Oral History Interview with Dr. Thaddeus Seymour
(6/1/2005)

Zhang: Good morning.

Seymour: Good morning.

Zhang: Today is Wednesday, June 1st. My name is Wenxian Zhang, head of Archives Special Collections. I'm here again along with Lily and Corey; we're going to continue our conversation with Dr. Thad Seymour that started last Wednesday, May 25. Thank you for coming again. We really want to listen to the rest of your story.

Seymour: Well thank you. And even before we start I'm mindful as you identify the date, that this is the first day of my retirement. Indeed, I have been on the payroll of one college or another every day of my life since July 1, 1954. And I formally retired on May 31 of 2005. So this is my first day. In fact, I was filling out a form for something this morning and it asked occupation. And I checked retired. I've never done that before in my life. But I will, I will continue to teach an occasional course, so I don't consider myself withdrawn. Simply recognizing that it's a formal change in my professional life after fifty-one years.

Zhang: That's wonderful, congratulations on your retirement—

Seymour: (Talking at the same time) Well thank you. Well, I just happened to notice—to be aware of the date as you introduced our segment. But I'm at your service; go ahead.

Zhang: Now looking back, when you first came here in 1978, what was you first impression of the college and what's the conditions or challenges you faced and how did you foster the transition and growth of the college from a stereotype of a party school to a nationally recognized liberal arts education institution?

Seymour: Well there are several different elements. You mentioned the issue of reputation. That was certainly an inescapable fact. "Jolly Rolly Colly," it was called. People teased about underwater basket weaving, whatever that is (laughter). Indeed, I'm serious about this, I tried, in conjunction with our centennial seven years later, to see if I could find somebody who taught underwater basket weaving and for the fun of it, offer a course through the art department as a kind of statement that we're no longer embarrassed about those insults. Indeed, underwater basket weaving is a craft, like quilting and other things. But I never found a teacher, and to this day I'm not quite sure what underwater basket weaving is.

But I do know what Jolly Rolly Colly stands for. Somewhere, and I'm sure the archives has these, I have two or three student renditions of songs called the "Jolly Rolly Colly Blues," and they're kind of fun.

So the first challenge was that the college had an identity problem. It— And that was a very interesting problem. Indeed— I'll talk some more about that later. The second problem it had was inescapably a management and financial problem. The college was in fragile financial shape. People were not very well paid and were aware of that. Records were, in my view, quite chaotic. For example, I asked to see the performance of the previous years budget and I didn't

get it until October. I came in July. I learned that there were twenty-nine separate bank accounts, because the college could not correctly maintain its own books. And I learned that these bank accounts had not been reconciled. At the end of my first month, I received a small handwritten envelope on my desk with my name on it. And I opened it up and inside, handwritten, was my paycheck. And I said, "What in the world is this?" And they said, "Well this is— You're on the confidential payroll." And there were twenty or so people whose salaries were carried independent of the college's operating budget so that other prying eyes couldn't see them. Absolutely improper and irresponsible, we stopped it right then. I remember looking at the budget and seeing a line item for Thermafax. (Laughing) Thermafax was a precursor to Xerox by many years. It was something used in the sixties, but that terminology was still on the books. Indeed there was also a line item that simply said, Yacht. And when I looked that up I discovered that Hugh McKean had maintained a yacht in Palm Beach, and it was carried on the college's books. He used it for college entertaining. And that was still an account on the college books. So we had a real management problem and frankly the first personnel act that I took was to ask the then treasurer for his resignation and to instruct him to leave his office immediately. We paid him for the year but we relieved him of his responsibilities immediately.

Now I had an acute financial problem. The controller, uh, in— A new president was coming on board and the controller had a feeling that the new president was sort of no nonsense about budgets. And one of the questions I had raised was, "How many students are coming back next fall?" "Well, we don't know." "Well, haven't they made their deposits yet?" "Well, they're supposed to make a deposit by July 1, but we don't really enforce that." I said, "You mean you don't enforce it, so you don't know?" We only had, maybe, five hundred deposits for the coming year. And I was quite agitated about that and, without my knowing it, the controller sent a letter out to all the students who had not sent in their five hundred dollars, telling them that their registration had been rescinded and that they would not be permitted to come back. So here we were, looking at a college year starting with five hundred students. But of course his hammer-handed approach was to assume that if a student got that letter that the student, or his or her parents, would pay the money right away. My reaction was, Perhaps the students will believe that Rollins means what it says and will— The student will transfer someplace else and we'll really be in trouble. Well we also replaced the controller.

Indeed, by October that first year we had no treasurer, no controller, and the bursar left also. So we had no financial officers. And a nice man in town named Ed Schriber came by to see me. And Ed said, "You know, we moved to Winter Park several years ago. I used to be superintendent of schools in Great Neck, Long Island. And my wife volunteers for the additions program and volunteers at the Winter Park Library. And I really would like to be helpful. I'd be glad to volunteer to help out at Rollins, if there's anything I can do, I can do to help." And I said, "You ran a school's financial affairs in Great Neck Long Island?" He said, "Yes." I said, "I'm going to ask you as a volunteer to take on Rollins." So in the fall that first year, Ed Schriber was our volunteer Chief Financial Officer. He was special assistant to the president. He had a budget, which permitted him to hire an accountant. The name was Perry. I lost his first name. So Ed, as a volunteer, and an hourly accountant ran the financial affairs of Rollins College. Ed, sadly, died ten years or so ago. And his widow, who is still a friend of ours and lives out in the towers where we live, Julie, his widow asked me to speak at his service, which I was honored to do. But I pointed out that Ed Schriber, as a volunteer, held the financial affairs of Rollins in his hands for a number of months in that first year.

