to our Centennial. It is just seven years away. That’s only 2,557 days. On November 4, our aim is to know ourselves and be known by others as the finest small college in the Southeast, standing among the finest small colleges in the country. When we do, we’re going to dispel once and for all the old myth of fun in the sun, underwater basket weaving, and ‘Jolly Rolly Colly.’ Our students know that already, that the myth is not true; at least, most do. By 1985, we want everyone to know it.”

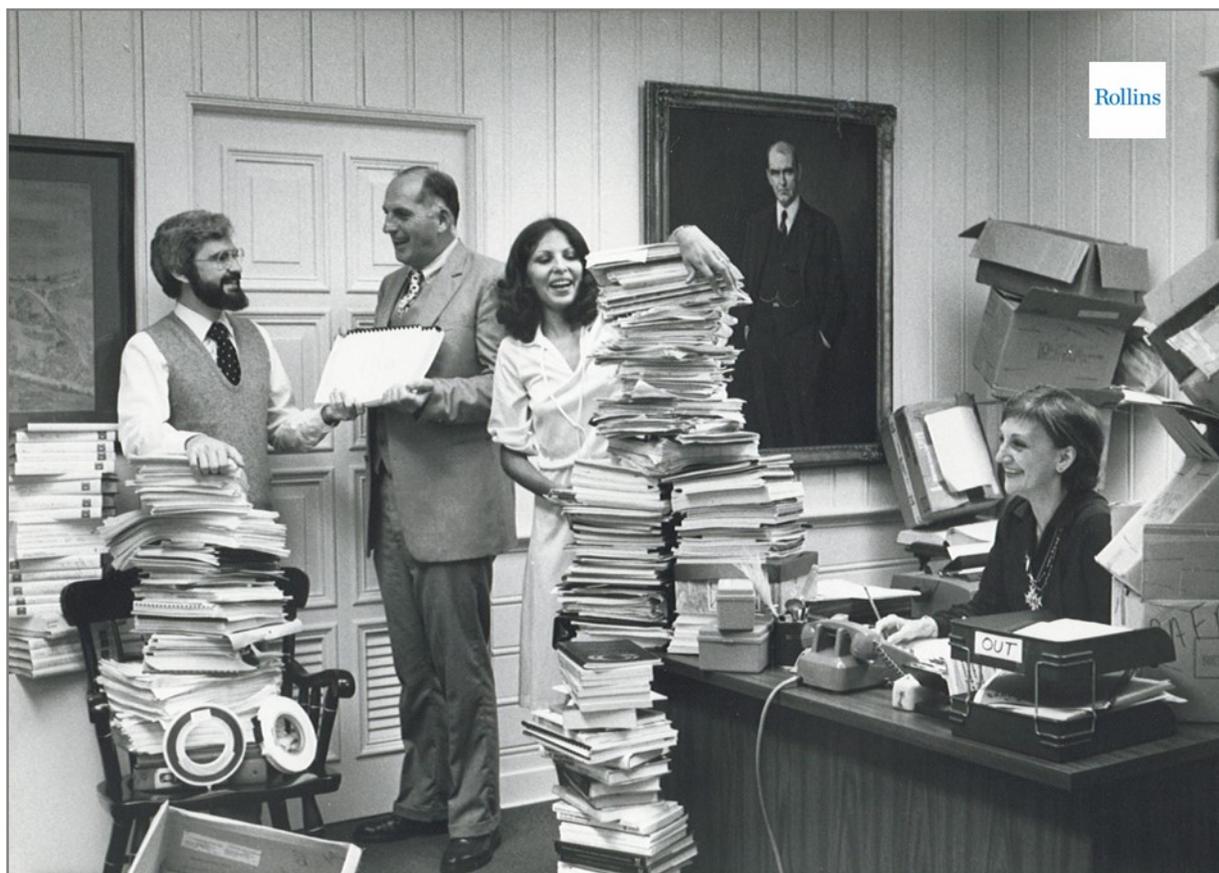
I took a hell of a lot of gas for that, from some people we all know, who said (inaudible). Then they started saying, Well, how are you going to know you’re that good? So at Convocation in 1985, I said, “Remember when I got smart? I said we wanted to know ourselves, be known by others, and so on and so on and so on. I hereby declare that [at] 11:15 on September 4, 1985, Rollins is the finest small college in the Southeast” (laughter). And somewhere buried in the files is my authoritative statement that we did that.

Anyway, that’s a bunch of stuff. Another thing I found, but I won’t take any time with it—it’s not that I’m organized by any means, but I do throw a lot of stuff in the file. When Charley Edmondson [former Professor] of the Search Committee came up to Indiana to talk to me about the job, I had a list of questions. Now this is a guy who is president of Wabash College in Indiana, had never been at Rollins, didn’t know very much about it. And my questions were—this is February 2, 1978; beginning of the search—Does the College have a conscience? That was my first question. What are the indicators of excellence for faculty and students? How is the financial management? Oh my God (laughter). I don’t even remember his answer. What are the trustee relationships? What about this evening program? Students? What about students? What about attrition? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the staff? Do you anticipate staff changes? What’s the picture of tenure for the faculty? The age of the faculty? What planning and institutional research has been done? What are the plant needs? What about federal issues: Title IX; handicap? What other issues are there? Are there policy changes? Are people that want to change the size, style of the place? What about the library? What about athletics? And I knew it’s at the very bottom. Is there a President’s House? (laughter) Anyway, that’s all a bunch of stuff I found.

Oh, and then the last—and this is really sweet. So, the first thing we did—Polly [Seymour] and I were talking about this the other day, and this is another shameless comment. In a couple of months, it became so clear that the problems were so acute that the trustees left me alone. They just—Okay, Thad, good luck. Hope you fix it. So there was a lot of room to get a planning process started and have it (inaudible) and that’s really what Dan DeNicola [former Dean of the Faculty] did.

