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## **Interview with Cynthia Wood: Vice President Emerita of Institutional Advancement**

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

Wenxian Zhang, Alia Alli & Jennifer Ritter

WZ: Good afternoon, today is Wednesday May 12. My name is Wenxian Zhang, Head of Archives and Special Collections. With me are two students, Alia and Jennifer. We are going to interview Cynthia Wood, Vice President Emerita of the Institutional Advancement, right? That is the official title? Cynthia, I understand you are a Southerner. Tell us about your childhood and where you grew up.

CW: Yes, I'm very defiantly a Southerner. I was born in and raised in West Central Alabama, which is in a small town, and I guess I have a lot of small town values, appreciate the positive things about the South: the warmth, the caring, and the hospitality. I think that when one grows up the South and they leave - I guess Florida still in the South, but I don't think Florida's considered the South anymore - and I think you feel apologetic on behalf of people who had some beliefs that you didn't share or some attitudes, but overall, I really value the foundation that I had as a Southerner, and I'm still very much a Southerner at heart. I just hope the good things about the Southerner and being Southern.

WZ: I read that your father is the superintendent of Dale County?

CW: He was. Well, my father was superintendent of schools during a very interesting period of time - in the sixties - well actually for thirty years. That was during the integration, when they were integrating the schools. It was very hotbed politically and my father was - well he certainly was a very traditional Southerner - but he was very much a moderate, so he really had a lot of pressure on both sides, because neither side thought that he was on their side. But I think that one of the things that he was most proud of was the fact that in many of the counties around where he was superintendent, they had a total white flight from the schools and he was able to - under his leadership - the schools remained pretty much intact. I think there was only faculty member that left in the whole county and he was able to, under court order, to do the integration and make it satisfactory. So, the school system still survives today as an integrated school system.

WZ: That's very impressive. Tell us about your educational background, your grade school, your high school.

CW: I grew, as I said, in a very small town. I attended kindergarten, which, back in those days, we didn't have public school kindergarten. I attended kindergarten once a week because on Thursdays, back in those days, the county's seat where my dad's office was, they could leave at noon. So, one day a week I got to go to Ms. Annie's kindergarten. Then I went to grade and high school. And high school was a very small school in Akron. I had some really good teachers and then I went to a big university. I went to Auburn University, which was a very large university, and I studied speech pathology there and I thought I wanted to be a clinical speech pathologist. Then I decided rather than taking time off, I would go straight though to graduate school. There was some mix-up and a fire at Florida State, and so my records somehow between

getting misplaced, so that wasn't going to be. I wanted like a partial scholarship, so they said I could have one, but it would start at mid-year. Out of the blue, I received a call from a woman who was head of the hearing impaired department at Florida State and offered me a full fellowship. So I ended up going to graduate school and getting a Masters in Hearing Disabilities. And that right after rubella epidemic, so there was a lot of federal money for funding, so I got my masters there.

I really feel like - I think I really am, I know I am - a lifelong learner. As having worked at Rollins, I really appreciate the value of a liberal arts education. I feel like I got my liberal arts education as an adult, kind of here, and not formally. I've taken classes and a lot of leadership training, but I've also just taken classes just to learn. I regret not having a liberal arts education but I bet you can always think that because it's never too late to do it on your own.

WZ: So what brings you to the Central Florida area?

CW: I came to the Central Florida area not long after graduate school. After graduate school, I lived in Jacksonville for a year, where I worked with hearing impaired children, preschoolers, and then had the opportunity to move to Orlando. Their program was a little bit more sophisticated. I received a job offer here, and was also dating someone who lived down here - of course he promptly moved to Ft. Lauderdale, when he got transferred, but I ended up marrying him, so it all worked out - but I moved down here for that opportunity. So that's how I got to Central Florida, and that was in the - gracious - the early seventies.

WZ: Okay, so I read that you were also involved with the Orange County Public School System. Tell us about that experience.

CW: Oh. I've had several - I say several lives - wonderful opportunities. My first career was in hearing disabilities. So I started in the classroom in the Orange County Public Schools in a self-contained special-ed class for hearing impaired children. We worked to try and mainstream them and to get them ready. But they were preschoolers. And I did that for several years, and then as I said, there was a lot of federal money available. So we applied and received a federal grant for working with hearing impaired through the public schools: hearing impaired infants and preschools and their parents. And so I became director of that Title Six project, I believe. We were able to hire an audiologist, and to do all of that. I moved out of the classroom and did that and then my last year with the public schools, there was funding to start a hearing screening program, so I oversaw that. Many children had hidden hearing disabilities due to medical reasons that they already knew existed because they needed to be screened. There wasn't a lot of infant screening done at that time. We did public school screening at all the schools. I used to travel all over the county. Then we had our daughter, so I retired from my first life. (laughter)

WZ: So what made you decide to major in speech pathology? You have this very specialized major and then choose a career in this area, and I understand you were also the co-founder and president of the Children's School for Special Children.

CW: Yes, I wish there was some noble reason I did that. Actually, growing up in a small town, I had a wonderful English teacher, and so I was thinking of a career and I didn't want do the traditional careers that women did at that point. So this sounded a little different, a little sexier,

than just being a kindergarten teacher or something. I mean, it's such a noble reason. It was interesting, and then when I really did pursue it, I found it very fascinating. Then I really guess, inherently, I was drawn to helping children regardless of who they were or where they were to reach their potential. So it was, I guess what really drew me to it and to continue. And then I really enjoyed working with whole family units, with children, special needs, and it's not just the child, it's the whole family, and then working within the systems to helping them find their place and to be accepted. So it really was a passion. Then after I retired from the school system at age thirty-something, I had the opportunity - well I had some wonderful volunteer experiences - with women's organizations. I was the president of the Junior League of Orlando, which did a lot of community service and provided incredible leadership training, and gave me wonderful opportunities to build on some of the skills that I had received as a leader when I was working fulltime.

