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Interview with Dr. Edward Simco - Alumnus and Faculty

Edward Simco
Nova Southeastern University

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ED SIMCO

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

HISTORY OF PRESIDENTS

ED SIMCO

JP= Dr. Julian Pleasants

ES= Ed Simco

JP: This is Julian Pleasants. It is the 24th of June, 2010. I am at Nova Southeastern University and I’m speaking with Ed Simco. Ed, talk a little bit about when you first came to Nova and how you happened to get here.

ES: Well, interestingly enough, I was at the University of Pittsburgh in the head research group there in the individually prescribed construction project that was then under the direction of Bob Glaser and Lauren Resnick. And this was at a time in the ’60s when science had some serious problems. We had fallen behind the rest of the world in our science and science education, and this was the area of learning objectives, behavioral objectives. This was also the time at which the revision by scientist, in terms of the Biological Curriculum Study Committee, was revising biology, was revising chemistry, was revising physicians, PSSC, Physical Science Study Committee.
Elementary school was being pointed to as being a very crucial stage in the learning history and development and interest in science. And of course you know science was largely taught a series of facts. The American Association of the Advancement of Science came along and got together and started to talk about Science - A Process Approach. And the Science Curriculum Improvement Study talked about it as a conceptual base with major themes and ideas. So under I think it was a Ford Foundation Grant, University of Pittsburgh had this program in Individually Prescribed Instruction and they were writing behavioral objectives, learning outcomes, developing science materials and math materials, both in science and math.

Well, I was in physics. I had finished my master’s I went off to teach in high school for two years, taught physics and mathematics there, became chairman of the math department outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was going back to get into my doctorate because I had been in and out. I had been at Rutgers, I had four children. Things were tough and monies were tough and so I’d go out and work in the industry. So I spent some time out there working with Westinghouse Electric Corporation and the Atomic Energy Commission. And I was in a group that was in
the nuclear reactor and design and they in fact were responsible for designing the nuclear reactors for the USS Nautilus, the first submarine. They didn’t develop the ships, but just the power plants or the nuclear power plants.

So basically I got in there and had worked on the delayed neutron fraction and Uranium-235. Some neutrons come off under fission, some delayed, and so there was a way of testing. And it was all kind of first. Mathematical computers were very cumbersome in those days, the big ones and then in effect to actually go and test this. So I was always in the physics field and so I came back University of Pittsburgh after the master’s degree, because I did both my bachelor’s and master’s at the University of Pittsburgh in physics. And I became acquainted with a faculty member there, Joseph Lipson. So I was interested and he actually helped me out and I became very close with him and his family, helped me out over the summers to gain employment.

He said, “I think you ought to come over here and work in the individually prescribed construction project.” So I did and then he got me interested in, “Well, maybe you want to get into science education, educational research, and
you can still maintain physics. And in fact, I’m going to a new university.” This was around ’67. “And it’s Nova.” “What’s that?” And in fact, as he kind of communicated with me he says, “I wouldn’t rush down here, but I’ll tell you, they’re offering assistantships $5,000 a year, you have complete remission of tuition.” At Pittsburgh and other places, as you will recall, teaching assistants or research assistants, you work pretty hard and there were little dollars. So that seemed great. “So let me investigate it. It’s a new university. I don’t want you coming down here with your family. I know you have four children. I have four, but I can come down. I can afford to move around.”

So I paid a visit I believe in March of it was probably ’68 because I think the first students were admitted in 1967, and few of them, and they were people in physics. And that still had an interest to me because you could blend physics, science education. So I came down and thought this was pretty nice and would be worth a try.

JP: So you would have started in September of ’69. Is that right?

ES: No, ’68.
JP: You started in `68.

ES: I started in `68. I was the second group. There were ten of us in that group. So he was the one that attracted me here. And when I got here, basically the physics piece was being phased out. I mean, they had a very strong physics staff here. It was a little disappointing, but Dr. Lipson said, “Hey, the science education is closely related, developing curriculum and science.”

JS: Well, explain that. Because I can’t remember the guy’s name, it started with a P, who was released. And it somehow turned out that the university, Abe Fischler didn’t think they were up to par. And the old story is it’s either me or the guy in physics, and somehow it ended up that the guy in physics left.

ES: Yeah. Well, I’m not sure I know that history. That happened before I believe that I came. When I got here, basically physics had been dropped. There was one center technically and it was called physical science center, composed of the education center and physical oceanography. That was it. They offered degrees in
science education, Ph.D., they offered in Ed research, that was the education department, and then they offered them in physical oceanography.

JP: So your degree would have been in science education.

ES: In science education. That’s correct.

JP: Which turns out in a way to be good, because that’s really what Abe Fischler was all about.

ES: That’s right. He was the dean of the science center. And of course he was the chairman of my dissertation committee and guided me because in those early days, as I said there were ten of us that were admitted the second year. I forget maybe that many the first year, but 1968 there were ten of us. Six of us were from the Ed center, which were three of us in science Ed and three in educational research, and then the other four were in oceanography. It was a research atmosphere. It was very close relationships with faculties. There were seminars. Research was done very early. We had a faculty advisory committee made up of three faculty members from within the center and one from outside the center.
And there he and I became interested in, and a couple faculty members in oceanography who were really physical oceanographers, some of them were physicists down there also because I think some of them migrated over there, they in turn wanted to kind of have a joint relationship. So this was where I met up with Dr. Pearn Niiler, Peter Niiler. And I worked with him on developing some of this two-layer model of the North Atlantic and North Pacific. So basically within the curriculum of science education you continued your science competency and you went into learning theory and social psychology, some of the behavioral science aspects so you understood the learner and you maintained your science, and then you went into statistics. But they were seminars.

JP: Now, were you disappointed? Because originally you thought you were coming here for physics, right?

ES: Yes, I was. Technically I was. But Lipson and Fischler convinced me that this is not a bad second choice. Because then I would have to pack all the way back up. And I wondered, my wife wondered too, because when we drove here there were three buildings. There was the Rosenthal, there was the Parker. This was the old version of the Rosenthal, the Parker.
JP: And this building.

ES: Nope. This was not yet built. I guess the plans had been made and I think it was finished in around ’70, ’71, if I am not mistaken. So it wasn’t yet. It was just kind of a pad out there that they were anticipating. And then the three apartment complexes that we labeled A, B, and C for graduate student housing. And this is it. And we drive up, my wife and I and the kids, and I said to my wife, “Well, this is Nova University.” She says, “Where?” So basically that was our — I mean, I knew it, but she didn’t know it.

JP: Were you put off at that point?

ES: Oh no, I wasn’t put off because I had been here. I had seen it and I had seen I think some of the potential. I could finish my degree in three years. I was getting paid $5,000 a year. All the tuition was paid for. The apartments were fairly cheap. I mean, it was tough. There in Pittsburgh we lived with my mom.

JP: So it was both a financial and a professional opportunity for you that was really in this case too good to pass up regardless of the limited facilities.

ES: Exactly.
JP: Because if you’re in the science environment at this time the labs and all of that were let’s put it fairly inadequate, right?

ES: Right. Oh, absolutely. And the Parker Building was basically a shell. That was the physical science building. But again, part of the literature that attracted me -- and these people remained on the board of advisors, I think it was called, of Nova in the early days. We had Glenn Seaborg, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. We had Hans Jensen, we had Emilio Segre. These were all Nobel laureates in physics. And there was still this physics component and I really got to experience that.

