

10-25-2011

Interview with Scott Chitoff - Alumnus

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NSUWorks Citation

Chithoff, Scott, "Interview with Scott Chitoff - Alumnus" (2011). *Oral Histories of Nova Southeastern University*. 11.
https://nsuworks.nova.edu/nsudigital_oralhistories/11

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SC= Scott Chitoff

Nova Southeastern University

History of Presidents

Scott Chitoff

JP= Dr. Julian Pleasants

SC= Scott Chitoff

JP: This is Julian Pleasants. It is the 25th of October, 2011. I'm at Nova Southeastern University and I'm with Scott Chitoff. Scott, tell me a little bit about your background and where you grew up and where you went to undergraduate school.

SC: So it's Scott Chitoff, with a long I, so you pronounce the T like a D. So I grew up in first Syracuse, New York, until I was close to ten, and then came to Broward County, Florida, Plantation specifically, just a few minutes from here. I went to the University of Florida for a few years, but I was more focused on the social aspects than the studying aspects, so my parents thought it best that I retreat. I came to Nova and finished my undergraduate degree at Nova.

JP: When was this? What year?

SC: Mid '91 to May of '93. I finished my undergraduate degree at Nova. I start in '89 at University of Florida. Then I got a Master's Degree at Nova in Dispute Resolution. Then I got a law degree at Nova as well, but I guess we're going to go back and start at the beginning, because all those things tie into the whole story.

JP: Yeah. When you started here, you were living in Plantation, so you would've known something about Nova University.

SC: Yes, because I went to the University School. I went there from sixth to eighth grade, so I had an exposure to it, but then I went to a public high school, South Plantation High School. But I did have a minor understanding of it, but not really. Clearly, it wasn't the significant player that it is now. All these facilities that are here now were not here.

JP: Did you feel like this was a secondary option for you, that this was not your first choice? Your first choice was UF.

SC: Yeah. I had gotten a half scholarship to University of Miami, but didn't take it. I was very big

into broadcast journalism in high school. It was very much a secondary or tertiary third option. I wasn't happy to be here, but I had made certain personal choices while at University of Florida, so the circumstances were such that I needed to get my act together.

But that's the interesting part of it. As I was getting ready to come see you today, I thought about it. At the time, the types of students that were here, many of them were me. They were people who did very well in high school, then went off to college and didn't, for whatever reason, do well, because of the social aspects or whatever it may be. I had very good friends, like Raphael Katz, who had been at George Washington University, but he had become friendly with some sons of Saudi sheiks and he was flying around in their jets. That's a very good friend of mine who went to law school at Nova also. There are a dozen stories like that.

So you had, at the time, many people who had been high achievers in high school, but for whatever reason didn't focus in college, show up here. So it was interesting because you have this sort of liberal arts undergraduate here, with no facilities, but you had a bunch of people that were bright, who were in the fabric of themselves high

achievers, but there were no facilities or anything around there.

So then you're here. "What am I going to do with this thing?" Then you get a guy like Brad Williams, who at the time was the director of student life, and he sort of channeled that energy.

JP: How many students were undergraduates when you were here? Do you have any idea?

SC: I would say it's less than 1,000, easily less than 1,000.

JP: Probably around 800 or something like that?

SC: Probably. It sounds right.

JP: And what were the entrance requirements at that time?

SC: I have no idea. It certainly wasn't what University of Florida was. But that's part of the interesting part of it. There are lower entrance requirements, but all of these people that I am talking about that I am friendly with were all people that scored high on the SAT and had high grades in high school, but we just - people didn't do well in their first or second years

of school because they were screwing around at a public university or a big university. So you show up here and I'm suddenly getting all A's and doing very well in this small environment, but with very bright professors. Stuart Horn – I don't know if you've spoken to him, but he's a very intelligent man – or Stephen Leavitt, who had been at the London School of Economics, or David McNairn, or Mark Cavanaugh, or Susan Ferris. You've probably heard all of these names. They are very, very bright professors.

So then it goes from, "Well, this is my second or third option." To like, "I really like this place. I feel like I'm growing here as a person. I'm developing." Then I started to get involved with the university, with the extracurricular activities, with Brad Williams and his group The Student Life.

JP: Was part of the benefit because it was smaller classes, more interaction with the faculty members?

SC: Yeah. I can tell you that it's like, "What am I going to talk to this guy about when I come to get this interview?" When I showed up at the University of Florida – and you work there, so you know this is a perfect example – it was an absolute culture shock. I remember my first summer was okay because you take like a freshman English

course. I was in journalism. You take like a journalism survey. It's no big deal. But then the first day of fall I go to this nutrition class or something, a science-type class, and they put me in Normal Auditorium with 800 students. You're going to take a class together. You're like, "What the hell is this?"

If I had to do it again and start over – not that it necessarily would've been Nova as my first choice, but I would've picked some smaller school.

JP: Stetson or something like that?

SC: Or outside the state. I was very big in journalism. I had gotten into Northwestern, into Boston University, into Syracuse Newhouse. But I don't even know if those would've been right. I didn't particularly enjoy or have an affinity for the large classes. And, candidly, there are so many distractions at a big school. I was young. I went to college at 17.

JP: You lived at home when you went to Nova?

SC: I did until I worked for the university, but that's later on.

JP: What were the facilities like at that time, the dorms when you first came?

SC: I really didn't pay attention to the dorms because I was a "commuter student," which most people were. It only was when I was asked to work for the university as a graduate student that I then sort of focused a little bit on the dorms.

JP: Okay. Now, what was tuition? Do you remember?

SC: I don't remember. I didn't pay. My family paid. But I don't remember it being anything significant, maybe \$12,000 or \$15,000 or \$16,000 a year.