Then a good friend of mine, who had a severely, was very severely, disabled child came and she said she was very frustrated, because there was not centralized services available for her special needs daughter. She was running here for speech therapy, she was running here for occupational therapy, she was running here for physical therapy, and then she was running here for educational opportunity. Nothing was coming together, and the school system was obligated to provide services but they were very incomplete and not what she wanted. And so she said, "We really need to start a school. Will you help me?" And ridiculously I said yes - but note, (laughs) it was meant to be. It was a wonderful experience that we had. So many of the skills that I use now and in my life and that I use throughout my career at Rollins really came from - well everything builds - I just look at the beginning when I was in school, in high school, all the way to now. One thing builds to another. So, a lot of skills and understanding of special needs families came from my career; my leadership and organizational skills came from my civic roles. And we started the school, so we had to do a site location, we had to do the fundraising, we had to do the board development, we did the hiring and we had to set the vision, and we were only going to do a top-quality place. We had to raise enough money to provide funding, and then that time the economy was very good, and we were able to get through some of her connections, some major funding corporations. We were very successful, and we found a site.

We had a school and it ended up - ironically, and to her credit - not really serving the population where her daughter fit. It ended up serving those children who were preschoolers who fell through the cracks. At that point, in order to get funding through the public schools or to get services, you had to get a label. If a four-year old receives a label, you can hardly ever get rid of that label. So what our school was about - we had a lot of developmentally delayed children that defied labels, or should not have a label because it was any number of reasons. So, the majority of our children, by the time they left our comprehensive environment - everyone was certified and very professional - most of them were able to be mainstreamed, and had very productive opportunities within a school system, and they never ever received a label. They never like, Oh this is the kid with ADD, or this one is emotionally handicapped, or this one's' language is delayed. Labels were just never given to the children, and we looked at each child as an individual.

The school was extraordinarily successful, and then we had a major - well the economy just really turned. There were a lot of other things that started happening in the community, and so we realized we were undercapitalized, and obviously our clients couldn't afford to pay what it really cost us to have the services that we had. Some of our corporate support disappeared, because it was during a lot of the SNL's went out of business and the money just wasn't here.

We decided very reluctantly, rather than dilute our services or start bleeding to death - as the Board of the Directors, you're also liable for federal and the payroll and so whatever - and so we decided rather than diminish, the best we would simply close. But before we closed, we placed every one of our students and we placed every one of our teachers and our therapist and everyone, and then we closed. And it was heart rendering; I mean men and women sat around the board table, and parents crying, but its better. If we couldn't do it the best, then we weren't going to do it.

WZ: So after that, were you also involved with the Valencia Community College?

CW: Yes, at Valencia, I did that periodically, not as a full-time position. I taught several different classes there and did one in child development - a couple of them there - and then I also did one with women - doing some classes for women to promote non-traditional careers so women could consider that. And then there was another federal program, where they wanted people to come in and train teacher assistants to be more professional and to develop skills. So it was a variety of different classes that I taught at different times over the period of - I guess it was ten years - that I was retired from full-time employment - ten or eleven years.

WZ: So why did you decide to come back to working full-time for Rollins?

CW: Well actually, I did not decide to come immediately, decide to come back to work full-time. I decided that I wanted to work part-time. And I knew Dr. Seymour very well from the community; Dr. Seymour was just a wonderful member of the community and a good friend. So I went and had a conversation with him, and it was just about the time when he had announced his retirement and it was right before he left. And so I said, "Are there opportunities at Rollins for part-time work," and he said no. Then we talked about other opportunities in the community. Then he said, "There is one position that I think that you might be well qualified for, but the administrative assistant is very likely to take the job, and so she's in line to take the job." And I said, fine. I guess it was a month or two later, out of the blue - and I don't even know called me - and they said, Cynthia there is a job at Rollins that has your name on it. It was the director of community and donor relations, and it was a full-time job. The lady that was really in line to take the job her husband was transferred, so she did not. So they opened it up to the community and I applied for it. I went through the big interview process. I knew because I had been very active in the community, I knew several people that worked here and knew the college well, and knew alumni and having lived in the community for so long, I knew the culture and so I was hired. I came to campus one month, I guess two months, before Dr. Bornstein actually moved here. She had been hired when I was hired. So we came together.

WZ: So that position of Director of Community and Donor Relations, is that a new position?

CW: No, there is no position that is defined as such now.

WZ: Okay, that's what I was wondering.

CW: But at that point that was the way it was positioned. My job was to be a liaison to the community, partially for the president, but also to work with the donors, and go to a number of

special events, and to get to know our alumni and donors. The top priority, because of the timing, was to introduce President Bornstein to the community so that she met the key people in the community and they met her. So I had a lot of opportunities and interaction with her, and the College, with the community, and of course with our donors.

WZ: So what is your first impression of Rollins when you first moved here or when you first started working for the College?

