

Southern Voices Oral History Project
Florida Southern College

Interviewee: Janet Martin Snapp, Class of 1973

Interviewer: Alexyss Staron

Date: April 9, 2012

Location: McKay Archives Center, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL

Medium: Audiocassette

Transcription: Alexyss Staron, April 24, 2012

Staron: *It is April 9, 2012 and I'm interviewing Janet Martin Snapp. Her graduating year was 1973. What brought you to Florida Southern?*

Snapp: I really enjoyed being here. I came here in 1969 and I was on campus until 1973. Then I married my husband (in 1972) and I graduated in 1973, on time, and I enjoyed all of my years of college although not every single year was on campus. I came to Florida Southern because someone from Kentucky who we knew was here on campus. I had visited FSC several times as a teenager to come visit this girl who was on campus; a friend of the family. I just fell in love with it. Being from Kentucky my father told me that I had to go to the University of Kentucky or out of state, and so I was like, "Hmmm, let's see ... what state would I like to go to ...?" I remembered the good times I had visiting at Florida Southern as a teenager and so I applied to Florida Southern, and Furman, and Wake Forest, and I ended up here at Florida Southern.

Staron: *What was your major here?*

Snapp: When I came I thought I was going to be a math major, until I had calculus! I made it through one semester of calculus and then the second semester of calculus that freshman year, I decided I better find something else that didn't involve as much math, and I switched to elementary education.

Staron: *Did you do anything on campus? Or, were you involved with any extracurricular activities while you were on campus?*

Snapp: I really enjoyed being on campus. I got involved in student government some. I was always playing intramural sports. I did join a sorority, but you couldn't join at that time unless you made your grades in the fall, so you could not even go out for rush unless you made a 3.0 GPA. In the spring semester you could go out for rush, but you had to make your grades during the first semester you were here. I did pledge AOP [Alpha Omicron Pi] and I enjoyed that. My husband ended up being AOP sweetheart our senior year and it was a great experience!

The other thing I did was try out for cheerleader my freshman year. I was on the JV squad until some of the varsity cheerleaders didn't go to a game one time and they were asked to ... I guess ... to not either

be on the squad or they quit; and so they needed to move some of the JV cheerleaders up to the varsity cheerleading squad. The cheerleading coach, who is Mrs. Kathy Benn now, is still on campus, and I see her all the time. What a small world to run into her and know that 39 years ago, she was my cheerleading coach! That's really a fun experience.

I really was pretty busy on campus, going from activity to activity. But I did find time to study! I did fine.

Staron: *Going back to AOP; now we have a fall rush. You didn't have that? You had to wait till spring?*

Snapp: If they had fall rush it was for transfer students, someone who came in older than a freshman. Freshmen could not go out for rush until the spring.

Staron: [inaudible]

Snapp: Right, right. That's something that's different.

Staron: *What is your husband's name?*

Snapp: He's John Philip Snapp and he was a Theta Chi. He was a baseball pitcher for the baseball team here. He was on one of the first teams that went to the nationals, and came back with the big trophy from when they first started being in the top echelon of all the teams in the nation for Division II. So he was a part of that, but he injured his elbow and didn't get to play past the middle of his sophomore year. But he definitely enjoyed doing that. He's two years older than I am, and he graduated at Christmas of 1971, so he was finished then.

I'll tell you something interesting about him and all the guys on campus. The Vietnam War was going on, so all of the guys on campus on Wednesday wore ROTC uniforms; everybody. The boots, the camouflage outfits, everything. And they had drills on Wednesday afternoons on the current soccer field and all of them were preparing to be officers in the Army, following graduation. I'm sure a lot of them did go serve, but by the time his four years at college was completed, the Vietnam War was ending. A lot of the guys who were with him did not have to go to serve in Vietnam, but all of them left here and went to whatever branch of the Army they had gotten into.

His branch was artillery. We were married in February of 1972 and we went together to Fort Sill, Oklahoma and were there three months so that he could attend officer training school. Then we came back to Lakeland so that I could finish school. When I came back I was in summer school, and then I interned, and then I finished my classes. That senior year was the year that I was actually married and graduated as Janet Martin Snapp.