JP: But certainly much more expensive than UF.

SC: Correct.

JP: So this is a stronger commitment on the part of your parents.

SC: Right, financial commitment, sure.

JP: So did that have an impact on you? In other words, they're paying a lot of money for your education, to get you straightened out academically as it were.

SC: No. I was just an immature child, like most kids are, and they pay attention. Your family's got money, they pay. They weren't offering to get me my own apartment. It

was sort of a tradeoff, I think. They were keeping me under their thumb a little bit.

JP: Well, that makes sense. [laughter]

SC: Right.

JP: When you started, what was your initial impression of the campus? Give me a little description.

SC: I'll use one word: tumbleweed. Nothing.

JP: You didn't have the Taft Center, didn't have the library.

SC: Didn't have the law school, the psychology school, the administration building – nothing was here. There was the Rosenthal Building and the Parker Building and the Mailman Building, those three buildings. It was literally tumbleweed, quite literally.

JP: Did that discourage you?

SC: Well, yes and no. It discouraged you, but at the same time you're like, "Well, I'm here. I've got to make the best of what I've got." That sort of attitude has gone through my life as far as the choices I've made, like the law firm I'm with. I went to a smaller law firm of 20 or 25 lawyers, and now I'm 40 years old and I'm in an equity

position, the youngest one at an equity position and making it my own. I have partners who are much older than me. I could've gone to a very big law firm with all the bells and whistles, but I made it my own. And, by the way, we have all the bells and whistles, too.

So it's sort of like with Nova. We all got involved and made it what we wanted to make of it, but that takes a certain type of person to be interested in that. A lot of people want it prepackaged and set up for them and here it is.

JP: Rather than make it yourself.

SC: Right. I've never really been that type of person. That's kind of boring to me.

JP: Well, talk to me a little bit about when you first get here. I suspect most of your classrooms were in Parker.

SC: Parker and Mailman, yeah.

JP: What were the classrooms like?

SC: This was 1991. There's no technology to speak of.

JP: There's a computer center, but -

SC: Computers at that time were like nothing. I was using like a Macintosh SE at that point.

JP: But your classes were -

SC: They were just regular, small little 20-person classes. There are no big survey classes here. Still today, there are probably no big survey classes. It's probably small class sizes. I come back regularly and teach at the undergrad and the law school. They ask me to come speak about whatever. They're still small classes, except the law school has a couple of big rooms, but law school is a little different.

JP: So did that help you in terms of your focus on academics because it was a small class, interaction with the faculty?

SC: I think you grow up much faster because you're forced to interact with the faculty, and the faculty is much more friendly and approachable and 3D for lack of a better word. They're not on the big screen, sitting in an 800-person room. You get to know the people. At one point, Stephen Leavitt, who to this day is a good friend of mine - I took an international law course and they didn't have kids sign up for it, so it was me and another

gentleman who was actually a Kenyan prince who was here. It was the two of us and him once a week for three hours. That was the course. Well, you better show up ready to talk about that course because there are only two of you to talk to the professor. So you had those kinds of opportunities that you wouldn't get in other places.

JP: If you had to look at the academic rigor of the courses, how different would it have been here from UF?

SC: I don't know. Could it have been more difficult? I don't think that it would be... Here's the problem. I think you had two types of students here at that time. You had people like me and then you had people who didn't do so well on the SATs, or whatever it may be, who were getting in here because the standards were lower. So I think the people like me were pushing each other a little bit, but we didn't to push ourselves all that hard to distinguish ourselves. So I think at UF you certainly would've had to distinguish yourself more.

JP: The competition would've been stronger?

SC: Correct.

JP: Now, when you first got here, let me get your recollection of 1991 and your walk on campus today, what is your -

SC: Oh, come on. I drove up and parked the car. Today I could've even get the parking machine to work to pay for parking and some kid says, "Oh, those don't work. Don't worry about it. Even if they ticket you, it doesn't matter." There were no parking machines and tickets and parking garages. Just getting over here, I'm laughing as I see some giant Dunkin' Donuts facility driving in on Davie Road, this brand-new place with people running in and out. There are NSU license plates. There are big, electronic billboards. It's not even the same place.

JP: It has dramatically changed.

SC: Dramatically. This is as if you're driving into UF.

JP: It's like two different schools.

SC: This so like you're driving on Archer at the University of Florida here. You come in and, to me, that's how dramatic the difference is.

JP: Right. Now, when you were here, there was no place to eat, was there, on campus?

SC: No, there was nothing.

JP: So where did you go?

SC: You went wherever. You went to Lums down on Davie. You went wherever.

JP: There was no bookstore.

SC: Well, the bookstore was off in Downtown Davie and then it came on campus fairly quickly.

JP: But I mean on campus there were those three buildings.

SC: Well, the bookstore was built into one of those buildings within a very short period of time, yeah.

JP: Okay. The Rosenthal Building was supposed to be the student center, but it really wasn't much of a student center, as I understand.

SC: No, not until the time that I started working for the university was there an effort. Really, it was the second half of my time working for the university that there was an effort to make it more of a student center.

JP: Right. Did you feel that you as an undergraduate were inferior to the majority to the students here who were graduate students?

SC: No. There was no connection. There was no symbiotic relationship with the graduate students. It was a disconnect.

JP: Yeah. You didn't interact with them that much at all.

SC: No.

JP: What was your major now that you're back at Nova?

SC: My major in undergrad was legal studies, which was really not prelaw. It was more like philosophy and history.

JP: More of a humanities-type course?