CW: Well, by the time I started working here, my impression of Rollins was pretty cemented, because we lived practically across the lake from Rollins. I think Rollins at that time, and hopefully still is, perceived as top quality, excellence, you had very high expectations from anything that came from Rollins students, any kind of publications, any kind of activities. Anytime the college did something, it was done well, so there were very high expectations of excellence. And there was a little mystique at Rollins, I think because it had a New England feel, and the students that came here were not just as they called it townies - some were - but it was such a wonderful mix so that if you lived here and came to school here, you had the experience of a national liberal arts college, which added so much depth to the community. I think anytime you have a college or a university that is an integral part of the community, and then it adds an incredible richness. I can't imagine living anywhere now that was not associated or close to an academic institution, because it adds such richness in terms of resources of the faculty, the students, staff, and the visiting speakers.

WZ: So three years later, you became director of alumni relations?

CW: (laughs) Yes, again, my life is being opened to opportunities and I just feel extraordinarily blessed. And when opportunities came along, it's all about timing and being there, and you just feel like if you're open to it, don't force things. It happens if it's meant to. Yes, I loved my job at the Donor and Community Relations, and the position of the Alumni Association came available but I did not immediately apply, because I assumed, as it had pretty much been historically true, that would hire someone who was an alum or an alumna. And I think that really was indeed what they were planning to do. Again, I think this was an alumni board member on a Sunday afternoon - I remember this call vividly - I got a call from a woman named Jane Duvall, and she said, "Cynthia, you have to apply for this position," and I said, "But Jane, I'm not an alumna." And she said, "No, but you know the College very well and you know the culture, and you know the community; you have had so much community experience, and you have worked with Dr. Bornstein. We think you are well qualified, you need to apply." So, Warren Johnson was the vice president and so I went and said - and I think the deadline had passed to apply - I said, "I'm interested in applying for this position." And he said, "Well, I think you're probably qualified, but the deadline's just about passed, and we have a couple of finalists that were considering. Will you be disappointed if you don't get the job and leave here?" And I said, "No, I'd like to get, but I love my job and I'm not unhappy with it, but this is just an opportunity where I think I would do well." And so he allowed me to apply, and we got down to two finalists, a young man from Yale and I was one of the finalists. And I had to go through the grueling process that finalists go through where you are interviewed for six hours and you have an open interview.

This search, I learned, was more exhaustive than most alumni director jobs were because at that point in time, Dr. Bornstein was here and the College needed to go to the next level and

we were preparing for a campaign. She was getting ready for her campaign, and in order to have a successful campaign, you have to have your different constituents in order. And at that time, the alumni body had not been guided to appreciate Dr. Bornstein, or to really accept her being here, because she was very different from Dr. Seymour and her style was very different. But she came with incredible vision and knowledge, and she was hired to take the college in the direction - our endowment, as you know at that point, was thirty-five million dollars, which was appalling - and her job really was to help stabilize and take us so that we could become competitive and to really go to the next-level of competition. It's amazing we stayed in business with an endowment that small. And so her job was to come in and she had to have people engaged.

It was very important for the executive director of the Alumni association to respect, and understand, and be able to work with the president so that they could engage alumni all over the country. The alumni body is very diverse demographically, and at the same time there is a feeling that needs to occur. I relished the challenge and the opportunity and it was a joy. Dr. Bornstein recognized the importance of the Alumni Association's role and Warren Johnson was - I loved working with him - he could be a real curmudgeon but he was very open to creativity and we took creative ideas and did some really exciting things. The first thing we did was to professionalize the Alumni House. The alumni office at that time - well there was nothing wrong with that, it's just the way it was, and it worked in the way of the culture - in was a very informal culture. The Alumni Board was pretty homogenous in terms of the years they graduated and they were pretty much from Florida, or local and we had a couple from out of town. And their meetings were very informal and they sat around and their office was very informal and it was a fun place to be, but it was not a professional office that was going to participate and have a key role in engaging alumni in the campaign.

So, we redid the Board. We obviously embraced the people that were there because they were wonderful people, but we expanded the Board and we developed a matrix so we would have different classes and geographical areas, and we really gave the Board important and legitimate responsibilities. You don't have a goal and you don't have a purpose, then you create your own and that usually is not a necessarily supportive initiative in College to kind of do your own thing. We worked very hard to professionalize the staff and to do creative things. Warren Johnson and Rita both encouraged professional development. They gave us funding for professional growth and development; I went to conferences, we brought in consultants, and it was things to really take this to the next-level and it was a partnership. We were able to do that and we were very proud our accomplishments. We received an award for - CASE is our national organizational council of events in supportive education - so we won a gold medal in outstanding strategic planning and board development. I had an article in the magazine on that, and we redid the Board and then had a wonderful staff that we developed. We had a woman who was working there - well first it was Jill Wacker and then who had actually help me - well us - start the program, but then Jennifer Johannesmeyer was here, who was an alumna of the College. When she was here, we won another gold medal for the model young alumni program. So we were on the cutting edge. We had board members at that point who were very serious in their role. They had clear expectations; we had one who was really into Internet, so we were the first office on campus to really do online things. The Alumni Association provided the seed money for the first website of the College because there was no money for it; the Alumni Association had a little pot of money that was supposed to support the mission of the College and the Alumni Association. That actually would pay for Matt Certo over the summer, who was a student, to set up the website for the College. Then the Alumni Association had the first page.

WZ: Yeah, I remember that. I came in 1995. I worked with Matt and remember him well, and I was the person to bring the first library webpage. So I want to thank you for your initiative.

CW: It wasn't me, it was just leadership is about knowing who to trust and who to value and having a vision - and having a shared vision - and to empower people to do what they do well. So I can't take personal credit for it other than the fact that I was in the right place at the right time with the right people in collaboration and working together.