The planning document was beautiful; very sophisticated. And this is a précis of it; I doubt if anybody’s ever seen it in recent years. But I’m going to read the last two paragraphs, that I’m very proud of. This is written in 1980. (Reads) “The last two years at Rollins have been startling. The clarification and improvement of our institutional finances, the attraction of many highly

talented administrators and faculty, the significant improvement in compensation.” We aimed and we achieved going to the A-classification in *The Chronicle [of Higher Education]*—I can’t remember what those are called—and one faculty member’s salary increased 54 percent. He came in and said, “I think there’s been a mistake.” Poor man. He was in the Music Department, where he was really exploited. (Reads) “The significant improvement in compensation, and the development of new policies and programs—these comprise an accomplishment worthy of national admiration. And we have just begun. The Planning Committee is convinced that Rollins College occupies a unique position among the institutions of higher education today. We have the unusual combination of a distinguished history, important natural advantages, and a wealth of untapped potential.”



Prof. Daniel DeNicola, President Seymour, Administrative Specialist Marsha Clore, and Presidential Assistant Connie Riggs pictured with the work of the College Planning Committee, 1981 (Photo: Rollins College Archives)

Do you remember the movie, *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*? In my speech I talked about that moment when Bogart and whoever are ready to turn back, and Walter Huston starts to laugh and dance and said, “You damn fools. You’re standing right on top of it, and you don’t realize it.” And I sort of used that as my metaphor in my inauguration address: Rollins is standing right on top of it. (Reads) “—untapped potential. With any luck, the next five years”—that’s getting us to the Centennial—“could produce a stunning achievement in institutional advancement. From all the discussion, interviews, conversations and surveys the Planning Committee have conducted, nothing emerges so clearly as the perception that Rollins is ready to move forward. And, as Hamlet said, ‘the readiness is all.’” Isn’t that wonderful? That’s Dan. That’s Dan.

So anyway, in 1980 we were ready. By 1985, if nothing else, we had this library. And, in its own way, the library became the trigger for everything else. So that's some old business.

Now, you ready for a couple of stories?

**WZ:** Yes.

**DC:** Yes, sure. Always.

**TS:** Now at this point, we're talking serious embargo stuff, including, I assume, the mutual trust of keeping this quiet and (inaudible) for a while.

When I came, John Tiedtke was Chairman of the Board, and John had many strengths, but he was a very odd—he was a very offbeat kind of guy. He used to carry a business-sized envelope in his pocket, and in pencil he'd written all sorts of questions. Every time he'd come into the office, he'd say, "Well, I was walking by the dining hall the other day and I noticed a lot of big fruit juice cans in the wastebasket, and I wanted to"—that sort of thing. He'd ask me these questions. John just drove me nuts. And he, as Chairman of the Board meetings, was a loose cannon and it was really—he was a dear man, and I love him dearly, and he hired me, and so on, but we weren't going to get from here to there with John Tiedtke leading it. And we knew we had to have a fund-raising campaign, and John was absolutely incapable of doing that. I also knew if we talked fund-raising campaign, that would spook him a little bit, because he was afraid that we'd turn to him to get more money than he wanted to give, because he was not very forthcoming. One of the hardest jobs I had was persuading—it had two parts to it—persuading John that it was time for him to step down, and then persuading Harold Ward to succeed him as chairman. You know Harold, because of the [Genius] Preserve and so on.

**DC:** Mm-hmm.

**TS:** Harold is a very bright guy; old Winter Park. Went to the University of Chicago; University of Chicago Law School; clerked for Hugo Black. Very enlightened; in the sort of social-action wing of the Congregational Church; very much engaged in issues of justice and equality. Just the kind of person we needed. But Harold's a lawyer in town and old Winter Park, and he doesn't need a fight. He's got enough else to do. And I was able to persuade Harold to accept the chairmanship from John. Harold was very young, as I look back on it.

A trustee, whom I saw at dinner last night, Joe Guernsey—very conservative, Old South—opposed giving a degree to Dan Matthews some years ago, because Dan had offended the Sons of the Confederacy with a prayer—Dan was the rector of Trinity Church in New York—had offended the Sons of the Confederacy with a prayer that talked about racial justice and so on. Joe found that reason enough to deny him an honorary degree or to argue against it. Joe had many strengths, but he was very difficult person, and very determined that the direction *we* wanted to go with the College was not where it should go. Joe, I believe, was involved in the establishment of Lake Highland Prep, which was established because of changes in segregation law. Joe; very difficult man. I learned after the fact that Joe was trying to block every Jewish appointment. John Tiedtke got Joe to be Chairman of the Nominating Committee for the Board, so Joe really was the gatekeeper to prevent all sorts of things.

Indeed, I'm going to jump ahead of myself, but when we appointed [*Name redacted*], who had been the provost of Stony Brook [University] and was not the world's best fit—but he was very bright and he really could shake up the Board to education in a very good way. Scared the hell out of the faculty, but he was very good for the time he was here.

But we recruited him, appointed him; everything was all set. The Board, recognizing that he would also be a vice president, and therefore an officer of the College, and had to be—as President and as a faculty, we could make academic appointments, but the Board could control a vice presidential appointment. The night before the trustee meeting, when we were going to confirm [*Name redacted*], we were having dinner at our house, and I learned after the fact that Joe Guernsey got the other members of the Nominating Committee in a room in our house; convened it as a Nominating Committee, with the intention of blocking [*Name redacted*] appointment. Hell, this is after Bob had been announced; he was coming down here, making plans to move his family, but the last *pro forma* thing was the Board.

Anyway, Joe was, in those days, a challenge. He's much older, and much mellower. He's lost his wife, lost his daughter, and he's—I see him, and we're very benign.

But here we are, trying to get John Tiedtke to step aside and Harold Ward to be the new chairman, and everything really depended on that. Absolutely, if we couldn't pull that off, none of this other stuff was going to happen.

Joe came into my office, closed the door, and said, "I've been thinking about this, and I think we ought to have Dick Trismen be our chairman." And Dick Trismen was old Winter Park. His father owned that big house—if you've ever taken a boat tour, with the columns on it. That was the Trismen house. The street there is Trismen Terrace. If you go out Aloma [Avenue], you go by Trismen Park. That's Dick Trismen's family. Dick was Class of '62 at Rollins, a lawyer in town, and just into everything—certainly when he was younger; he died just a couple of years ago. Dick was Secretary of the Board and College Counsel, but not a trustee. And so the only person on the Board—and Harold was by far the best person anyway; he was really the only reasonable, rational person to succeed John Tiedtke. And here comes Joe Guernsey, wanting to propose Dick Trismen. And I said, "Well, he's not even a trustee." "Well, we can elect him a trustee, and he knows the place well enough; we can make him chairman. I think that we can do that." This would have been an absolute disaster. Dick was good at many things, I'm sure, but he was just one of these people who loved the intrigue of stuff. Some people are energized by that. And we went back and forth on that.