The financial situation was, was really acute and strategically a problem was that the then School for Continuing Education, that's now the Hamilton Holt School, but that's another story. The School for Continuing Education, the SCE, was generating a huge amount of income. Its costs were low, it was taught by adjuncts, and on a sort of piecework basis by regular faculty. Students could take any number of courses they want, wanted and any student who wanted to could take courses. So the School for Continuing Education was generating, probably, seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars of income available for the operation of the college. And it was a crucial part of the operating budget.

On the other hand, and I don't— I certainly don't want to minimize the good education that very many students got from that program then. On the other hand, it had real problems of quality. We had a program in law enforcement for example. We would offer a degree in almost anything anybody wanted to get a degree in. And I had taken the position, going back to the Jolly Rolly Colly issue, that the destiny of the institution would be determined by its quality. That quality was the word. In my inaugural address and in every document in those early years, I said, "Every decision should be made on the basis of the extent to which it enhances the quality of the institution. That quality of the institution was our most important issue, period."

So that, among other things, meant very hard work on the School for Continuing Education. And we changed deans there and made important changes there. And then finally— Well two other things. I've talked about image, I've talked about finance, I've talked about mission. There're probably two other questions. One is, How do we define who we are and have the faculty collectively committed to those goals? They say of leadership, that leadership is a matter of articulating a shared vision and encouraging the members of the organization to work towards achieving, fulfilling that vision, achieving those goals. So they— It was very important that we start a planning process.

Now I knew, when I came, that the college's centennial would be in 1985. That was long enough to permit a planning process. And indeed in my inaugural address at the very end, I said, "Now, the centennial is two thousand, five hundred and thirty-seven days away and we have a lot of work to do. Let's get started." But we set up a planning committee to help us define who we are, who we wanted to be, and how we would get there by our centennial. In my inaugural speech I said, "Our goal should be, and is, to know ourselves, and to be known by others as the finest small college in the southeast, standing among the finest liberal arts colleges in the country." And frankly, I think we did that. I think, by 1985, we were, no—

I was looking, just this morning, as a matter of fact, at the *US News* survey for this year, and the number one college in the southeast is the University of Richmond. Now, as a New Yorker, I don't look at Richmond as the south (laughs). That's a little bit more, not the northeast, but the mid, mid Atlantic. The southeast to me is the, let's say the North Carolina-South Carolina border. And I remember I used to say, "Draw, in your imagination, a line from the North Carolina-South Carolina border across the country to the Pacific Ocean, and name five selective liberal arts colleges." And Rollins, of course, but then after that it gets hard. And you start saying, Well, let's see, Millsaps, Oglethorpe, uh, what else? Well, people say Emory, not Emory— Emory and Alburn and places like that, those are big universities. I'm talking about places like Rollins. Now you do that in the Northeast and it's easy: Bates, Bowden, Middlebury, Amherst, Williams. Do it in the Midwest and it's easy: Kenyon, Antioch, Wabash, Kalamazoo, Beloit, Grinell, Carlton, Colorado College, Occidental. But in the south, Rollins has the territory, it seemed to me, all to itself.

Indeed, one of the things that I thought about a lot was when I was in college we looked on education in the sunshine as somehow corrupt. We looked on co-education as a little soft. There was Cornell, which had women students. But the Ivy League was all male and indeed we used to think that students who went to Stanford went out there to play tennis and chase women who were waving pom-pom's. And I kept talking about the Stanford effect. I said, now Stanford today is arguably the finest educational institution in the world. So that Puritanical heritage that dominated my educational years that said you need to go to college at a place where it gets dark at about 4:30 in the winter time, where you are not distracted by the opposite sex. That whole idea went after World War Two. And I said, "Rollins can capitalize on this." And there was a— President Fairchild had a wonderful (laughs), wonderful line; this goes back to the nineteenth century. He said, "You must not confuse latitude with lassitude." Isn't that wonderful? Well, I tried to make a lot of that. That, one of our lines was, "You don't have to be cold to get a good education."

So the point I'm trying to make about planning was that we felt that if we could commit ourselves to quality, define our liberal arts mission, and really work at it, we could, by our centennial in 1985, be recognized as one of the finest, as the finest small college in the southeast. And we were. *US News* and *World Report*s started its reports about then and Rollins was listed. The University of Richmond was ahead of us, but Rollins was listed where we are now. *Time Magazin*e wrote a piece about, I hated the title, "Nine Nifty Colleges on the Move", but Rollins was one of them! On the move.

A final comment about the planning process. We felt very strongly in the planning process that we needed to be clear about what liberal arts education was. Liberal arts education is not the majority of your students studying business, and the second largest group studying communication, which was what was going on. Liberal Arts education is grounded in tradition, that goes back to the founding of Harvard College or goes back to Oxford in the Middle Ages.

So, probably the gutsiest thing we did, in the planning process, to define what the Liberal Arts stood for, was to drop the business major, to dismiss all the efforts to have a communications major, and, indeed symbolically to, at the same time, add classics. Indeed, playfully, as part of all that we changed our diploma from English back to Latin. We said we're going to change our degree from a BA to an AB. That is, a BA stands for a Bachelor of Arts; AB stands for Artium Baccalaureates. And so in 1985, as a centennial statement, we changed our degree to Latin to say we are committed to being a first-rate liberal arts college. That's the fourth point.