WZ: And so, I understand that there are a total of ten thousand Rollins alumni?

CW: About twelve to thirteen thousand. And that does not count Holt or Crummer, that's just the traditional Arts and Sciences.

WZ: So what is your impression of Rollins Alumni? How many people do you really know personally being the alumni director?

CW: You're very fortunate to meet a lot of them, particularly because you do travel and you go to different places. Obviously, there is a big group of alumni locally. You get to know a lot of people by mail, and by phone, and now email. And then of course, reunion provides a wonderful opportunity for you to put names with faces and to engage. Each year you have the opportunity to engage with leaders of particular anniversary classes. One of the things that we were really excited about was - well it started out that our reunion attendance was very, very low. It was embarrassingly low, and we would try and we would try to do a party for every class and we would make ten year reunions or whatever, and people just didn't come, or very few people came and we would get the same people, and maybe they would come for their fiftieth or their twenty-fifth but beyond that, people just weren't interested. So we thought, Okay what can we do? And they tried to take credit of everyone; they tried all sorts of things. So we said, let's try something different. So we looked at the alumni base. Rollins alumni did not have a sense of class. And I know Dr. Duncan has really - and hopefully maybe in the future - the class of ten, and the class of nine and the class of eight - but generally speaking there is not a sense of class. Even though it's very small - class meaning class identification, not social class - the affinities lie within groups even though it's a small campus. In the early days, it was football, it was theater - always theater - English majors, baseball team, basketball team, sororities, fraternities; it was different affinities. So we said, Lets don't do every five year anniversaries. Why don't we hit the major years and appeal to what people want to do? Let's do affinity reunion.

So the first affinity reunion was a football reunion and at that point in time, the football team went out of business if you will, it was ended in 1951, I believe - so this was in the nineties, so as you can imagine, the people were not real young - they were probably in their seventies. Well we had a huge attendance. All these football players came back with their spouses, and then their friends would come and then the cheerleaders came. So we had this football reunion, and then people would say we were really close people ahead of us. We tried to look for a formula for cluster reunions, but formulas just don't work where you cluster your years together. All of a sudden, our numbers started going this way. So we said, okay, so this worked, let's think of other affinities. Starting at that point, we had a sport affinity and an academic affinity every year - not the two were mutually exclusive, but they were to an extent. So we would have

an English majors reunion and a crew reunion the same year. Well they would reenact the Shakespeare thing they used to do, and the alumni would come back and do that, and then we would have regatta. The largest reunion we ever had was when we had a crew reunion. Coach Lyden, a former coach of the crew team, got on the phone and called. It was the largest reunion that we ever had. Then we had all these academic majors and then the key classes too.

So when you ask about Rollins alumni, they are very connected to each other, but through affinity groups and they are very devoted to their faculty. When you talk to alumni for the most part, they have a very special place for Rollins in their heart and they will cite one, or two, or three faculty members who really changed their lives and that were very much involved. In different eras there are different people and then sometimes there were staff members. Like it was Dean Darrah, who was Dean of the Chapel, was truly one of the most beloved men - well I never knew him, but the alumni talked about him. Then there was the Dean Hanna, when President Holt was here, he was much, much beloved, and Dr. Seymour of course. You could just go down the line and then of course the faculty the members. Jack Lane had his following, and Pedro, Dr. Pequeno, had his followings. You had different faculty members that appeal. And in the theater, I mean my goodness; you had such a huge theater tradition and then the music tradition. You got Mr. Rogers and his wife and then that whole continuity. So that's where the connections were. They loved the place and they loved the faculty. Then probably until the late seventies, I would say, the Greek connections were huge. You would hear my fraternity brother or my sorority sister. I think in the eighties the Greek was still very strong, but if you weren't a Greek it wasn't the same. I would say in the fifties and sixties if did things on campus, you almost had to be a Greek or you were a Greek. Whereas it changed a lot - well the Greek system is very important and it's a wonderful connector, and it's a nice key in recent decades as it was earlier.

I will say that they were periods of time that there were alumni who were apologetic of their degrees. There were a few key times in the history of the College when Rollins' academic reputation was a little weaker than others, and it seemed that the alumni were not as connected during that time. The early seventies seemed to be one of those periods. There were a couple of times, maybe in the early sixties I bet. But for most part even there, were some stellar faculty that would bring people back. I think the big shift that really started the building was when Dr. Seymour came. Then the academic reputation really started growing. But even those who were before Dr. Seymour, Rollins provided a great education. It was truly much greater than the classroom, and you had experiences and I think the greatest thing is the connections that you made and the people from different places. It was just amazing.

When you look at the fifties when men came back from war - that had to have been an incredible time here at Rollins. I remember one gentleman saying, "Poor veterans were coming to marry rich young women." (Laughs) That happened a lot of the time, and that was a very interesting culture - but you had a wonderful culture in the fifties. You had these people who had fought for the country and they were back on campus and they were men and they valued their education. Every decade or every year has some incredible people and they are so interesting. They have done very, very interesting things, very entrepreneurial generally. You've got a lot of entrepreneurs that graduated from here. When you look at Wall Street, you don't have a lot of investment bankers that were Rollins graduates, you don't have a lot of corporate CEOs, but you see a lot of entrepreneurs. You see a lot of clever, fascinating, interesting people.

WZ: You mentioned Mr. Rogers a little while ago, one of the best known alumni, so tell us about your experience working with him.