SC: It was close to being a history degree, to be honest with you. You're talking about civil liberties, but you're talking about it in the historical context. You're talking about industrial revolution or social reforms, and you're talking about Sacco and Vanzetti – I actually wrote a paper on Sacco and Vanzetti years ago – and about the '20s, '30s, '40s, the Ginsbergs and all these people, and all the different historical things that are going on in the United States that are changing the industries. You've got Upton Sinclair and *The Jungle* and all these things.

They tried to mix all that into how that implicated the law. So it wasn't really prelaw like, "Okay, let's basically teach mini law school." It was, "How is law woven into the fabric of our society?" It was very well done.

JP: So at that point you knew you wanted to go to law school?

SC: I did, yeah.

JP: So your goal was to do well enough at Nova to qualify?

SC: Right.

JP: Did you intend at that point to go to Nova Law School?

SC: No, I didn't intend... Well, I didn't really know where I wanted to go, to be honest, for law school. Law school is like medical school. You do well, you go to take your LSAT and you apply. What I found out - of course, you're fast forwarding several years to the law school piece because I got the master's and I worked as a graduate assistant, and then an assistant director of Student Life, and then I went to law school.

What you find out as you start to really think about going to law school is that there are two ways to go to law school. One is to go to a nationally prestigious law school at a significant financial cost, and I don't know that anyone was paying for that for me, or you try and go in the state that you're going to live in or want to live in, or, more particularly in South Florida, you have the opportunity to go to a law school - University of Miami, Nova, St. Thomas - right here and develop those networking relationships while you're in law school so that you hit the ground running when you leave law school.

JP: Now, talk to me a little bit about your relationship with Brad Williams. I understand you were one of the first ones to agree that there needed to be a lot more social life on campus.

SC: Yeah. I showed up here in '91. This guy had kind of mystical powers or something, but he kind of forced people to go beyond themselves. I had been the yearbook editor at a very large public high school, in high school. I don't know how I met the guy. I guess you meet him and you start talking to him. They have this yearbook at the school and it's not so good. I said, "Well, I did that in high school. I did a huge one. I can do that for you."

And it ends up being that the company who's producing them at the time nationally - I forget which, like a Jostens type of company; I don't know what the name of the company was - and the woman remembered me from when I was in high school. So I start doing that for him.

So if you're sort of like you are, the historian for the school at this point and you're doing the yearbook, you start to become involved in what's going on. He started talking to me about UF and about being in a fraternity at UF and about what it was like, the fraternity and sorority life. The conversation evolved that this would be a prepackaged way of developing a very nice social community service and leadership component for the school.

JP: Which was badly needed, obviously.

SC: Badly. It was basically helter-skelter at that point.

JP: So what you're talking about is there is now going to be some structure?

SC: Right. You take the student body and you're going to say, "Okay, I want to devote 25% of the student body and try and get them involved in fraternity and sorority life, then hopefully some of those people are

involved in the university athletics, athletic teams, then there will be clubs and organizations. But I want to develop some student leaders in an organized way."

Research would show you that despite the risk management issues that sometimes come out of fraternities and sororities, that you look over the history of time and significant people came through fraternities and sororities.

So he's working on this and thinking about this. Just before I graduated, he says, "I'd like you to consider working for me." I said, "Well, I'm thinking of going to law school, but I'm not sure." He's like, "Well, I want you to work for me and get a master's. I'll pay for it and I'll give you an apartment and I'll give you a stipend. Work for me as a graduate student." It was supposed to be 20-something hours a week.

JP: And it ended up being 60? [laughter]

SC: At some points, it was 90. I remember there was a letter that was written into my file by him and sent to the president of the university, how I worked like 90 hours a week for the first couple of weeks that this thing got started. I got hired in April of '93 to be the graduate

assistant in charge of developing a fraternity and sorority system.

I'm graduating. I'm going to Europe with a buddy of mine and I'm going to go work for the Narcotics Unit of the State Attorney's Office in Miami. A family friend was the state attorney. But this thing is supposed to start in August. He never intended on me starting in August, when we're recruiting kids and they're joining in August. He thought I was just going to start in August and spend the year kind of researching and developing. Well, I was kind of like, "Let's go." I'm making phone calls. When I get back from Europe in June, I'm making phone calls and I'm working for free - unofficially, I guess - all summer in getting in and setting up national fraternities and sororities to come down here. I even engaged a consultant, lined up a consultant.

August of '93 we pitch a tent with "Greek Life at Nova." *The Miami Herald* shows up and it is front page of the national *Miami Herald*, like front cover, color picture. We've got four fraternities and sororities like that. I think technically 18% was the amount, 18% of the kids the first week joined. So 18% of the school is suddenly wearing Greek letters.

JP: What four fraternities?

SC: It was – we might have to check this afterwards – Sigma Alpha Mu is a fraternity. Theta Delta Ki out of Boston – and I could be wrong about that name. Delta Phi Epsilon, which is a sorority out of St. Louis and Phi Sigma Sigma out of Boca Raton, but those are two national sororities. So you had two and two.

JP: Okay. Two fraternities and two sororities?

SC: Right. So this just changes everything, obviously, because you –

JP: Now, how hard was it to get a national fraternity or sorority to come down here on a campus that's never had any?

SC: Impossible.

JP: Yeah.

SC: Impossible. But I had some national relationships because I was involved in my fraternity, and I leveraged my own national fraternity's executive director, who was legendary in the world of fraternities, named Bill Schwartz out of Indianapolis. And he, on behalf of Nova, made some phone calls to people.

JP: Again, it's who you know, right?

SC: It's who you know and that's one piece of it. But even more significant than that, I'll tell you what happens is that fraternities and sororities service their local chapters who pay dues to them, obviously, by traveling consultants or representatives. So it was easy to sell them on taking a chance on Nova because they had to go to University of Miami in the south or FAU in the north or Gainesville, and the person had to be here anyway. So it's just another day or two. They don't even have to change their hotel.