Staron: *Is he still in the military?*

Snapp: He did owe them seven years of reserves, so one weekend a month he took care of that duty that he owed them for the ROTC scholarship that he was on. But he never has served after that. I don't even think he got to first lieutenant; I think he would have had to have served a little longer than that. I think he was finished with his term of duty probably around 1979 or '80.

Staron: *Did you have any children?*

Snapp: We do, we have two boys. One was born in 1980 and one was born in 1983. The younger son went to Florida State and he's finished and is a technology major and works for Publix Corporation. My older son is going to be a transfer junior next fall, in some kind of biology or environmental degree, so we will get one Florida Southern graduate, we hope, out of one of the boys. I'm real happy about that.

Staron: *What was a typical day like, here at Florida Southern, back then?*

Snapp: The classes my freshman year were very interesting. The first semester I was here, we took classes on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and other classes on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. I tell people that and they are like, "That can't be," and I say, "It is!" We had Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday classes. They were all the same length, so at that time they had not figured out how to make Tuesday/Thursday classes longer so that the amount of time was the same. Now the second semester I was here it did change.

I remember having to wear dresses to Sunday lunch, and the guys had to wear a tie. I remember that we didn't wear shorts a lot to class back then. The guys who were in fraternities would wear a tie on their pledge day or when they were pledges ... I don't know if that's still true.

Staron: *It's still formal wear every Monday, if I am right.*

Snapp: On Mondays, okay. Well that was true then, too, so those of us in sororities and fraternities were kind of dressed up, or if you were a pledge, you had to wear that tie a lot for the guys, I remember that. I remember stealing things, like their brick; they had to carry a brick around or, the Theta Chis carried around a brick and the Pikes carried a cane.

Staron: *They still do, carry the cane.*

Snapp: If you took a cane, they had to come to the sorority house and sing to get it back. That was fun times to enjoy doing those kinds of pranks on each other.

We also had "candle lights" at night, and they would call everybody down to the lobby and they would pass a candle around. When a person had something to announce, like an engagement or a panned or something like that, then you blew out the candle, and it surprised everybody and everybody was so happy for that person. As the candle went around the circle you were wondering, "Who is it that's going to blow it out?" That's a happy memory I have.

I remember being in class, then going to cheerleading practice, going to intramurals, going to dinner, going to the library, going out for pizza or something after that. So it was a busy, fun day. A lot of times when I tell people about the hours at the dorms they don't believe that either. My freshman year I had to be in the dorm at 9:00 at night.

Staron: *Are you kidding??*

Snapp: There were no guys allowed upstairs at all.

Staron: *Oh ... my goodness!!*

Snapp: There was this big rack of cards that if you were going out, you had to sign out to say where you were going and who you were with. Now if you made your grades, which I did, I got to go out for rush in the spring, you got to stay out till 10:00 during the week, because you had proved yourself that you could make good grades. On the weekends, the curfew was 10:00, and then if you had good grades you could stay out 'til 11:00. It was an incentive to make good grades, so that you could have better hours!

Classes for me were in Edge Hall, which looks very much the same today as it did then. When I was a student, we set up the preschool that's down underneath in the basement. We were planning that preschool while I was a student, and it probably opened either my senior year when I wasn't on campus, or the next year. So the preschool's been in the basement of Edge Hall for a very long time. It was really fun to set it up and see how the different centers worked and involve the education majors.

Staron: *Now as I was looking through the yearbook I noticed that the buildings for fraternities and sororities were different. They were where Nicholas and Wesley are now, and now they are towards the back of the property towards the Roberts Academy area.*

Snapp: Right. I currently teach at the Roberts Academy, and so it's a very unique situation to be back on campus, and to be able to walk around with our students and learn about the campus and all.

But at the lake, there were seven buildings that were all attached by a single roof across the front, almost like a porch/awning type thing all the way across, so each sorority had their own lobby they could decorate and then you had upstairs bedrooms and two to a room, usually, and a room mother was there. She was the one who was kind of in charge of the houseful of girls.

If you look around campus, there was nothing beside the Branscomb Auditorium. The business building was not there at all, that gray and black and white one that's up there. There was nothing across the road like the nursing or humanities buildings. None of those buildings were there. In the middle of campus where all the covered promenades are now, there were a lot of citrus trees, because the citrus department used those trees for classes, doing grafting and research. Edge Hall was there.