CW: Oh, Mr. Rogers. Some of my most precious memories are of Mr. Rogers, because he is exactly the way he was when I used to watch him on television when my daughter was three years old. He was totally genuine, very humble, very committed to what he did, and when you really look back at what he did to children's television it's just phenomenal. He never capitalized on it, where as you look at Sesame Street - I love Sesame Street - but they commercialized and capitalized, and Mr. Rogers never sold his products; you don't ever see Mr. Rogers all over Toys R' Us. He kept the brand true, and he was very sincere. He came back a number of times. We were fortunate that he would come back. Of course Joanne came back very, very often, his wife. I guess my greatest memory of him was the year that he spoke at his fiftieth anniversary and he was our speaker in the Chapel. He was just amazing. There was a graduate in the nineties who was a photographer, Robert Hartley, who died several years ago, but he was taking his picture - and I remember him taking Mr. Rogers picture and I have this picture - I still have the picture that he took of Mr. Rogers and me - and then Mr. Rogers said, "Oh, I want to take your pictures. I love to take pictures." So he took Robert's camera and took Robert's picture, and that's who he genuinely was. He really cared about a person. It didn't matter who they were or what they were, he genuinely cared about the soul of the person and who they were. He was phenomenal. But I could say Joanne is equally so, and Mr. Rogers, even though he was never commercialized or whatever, he was still a celebrity. She was always in the shadow of him a bit, but she was equally phenomenal. I have very fond memories of both of them. I know Joanne is still alive, of course.

WZ: Who was some of the administrative leaders of the College of that time? You mentioned Rita, you mentioned Thad.

CW: When I was here, or when -

WZ: The ones that you got a chance to work with.

CW: Oh, the administration and leaders that I worked with? Well, Dr. Seymour had left, or was leaving, as I came in. Warren Johnson of course, the treasurer at that point was Bob Bowie when I first came, I worked with Dr. Bornstein, Steve Nelson was dean of the students. Over the years, I've had a very close collaborative relationship with Roger Casey. As vice president, I had some wonderful collaborative relationships with Dean Joyner and Dean Erdmann and we worked a lot of years - even when I was in the alumni house, I worked with Dean Erdmann - because we were always thinking about how to engage alumni and the appropriate manner with admission enrollment. Phil Roach I worked with very closely, and Penny Parker, and Dean McAllaster. Collaboration was very, very important to me, and our job at the development in my mind was not about raising money, and it was about getting people to invest in needs and things to help the College. So therefore, you would work very closely with faculty and with administration. We were there to serve them, not the other way around. It doesn't do any good for us to just raise money, you've got to know what the priorities and the needs are, so you need to try and interact with the different departments. I've loved working with Donna Cohen and also with Jonathan, even though it was a short time; obviously with Archives - we could never

do anything from the time I came without archives - whether it was donor relations, alumni relations, vice presidency - archives was the thread of relationships, and to preserve those. I'm sure I'm leaving people out. I was very fortunate to have very positive relationships especially. When I first came, some of my closest associates and associations were with the grounds keepers and with Marriot and with Facilities. They had my back. If you did events and you didn't have the support - we were genuinely appreciative and enjoyed working with them. They were great. They were so proud of this place and you could count on them to have things. If they said they were going to be there, they were there. Tom Wells was here when I first started and Chuck, and those guys and ladies were wonderful to work with.

WZ: Yeah, I remember reading an article in the alumni magazine, I really like this term that you don't see yourself as a fundraiser, but a "friend-raiser."

CW: Well, the truth of the matter is, a good development officer is donor based and is relationship based. You can go and get money from people, but to be more successful, you really do have a relationship with the people, though not personally. You must understand that you can be friendly with them and have a very warm relationship, but it was never my friendship with them. I always represented the College. It was very important to have a relationship with them on behalf of the College. Wealthy people, who by the time I became vice president, I ended up working - my portfolio of donors was obviously the more wealthy. They liked the same attention as everyone, and it's very important to have that relationship to know what their interests are, to know about their children, to know what they like and what they don't like and to know what their priorities are. For example, there are donors that we would have that you would never ask to help with the dormitories; you knew that they loved students. There were others that would more like buildings, and other people liked other things, you just have to know. This was very human and this was something that they really enjoyed investing in. And I really did see it as an investment, and then it was our responsibility to let them know how their investment was used.

One of the things that we really paid attention to was what we called stewardship, which was not just saying thank you and running. We had developed systems when I was vice president. We had systems where not only did we do the thank you notes, but you would know the people and so if you saw an article that they would be interested in or if they had a student, you would get a report from a student, or you would get students to write notes, or you would let them really understand how valuable their contributions were. It wasn't just taking their money and running. You wanted people to feel good about investing in the College and know that it was paying off.

WZ: So in the process of being vice president for development, did you get to know the Cornells well?

CW: Um-hm.

WZ: Tell us about your experience with them.