I want to say one other, probably the most important thing about that. I— In my 51 years in higher education, the person I have valued the most is Daniel DeNicola. Dan is a graduate of Ohio University, did his graduate work at Harvard, studied and got a degree in education at Harvard, came to Rollins to teach philosophy and was tapped to be the Dean of Education. And he was doing that in his early thirties when I arrived in 1978. He and I immediately liked each other. And knowing how important planning was and knowing that Dan was the brightest, most enlightened, most engaging person I have ever known in my professional years, I asked Dan to head the planning committee. He did an absolutely brilliant job. Now I suspect, I know those documents are all here in the archives, and I suspect they are encumbered by the passage of time.

But we set up a special office, we hired a fellow named Roger Baldwin who came down from Stanford. We put together a brilliant committee, and that committee, working with the trustees, produced a course-setting document for our centennial, which I think is probably the most important several pieces of paper of my administration. I think, maybe, of the last decades.

But Dan, who's now the chief academic officer at Gettysburg, is a person I admire more than any other I've ever worked with, and like more than any other professional or personal friend. And I have said, I would say it more formally in this occasion, whatever enhancements to our academic reputation and our academic program may have occurred during my administration, it was all Dan DeNicola. I depended on him, I turned to him, I was guided by him, I was educated by him, and I count him as the major figure of my administration.

The— I guess the final thing I'd want to say is that the place needed to be cheered up. It had had a beating. It— the, uh, you'd had the Wagner Era, you'd had the Era of Good Feeling for Hugh McKean in the fifties and early sixties. And then campuses got cranky with the sort of unrest we were talking about in our last conversation. Hugh left in '69, very bitter and disappointed. And then Jack Critchfield came in. Jack: popular, young administrator from Pitt [Pittsburgh]. And the place in its constituencies became divided. There were the McKean loyalists and the Critchfield loyalists. And that was very painful. And then Jack, in 1978, decided that he wanted to pursue a corporate career and he left to be president of the Winter Park Telephone Company. And then, and left that to work briefly in insurance, and then went to Florida Power, and, by the way, became chairman of Florida Power, a major figure. He's now retired. But Jack left and Fred, his assistant Fred Hicks, was the acting president and parenthetically an applicant for—to become permanent president.

And when I saw the place— You asked, half an hour ago, what did I see when I came here. When I saw the place, I saw a physical plant in quite serious disrepair; I saw a place that was embarrassed by its Jolly Rolly Colly reputation; and I saw a place that needed to be loved. It needed to be—to feel good about itself.

A quick story about its reputation. This is something that somebody could write a term paper on and have some fun with. When the position of president was advertised in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, its customary that you write a description of the place. And it says, Located in Winter Park Florida, adjacent to Orlando, community of twenty-five thousand, one and half hours from Atlantic beaches, and forty-five minutes from Walt Disney World. When the faculty saw this, they went absolutely bonkers. They said, What! We're advertising this as being close to Disney World? We're an educational institution! And they insisted that that line be taken out the ad, and the next time the ad appeared, that line was gone. I've always— I remember that so clearly, I was told about it. I've never seen it with my own eyes. But I've always thought it would be fun to go back to the *Chronicle* and track those ads and see it. But I had fun later on saying, "Really? You took it out? That's the only reason I came!" (laughter) They didn't think that was very funny.

But the place was disturbed by being identified with Disney World, with the beaches and so on. So, it was just what I wanted to do. I had been at an Ivy League college where I used to say one of the challenges was that the students are getting so bright that the trick now is to have the faculty be worthy of the students. I'd been in the Midwestern college going— Primarily going through the period of the transition to the seventies, which was very challenging. And this was an opportunity to participate in a college effort to fulfill its destiny as a first-rate liberal arts college, and, frankly, as a community where people cared about each other which was, has always been important to me. So I was very honored and privileged to come. It was just what I wanted to do, and I think it was what the institution wanted to do. Of leadership, they say, Leadership is fine, but you have to have followership. And the followership was there.

Though I'm suddenly reminded, when I came, full of enthusiasm, I began to worry, Boy, there's so, so much to do! And people are somehow expecting things that I just can't do. Maybe

I can do them eventually, but I can't do them right away. And at my, I think my first faculty meeting, I concluded by saying, "I want to be sure you understand one thing: I am not the tooth fairy." Somebody gave me a t-shirt that said "Tooth fairy." I still have it some place.

So, that's a very long winded way of saying, I came to a place that was wrestling with its identity, financial affairs, management affairs, planning affairs, where's it going. And I came to a place that had never raised a million dollars. It had an endowment of twelve million dollars, six of which was managed by Sun Trust and the other was managed by our financial people. So clearly fundraising was a big part of the goal as well.

Zhang: Could you tell us about your effort working with the Olin Foundation and funding for the Cornell Social Science building?

Seymour: Yes, thank you. In fact, let me precede that with another quick story about fund raising.

Rollins had never raised or received a million dollars until a bequest from George Pearsall. George Pearsall was a man from Deland, who, when he died, left a million, two hundred thousand dollars to Rollins. Now here's the story of Pearsall, and it's a story I've told often. George Pearsall lived in Deland, his wife had gone to Stetson, he was a modest man who had retired, but he had had a hobby of investing, and he had invested, obviously, in a very canny way and had quite a portfolio. He also had an interest in probability theory. Kind of wacky interest in probability theory.