JP: That is pretty impressive if you first look at that. I’ve seen that list. Then I thought, “Gee, this is pretty impressive for a school nobody ever heard of.”

ES: That’s right. And I think that’s the history the rest of the way and the struggle that we faced trying to give ourselves recognition. So that’s what brought me here. And I finished up in ‘71, started to inquire about positions in science education and science departments. There was a University of Washington I had an offer. But Dr. Fischler said well, you know, you can take a post doc here, there are some interesting things. And of course at
that time the university started to change, as I’m sure they’ve given you this, maybe I’ll just repeat some of it, but around 1970 when NYIT, we had the consortium with them. And I was pretty much finishing up so in a sense it wouldn’t have hurt my completion of the degree, but possibly. I’m like my gosh, is it going to be worth anything? Because we had some financial difficulties, as I’m sure --

JP: And Abe Fischler said at one point they were on the verge of shutting it down.

ES: Absolutely. And we thought well, you know, I’m still a student. And a lot of the faculty there said well, you know, are we going to become a part of Florida State, University of Florida? What are we going to do? So fortunately I think we in part got bailed out.

JP: No question about it, without the NYIT relationship it wouldn’t have survived.

ES: Then I think around the '70s then we kind of switched to not the science center, because it kind of was fading as I was finishing up the science center, but became the behavioral science center. And that’s kind of been where I’ve been. It has kind of merged into other things.
And these were the people in the behavioral science center that started the other programs. Fischler was extremely innovative. He challenged you all the time to come up with innovative ways in education. He wasn’t a traditional -- he liked tradition, but he still thought there were better ways of doing things. And this is when the National Leaders Program, Don Mitchell came on, and of course I’m here, trained in math and science and physics and statistics, so I became a national lecturer for them, traveling around with the off-campus sites.

JP: Talk a little bit about that, because at this point in time I would say the early ’70 was a main source of income for Nova, and there were I guess 20 or 30 campuses around the country. Talk a little bit about how you would organize and you would fly to a particular center, let’s say in Pittsburgh, and you would spend the weekend and give lectures. How did that exactly, this distance learning program work?

ES: Well, at that point, again yes they had clusters and they went for licensing in the various states so that they could offer these programs. So they were conducted on the weekend and let’s see now if I can recall. I think they met was it once a month? I’m not sure now. Or maybe
once every two months. But again, part of it was communicating with them. And we didn’t have good computer communications in the early ’70s then, but we would send out the information to the cluster coordinator who would coordinate with the center. This is the Ed Leaders Program. And they would set up maybe a hotel or some convenient facility that we could come in there, have the necessary blackboards and what have you.

And so you would conduct, on a Friday night, you would meet with them and kind of get them oriented towards what you were aligned to be doing. They would have pre-assignments before that so that they would prepare themselves. And then you spend all day on Saturday and part of Sunday lecturing to them, discussing, small groups, break out maybe small groups, have them do projects, and they would submit projects back to you. And I went to a number of sites up at Erie, Pennsylvania in the middle of winter in February. And interestingly enough, one of the people -- and this program was designed for supervising principals and principals and high schools and elementary schools to get them the doctorate in education.

JP: So were you doing the --
ES: I was doing the research methods and statistics. The other content was the prerogative of. It was really called an evaluation module, research and education and evaluation. There were some other prominent national lectures too, like Dan Stufflebeam, Michael Scriven. And these were well-known people from other universities. So we had a nice reputation because I would go out from Nova, giving it our Nova presence, and these people would have the prestige and I didn’t have the prestige that they had at that time. And that’s the way it was conducted. So we met and for the same basic number of contact hours, roughly the 15. And then I think they had to come for institutes in the summer and what have you to give that presence here on the campus so this wasn’t all distance education.

JP: Well at the time there were two issues. Obviously a lot of states didn’t want Nova infringing on their educational expertise.

ES: Exactly.

JP: And secondly, the Cincinnati Enquirer referred to the program as this is a diploma mill. How did you deal with these kinds of negative problems and attitude? And in fact, from the people I’ve talked to, this diploma mill concept lingered on for quite a while.
ES: It certainly did, and it presented a challenge to us. But I think the way, in my estimation and opinion, that we overcame it was we had these national lectures. Well, look at their credentials. They are teaching the same material that they teach at their universities. Look at some of our people. Some listened to us. I think it will be worth something. We’re going to give you an education of quality and you’re going to be able to stand proud that you got this degree. You’re going to have knowledge and we’re going to make it essentially convenient. It was convenience as opposed to anything else. The quality was there. We ensured it by these outside national lecturers. So look, there’s the credentials.

JP: What he was saying - Fischler - was that that was the issue. How else were policemen, firemen, supervision people, superintendents or principals, how else were they going to get a degree? Unless they were given the opportunity to do it at night, do it on the weekends.

ES: That’s right.

JP: Because these are working people.
ES: Exactly. And this is Fischler’s innovation. I mean, look, who says that the amount of knowledge learned is proportional to the amount of time you sit in a seat in class? It’s not necessarily so. You would have learning objectives. What was the purpose of these things? We had evaluations, we had competencies. And look where we are today. In the psychology center we’re facing what are your objectives, what are your goals? Well, how are you going to evaluate the learner, their outcomes? What are they going to do to demonstrate? Well this goes back to the ‘60s in the sciences when they had Individually Prescribed Instruction project. There is a hierarchy of behavioral objectives. This is the terminal. These are the enabling. This is what we’re going to do to evaluate these. If you can pass up at this level, then these are subsume. So yes it took time to kind of --

JP: Plus it was new.

ES: It was new.

JP: And people were not clear as exactly what their objectives were.
ES: Exactly. And so there was this development of these external, and this Ed Leaders Program was the one that in fact generated a good portion of our income.

JP: Yeah. I notice here you’re starting to come under obviously influence of Abe Fischler.

ES: I think that happened.

JP: That started right away, huh?

ES: That started right away.

JP: So ’72, ’73, you’re a director of research and evaluation, Institute of Child Centered Education.

ES: Right. Well this is Dr. Marilyn Segal’s. Dr. Marilyn Segal, who was responsible for the University School and -- I forget what we call it now, I apologize. It’s part of --

JP: The Family Center?

ES: Family Center. Thank you, thank you. She was a graduate. In fact, we entered together. She just finished a few months ahead of me. And she convinced Abe to start this center. But more importantly, back in ’69 I believe it was, a number of us graduate students and faculty members were very unhappy with the educational system here at the
elementary and secondary level, although Nova High School was great, but there wasn’t the middle school and elementary school. It was Davie Elementary. And our kids were not reading, learning very much there. So I and a number of others went to Fischler and we talked to Mickey, Marilyn Segal, we called her Mickey. She had a preschool, from pre to I guess kindergarten. And one of my children went there and my other child, my oldest went to Davie Elementary.

So I said can’t we increase it and add a year of schooling each year, like first grade, second grade, third grade, so we can accommodate the graduate students’ kids? Because all of us had about three to four children when we were here in this graduate component. Very small. As I said, six of us. So we got it to happen. And she was down at Temple Beth El in Hollywood. We went over, and I think Dr. Lipson had left, and there was his house. And we used one of the houses over there that’s now been demolished and is part of whatever building I can’t even remember over there. And that’s where we started the University School. It then migrated to the Parker Building and the Rosenthal Building as we added on.
I was on the curriculum development committee. In fact, I headed the science and math because here is the graduate students and every one of them had background in science, master’s in science, biology, chemistry, physics, and they were teachers also. So we were the early teachers.