CW: Oh, oh, the Cornells. I knew the Cornells from the time I came because as donor relations director, it was my job to plan the trustee dinners, and plan the donor dinners, and all the events

at the president's home, so the Cornells were there, and so you always spent lots of time. You knew who they were going to sit with, and what they were going to do. Mrs. Cornell was in her wheelchair and because she had polio. They were really interesting people in the fact that - Mr. Cornell particularly - was very unassuming, very quiet. Their home down in Delray Beach was very, very simple, nothing fancy at all. It has some really pretty antiques. I never saw their home in Orange County, New York, but I'm assuming they had some lovely furniture; but there was nothing pretentious about them. And he was extraordinarily philanthropic. I guess Harriet's one thing was the fact that her jewelries - she had beautiful jewelry - but she would go to cloth world and she made these ascots for Mr. Cornell, and she would go and get dresses and she would get ladies that would help her take them up. They lived frugally. They loved their dogs over the years. They were very generous. They loved having people come visit them. At the beginning, we would see them periodically - and of course, Bill Gordon, who was a predecessor to me in the alumni house, who was the associate vice president of development, and he retired - not only was he the college liaison, he watched after the Cornells. He was - Mr. Cornell said it - was one of his best friends. He genuinely loved him. Mrs. Cornell could be a little difficult sometimes, but after I got to know her, I think some of the difficulties were because she was in a lot of pain, and she came increasingly limited in her mobility. She had to lift herself and as she got older she had a lot of arthritis, so she became more physically dependent on help, and they were very reluctant to get help for a long time. She loved the attention. I would say probably that Mr. Cornell's philanthropy was a little purer than hers. They were both very generous. Mr. Cornell loved the College - he absolutely loved the College, and being a trustee was one of the most important things in his life. I don't think he missed - over my nineteen years here - I don't think he missed maybe one meeting. He was rarely absent. It was a very important thing to him.

Before Mrs. Cornell died, she did not have a disease to indicate that she was about to die, I guess she sensed it. They had had show dogs, and then they didn't have a dog for a long time because the dogs would be so hard to care for. I think they had the Samoyed. Before Mrs. Cornell died - probably the last year that she was alive - she surprised Mr. Cornell with a dog that was very much like the dog - it was the same breed that they had and had loved so much that they had not had. So she surprised him. Then at that point, Mr. Cornell was no longer able to physically lift Mrs. Cornell and so they had help that stayed with them. In order to get the dog - Jean, he was the one that helped there - he had agreed to help take care of it. He was thrilled. It was the worst dog. He paid so much money to have that dog trained. It was the most obnoxious dog. (Laughter) It was Ivan the Terrible. Mr. Cornell liked to drive and so after Mrs. Cornell died, we wanted to have someone down in the College, because he was so lonely, so one or two of us would gather at least every three weeks, so we saw him quite often, and he liked to drive. So we would say, Why don't we just meet you there, and he would say, "Oh no, you need to come by and see the dog." And so we would go see the dog, and the dog would jump all over you. We used to wear black suits, but no one can wear black suits to Mr. Cornells. These Samoyeds were white and they shed and they jumped all over you. Oh, they were just obnoxious. And he got Ivan, and then he got Posey, which was calmer and she was sweeter. And Mr. Cornell was - well, we never wanted to ride with him. I liked to go down with one of our development officers who were a male because he would let him drive. Mr. Cornell was of the generation that ladies shouldn't drive. You would just pray an awful lot. Because he was scary, he was just absolutely scary to ride with, because he was just this tiny little man and he would speed up and slow down, and he could hardly see over the steering wheel and he should not have been driving. It would scare you to death.

One of the neatest things was that Posey had puppies and that was just like Mr. Cornell's grandbabies. He had the best time. Cornell University, which was also a recipient of some of his generosity, sent a vet student down, who stayed for like two weeks to take care of the puppies and all of that. Carolyn Plank, who was with donor relations and also a professor here - a speech teacher - planned a puppy party. She had gotten these towels and had a monogram, "Posey's puppies." Dr. Bornstein hated dogs (laughs). We went down for like a baby shower for puppies - we had a puppy party - we went down and we had some of Mr. Cornell's friends from Palm Beach who really weren't that fond puppies either. We had these cute little furry white balls, and so you had a towel in your lap in case the puppy had an accident, and everybody got to hold a puppy, and oh and ah over Mr. Cornell's puppies. That was a highlight for him, because it was his children or grandchildren. You never had to worry about taking about anything, you would just listen to Posey's stories. Ivan never, he never, calmed down; he was awful. Fortunately, when Poesy had her puppies, they took him away and boarded him - well he stayed with friends for a while. When Mr. Cornell died, they took care of the puppies in the will. They were well taken care of. I think they went back to New York to the breeders, they were well taken care of.

WZ: That's a fascinating story (laughter). What are some of the special projects that you got involved with that you'd like to share with us as the vice president, or fundraising, or special moments that you remember?

CW: There were a number of highlights; I think when we really turned reunion around, that was one of the highlights, professionalizing the alumni association, and really building on the pride. Pride enhancement was really one of our goals, to really build the pride of the alumni. They had so much to be proud of, and so we tried to communicate with them in a way that we could generate more pride. I look at the alumni recognition awards and also in the magazine to help alumni get to know the exciting things. It enhances pride in the institution, and you see what other alumni are doing. There were a lot of events.

My greatest memories were of the people, and my greatest joy and satisfaction really came from when I was vice president with building a collaborative team. I had a wonderful team. They were very gifted people. When I first started, we had different departments. They liked each other, but one department did not understand what another department did, and so there wasn't mistrust but it was just that they just didn't really understand. There was a mild friction between some of the departments. We really developed a collaborative team. It has to be genuine, but it has to be orchestrated. So by the time we were done, we had a collaborative team. I was so proud of the professionalism of our team, and it was amazing the creativity - and when people started working together - the synergy that came out of the ideas. We worked so well as a team, and my senior team, which we met regularly, held me accountable. I had my own portfolio of donors too. It was that respect and accountability that we had for each other. We had corporate values, and I think that a lot of times, you have the values, but I think that the department's division really started experiencing the values. They really had respect, integrity, collaboration, trust, quality, professionalism. All those things we really did exercise. If someone really didn't hold up their bearing, we tried their part, and then it was of the reflection of the team, so the team took peer accountability. What our goal was for everyone to understand that development is a process, and everybody in the division, regardless of what their title was, had an invaluable role to play. If one person didn't do their job well, it was a reflection on the whole team. Everybody was a key person, not the vice president - it wasn't about title. And so when

did our annual retreats, we did it without titles, and everyone equally participated. We would do it around a book, or around a theme, so everyone regardless of their seniority or their position, whatever, was respected equally. They became to expect that an entry level administrative assistant were professional just as the associate vice president or assistant vice president was professionally. It was hopefully warm and friendly. It wasn't about being liked, it was about being fair. It was just a generally warm regard and excitement over what a collaborative team could do. I think we enjoyed a lot of success because we were donor centered and we had a relationship with our donors, but also relationships within the College and also relationships within our teams. We really were a relationship based tradition. I think that was very genuine.