JP: No. Plus, they're happy to come in the winter.

SC: Exactly. But then we try and grow it and you bring in other national fraternities and sororities and it became more difficult. They're looking at the place. I remember, "Well, where are all the people?" "What do you mean?" "Well, we don't see any activity here. We don't see a bunch of people running around here." "Well, because they're not because there's only X amount of students and if they're in class there isn't an excess amount of people walking around here.

JP: So, in essence, what you have is a small undergraduate campus like Stetson, something like that?

SC: I wouldn't even call it that.

JP: Not even that big, but you have a — this is not where you got 30,000 students.

SC: No. It's smaller than Rollins College even.

JP: Yeah, exactly. That's about right.

SC: Or Eckerd College. I mean, we're talking small.

JP: Yeah. And how many did you get before you left, how many fraternities and sororities?

SC: I mean, you can check this, but I think it was up to four fraternities and there were still two sororities or maybe a third sororities. Sororities are more difficult. They're very nationally — they control themselves. It's like the NFL. Fraternities are a little more renegade as far as building. If there were 1,000 kids, there were something like 250 involved. If you had 25% at the University of Florida of all fraternities and sororities it'd be unruly.

JP: Oh, yeah, it couldn't happen.

SC: Right, couldn't happen.

JP: So you had no houses. Do they still not have –

SC: They do not.

JP: So how did you interact? What was the –

SC: So you obviously have to be creative. The kids would have their meetings in dorm rooms, or if someone lived off campus in an apartment, or in meeting rooms on the campus. And then I created something called a Greek Council, which was a fiction, but it was created by the university to drive the agenda. Now I'm a university employee and I'm not one of the students and I'm trying to drive the agenda. And at the same time I'm trying to teach them what fraternities and sororities are, because remember, they joined, but they don't know what it is. They have no idea what they're involved in. There's no history. There's no tradition. There are no alumni.

Okay, so what do you do? You create your own structure and then you, through the fraternities and sororities, ask them to get their own alumni from other campuses to participate. And then we created a structure of officers on this Greek Council to kind of – even though the university is controlling it completely, we tried –

JP: Well, but it gives them a sense of participation.

SC: Correct. Try and get them to create a constitution and bylaws. And that evolved into a separate fraternity council and sorority Panhellenic – sororities are Panhellenic, right? And then you had the three. And I think to this day there is sort of that structure where there's an overall joint organization of fraternities and sororities, but then they have their own organizations.

From a disciplinary perspective, it's kind of like I'm a lawyer, so lawyers are self-regulated, right? It's the same sort of thing. You wanted to teach them to self-regulate themselves and police themselves and raise themselves up. And then also as we decided to bring more fraternities and sororities on campus, you want them to make the decision. The university could easily make the decision, "We want to bring in a fraternity or sorority." But if they're not going to agree to it or endorse it, then it's just going to fail anyway.

JP: Well, you know, Brad told me one time, he said when he first got here he wanted social activities, so they decided they were going to have this buffet and drinks and they put all these signs up and everything, but nobody came. And so he finally found some young woman and she

said, "I can organize this." So she got in charge of it and about 50 people turned out.

SC: Right.

JP: In other words, they organized it on their own with his help.

SC: Correct.

JP: When he tried to do it, people didn't want to show up.

SC: Right. For instance – this is going a little off track, but there is so much I could talk to you about. I could be here a week with you. We created something called the 24 hours of softball. We created an event that literally went 24 hours. It's a painful, painful thing to be in charge of. It was benefitting Joe DiMaggio Hospital at the time, which was in its infancy. So now you have this core group of students who can get teams together, who can help you run the event, who are motivated.

So suddenly, you name it across the campus, anything we're trying to do – they're your go-to people. Go right back to them.

JP: Plus, they're pretty excited that now they've got something to do.

SC: Correct.

JP: Prior, there was no organization.

SC: No, there was nothing. It goes through the fabric of the school. You've got orientation and suddenly – although this had to be stopped because the lawyers said it got too dangerous. But they created obstacle courses for the new kids to run the freshman through as like a team-builder kind of everyone gets to know each other fun activity. They were creating wild obstacle courses out on fields, or there were different events. We had raft races at homecoming and all these various things, but now you have – it's not just like me and my buddies are getting together. They're involved in this identifiable group, they wear the letters, they have this sub spirit – because remember, there's no football team here.

JP: That's right. There's no university spirit, per se.

SC: Right. There's nothing like the Gator Nation at University of Florida. So suddenly these fraternities have something to rally behind and that's a powerful thing,

whether they made a softball team for themselves or whatever.

JP: And I understand from Brad one of the things he wanted – and you've already mentioned this – is it had to be social, but there also had to be some leadership components and some commitment to –

SC: Right. I spent two years as the graduate assistant and then I got my master's and they made me an assistant director, like his deputy. I'm young. I'm 23 years old and I'm number two in charge of student life at a university? It's sort of unheard of a little bit, right? I'm going to these national conferences and I'm like a whippersnapper. It's kind of a weird thing; I've got to be honest with you. I'm 21 starting this thing and he's sending me to these conferences to try and learn stuff. I was kind of blown away.

But, yes, then the leadership piece, I got a master's in dispute resolution. I was teaching. I had created a whole course for conflict resolution and I was teaching them that and then leadership development was the other piece, so I was teaching with him all sorts of leadership development things.

JP: Let me interrupt you. Where did you get that degree, in what department?

SC: It's the School of Social and Systemic Students, so it's a little bit of an interdisciplinary, gaming theories – a very interesting degree, I've got to be honest with you.

