Dr. Dick Dodge

Nova Southeastern University

History of Presidents

Dr. Richard Dodge

JP= Dr. Julian Pleasants

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JP: This is Julian Pleasants; I’m at Nova University and am talking with Dr. Dick Dodge in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. We are conducting an interview for the history of Nova University. Tell me when you came to Nova, what the circumstances were, why you took the job, and who hired you?

DD: I came in June 1978. As for why I came was I was lucky to get a job. I applied, came down for the interview that previous winter. There was a huge snow storm in Connecticut. I took the last flight out of New York City and it was that big blizzard of 1978. I came down here to tropical paradise, what I thought. I interviewed, stayed over at Marina Mile Motel or Hotel over there on 17th Street. I was impressed by the place. It took me a while. I was looking at some other offers, which did not come through, so I accepted Nova, and we moved down in June.
JP: Who was director at the time?

DD: The director was Dennis Moore. Dennis Moore is a physical oceanographer and what had happened was, this was in 1978, so I suppose they must have advertised in 1977, and following the death of the previous director in 1975, apparently the Center went into a tailspin, and they decided they would hire some new faculty that had grant writing ability, who were not necessarily physical oceanographers. So, I was part of that applicant pool, because I’m not a physical oceanographer, I’m a coral reef biologist. So, three of us came in as a result of that search; one physical oceanographer, one geologist, and me.

JP: You did your training at Yale?

DD: I did my graduate training at Yale, yes.

JP: And, what was your specialty other than coral -- you are essentially a biologist, is that right?

DD: Well no, a geologist. I got my PhD in the Department of Geology and Geophysics, but of course coral reefs are rocks and animals, so it fits well within -- geology is a good coral reef field to get into.

JP: Now, when you came, what were the circumstances of your hiring in terms of your job responsibilities, your
pay, fringe benefits, all that sort of thing. Give me some sense of what that was like.

DD: Well, it was a real job. We had a contract, and the idea was that I was an assistant professor. There wasn’t much to teach. The Oceanographic Center didn’t have any master’s programs. They only had a PhD program. Nor did the main campus, so our mission was to do research. So, that first year I came, I worked hard on writing proposals with the hope of getting money to continue. I think I was on a … I’m pretty sure that was a 12-month contract. It wasn’t a 9 month, it was a 12 month.

JP: Pretty good in an academic institution, they are not always 12 months.

DD: It was, I thought, good, until it changed. So, the punch line of that story is that the next year the university continued to be on hard times. I guess the University was going through a hard time then when I was hired, and then kept going on hard times. So, President Fischler at that time came down a year later, after I was hired, and essentially notified everyone that we were all being transferred to soft money and, if we had grants, by all means we should stay and use them. If we didn’t have, well see ya later. It was a bit of a shock. So that was a
bit of a shock, but I was lucky to have some, and I got us a contract grant from the University of Miami to replace someone who was going on leave to NSF. So, for the next year to year and a half, I actually worked at University of Miami, but I was still paid through Nova because it was a subcontract, which really was a saving thing for me.

JP: And, at that point, none of the faculty with the exception of the law school had tenure.

DD: No, I believe that no-one had tenure.

JP: So were you on a year-to-year contract? Is that how you worked?

DD: Well, we had initially it was a year contract, then it was dissolved, and there were no contracts. We had no contract at all. That persisted until Ovid established contracts, much, much later.

JP: So for a period of 10 or 12 years, you had no contract at all?

DD: No contract, no, no contract.

JP: So you depended on grant money exclusively?

DD: Yes, absolutely exclusively.

JP: Now, in the beginning ... sorry ...
DD: Although we began some teaching programs back in the 1980s which were able to supply some teaching money for faculty and some administration money.

JP: Talk about some of your early teaching programs then.

DD: The first teaching program, well, the Oceanographic Center always had a PhD program.

JP: They started that.

DD: And, that persists to this day, and it has been successful. Never graduated many per year, but distinguished people. I think it was 1981, President Fischler brought in a man named Charlie Finkel. Charlie wanted to start a coastal zone management master’s program, and he had a grant from his grandfather, so Abe brought him in and said, “Okay, here’s Charlie, he is going to run a master’s program here. Be nice to him.” So, everyone was nice to him, and he started a master’s program, which was very seat of the pants. He lasted about 2 years.

JP: What kind of masters?

DD: That was a masters in coastal zone management and he recruited some students and some professors to teach. One of which was a retiree from NOAH NIMPS, who came and
actually had an office at the Oceanographic Center, but they were not on faculty. Charlie was not on faculty, neither was this other guy, Louie Rivas, Dr. Louie Rivas.

JP: So, when Charlie Finkel left, did the program die out or did it continue?

DD: When Charlie Finkel left, we took it over and Curt Burnie, Dr. Curt Burnie who came, I think in the early 1980s was there. He was a biologist, and we had to keep that running because there were students in the pipeline, and we said, well let’s keep it running but we needed to establish a marine biology program because we were biologist, coral reef people are biologists too, and it seemed the logical thing to do. We had some other biologists on staff. So, we kept the CZM program going and started a marine biology program, which became reasonably successful over time.

