

Interview with Mickey Maxwell
HVAC Lead Technician for Facilities Management

Wednesday, June 9, 2010

Wenxian Zhang & Jennifer Ritter

Rollins College Archives

WZ: Good afternoon.

MM: (at the same time) Good afternoon.

WZ: Today is Wednesday, June 9, 2010. My name is Wenxian Zhang, Head of Archives and Special Collections. With me is a student, Jennifer Ritter. We are going to interview Mickey Maxwell, the lead—uh, what's your official title?

MM: Actually it's heating, air conditioning, ventilation, and refrigeration lead technician.

WZ: Okay—

MM: (at the same time) Or HVAC's what they say.

WZ: Great, so glad to have you here.

MM: (at the same time) Thanks.

WZ: So Mickey, tell us about your background, where you grew up?

MM: Okay, that's well—I was a service brat so I was all over the place; mainly born in Florida over at Port St. Joe Florida, because they didn't deliver babies in Apalachicola, Florida at the hospital. And so, I'm from the panhandle, lived a lot in Panama City, Florida and my dad was—went into the—back into the Air Force sometime after World War II in the early fifties, and so he was fortunate to find a place that's close to home—which Panama City, Florida was close—and then was transferred all around in the Air Force, other places in Florida but lived a couple years in Taiwan, and that was then like '58, '59, '60 I think it was came back.

Lived in Mississippi and Georgia, mainly in the South with that and after he was transferred from Taiwan he wound up in Jacksonville, Florida. He was in Air Force but he was on a Navy base. And from there, I finished high school in Jacksonville, Florida, Forrest High School in '65 and then moved to Savannah for one year in which I joined the service and got into the Coast Guard. I was working on Air Force base for a year and I knew the sergeants that I was with and worked for and they were friends with this Coast Guard recruiter, and they all talked me into going into the Coast Guard, which I was planning on going into the Air Force like my father. In fact, they even had a father and son program going on at the time in which I could have gone to boot camp and been sent right back to Hunter Air Force Base in Savannah where I was actually at anyway. But, I joined the Coast Guard and— which made sense 'cause I loved boats and I loved the water and I was actually—for the Air Force—I wound up fixing outboard motors at what was called the boats and motors shop and checking them out and repairing them.

So, when I went into the Coast Guard they was wanting me to become an engineman, to go to school and learn the—all sorts of engines and things since I was already doing that anyway, and—which I did. I went to engineman's school and—which I thoroughly enjoyed—and they—then right after that was ending I had a choice of duty stations. One was either a Coast Guard icebreaker or Alaska. And I hate cold, I hate cold with a passion, I'm a Florida boy and I hate cold. But anyway, I chose the icebreaker so I figured I'd see the world instead of just being stuck in an isolated station in Alaska; I'd talked to plenty of guys that did that. And so, I did go all over the world. The first cruise I made was to Antarctica—I meant to the Arctic and it's like a four month cruise up and down around Greenland and Canada and then I made two southern trips to Antarctica in operation (clock tolls) Deep Freeze and one of them went around the world. And on one of them we ripped the bottom out of the ship and we stuck on this unchartered rock that we chartered and we were stuck on that for several hours and I was down in the engine room and you could see the steel moving beneath us and it sounded like somebody kept dropping hand grenades down in the engine room down with us it was so loud. The swells would raise the ship off of the rock and then slam it back down and—so anyway, made it through all of that and then went to New Orleans for the rest of my time in the Coast Guard.

And that was just at the time hurricane Camille came in and I had decided to extend an extra year to go to refrigeration and air conditioning school—which, is my trade which I'm still doing after all these years, it started in the military. And went off to California and came back and finished out my five years that I spent in the Coast Guard there. And from there with no other place to go—my dad and mom and everything, they were—my dad was transferred back to Taiwan for a second tour. My wife's dad was just gotten out of the Navy and they went back to Georgia, and since my wife and I had both had gone through high school in Jacksonville where we had met—we were high school sweethearts, been married forty-two years. So, anyway—we went back to—decided to go to Jacksonville—had a few friends still around there—and went there. So, went right into air conditioning and I've been doing air conditioning and refrigeration since.

And just go very into—enjoyed that trade and what got me down this way from there, I was working with a company—which's no longer in existence, it was Food Fair Corporation Pantry Pride Stores—used to grocery stores and everything, and I did a lot of commercial refrigeration for them. And I'd travel all around, I would literally pack my bags, I would go in on Monday mornings and not knowing where I would be. I could be in Georgia, I could be down this way, or I could be over in Alabama, I could be—a lot of times I never know where I was going. I'd just come in and go wherever they need me and sometimes be gone a week, sometimes I'd be right back home that evening, you never knew. Well, I hated that, 'cause I like being at home. And an opportunity came up where an area came open down here and from—it extended from Winter Park to Leesburg, and I told them I would like it. And they said I would have to move. Now, most people don't want to move when they have a new house and I had acreage—I had done very well—I had a beautiful place and they couldn't believe that I would leave all that to move down here. And I said, “No, I want to. I hate the cold.” Jacksonville gets very cold even, and I'd had plenty of cold.

Anyway, I took the transfer down here and I'm really glad I did, I wound up in Mount Dora. That's where I—truly love Mount Dora. It's a great place to live and raise a family. And by that time had two kids and another one was on the way so, I've been in Mount Dora every since. In and outside of it, I have also bought some acreage outside of Mount Dora one time and built a new house on that but, after having—oh—about four new houses—I think it was—my wife and I decided to get an old one. We're going back a few years—about twenty-eight years ago—

and so I bought this old, old house in downtown Mount Dora that nobody would buy, at the time there were plenty of those. An old two-story, it was very old then and it's over a hundred years old and I pretty much rebuilt the whole thing from the bottom up and I've been living there ever since. So, I get a real old house and I stay there. So, I've been—a lot of my stuff has developed around the family there.

