

Interviewee: Ted Smith

Interviewer: Jay Grife

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UF298A

G: This is April 5, 1996, and my name is Jay Grife. I am sitting at a bench outside of Grinter Hall, near the plaza [of the Americas] at the University of Florida. This interview is part of the oral history program relative to the history of the plaza. I am sitting here right now with Ted. Ted is an alias. All the stories that Ted will relate to us are considered legal hearsay. They cannot and will not be proven in a court of law nor will they be asserted for the truthfulness of what is stated. This is essentially a narrative that Ted will be providing based on stories that he has no personal knowledge about but has heard about. Anything that we do here or we are told must be related in that sense as a third person narrative. Even should Ted revert into the first person narrative, it is purely to expedite the taping and discussion. Thank you.

S: Hello, my name is Ted. I used to be a student here at the University of Florida. I came here as a freshman back in 1978, and I was eighteen as were most of my friends. I transferred from California [which Californian school?]. I lived in Florida before that and was basically homesick and my friends talked me into coming here and so there I was in 1978, like I said. Now, you have to remember that back then the drinking age in Gainesville was eighteen and Gainesville was

pretty much a wide open town. You could regularly, during the fraternity rush parties, go down to the frat row [buildings along Fraternity Drive between Museum Drive and Stadium Road] and come upon a fifty or a hundred keg party on just about any weekend. Everybody knew that, including all the citizens of Gainesville. So they also ended up getting a lot of the locals showing up at the parties. I did not go much for the frats' philosophies myself, it was fine for them, but it was not for me; but I would go there and drink their beer. A lot of times it was free, and we are talking fifty-keg parties with maybe a thousand people showing up. I was eighteen; most everybody there was eighteen. They did not check IDs a whole lot back then, certainly less than they do now; and I think the bars stayed open later than they do now. I think they were open until 4 o'clock back then. I am not really sure about that. You can look back and check on that.

Well anyway, Gainesville was wide open, UF [University of Florida] was pretty much wide open and there was a free, easy going attitude. There was not much police presence back then. They [the University police] had a little tiny building that they still operate out of, but I think there were maybe ten or twenty cops on campus.

You did not see a whole lot of them, but you knew they were around and

everybody felt safe. It was before any of the student murders and before people started losing control due to crack cocaine and other things like that.

Well, Gainesville was a nice place to live, a great place to go to school and a lot more relaxed. There was a wide open feeling about anything there, including the plaza. As for the plaza, I saw a lot of people smoking marijuana openly on the plaza back in 1978. In 1979 and throughout my years [number of years?] as a

student here, it was pretty common to see. The cops did not seem to care a whole lot back then. If they [the cops] were there, they did not make themselves known. Also, the plaza was the center of the alternative culture back then. Everyday we would see a parade at the plaza. We would see the Hare Krishnas dressed up in their full regalia singing their songs. We would see the frisbee players on one side and then the hippies would always gather together. There would be people juggling. All that was a typical day at the plaza. People would go there to skip class, relax, forget about everything and try to have a good time. It was always a nice place to go. We actually had good weather most of the year, and you could always find your friends there and find out what was going on as far as parties or find out which classes to avoid, things of that nature. I had some friends that were kind of ahead of their time. We called them the "Punkettes." They were five girls, and they were definitely a little ahead of their time. This was back in maybe 1980 or 1981. They would wear leopard skin miniskirts, very small tops, and leather gloves with the fingers missing. Very few people were wearing that stuff back then except probably over in England, when punk rock first came out. These girls would skip class with us. They were from the beach area too so we had a lot in common. Like us, they liked to go to the beach a lot. They introduced me to drinking on the plaza; something I really had not thought about at the time. They were doing it, and they seemed to be having a really good time; so we said, what the heck. They would bring a deck of cards, we would play poker, have a few drinks and skip school. It was just a great thing to do. We were probably doing all this because we got our student loans, which

were easy to get back then. Everybody got them. We would pay our tuition and then probably spend the rest on partying. We would go out at night, every night, five nights a week maybe.

Like I said, we would regularly hang out on the plaza, skip class, find out where the parties are, and go to concerts. There were always good bands playing back then, like The Roach Motels and The Riff, a couple of local bands. I think The Riff moved out to California. I do not know if they ever made it big or anything.

G: Were these student bands? Were students the band members?

S: They were people who came to Gainesville to be students, but ended up doing something else, a lot like I did. I thought The Riff was an excellent band. They played "Talking Heads" music when the Talking Heads first came out. [The Riff] were popular and would always pack the bars.

G: Since you have given us a little background Ted into the plaza, we will now look into the social history of the plaza and touch upon several main themes:

-the main music themes that you would hear when you walked onto the plaza as a student,

-the major dress themes you would see,

-the major types of drugs and drug interactions that you would see students using,

-the degree of sexuality that was either shunned, allowed or such like that

-the Halloween balls

-a little about the UPD [University Police Department]

There had to be some degree of UPD presence, and either they allowed it or they vicariously did not want to be involved in it. Do you want to discuss the UPD first?

S: No, let us go in the order that you have.

G: Okay, the first topic is music. You were talking about two student bands: The Riff and the other?

S: The Roach Motels. It was almost like a comparison of The Beatles and The [Rolling] Stones. The Riff was more or less the "good guys," and The Roach Motels were definitely a hard core punk band which everybody liked. On most weekends they [The Roach Motels] would have parties right across the street from campus. The house that they played at usually got trashed, and everybody had a good time.