And he went to the math department at Stetson and said, "Excuse me, I'd hate to bother you, but I'm interested in probability theory. I wondered if there was somebody here I could talk to a little bit about it, I'd like to read more." And the secretary said, "Well, Professor Johnson would be the person to talk to. His office is down the hall. I'm not sure he's there, but let me make an appointment for you to see him tomorrow at one o'clock." So, Mr. Pearsall came back the next day at one o'clock, and Mr. Johnson never showed up. He said, "Well I must've gotten it wrong," so he went back and made an appointment for the following week, Tuesday at three o'clock. He got there at three o'clock, Mr. Johnson's door was open, he was talking to a colleague, and Mr. Pearsall said, "I'm sorry to interrupt." And he said, "I can't see you now I'm too busy (unintelligible) so you come back later." And so he made another appointment and he came back a few days later, and the door was closed, Mr. Johnson wasn't there— Professor Johnson.

And Mr. Pearsall said, "You know, there's another college I've heard of down the road in Winter Park, Rollins, I've never been there." But he drove down to Rollins, went in to ask for the math department, was in the Bush Science Building. Went into the Bush Science Building, went down the hall, there was a door open, faculty member Sandy Skidmore was sitting there. And said, "I'm terribly sorry to bother you, but my name's George Pearsall, I live in Deland. I've gotten interested in probability theory and I just was trying to get some advice about some books to read." She said, "Oh, I'm interested in that, too. Come on in."

They sat down; they had this wonderful conversation. And as she talked about probability it turned out that he was interested in ESP [Extrasensory perception] and such matters. And she said, "Well my colleague, Hoyt Edge, in the philosophy department is very interested in ESP. So let's walk down and I'll have you meet him." So she walks George Pearsall down to the French House. They meet Hoyt Edge, he and Hoyt hit it off. Hoyt's father had taught at Stetson, so Hoyt knew Deland. The next year, out of the blue, Mr. Pearsall sent a

contribution of five thousand dollars to support research in parapsychology. And did that for several years, and became more interested in Rollins. And when he died, he left a million dollars.

Now, the point of this story, in my experience, is Sandy Skidmore, in a way, is responsible for that gift. But she didn't set out to do that. She's just a very nice person. And that's the kind of place we are. And, when he came, he knew he was in a congenial community and you can't fake that. You can't say, Whenever I see someone come in the door who looks like he may have money, I'll be nice to him. You can't do that. And the fact is George Pearsall never looked like he had money, he was a modest man. I remember when I was sitting down talking to him one time about his portfolio, he had it all written out on shirt cardboards. And we were sitting at his kitchen table. And he left a million dollars! Anyway, we were just not used to raising that kind of money.

When I came, the condition of the plant was acute, and probably the biggest problem was the library, the Mills Library. The *Yale Underground Guide to Colleges* said, The Rollins library is so bad students are advised to bring their own crayons. I remember there was an elevator in the stacks. And it was one of those things where you have to pull on the cable to make the thing go up and down, and a sign I've never forgotten was on the door. It said, Look before stepping in elevator. And what that said to me is, You may open the door and the elevator won't be there, so don't just walk through the doorway!

The archives, this collection was in the downstairs in the— No, instead the rare book collection, was in the down stairs in the back next to what's now the entrance to the post office in a room that had standing water on the floor. This is where the autograph book, Hamilton Holt's autograph book of the autographs of all of the presidents were, half of which had been ripped out. The Archives themselves were upstairs and you may or may not know the story of the transition, but if you ask Kate sometime that's something worth recording, because it was a very painful transition and the former— Anyway, that's another story. But the building was awful.

Jack Critchfield had made a preliminary inquiry to the Olin Foundation about building a new library for Rollins. Olin's custom was to build one or two buildings a year, mostly science buildings. Franklin Olin of Federal Cartridge was a scientist and an engineer. But they had done a few other buildings, and Jack applied for this and had an architect. And they had plans to build the library down where French House is. I didn't like the plans very much. I called on the Olin people and said, "A library is the most important initiative for Rollins. We want to stress our academic priorities. The heart of the campus is the library. I want to do this right. I'm not comfortable with these plans. I would like to withdraw our application." So we withdrew our application from the Olin Foundation with the understanding that we would come back to them.

Jesse Morgan, our treasurer, newly appointed treasurer— I'll say a word about him later. We kept trying— Jesse said, "You know, one of the things they don't like about the plan we had before is that the library is not prominent enough. They want this—they wouldn't say it in these terms, but they want this to be a prominent building." We talked ourselves into building it in front of Mills. Now, the Mills Grant prohibited building anything in front of Mills. But we even talked ourselves into saying, Well if we call it Mills, we can call it an addition to Mills, and the whole complex would be the Olin Library. And we were going along that line, and I never felt right about it. But we did get the trustees to approve, it's in the minutes someplace, to approve locating a new library in the horseshoe in front of Mills, which would have been a disastrous mistake. But we needed a library and we needed the money.

One day Jesse Morgan comes to my office and says, "I got an idea." He said, "Come with me." So we walked out of the office and walked down. And where the library is now, used to be where Knowles Hall was. And he said, "You know Knowles is about to fall down. If we took Knowles down, we could put the library right there. If we put it at an angle, it would take the eye down to the lake," which is another thing we had talked about. And I said, "Jess, you're absolutely right. You're absolutely right." I've often said to Jesse, "You're the most creative person I've ever worked with and you're that one (snaps) idea." There's a wonderful new book out by Malcolm Gladwell called *Blink*, and it's about those (snaps) ideas, and this was (snaps) one of those ideas. And we then began to draw up some plans, went back to the Olin people, they were interested, and we began a relationship which went on for several years.

I never worked harder on anything in my life. Writing that proposal was a full summer, I'm going to say, of '83 that I worked on that. I often wished that I'd kept all the papers, they were in this huge file, to show my students the draft, and then draft again, and then draft again, and then correct, and then revise. The writing is the easy part; it's the revision that's the hard work. And that was really revised.