JP: Did you teach just marine biology or did you also teach coastal zone management?

DD: Coastal zone management and marine biology were taught at the center. I didn’t teach.

JP: Okay.
DD: Curt Burnie taught initially a great deal, and then we pulled in faculty to help teach too.

JP: Have you taught these courses at all, at the time you have been there?

DD: No. I have not.

JP: So you have been essentially a researcher?

DD: I had been a researcher, although I have taken on quite a few students over the years.

JP: PhD mainly?

DD: No, mainly masters for guidance in their final Capstone experience, whether it is a thesis or a Capstone review paper.

JP: Explain to me a little bit about what a course in coastal zone management would be about?

DD: Coastal zone management is a master’s degree designed for folks who deal with the complex issues of the coastal zone, which involve the ocean obviously, the estuaries, and the people who live and work there, so that was focused quite a bit on the marine aspects of it, and the animals and plants that live in the ocean, but we also tried to bring in some policy issues and also tried to
bring in some management issues of how you manage coastal resources because the governments need to manage those resources to not die and to be available for users.

JP: I guess you would also deal with the erosion of the beaches?

DD: Beach erosion, absolutely. Coastal construction, beach erosion, all those issues of zoning, how you use the coastal zone productively with (unintelligible).

JP: What is the current thinking about beach erosion? Is it replacement of sand? Is it jetties? Or does any of it make any difference?

DD: Well, beaches are very valuable. They continue to be valuable. They continue to erode, especially with rising sea level, but they continue to be renourished. It is becoming harder and harder to get permits for that. It is also harder to find sand because Broward County especially has had a long history of beach re-nourishment. All that good sand has gone. So, they need new technologies to use existing sand to be less silty, or less rocky, and they are trying to do that.

JP: I had heard somewhere that they were trying to produce some artificial sand.
DD: Well, they can, that is all doable. It just costs huge amounts of money, so you can make sand out of glass. All that is possible. You can truck in sand and put it on the beach, but it is hideously expensive compared to the way they do it, which is that you go offshore, suck up existing sand, and pop it on the beach. So that’s why it’s not done to any great scale. Small scale, some of those are done.

JP: One of the problems has always been with coastal zone management, is the controlling authority, as Al Gore might say, who really is responsible, whether it is water management districts, whether it is local political groups, everybody has --

DD: -- a finger in that, yes.

JP: In a way, everybody is indirectly or directly involved with the decision making.

DD: It is a heavily regulated area, and it is often difficult to figure out who you need permits from to do things at the coastal zones, so we just found out a year ago, we needed a permit to do things we have been doing for years with Broward County.
JP: Would most of the permitting come from the county?

DD: For the project itself, the beach renourishment physical project, the permit comes from the Army Corps of Engineers, and they have to have sign offs from other federal agencies. Back in the day though, those sign offs were perfunctory. They are becoming harder and harder to get sign offs from NOAA, from Fish and Wildlife, and from EPA. If I want to do something on the ocean, like install something on the ocean floor, our people have to get permits from Broward County, from the state of Florida, from FWRI, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, and also from the Department of Environmental Regulation. So it gets complicated. It gets harder and harder to get things done.

JP: And, for the record, what is NOAA?

DD: NOAA is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, federal.


DD: Right.

JP: So, the money that you would apply for, normally is your best source federal grants?
DD: Our grants at the Oceanographic Center have many sources, so we get money from Broward County. We have grants from the state of Florida, DEP, from the Fish and Wildlife Commission. We have federal grants, NOAA, National Science Foundation, and we have some grants from NGOs, non-governmental organizations like the Nature Conservancy and Save Our Seas Foundation, some foundation grants too. So we look at all funding as you have to be multitasking to get funding to do things, so you look at as many sources as you can.

JP: And of course in the state of Florida, the coastal zone management is absolutely critical in terms of both the water that the state needs and the tourism. I mean, if you. We will get into this a little bit later with the oil spill, which I know you are heavily involved in. Talk a little bit about what your facilities were like when you guys were here in 1978, what was it like? Obviously, you were physically independent from the University. Your Center is out a Port Everglades?

DD: Port Everglades.

JP: So, describe what it was like then and how that has changed to the present.
DD: Okay. Well, we were a campus of Nova. I think Nova has four campuses, and we are one of the four. We are about 12 miles due east of the main campus. We are right on the ocean, right at the end of John U. Lloyd Park, which is a long state park, and we are nestled between the U.S. Navy Base and the U.S. Coast Guard Base, right on Port Everglades, very close to the entrance channel of Port Everglades.

JP: And what was there when you first got there, what buildings?