G: Ted, at times during this interview, we will put ourselves in a metaphysical state back into the 1970s.

As we walked onto that plaza, what kind of music do you think we would hear from the radios? What would people be listening to?

S: Most of the time, there were no radios. It was before ghetto blasters, and people really did not carry around radios. Most of the time, you would hear the Krishnas playing their music: tambourines, finger cymbals. Sometimes they [the Krishnas] would bring a cassette recorder with some of their music taped on it and chant along with it. I would say that 80 percent of the time that was the type of music you heard: the Krishnas.

G: People would not be walking around with CD players; I guess there were no CD players.

S: No, I cannot remember any CD players back then. Ghetto blasters were not that popular. Most of the time, people did not want to interfere with the ambience of what was already there.

G: So music was more of a secondary things related to the Krishnas. We will talk about the Krishnas as an influence on the plaza later in the interview. Again we will jump back in our time capsule and go to the plaza. Besides the Punkettes' animal outfit [laughter], what would the students normally be wearing? For example, there are two young ladies walking by that are wearing jean cutoffs and white T-shirts, and smoking cigarettes. What would the normal undergrad student, grad student or law student, for that matter, hanging out on the plaza be wearing?

S: Well, all of my friends would be in surfer shorts and T-shirts. We would wear those everyday. Sometimes we would change them, and sometimes we would not. We did not care a whole lot, because we knew we were going surfing, if there were waves, we would skip school and go surfing. Now one of my great memories is of dolphin shorts, which a lot of people wore. That was when they first came out.

G: What are dolphin shorts?

S: I guess the closest thing they have today to dolphin shorts, although I have not seen any lately, are the runner shorts that are almost split up the side. They [dolphin shorts] are very sheer, very thin, and very small. The girls would always

wear them at least one or two sizes too small to emphasize everything. There are shorts similar to them today, but they have biker shorts underneath. Biker shorts were definitely not in or around back then. So in the summer and in the spring, people mainly wore dolphin shorts and small T-shirts, because the weather is nice here most of the time. I guess blue jeans and T-shirts were most common for the student population, except for those with money who might dress up a little bit nicer.

G: What about shoes? Did most students on the plaza wear shoes, sandals, or were they barefoot?

S: Most of the people I hung out with wore slaps or sandals. If you thought you might need them when it rained, you wore shoes.

G: I do not mean to be dating myself, but I will. When I was an undergrad, most women wore a lot of undergarments except in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, then when things became more radical, bras and underwear were gone. How was it on the plaza? Did women walk around in radical clothing, such as I described, or in more conservative clothing?

S: I would say that most of the people who attended school here and still do attend school here are from the coast or some such area, so undergarments were probably as unimportant then as they are today. They were there, but I did not notice them a whole lot back then. [laughter]

G: So basically you are saying that students are students, only now perhaps a tad on the updated side for 1996?

S: Except for the fact that during the spring and summer you would see a lot more bikini tops, and girls laying out on the plaza in bikini tops, which you do not see nowhere near as much today.

G: What do you think stopped that?

S: I really do not know.

G: I find that interesting, because I would think with women's liberation and the feminist movement that women would be more prone to do what they felt natural or do what they wanted. I would think that about the time we are talking about, the 1970s, women would be more subdued.

S: It was the late 1970s, and it was at a time right before a big conservative wave hit Gainesville. I would say that wave hit in the early 1980s or mid 1980s. I guess people thought they were a little more free back then.

Let me say one more thing about the dress. A couple of times back in the 1970s and early 1980s , you would see a topless girl on the plaza. I think I saw that two or three times back then. I have not seen that lately, but I do not spend anywhere near the time there now that I used to spend [laughter]. People did not seem to care. Then, the attitude was "let her do what she wants."

G: This was not a streaker, but someone hanging out, taking her top off?

S: Yes. She was laying down or sitting up. That [her bikini top] is the undressing part of the dress. [laughter]

G: When you gave your introduction to Gainesville and the plaza you made a few references to students going out on the plaza having a few drinks, getting high, and skip class. Your inference was that a collective body of students took their

student loan money, paid their tuition and used the rest of their money to enjoy themselves, oftentimes did not go to class. Could you say whether this was a majority of the students, a minority of the students or only those students you knew from the plaza? Did the plaza relate to the degree of students skipping class? In other words, if at that time we were to go to the chemistry building, would we have seen the same students cutting school as we would have seen hanging out there on the plaza? Did the ambience, the atmosphere of the plaza contribute to students cutting class?

S: It seemed like the plaza was the place to hang if you did skip class. The plaza had entertainment. It had the Krishnas and the preachers, a wide variety of people. If you were bored, there were not many other places nearby to go, so people ended up at the plaza. I am sure that there were students, who were spending their money on partying rather than on school. I am sure that was going on in a lot of other places. Maybe because of the beach, lot more of my friends were partying than those in the more conservative areas in Florida like Orlando. For most of my friends that [partying] was the thing to do. We would look forward to getting that student loan check, because we knew that once our tuition was paid we would at least have money for a little while, and we could pretty much do with it as we wanted. You knew you could always get a free meal from the Krishnas on the plaza. So you could get a free meal everyday; and I thank the Krishnas because they got me through one summer when I was really poor. I really do appreciate them, and I know that I am not the only one. I was not homeless, but there were homeless people out there getting their food too.