The uh— But we pulled together a proposal for them. And one other hero to be mentioned. We were serious about this. We had to have— Everything we were trying to do depended on a new library. Not a new gym, not a new whatever. Library. Quality. We're a liberal arts educational institution. The most important thing we do is library.

The uh— A young couple of alumni, Barbara and Peter Dixon, they had been friends of mine, and they had— They understood this, and one of our problems was we had a very low book budget. If we were going to get a new library, what were we going to put in it and the Dixon's gave us a million dollars to buy books for the new library. Now that was part of what we were able to take to the Olin people. Said, "Look, we're serious enough about this. Our alumni are serious enough about this, and they've already committed a million dollars for book purchase. And if we get a new library, we'll have books for it." And I think that was a very important factor. I will never forget the day there were a group of us meeting in my office and Connie Riggs, who worked with me, came in and sort of said, "I have Larry Milas on the phone." He was the head of the Olin Foundation. And I knew we were going to hear pretty soon. And the whole place was watching me, and I did not go to the phone in my office. I went to the phone out there. So, if it was bad news, I at least would have the privacy. But instead it was good news and I stretched the phone as far as I could and looked at the group and did that (thumbs up) and they all exploded. It was probably the happiest single professional moment of my life. So we got that, that grant.

One of the things I've always known is we had no alternative. If we had not gotten the grant, they, uh— I don't know where we would've come up with a hundred thousand dollars to redo Mills, so it was, it's the most important tangible part of my administration. Larry Milas has just retired from the Olin Foundation. I wrote him a letter the other day to say briefly what I've just said here, and to say that what I most appreciated was that he knew that in making that grant he could give Rollins the good housekeeping seal of approval to help us go forward. I've been told, I don't know, that it came down to Rollins and Tulane. And for Rollins to beat out Tulane made us feel very good about it.

The other building projects included the Alfond Baseball Stadium; Harold Alfond helped us with that. We had gotten Dan Galbreath of John Galbreath Company in Ohio, whose son, Squire [John], had come to Rollins; gotten him involved. Wonderful man; wonderful friend. And Dan, who owned the Pittsburgh Pirates at one time, helped talking to Harry Alfond to encourage

his contribution, and also George Cornell. We put an addition on the Annie Russell Theatre with a grant from the Kresge Foundation, and a number of other things. But we really needed a social science building. We had torn down Knowles; those classes were being conducted in the old Park Avenue school building. And we needed a social science building. (coughs) We wanted a social science building that was designed for around –The conference plan I did, which would have lounges, comfortable offices for faculty, would have space for conversation. We knew it was going to cost 3.5 million dollars and we began working on, working with, working on the Cornells. The Cornells had given I think about a million dollars, or less, slightly less than that, for the Cornell Fine Arts Museum. We got them to give a million dollars for, to endow scholarship and the classics chair, but we had to get their sights raised to three million dollars, which was hard to do. They were not in the habit of that kind of philanthropy.

We had a campaign to raise thirty-three million dollars, and we spent a lot of time with the Cornells helping them understand that for a campaign to succeed, you have to have one gift of ten percent of the total. There's a pyramid that fund raisers use. And to help them understand, they were the only prospects that we had in the Rollins family, in those days, who could do that. And they wrestled with it. And we had an architect present the case. The whole thing was orchestrated very carefully and very hard. At the fall trustee meeting. This was '87, or so. We made a presentation, we were over in the green room, I remember we had drawings. And then that was Friday afternoon. Friday evening, it happened to be Halloween, and we had invited the trustee's to come for dinner at our house. Well, we had this little presentation in the afternoon for George and Harriet. And then it broke up with no, with no response or commitment on their part. And Bill Gordon called me, and Bill Gordon had been with them, was a friend of theirs, and called me up afterwards and said, "Congratulations." And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well George and Harriet are going to do the building." I said, "They never said that to me." He said, "They did. They thought they said that to you." And I said, "I hate to be old fashioned about this, Bill, but until we shake on it, I'm not going to believe it." So Bill and Peggy drove the Cornells to our house for dinner on Halloween. And Bill said, "Thad, George has something he wants to say to you." And he said, "Trick or treat!" (Laughter) It being Halloween. I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "We decided to treat you with a new building."

And for years I called up George Cornell on Halloween. His birthday was on Saint Patrick's day, March 17. I would call him, for sure, on Halloween to say "Trick or treat" and on March 17 to wish him a happy birthday. But that was, just as the library was the center of the institution, the— a contemporary social science building was very important, both in a statement about education and about providing space for students and faculty. Jack Lane designed it, maybe you've already talked to Jack about his vision of that as, in affect, the student and the faculty member on either end of a log. So that was the Cornells, who were very, very challenging, as others have no doubt told you, but very dear people. And interestingly, as I finished my administration, we became much more comfortable friends, because they knew I was not trying to get money out of them. So we continued to be friends until, first Harriet and then George, died.

Zhang: Could you tell us a little more about your leadership effort in the centennial celebration?

Seymour: That was the most fun I've ever had! I, knowing that we would be talking, when I woke up this morning, I found myself thinking about the centennial, ranging from the photograph, which I think we may have mentioned when we were talking before, that photograph (points to photograph behind him). And you've seen the person in either end.