And I was in that house whenever one of my friends who is in my church who used to—who was a graduate from Rollins College and he was also the vice president of Winter Park Telephone Company at the time—when they used to have that—and he had—was trying to get me to go to Rollins, because he knew they had an opening for an air conditioning man and he was good friends with the—at that time was the Physical Plant, which is now facilities, the same thing, facilities management but it was Physical Plant, he was good friends with the director Tom Wells and he was trying to get me to come down there. 'Cause he knew that eventually they would need somebody down here to actually be the lead and to run it for them. 'Cause—put it this way—the guys were getting old that they had. Had a lot of experience and they had some good people but they were getting up there and getting ready to retire. And he was trying to get me to come down here and well, I didn't want to leave even though the company I was with was under—had been under chapter eleven and they just sold out and went an extra year and I said, "No, I'm going to try to make it with this new—with this company." I really—I mean I really enjoyed my job that I had down here with the stores locally and then the following year they did close up and I came down here and by that time my friend who used to be the vice president for the telephone company, he was then the personnel director here. They closed up over there, and he came back to Rollins and so they did hire me and basically hired me with the intention that eventually I would be the lead. 'Cause I had a lot of experience, I had plenty of experience in refrigeration, air conditioning, all kinds of mechanical fields and electrical—a lot of electrical experience. And so anyway, I did come to work here I've been here now—this is my twenty-fourth year, I'll be starting twenty-five years next year—next month I mean—in July. I start on my twenty-fifth year which I've really loved Rollins.

And, meanwhile about the same time that I was getting prepared to come here, I'd been going through about a four or five years transition in the Episcopal Church to be a—what's called a permanent deacon, not a priest. The bishop that ordained me—Bishop Folwell—had opened that up for me and said that if I wanted to become a priest then that would be—that he wouldn't bar me from that. And the bishop we have now—John Howe—he has tried several times to get me to do that but I like being—I am a deacon in the church, I am permanent deacon I have been for twenty-four years now going in September or October. Pardon me, October, and servant ministry I like that. But—In my church and in the world too and quite frankly I don't want to be sitting around in a parish church listening to husbands and wives complaining about each other and all that sort of thing. And that's not what I like to do. I mean, I do get some of that—of course—but around there. And I was pretty much normally over these twenty something years I have been the only deacon at the church for most of it. There's only been some times—short times—that I've had somebody else and there's another deacon.

But I stay very involved in the church but the thing that primarily I've really enjoyed is a deacon in the Episcopal Church is a servant minister who normally has another ministry outside of the church. And what I have really loved over the years is prison ministry. I have been involved in that for at least twenty-five, twenty-six years. And I pretty much had my own—kind of my own congregation in prison for about twenty years consistently. But with all the troubles that have gone on in the Episcopal Church in the last five or six years we finally stopped it,

because it's kind of funny when the felons they really kind of beat up on the other guys not wanting them to be involved in something. And really all of them need to be changing their lives instead of worrying about the other fellows and where they're going. But I've still had a lot of close friends there, helped a lot of men.

And I pretty much work now in—it's called the Kairos Prison Ministry—which is non-denominational. And—which we put on these weekend events which runs from Thursday evening through Sunday, which we invite a selected, chosen members and usually we try to get the leaders in the prison to come in and join us as a team of men who have prepared together and become really one body and we invite them, they come and they stay with us. We feed them and do all kinds of things—you know—pray with them and just accept them like they are and love them like they are. And hopefully, they will experience God's love in that manner, in a very special way and we don't go there to condemn them or anything like that. Just go there to accept them, and we really hope that they will change their lives and the ministry is totally non-denominational. We have people from all faiths—as long as they're Christian. We look at the common—our common ground, that's what we work with, is our common ground as Christian believers. And when—a lot of men do change their lives.

In the prison system for anybody that has ever been incarcerated, the rate of recidivism is extremely high, extremely high. And pretty much if a guy has been convicted of a crime and he's been in prison, chances of him going back are very high, that he's going to re-offend and go back again. About twenty-five thousand dollars a year, that's pretty expensive for all of us taxpayers too. But for those that have gone through like our ministry and get support—because we are not just support while they're in prison but we're also—we give them encouragement and support afterwards also—there's also aftercare with it. And the rate goes way down as far as the rate of recidivism. We've been very happy and pleased about that. But, we'll never be totally pleased until everybody quits going to prison of course. So, but—And also I don't work in the side with the families but we have people that also work with the wives, and mothers, and daughters, and girlfriends of these guys. We have women that do that. And also have it for teenagers called the Torch system. You know, we really hope to break that cycle of crime and we do it through faith as a faith-based program—that's what that is.

So, I spend most of my time either with my family, at work or working with the church or with the prison system or something. I used to spend a whole lot—used to have a lot more time. They've gotten very stringent on the prison rules. They've gotten just—extremely stringent. You can't just go out there whenever you want to anymore, you can't be late, you've got to be early, and it makes it kind of awkward. Well I figure, once I retire from regular work then I can—like so many of my friends—devote more time to that. I'll probably pick a day of the week and spend all day there—you know, morning 'til evening. That's what a lot of them do. And that's—you know—sort of anyway that they can, so.

But Rollins has been extremely good to me in that respect and in my ministry because I could have gone elsewhere—I had other offers, like I say I've always had a lot of experience and I had other offers to go with other companies and do pretty much what I really enjoyed was commercial refrigeration. I always loved that kind of work. One thing about it, if some ice cream is thawing out you just know you have to freeze it. If somebody's hot, you have to listen to them yelling, "I'm hot! I'm hot! I'm sweating!" and everything else—you know. So, that's a little better in that respect. But I've always enjoyed refrigeration work. But Rollins has been very good in that whenever I needed to do something with my ministry that I could get off. And Rollins has always been very supportive of almost anybody that I know that ever did—worked in

anything to help other people or to help their families or anything. And that has been very important to me, one reason why I've been here as long as I have been. So, but it's sometimes it is a struggle. I mean, you get to summer time like it is now and I put in a lot of hours. But we have to, and that's the nature of the game.