WZ: I understand also you've been teaching regular courses to students?

CW: Ah, yes (laughter)

WZ: Tell us about that.

CW: Oh, that's a fun thing. Some point in time, I decided that I've always been fascinating with table settings and how to do that - maybe it's my southern heritage. Not just formal manners, but just protocol. Then of course, when I was head of donor relations with a female president and a male spouse as the president, we had to go back and see protocol books on how they should be addressed and all the kind of protocol. We had events and you had to stay in protocol, so it kind of limits up your understanding of how to do things. I took a class and I got certified; it was a birthday present that I told my husband that I wanted. It was a class in etiquette - business etiquette - it wasn't online. It was like a two-day thing and I went to get my certificate. After that I did it as a volunteer, and at one point in time I thought well maybe I'll do this when I'm not working full time. But you have to market and all that stuff and it's not worth the effort, but I loved doing it. So for six to eight years I did it for career services and then also for Crummer. The Crummer students were a little more serious. We did it around a meal and Marriot was wonderful. We did a five-course meal and we discussed which fork to use, and then there were questions about what to order when you're at a restaurant. We talked about interviews and banquets and there were all sorts of questions, but they generally were focused on business table etiquette - not only what was in front of us, but also in restaurants and all that.

It was just so funny. I saw a student the other day that was an alumna, and she was like, "Mrs. Wood, I still remember that business etiquette." We had this little joke about which was your glass and which was your plate. So I would say, "If you're not dyslexic, this is the way - this is the "d" (forms a d with right hand) and this is the "b" (forms a b with left hand) and everything on this side is the liquids. So if you sit down and everything is pushed together, you know that the glasses and the cups are yours. The plates are in the middle and your bread and your butter is over here." And they were saying, we can't ever go to any event without doing this to remember. (Laughter) It was a joy, I loved it. The faculty members came and the last two years I did it, it started to become a requirement involved with athletic teams. I used to do it just for seniors who were doing it for interviews, but then all the athletic teams did it - the coaches would come with athletic teams. Some of the first-year students probably weren't as serious about it as a Crummer or senior because it really had meaning to them, but for the most part, they really enjoyed it and had great questions. We had fun but it was very helpful information. If nothing else, it would just raise their consciousness so they would think about it. And I would

say, “You know, you don’t have to use the good manners, but at least be aware so you can choose not to.”

WZ: I know that you are a great speaker. I really enjoyed your presentation at the Book-A-Year..

CW: Oh, thank you.

WZ: Its here in Archives. But also, you are a scholar.

CW: Oh (laughs), not really.

WZ: Tell us about this article.

CW: Oh, this is the one that talks about how we built a collaborative model very consciously. So that really just shares kind of the steps that we went through on how to build a collaborative team. You have to force it; you have to be deliberate with it.

WZ: Also, I read that you served on the Winter Park Community Redevelopment Board.

CW: Um.

WZ: The Winter Park Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board?

CW: That was years ago. Yeah, that was a long, long time ago. Recently, before I left, I was on the Winter Park Institute Community Advisory board trying to get the community involved, but the CRD Advisory Board, that was years, and years and years ago.

WZ: Now, looking back, how do you view your Rollins career of nineteen years?

CW: It provided me with experiences, knowledge, skills, and opportunities that I don’t know where else I could have gotten them. They are invaluable and they have opened so many opportunities that I was able to go places and meet people and be in situations that I would have never been able to do otherwise. It was a perfect job in my mind. I really enjoyed it. It was very intense, especially if you’re responsible - I couldn’t certainly have did by myself - but when you’re held responsible for the fundraising of the College. The people I met I’ve always genuinely - I’m really fascinated by the people; people are a study for me. It’s just fascinating to appreciate people for where they are and who they are. In this job I could be talking to the most radically conservative person one minute to a sports fanatic the next, to the most liberal person next. It was just such a joy and my job was really to listen and to know who they were. You had to be able to know which questions to ask. I certainly couldn’t be conversing in a liberal arts education. The people fascinate me and they were very eager to share, and so I just really appreciate the opportunity to meet so many, very, very interesting people. It wasn’t just the mostly wealthy people that were interesting. It was everybody who walked through the door was interesting in their own way. Some were really challenging too (laughter) - really challenging.

WZ: Tell us some of the challenges that you experienced.

CW: Well, let's see. We had a gentleman that came in the Alumni House one day. He came in and he said he wanted to leave the College a million and a half dollars. He introduced his second wife - he was an older gentleman - and he was giving us all this information and whatever, so thanked him - we were always gracious to him - and then he went out to his car. Well, he had parked in the fire lane, which is out of the jurisdiction of the campus police, so he had a ticket. Well, he came back in furious. He said he'll never give another penny to the College, and he will never come back to the College again.