Now I'm making much more of this than may seem to you to make sense, but if I look back on my life, this is one of two or three moments where things could have gone either way. I looked Joe in the eye, and I said, "Joe, you know that I believe Harold Ward should be our next chairman. And I have to tell you that if you nominate Dick Trismen, I will vote against him. And if others vote with me, then Harold Ward will be the chairman, and that will be the end of it. But if Dick Trismen is elected, I will resign, obviously. There's no way I can serve with him." And he looked me in the eye and said, "Well, I'm sorry you feel that way," and walked out.

**DC:** Wow.

**TS:** And I never knew where that was going to go. Other people thought it was a lousy idea, and that was the end of it. But he walked out, I remember that.

The great liberation for me was, we were—we have five kids. We were celebrating the fact that we had just sweet Abigail at home. The kids were grown; their education was paid for. And having been a college president once before, when I came here, I said, "If it works, it's fine, but this better be fun and better be what we want it to be. Life's too short, to hell with it." So if it had gone the other way, that would not have been the end of the world. But in terms of what we had been working on, and what seemed to me really exciting and fun—what Rollins could be—that

was one of those moments. It was.

And then, the net of it was that they recommended Harold, but at the meeting—I can still see the room. We're meeting in the conference room in back of the chapel; you know, the far side of the chapel. John Tiedtke was chairing the meeting, and we went through the agenda. And he never called on the Nominating Committee. And we went and just sort of skipped over at the beginning; he was so blustery, as though nobody—it just sort of was like going down the rapids with John. And we got almost to the end of the meeting, and I said, "My God, Joe has gotten to John, and John is just going to finesse this." And I kept saying, "John! John! What about the Nominating Committee?" And he finally said (imitates exclamation) and introduces the Nominating Committee. And Harold was nominated and elected unanimously and so on.

Then this morning, as I was thinking about this conversation, I remembered a real affection for dear John, who had given his whole life to the College and saved the College in 1948, selling those bonds, despite what George Carrison [former Trustee] said. We had a farewell for him in the [Enyart-Alumni] Field House, invited all his friends, and the Bach Festival Choir sang and concluded the evening with their version of the *Hallelujah Chorus*, which was (sings): "Hail, John Tiedtke! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hail, John Tiedtke!" It was wonderful. I wish there were a recording of it, because it really ought to be in the file.



Thaddeus Seymour, John Tiedtke, and Harold Ward III at the tribute to Mr. Tiedtke (*Photo: Rollins College Archives*)

And in my office, I will go back and get a copy of this here, if you want to add it to the other stuff. I have a picture of—we're all in black tie—Harold Ward, John Tiedtke, and me at the microphone. And I'm saying something to Harold, and for some reason I have my hand like this (gestures), and John Tiedtke is standing here, and it looks like I'm saying, "You're out of here!" (laughter) It was a very funny thing. I have it on my bookcase. I'll be sure you get a copy of it.

Now, that conversation with Joe, that's tabloid stuff. And maybe (A) he doesn't remember it, or (B) he has a different version, or (C) maybe I made it up (laughter), but it's pretty much etched in my experience.

There was not a dissimilar one—quite different—with John Tiedtke, and I'll be more oblique about this, but there was a faculty member—I mentioned this the other day—who was buying and selling currency in Colombia while he was running the foreign study program. And it really was scandalous; probably illegal. I think I mentioned that Bill Gailey, the Comptroller, went with him to his house to get the records, so that he couldn't change them before they were examined.

But he was very fond of music, and very close to John Tiedtke, and began to talk to John Tiedtke about how he was being falsely accused by me and so on. And we'd spent an awful lot of time on this. This was really serious. And Jesse Morgan, the Treasurer, and I went down to see John Tiedtke. And John said, "I really think you"—this is while John was still Chairman of the Board—"I really think you're making too much of this. He's a nice person and I don't think (inaudible)." Oh, and I told you about the interview we had, where I had the recorder in my pocket, that's right. But just before that, in that conversation with John, Jesse and I had said—I'd mentioned all of this—this is where the character of the institution is on the line. Either we take this seriously or you've got to get somebody else to run the place, because we're out of here. And Jesse and I were prepared to. And it's not my nature to threaten anybody. That's the only two times it's happened.

Now, here is the worst experience of my life, and it happened on October 15, 1981. I'm serious about this. And now this is embargo—this is when I was referring to with Socky [Professor Maurice O'Sullivan]. Others will know it. Do whatever you want to with their part, but. Here we were; we were trying to educate the trustees in what Rollins could be. We had recruited so hard to get talented, interesting, capable, diverse faculty, and we had probably eight new faculty appointments in the fall of 1981. Bear in mind, that's right after "readiness is all." And we were really getting going. I was anxious to have the trustees get more—not just come and approve budgets and hear reports, you know, but engage more directly in the place.

We had a dinner at the Cornell Museum, and I invited our new faculty there. The new faculty included [*Name redacted*] [Professor]. There was just a wonderful appointment. And we were sitting around. We worked hard to pick the people up, so they could all talk to each other. And after dinner, Dan [DeNicola] and I introduced the new faculty and asked them to tell where they were from and so on. This was wonderful—just knock your socks off, bearing in mind the community they were entering and enriching.

And after it was over, I said, "Wait a minute," remembering that thing about the first class: you should be sure that the students get to know you as well as you get to know them. And I realized, Now wait, this isn't fair to ask the faculty to tell who they are and not have them get to know who the trustees are. So I said, "Now, it's not fair for the new faculty simply to give their biographies. Let's now have the trustees do it." I said, "Now here is Joe Guernsey." I did most of his biography. His grandfather sold insurance here; in fact in that little booklet about Winter Park, there's an ad for the Guernsey insurance thing in the back. I said some things about Joe, and I said, "Joe, would you tell us a little bit about yourself?" And he stood up and told about himself. And I introduced somebody else, and I thought I was just Uncle Guido. I just couldn't have been more good-humored about the whole thing.