JP: Well this is one big advantage of being at Nova. If you had been at another school you would never have had these opportunities, would you?

ES: That’s exactly correct. And this is what kept me at Nova. In fact, I could almost start any program, I would just have to go to Fischler and say, “I want to start this.” And this is how I started computer science. I said, “I’d like to start computer science.” “Go ahead.” “Okay, I want to give this up.” “Uh-uh. You do that too.” That was kind of a standing joke. So we got the University School going, and Mickey then was very much interested. She wrote the book Run Away, Little Girl, and she got a grant. It was for Home Start: School for Parents, a TV serial. It was a three-year grant and I was the evaluator.

JP: Now, Fischler liked it because he could use the school as an experimental base for his ideas.
ES: Right. And that’s the early phases of it. And then it became more formalized. As you know now today it’s up to high school and it’s quite different. Fischler had a lot of contact up in Connecticut and Joe Randazzo who was the first I think official headmaster came from up there. So we attracted a lot of the teachers, and these were creative teachers who were interested in the children, the open classroom environment, individualized instruction. In other words, things would just pop up. You would have this education -- what was it called?

JP: Well, you work with the Professional Semester and Teacher Intern Program.

ES: Yeah. Research and evaluation component of early childhood. Sorry, I just kind of left that. Again, some of these years there were dual things, as I said, went to Fischler. The Nova High School was a very interesting place in the early days because again, with us being in science education, a lot of them helped them with curriculum development and even went over there to show them how to maybe teach some of this material a little better in math and science. And there were a number of universities, two in particular - Alderson-Broaddus out of West Virginia, and I think it was Western Illinois
University – used to send their teachers down for a one-semester internship at the Nova complex because it was so well-known, because it was developed under I think a Ford Foundation Grant. So they would come down.

We had a lot of room here in these apartment complexes, so we housed them. And I ran, and a couple of my fellow students at that time -- well actually I had finished my degree but they were students in the science Ed. We would run seminars on the teaching of science, the teaching of math. So this Teacher Intern Program kind of helped Nova because they got free labor over there, good teachers, we housed them over here, got a few dollars as we try always for their staying here, and we were able to practice.

JP: Now, at this point where you officially a member of the faculty?

ES: No. I think my official faculty -- I was a post doc, then --

JP: Well, by `73 you --

ES: By `73 I was, yeah.

JP: Now, when you started, give me a little sense of the comparative value of salaries and perks. You had a
retirement program I’m sure and healthcare, that sort of thing?

ES: Yeah. Well, let’s see. Do you want a number?

JP: Yeah.

ES: Okay. When I started here as a post doc, my salary was $12,000 a year.

JP: Which at that time wasn’t too bad.

ES: Wasn’t too bad. Remember, I was making five as a graduate student here under that assistantship. Of course we worked for it too, because Fischler would bring in projects and we would evaluate various school systems. We’d go out there, write reports. And he brought in a Ford Foundation Grant to evaluate the Ed Leaders Program and I was the director of the research --

JP: So some of it was grant money you were working off of.

ES: That’s right. Exactly. So it was always that. It was the traditional health insurance, but I don’t seem to remember that being a major issue. As a post doc I think I was eligible for retirement, TIAA-CREF. However, it was interesting in those days of TIAA-CREF that you
professionals had to give 10 percent of their salary in order to get the university’s 10 percent. Of course that’s no longer. Well, those days my kids were in school, I bought a house because I had decided to stay here in 1974. There was the mortgage payments and things of that nature. I was preparing them to go to school, University of Florida, so I couldn’t give 10 percent of my salary. So I lost out because I couldn’t join for a number of years, then finally I was able to join. But there were some problems maybe that you’ve heard about, those early contributions where they were deferred and they had not gone in because we needed expense money. It was very difficult because --

JP: And also I’ve heard that there were times apparently when some people were not paid and some people were asked to hold off four, five days to cash a check.

ES: That’s absolutely correct. The professionals, the faculty and I guess what we call the exempt were asked, “Don’t -- please don’t cash your check. Let’s let the,” we called them secretarial staff at that time, “Let them cash it.” Although Fischler always seemed to be able to come up with --
JP: So you never had a situation where you didn’t get paid?

ES: No. Not in my -- I mean, personally no. I always did get paid. Yes, you had the delay, you worried.

JP: Sure. Well, you had four kids and you had a mortgage now so it was a little dicey from time to time.

ES: Absolutely.

JP: Well, now the thing that intrigues me about your career is what you just mentioned earlier is all of a sudden now you’re in physics, you’re in early childhood education, you’re starting to get into psychological issues, and now all of a sudden you want to develop a computer program.

ES: Right. Well, basically when you look at what I did in the early childhood, what I did in the Teacher Intern Program, what I did when I was lecturing for the national lecturers, was statistics and research design. It was the scientific method, those issues. I had been still working with Peter Niiler in oceanography on a number of other projects. We had one publication in ‘71 and there was another one that we were working on. So I never gave up my interest in physics.
So my role was always the science role and that’s where computer science came in, namely we had talked in the early days, and if you look at some of our early bulletins, one of the centers that we were going to develop was information and computers. So it just so happened that there was a gentleman, his name was Phil Adams, and he was quite an innovative individual. So he was working I guess at that time maybe it was IBM or Harris. Because we had a lot of computer companies around here. We had the Harris Corporation, manufactured computers, Systems Engineering Laboratories, we had Burroughs, a division of Burroughs down here, and there were scientists out there and some of these people were very much interested in having the program at Nova.

JP: Give me some sense in 1973 the status of computers. There were no PCs, we were past the Cray Computer, computer, but where are you?

ES: Okay. Let me give you a little computer background.

JP: Now, you’re talking to someone who will not understand any of this.
ES: But I mean I’ll try to -- I’ll just draw in a few things here. Our first one was an IBM 1130 in 1968. It had 16K of memory and it had those big platter disk drives.

JP: Large.

ES: Very large. Sixteen kilobytes. Like, we’re talking megabytes today. Very little communication. Most of it was remote batch processing where you would submit card, most of the stuff was still done by cards. Interactive terminals were just --

JP: And you better have them lined up right.

ES: That’s right. Exactly, in most of the programming. Then because of Systems Engineering Laboratory being here, Abe and -- we sort of convinced them that maybe they would like -- this was about `71, that they would give us a bigger system. So when we moved to this building, the center piece here had the nice raised floor, because in `68 we were in the Rosenthal Building just on one of the first floors. So we had this raised floor and we got a Systems Engineering Laboratory.

And then things started to rapidly develop. We wanted to have communications through remote or batch or timesharing communications. We wanted to do not only
academic processing, because that was our first one. We were doing the statistical packages. And we had to write them because packages like this, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS, which is a well-known mathematics and data manipulation program, I think it’s now owned by IBM.

JP: Let me interrupt you a second just to get a standard again. Frank told me when he came here from South Carolina that the computer processing was superior here to a traditional university in South Carolina.

ES: Let’s see. I’m trying to think of when --

JP: Well, frank would have come in '78.