I was in Joseph-Reynolds, on the third floor. Guys were allowed in the lobby, but not upstairs, like I said. The upstairs, where it's screened in now, was open, so girls could actually sunbathe and read a book or whatever you wanted to do up on those white shelves that are up there below the screening. So the screening goes from the roof down to these white ...

Staron: *The columns?*

Snapp: Yes, where the columns ended ... right, the short walls that are white, we could actually sit out there and talk and just visit and all that. We still had suites. I think all the insides of those dorms upstairs look very much the same. In the suites there were always cards going on, there was always popcorn, there was always music. We didn't have TV's in our rooms, and there were no computers then. The only phones were one on each wing. Imagine that! On Joseph-Reynolds on one floor there would only be three phones.

Staron: *We already have a problem sharing bathrooms ... three phones?? Oh, my goodness!*

Snapp: There was an intercom of some kind so they could let you know that you had a guest in the lobby. Someone at the desk downstairs would page up and say, "Janet, you have a visitor in the lobby."

That would let me know that someone had come to see me. I didn't know whether it was a girl or a guy, but I figured it was a guy because girls could come up. Does that help you with what the campus looked like?

Staron: *It's a lot different now, than it was back then.*

Snapp: Oh, it's just ... really ... much more beautiful now for all you students.

Staron: *Were there any places you would meet, eat, like under-cafe? Did they have any other places?*

Snapp: We actually did, we called it "The Sub", I think, and we would go down there and get salads and things. The cafeteria honestly looks very much just like it did. The back room was sororities and fraternities. They sat back there. They had certain tables that were theirs.

Staron: *So you separated the normal student population ...*

Snapp: We always had guests at the tables and stuff but there were certain tables and certain places that were assigned; kind of where your group just always had meals together. I think some of the fraternities were out in the big room, and my husband told me that was so they could check out the girls that came through the line! I said that doesn't surprise me; that was probably true!

Staron: *That's probably why, in the cafeteria, towards the drinks, there are two long tables where a lot of the fraternities sit!*

Snapp: Ah huh, see? Now you know. They're checking out the girls! That's been a tradition. There also was a wall across the road from the lunchroom. There was a low white wall there, and that was called Zeta Chi wall, and when people would come out of dinner, there were always guys sitting there, that you had to walk past to get to the sorority houses. There was no Willis Gardens, no Wellness Center ... the pool was there, but it wasn't the pool that's there now. It was a much smaller pool.

Staron: *The pool was in the same general area?*

Snapp: Yes. It was more in the area where the lanes are, where you swim in the lanes? It was more at that end, not the part towards the lake.

Staron: *It was where a lot of people play basketball?*

Snapp: Right. So where people swim the laps was more where it was, at that end.

Staron: *Did you have a swim team back then?*

Snapp: I don't remember that there was a swim team. There weren't a whole lot of sports. There was basketball, soccer—because we cheered for that—and there was baseball. There was no softball. I don't remember volleyball, other than intramurals. There was crew on the lake, and I think the college still owns the crew sculls. They're about 20 feet long and it took a team of people rowing and a coxswain, and crew would go across Lake Hollingsworth and you can imagine how pretty that was. Teams would come here to compete with us. It really was a neat sport. Not that many people did it, of course, but it was something that was available. But women weren't in sports, other than cheering and intramurals.

Staron: *Were there any water sports, like skiing?*

Snapp: The lake was there, but honestly I don't remember that anyone skied. I know Coach Benn, Kathy Benn, who's here now, could give you a really good history of how women's sports began, because she was one of the people who was very active in doing that.

Staron: *Are there any additional thoughts about school or anything else you did here you'd like to share?*

Snapp: One of the interesting things was when my husband and I went on a date, we would go park and kiss and all that [laughs], and you parked facing the water. There were no curbs, no anything. You just pulled off of Lake Hollingsworth like ... over in the Sump area and also on around from the college. You could just sit there and park and watch the lake and just sit and talk, or ... you know ... whatever you wanted to do ... [laughs].