JP: That's an MS degree?

SC: Yes. But I've got to tell you it's, to me – and they won't want to hear this, but to me it's a useless degree unless you go to law school or do something different with it.

JP: Yeah.

SC: And that's how I ended up in law school. I started a PhD and did the year of the Ph.D. and I was kind of like – I went to this guy, Brian Polkinghorn, who was a big professor there and he was a well-known gaming theory expert. And I said, "Listen, unless I'm going to be a professor, what's the point?" And then I met Joe Harbaugh from the law school and he's like, "Look, you need to go to law school." And then the general counsel of the university, Joel Burman, was like, "Let's get you applied. Let's go."

JP: But in the context of your later career that was helpful?

SC: Amazingly helpful because I do things and conduct myself and the way I negotiate with people, I come out of left field at them and they're... My playbook is much more developed than a lot of people with regard to that area.

JP: Now, when you were working with the university, how would you evaluate your perks? You had I guess -

SC: There were perks?

JP: Did you have healthcare or anything like that?

SC: Well, you're talking about while I was a grad assistant or when I worked here?

JP: When you worked here.

SC: Well, I'm 23, they give me a job, so then they take away the housing because I got the housing... So now I'm making like \$20,000 and then the extra made it \$25,000. We're talking like nothing. I got healthcare.

JP: But at that point -

SC: There was cafeteria at that point. They gave us a little card to get food. But it was basically... There was no perk. There's no money and there's no perk.

JP: Yeah. So you were doing it because you really like doing it?

SC: Well, that's the interesting part. Yes. I liked it. I got my master's. I got sidetracked off the law school idea and I didn't really know what I wanted to do. And then I started thinking, "Do I want to be some sort of dispute resolution consultant of some sort?" And then it became clear in the fall of the last year that I worked for the university, the fall of '96 - I left the summer of '97 - "I just don't want to do this anymore. I'm too old to be chasing students around, with fraternities and sororities. I need to do more with myself."

JP: So you were there from '93 to '97?

SC: Correct.

JP: Okay. Now, during those four years of time, what else did you work with besides sororities and fraternities?

SC: So I was in charge of the commuter students. I was in charge of the international students. I was in charge of the volunteer programs and then the leadership development.

JP: And I understand at some point, Brad told me, a radio station -

SC: There was, but I think that was there even prior to me.

JP: Oh, was it?

SC: Yeah, but I really didn't participate in directing that activity, but it was there.

JP: Were there many international students?

SC: There were.

JP: And of course there was no university service, per se.

SC: No. We were creating services within student life because there were no separate departments to do these things. How do you take commuter students and build them into the campus life? What activities and services can you provide them?

JP: What did you do for them?

SC: Not a whole lot, to be honest with you. We attempted to. You attempt to make things known to them. You attempt to get them, even though they're not living on campus, to involve themselves in fraternities and sororities, to get a connection to the school, to get them to come to - the basketball team was pretty good, soccer

team, baseball team. Try and get them to come out to athletic events. It's really a marketing activity, to be honest with you. You're trying to get them involved.

JP: Yeah. And most of these people – some of them are obviously adults and have families.

SC: Correct.

JP: They're not going to come hang around.

SC: It's difficult at best to get them involved.

JP: Yeah. Did you have, say, social events once a year, like homecoming or whatever, where you would encourage people to –

SC: They had homecoming, but they also regularly special events. There was a thing called the Hollywood Squares, where they actually rented the scaffolding and the whole deal. There were various events like that throughout the year. When the fraternities and sororities came, there were parties on the weekends, which sort of, to me – and Brad and I were talking recently and it was like, "I can't even believe that we had that stuff going on."

JP: Was there a problem with underage drinking?

SC: Well, underage drinking and potentially fights. I had literally police forces on the campus and regularly people would have to be arrested. Maybe this is how I ended up being a lawyer because Joel Burman, the general counsel, always said to me, "You are very good at risk management." The school never had a problem; we quite literally never had a problem.

JP: And while we're on that subject, one thing I don't know much about, what kind of police force was there on campus?

SC: Well, no, we only had security but we'd bring the Davy Police onto the campus for the events. And I think today there are still no police on the campus. They would still do the same thing. But like you'd have off-duty police officers at all these events.

JP: But during the week there were some security people around?

SC: Yeah, Nova Alert or whatever they called it.

JP: Okay, but not in the sense like Florida has a campus police?

SC: No. There was no campus police and there still isn't. Right, because it's a private school.

JP: All right. Now, at some point here, you're going to decide that you need to go to law school.

SC: Right. So the fall of '96, I convened a meeting with Brad and said, "Look, my passion for all of this is kind of waning here." I have a deputy at this point and that person is taking the late-night meetings. Not to digress, but you're talking a significant amount of hours that are going into this thing. You're talking 60 or 90 hours a week and you're making peanuts, so you better be like into this thing, and it was waning.

JP: And so you had no desire to have a career -

SC: What am I at that point? In '96 or '97, I'm 25 or 26. I've got a live-in girlfriend or whatever it may be. I'm thinking a little differently about life now. I want to make some money and I know I'm not going to make any here, doing this. And that's not to say that what Brad does isn't a noble effort. And at the higher levels you can make some money, but it wasn't for me anymore, so I'm considering, "Am I going to do some kind of consulting gig or go to law school?" And, in fact, I talked to Brad's brother-in-law who was involved with a big bank overseas and was interested in me coming to work for him, of all people. So it's like, Brad's such a great guy he's

literally more concerned about me than, "You're my employee. What do you mean you want to leave?" In most regular corporate settings it'd be like, "You want to leave? Good, you're fired." But that's not how it played out. It was kind of this, "What are you going to do with yourself?" I decided on law school.