ES: '78. Yeah. That would be the case because in about '77, '78, we actually hired a consulting firm to kind of give us some impetus in terms of saying what we really needed because yeah, you want to get the big computer, but will we need all this. Because we started to do administrative processing too. So we got a Digital Equipment Corporation 20, it was our 20/20 system. It had about 64K of memory. So that was going from 16, that’s four times the disk drives, tape drives, et cetera, with communications capabilities like dial-up modems. So our
statistical package was pretty good. We predated a lot of the major packages, although to support them is very costly. But it got done what we needed to get done. So we were able to process academically very well, so there was not a question there.

When we started getting into the administrative processing is when our problems began because we wanted to do payroll. We withheld doing that, but we wanted to do accounting. So we needed bigger machines. We actually needed two machines – one to run the academics and one to run the administrative. And we had twisted pair, the telephone lines that connected. We had a lot of trailers out here; we call it human resources and personnel department at that time. They were out in a trailer now. And we got telephone, Southern Bell to install telephone lines, and then we had our communications setup.

JP: It seems to me that from the beginning that Nova has pursued technology.

ES: Absolutely.

JP: Ahead of other institutions. And Abe, pretty old fashion in some ways, but apparently bought into this need
for high-tech as soon as they could afford to pay for it, let’s put it that way. Is that a fair statement?

ES: Exactly. And the other aspect of it was there was a Dr. Scigliano who came on as registrar. And he started the computer-based learning. But it really emanated from this gentleman named Phil Adams who was a faculty member eventually in our computer science program, very bright individual. And he spurred the development of what we would call the electronic classroom, and a number of people worked on it from the computer center to get this communication device to that computer-based learning could become a reality. But again, it emanated from the technology desire and the science desire and the ability to watch the growth of computers and say, you know, they’re going to play a role. And they were increasing in capacity. Of course their sizes were too, but then eventually they started decreasing in size and increasing in capacity.

JP: And part of this, somebody mentioned to me the other day, is one advantage of a private university over a public university. There are some disadvantages, but in this context you can just do what you need to do, you don’t have to get it approved in Tallahassee.
ES: Nothing needed to be approved beyond going to Fischler, saying, “I want to start this computer science program.” He’d send you a memo, okay.

JP: So flexibility, innovation. In other words, part of what you’re trying to do is become more efficient. We’re trying to have a better accounting system, we’re trying to control personnel, retirement funding, all of that.

ES: Exactly. And a largest portion of our budget is in personnel cost. And I was able to develop a system that could roll into the budget process. You know how the university set up on these autonomous centers. Fischler calls it every tub on its bottom. Every center was responsible for its income and expenses and giving overhead back to the university to support the central administration. So the personnel costs were extremely high.

JP: Plus everybody had different systems.

ES: So what I did, I wrote a fairly straightforward program that would kind of just wrap this into the budget and keep track of people and what their salaries were, what accounts they were charged to. We used to divide people up
three, four, five, six different ways, get part from this account, part from this account, part from this account. So they did that and they rolled it in and then of course the other expenses were rolled in. And then we had to eventually go to really get an outside package. It became apparent that we couldn’t develop everything. We didn’t have all the recourses within the computer center or computer science to develop it, so we went outside to get a package and we even had a little facilities management for a while.

JP: Who did you contact for that? It doesn’t matter, but what you’re now saying is you developed to a certain stage, now you’re going to need top-level technological expertise to go farther.

ES: Yeah. For example, I think NYIT provided us one package, ACES, I forget what it stood for.

JP: They did, yeah.

ES: Academic Computing. And I forget who we bid on because by that time I was spending more time in computer science, developing that because the master’s program, the bachelor’s program, the doctoral program, and trying to --
JP: But Schure would have been an instigator as it were to encourage Nova --

ES: He was, but also he would sort of dictate at times too what came down to us. We would get charged for it too. It wasn’t like --

JP: Well that brings up a question that had difficulty getting answered for me. There is this rumor that he was forcing Nova to buy computers at an excessive price.

ES: I think I’d have to say that was true. I mean, he would dictate, you know, “You get this 11750, we have it, we’re going to send it, and this is what it has, don’t ask any more questions about it.” We could pay very well and he would send -- he became very infuriated. He called me a number of times. I have a memo, which I just reviewed, and I wrote to Fischler saying, “I can’t work under this. He’s kind of coming down on me saying, you know -- he’s very low on Nova, they’re not paying the bills, I sent him all this equipment down there, they don’t even send the money up here, I’ve given you the best bargains, I’ve done all this work for you.”

JP: Was it a good bargain or was he overcharging?
ES: He probably was overcharging. I mean, it wasn’t exactly the configuration. It was one of their hand-me-downs. They were escalating upward in terms of their capabilities.

JP: And selling you their older equipment?

ES: That’s right. And it wasn’t the greatest. It was small memory and what have you, smallest of the --

JP: What was Fischler’s response to that?

ES: Well, it wasn’t my purview to do that, to get involved other than he’s making it difficult for me, because he’s sending me these notes and I can’t get my job done. So I don’t know what Fischler actually did at that point.

JP: Well, I’d be interested to get your take on the ’85 breakup. Part of it was Fischler told me that he saw himself as an employee of the board of trustees, and that time as you probably know NYIT had eight and Nova had seven. And secondly, he said the head of NYIT, as he sometimes referred to Schure, saw himself as an employer. In other words, since he was chancellor, technically he was over Fischler. And so my sense was maybe the computer
issue was part of this system where he was telling Fischler
do this and you got to do that.

ES: And I think that’s correct because he would say
he had these greatest packages up there, these software
packages, and send them down to us, “No, you’re going to
use these.” And they couldn’t be implemented because they
were just not well-developed. I mean, they were full of
bugs and problems.

JP: But it was the New York Institute of Technology,
so one would assume -- and then the other issue that comes
up. And it’s pretty clear that over a period of time the
money given by NYIT was critical to survive, but over a
period of time we, quote from Fischler, were paying them a
lot more than the benefits. So money was going out of
Nova, and in a critical economic situation they really
couldn’t afford to continue that relationship.

ES: I believe that to be the case. I mean, that’s
kind of my sense. And again, I wasn’t involved some time
with this because this was on a different level and I still
had my concerns with just running the computer center,
trying to create these programs, and do what I needed to do
to help the survival and promote Nova and make sure that
people recognized it as a quality institution. Because one
thing is quite clear. We started with our first student group in `67. They graduated in `70. I forget how many now. We went for accreditation by the Southern Association around the `70s. We got it in `71 when the second class graduated, first time we applied, `71. I mean, we only had four years worth of experience.

JP: That’s unusual.

ES: And I thought that was an accolade. It was a feather in our cap. And we got one every year after. And we kind of pointed to that so many times because many of the issues of the Southern Association is we had these off-campus programs, you meet on the weekends. “Who’s teaching? You have big adjunct faculty. Where is your permanent faculty?” Well, let me tell you, the people who were teaching out there are part of our permanent faculty too. They teach the same course. “Can you do it in a weekend?” Well, yes you can do it in a weekend. Yeah, there are some struggles, but you are committed.

JP: Well SACS wouldn’t have approved it if they didn’t think it was.
ES: Exactly. And we have to owe a lot of this to Fischler and his innovations and his spurring and his creation and encouragement of these programs.

JP: Let me get back to `85. How did things change after NYIT relationship ended for you in the computer center?

ES: Well, I think I was transitioning out.

JP: While we’re on this, let me go through and sort of get you to respond, because what happens here is the terminology, computer center, information services, all of that changes quite a bit. So `73 to `76 you were director of the computer center.

ES: Right.

JP: And at this point you were really just getting started. I mean, everything was brand new.