Right here, wearing a white shirt and a necktie is David Zarou. Right there. And when the camera passed it, he ran behind the bleachers all the way up to here and there he is right there (points to second picture). White shirt and a neck-tie. So he's in it twice. Now this is a, yeah. We modeled this on this picture, which I had in my office, and if you look at the sign, here it says: Rollins College, Winter Park Florida, 15 January 1941. The lettering on the sign here is exactly the same. Rollins College, Winter Park Florida, 9 September 1985. And this picture in my office was so important to me. This was the students and the faculty of Rollins College, 1941. And I said, "Any time you've got a college that hold for a portrait or a photograph, you've got a community you can comprehend." I use to say, you could hold this college in your hand. When I started out, somebody said, "Well I'm not sure you can hold this in your hands anymore." But you can still get your arms around it. (Laughter) As I was saying that, it's a wonderful, wonderful line and, uh, I— One of the things that really gets me is I know so many of these people: here I am, here's Polly, here's Olga [Viso], here is Octavia [Lloyd], who was just back for a visit the other day, and you look at that picture and nobody is making an obscene gesture or anything else. It's a wonderful, wonderful picture.

As you may know, we had set it up with Good Morning America. The camera comes in with Murry Sales, and he says, "I'm Murray Sales, president of the Student Government at Rollins College, celebrating our centennial and we're here to say—" And with that the camera goes (makes whooshing sound) and we all say, "Good morning, America!" (Laughter) And that was as much fun as I've ever had. And then for the birthday, November 4th, we had a whole bunch of things going on. We had a program in the Annie Russell Theatre, remembering Hamilton Holt' and we had his contemporaries talking about him and we put a portrait of him on the stage. We had the, uh, Mr. and Mrs. Hooker, people representing them, arrive by train at the railroad station. I went over in our old family touring car and met them, and I remember standing at the station, and there Hope Strong led a cheer, and then I led a cheer, and so we kicked off the centennial that way.

Saturday night, we had a performance of *Man of La Mancha* in the field house, which was wonderful. And then Sunday, the centennial was Monday, Sunday we had a picnic and then in the evening we set up luminaria on all the horseshoe and a big tent. In my mind's eye, I can see Lauren Matthews, the daughter of Dan Matthews, who'd given our commencement address, cutting the centennial cake, and then right at midnight, we had a fireworks display and I had worked it out with the man in charge of the fireworks to give him the signal. So I had a watch and he said, "Now it takes about 3 seconds from the time I light it until the time it goes off." So I had to give him a margin of three seconds. So thirteen seconds before midnight I started going, ten, nine, eight, and then they fired it off and we had fireworks over the swimming pool. It was wonderful. And the students all started chanting: "Fox Day! Fox Day! Fox Day!" They wanted a Fox Day the next day. And the next day was our big day. We were having an event at the chapel and there's something else about it, I need to tell you.

The uh— But I got a phone call at six o'clock in the morning at home. And someone said, "You know, I think it's great that you're a hundred years old, but are you going to ring the damn bell a hundred times?" And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well the bell at Rollins is ringing. It's been ringing for the longest time." I said, "Uh-oh…" And I got my car,

came up to the campus, the college bell was ringing. And there in the center of the campus was a papier-mâché fox. (Laughter) And everyone said, "Fox Day! Fox Day!" (Laughter) And I went over and picked it up, I saw it was very light, and put it in the back of the, uh— I was driving a VW Bug Convertible at the time, and put it in the back of the car and drove it off and took it home. But I just remember that moment of walking across the campus holding this papier-mâché fox with those bells going in the background.

The two things about the centennial day: one is, we had a very nice ceremony in the chapel. Very important, we had some speakers, that sort of thing you do when you have a hundredth birthday. But we had done something very important that weekend, and this is lost in the shadows of time. You have to go back to 1985 to remember that the big issues on campus was apartheid. And students were pressing their colleges not to invest in companies that were doing business in South Africa. And the term was divestiture: wanting their colleges, their trustees, to divest. Last time we were talking about the Kodak and Solinsky and the Dartmouth, that I answered your question, in 1987. Sorry, 1967. And here it is 1985, and that issue is big. Anybody, wonderful research paper, but anybody doing research on that will find that in the *New York Times*, things about divestiture. At Dartmouth, for example, the students built corrugated cardboard shanties on the campus and lived in them to make a statement about Soweto on the conditions for the communities in South Africa. So the question came up— Well one other thing. So the question was, don't invest in South Africa. But there was a man named Dr. Leon Sullivan, who was on the board of General Motors, who said, "Wait a minute, investment is important to the economic welfare. Let's identify those companies that have fair employment practices, give equal rights to blacks and whites, who have healthcare and other benefits. Let's establish what we call the Sullivan Principles, and any company that qualities for, that meets the Sullivan Principles, is okay for investment."

So we— This question of the Sullivan Principles became very hot on campuses and we had a group of students led by a student named Woody Nash, who set up corrugated cardboard homes in front of Mills to protest Rollins' investment practices and to urge the trustees to divest companies that did not subscribe to the Sullivan Principles. The trust[ees]— I've been so proud, I've always been so proud of this, the trustees were meeting in the Galloway room. And this was just before the centennial weekend. The trustees walked right by those shanties into the Galloway room and on Friday before the centennial voted to divest. Now, for Rollins that was big. It's a whole other conversation about how the trustees have come of age, but that was a huge, huge decision. And I was so proud that— And I announced that as part of the comments on Monday. I'm so proud that part of the coming of age, not just shedding the Jolly Rolly Colly, not just being a Nine Nifty College, not being in *U.S. News* and the *World Report,* was having the conscience to act out of a principle about its endowment.