And it was free back then. Now they beg for a donation, but back then it was truly free and it was great.

G: You just mentioned homeless people. Did people ever camp out and live on the plaza? If you wanted, could you actually sleep all night on the plaza?

S: No. Maybe on a rare weekend; but, no, I never saw that.

G: Now let us discuss more of the recreational things that students might have done on the plaza. We are not talking about what they might have done in their rooms or off-campus. We are talking about students walking through or around the plaza or hanging out on the plaza. Would you see students drinking beer?

S: [Long pause] On rare occasions. But most of the time, the people doing it were smart enough to try to conceal it.

G: It was not overt? It was not like, hey, I am getting high, I am drinking, and nobody is going to give a hoot. You had to be a little cautious?

S: Drinking was different from getting high. You could pretty much tell who was getting high. You would see little groups of people passing something, and clove cigarettes were not that popular back then, so everyone knew what it was. As far as the drinking, there might be two or three people isolated and sneaking a sip out of a beer can or a bottle, but they would try to keep it concealed; but you could always mix a drink and put it in a cup and hang out on the plaza. No one would ever know, except you and your friends. I actually knew a couple of people who would mix up drinks and go to class. Hey, if that could get you through school, what the heck.

G: Let us discuss drugs a little more. Was pot or marijuana the main drug of choice on campus, in the plaza area?

S: From what I saw, I would say pot; but a lot of people seemed to be tripping too.

G: On what, LSD, Mescaline?

S: LSD.

G: Mescaline?

S: Mushrooms were very popular and still are. They grow wild outside of Gainesville.

G: Did the students, at least the plaza drug culture type students, know where to go in the fields to pick the mushrooms? Was there a common underground flow [of such information]?

S: Yes, I would say so. Yes, definitely. Once you arrived here from wherever it was you came, and you hung around the plaza long enough, you would meet people who would be into whatever it was you wanted to be into. I do not think heroin was very popular back then, but as far as just about anything else, you could find it, and they would tell you where to get it if they did not have it already.

G: Let us go back to 1978, back to the drug culture on the plaza. Were there certain places on the plaza that if you wanted to buy a joint you could just go buy one? Was there a certain corner where you knew someone would be there who you could cop a joint with?

S: Not that I knew of. I only saw groups of friends hanging out with each other, not sharing openly with anyone who walked up.

G: At the time, were students paranoid about it? Was there drug paranoia?

S: Definitely not. UPD did not arrest people regularly. You could walk by the plaza and smell marijuana in several places. As I said, UPD did not have a great presence back then. I would say that drugs were tolerated until the early 1980s when they [UPD] started cracking down.

G: Is that when that conservative wave surfaced?

S: Oh, yes.

G: O.k., we will get into that in a little bit. I want to ask you a few more things about marijuana, and then we will jump to the psychedelics. On marijuana, do you remember the approximate costs at that time? I know we have had twenty years of inflation.

S: What I remember from talking to other people who were involved in that, not that I ever was, I would say about \$80 for an ounce of some very supreme, good grade, local Gainesville green.

G: Was Gainesville green the pot of choice?

S: Back then, Gainesville green was of very good quality. I heard, for the money, it was the best deal in town. I think even **High Times** mentioned it in one of their issues back then. It said that Gainesville had great prices and was a mecca for Gainesville green. It has a reputation.

I would like to add one other thing from back then that I remember. I am not sure of the year. It was either 1978, 1979 or 1980. The Gainesville Growers Association, which was a loose-knit group of people involved in growing good grade Gainesville pot, donated approximately \$30,000 or \$20,000, I am not sure which, to the MDA [Muscular Dystrophy Association]. Well, the MDA telethon

was televised, and we were watching television that day and happened to see the telethon when the announcement flashed across the screen about a generous donation from the Gainseville Growers Association. Everyone got a kick out of that.

G: Was the donation graciously accepted by the MDA?

S: I am sure it was. I do not know if they [the MDA] knew what they were getting or from whom they were getting it, but they definitely accepted it.

G: I have one last question to ask about the marijuana scene. Was there enough of a student body that was utilizing it that students could support themselves, if they wanted to, by selling it or trading in it?

S: Oh, yes. Definitely.

G: So you knew of students who might have supported their tuition or their living by selling drugs?

S: Yes. Many people got very well-off from doing that back then. The laws were a lot less strict and were not enforced anywhere near like they are now. I knew a lot of people that quit school and did just that and did very well at it and then after awhile they got out of it. They made enough money to not worry about having to go back to school anytime soon.

G: What about hashish? Do you remember that at all?

S: Yes. I had some friends who indulged in that. There was a lot of it around back then. From what I remember, it was maybe three dollars per gram, and was very good grade a lot of times. A lot of people fried their lungs with that stuff.[laughter]

G: I know there was no local Gainesville hashish grower, but were there students you could actually go buy it from?

S: Actually, what I remember about hash was that it got us through the summertime, or wintertime, I cannot remember. People who were smoking this stuff got through the seasons when the good Gainesville pot was not around. It worked out great for everybody.

G: I know this is a very offhand and weird question, but since I can relate it [to the time] when I was an undergrad, I will throw it at you. Were there a lot of pipes and bongos on the plaza that students would use or again was this only for your dorm rooms?

S: I did not see any bongos on the plaza, but I did deliver sandwiches for a restaurant and I remember seeing bongos in lots of dorm-rooms I went to. Bongos were pretty popular back then.