Then we got to Bill Miller. Bill Miller from Ohio; everybody's friend; X-Clubber; friend of Hugh McKean [former President]. And Bill Miller said, "Well, yeah, I went to Rollins. Rollins

was fun when I was here. We were in the X-Club and we used to—course, this was during Prohibition. And during Prohibition, if you wanted some booze, ha ha ha, you'd go down to Harper's [Tavern] and you would tell them what you wanted, and then you would come back at the end of the day in a convertible, and they had this jigaboo up in the tree and he'd drop—." You tell me now. It was the most awful moment I ever experienced in my life. And not everybody understood, and a lot of trustees said, "Oh really? It had a jigaboo, uh huh." And the evening just dispersed like that.

And to this day, I wonder what I should have said or could have said or could have done, and Dan and I have talked about this for twenty-five years. But we all left. And I was trying to figure out, how do we now—where do we go from here?

Now this is Thursday night, small town. By Friday night the whole—every faculty member talked to every other faculty member. By Saturday, I was sure that I was going to get a demand that Bill Miller be dismissed from the Board; pretty appropriate. But I knew that if he did, the majority of the Board would resign. Now let me stop at that point and go back a step.

[*Name redacted*] was the Vice President for Development. Very talented guy; Ph.D. in English; had been doing development at Penn [University of Pennsylvania]. I think this may have been his first year. And he got dragged into a after-the-meeting drink by some trustees and others. And on my desk on Monday morning—I may be wrong about the day; this is the date, October 16, whatever day of the week that was. The event was Thursday night. But on my desk was this memo, and I'm going to read it. It's a little long, but it sort of encapsulates the fascinating, absolutely mind-jolting circumstance of that time. Bob—great; very understated English teacher. (Reads)

"I suspect that all of us felt that the dinner with the trustees and new faculty last night was not satisfactory. From my perspective of Development and Public Relations, for the success of which trustees are essential, it was a disaster. I suspect too, that each of us recall trustee behavior that was not what the college needs and deserves. But, as someone testified in Washington recently about a critical issue, you have to scratch through a lot of gray before you get to the black and white, and I got some of the view from the other side of the table.

After the dinner, I was invited to join [*Name redacted*]"—

It was her husband who wrote that questionnaire about the knee-jerk faculty. I thought I showed you that the first day. (Reads)

"[*Name redacted*] [Trustee], [*Name redacted*] [Trustee]," [*Name redacted*] Field, "Bill Miller, Pete Sholley," a young trustee from Boston, but not much with it, "and Suzy Thompson" alumna who was in the alumni—I guess she was alumni trustee at the time. "I was invited by them for a nightcap. We talked. Or, more accurately, they talked at me until eleven thirty. The conversation rambled, of course, but I've tried to reflect on the substance of it. Each had his or her own gripes. Pat, that she was embarrassed repeatedly among her friends in the admissions area. Bob, that we didn't do more and better alumni programs. Pete—who'd been primed, evidently—that we had handcuffed Bill Gordon, who could do a lot more if only he had the support and budget from the administration."

Bill, very nice guy. Was the alumni director. Very sweet, still here in town. His son is the principal of Winter Park High School—and a nice guy. But old style. (Reads)

“Bill,” Bill Miller, “that we had made a nearly ruinous mess in athletics. Yet through all of these rumblings, some of which we’ve heard too often already and some of which can be shrugged off, a deeper note was sounded. Let me try to formulate what I heard, because I think the concern does have consequences for us all. None of the five alumni trustees were impressed by the new faculty. That came out plainly, simply, clearly. Someone said pointedly that of the eight new faculty members, not one was a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant male. And that observation probably comes, I believe, quite close to the heart of the matter.”

This is serious stuff. This is the ball game. And as I said, I don’t want this to be misinterpreted. This is simply an example of the growing pains of helping an institution get from here to there. And it ain’t easy. (Reads)

“And that observation probably comes, I believe, quite close to the heart of the matter. They feel that the Seymour administration is fundamentally changing the institution, not just improving on it, in ways that the overwhelming majority of the Board, of the alumni, and of the philanthropic friends of Rollins do not want.”

Isn’t that so interesting? (Reads)

“They believe that the administration is relentlessly doing so in terms of basic values and assumptions which they do not share. That we hold it to be self-evident, for instance, that it’s good to have more women on the faculty and more blacks in the student body. That it’s better to have high SAT scores than children of good families. They do not agree with the hypothesis, let alone the outcome. Furthermore, they feel vaguely powerless to alter the course we’re pursuing. And finally, powerlessness, or a sense of it, makes for anger and/or hurt, both of which feelings lead to withdrawal.”

Now this is what I was saying earlier. We had our open field. The financial problems were so acute that we could proceed with the planning, and they sort of didn’t understand what that was anyway. But at this point, they’re feeling powerless. (Reads)

“Somehow, this view of matters has got to be opened-air confronted. I now think it’s deeper than I realized. This perception of the progress of the college casts a shadow on everything, even Thad’s glowing three-year report. It will be corrosive and may be explosive. I don’t have any flashes of insight into the question of how to deal with this configuration, but I think we dare not assume that things externally will evolve in the right direction.”

I think that’s fascinating. And nobody knows this. But this is a little memo I’ve had in the file. And a few of us know it; we all lived through it. But as a moment in the evolution of a contemporary college and what it’s dealing with, whether it’s Rollins or Hiram [College] or Knox [College] or Willamette [University] or whatever, I just think that—I found this in the file and concluded that maybe it ought to go more permanently in the file, so I’ll turn it over to you. I still have the original. When this is done, I’ll give you the original one.

I did—and I’ll leave this with you, I won’t bother reading it—I did write a chronology of what happened to send to the trustees and, interestingly, there have been a lot of emendations and corrections on it, but it says, “Not sent.” I’m interested in the corrections for this reason—nothing to do with any of this. After my happiest young years of teaching, I got into administration; had very happy years as Dean at Dartmouth [College]. And going through the

files, I found the file that was marked “Cirrotta.” The name wouldn’t mean anything to you. [Raymond J.] Cirrotta was a student at Dartmouth who got beat up by a bunch of Dekes [members of Delta Kappa Epsilon] because they saw him wearing a letter sweater and, figured, (imitates voice) “You know, Jewish kid—.” And so they went to the room; straightened him out; punched him. He fell, hit his head on the radiator, and died.