JP: And you decided on Nova?

SC: Yeah. I had come to learn that you really want to go to law school where you want to work, unless you want to go to some national institution. I guess I didn't think in my mind - although now you sort of understand why people go to Harvard. I certainly could've gotten into some significant, different law school. I don't know why I decided on Nova. I had gotten into other law schools, but I still decided on Nova. Maybe it was because I was comfortable, I don't know. Maybe that's part of it. Although I became very uncomfortable when I got to law school, trust me. They don't make it easy.

JP: Oh, first semester is tough. In 1997, in the fall, is that when you started law school?

SC: Yes.

JP: Okay. And when you started law school, give me some sense of... By that time, the new building was in.

SC: The law school building was in, in '93.

JP: Yeah. So you have nice quarters?

SC: Very nice quarters, yes.

JP: And so that's good. The faculty, how would you assess the law faculty?

SC: Excellent. That's on par with the University of Florida. We're using UF as the benchmark here. Yes, the law school is... If you look at the law school – and that's the one I know the best, obviously – that's on par with any law school in the world.

JP: At the time, it was not.

SC: Well, you're saying from a ranking perspective.

JP: Yes.

SC: But rankings, to me, are kind of nonsense because I have beaten up on Harvard-trained lawyers many times. I think academically and facility-wise, it was very good.

JP: As you well know, in the real world people look at degrees.

SC: Well, right. Here's why. Here's what happens. What happens is someone goes to a Harvard and then what there is a Harvard network. What happens is those people are funneled to the firms that want to hire from Harvard, and suddenly in New York, in Manhattan, or in big-city Chicago or wherever, they're getting those opportunities that you wouldn't necessarily get from a Nova. So I ended up at a very well-known law firm here that's very difficult to get into because of my persistence. If I had been at a Harvard, I don't know that I would have to be persistent at all; you just have to be smart.

JP: Well, I think people look at the Supreme Court. All nine are either graduates of Yale or Harvard. They see those schools in a different context. As you say, I know a lot of people that took UF Law School and a lot of people who could've gone to other schools who want to practice law in Florida, so they go to Florida. Their classmates are going to end up being governor.

SC: Right.

JP: So you know the people in Broward County and you know the people in South Florida.

SC: Right. And my partners are UF graduates and FSU graduates and UM graduates. But the difference is if you go to a Nova, you'd better be – and this is a different topic, but it's part of the story of the university – damned persistent about how you're going to get your summer clerkships and your training. The people that didn't do all that and went to the summer abroad or nonsense like that – I thought was nonsense, but I guess it's good for some people – they came out and they didn't have jobs. I came out and I got a full-on – I was hired in the fall of my third year of law school. I had the job. I hadn't taken the bar exam yet and I had my job.

JP: By the way, I have heard from somebody that in the last year or two Nova had a higher percentage passing the bar than Florida or FSU.

SC: Yeah. I don't know the specifics. You'd have to ask the dean. But it's my understanding that in the last two years we were number one or number two in the bar exam.

JP: Somebody had told me that.

SC: Yes, that's true.

JP: What size classes did you have in law school? I know that there's got to be a couple of large –

SC: Law school is done by sections when you first start. It's kind of like the military a little bit. I think those sections were probably 50 students each. I think we had 300 starting, so 6 sections of 50. And then, as you know, by the end of the first year 30 or 40% are gone.

JP: Some of them are gone after the third week.

SC: And then the classes are something like -

JP: 35 or 30?

SC: Up to 50, but then are smaller survey - the more specific the niche area, the smaller the class. So you could end up with 15 or 20 people.

JP: Yeah, if you got into international law. What did you specialize in?

SC: Well, I knew from my family background that I wanted to be in business law. I always thought that you had to understand how to do litigation and transactional - transactional meaning contracts. You had to understand how to write the contracts to litigate the contracts and you had to understand how to litigate the contracts to understand how to write the contracts, so I sort of made it difficult on myself because I tried to focus on both. And

to this day I have a 50/50 practice. I do litigation and transactions. What's happened is I ended up being outside general counsel to a number of companies now because I know both sides of it. So yeah, I wanted to be a business lawyer.

JP: Do you feel like the law school prepared you well for your career?

SC: Absolutely.

JP: How'd you do on the bar?

SC: Excellent.

JP: Did most of your class do well when you graduated?

SC: Most everyone that I was friends with did well. I don't remember, candidly, what the passage rate was. It was maybe 70 or 80% of the class.

JP: So when you took the bar did you take a Kaplan course or anything else?

SC: Well, it wasn't Kaplan. It was BARBRI and PMBR.

JP: Okay, but the preparation courses –

SC: Well, yeah. There was a multistate preparation and then there was an overall.

JP: You're licensed in the state of Florida and you have reciprocity with a lot of states, except, for example, like New York?

SC: No, there's no reciprocity because Florida doesn't give any reciprocity.

JP: Is that right? Okay.

SC: I think you can go to the state of Georgia and take like a one-day bar exam, but Florida doesn't have reciprocity.

JP: And there's a reason for that.

SC: Of course. We don't want anyone coming in here.

JP: Everybody from Pittsburgh would be down here.

SC: We don't want anyone coming in here to take their vacations.

JP: And stay.

SC: So I'm licensed in Florida and then I'm licensed in a bunch of federal courts.

JP: So did you feel like when you were at Nova Law School that you were intellectually stimulated as opposed to going through the motions of getting your degree?

SC: Absolutely challenged, yes.

JP: Because to a lot of people law school is drudgery.