The, uh, now the other thing that happened, you may not know this, is after the ceremony we came over here and put a time capsule in the Olin cornerstone. So that was the last event of the centennial. No, that was the last event of the centennial observation. The last event, and most people don't know this, was in Woodstock, Connecticut in August of that year. August, '86. When we reenacted Hamilton Holt's tradition of having his birthday party. And we had about two hundred and fifty people come out and had a wonderful picnic there. So we used that. We began the centennial with the dedication of the Olin Library on April 17, 1985, the anniversary of our charter. And we concluded it in August of '86. So they— That's what the centennial was all about. It was great fun, I loved it. I had a good time.

Zhang: Could you tell us about your involvement with the renovation of Walk of Fame and Pinehurst?

Seymour: Well, thank you. Well Pinehurst— Pinehurst was in terrible shape. When I first saw it, it had holes in the floor, it had rats coming in. When it rained, you'd get your feet wet in the bathroom because of the splashing up and so on. It was in terrible shape and everybody wanted to tear it down. And I knew it was our last original building and so our last link with our founding. I learned later, by the way, that the architect for that building was from Worcester, Massachusetts and he had also designed the hospital in Hanover, New Hampshire, Mary Hitchcock Hospital, where four of our five children were born, so I had a personal link, nothing to do with it. But I knew we should save Pinehurst. We had a consulting architect, Bill Turner, dean of the architectural school in Tulane, who helped us think through what could be done with it. And Bill helped us talk to our trustee Ira Kooger about making a gift to preserve the building. And we got enough money to restore it.

One of the things about the building is that it had been located very—located right next to the original Knowles Hall, and when Knowles burned we later discovered black marks on the north end of Pinehurst where it had charred. But it was very close to the Walk of Fame, which by the way in those days was a real road with cars back and forth. And very close to the dormitory next to it. So part of, because we had to redo the foundations anyway, part of it was to move it south by about twenty feet and east by about twenty feet. And somewhere in the archives is a film that a local T.V. company did, *Time Lapse*. And you see Pinehurst go: zoom, zoom! (Laughter) It was great fun to see. So that was very important to me and every time I see it I realize we still have that link with our founding, because it was a part of the original campus. I'm pleased with that.

And the Walk of Fame was gift of Frank Hubbard and his family to permit us to recast that. That was very important to me. I mean, that was pure Hamilton Holt. The Walk of Fame is pure Hamilton Holt. And indeed, at his home in Sunset Hill in Woodstock, is a walk of fame. With a mill wheel, and then stones from his forbearers, members of his family. So, when he came down here, he said, "Oh, we ought to have a walk of fame." And he got a mill wheel brought down from Connecticut. By the way, his tombstone is one of those mill wheels. If you see his grave in the Congregational Church in Woodstock, it's a mill wheel. But he brought that down, and then encouraged people, as we all know, to bring back mementos. I've always said it's institutionalized vandalism of the worst sort (laughter). However, it was a sentimental statement on his part that these mementos would inspire all of us. Those of us who live here know that part of the fun is to see visitors go around and look at them and usually it's funny. Funny sort of familiar style. And the husband will read the names aloud. "Oh yes, here's Shakespeare. Oh, and here's Robert Burns." As if he knew any of them. (Laughter) And then we've all been asked the question, "Oh! Are these people all buried here?" (Laughter)

I had some wonderful moments myself. The Martin Luther King stone was gathered by Dan Matthews, who talked to the King family and he gave it to his daughter, Lauren, who brought it down personally and we set that there. The Zora Neale Hurston stone, which was reflecting the one Alice Walker had put on her gravestone. One of our alumni read from Zora; that's the first I heard of her work. Tina Osceola helped us put in the stone for Chief Osceola, her grandfather. And I, somewhere, have a photograph of Tina in her full Seminole regalia and me in my academic gown standing there by the stone. So, the Walk of Fame was a very happy

project for me. For fun, because Susan Curran had been so interested in the walk of Fame, I designated her the college Lapidarian. She and I continue to tease about that.

Zhang: There's an old saying that says that behind every great man, there's always a great woman.

Seymour: Oh, indeed.

Zhang: So could you tell us about Polly Seymour?

Seymour: Well, I should not say. You would really need to ask her, because I would never speak for her, but we, we who have been married for fifty-seven years now.

Zhang: And how did you two meet? Last week you mentioned that you—

Seymour: Yeah, we met in the summer of— In New Hope, Pennsylvania where my folks had a place, and where her father lived, who's an artist. And we got married. And we— She sacrificed her work to permit me to go to school, and uh, so she did not graduate from college until we came to Rollins. I think I mentioned that she graduated from Rollins in 1985; straight A student, did wonderfully well. But she has been a partner, a great fun in this profession, as we've done it together and she's been a partner all along the way. We've raised five kids along the way as well. But she, she never liked the term first lady. Indeed, it makes her quite uncomfortable. But I think she has always been comfortable with our partnership with the three institutions that we've served. We have entertained a lot of people in our home, we have talked about everything, she's advised me of all sorts of things. Indeed, I remember one time I was visiting another campus and they were pressing me very hard, pressing us very hard to go there. And so I passed Polly in the hall; she just went like this, putting her thumbs down. Simply to say, I don't think this is the place for us, and she was absolutely right. So, she has been a joyful partner, and continues to be. And she would speak for herself.

I guess, if there's a downside, because, you know, these jobs are fun but they're not without their hard times. During *Equus,* which I talked about last time, I didn't talk about the bomb threats or the people who called her up when I was out at the courtroom. People would call her up and say, "You're going to die in Hell. You're going to burn in Hell." And when, we have often said, when the going gets tough, suddenly you discover that people won't talk to you very much. Our analogy has been that it's been like having a dread disease and your friends don't know whether you know that they know you've got it. And so, during some hard times, and I won't identify them. To myself, I can name five or six really ugly tough times at Rollins. During that, during those times, Polly always said she felt very isolated. Nobody talked to her, nobody ever said, Oh Polly I'm sorry you're having such a hard time, don't take it personally or whatever. It just— Like the Quaker shunning. And that's the downside.