In the history of an institution—talking about tabloid—this was really big. In fact, when I went up there to teach, that’s about the only thing I knew about the place. All I knew was, the place where those fraternity guys killed that student.

In the file, I find the Dean’s draft, which he’s writing in the infirmary, of the announcement for the press of the student’s death; that the student had died. Absolutely fascinating document. I wish I had snatched a copy of it. But my point is, he kept trying to change the language. I remember at one point he said, “Blows were exchanged.” First he said, “They hit the student.” It kept moving from active to passive all the way through. It was just the most—I’ve always thought, what an interesting sort of case-study document of the anguish and the thought process and so on.

There may be a little of that in here. So anyway, this is Friday evening; there was a petition being circulated. I reported this to John Tiedtke on Sunday. I knew that it was my responsibility to have a faculty meeting Monday. I prepared a letter; attached, if I can find the letter. The net of it was, Bill Miller—he never knew about anything; what’s the problem?—Bill Miller had left, I think first thing. He left Friday to go Columbus to go to the Ohio State [University] football game. And I had to be in touch with Bill Miller, if there was any chance of holding the place together. To apologize.

I got Harold Ward, who took this very seriously and was right where he ought to be, but who shared my view that if we got Bill Miller to resign, we would lose the Board, and that there was just no way we could put the pieces together. Here we are trying to do the Centennial, get a library, and (inaudible). Harold undertook to review the trustee qualifications; the committee on trustees. I had absolute confidence in Harold, and the faculty did. He was really the one who managed to get us through this.

[*Name redacted*], with the greatest dignity I’ve ever seen anybody express, was above it; stayed out of it. We all recognized whether Richard had been there or not did not matter. That was not the issue. But Richard did not want to make this about him, and I’ve always respected that.

Anyway, that’s a draft of what happened; those are some of the details. Really, if I were on my deathbed and someone said, What’s the toughest thing; what’s the most fragile you ever saw an institution and a group of people being? It’s that event, for what it’s worth. Someday it will be perfectly all right for people who are trying to see how an institution went from here to there, but a lot of these people are still around. Bill Miller’s son is a friend of mine, or an acquaintance of mine—.

**DC:** And the faculty no longer meet with trustees, do they?

**TS:** Not that I know of.

**DC:** I wonder when that started.

**TS:** Well, we kept it going, certainly. But—

**DC:** I know. I just thought that was interesting, in terms of—

**TS:** And we were, in our innocence, we were so excited about these new faculty members. We said, Boy, now the trustees are going to understand why we've been doing this. And the evening was going wonderfully well, until that moment. I just—it was the San Francisco earthquake: boom.

Anyway, that's the goriest thing I have to tell. There's lots of other little, little moments in my career, but all the rest of it has mostly been fun. But I got thinking about funny things. But that's for maybe another conversation. Like, well, funny things.

Now I'll stop. I've told you the most intimate experience of my career at Rollins, for what it's worth. I have something very different, if you want to hear it. Let's hear something different; cheer us up.

**DC:** Okay.

**TS:** Because that's tough going. But that was 1981; twenty-eight years ago. So, forgive that. My kids did a lot of stuff twenty-eight years ago that I've long since forgiven. And we all have.

I was just talking to Jonathan [Miller, Director of Olin Library] about Gamble Rogers [James Gamble Rogers II]. Gamble Rogers was the dear architect of this community, who designed the Olin Library. Working with him was a special joy for me. He was eighty-four when he did the library, and he really did this himself. Worked with his son, obviously, but this was his—he always told me, this was the building he'd spent his life preparing for.



Architect James Gamble Rogers II '85HAL at Olin Library (*Photo: Rollins College Archives*)

He died in 1990. There was a wonderful service for him, and his children and grandchildren spoke at his service—Presbyterian Church. And his grandson Geoffrey, who was an English major at the University of Florida, rather than speak, wrote a little sonnet, which he read at the

service. And it meant so much to me because of my affection for Gamble. I always teach this in my poetry class.

And here's Geoffrey, talking about his eighty-year-old, eighty-five-year-old, eighty-*nine* year old grandfather, who lived in Temple Grove. Temple Grove was where the Temple Grove oranges were developed, and you can still see one of the last trees. Most of the trees are gone; they've died of old age or the freeze. But the trees are there, and Geoffrey's grandfather took him for a walk in the grove—that's what this is called, "A Walk in the Grove."

Before I start, I'll remind you that one of the things about growing citrus is that you take a slip from one tree and graft it to another, and that's how the Temple oranges were continued. (Reads)

"A Walk in the Grove," by Geoffrey Gamble Rogers

In what the freeze had left behind, he showed  
me how the oldest tree was dying, where  
the years had tired the trunk. But branches bowed  
with fruit above where here and there

A shoot looked promising and might, with care,  
be cultivated—grown into  
another tree. Content enough to share  
an orange, talking of the grove, he knew,

I think, that he was dying. Silent while  
we climbed the steps, I held his arm, his sleeve.  
He checked the time, then smiling Daddy's smile  
he closed his pocket watch and turned to leave—

The spring, the heart wound down, the decades flown  
At last to be survived by flesh and stone.

I just think that's a wonderful poem. That sense of the family continuity; that his grandfather is "smiling Daddy's smile," "to be survived by flesh and stone." I gave this to Jonathan, and I said, "Now I know Jack, the son, who's a good friend of ours. But in a way, you, Jonathan, are the custodian of the stone part of this poem." And I think that's a dear little poem—for a *student* to write?!

Now, you watch your watch. I don't want to shoot your day. Is there anything else you want to talk about? I'm at your service.

**WZ:** (to Denise Cummings and Julian Chambliss) Do you have any questions?

**DC:** Did you want to talk about Winter Park a little bit?

**TS:** Oh yeah, I'll be glad to talk about Winter Park

**WZ:** You are so deeply involved with the Winter Park community. Maybe you can enlighten us.

**TS:** Well, we were—who were we talking to? Somebody.

We've been lucky enough, wherever we've lived, to have it in our mind that we live in Hanover, New Hampshire, and happen to work at Dartmouth; we live in Crawfordsville, Indiana, and happen to work at Wabash; we live in Winter Park and happen to work at Rollins.