And yet, I know we're starting to prepare for another prison team and so that's going to be—we'll have a meeting one night every week to prepare for that. Three months in advance we start this, and we have one in September so it's coming up and so it's hard to work all day and get here early in the morning and work and then go do that and then go home and get—don't get a lot of sleep because way down here—and I live in Mount Dora and it's good—it always takes me a good while to get back home. But, very rewarding, very rewarding and I'm—especially whenever we find some ex-prisoner, ex-inmate that will come back and work in the ministry with us. And that we've had quite a few of them that are doing that now, more and more so. (clock tolls) That's what we'd like to do, is work ourselves right out of the job and right out of the ministry and have just them doing it. Nothing ministers better than somebody that's actually been there, been through everything like that—so.

But, I enjoy it and really love working at Rollins, great place. And it enabled—has been good for my family. One of the things that really brought me here was my friend who was—Scott Witherell was his name—and he was the one that encouraged me to come here and still alive, still in my church. He's eighty years old now. And still going, wonderful man and good friend and he was asking me before he says, "Mickey, what are you going to do about your children's education?" And that was the key. I kept thinking, well you know, go where they can or anything. So that—the benefit of that really brought me here but it was all after all the—I'd used up all those benefits with my kids I just loved Rollins too much to leave, really. And that's (laughs) a lot of people, nobody—just don't want to leave here. Students included. (laughs) So, I've talked to quite a few students who never wanted to leave, they enjoy it. But it's a great place. I'm very open. So you have some questions, beyond that?

WZ: That's really fascinating. But let's go back a little bit.

MM: Okay.

WZ: Tell us about, you grew up in Jacksonville in the sixties—

MM: (at the same time) Yeah.

WZ: —How's the life was like?

MM: Well, gosh. In the sixties, let's see. Went there in about—it was just about 1960 I guess it was—when I went there. And to me it seemed pretty normal from anything else but coming out of Taiwan and coming back to there was quite different. 'Cause Taiwan was very third world country at the time—two years over there. And it—in the—so I was there—'cause I graduated from high school in '65 and the world was kind of changing a lot at that time in the sixties. And—but really with my dad being in the military and I was always around that I really didn't see a lot of the wild things that was going on and it didn't seem that much in Jacksonville at the time. It was a probably a good place to grow up, a good place to live. I do go back there quite often now to go to football games or some reunions for high school and this sort of thing, and run into some of

our old friends. But—I don't know—to me Jacksonville was more of an industrial type of a town and of course once I got out of the military later on, I kind of wanted to put that behind me and go on to something else, and so that's one reason why I wanted to come down here. There's not much of that. Although, like many people I wish I would have stayed in, put my twenty years in, got my retirement. I've gone to a reunion from that ship—the icebreaker—that I was on forty years ago and two years ago in Charleston, and we have one this year coming up in Baltimore in September. And it was really nice to see a lot of those guys. A lot of them stayed in the reserves, some of them stayed in the service and they're all there in that sixty year old range and started getting retirement pay and benefits. And so, that was nice. (laughs) I'm glad to see them do it, I wish that I'd done that in some form maybe.

Yeah, Jacksonville was the kind of place that I was always looking for something a little more than that. And down here I just really found—I mean, I really love coming down this way. I love the weather here, the winter time is so much better, although last winter was very cold here. It was like it normally is in Jacksonville with all the freezes. And I probably got a little colder in Mount Dora than we did here in Winter Park, but it was a lot of it. I was really looking for a family place to—more so to raise our family as one of the things when I got out of the service and my wife was six months pregnant. And living in New Orleans—New Orleans is kind of a crazy place. It was a great place if it was just my wife and I, but to raise my family there? I really didn't want to do that. New Orleans is just kind of pretty wild—even then. And so, that was another reason why we went to Jacksonville and it was always—usually we did everything for our family. And moving down here was a good move. Especially—you know—my kids going to be raised in Winter Park—I mean in Mount Dora, was really good. I did consider moving to Winter Park. I kept trying to do that but after being in Mount Dora for a while and once I was working down here I couldn't get my wife to move down here. So, it would've been easier for me for the travel, the commute in the morning. So, but I'm used to it, been doing it a long time.

WZ: Good.

MM: Yeah.

WZ: So, when you first came to Rollins in 1986—

MM: (at the same time) Yes, '86.

WZ: —What is your first impression of Rollins College?

MM: Oh, I thought it was beautiful! Now, you've got to realize it wasn't near as pretty as it is now. But to me it was very pretty. And the man that I was actually brought here to replace—I never will forget this—We were in Carnegie Hall for something, and we came out on the front steps of Carnegie and—he had been here like twenty something years himself—and we're standing on the steps of Carnegie and I'm looking around and I said, “Wow! This is really a beautiful place.” And his response was—he said, “Well, I don't think it's so pretty around here, and so beautiful” he said, “You want something you go over to Leu Gardens or some of that.” I said, “Wow, well that's not the way I feel.” Now see, you have to realize I'm used to working in a place and when I come out I'm looking at a big, black top parking lot, there's no trees, there's no birds flying. There were maybe some birds on a wire over—I mean, just nothing. And we walked

out of a building down here and I look at flowers, and trees, and grass. I mean, to me it was just gorgeous. It's like—it's kind of like living in a park when I'm here. And I still feel that way. And—of course—I logged it in my mind way back then to never have that attitude. (laughs) Like that, and never think of it. And I have, and I've thought about that many times, that this is just a beautiful—and it gets better all the time.