Staron: *Was that the place where everybody went? Was it like the "hangout?"*

Snapp: It was a place where you could go on a date and ... be by yourself. So there wasn't a movie to watch or anything like that [laughs] it was just ... a quiet place to go. I think one of his fraternity brothers one time didn't put the car in reverse and touched the gas pedal and went down IN the water and all the guys had to come pull the car out!! That's a Theta Chi story that somebody could tell! Not me! But we had a good time.

When I arrived at Southern, you know, you came by car. Airplanes in the early '70's or late '60's ... you know, it wasn't real common to fly.

Staron: *Was it expensive to fly?*

Snapp: I guess so. I just never had flown a whole lot. Now once I was here, I flew home for Christmas and Thanksgiving and all that. So I guess it was depending on what your family had exposed you to, as to whether or not you had had a lot of that. But we would all get in a taxi ... three or four girls from the dorm would get in a taxi ... and we would go to the store together and split the price of the taxi. Hardly anybody had a car. Just some guys had cars, and it was nice when they would take you or whatever. One of the interesting things was how I met my husband. I am a Kentucky sports fan and my parents sent me tickets for the Kentucky football game which was in Tampa, and they were playing Florida; the University of Florida would play Kentucky over in Tampa. I didn't have any way to get there but I had the tickets, and my husband had a car on campus, and that's how we met. I asked him if he wanted to go to the game and he said yes, and I said, "Well, I've got the tickets, if you've got the car!" So that's how one of our first dates came about.

Staron: *Awwww!*

Snapp: That just shows you how times have changed over the years. Nice happy memories.

Staron: *Was there anything in downtown Lakeland, any places to eat or movie theaters ...*

Snapp: We would walk over to South Florida and eat at the Reesecliff, it's about three blocks, where the nursing building is, if you go straight to South Florida. That was a common thing that people would walk

over there. You would go to the Publix shopping center that was under the arch, South Florida, or you would go down to Memorial Boulevard and that's where there was a Sears and it's where a big government building is now—they're using it for a government building, and there was a Publix there. Shopping was there, jewelry was there, beauty salons were there; so that's why four or five of us girls would get in a cab and split it, it was about a dollar apiece, to go down there. Then you'd call them and come back. It was probably a good mile walk if we had walked all the way down there. But that's where you would go and stock up on shampoo and all that stuff. The bookstore was still there, the mailboxes are in just about the same places. There were bathrooms down there, they are still the same. Now where you have the little shop-and-go type place, what's it called? The little Moc Mart? Yeah, we didn't have that. But we did have that little place you could go get French fries and a hamburger, stuff like that, but it was on your money, it wasn't on your food money.

Staron: *No swipe cards?*

Snapp: No swipe cards, and you could eat all you wanted at the cafeteria but you couldn't take anything out.

Staron: *Well you can find ways to do that.*

Snapp: Guys in sports really had to eat well and then if they missed the ball game [?] they were paid food money to get something on their way back to campus or something.

I just have nothing but happy memories about it. I'm so glad I went here and I'm so glad that I have the opportunity to work here on campus and work for Florida Southern College, by being at the Roberts Academy. The Roberts Academy was opened two falls ago. I'm now talking to you in April of 2012, so it would have opened in the fall of 2010. I was a retired schoolteacher and the school opened with 23 students for children with dyslexia, and now we are at 65 students our second year. Hal and Margie Roberts donated something like 3.5 million dollars to make sure the school got started and got under reconstruction, and the building we are using was the United Methodist Conference Building for the entire state of Florida. They [the United Methodists] have now moved to a new location on Lake Wire downtown.

I honestly don't remember going to downtown Lakeland a whole lot. I think there was a Maas Brothers and there was a Penny's downtown, but I really didn't learn about those until after I was married. Whatever we needed we bought at home and brought with us, or if we needed to go down to a shopping center it was just for things you'd need; deodorant, toothpaste, hairspray, haircuts, and things like that.