I learned very early on from other mentors, the biggest mistake you can make in one of these jobs is to somehow think you've been canonized as president of a college or whatever. My role model/mentor at Dartmouth, John Dickey, who was President, always referred to his work as a job. I love that. In fact, he wouldn't say, "the President." He'd say, "the man on this job" or "the person on this job." And that's always been quite important to me, including when we came here, knowing—I would almost say, it's just a job. Now, you want to do it well. Wherever you work, you want to do it well; you want to have it be of service to others, and of value. But it is just a job, and somebody else can do it.

So we have always, wherever we've lived, had our own lives. It's been very important to us to have our own lives in the community. In a quite different connection, I was telling somebody the other day about the coffee house several of us founded—boy, that's a long time ago—in Hanover, New Hampshire, in 1965. We based it on—that was before you all were born, but it was in the day when there was a kind of coffee house movement in the country, and there was one in Washington called The Potter's Shed or Potter's Wheel [The Potter's House], and they were church-related, but they were not evangelical. They were a church trying to express its mission. The metaphor was that in serving coffee, you're trying to serve the spiritual needs of the next person who comes in the door. And we had a coffee house called The Ram's Horn—break down the walls and so on—and we did it for three years. It was a very important part of my life. And I think about—I go back, and I miss those days. That was fun. I try to be a little engaged in that in other ways even now.

What I'm saying is, being a part of the community was very important for me—and for Polly. Polly is always—she's very much involved with the library here, as you know. And we were, again, talking the other day, about being a part of the community has been very important to us and, in a way, made all the difference. So we have gotten to know Winter Park. At first, this was hard work, and this took a lot of time. It is 24/7.

I'm going to tell a story, assuming it's all right to ramble. This has nothing to do with anything, but I was trying to think of some of the funny experiences. And one was a mother who called up, giving Connie Riggs, who worked with me, hell, because she couldn't reach her son by telephone. (Imitates voice) "I've been calling him and the phone always out of order!" And I said, "Connie, I'll talk to her, but could you find out something about her son? Look him up in the directory." So I was talking to the mother and trying to calm her down. Connie handed me a note that he was living in the KA [Kappa Alpha] house, where every weekend they would rip out the phone. And I said to the mother, "I'm just so sorry you're having this problem. Now, Mrs.

Jones, here is this problem, and I'm so glad you called. Your son, of course, as you know, is living in the KA house and they—despite every effort we've made to be sure that parents can reach their children, they keep ripping out the telephone. Now I had not been aware that it was as acute as you have told me, and I really appreciate your telling me what a severe problem this is. And I want to say two things. First of all, tell your son that any time he needs a phone, call me; he can come over to my house and use it. Any time you need to reach him, here's my home phone number." And I gave it to her. I said, "Really, you are absolutely right. Not having access to a phone is the worst kind of management, and we've been trying so hard to deal with it, but I'm going to call up your son right now and ask him to come in." You never saw a woman want to get off a phone call faster in your life (laughs). That was really great fun for me. She said, "No, no, no, never mind! It's all right!" (laughter)

Now the KAs were—the nice thing about having been an old dean is I learned something. I was carried out of my office by SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], and I dealt with all those days. And I know them pretty well; those are all friends of mine. But in 1986 or -7 the KAs, who were really—they were so characterized as bad boys, they really had to work to preserve their reputation, so they'd do everything they could to screw things up. And they lost their house and were moved to a dormitory and this, that, and the other. And one of the last emergencies was that they had done a lot of damage and had not made any effort to pay for it, even though they'd been billed. The Housing Review Board took their house away, and so they decided to protest.

Now it happened that we had been able to get away and took our kids; the first time I ever did this. We went on a cruise; we were cruising with all our kids down and just off Key West. We came back in, and I hadn't seen a newspaper in a couple of days. I picked up a newspaper, and I noticed the headline, "Students Protest with Tent-In." And I assumed it was Amherst [College] or [University of] Wisconsin. And it said, Winter Park, Florida. And the KAs, to protest losing their house, set up tents in front of Carnegie Hall. And they were going to stay there until they brought the administration to its knees.

Well, I had to get back on the damn cruise ship. It took us two more days to get back. We finally got back, and here are all these tents and students protesting. And I kept saying, "You know, I've dealt with students who are protesting racial injustice and war in Vietnam and things that really matter. This is a goddamned fraternity! What are you guys doing?" No, no, I was so, so mad at them. But they said, We just want to, we want to appeal it, we want to appeal it!

So, one of the lessons I learned in my dean days was, anybody will have certain actions where they expect a predictable reaction. In wanting to appeal it, they hadn't really thought what the next step might be. They just assumed I'd say no. I said, "Okay. But we'll do it with a public hearing, and we'll do it at three o'clock this afternoon. You come over to the (then) Campus Center, and we'll have a public hearing. And we'll put the word out, and anybody who wants to come can come." The place was packed.

I had—God, I had a good time doing it. I have a tape of it someplace. The student radio station taped it. I had the manual for KA that talks about its values. Its mission included teaching social graces, including in the handbook about how to choose a wine and how to set a table (laughs). You know, I was going through all that stuff. And it really sounded wonderfully ridiculous.

We got down to the fact that they owed \$1,200; been given all sorts of chances and extensions; wouldn't pay it. And Dave Lord [Trustee and former Associate Vice President for Business] had even—he was in charge of Physical Plant matters—had offered—we were trying to open the Alford [Baseball] Stadium. We needed some help getting the turf down and offered them jobs at

\$5 an hour to put the turf down, and they could work off that \$1,200, and they never showed up. And I was really giving them hell about this.

Just then, the president of the house turned to somebody else who left, and a little while later came back with an envelope. And I saw the envelope, and I said, "If that is a check for \$1,200, I guarantee you that KA will not open its doors on this campus tomorrow or ever again" (laughs). He pulled the check back and put it in his pocket (laughter).

This was wonderful. After the whole thing was over, I said, "All right, this has been very helpful, thank you so much. Anything else you want to say?" And we closed the thing up.

This was the most fun I ever had. This was in the Campus Center. A lot of people; a lot of Independents, who were not much on fraternities; people from *The Sandspur* [student newspaper]. And when the meeting broke up, I said, "Now I will call a meeting at ten o'clock tomorrow morning and will announce my decision." I have a tape of this, too. It's been a while; I haven't heard it in thirty years. So we had the meeting, and I said, "I have reviewed the facts and reviewed the conversation we had yesterday. And I've come to my decision. No." And they stupidly got up and walked out. And I then was able, for those who remained, to give a pretty stern talk about what was expected of our fraternities and so on.