The grounds and the—it's just incredible. And I tell ya, our grounds crew is just amazing. They always do so much and there are really not that many people. They work extremely hard. They do a fantastic job and it pays off, it really does. It's nice to have a pleasant place, something that's pretty to see. I always feel that about Rollins and it's not just the grounds but even the buildings have gotten better and better and better. Gosh, when I first came here this one [Olin library] was just opened—you know. The library was just opened and it was new and it was—people would walk in here and say, Wow, this is beautiful. And it still is. It's been maintained very well. And even to get the addition on it here was really nice. But it's been—it's changed. Everything has changed quite a bit. All of our buildings are changed, the grounds have gotten better. The buildings have gotten fantastically better. I remember the dormitories, all the dormitories were pretty much the same, they were getting old.

The air conditioning was put in them in the latter sixties to early seventies and most all of them had the air conditions that—for the rooms—that were hanging from the ceiling. And we always had to go in and take these three screws out and drop the big panel down to work on it. Well, you have to watch out 'because you get a face full of rust or something—stuff would hit us. We always had a time with them, 'because they were just getting really old. They were getting in pretty bad shape. So, it was a really good thing when they started renovating these buildings and the dorms. Been doing a good job of it, they really have. Most of the stuff that's being put in will be there for long term and it needs to be for long term use so you don't keep revisiting and spending money on the same thing over and over again. And they've done a—do a better job of planning every year. We're getting smarter at it, even our chill water systems that we're doing now 'stead of—we used to have little chillers all over the place—little air conditioners—all over this place. And now we have beautiful green spots out there, flower gardens, there are patios there are all kind of things where we used to have air condition chillers. And only those that've been here for a while would really know that. And it's been nice, 'cause every time you put in one of those big chiller plants—like we have in back of the library here—that means we're eliminating a lot of the smaller stuff and just consolidating. We're also a lot more efficient. A whole lot more efficient that way and that's worked really well. It's made all of our jobs really better. And we can actually provide a better service for all of our people: staff, faculty, visitors, everybody, especially the students which is where we really have to do it, so you know.

JR: Speaking of the transition to the new air condition system—we spoke with George Herbst a while back, who was overseeing the transition to the chiller loops—

MM: (at the same time) Mm—hm.

JR: —Was, were you and facilities management involved in that transition?

MM: Oh yeah, they usually always asked my input on the different things and we always learned something. Like I said, we time we do them we have two major loops out there now. This, on this end we call the West End and it goes all the way—spreads all the way from the

library all the way across Holt Avenue and all the way to Fairbanks, to 170. This is the smaller of the two. The other one, which is pretty much everything you see on that side (points) I mean, all the way. It doesn't go to Holt-Holt Hall, but eventually it will. It's all going to be tied to it. But from Bush all the way through and hopefully we're going to tie it on down to McKean and the campus center shortly. Hopefully within the next year that will be tied together. We have several big chiller plants, over there and we really need to build another one and actually, eventually the plans are it will go all the way up and all the way to Sutton Place with it and just tie everything in. We might have to get this new dorm built out on Fairbanks before we ever get to that part over there next to Holt. That's all plans, so you know, it used to be, I used to see all these little—they'd have like maps set up and they would have all kinds of plans and show all these different buildings that weren't there and that was the future. And you'd go and you'd kind of scratch your head and look at that and say, "Well, that didn't happen and that didn't happen and that's not going to happen," and these different things.

But nowadays, whenever they do something like this, you can pretty well figure it's probably going to happen. They do a lot of planning, they know that there's good payback, and that it's for the benefit of the college and it'll be good. Put a lot of—I think there's a lot more thought behind it now than there used to be. Plus, they study, study everything. You get—figure out what we really need. So, yeah the chiller loops are—that's the best way to go. And what people might have a plant sitting somewhere and you don't hear it running and that's good. If it's not running, we're saving money. Because the thing is you don't want to run a whole bunch of different pieces of equipment, you only run what you need and with these loops when we start tying all these things together we can do that. And so, bring in say, some of the smaller equipment whenever—at peak times when it's really hot or—you know—shut down some of the bigger stuff.

I do that right here between winter and summer with the library and the new Ward chiller. There's actually a chiller inside of Ward. Most people don't even know that—it's in the corner. They did a real good job of engineering on that, it's really quiet. In fact, I remember when we really worried about that when we first put it online. And I remember going up there and knocking on doors and talking to the girls living right above it. I mean, literally right above it. They did not even know it was there, and it was running. So, that made me feel really good whenever—that it was engineered that well to be quiet and not to disturb the residents. It's a big—the loops are a good thing but in the winter time—like here for the library, for this system here—I'll run the one that's in the chiller that's actually inside of the library. And it's very efficient in cold weather, it runs and I don't need as much capacity and so I'll run it and we're saving energy by running that one. And when I do—because there's some savings too when we run the big one in Ward, because it also makes hot water. And so it's—we're using all kinds of things that—to our benefit energy wise and conservation wise. This cooling tower that's out here behind the library actually has no chemicals going in it. And that's unheard of—I mean—years ago I'd never heard of anything other than you chemically treat all the water or else you get all kinds of stuff growing in it and you can wind up with all kinds of problems. Well that one ever since it was cranked up has never had any chemicals added to it and it's this whole electronic system that's on there. Even though all the chemical outfits always keep telling me, it won't work, it has worked. It's worked very well, I'm very happy with it. We hope to eventually do that with all of our cooling towers. And it's good for the environment too. And that's another thing.

WZ: So, what other major projects you get a chance to work on?

MM: Well, we just walked through Rex Beach dormitory that's boy—it needed it. It was kind of the last of the ones that needed a major overhaul. It was the worst that was left and it is—if you went through it right now you wouldn't even recognize it, it's all gutted. I mean everything's gone out of it, it's really ripped up. And it's going to be—it's going to come out probably better than Ward. It's going to look really, really nice. So that's going to be good. It also is going to have—use the sun to make some hot water for us. We haven't done that down here yet. We're actually going to do that. And Rex Beach will be one that we can actually control—temperature wise, even down to the rooms and look at them—off of our control system with the computer.