G: Okay, enough about pot, I think we covered the general idea. Were psychedelic drugs becoming popular on the plaza in the 1970s and 1980s when you were here or were they pretty much entrenched at the time?

S: I got here at the tail-end of the 1970s. It was probably a lot more popular before I got here. But when I got here it was still popular enough that a lot of people still did it. You could spot people tripping, if they were staring at the tree or the sky or just sitting there with that blank look on their faces. It was pretty common.

G: When we are talking about a time frame, would [these activities] on the plaza take place during the daylight hours, evening hours, or twenty-four hours a day?

S: Most of the activity of the plaza was centered around lunchtime when the Krishnas served their Krishna lunch at noon everyday, five days a week. It would be most populated then and two or three hours later it would go back to being the normal wide-open space. I do not recall ever seeing any activity there at night except during the Halloween Balls.

G: Since you brought up the Halloween Ball, would you tell our listeners about it? Many people have never heard of the Halloween Ball, much less actually seen one. Give us a brief idea of what it was and how it related to the plaza.

G: When I came here [to the University of Florida], it [the Halloween Ball] was still wild. It was definitely before the conservative wave. In 1978 and 1979, every year before I got here, they had large concerts on the plaza and they had thousands of people there. I think Savoy Brown played in the concert I was at and there were probably 5,000 or 6,000 people there. It was generally crazy. Everybody was dressed up in costume, and just about everybody was either tripping, drunk, stoned or any combination of the above, I mean just about everybody, few people were not. The music was great. I do not recall seeing any cops back then, which was pretty cool.

G: Were Gainesville police allowed on campus at that time or was it strictly UPD?

S: Yes, [only UPD]. You never saw Gainesville cops on campus.

G: Professor [Samuel] Proctor, who is the head of the Oral History program here at the University of Florida, said that one time he brought his two very small grandchildren here during the Halloween Ball. He saw some of the costumes which either exaggerated the genitals or had nothing covering the genitals. He

told his grandchildren that they were leaving, and they left. Was that an accurate description of some of the costumes worn at the Halloween Ball at that time?

S: Yes. I came here before they moved the party [to the band-shell area and Feavet Field], and the last two years I was here a lot of that was happening. The costumes seemed to reflect a Mardi Gras-type atmosphere with clothing not completely optional; but most people did wear clothes and only a few did not.

G: At that time, how long did a Halloween Ball last on the plaza? Five hours, six hours, all night?

S: From what I remember, it would start around eight o'clock and it was over about midnight. There was a case where a couple had a sex act on the library steps, when I was there.

G: Since you brought up that, let's discuss sex now. It seems you lead me into what I want to talk about, which is great. Ted, was sexuality overall on campus conservative? Was the student body a conservative group at the time?

S: Conservative? I do not know. When I came here, I saw nothing different from the other places I had been.

G: Same as California?

S: Yes, pretty much.

G: I was told that there were a lot more plants and bushes on the plaza, at that time, than there are now. As a matter of fact, I believe I saw that in the photograph you showed me. Ted brought a picture of the plaza taken in 1980 that we were able to look at and review.

S: There were a few more trees, but not many more bushes.

G: At the end of a Halloween ball or at the end of a day of partying, getting high, whatever, if a couple wanted to have sex on the plaza, would anyone point their finger and say, get up, would UPD yell at them, or was it cool, hey everyone was having a good time, go for it.

S: I do not know that that ever happened. It did not happen to me, and I never saw it happen. I am sure that some people did it just like it was a big thing back then to make love with your partner on the fifty-yard line of the Florida field.

G: Did you ever do that Ted?

S: No comment. But I am sure that people did it, but I never did it.

G: Fair enough. I have one last thing concerning the social aspect of the plaza that I would like to discuss. We have covered a number of things in this interview, but I think we have not talked enough about the UPD. As far as the UPD on the plaza, you said that their force in number was small and their presence fairly minimal. In order to more clearly define their presence and reputation, describe its [UPD] relationship with the student body. If a student saw a UPD cop approach him or noticed one near him, what would have been his response? Would he have been paranoid, shoving whatever he had into his bag and then leaving that area or would he have simply said, hey, they know I am cool. I know they are cool. No problem.

S: It was definitely the latter. As I said, there were not as many then as there are now, and they were very tolerant of just about everything back then. I know today people worry about it [UPD], but I know they did not back then. Although, back in the early 1980s when that conservative wave first hit, and UPD started

arresting people for smoking pot on the plaza, we knew the tide had turned in a different direction.

G: Since you have this craving, Ted, to talk about the conservative wave [laughter], explain to us its meaning. When do you think it started? At the beginning of the Reagan Era?

S: Definitely.

G: Was there a wall that separated the old plaza from the conservative wave plaza? Is there an incident that transformed it or was it merely a slow, gradual metamorphosis? Was there an event of local, national or world scope that related somehow to the start of a conservative trend in Gainesville, at the university?

S: Yes. I think I definitely noticed it [the conservative wave] around 1980, which was the same year the hostages were taken in Iran [the Iran-Hostage Crisis]. Actually the whole country got a little bit paranoid, and UF was no different. They [the university] even expelled Iranian students. They froze all the assets and bank accounts of those [Iranians] that lived here. Maybe it [the conservative wave] tied in with the Reagan presidency. I think that [the Reagan presidency] is probably right around when things started to change here. From what I know, things changed everywhere, not just here. You could definitely see it happening here during those years.