We had another gentleman who was - well he was very a special man - and as he got older, he became very challenging. He had been - I don't know if he was an Episcopal priest - but he worked in the Episcopal Church somehow. He came from a very wealthy family and his resources were pretty much given out. It was kind of like his wife was just tired of taking care of him, but he just loved Rollins so much. And so he would drive down in his car that was just falling apart with his scraggly dog. He would come down, and every time he would come in and talk about Rollins, he would weep every time he talked his experiences about Rollins - he would just literally cry. I cannot tell you about how unkempt he was. The older he got, he would become incontinent. He didn't shower well. He was so excited because he had donated to the College, but he just donated so much love to the College. He came down for the campaign celebration, the big one where **Amelia Horn** - or somebody - with the orchestra and all, and he came down and oh, he smelled so bad. He was staying at the Mount Vernon, and we were really worried about his physical safety. Then he went to the Chapel for something, and he had an incontinent accident in the Chapel, so I called Pat Powers, and said, "Pat, we have really got to take care of George, but where do you seat George - his name was George, but I don't want to use his last name, not Cornell, for goodness sakes - where do you seat him so that he feels really good, but at the same time that he is not offensive to people?" It's just kind of like, everybody scattered when he came, and for good reasons. Bless Pat's heart, we got him some clean clothes and he went over and helped him shower and all, but he had some issues. What we did, we managed to get him up to the event, and rather than putting him at a table with everybody - because we had cocktails upstairs and the performance up stairs - I said, "George, we have a very special place for you. We are going to sit over here." So he and I sat over on the side so people wouldn't have to smell him even though he had a shower. He was another one, but he just absolutely loved the College.

Then we had some very colorful characters. One of our fraternity founders came back and I think the young men were mortified. He came back for reunion one year and he said, "Oh, I'm one of the founders of the chapter of your fraternity - I'll leave it nameless. He had on a blue velvet, kind of Elvis type jacket and he had these big metals around him, and I think he opened up his suitcase and there was some porn in there (laughter). It was just amazing to see. He made a very significant gift to the College, so he was invited to all the donor dinners. I declared some of his dates were from an escort service. That was always interesting. Then we had just lovely, lovely people, like Joanne and her sorority sisters. Then we had just fun, fun, fun people who just loved the College - incredible athletes, very accomplished people - they just ran the whole gamma of interest and personalities. There are tons of stories, some of them I've repressed. They were always some that were very challenging. You also have to deal with some who are mentally ill. They call in and imagine and hallucinate and say they are going to sue the College over this, that, and the other. So you had challenges that you had to handle, and you have to

handle those very carefully and very discretely. For the most part, they are just incredibly generous, lovely, lovely people, generous of who they are.

WZ: That's an incredible experience. So how is your retirement life? What is going to come up next? Are you going to come back and do something else?

CW: I don't see myself coming back here. I don't know that you can go back; I think you build on experiences - I won't say never because you never know. I have come back and spoken a couple of times at the philanthropy and not-for-profit leadership center. My new passion builds on my experiences here. My new area of interest is strategic organization, and strategically engaging women as philanthropists. Women control most of the wealth in the country and that is going to increase. Sixty percent of the college graduates are women. Even when it's a couple making decisions, the woman is the primary influencer of where they give the money. Women think very differently in terms of philanthropy and the decisions are based on unique qualifications and unique motivations. Quite often in colleges and universities, I know their organizations have very traditional, almost male model of development. You go and hear case, meet, you go and say these are our priorities, and giving is a little bit competitive. It's a little bit based on we need this, we need this, whatever. Now this is generalized, of course. If a man makes a decision, he is more likely to respond to peer pressure. When women give, they are less competitive in terms of their giving. They would much rather be collaborative; they are very creative, and are about change. Rather than saying, Oh I want to give to this building or for this, they want to know what is the outcome going to be with my money, what change is it going to make, what's going to be better? They want a lot of accountability, takes them a lot longer to make decisions. The approach is very different, so organizations need to be very strategic. Interestingly enough, a lot of principles that are applied to women are becoming significant for what we are calling the new philanthropists to meet younger generations of men and women. Whereas before my generation, men would give money in the trust organization and they liked recognition and the chest bumping. But now, particularly entrepreneurs and gen-X's, they want accountability - especially entrepreneurs - they are looking at this as an investment and want to know if they made a good investment and they want to know where their money went. They are not going to trust universities - they don't trust any organizations - they want to know if their money is well used and well spent. There is a lot more accountability that needs to be given. But women especially, they operate differently. As they gain more influence - and it's not a feminist thing, it's just reality - as they gain more influence and they outlive men, and down to the days when I'm going to give to my husband's charity because it's his money, when he's gone, a wife will honor him to a degree, but she's going to give to give to who she wants to give to. So you have to teach her how to think like a philanthropist in terms of being purposeful, but it's also what I'm doing as a volunteer. I'm chairman of the Center for Woman's Philanthropy with a community foundation. Professionally, I have a consultant company that I have just started that I want to work with organizations with strategically engaging women so that their development plan has some strategic things that are looking at the women too, in addition to the good work that they do.

WZ: That sounds great, I wish you the best. We appreciate your endeavors. Anything else you would like to share with us before we close?

CW: No, thank you for doing this. Thank you for the opportunities to talk about myself. I thought I was going to be talking about alumni (laughs).

WZ: Thank you for participation and your contribution to Rollins College. You've helped us preserve the history of the College.

CW: It's a wonderful, wonderful history to preserve. Thank you.