But for those few occasions that somebody that had been such fun always ultimately turning on student friendships. We've had student friendships all our lives. Continued to this year at graduation. Some very special friends graduated. And that's what has made it fun.

I was thinking, I went through some papers, I won't refer to many of them, but one, as a reminder of perspective, alumni were asked for their view of the place and one wrote: "The school has lost"— This was written during my administration —"The school has lost the spirit of

Dr. H. Holt. It has turned into a pinko knee-jerk hotbed liberal mess. It's thrown off fraternities and sororities and let the faculty run the school who all have tenure, which is another name for unions. No wonder the alum's don't contribute!" (Laughter) So that helps with perspective on change.

Zhang: Some people believe another of your, the legacy of your administration in fact is that you strengthened relationship with the city of Winter Park. Can you tell us about your involvement with the community?

Seymour: Well, being a part of where we live has always been important to us. We were very much involved in Hanover. One of the things I did that was great fun, was to be the marshal of the 1961 bicentennial parade in Hanover. Gosh, I had a good time! I remember somebody in one article, I was quoted as saying: "Parades bring out the best in people!" (Laughs) Well, the sort of do. I love parades. And I, uh, I was involved in a lot of things in Hanover, I was involved in the church, I chaired the Campus Ministry committee. Through our church we founded a coffeehouse, which was a very big thing in the sixties. The Ram's Horn Coffeehouse. So we've been involved in Hanover. Both of us had friends and activities. In Crawfordsville, I was an active Rotarian. I remember I loved to go to Rotary and I'd sit across from a farmer, and he'd be telling about his problems with hog bloat. And I'd say, Isn't that wonderful? I thought I had troubles. Here's a guy dealing with hog bloat. (Laughter) And that was very important to me. I chaired at the United Fund there, and worked at the coffeehouse in that community. Polly was very much involved with the town swimming team. Our kids were all swimmers there. I helped organize a summer theatre group called the Sugar Creek Players. And again, I think balance in your life requires that you— You're deprived if you don't enjoy the fellowship of a community.

And when we were thinking about coming to Winter Park, the fact that Winter Park was a small town was important to us. So I was a Rotarian and got involved with a number of community organizations. I was chairman of B.E.T.A., the helping program for women and children in Orlando. Did that for seven or eight years, and enjoyed being involved in other groups not simply to be on the letterhead but it was fun to be involved with the Science Center and WMFE and stuff like that.

Polly's biggest commitment has been to the Winter Park library. She began running their book sales in 1980. Seventy-nine or '80. The first year they raised two-hundred and thirty-two dollars. They— The book sales grew and became very successful, raised maybe twenty-five thousand dollars a year. And then one day Polly said, "You know, all my volunteers and I are getting older. This is a lot of work." And when they remodeled the library, she and Bob Melanson, the librarian, worked out an arrangement for there to be a permanent book sale. A bookstore. The New Leaf Bookstore. And that's been Polly's passion. She has worked at that. She's there almost every day. It has raised, since the first book sale, it has raised almost three quarters of a million dollars. And I— Just watching for that, and she never says anything about it, but I'm watching for the day it hits a million dollars, which it will. I hope it will in our lifetime. But more than that, it's a statement of community spirit; a lot of volunteers work there. It recycles a lot of books; probably twenty-five to thirty thousand books change hands every year. She was chairman of the board, and she hired Bob Melanson, she was head of that effort. And then she got me involved with the board. I served as chairman of the board and helped with some other initiatives.

You and I served on the Smith committee and that's been fun. She and I both got involved in Habitat. I've chaired that for a while. One of the things that was most fun was chairing the task force on community civility, which I enjoyed doing back in the early nineties. So being a part of Winter Park has been very important to us. Very fulfilling, very natural, and very happy. Indeed, the work would not have been as much fun if it were not for the community as well.

Zhang: How do you view your Rollins career and now that you're officially retired, what's your plan?

Seymour: Well my plan is to stay in Winter Park and to be a part of it. And to teach at Rollins, probably as an adjunct. Probably, every semester, to do a course, but to have the option of maybe not teaching one semester so we can travel or whatever. We have organized life to spend the summers where it's a little cooler now, taking care of grandchildren up on Shelter Island. And to continue to be involved in the community. But I will celebrate my seventy-seventh birthday this summer and I'm trying to be prudent about not taking on more than I can comfortably handle. Indeed, I'm feeling a bit of the squeeze right now because I did agree to give the commencement address at Trinity on Saturday, where our grandson is graduating. So I have to do some things like that and enjoy it.

I'm so comfortable about our time at Rollins. When I finished up the spring, Barbara Carson very kindly made some remarks at a faculty meeting, and what particularly pleased me was that she talked about my work here as a teacher, and noted that I'd been teaching here for fifteen years, which is longer than any other job I've had. I taught for five years, I was dean for ten, I was president at Wabash for nine, president here for twelve, and I've been professor of English for fifteen years. And to have the privilege of leading the institution for the period through its centennial and helping the institution define itself as part of that discipline, and then to top it off with spending my, devoting my attention to students, has just been perfect for me. I couldn't be more grateful for that privilege. I mean that.

Zhang: Thank you so much. We really enjoyed your conversation.

Seymour: Thank you, it was fun for me.