G: In what way or ways did the plaza change during the heart of the conservative wave? I know that you mentioned one: UPD busting people for drugs. Were the students shocked by this change?

S: It was surprising to the people I witnessed it happen to. Until that time, it [drug use] had been tolerated as far as I know, unless you were being very blatant about it in front of maybe UF administrators. Before that time, I do not remember anybody getting busted, and I smelled pot regularly on the plaza. But in 1982, 1983, there were undercover cops on campus.

G: Student undercover cops?

S: No. I think they were just cops dressed as students. I witnessed an incident where some people I know, some beach people, were hanging out, smoking a little bit of pot out of a pipe. Sitting across from them on a bench was a person who looked like an ROTC student. He had very short hair and dark sunglasses. They had no idea who he was and probably did not even care. He snuck up on them and got right next to them and said, nobody move. You are all under arrest. When they related that story to me, I realized that the fun and games were over for the plaza, because up to that point, you never heard about that kind of thing happening. But once it happened to them and a few other groups of people, word eventually got around that it was no longer cool to smoke pot openly in the plaza. Some people still did it, and if there were no cops around they got away with it, but most people no longer did it.

G: Did any of the music or the dress change with the conservative trend that, as you say, swept through Gainesville and the university in the early 1980s?

S: Oh, yes. Unfortunately, the dolphin shorts went out the window. You noticed more Izod and Polo shirts. I remember we used to make fun of the guys who would wear the Izod or Polo shirts and turn their collar up. We always thought of

that as a fashion faux pas, of course we never wore shirts with collars. We never really cared. We just made fun of people with collar shirts turned up. We would say that the wind was blowing a little too windy that day. Still, more people started wearing collar shirts. After all, Florida is a comfortable place to live, and people like to dress comfortably.

G: Am I correct in saying that the students changed according to the guidelines of the new conservatism as interpreted and imposed by UPD and the university administration?

S: No.

G: No?

S: No. I do not think so. I think it was just guys trying to impress girls as it is today. It was just fashion. I do not think that anybody did it for any reason; I think it just happened.

G: Thus far, we have discussed some of the social history of UF, specifically the plaza, in the late 1970s. We also have discussed the reaction of the students to the conservative wave of the early 1980s and its consequences on life at UF and on the plaza. My next few questions will have more of a political theme to them than the others had. Obviously, when you arrived at the University of Florida, the Vietnam War had ended. Do you recall any stories from friends about how students reacted during that war? For instance, was there any visible reaction to the Kent State Massacre? How did the students as a whole feel about that war?

S: None of my friends talked much at all about that. The only story I remember was something about the Gainesville Eight, some occupation of Tigert Hall, I really do not know what happened then, although I read the story.

G: Okay, so all that early radical stuff, like Vietnam and Civil Rights and the Women's Lib movement, all that was a done deal when you came here?

S: Yes.

G: Okay. What about the politics of racism? Obviously, UF was a segregated school and then became an integrated school. But now, in 1996, there is a strong observation by minorities that the plaza is a lily-white plaza. Not that blacks were not allowed on the plaza, but they chose not to be part of the plaza scene. Do you remember that at all when you were in school? Was there either a black interest in the plaza, or lack of interest, or can you relate to any of that at all?

S: Back then, I think there were more black people hanging out on the plaza than there are now, but not a real noticeable difference. I guess they thought they needed a place to congregate, and now they congregate over at Turlington Hall which, at that time, was called GPA. They have been congregating over there ever since the building was built. I remember that they brought ghetto blasters and listened to their music there. I know music is an attraction for all different cultures wherever they might meet.

G: Do you remember times on campus when there might have been like a racial animus where white students would make it uncomfortable for the minorities to come onto the plaza or onto the campus in general?

S: No. The only time I saw people feeling uncomfortable on the plaza was when the preachers were there accusing everybody of being whoremongers and masturbators or things of that nature. The preachers would pick on races too. Some of them were very cruel about that.

G: Tell us about that.

S: I am not a racist myself, but there were a couple of preachers who thought that black people descended from monkeys. They [the preachers] would make fun of them.

G: Were these actually some of the terms preachers used, that blacks evolved from monkeys and were inferior to whites?

S: Yes. I thought the preachers were definitely bigots and used that terminology.

G: Can you recall any particular preachers who thought that and acted in that way?

S: I can remember names of different preachers who were there, but I lumped all the preachers into the same philosophy. I never gave them any credit.

G: How did they relate to the students? I mean, did the students buy into their act? Did the students say, hey, man, leave me alone!

S: Everyone had his own reaction. I looked at them as entertainment. For me it was theater. I thought of myself as a court jester and made fun of the preachers. I would ride my bike in circles around them and throw peanuts at them while they were busy calling all the rest of the students whoremongers, masturbators and evil frat boys.

G: Were you ever damned to hell for doing that?

S: Oh, yes. Plenty of times. [laughter]

G: Ted, next, we will talk about the personalities of the plaza. When you came onto the campus and on the plaza, were there specific characters or personages that you saw on a daily basis, perhaps always sitting on a certain bench or under a certain tree?

S: Oh, yes. There was this character named "Radical" Bill, who was hanging around the plaza. Radical Bill always dressed in army fatigues or, at least, some part of his outfit consisted of army fatigues. He was there long before I got there and, because he always there, had quite a presence. I do not think he was in school, but he may have taken a course or two. I am not sure.