ES: That’s correct.

JP: Then from `76 to `81 you are director not only of the computer center, but the computer science program.

ES: Right, because we had started the master’s in `76 and had hired a faculty member to be one of the faculty members of computer science.
JP: And in fact the M.A. program in computer science started in 1975, is what I have. Is that right?

ES: M.S. Master of Science in computer science.


ES: Yeah. I think `76, `75-`76. Well I think -- yeah, `75-`76.

JP: Okay, fine.

ES: And this was spurred on by local industry. As I said, we had all these computer companies here and they were interested in a program, and a couple of their employees contacted me and said, “Why don’t you offer a master’s degree?” I said, “Who’s interested in it? Can you generate a student population for me?” Because we need critical masses to start these programs. Fischler wouldn’t allow them unless you can kind of let them balance their budget. But we want one that’s taught in the evenings. We don’t want to have to give up our jobs. We can’t do that. So they have to be 4:00 to 7:00 or 5:00 to 8:00 time frame, and it has to really be applicable to us. There were a lot of hardware companies, but we need some software instruction. And that’s how it evolved.

JP: You help us with the software --
ES: Exactly. That’s right. And that’s how the program got started. We put it down to the bachelor’s degree. We once had a center for science and engineering. That one didn’t go too well. Electrical engineering and I think computer engineering. About 1981 I think is roughly when it started. The problem there was again we had local industry. We couldn’t supply a lab, an electrical engineering lab. So we kept the computer science part of it. But I was kind of still -- I mean, I transitioned out of the computer science for a bit at that time because there was a little conflict I had with one of the people over there. I won’t mention any names.

JP: Okay. So from `84 to `87, you are director of the department of computer science.

ES: Yeah.

JP: And the computer center.

ES: Right. Remember, they were sort of an integral kind of thing.

JP: Ultimately it all merged, right?

ES: It all merged. And I’m sure Fischler has told you, Nova has been quite interesting because it started off with this center concept, this larger idea of related
academic disciplines. And he didn’t want departments per se, and you couldn’t exist as a little department. So you were kind of always incorporated into a center. And so you got moved around a lot of times. The computer center was fairly big in the sense of a budget, so computer science was sort of there. Why? Because it’s computers. Did it make sense? Well, in some sense it did because you needed the technology, you needed the software, you had people who were out an industry and they were working in the computer field and they were developing the hardware and interfacing software. We’re talking computer science now. We’re talking operating system, network design and analysis, all those kind of thing. Not the soft kind of, you know, I can run Microsoft Word. No. We were in the hardcore type of science and we wanted to make a reputation. And we went and offered programs onsite at Motorola and IBM. We proposed and went up there because IBM was very big and we used a lot of their people, their Ph.D.’s to teach in our doctoral program.

JP: And you used some of their software too, right?

ES: And some of their software too.

JP: It was a win-win situation.
ES: Yeah. We had a very nice relationship with industry, and we had a nice continuing education program for Motorola where they had an education center in Schaumburg, Illinois. They were hardware-oriented. Up here in Plantation and one up in Boynton Beach. But they released their employees if they wanted to have a Friday off to go to classes. And we were running special workshops in C and C++ and some of these languages that they didn’t know about. So we made some very nice dollars from them, and this was out of the computer science though.

JP: Where would you be on the computer learning curve for academic institutions? Were you ahead of the curve? Were you the kind of people who were starting these IBM programs ahead of other institutions?

ES: I would think that we were probably right up there because I don’t remember too many institutions going up. They were more traditional.

JP: Yeah. That’s why I asked that question.

ES: They were more traditional. I think we were both in terms of not only computer science but this computer-based learning, the Doctor of Arts.
JP: And things would have certainly gotten easier after ’85 because Schure was not sending you his equipment, calling you up, trying to organize your workday.

ES: Exactly. Like, you know, you got to respond to us. We got the greatest things up here and we never saw anything great work.

JP: So that gives more money for Nova, plus opens up opportunities in computers that you might not have had had you stayed with NYIT.

ES: I think so. I would think so. Again, as I say, I wasn’t in that level of interaction with Schure in terms of -- I was one of his employees.

JP: If we take a date, maybe this is the date that you can give me, I’m not sure from all the other information I have, but 1989 you have this unified center for computer and information services. So everything is now in one central location and computer sciences and information all have their own center now.

ES: Right. The way it started again, because of the center concept, the computer-based learning, which was using the electronic classroom and having remote access, bringing students on campus for summer institutes, offering
a Doctor of Arts in information science, a Doctor of Arts in training and learning. This was run by Scigliano. I had the computer science, but again remember it emerged from the computer center and call it the department. And then Fischler said, “I’d like to put you over there in this computer-based learning center.” And I said, “I don’t think it’s a good idea.” He said, “Well you’re small and you’re not going to have the same amount of students as they do,” because you’re talking about highly-trained technical science backgrounds, and these other people, they had very little knowledge of computers. They were in information sciences or training and learning, and we were just using computers as a vehicle to educate them. So I said okay. Then I was in that center and it was computer-based learning but it still was the department of computer science.

JP: And did it turn out to be a good idea?

ES: Yes, it did. Yes and no. What happened was that eventually I said, “We need to call this the center for computer science. I think we’re getting big enough.” That’s when we started the doctorate and the doctorate started to grow. We had the master’s, we had the
undergraduate program about that time, maybe before that time.

JP: Yeah. The Doctorate of Science program is 1986.

ES: ‘86. So that’s coincident with. I guess, and again some of these dates are a little overlapping here, overlapping there. John Scigliano was made vice president. He was the director of the computer-based learning. There was some talk about how we wanted -- he was leaving that. So he had three programs, the Doctor of Arts in Training and Learning, Doctor of Information Systems, and one other one I can’t remember, Doctor of Science in Information Sciences, I think. But we can check on those. How should they go? Should the Doctor of Education go over to the education center? Should information go to the business school? And then we’ll retain the computer science and information science aspect.

Well, what happened was I was asked -- was Fischler still there or was this Lewis? I think it was Dr. Lewis. No, he was vice president. Scigliano was leaving and they asked me, because they talked about it at the higher level, whether I would take over all of that and incorporate it. I said yes I will, because I can name it the center for computer and information sciences. So that’s how that big
center and it’s one of the major centers now. I had a real nice faculty going at that time. In fact, the person that I hired, Dr. Ed Lieblein who then took over from me when I left, was the new dean. He became the new dean. And then we became named as deans. Fischler never liked deans. He liked director. He’d say, “You’re whatever.”

JP: It didn’t matter if you were in charge.

ES: Exactly. And you knew you were in charge.

JP: So by ’93 you’re going to step down as dean. And since that time you’ve been a professor at the Center for Psychological Studies. So what have you done from ’93 on? How has your job changed?

ES: First of all, no administrative duties. I’ve always had at least three duties of Nova – teaching, because I’ve taught since day one here, computer center or something, or computer science, so there was always an administrative role. No administrative role. I’m a regular faculty member. I teach. I supervise dissertations. I’m on dozens and dozens of dissertations.

JP: But you are still involved in statistical area as opposed to psychology per se.
ES: That’s right. I am not in psychology per se. I am in statistics and research methods and research design.

JP: But a lot of that is applied to psychology.

ES: Exactly. I mean, statistics can apply to a number of disciplines.

JP: Seems to me I read that you’ve done some work in biofeedback and things like that.