That pretty much took care of the KAs. They're no longer here. Anyway, that moment in that public hearing with the check was as much fun as I ever had.

That's nothing to do with here nor there. I was talking about the town. So we have both been involved in the town. Polly's first activity was with the [Winter Park Public] library. It was our very first year, and there was a retired faculty member from Rollins, Geneva Drinkwater, who was very active in the library. And she and Polly got talking, and Geneva said, "You know, I've always thought it would be nice for us to have a little book sale." And Polly got a folding table, and they got some old books, and in 19—I want to say, in the spring of 1979, my first year, they had a little book sale at the library.

The book sale began to grow. Pretty soon, we turned to student friends to help us, because the books got to be heavier and bigger. Tom Wells [former Director of Physical Plant] would lend us the pickup truck from Physical Plant. And for many years, Billy Gordon—Bill Gordon's [former Director of Alumni Affairs] son, who was in the Sig Eps [Sigma Phi Epsilons] and is now the principal of Winter Park High School—would organize the pledge class to haul books out into storage. They'd be dropped off at the library, and then we had the storage unit out some place, and then a freight station down at the Farmers' Market. And then for the book sale, we'd haul them back and set them up. And that went on for about thirteen years.

One day, Polly looked around and said, "You know, the same volunteers are working as when we started. The difference is, they're thirteen years older. Now they're all sixty and seventy years old, and these books are just as heavy as they used to be." The library had just expanded and they got the idea—I'm leading up to a point here—got the idea that instead of having book sales twice a year, they would have a bookstore and be there permanently. You've also seen it; it's a great book store. So the New Leaf Bookstore opened in 1995.

Between the bookstore and the book sales, that enterprise, sponsored by the Friends of the Library, has raised over \$850,000 for the library. And I'm hoping in our lifetime—I think this is going to be the case—that we'll hit one million dollars. And I keep urging—Polly's very reticent about it, I think. That's a wonderful story of what volunteers can do. Anyway, but through that we've both been involved and cared about the community.

My activities have been all sorts. I was chair of BETA [BETA House, a shelter for pregnant teens and young mothers] for a while, and it worked this way. A friend of mine, whose husband had been a Wabash person, was one of the founders of BETA, Kathy Perry. And her co-founder was a very bright woman, Judy Peterson. BETA, when it started out, was a particular darling of the Catholic Church. And it began to get a kind of pro-life perception that I was assured was not what BETA was all about. But they were really stuck with it. And Kathy and Judy came to see me one time and said, We want to get you involved. What we really need is a Protestant male (laughs). And I said, “Well, I’m not sure what else I can bring to BETA. That’s one thing I guess I *can* bring.”

So I got involved with BETA, became Chairman of the Board, helped them meet with the city commission in Orlando, get the land—BETA House used to be on Magnolia Avenue; downtown, in a tiny little building. The space was less than the [Rollins] Archives. And we got the piece of land down by the airport. I worked with her to call the on the Edyth Bush [Charitable] Foundation. Kathy Perry moved away, so I worked mostly with Judy Peterson. I instructed her to go in and be a sort of—shame on me—but maiden in distress, because Dave Roberts [President of the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation] was shamelessly chivalric. If you just say (imitates voice), “Oh, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Roberts, oh that’s wonderful, I didn’t realize (inaudible).” She always came out with more money than she asked for. They put up most of the money for building the new house. So I was involved in that. That was very important to me, and it was a way to be involved in both Orlando and Winter Park.

I’ve sort of lost track of what my other interests have been, though the most rewarding for me has been Habitat [for Humanity]. That really began with Rollins. Arnold Wettstein [former Dean of Knowles Memorial Chapel] and John Langfitt [former Assistant Dean of the Chapel], who were the campus ministry group, took a group of students up to Americus [Georgia]; learned about Habitat. They still boast—well, Arnold’s gone now, but John boasts about hearing Jimmy Carter teach a Sunday school class. They came back and organized a Rollins group to build a house, which they did, on Lyman Avenue; the first Rollins house. And that became the trigger for establishing an affiliate here in Winter Park. And I was privileged to be part of that founding group. And again, needing an effective establishment male Protestant—not necessarily a Protestant, an establishment male—they encouraged me to chair it, and I’ve been Chairman since. And we are on our forty-fifth house now. I’m just so proud of us—forty-five houses, and all done by volunteers. And of those, ten have been done by Rollins students.



Thaddeus (left) and Polly Seymour (right) at a Habitat for Humanity House sponsored by Rollins College (Photo: Rollins College Archives)

But that would lead me to something I know Julian's spent a lot of time working on, which is [that] there was just nothing going on to provide affordable housing on the west side of Winter Park. Habitat was it. And in a way, Habitat still is. Now, the [Hannibal Square Community] Land Trust is starting to roll, and we're beginning to negotiate with them, and I think that something will come of it. But all the time the city was wrangling around us, we were quietly building housings, and building that many. I should say that maybe eight of those forty-five were in Maitland, so the balance is less than the full forty-five. But it has been a very important constraint, at least in some areas of the west side of Winter Park, to keep Dan Bellows [Winter Park developer] from buying up every block. And he tried everything. He tried to get a moratorium to prohibit us from building more houses. He's trying to get the homeowners to refinance through him, so he owns the mortgage, just waiting for them to go broke. And we're trying to prevent that. And that story's not over yet.

But more people are engaged in that now, and the Land Trust and the CRA [Community Redevelopment Agency] have played a very important role. And Hal [George] is the head of the CRA now, and Hal has really been, *really* been Habitat. I've convened the meetings, and been Uncle Guido and so on. And I did—Polly and I [worked] on several of the Habitat houses, where Polly provided the food, and we were there every Saturday. But we're getting older now, so we don't do that as much. And Hal is really the key. If one were to say who has been Cincinnatus at the bridge or the boy with the thumb on the dike, it's been Hal. So those are just some thoughts about the town.