G: You saw Radical Bill on a daily basis?

S: Oh, yes. Everyday. He was there five days a week.

G: Why was he called Radical Bill?

S: Apparently, back in the 1970s, he did something to earn that nickname, something about a sit-in at Tigert Hall with the Gainesville Eight [a group of eight men from Gainesville who served in Vietnam, returned to Gainesville and vehemently protested against the government and especially its treatment of the Vietnam veterans]. I am not real sure .

G: This was only something you heard?

S: Yes.

G: Did you ever have any conversations with Radical Bill?

S: Oh, yes. He was an easy-going guy to talk to. He liked to heckle the preachers, and I liked to watch his act, because I knew that it was good, free entertainment.

He was pretty smart. He could argue with the preachers, and he could shut them up. Not many people could.

G: Did Radical Bill argue on a religious plane with them or on a derogatory plane?

S: Both.

G: If a preacher damned him, how would he respond?

S: Radical Bill would say, what about this verse in the bible that says, so and so?

G: Oh, so Radical Bill knew the bible well enough to retort in a biblical sense?

S: Oh, yes. Definitely. He was great, very good entertainment with the preachers, especially when he argued with Jedd.

G: Was Jedd another personality on the plaza?

S: Jedd would come, as he still does, during finals week.

G: He came only during finals week?

S: Only during finals. Maybe once during finals week in spring, when we were still on the quarters system back then. He came once or twice a year. He made a lot of noise on the plaza. I personally did not like noise on the plaza, because back then I was in school, and sometimes I would go to the plaza to try to study even though I knew I would not always end up studying.

G: Ted, you did not go to class. What were you studying for?

S: I was a music major, so we had a lot of free time.

G: Okay.

S: Anyway, Bill argued with Jedd, and Jedd tried to think of answers to respond to Bill. People enjoyed watching them argue. It was fun. I definitely thought it was fun. I adopted Bill as my mentor and started talking to him a lot. He had been

around Gainesville and knew what was going on. He knew where to go and what to do.

I thought of the idea of riding my bicycle in circles around the preachers, making fun of them. That is how I got the name, "Bicycle" Ted. It was good fun and a good way to skip class. I did not seem to hurt anyone, so I kept doing it for a long, long time. I finally retired that act, because one time, as I was riding my bike in circles around one of the preachers, a guy jumped out of the audience and tried to kill me.

G: A preacher tried to kill you?

S: No, a student. He jumped up, grabbed me by the throat, threw me off my bicycle and started shaking me around ruthlessly. Fortunately, a bunch of people on the plaza came to my rescue.

G: Bill?

S: No. Bill would have, but he was a little too far away. There were people in between me and Bill, whom I did not know at the time, but whom I know now. I thanked them for pulling this guy off of me. I really was not hurting anybody. He thought I was, but I did not realize that he was a psycho. There were not too many psychos in the audience, every once in awhile you would find one. This guy definitely was a psycho and tried to kill me. Ever since then, I realized that it was not worth it, to heckle the preachers, at least not in that form; but, every now and then, I still throw peanuts at them.

G: How many [people] were in the crowd? You said, this guy bolted out of a crowd, and I have a picture of a large crowd and an assassination attempt on you.

[laughter]

S: No. This happened fairly recently, within the past two or three years. Back then, Jedd would draw a big crowd. He was full of fire and brimstone and had an act that was a lot of fun to watch. Everybody would skip school to hang out and listen to Jedd. He got there around eleven and started preaching. At the beginning of the day, there were maybe 50 or a 100 people on the plaza listening to Jedd. By the end of the session, about three or four in the afternoon, there would be a crowd of maybe 1,000 people.

G: Jedd preached for three or four hours?

S: Not non-stop. He interacted with the audience, and the audience interacted with him. He would take a break and have his wife preach for a little while. His wife is **Cindy Smock**, whom he met here at the University of Florida. They met in the parking lot at Krystal's, right across the street from the plaza. She was a former disco queen who found Jedd, found the Lord, and changed her evil ways. The rest, as they say, is history. I think they have five daughters now, and I think Jedd is planning on having a few more.

G: What did Jedd look like?

S: Back then, Jedd was in good shape, but a little overweight. He always had a nice suit on, which was financed by some of his benefactors. He always had a new car and a nice watch. Of course, all of these were donated to him by people who supported what he was doing.

G: Did he pass out any literature?

S: Yes, he sure did. At first, he handed out a few leaflets. He then wrote a book that someone published. He handed out autographed copies of it to those people he thought particularly needed help, which included anyone he suspected of being gay, lesbian, Jewish or a frat boy or a black. He definitely pushed his book on those people.

G: According to Jedd, those people needed help desperately?

S: Oh, yes. He still thinks they do. He has preached here nearly every year for eighteen years. I know he even preached here before that.

G: Have you seen Jedd lately?

S: Yes.

G: If Jedd saw you today, Ted, would he say, hey, I know you.

S: No. He does not react that way with many people, except for maybe Radical Bill. They became friends through the years. Jedd thought that Bill was so far gone that he took Bill to dinner at a nice restaurant whenever he passed through town. Bill looked forward to those dinners, because they were usually his best meal of the year. As far as I know, Jedd still takes Bill to a restaurant and buys him dinner. They have developed somewhat of a friendship over the years.

G: Did Jedd ever successfully convert students or did students just go there for the entertainment?