ES: Yes. With one of my colleagues here. But I mean it’s the substance. And again, a lot of the substance is not my --

JP: Right. I understand.

ES: It’s the method of designing a study, properly analyzing it, and drawing appropriate conclusions based upon the analysis and hypothesis.

JP: And you still do your computer stuff. You do FORTRAN.

ES: Yeah. I mean, I don’t develop as many programs. I did it for a number of years past `93. It’s mostly kind of scripts in the major statistical package languages, although I still have a few FORTRAN things that I haven’t completed but may get to.
JP: Well, in some sense it’s good for you because you had different experiences. You don’t have to spend all your time doing the same thing. I notice that the areas of expertise and the courses you teach is extraordinarily broad, so it keeps you from getting stale.

ES: Exactly. And so, you know, statistics advances too, believe it or not. Although it’s just not all means and medians and modes. New processes. But it’s interesting, some of the new techniques, they’ve been around for a long time. But it’s because of the computer and its ability to process these things, because you can never do them by hand. I mean, I remember slide rules and doing things like that, desk calculators.

JP: You’re talking to a historian, so none of this makes any sense to me.

ES: I mean, I basically left when Fischler left. When Fischler stepped down and Feldman came on, I’ll be honest with you, I wasn’t too happy.

JP: So did you have much interaction with Feldman at all?

ES: Yeah I did, unfortunately. Excuse me, I shouldn’t say that, but I’ll say it.
JP: So this was personal?

ES: Yeah, because he wanted this to be done and he wanted it this way, I think this should be broke up into this and this.

JP: One of the problems that other people have mentioned to me is he comes from Central Connecticut State University, pretty traditional school, and he comes in here and he’s in a difficult situation. He’s following Fischler, who is very innovative and very experimental, and he comes in and he apparently, from what I’ve heard, looks at things in a much more traditional way, and this transition period was difficult for a lot of people apparently.

ES: In fact, a lot of the then deans, they left or stepped down. I mean, it was a very --

JP: He was only here for two years, but nonetheless in two years there were a lot of changes. Did you have much work with Ovid Lewis?

ES: Yes I did, in fact. And I have a great deal of respect for Ovid. He was dean of the law school and I was in the computer. And this was when NYIT, but we did get a computer down there at the law center. This was off of 84.
JP: Yeah, when they were on the east campus.

ES: In the east campus there. So I worked intensively and in fact went to a couple conferences with him and made presentations there. So I did have a lot of interaction. He was a big supporter of the computer center and computer science.

JP: How would you evaluate his presence? Of course, again he was in there a shorter period of time.

ES: Shorter period of time, right. I think he was a real academician. He still concentrated along those lines. And when he was vice president, I think he gave some strength to the academic arm. He was a very bright individual, very capable, very knowledgeable, and not against innovation, but still sound in the academics. And my reaction and my relationship was one in which I could get some of these things, I can tell him about -- and I guess this is the best example I can use.

We had this problem called vertical integration at Nova. The undergraduates started as a separate division and they ran all the undergrad, and very little linkage between the undergraduate and the graduate. There was one center and it was computer science, which we controlled the
major in computer science. So it was integrated from the bachelor’s vertically up to the doctoral degree. And I remember writing a number of memos to him about vertical integration and then John Flynn who was also the former director of the behavioral science center before Frank DePiano and after Bud Kilpatrick, was also very much for vertical integration and supported that concept.

And we could present an academic case to Ovid. And that strength of academic units where you have a faculty that know computers and computer science from the undergraduate to the graduate, we can make programs so that if people want to come in for a master’s we can have these pre-courses that they can take. They don’t have to take a full undergraduate curriculum. As long as they have a good science training. So he was very supportive of these kinds of academic arrangements that were more I guess traditional in some sense.

JP: He talked more about that when I talk with him that he really had hoped to develop more of the undergraduate curriculum, literal art studies, because that’s really short of where he came from. And at the time he was in because of various other circumstances that was really not on the drawing board at the time.
ES: And I think he was the true academician.

JP: He was. No question.

ES: In that series of precedence. Certainly today we don’t have that academic arm. And when he was vice president, he gave a very nice, solid meaning out there in the outside world and with SACS that here’s an academician, running vice president of academic affairs. And so, I mean, he probably didn’t like to be in the role of president.

JP: He really didn’t want to be president.

ES: But people stepped up.

JP: He was not in the sense that our current president is, CEO.

ES: Right now it’s a business. With him it was academics and there were always these issues.

JP: Well, I guess as you go through the history of the university you need different people at different times. And talk about Ray Ferrero who has come in and changed the face of the campus rather dramatically.

ES: Well Fischler -- I don’t want to say he never liked physical facilities. We needed a certain number.
But it wasn’t in buildings. It was in the programs, in the innovation there. And he was never really big in building the campus because there were other things that were more important in education than in buildings. And that’s I guess where Ferrero steps in. And Ray Ferrero, I mean, he’s developed this campus and I don’t even recognize it. I look out my window and I say my goodness. I don’t know half the buildings. And as we said earlier on, I don’t know 90 percent of the people. I came from trailers at times. And when it would rain and it would flood, we had to wade through water and we were put wherever we needed to just have a little home base under Fischler administration. But now looking at the campus, it’s --

JP: Do you see that as integral part of the development of the campus? At some point you need a physical campus.

ES: You need a physical campus. And I think we had the land. The question though of how we got these buildings, donation, et cetera, maintenance and all that, and the budget it takes now to develop. It’s always been a little worrisome, have we developed it too rapidly.

JP: How did you feel about the merger with Southeastern?
ES: I didn’t have any serious problems with it. I thought it served a need in South Florida to have another program. Medical facilities are always an integral part of a university and now this is becoming a little more traditional in the sense of how it’s organized. I mean, the programs, some of them are still very innovative. I had no problem dealing with it. I thought that was nice, although it was interesting they got to be named chancellors and things like that and we still struggled with directors. They got pretty much all the accolades.

JP: They had the money, Nova had the land, and so it looked like it would have benefited both institutions. How do you see the future of Nova? Do you think it needs to expand more the physical campus? More students?

ES: Well, the problem I think is that many of these programs, education and others that have had these large student bodies and their graduate level. We’re in high competition right now with other universities doing the same kind of programs. Yeah we were once the leader, we were once the innovator, but others have picked up and are doing the same kind of job. I don’t think we can continue. The competition is very tough out there. So I don’t think we can continue to build it only at the graduate level.
We have a problem in computer science that I know. We have a problem in psychology that I know where there is tremendous numbers of doctoral students, hundreds of them. And if you’re going to give them Ph.D.’s, you got dissertations and things like that, you can’t really have a quality program if you’re going to have that many because you don’t have a faculty which is big enough. It will cost money to have the faculty. So I think we need to develop the undergraduate program. I think that has to expand. I think that’s more capable of bringing in the revenue than the graduate program. Not that we’re going to cut it back, but we’re going to --

JP: But you see the -- and I’ve talked to George Hanbury and that’s really where the board of trustees wants to go now. They see that you can keep the professional schools. He said they’re pretty much maxed out anyway. Let’s keep them the same and develop the undergraduate but more particularly develop the quality of undergraduate without limiting one of the things that Nova’s been famous for is access so that people can still come. But if you’re going to develop undergraduates, it’s going to take a lot of scholarship money. This is a private school. They can
go to FAU for $30,000 or they can go Bright Futures for nothing.