That's another thing that's gone a really long way since when I came down here everything was just plain old analog controls everywhere and now it's—Hey, right there in my bedroom at my house I get online and go down here and I can start stuff, shut it off, change some temperatures. But it's amazing that we can do that now. And that's only in twenty-four years. I mean, if anybody would tell me that's what we were going to be doing twenty years ago I'd of said, "You're crazy." (laughs) But it's a reality now that has happening. It's—the only problem is with electronics if something goes bad there's a lot of stuff we can't do. So, we have these HOA switches as they're called—Hand Off Auto (laughs). And sometimes I need that and we have to go to work and physically go to them and change them over to manual to kick them on. I did that for Carnegie yesterday morning—Monday morning. Thing was we had a problem.

But anyway, sometimes we pull it up on the computer and it's not responding—(the microphone falls over) Oh! (microphone is set back up) Just get an NR and when it does that you've got a problem. Unless you physically go and look at it you don't know what's going on or what's happening. But it's interesting. So, if you travel as long as you can get on the Internet you can always (click) go down to Rollins here and find out what's going on. Most of the time I do that—days off I'll just go on there, look down and see what's happening. See how my chillers are doing. And I like that, it's a good thing about the chiller loops but that's the way to go. We're doing pretty good on that. The only thing is that piping underground costs a lot of money, a lot of money. And 'course, whenever you cut a big trench across a campus you're going to interrupt somebody's traffic flow. So we have to do that from time to time even have to go right across roads. Whenever we bring this to the south—the loop over there on that side, on the east side—and bring it all the way down to the campus center, we have to—unfortunately Holt Avenue will have to be dug up again. That's right at the pretty spot too, that's raised up, by the Chapel, in there. We'll have to go through there again. We have to get bigger pipe across the road than what we have. That's one thing we keep saying, oh, if we had just thought about this a long time ago. And we're trying to do those kinds of things now, 'because we're learning more; and so, we'll plan for the future a lot better with the chiller loops. There's no telling what technology's going to change another twenty years from now. Maybe there'll be something better.

WZ: So, who are some of the people you get a chance to work with here at Rollins?

MM: Who I've worked with?

WZ: Yeah, who were the people that you know that make impact on you, on your—

MM: Oh geez! Well, Thad Seymour was a president when I first came here and—Oh gosh—everybody loves Thad. I mean, he was—when I was ordained in the Episcopal Church he actually

wrote me a letter. And that really impressed me because I was a relatively new employee here. Let's see, 'because I started in July and I was ordained in October and I think—to have the president write me a letter I thought, Wow that was really impressive. And so, I mean, he was such a neat guy. I'd always tell people, if he saw somebody out raking leaves and he didn't know who they were—he didn't know their names—he would go out and ask them who their names were and the next time he saw them he would call them by name. He's got a great gift at that. But Thad was like that so he left a big impression on me.

As well as Tom Wells—the director that we had when I came here—always meant a lot to me 'cause he really—he cared about the people, not just in the work they did but in them personally. If somebody had a problem then it was like we all had a problem and we would see if we could help them. I always liked that, I thought that was really good. 'Course I've known so many of the professors and people that was here over the years. In fact, Joe Nassif who I used to—he used to tickle me a lot. And I remember after one of the graduations—and so, he was kind of running it, it seemed like. I yelled to him out there one day and I said, "That was a great liturgy you had!"—you know—using a church term, he knew exactly what I meant by it and it really was very much like you would do in any worship service in a church where everything's planned out and everything like that. And so, we became friends and I used to go to the plays. I used to buy season tickets for the Annie Russell Theatre. But, I think I enjoyed it a lot more than my wife did, coming back down here and getting back home so late. I finally had to quit doing that but I enjoyed it.

There've been many people through facilities that—of course—I've been close with. I've known a lot of their—just a lot of the people over the years in both the administration and two—I had something special that happened years ago that I got to know a lot of the administrators and all. That was—they had a—somebody came up with—they used to have the faculty senate that was here and made decisions for the college and whatnot. Somebody came up with the idea to have two staff members elected every year; we'd have two people on there too. And people kept bothering me about that, running for it and it was the first time ever. Finally I just said, "Okay, go ahead. Put my name down there. I don't care, I won't get elected anyway." Well I was wrong. (laughs) I did get elected and was the first person ever elected to it—is what the lady said to call me. And it was—well, it was two of us—myself and Udeth. You know Udeth was the other one, it was both of us. Well, Udeth, of course he fit right in a lot better than me. So, I would go to these senate meetings and I learned a lot. It was interesting and supposed to be for a two-year term. Well, somehow Udeth, he got off of it he had to go to something else. They messed up the elections or whatever and I had to serve three years!

And it was the same time I was on the staff advisory committee and I thought, Oh my gosh. You know, it was (laughs) I'm sitting in here but—I learned a lot, learned a heck of a lot listening to the other faculty. And talking with them, they would ask me all kinds of questions. I thought it was very interesting to sit in there and listen to them talk about things that they wanted to do, needed to do, and include a building or something in there and I knew how much we went through to get these buildings ready and to change things around for others programs and then they'd just up in the air want to move it to this other building, and now I'd think, Oh my gosh. Now that was, to me, really wasting money and things like this. And I remember making the comment, "Well, if it didn't work in this other building it's not going to work in this building. It's the same thing. You're doing the exact same thing." So anyway, but that—in those instances I was better off keeping my mouth closed.