I'm very concerned about this election. And I got in trouble in the last election now that the [Winter Park] Towers—because we sponsored an Obama gathering there. And I got a letter of censure to me and the members of the committee, because we're not supposed to have rallies. This was not a rally. And so I'm sort of keeping my head down on this election, out of the

Towers, because I don't want to do more harm than good by being involved in it.

Anyway, I love this town. And Casa Feliz [historic home, moved to a new site in 2001 to prevent its demolition] has been a very important part of our work, we've both been involved in that. And that's all.

**DC:** Whatever happened to the Casa Feliz property that's still vacant?

**TS:** It's still sitting there. The nice thing is, the market's fallen out, and I hope the guy goes broke with it. I was looking at it the other day. The old gate is still there, with the vines. And that scoundrel—because he gave it to the town, he got a tax deduction for it as a charitable contribution. So, a couple million dollars. But it's just an empty lot now, and somebody will build on it.

I was out at the Casa the other day; indeed, I'm going to presume to tell you something we haven't told anybody. It's no secret, but it's been very dear and important to us. I was out at the Casa the other day, and somebody was saying, You know, if it were still in its former location, it wouldn't be serving the community as much as it is now, because it wouldn't be as prominent. You see it as you drive by the golf course, and it's standing there, and it's beginning to settle in in a very nice way.

Because of my affection for Gamble [Rogers, architect of Casa Feliz] and affection for storied treasures, Polly and I got involved in the Casa effort very early on, and when they were moving it, and I've done some oral histories and done a little guided tour on an iMovie and so on. So we've been very close to it. On several of the events, I've read Geoffrey's poem. We had had—our son now has an old family car, and for one of the events I had a Dixieland band, and we led a parade there and so on. Polly, too, has been very much involved and been a docent. We were able to negotiate with Lewis [Duncan, President of Rollins] to get a bench that had originally been in the Casa, which was in the hallway of the entrance to Bush [Science Center]. And Lewis gave it to the Casa. So one of the original pieces of furniture is there, thanks to Rollins College.

Anyway, Polly served on the board. She went off the board last week; last Wednesday. And I got a call from [board member] Peggy Rogers; after the board meeting, they were going to have a lunch and thank Polly for her service, and could I come join them? I said I'd love to, forgetting (A) that I was involved in gallbladder surgery and a bunch of other stuff. But more complicated than that was serving on the Winter Park Ethics Board, and we had a meeting on Wednesday. I missed the previous meeting because of my surgery, so I had to go that meeting. I called up Peggy and said that I'm going to be a little late, but I'll try to get there at least for some dessert.

So I came in late, and when I came in, she had been waiting for me very nervously and was so glad to see me, and I was kind of surprised by that. All that's preamble to say, after I caught my breath and sat down, she said, "Now, can we have everybody's attention?" And Jack [Rogers] brought a box over to Polly and said, "We want to thank you and Thad for your service on the board." And she opened it, and what was involved was really probably the nicest thing that's ever happened to us. We certainly think so, in part because the fit is so good. They have named the parlor of the Casa Feliz for us. It's a little plaque, and it says, "Parlor," and it says, "Polly and Thaddeus Seymour." Our kids don't even know. We haven't been in touch with our kids.

**DC:** That's neat.

**TS:** Because I said to them, "The Casa to me represents citizens putting their foot down and saying, Wait a minute. Don't send a bulldozer into everything that we value." And a wonderful

confluence of things: citizens picketed; scared the hell out of the [City] Commission, who put a one-month moratorium on demolition. In the course of that one month, they began to raise some money, and Polly and I were involved in that. Then they found the eagle nest with the eggs in it; got the Audubon Society in to point out you cannot have construction within 500 yards of a nesting eagle's egg. That gave us the time to negotiate the gift to the town; to raise the rest of the money; get the engineers in to figure out how to move it. And it just was one of those wonderful things.

The building represents "Yes, we can," as far as I'm concerned. The parlor represents hospitality and friendship and leisure and folks, and Polly and I are just so touched by this.

You know, an etched glass bowl is fine, and I love them. I take that back. We were designated Citizens of the Year for Winter Park. We were very touched by that, back in 1997, and got a glass ice bucket. When we moved, we had a garage sale sort of thing. A couple of days later, a friend of ours said, "At your garage sale I got this ice bucket that says 'Polly and Thaddeus Seymour, Citizens of the Year.' I know you put it in there by mistake, and I thought maybe I'd better buy it." (Laughter) That's to take nothing away from that at all, but we still laugh about, *Thank God, Grace found that*. We got talking about it yesterday, and Polly said, "Where is it?" And I said, "Hell, I don't know" (laughter).

Anyway, the thing at the Casa is about as sweet as anything I could have asked for. We're very touched by it. From our point of view, in terms of being a part of the town, that really means a lot.

I'll let you all go eat. Okay, done?

**WZ:** Thank you so much, Thad. We really enjoyed your life story.

**TS:** Well, I was trying to think of all the funny stories, like the time they were putting on *The Rocky Horror [Picture] Show* in the Sandspur [Field]. And we went to it, because our kids had all seen it, so I didn't realize, you know. So we went, and we were sitting there, and one student came up to Polly and said, "Oh hello, Mrs. Seymour, are you a virgin?" Which is, in *Rocky* language, I gather, meaning, you've not seen it before (laughs).

**DC:** That's great.

**TS:** Or the time—one of the things I was very much involved in here was the Feed the People Concert. And the first one was at the Annie Russell Theatre—absolutely wonderful event, and the kind of thing that was not happening much at Rollins. And it continued, and I've always enjoyed being a part of it. They used to sell—I don't know if it still goes on—they used to sell t-shirts. And one year, they were doing it out in the Sandspur, and they had boxes of t-shirts. And it was very crowded, so I got out my \$20 bill, put it down, and was looking for the box with the extra large t-shirts. And here was a box that was filled with matches. I picked up one, and I wondered, Why are they doing matches? And as I looked at it, I realized it was a condom put out by the health service (laughter). There was a young woman sitting there who saw me laugh. You never saw two people more anxious to *disconnect* (whistles; laughter). I picked up my t-shirt and threw it over my shoulder (laughter).

Lots of stuff like that. I can think of thousands of those, but I won't burden you with any more.

**WZ:** Thank you so much.

**TS:** Oh thank you; fun for me! It's hard to find to find an audience these days (laughs).