ES: And this brings up another interesting point, and that is in our doctorate program in psychology, our Ph.D. You have a Psy.D., Doctor of Psychology, and Ph.D., Doctor of Philosophy. We have had large numbers, like 25 of 30 students at times in the doctoral program, the Ph.D. program, not the Psy.D., because we have like over 100. We’ve had 120 people. So we’re cutting back because APA, some of these accrediting agencies are saying --

JP: Too many.

ES: Too many. So we’re cutting back this year to about eight to twelve, and we want to continue to do that. Now, we want to get the top -- you’re talking about quality. We want to increase the quality. Well, give me the money.

JP: That’s right. You got to pay them to come.

ES: And that’s exactly right. I mean, if you want the ones that are at the top, they’re going to go, they’re going to get the monies and the assistantships at other institutions. So who’s to raise the money? I don’t think we can support it by developing new programs completely to
get that scholarship money, and here’s where the board of trustees and the administration, the chancellor and the president and that group, the development office need to come and get some money so maybe five, six scholarships or assistantships, and we can try, and then the quality will come with it.

JP: Well that’s what they’re doing now. They’re getting ready to have, as you probably know, $100 million fundraising drive and they have specifically set out that money is going to go to student endowment and faculty endowment. And the idea is if you’re going to get them, you better have that funding. And I think that’s where it’s easier to set it up than to actually raise the money. It seems to me partly what people don’t understand about Nova is this inverted pyramid for most institutions, that you’re on campus, you don’t see a lot of undergraduate students wandering around the campus. So that, from what I have heard, is going to be part of the priority.

ES: Right. And I think the building of the science and engineering. Because I think in computer science not too many years ago they gave up the undergraduate and I’m not sure why they did that.

JP: Well I think they want it back.
ES: That’s right. But it’s just so ironical to me that I fought this for years and I had to argue with my dean colleague, “Look, this makes sense,” and write these memos to Ovid and say this is the way it should be. And we were the only center. And now we have the business I think is going to do it or is doing it, education, and now we’re going to --

JP: Even oceanographic. They’re going to be pulling in some biology majors and environmental.

ES: And I think that makes perfect sense and it always was I think the kind of model that we were talking about. But we started at the graduate level, remember, and we worked down.

JP: But there is a group of people who are somewhat “disturbed” that we are getting “Nova back to a traditional school” as opposed to the innovative experimental school it started.

ES: Well, I don’t think it’s at odds with innovation to have some kind of structure like this. I mean, what sense does it make to have a separate undergraduate faculty in math, physics, computer science undergraduate? I mean, you don’t separate yourself that way. I mean, if you are
at an academic institution, we hope as a professor or as an associate assistant that you’re doing research, that you’re doing teaching. Yes, we have a heavy emphasis on teaching. I mean, that’s our livelihood and it’s always been that. Yes we have people who do research, but I think it takes a blend.

So I don’t think you prevent people from being creative by having a structure that looks more traditional in the sense of organization, because we’re facing that now in the Center for Psychological Studies. We got a new -- I don’t even know what the heck our new name is. We have the Family Center, Center for Psychological Studies, Social Sciences. It’s always been that: how do we bring these together to get the synergy to work across disciplines? And I think that’s the big issue. How do we innovate across centers, getting the health professions to work with them? I mean, because everyone is so tied into their own little center, you got your own load to carry.

JP: That’s been sort of the standard. That’s how it started out. So everybody has developed and operated in system so there is a tendency as you know in academia to once you’re in your own little bailiwick you pursue your goals and you don’t worry about what goes on in the bigger
university. And that’s going to be the job that Hanbury and others are going to have in the future. If you were to assess the technological status of Nova today, how would you look at it? You have the virtual classroom, you have Wi-Fi. Do you see this as one of the best qualified as it were in terms of technological resources?

ES: No. I mean, a lot of what’s out there is extremely innovative and can really provide us with the necessary medium for teaching and learning. But we don’t always have -- I mean, some centers have more access to the technology than others. Technology is still expensive. We have in the classrooms, you know, yes these overhead projectors and we have the blackboards and we have all of this, but a lot of times things aren’t working either in the classroom. Computers fail, the light bulb is out, the remote control doesn’t work. And I’m kind of speaking from the psychology group because I think we’re on the low end of the totem pole in terms of actually getting resources. And I try to bring up the computer, sometimes it’s so slow, printers are down. I just don’t think that we’ve paid enough attention to --

JP: So what has happened from all of this energized development in the beginning sort of tailed off?
ES: I would say so. I mean, technology takes a bad hit here now because I think the lack of resources, financial support, because the people, we don’t pay people that well in the technology and they go elsewhere. So we hire the novices.

JP: Not so good.

ES: And they get trained, well trained, and they leave.

JP: Well it’s interesting because if you talk to the administrators, it’s the most wired campus. Whenever I talk to faculty and other people they say what you say. Somehow or another they may be well-wired at the Horvitz building. We need to get these guys out and let them look at the rest of the campus.

ES: I think so.

JP: Which is sort of strange in a way because you were so ahead of the curve at one point, now it looks like that’s sort of become secondary.

ES: I think it has. Yeah, there’s still a lot of development out there, but there’s also a time issue. Faculty in many centers tends to be a little bit older. They’re not against technology, but they can’t take the
time or they don’t have the time to spin up to here because they have such a burden already. You still have the handle on the students, the dissertation, you still got to read themes. And to try to spend time creating a new development project that kind of has an innovation for delivery of a particular course or something, where is the support?

JP: Sounds like Nova needs a technology czar. Maybe you can have one more shot at it.

ES: I’m headed -- you’re retired now, right?


ES: I’m sort of heading down that pipe too.

JP: Now, when you look back on your time at Nova, what would be your most satisfying experience?

ES: I think my most satisfying is the fact that I’ve been able to develop these programs and create computer science, get the computer center moving, hire people that are still here by the way. They had worked for me in the computer center. Jackie Jones is still here. So I think it’s my freedom to develop programs, courses, flexibility of the administration, Fischler in particular, the encouragement that he’s given me, the support that he’s
given me. And some of the early people who helped make and keep this place together at a time when it could have dissolved. I mean, people worked hard. They did whatever they had to do to make whatever they were doing a success. And I think that freedom to be able to do that where you’re not under Feldman saying, “Well this is the way you’re going to do it.” You come up with it. You propose it.

JP: Is there still enough of that flexibility here?

ES: I think there is. I think there is, yes.

JP: What would be your most disappointing experience?

ES: Well, I think in one sense it’s how maybe they treated some of the people who have been here a long time, have helped this place develop. Just kind of ignoring them, not -- I don’t want any accolades, but I think not recognizing what some people have done for the university. Certain people are promoting themselves and that’s all they’re interested in: me, me, me. They don’t work very hard for Nova. They work hard for themselves and they take advantage.

JP: So that’s sort of the downside of this system, isn’t it? If you allow all this freedom and flexibility, sometimes people are going to be off on their own tangent.
ES: I think you could be right, yes. So, I mean, it’s disappointing that these people are the ones that are promoted. And not promoted to another level. I don’t mean it in that way. But in terms of, “Oh, look at all the headlines that these people make.” They have the same canned presentation.

JP: That’s always been true in academics, every institution. It’s hard. Have you ever been at all disturbed or worried about factors, no tenure for faculty other than law school?