But—you know—they listened. If I had something to say they would listen and I really got to know a lot of the people then and that—most of that came about because—well also, being a minister I'm used to being in front of people. I do two services every Sunday in my church and also stuff in prison and a lot of things I've done. When they needed somebody to uh—be a speaker for the staff at Rita's inauguration they asked me and I was—I think I'd been here about three years or something like that—so I said, “Well, okay. Fine.” And I did that. And then they also asked me to do Lewis's. I think that I kept saying, “Don't you need to find somebody else? You know, I did the last one.” But anyway, they wanted me. So, it's just finding somebody on the staff that doesn't mind being up in front of people and having something to say. I'm used to that all the time. So, that wasn't an issue with me so I figured it was just easier for me to do it than for somebody else probably. But it was enjoyable, but that—on that faculty senate that was a real learning experience. So I got to know a lot of the vice presidents over the years that way. And so, it was very interesting.

And Lou Morrell did a lot. He came in—was vice president and treasurer. And about that same time and he was—of course—I would speak to him in his office quite a bit too working on his air conditioning and different things. But, hearing him on that and it was interesting to see how these people made their decisions and kind of hashed it out. It was obvious a lot of them would be at odds with each other—which is rightfully so. But yeah, I would say he also had an impact.

But Rita of course, she was always real nice to me, Rita was. And she asked me one time, she stopped me out there at on Holt Avenue. I was in my golf cart. She asked me to come over and she wanted to talk with me and find out some things, how it was going with the staff. And I said, “Sure, I'll call Lorrie and see you over there.” She said, “How about now?” Well, she's the president so (laughs) I said, “Yes, ma'am.” And went over and sat with her and talked with her and she was always very hospitable to me and very nice to me. In fact, I just saw her at our last end of the year party, went over and gave her a hug and a kiss. Always have, always greeted her like that. She's a wonderful lady to me. She did a lot of great things for the College—very good in fundraising.

And you mentioned George Herbst [corrected]. George was a very interesting character. When he first came here we had so many needs and he was very instrumental to a lot of the things you see around here now. It was his guidance that did a lot of that. Rita raising the money, George spending it—that's the way I always looked at it. And we had this old—had a little chiller was in the basement of the Chapel. It was put in—I think—somewhere in the early sixties—I think I still have the little name plate off of it—the tag. It was amazing this thing had been there all these years. There was another chiller that was up above that was tied to it. When they first put that chiller in there it was for the Chapel and for Annie Russell Theatre. And they put the piping in for both of them. This isn't that big, it's a rather small thing and these are big buildings. If they had a function in the chapel they would cut the valves off going to Annie Russell Theatre. If they had function in Annie Russell then they'd cut the valves off going to the chapel. If they had a function in both of them, there wasn't enough air conditioning. But that's the way they did and they added another piece to it. But this old cooling tower—these things were on, was behind the Chapel. And it was so wore out, and so rickety, and so noisy and people would keep calling down to facilities saying, hey, this thing sounds like it's gonna fly apart. And I'd say, “Yeah, it is. It's going to.” It was terrible. But they wouldn't spend any money on it 'cause they wanted to replace it and do something new.

And I was complaining to George Herbst about it and we were in the Galloway Room. He said, “Mickey, come here and sit down.” And we sat down at a table and he told me, he said,

“I want to tell you something, how I operate. And that is that we might not do things quick. So it won’t be as quick as you want,” he said, “But we’re going to study the situations, we’re going to do it right, and we’re going to do it to be real good and for long term.” And really—in other words—we were really going to have some good quality out of the stuff that we did. Of course, that wasn’t fixing my cooling tower. It’s still terrible—I mean you wouldn’t believe it. And it went on; he’s just trying to calm me down. Saying, “We’ve got to do something.” We did go get this other one that we pulled out of the campus center when we did something, stuck it up behind—nestled in there and tied it in temporarily to eliminate that one.

And right now if you go behind the chapel there is a wall and there is a cooling tower down inside of that and a chiller back up inside of it—a new one, newer stuff. Anyway, there was an air conditioning man that I knew that his daughter was married in the Chapel. And he asked me where the chiller and everything was. He had parked in the parking lot across the street, walked right by the tower and never knew (thud) it was there. And I said, “Well, George was right.” You know, to make it look good didn’t—and that was his philosophy. And that’s one of the reasons why we got rid of all these little chillers and little air conditioners everywhere, was to clean it up. He’d a lot rather see a bush than see an air conditioner—which, you gotta admit—is a lot better. But that’s getting constantly better there. So, George has made a big impact on the College as well as on me and in changing my thinking around a lot.

We used to—before the time of George and Rita and before we started getting money into this place—it was fixing everything as best you could oftentimes band-aiding everything together. And we fixed a lot of things with old parts, old stuff that we took off of something else, old stuff that you would just cannibalize things and keep things going. And so, my present boss—Scott Bitikofer—he is—he fussed for years about all this stuff that we had around pigeon holed everywhere, everyplace, spot we had old equipment and abandoned stuff and so he’s been on me for years to get rid of this stuff. And we’re slowly getting rid of more and more and more stuff, and so I always kind of worried about the day we would have to go back. And every once in a while I still—you know, I have something break down and I think, Boy, if I hadn’t of thrown that thing away I’d have it. Just go get it and put it in. But we save valuable things now—pretty much—and throw away the stuff that’s not. And so, there’s a lot of times you can save a motor that’s four hundred dollars and just ‘because it’s sitting on the floor of the basement of Bush I mean, there’s nothing going to go wrong with it it’s fine ten years from now. And I do that quite often, things like that and pumps and that we can re-use. But, try to save things that are of value and the other things well, we can buy them and hopefully upgrade things. That’s another thing I’m learning to say no about keeping a lot of this old stuff now because I’d rather get the new stuff. (laughs) As long as we can stay economically viable—as we are—then we’ll continue to put in new stuff and to upgrade. The newer stuff is much more efficient—usually—than the old stuff. Quite a bit more efficient and we’re always looking forward to that.