S: In my opinion, they went for the entertainment, but there were people there who actually would stop and listen to Judd and think about what he was saying. Maybe a few people believed it, but I do not think he actually converted anyone,

other than his wife Cindy. I do not really know whether he converted very many people, but he certainly was willing to engage in a long-winded conversation about his belief in God, and if you did not have one [a belief in God] he would definitely try to push it on you.

G: He never got physical? You never saw any physical reactions except that one time you were almost assassinated?

S: I have seen a few people throw things at him, a couple of people would get in his face. I cannot remember him hitting anyone, although he may have.

G: Ted, you pointed out four or five minority groups such as blacks, homosexuals, lesbians, and Jews, I guess all these Jedd considered heathens.

S: Oh, he still thinks they are.

G: He still thinks that they are heathens?

S: Oh, yes. They are all going to hell in his opinion. He certainly created a lot of controversy whenever he showed up.

G: Did those people ever know Jedd was coming? I think most of those groups, at least in 1996, would not want someone on the plaza or anywhere preaching this kind of hatred and animosity. I think they would want to confront him.

S: Well, small groups of maybe Jewish fraternities or black people would speak out in their own defense, but he still is tolerated to this day. He is not near as excited about his message or his preaching now as he used to be. He has gotten old and tired and just does not have the same fire that he had.

G: Ted, now that we doused his fire, I want to move off the subject of Jedd and redirect our conversation toward the third group on the plaza, namely the

Krishnas. Do you know when they first came to the plaza? Did friends ever tell you stories about when they first made their presence known?

S: I know they were here before I got here, because they were serving lunch here at that time in 1978. I had a few friends who were here a couple years before me, and I am sure they were here even before them. I think they have been here for thirty years.

G: How did the students in the time that you were here from around 1978 to 1985 react to the Krishnas?

S: Most students liked the Krishnas, because they [the students] spent all their student loan money partying and could always use a free meal. The Krishnas are very well tolerated on the plaza. They do make a little noise, but it is a happy noise and people do not really mind it. Students did not mind them back then, and I do not think that they mind them now.

G: What about the proselytizing they do? Did that ever turn anyone off? For instance, Jedd seemed to have a certain degree of antagonism that incited people to react. Did they [the students] ever react in the same way to the Krishnas?

S: No. The Krishnas were very passive. They were not pushing their religion on anyone. If you went to get their food a couple times a week, they might try to talk you into going to the temple to listen to what their leader had to say. I know they have a farm in Alachua where they grow all the food that they use for the lunch. They are not a hard sell like Jedd. In fact, add them to the group of people Jedd

thinks are going to hell. He argued with them on occasion and put them down in front of everyone.

G: Did Radical Bill interact with the Krishnas?

S: [long pause] We would have Krishna lunch a lot. [laughter]

G: So the Krishnas were here on the plaza before you were here, and we know they are here today, making them a long-standing part of the plaza. But you used the word "passive" and is that how you would gauge them? People know they are there, if you are interested in relating with them, I am sure Krishnas will respond, but generally the relationship between the Krishnas and the students is and has been harmonious?

S: Also, they provide a good, free lunch.

G: I have to try the Krishna food.

S: Yes, it is great.

G: What is it?

S: It is almost always rice and beans of some sort. For a long time on Wednesdays, they would have pasta with veggie meatballs; which, most of the time, was pretty good. A lot of times I thought they put too much spices and curry in it, but hey! When you are hungry and have no money and know you can get a free lunch everyday, you go there.

G: We are now approaching the end of our discussion with Ted and those things he remembers of the plaza. We will then ask for his overview of 1996. Ted, we have discussed the main personalities of the plaza; namely, Radical Bill, Jedd,

and the Krishnas. I remember you saying something about frisbee players. Was frisbee the popular sport then?

S: Well, the best [comparison] I can think of is that the plaza was like a circus. There was a little bit of everything. The frisbee players were out there everyday that it was nice throwing a frisbee through the Krishnas, through the preachers, through Jedd. They [frisbees] were everywhere. Occasionally, the ultimate frisbee team would practice on the plaza. They played a crazy game called "guts frisbee." They would stand across from each other, a certain number of feet away, and throw the frisbee as hard as they could at the person across from them. That was fun to watch. The plaza is a perfect place to play frisbee. When it is not too crowded, it has wide open spaces. Once in a while, someone would catch a frisbee in the head, but I do not think anyone ever got seriously hurt by it.

G: Did anyone ever try to throw a frisbee at you while you were on your bike?

S: No. I never had that experience.

G: What other sports activities did you notice on the plaza?

S: When I was here, the sport was mainly frisbee. There was an occasional juggler on the plaza, juggling balls or bowling pins. Hackysack was not popular until a number of years after I first moved here. They called it "foot football," it [a hackysack] is basically a bag full of beans which you kick around by yourself or in a small group without letting it hit the ground. Hackysack and frisbee are sports that the plaza lends itself to.

G: Was the plaza dead when it rained?

S: I remember being out there on days when it was misty or not raining a lot. There were still groups of people hanging out there. I do not think that happens as much today as it did back then. We tolerated a certain amount of rain, but then we went across the street to the "Pizza and Brew" and proceeded to drink free pitchers, because we knew the waitresses. [laughter]

G: Did the Krishnas serve lunch on rainy days?

S: Usually, if it was raining, they would skip it.

G: Did Bill leave the plaza when it rained?