Staron: *Now for the Roberts Academy, were there a lot of elementary education majors that work over there, did they become teachers?*

Snapp: That is one of the neatest things about the Roberts Academy is that students come over there and donate their time, because a class requires them to be there to help with reading. They come over and help us with the students. No teacher can have more than 12 students, and these are students who have been in public school, most of them, and are having difficulty with reading and with keeping up and their parents want to try something new. It has been extremely successful. We just love on the kids, they feel that love, they feel like they can try again, they're willing to give a good effort and they are being successful again. It's like giving them a whole new chance to start over; it's like a do-over. And I'm

just so thrilled to be a part of it. It's just something I never dreamed I would do. We're trained in a method of teaching them called Orton-Gillingham, and it's been a national program that has worked and been successful, it's just not talked about or advertised a lot. We've actually got someone who's training all of the teachers, and it's almost like getting another masters degree. I already have two masters degrees, so I feel like I am just ready to learn, you know, like getting a whole other study of doing it. There were three teachers the first year we opened. I had first and second grades, someone did third and someone did fourth. This year we have seven teachers, and next year for sure we are going to have eight, maybe nine. We have grown.

Staron: *You've grown quite fast!*

Snapp: We really have. Word of mouth has really spread and five more classrooms will be constructed this summer, in the second floor of the [former] United Methodist Conference Building. It's now called the Roberts Academy. It's really been a privilege and I can't think of anything I'd rather be doing at this time in my life. I'm thrilled to be an employee of Florida Southern College, as well as giving back to kids who need it. It's really special.

Staron: *It's nice that they have Roberts Academy. It's nice that they do that for the kids.*

Snapp: Yes it is. We're the only school that's a full-time school for dyslexia in the entire state of Florida.

Staron: *That would have been nice, for me!*

Snapp: You've admitted to me that you have dyslexia. And it's a struggle.

Staron: *Yes, it is!*

Snapp: You've got to learn different ways to learn and cope, and learn what works for you and re-writing your notes probably, and then ...

Staron: *Yes, talk about reading five or eight times, just to get it, and then ...*

Snapp: Right! And it must be frustrating when kids can get it the first time. They take it for granted.

Staron: *Yes. For me, I ... you feel like a failure, and it's like, "What's going on? Am I not ... I don't understand it ..."*

Snapp: We've taught all the kids that we have, that they will learn a different way to learn the new things they have to process, that you're gifted in another way. Our philosophy is that you have gifts that you will use to give back that are different than other people will have.

Staron: *Yes, I'm more of a counseling kind of person. I like talking to people. And I like solving people's problems, I guess, in a counseling sort of way ...*

Snapp: Right! You're probably a good listener, too!

Staron: *Oh yes! Well, maybe not to my mom, but ... !*

Snapp: That's because of your age! [laughs]

Staron: *I thought it would have been really nice when I was younger if I would have been raised, education-wise, through a Roberts Academy. It would have probably helped me a lot more.*

Snapp: It really ... yes, we've had some other college students from Florida Southern come over and talk to our students and that's good for them to hear, that they can still go to college, you know, they're still going to be successful ...

Staron: *It's hard! But ...*

Snapp: You're going to have to work at it. I think that's one thing we've loved them through, the possibilities that they have for the future.

Staron: *It gets you to learn your difficulties and what you need to work on more, even though if I didn't have Roberts Academy, you get to know yourself, and know what works and what doesn't, and if you need help then there are always teachers that can help ...*

Snapp: Right. And that is one thing that is still true of Florida Southern. The teachers cared so much about us, you could always go talk to a teacher, you could always get them to help explain something again. When you go to the big universities you're not even being taught by the teacher, and I think that's one reason I'm so thrilled that my son is coming here, because I think he will be great with engaged learning. I think that's going to be a really good fit for him.

Staron: *So that's nice, that you have your second generation coming behind you.*

Snapp: Yes! We're really thrilled about that.

I just think this is a great idea, to be interviewing people and going back, and making us go back and look at the yearbook, and go, "Oh, my gosh! Look at how we dressed!" I tell people that when I came to Southern, my mother said, "What are your grades going to be like?" And I said, "I don't know," but I know I certainly have learned a lot. You learn a lot about life and friendships and what the challenges for yourself are, and what you can do, and you can gain that confidence that you can do things that you didn't know you could do. I just really think getting away and going to college is the best ... and to go to a liberal arts school where you get a broad education ... of some religion, some art, some music, your basic core classes ... it's just a great idea. Because then as an older adult you can appreciate things that you remember you learned in the days that we had at college. I'm just very grateful to get to be interviewed and to be a part of this. Thank you so much.

Staron: *Awwww, you're welcome!*

[END]