But yeah, that’s some of the people that’s really influenced me with the past; I don’t know if you were here when the lead electrician for many years here was Bob Betts. And he had a stroke—probably about five or six years ago, maybe a little longer and could no longer be with us and he was here for about thirty years and ‘course he always—learned a lot just watching Bobbie and how he worked with people. No matter how much work he had he was always happy to get more it seemed like and knowing that he couldn’t keep up with it at all. So, it was so funny ‘cause after he had his stroke he couldn’t be with us anymore and we always commented we’d keep finding all these work orders hidden away in places here there and everywhere—there was no way you could do it all. Had so many of them and so, we have a much

different system now. But it was interesting. Kind of like if he didn't want to do it—I guess—and he thought it was silly he'd just (whoosh) tuck it away somewhere. We found a lot of those. But yeah, Bobbie meant a lot to me and there have been quite a few people.

Chuck Winkle was an assistant director at the plant—a former locksmith—he meant a lot to me. Every once in a while I'll run into him. But, of course Kurt—who's with me now—my boss Kempster—he's great, he's fantastic, I love working with him. He's retired Air Force and so was my father, he retired from the Air Force. That's neat. He's a good boss to work for, and he's a joy. So, and all the guys really like him. So, but there's quite a few people around. I used to really enjoy Arnold Wettstein I used to—who was the dean of the chapel for many years here. Arnold was a great man, he—in fact, I had him at prison before to do—we did a combined service. And used to take some of the students out there, used to have a chapel deacon's program and we'd open it up and people would sign up. Did that several times, also did it with UCF too with the Episcopal Church group they had over there. Had to take them out there several times, to go to prison. John Langfitt who used to be here—John's a wonderful guy and I really, really missed him when he left here. But John Langfitt he came out to prison with me a time or two. And we'd always do a kind of combined thing.

I kind of stopped that, bringing the college students out there because—I'll tell you what happened. I had—they called me one day from—I can't remember—dean's office or somewhere said that they wanted to know about if I knew where some girls were or something. Somebody had been running around looking for them and I figured out it was one of the prisoners who had been out there and met two of the girls in the chapel, came out on a service. And he got out like a couple days later and he's down here looking for the group and wanting to join them and said, "Oh, my gosh!" He had no business being down here so, but that one was kind of spooked and I didn't know these that came out there. Kind of for security reasons for the young ladies I felt probably best not to do that. So, I haven't—that was many years ago—haven't taken any more groups out to prison. Plus today everything is tightened up so much about that, that they wouldn't go for it anymore—in the prisons—more than anything else. It's really hard just to get people cleared to go in there now. In fact, even with our clearances that we have—I still have my badge and everything else—even with that they don't even—start taking everybody's badge away from them. I figured eh, not getting mine. I keep it in my car (laughs) I don't even bring it in there.

WZ: So, in your capacity working here, do you get a chance to interact and get to know some of students here?

MM: Oh, sure! Yeah, I don't know that many—I used to always get to know a lot more of them whenever I did a lot of work inside the dorms and fixed their air conditioners. Now, you've got to realize when we had all these old air conditioners around we were always changing motors and doing all kinds of things. Now as the newer stuff is going in and we do our summer work and do the stuff at Christmas break and everything, we don't really have to go into the dorm rooms and so much—which is good because you don't want to disturb the students and you want it to work good and be functional and hopefully until it all gets old again and hopefully it won't be that bad. Yeah, I do get to meet students and I know—always look forward to graduation because then I get to meet some of the parents, which is a joy. I had several of them that introduced me to their parents. This past time and I really enjoyed doing that and meeting them.

And so, one of the young ladies—oh, I just loved her a lot—all the guys did down there, she worked with ResLife—and she liked to fish. And you don't find too many girls that want to go fishing. Well, I love fishing, I do that with my sons and so I brought her some old fishing equipment and a rod and reel and stuff that I had so she could go fishing with some of the boys who go around the lake and fish down there. And so, she was real pretty. She got me a fishing hat she gave it after graduation, I met her parents and everything and her—it was really neat to meet her parents because I know her mother is very involved in their church back home. And so, that was really neat. And another girl that I'd met—and she is going into the Peace Corps—and I'd met her parents too. And talking with them—'cause I'd asked her about this book that I'd remembered had impressed me way back in the, I guess the sixties, it was called *The Ugly American*. It was a very famous book at the time and I'd asked her about it. Well, her father—of course—remembered it 'cause he had read it too. So, she was going to try to get it. But anyway, it was really neat to—I think her mother was from Baltimore—which is, of course where I was up there on my ship—that was my home port for my ship years ago. And I'm going back up there in September so—hopefully I get to go up there. Depends on what all's going on around here and elsewhere, want to do that.

But yeah, I don't get to meet near as many students as we used to, used to get to know a lot of them because you were around them more. But now it's mainly the ones that will work with ResLife or get involved in something on campus and we help them out and get to know them. Now when my son was going here—I had one son graduated here in '93—and he was an ATO and—oh gosh—I knew loads of people back then. I was also on their advisory council then as—killed two birds with one stone—I was a staff member and a parent. So, (laughs) they got me doing that and, but that was nice, that was good to do that. I feel bad about the boys not—you know—not going to be here anymore but, so it's a shame. But anyway, that was—I totally understand it, I mean, after we've seen all the stuff that goes on. But it was—I really enjoyed it when my son was here, just meeting so many of the guys. I already knew some of them before he got here, they were—those boys were very active. And back—oh, many years ago I had—knew some of the boys that was on the baseball team and there was enough of them there and they wanted me to have—to have their own little like Bible class and prayer group type thing. So, did it right went to Arnold Wettstein he's—and we did the authorization and he said, “Well, you have to have the boys come and talk to me.” So they went to him, so that was all we did. We met in the parlor over there and for a year and that was really nice, I enjoyed that. Even had one of the boy's father—when he would come and visit he'd come with us. And that was real nice, a real nice group of guys they had that time.