ES: You know, not really. Again, and under Fischler it never bothered me because all I felt that I had to do is work hard and produce and that things would come along, that there was enough of a system in place that you would be evaluated fairly and properly by your colleagues and then of course given the stamp by the administration and under the faculty, you know, we are reviewed by our peers, although I think that needs to change a little bit in terms of just this automatic promotion. But no, it never bothered me one bit.

JP: Over the time you’ve been here if you go through all the presidents, and let’s sort of leave Fischler out of it because he was really a different type, has the faculty
had enough input into what goes on in the hierarchy of the university?

ES: No, no. Not in --

JP: In university-wide decisions.

ES: No.

JP: So there’s no faculty center, anything like that.

ES: No. We had one in the early days. No. There’s none.

JP: Is that a problem?

ES: Yeah, I think sometimes because they’re not listening to our concerns and what we could do to make this place a better place. I mean, they’re just saying oh, this is what you will do. I mean, there’s a great discouragement about raises. I know it’s a problem everywhere, but the way they do it and the way they promise things or they say, you know, here’s a little mere pittance. And we see a lot of money being spent on lavish things and some people aren’t being rewarded according to their performance. And there’s nothing that we can technically do in terms of getting together as a faculty.
JP: Were you involved at all when there was an attempt to join the United Faculty of Florida?

ES: I mean, there were memos and things that went out, but I never --

JP: And it got voted down pretty decisively.

ES: Yeah. I mean, that was in the earlier days. No, I don’t think we wanted to. We liked the autonomy. We felt that we had a security, at least through the early decade or two.

JP: Is there any resentment -- and you see a lot of money -- they’ve bought a golf course, there’s a lot of money spent on landscaping and developing of the central campus.

ES: We wonder. The faculty wonder whether this is all been necessary. I guess it’s not our purview to tell the administration what to do. We hope that they are really doing this for purposes that could make this a better campus over time that you know, here was an opportunity to buy this stuff, it could be developed into something long term that somebody is strategically planning.
JP: Well, that’s part of what makes a good university is that somebody has some vision of what it might be 20 years down the road. So if you’re going to have land restrictions, maybe it’s better to go ahead and purchase this land now, although I’m sure they’re not in the business of running a country club.

ES: But I think the communication could be a little better in terms of what this is all about. We read it in a paper. Case in point, our holiday schedule. We get this e-mail from Ferrero because it was such a success last year where we had off after Christmas for the whole week and we didn’t have to come back that we’re going to continue that, and here’s our holiday schedule. Well, we used to get the Jewish holidays off. We used to get Good Friday. But it wasn’t said in that memo. You know who saw it, or I guess some of us saw? In the newspaper. I mean, these are the kinds of things that --

JP: But there was some -- I remember talking to George Hanbury or somebody that was that ten-day period where you could -- they were just going to close down the university.

ES: Right.
JP: But some unions or some process, something wouldn’t let them do that. I can’t remember what the issue was. But a lot of times these ideas, what a great idea, nobody’s here anyway, let’s just shut the whole thing down, then all of a sudden you find that you really can’t do that because there are agreements with Broward County about keeping the library open and on and on and on.

ES: And that’s fine, but in terms of these other holidays. Like, you know, it looked like this was a gift.

JP: They took it away.

ES: Took it away. But, I mean, to see it in the newspaper.

JP: That’s bad communication.

ES: Yes. I think it is.

JP: I interviewed a guy who was president of the Alumni Association in 1992-94. Since he was president of the Alumni Association, he has not been contacted by the Alumni Association. And you would think that if you’re going to contact anybody, those would be right at the top of your list. I told Frank about that. He was not too happy. So part of what this university needs is a spree
decor sense of an integrated institution, which you don’t really have.

ES: I agree.

JP: And they’re aware of that. I mean, they know how the university developed that that’s the way it’s gone. So that’s part of the undergraduate push. And then there’s this talk what we need here is a football team.

ES: No.

JP: And I can imagine what the faculty might think of that idea.

ES: Well, if we played the University of Florida, maybe we can get some revenue.

JP: They will pay you a lot of money to lose 60 to nothing. But the cost of building a stadium and hiring a staff, for a school like this it would seem to be a horrible decision.

ES: Right. And we have never, in my opinion, had a board of trustees who really went out and raised money. I just don’t think they ever got the message that boards of trustees are responsible -- I mean, the point being that that’s their primary role in my opinion.
JP: They did in the Oatmeal Club, the very early days. But you’re right. And what I’ve learned, at least from my general information from doing these interviews, pretty much the board of trustees does what the president tells them. And I’ve heard that from the members of the board of trustees.

ES: I think that’s correct.

JP: And at some point it seems to me what you’re talking about is faculty needs more voice, trustees need to be more involved, and that once you get all this extra input, then they’ll feel more involved and maybe will be more willing to go out and raise money. Now I don’t know the trustees, but --

ES: I don’t know them either. And I knew them in the early days because we did have some innovative things there in the early days.

JP: Are there any memorable events while you’ve been here, either Hurricane Andrew or speakers, Dalai Lama? Any other sort of interesting events that might stand out in your memory? Because Andrew took out all the new trees.

ES: Really did a job on our trailers when we were in computer science. I think it ripped off the whole side,
insulation was sticking out and all that. That was a very frightening experience. Nothing comes to mind immediately. I think in the early days it was the close association between faculty and students and how we used to at least socialize and the quality of some of the people that I’ve been involved with. But that’s probably the more outstanding thing - some of the good people, some of the hardworking people, some of the bright people, some of the influential people.

JP: Without whom the university could not have survived.

ES: Yeah.

JP: Everybody says well, the president and all these, but if you didn’t have the administration and the faculty--

ES: And I’ll tell you, there’s been some --

JP: Sometimes that’s underestimated. You say, well Fischler saved the university, but he couldn’t have done it without people like you.

ES: And again, some of the faculty and computer science and of course psychology. Some of them are big names, you know, Nate Azrin. I mean, these are extremely bright people.
JP: Before we finish, I’ve just got a couple minutes, but the Maltz Building and Maltz, interesting guy, Max Maltz. Talk a little bit about him. You were not involved specifically I know in that, but --

ES: I really don’t --


ES: I mean, all I know is that when Frank was dean, he went on a concerted effort to raise the money to build that money. He was very instrumental in doing that. As I said, I fell out of the loop essentially around ’92, in ’92-'93 when I came back here. I was just a regular faculty member, no administrative.

JP: Is there anything we have not talked about that you would like to talk about?

ES: I think we’ve addressed many of the things that I thought about. I guess I felt that my contribution to this little history after talking with Frank was some of the early day stuff. Because as I said, as we moved on into the ’80s -- and I didn’t like controversy either. I didn’t like the confrontation, although I had my occasions to have to get rid of a few people in the computer center.

ES: That wasn’t much fun. But I’ve been able to do what I wanted to do and people have somewhat left me alone and I think I’ve contributed. So I think it’s been good for me and I hope I have contributed to Nova over the years. I mean, I’m most proud of the students that I was working with and how they’ve gone out there, some of the recent distinguished alumni, very, very impressive of what they’ve done. Coming out of Nova in a time when we were in the behavioral sciences, the psychology of change and didn’t have APA accreditation a lot of times. We took time to get it. These people just excelled out there.

And I think I’ve always been a teacher of heart, and that’s been my love, seeing a student and seeing them successful and seeing them get out there and make a reputation. I think if you ask me what my most exciting experience is or whatever you asked, I think they are for the most part.

JP: Okay. On that note we’ll end it. And thank you very much, Ed.

[End]