SC: Well, I will tell you this: My golf game became very good in law school. Towards the third year, it basically is you've figured it out at that point and that's sort of similar to when you're practicing law. I can learn any topic I want to learn if I spend three days on it, and that's kind of what they train you in law school. But, listen, it's a very fine law school and its training people as well or better than any other law school, in my opinion.

JP: And when you were in law school, where did you live?

SC: I still lived at home.

JP: Saved a lot of money.

SC: Resources are resources. It kind of impinges your social life a little bit and you've got to be a little more creative with your social life.

JP: Now, when you were in law school, did you participate in any of these undergraduate social activities?

SC: Absolutely not.

JP: You cut off completely?

SC: I cut the cord. They had a little event for me when I left and I cut the cord, literally. I never even spoke to Brad for almost two years, or a year and a half, the first year and a half. And then I was looking at an opportunity to go to the firm that I'm with or stay at another firm that I'd been working for, and I went and sat with him and he kind of helped me through it as a mentor.

But literally when I left I said, "Look, if you need me, if you need my advice, call, but I'm going to disconnect myself because I really want to focus on law school."

JP: Did you participate in any social activities in law school?

SC: I did, yeah.

JP: What did they have, in general, for entertainment?

SC: There was a business law group I ended up being president of. There was a variety of that kind of... More academically, I was on the *Law Journal*. I was one of the editors.

JP: There are legal fraternities.

SC: Yeah, I was in that, too. I was in the Phi Delta Phi. I don't know. You can look on my résumé and see whichever one I was involved in. But, really, law school is more like you start in a section and you get your five or ten friends out of that section. And even though you're not in sections going forward, that's your group. Mine just happened to be golfing buddies because that was the thing we were all into, golfing or going to the Falcon Pub down the street or whatever it may be.

JP: So it's sort of individual social activities?

SC: Well, there isn't a whole lot of time to do a bunch of stuff anyway. And then everyone starts working their second year at law firms and then there's less time. And then into your third year then you're talking about the bar exam and now there's no time, no time at all.

JP: Well, did you feel that in your personal evolution, by the time you got to law school you were

really focused the way you had hoped you would be, as you progressed from UF to Nova undergraduate, now in law school?

SC: Yeah. My undergraduate and then my master's I'm still not focused with what I really want to do with myself. Now I'm focused. Now I have a very laser focus on what I want to do with myself.

JP: What was the cost of law school, do you remember?

SC: A lot. I'm still paying for that. I promise you have some nice loans.

JP: Was it \$30,000 a year or something?

SC: At least. My year was the first year to get laptops in law school and they had a Wi-Fi. We paid some extraordinary amount of money for laptops that were crappy, to be honest with you.

JP: Sure.

SC: It's funny. I'm walking around with MacBook Air now, this skinny little sliver of a piece of metal.

JP: But they were pushing this technological -

SC: Let me tell you something. I'm in charge of technology at my law firm now. The tech guy works for me. Technology is the whole deal.

JP: Particularly in law.

SC: Yeah.

JP: If you don't have the court system -

SC: If you don't have that, email, documents, whatever it may be.

JP: You couldn't function anymore.

SC: But law school was pricey for that.

JP: Was it worth it?

SC: Yeah. Without getting into actual dollars, I make a significant amount of money a year. Unless you go and work for a company and you spend those same - so I graduated college close to 20 years ago, right? So if I spent 20 years at a company, would I be in the same economic position or better? I don't know. How many companies would I have worked for at that point, right? If you look at like Apple and these guys who left Stanford and went to work for this guy, Jobs, and they're the same age as me and they're worth \$150 million apiece -

JP: That's pretty unusual.

SC: Right, of course. What percentage is that? For my age, in South Florida, I know that I am at the top of my game economy. So, yeah, there are no regrets. Do I make a Porsche payment every month as far as my student loan? Yeah, I do. But you know what? It's the cost of doing business.

JP: Well, if you didn't have that, you wouldn't have the ability to earn the money in the first place.

SC: Right.

JP: You've already mentioned it, but I know people, good friends, who were at Yale Law. In the real world, you could be GW Law. It doesn't matter if you have the ability and you use your ability. You can be a better lawyer than anybody who came from any other institution.

SC: But that's only part of the story. The other part of the story, which is what I learned from Brad Williams, is the salesman side.

JP: Sure.

SC: And the leadership side. To be honest, that's the harder part of the whole deal is going and getting the

clients, interacting with the clients, having them believe that you're driving their bus, that you're their man and all that sort of stuff.

JP: Yeah. But you have to remember that they're client and they pay you.

SC: Right, of course, exactly.

JP: Something I mean to ask earlier, when you were there the transportation situation was pretty bad, wasn't it?

SC: I don't even know that there was a transportation situation.

JP: There was a bus that came in.

SC: No.

JP: There was at some point because I know people who took the bus.

SC: No, not that I know of.

JP: Well, they went to -

SC: Broward County maybe had a bus.

JP: Well, they went to Broward County College.

SC: Okay, fine, yeah.

JP: Then they had to walk from there.

SC: Sure.

JP: So how about parking? By the time you got to law school and all of that, was that a big issue?

SC: No.

JP: Not like today?

SC: No, not at all.

JP: So in terms of transportation, the campus wasn't really big enough to have parking garages and all that sort of thing, too.

SC: Well, the campus was big enough. They had plenty of space.

JP: Yeah, but I mean in terms of the number of vehicles and that sort of thing.

SC: No. They didn't have a critical mass problem at that point.

JP: When you finished, how has your relationship been with the university? Do they contact you? Does the alumni

office contact you? Are you aware of what's going on at the university?

SC: Yeah, I'm aware, but I have a more involved relationship with Brad, obviously, and with several professors. I represent several of the board of trustee members as their personal lawyers. And as a result of that, I have a relationship with Dr. Hanbury.