S: Bill stayed out there until it was unbearable for him.

G: Then he went to the pizza place with you?

S: No. He went wherever he went. I really did not even know where he went.

G: During our break you told me that the plaza was often used for rallies: political rallies, student rallies, feminist rallies. You said that you recalled certain rallies, for example, you remember a rally held in protest of the Iranian Hostage Crisis. Explain anything that you can recall about the rallies. How did the students react to the rallies or involve themselves in the rallies? Did the UPD have a presence at the rallies?

S: During the day, the plaza was always a great place to have a rally of any kind, because you were guaranteed to have some kind of audience. Christian supporters, anti-abortionists, feminists, people who save animals, just about every cause you can think of has had some kind of rally there. The rally I remember most was a protest when the hostages were held in Iran. There were several hundred people there. The African-Americans held rallies on the plaza. I

do not recall any violence ever happening. It was understood, like an unwritten rule, that when you went to the plaza you would have a safe time, unless you were heckling preachers and a psycho jumped out of the audience at you. Other than that, it was a safe place to be. Since UPD will not allow illicit fun there anymore, it is probably safer than it has ever been.

G: Overall we have covered much that you can recall. Let us do one final time-trip. We have discussed the plaza in the late 1970s and then the conservative flow and reaction in the early 1980s. Ted, as you walk onto the campus now in 1996, what strikes you as favorable or unfavorable about the plaza and UF? Can you relate the 1996 plaza to the other time periods we have covered, to the plaza of 1978, the plaza of 1980?

S: I think it is still a safe place to go, to hang out, to enjoy the weather, to study and to listen to some Krishna music. Of course, now that I am not a student I do not go there much anymore. I do occasionally drive through there. I would say the plaza is still pretty much the same, but the people have changed a little in relation to it.

G: How?

S: It is almost twenty years later. I am sure that there are still people that go to the plaza their first year here. They hear about the plaza, and they go there to hang out. It is a good place to get together with a group of friends and find out what is going on.

G: Ted, you just made an interesting point. Incoming freshmen, those who will be starting in the fall of 1996, once these naive freshmen settle in their dorms, they

will hear about Gator football or the O-Dome [the O'Connell Center]. Is the plaza something incoming students look at as being part of UF tradition?

S: I do think people that have any leaning toward being out of mainstream society probably have heard about it [the plaza] and probably would enjoy going there. Of course, it is [located] in front of the library, so it is hard to miss. I think that particular location exposes people to it who would normally be there, because they have to go through it to get to the library. UF administrators do not exactly look in place when you see them walk through it. Of course, they still do it. But the plaza has always been a place for people to relax and have fun.

G: Ted, based upon your facial expressions and what you have said, I am under the impression that the plaza in the late 1970s was an exciting, uplifting place that changed in the early 1980s, when the conservative wave hit, into something very different. Since then, the plaza seemingly has lost its spirit, its life, as fewer students are aware of it or are involved in it. Since the time you were here, have you seen among the students a growing indifference to the plaza? Is it possible with future generations of students that the plaza will only exist as "this grassy place in front of the library?"

S: I suspect that, after I am gone and you are gone, the Krishnas will still be there doing their thing, and I suspect that people will still go there to hang out and get away from it all even though it is in the middle of the campus. I think that people will continue to go there for that reason.

G: So you think [the plaza] will continue to be a force in the students' lives?

- S: The plaza is there for people who want to expose themselves to it. For that group of people, who I am sure will always be around, the plaza will continue to be [a special place].
- G: Even though you were a former counter-culturalist and you were not a student for twenty years, try to put yourself in the position of a new student in 1996. Now, if the administration of UF sanctioned by fiat the construction of a new building on the plaza, in your opinion, how would the students react? I think we can assume Radical Bill would be upset, but would the student-body of Florida, such as it is now, as opposed to what it was in the late 1970s and early 1980s, would the students just say, okay, that is it. Would they react at all?
- S: Yes. I feel that the administration could push for a new building on the plaza if they wanted to, and I do not think the students would have a whole lot to say. There might be a little verbal protest. If they [the administration] put a building there? Wow, I never thought about that. I am sure they could do it. They have done it in plenty of other places.
- G: You mentioned that the administration had new sidewalks built every summer while you were here.
- S: For a long time they did that, and there was even talk of paving most of the plaza, but the students protested. But now, students do not protest in numbers as they used to.
- G: Does our society discourage protesting? Do we feel powerless to change anything?

S: I do not know. Maybe the plaza is not as important to this generation as it was to previous generations for purposes of getting away from it all.

G: It is a little bit sad. Hopefully, someone might listen to these tapes and hear what the plaza was like. Ted, you certainly have provided us with a different kind of insight into it. I think we have others who will be interviewed. The UPD is being interviewed, Bill will be interviewed, as well as some of the Krishnas and some preachers. I do not know if Jedd will be interviewed. But yours has been an interesting insight because it is more from a student's point of view. It is a view more through a student's eyes. So on that basis is there anything else you think you might want to tell someone listening? Hopefully, you may be inspired to convey some important thought for the future.

S: Well, I hope that one day my grandchildren, if I ever have any, can go to the plaza, hang out, play frisbee without any buildings in their way, enjoy the sound of the Krishna music and soak up the fact that there is still a small green space on campus where you can go and almost get away from it all even though you are in the middle of the UF campus.

G: Thanks a lot Ted, we appreciate it.

S: Thank you.