Being in the Episcopal Church—we have one, All Saints Episcopal Church is right across the street other side of Holt Avenue here. And it's a great church. I know plenty of friends in there, and always have had. And they always want the students to come over, well I keep trying to encourage the students that are Episcopalian to go across the street but—you know—they always want their own thing. And so, for—I think it was about a year, two years—I had a little service for them here. One day a week and we'd have communion over in the Chapel and give them a little simple service so they could have their own service. That was nice, I enjoyed that. So—you know—needs change as people—much better if they get involved in the church over there.

WZ: In 2005, you were given the Helen Crossley Award, right?

MM: Oh, yes. Yeah.

WZ: (at the same time) Congratulations on that.

MM: Thank you.

WZ: So, how do you view your Rollins career of twenty-four years?

MM: Oh well, I'm really—to me I've really enjoyed it. I always think that I probably get more back out of Rollins than I ever give them myself. I'm basically a happy person; I think things like that is a choice. If you want people to love you, you love them. And if you want people to be happy for you to be around, you be happy when you're around them. And so, my Rollins career is just something—to me—to come here and work is a joy. I really love coming to work. I've a simple philosophy: You should be happy to go to work, you should be happy to go home. If you're not—in either one of them—you need to change something. (laughs) Change it, make it better. And so, I try to stick with that and I try to be happy to come to work and when I go home I want to be happy to go home too. I don't regret coming to work at Rollins and I've really looked forward to it. I think that—I feel that I've made a lot of contributions here but I think I am better for having been here. (clock tolls) And hopefully the College is too.

I think so, and I think Rollins is a place that really cares about its people. Not just its students—because they are the ones ultimately that's paying the bills—but I think it really cares about its staff, and cares about its faculty, I think it cares about everybody. And I think it cares about its impact upon the community itself, the whole community. Always feel that Rollins does a good job with that. And I look at our young people—and young people in general throughout the whole nation and everything—and that's the future. That is our future and I look at Rollins as a place where—hopefully, they will be not just educated but they will actually learn to live together, communicate, talk to each other and learn to make a difference in the world. And I see how it works here now, they're getting more people to be community involved and I really enjoy seeing that. Whether it's building a house for habitat or cleaning up something in the environment, it would be—it's a good thing and I like to see that encouragement. And I like to see them including people of all different faiths and—you know—nations, and just that's a fantastic thing. And I see that happening more and more at Rollins.

When I first came here twenty-four years ago, you didn't see Rollins being that diverse and so it's changed a lot and it's gotten a lot better along those lines. That's a good thing there. I think the whole community is more open to accepting people that are different. I've always found people that are different to be interesting. And that's what I like. I guess a lot of that came from when I lived in Taiwan when I was young. The people there just—they fascinated me. They might not have had much, but they were basically happy and willing to give and to share. And I found that all over the world. When I was in—up in Greenland, it was a very remote village that we went to and the only reason why we went there on the breaker is because we had a station that was nearby and we had to supply them with oil—this sort of thing. Greenland was part of this—our defense for the United States against nuclear war, and that's what it was all about. And so, we had to have a presence there. And this little place that we went to the—we always called the Eskimos, but it was Inuit people—the more of the original people from Greenland that survived and it's very harsh. But there was—it's owned by Denmark.

And the people lived in shacks, basically. They were well constructed to withstand the weather. They had pot belly stoves inside for warmth and for cooking. There was nothing fancy

about them. All the beds would just be bunks with boards nailed together and the people slept on them but yet, they had family life. And it was just a village and it was probably about—maybe—thirty to forty of these places in there. But the people would invite us in. They couldn't even speak English—you know—and we certainly didn't speak Danish (laughs) or whatever it was that they spoke. But, they'd come in and we'd just gesture to anybody and give us—make us this little tea like concoction—it didn't really taste like tea. I don't know what it tasted like—but we'd smile at each other and drink it and people would be very happy and they were just glad to have somebody from outside the world. And course, we were always taking things off the ship and just giving it away (laughs) to them so they would have stuff. But just, they were quite diverse and open and happy to meet people. I think you learn a lot from experiences like that. And I had a lot of those, being all over the world and seeing people survive through very harsh weather and harsh places and harsh times with meager—what we would call a meager existence—but they could still be happy.

So, I think that it's a real blessing to me to come to a place like Rollins and to have been working here all these years and I enjoy it. And I'm in no hurry to leave. (laughs) Put it that way, even though I'm getting up near retirement age—I'm sixty-two now—and but I hope to stay in good enough shape to keep going for a good while. Like I said, I really enjoy the people. I came here for the educational reasons, benefits for my family and stayed here because I just love it. I really do. Not many people can really say they love their job, but I do. I really enjoy the people around me too. It's really nice, like in facilities with all the guys in the shop that we work with, it gets quite interesting but, you know. And one thing I always say is the youth keeps you young, so it's a good thing working at a college and having the—having our students here. It's invigorating; it's nice to have the youth around us. And that's my hope for the future, is the young people.

I know, we've had at my church in Mount Dora—Saint Edwards—we've always had a commitment to youth and youth groups. And even with my church—we went through a split several years back. It was a very hard time but we survived and we have another youth group and youth leaders and we're building back up. And we've got about twenty something kids in there now. And we don't care where they come from, very few are actually from our church—they're from all over. And that's fine, we welcome them. And I used to always tell the former youth group leader—and I've told the new one now—I said, "You do a good job with them now and I won't have to bother with them later." You know—in prison—and that's what I say. We need to do everything we can with our youth and our young people and developing our students and everybody that we can, including the staff and faculty here. (laughs)

WZ: That's great. Anything else you'd like to share with us before we close?

MM: Nah, can't think of anything. I enjoyed this. Any questions, anything?

WZ: Well, thank you so much Mickey—

MM: (at the same time) Right.

WZ: —Really enjoyed the conversation. We would like to thank you for all your contributions and for help us preserve the history of Rollins College.

MM: Well, thank you and God bless you, enjoyed it.