JP: So you're much more aware of what's going on here than the average alumni, right?

SC: Right.

JP: I hear all kinds of horror stories. I talked with one guy who is president of the alumni association. He was president and they didn't even have him on a list.

SC: I will tell you that I don't - I'm not home from 8:00 in the morning until 7:30 at night. Like most people now, I don't even answer my own home phone. My wife uses it. They probably call and she probably tells them to go fly a kite because she sees what I pay in tuition every month as far as the loan. I don't believe that their alumni infrastructure or their institutional gift vehicle is very good, even today.

JP: No, it's not.

SC: At all.

JP: I learned that from talking to the -

SC: I know that from having lunch with Dr. Hanbury.

JP: Well, George is the one that told me the same thing, so yeah, and they know that.

SC: In fact, at lunch I think I gave him - he was talking about how he wants to get everyone to give a little something, so I pulled out my wallet and gave him something right there at lunch. I said, "All you have to do is ask and people would give." Going back to even 1993, that's the problem. What is my connection back to you? Other than just asking me for money, what are you going to do for the alumni and how are you going to involve the alumni? That's that whole fraternity and sorority thing. It's the connection.

JP: Right. And there's no football team, so you're not going to -

SC: Yeah, but I don't know if you need a football team necessarily. You could have other activities. A football team is an easy thing. Look, there's no mystery to the SEC schools and the football team because it's an organizing activity. It's a Saturday activity that starts

at eight in the morning until game time. It's a thing that everyone can organize around. So does that make it easier? Yeah, it makes it easier. But there are other things, other sports that you could do.

JP: When you were here, that was another aspect, particularly when you were undergraduate and when you were working on campus. Was there much interest in sports? There was, what, like a baseball team and a basketball team?

SC: Yeah, but it was marginal. It was like, there's a basketball team, but they're playing in some church down the street or they're playing at ECC. Now I hear that, because of the facilities that have been built, it's a much different experience because you have an on-campus stadium. The baseball team did have people following them and whatever it may be.

JP: But it was not what we would call -

SC: It's not a Ben Hill Griffin Stadium. No, it's still not.

JP: But is it part of the social fabric? Do people have an interest? I noticed they're getting ready to start

a swim team and the women's golf team has won a national championship.

SC: But I still don't think that it's... It is not part of the fabric of the institution, in my opinion at least.

JP: Okay. Well, that's what I want to know, yeah.

SC: It's not part of the fabric of the institution, in my opinion, such that everyone on campus knows what's going on with it.

JP: And there are a lot of us who believe that's a good thing.

SC: That what, that they don't?

JP: At the University of Florida, football rules.

SC: You're saying that, as a guy who worked as a professor at University of Florida, you probably didn't like the fact that from a political perspective that the head football coach could do what he wanted, close to what the president could do. John Lombardi and Bernie Makin are reporting to him practically.

JP: And I've asked both of them that very question and they've both said, "It's out of our hands."

SC: Right, because it's too big. It's superstructure.

JP: Oh, you can't stop it.

SC: My old boss – he's now a retired lawyer – was the president of the UAA at Florida and then headed the law school board. He said, "It's a machine, like Alabama. You can't control the thing."

JP: No. It's out of control.

SC: But I don't think Nova needs necessarily a football team.

JP: No. And everybody I've talked to at Nova does not want a football team.

SC: I don't think it's necessary.

JP: No, it's not. It's not what this school is about.

SC: Right.

JP: And partly because of the way it evolved.

SC: Right.

JP: And because you still have an overwhelming majority of graduate students as opposed to undergraduate.

SC: Right.

JP: Now, one of the things they're talking about – and I talked with George Hanbury about this – is they see that it's critical for this school to really develop more undergraduate students and higher-quality undergraduates.

SC: Absolutely.

JP: Would you agree with that?

SC: I had the same conversation with him. I think it needs a critical mass of 2,500 to 5,000 undergraduates. What that does is a number of things: It drives the on-campus population. If you drive the on-campus population, you drive the fraternities, the sororities, the clubs, the organizations, the performing arts, all the campus activities, the athletics, everything. It's like a city. It feeds the city. It creates the energy. Commuter students aren't going to create the energy. The on-campus students create the energy.

As you get a larger percentage of students on campus and higher standards, then you have Fulbright scholars and national Rhodes scholars, you're involved nationally and you're in the conversation and you're getting research

grants. You become a significant institution from a research perspective.

JP: Right. And that makes a huge difference. I'm about out of time. I've got another interview. But let me get you to sort of come up with some anecdotes like you were talking about when you had the 24-hour softball. Any other things like that that would give me sort of a glimpse into what student life was like during that time?

SC: I think you had – regularly, there was a thing called... One fraternity of the group – the guy's now a big banker in England named Mike Betesh. He put together a thing called the Sun Fest in the spring, and he would have reggae bands for his fraternity and huge crowds would come out.

There were these obstacle courses they would do.

JP: Now, when you say "huge crowds," would this be surrounding community young people?

SC: No, it'd be from graduate students or whatever. People would just come out. There were various events that would go on, on campus. It took on a different tone. It became that more people would show up and they would have more parties or whatever it may be. But, again, you're

still using a campus facility, so the cafeteria becomes so-and-so's event. They have a big theater production or whatever and now these are all members of fraternities and sororities that are putting on a theater production.

JP: And so the benefit of this is you have some campus —

SC: You're building campus life.

JP: Yeah. You feel like you're part of an institution.

SC: They're building a campus life, exactly.

JP: That's great. Scott, thank you so much for your time. I'm going to end on that.

[End]