DD: The center was built out at that site in about 1970-1971, through a donation from the Forman family, and I’m not sure what other funds were available. So, in 1978 when I came, the center consisted of a boat basin, a marina, and one building, which was the Forman Building, and a houseboat. So when the center was established initially back in the 60s, 1966, there were two houseboats. One was owned by the director as a residence and one was the lab of the center, and that was on 15th Street apparently. This is my knowledge of past history, and they maintained there until they built the new marina, and I guess they must have moved the houseboat over there in 1971 or so. So, I would say the houseboat was where the faculty
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offices were, where the site of the secretarial staff were, and the Forman Building had storage areas. It had electronics lab, a big pool table upstairs, had the library, and had a big warehouse bay, which it still today does, and a machine shop. A very nice machine shop and carpentry shop.

JP: And how many people would have worked in 1978 at the center?

DD: Probably about 10-15 people there in 1970s.

JP: How many faculty?

DD: Maybe 10 faculty.

JP: Support personnel, the secretaries, and that sort of thing.

DD: The rest were support secretaries. We had a nice library too in the Forman Building. Maybe it was a little more, maybe 20. That changed in 1979 when everything changed. We lost a lot of faculty. After that, I would say there were only 4 faculty.

JP: What happened in 1979?

DD: That is when we all were put on soft money, and many people left.
JP: So the people just left?

DD: Many, many, most left.

JP: And then what transpired as you go through to where Ovid Lewis comes in and tries to reestablish the center?

DD: Well I wouldn’t say Ovid tried any harder than Abe. Ovid was a great guy, a great academician, very supportive. He established faculty contracts, and that was good.

JP: Well that gives you a little stabilization.

DD: It definitely gave us stabilization.

JP: How did then, at what point, did the center revive and --

DD: Well it was a slow growth from 1979 onward. Folks sort of persisted. One of the hires when I came in was a guy named Jay McCreary. He was a physical oceanographer and a very good one. He had a lot of grants and was able to maintain that physical oceanography transition and attract some additional professors and retain some professors in physical oceanography, so that kept going for quite a while. We added biologists and geologists slowly over that
period of time, as the master’s program grew and as they began to use some teachers on the main campus too.

JP: So currently you have about 15 faculty?

DD: 15-16 faculty, that’s correct.

JP: And what’s the physical plant like now?

DD: Physical plant, when I came in 1978 there was another building on campus, which was called the Shore Building, and that was built in 1976, and that was owned by New York Institute of Technology, and that was when Nova and New York Institute of Technology was sort of conjoined, but the building was occupied by NYIT scientists and technicians. They were very interested in ultrasound. So, it had nothing to do with oceanography, they were separate. They stayed over there at their building, did their work, and I would say in the 1990s that was when New York Institute of Technology left Nova, and they left that building. We acquired it back, not back, we acquired it. So I wrote a proposal to renovate it, put in labs, and we were very lucky to get that money. We got it renovated, so we were able to put in biology labs, geology labs, and it became really the focal point of the center after that.
JP: Do you know if the University had to pay for that or did NYIT just give them the building?

DD: I believe NYIT was moving out, and they gave the building, and I remember that there was a little concern that the Oceanographic Center wouldn’t get the building. We felt, “Oh, no, maybe he is going to give that to someone at main campus” and at that time, we still had that houseboat, which was in bad shape, and the Forman Building which was sort of in bad shape. So, Abe was kind enough to give us that building.

JP: So, that building adds to the campus. Anything since that time that you have had built?

DD: Yes, but relatively recently, about 3 years ago, whenever Hurricane Wilma was, we lost the houseboat finally. It was in such bad repair that …

JP: Probably just as well at that point.

DD: It was in horrible shape, and then the hurricane damaged it a bit and the main campus just refused to fix it anymore because it was such a loss. So, we lost it and after some whining and crying, we got a modular building out there, so we have a nice trailer, modular set for offices and things, which took over what the houseboat had,
and then we added another modular building that was a donation from the port that was a car dealership and a nice modular trailer set up, and they gave us that trailer. John Santulli was able to acquire them. We moved them back over to the Oceanographic Center and renovated them, so that was a good addition too for education and office space, labs.

JP: Is the physical plant adequate for your needs?

DD: Well it hasn’t been. It hasn’t been, but those modulars helped. Recently, we have just got a new grant to build a new building, and construction of that is going to start in September/October, at least groundbreaking will. Construction will start in December/January, and that is going to really be transformational. That is going to be an 86,000 sq. ft. building with state-of-the-art laboratories and big seminar rooms and things.

JP: So this is huge?

DD: This is huge for us. It is going to bring us up to par with the main campus’s wonderful facilities, and we will have wonderful facilities down there that we can be proud of, and I think it is going to attract new faculty, and certainly attract students, and we are very excited about it.
JP: I know talking to George Hanbury, one of the things he sees, and he knows this new building is going (unintelligible) and understands the import of it. But he also talked about the fact that he would like to see the Oceanographic Center encourage undergraduates to start taking courses in biology, environmental sciences, whatever, and that this would be an attractive option for some students to be able to leave the main campus and do some field work. Is that part of your new program as well?

DD: It is part of our vision. Nova started, as you know, very silo oriented with individual centers of schools that were somewhat autonomous. It was not a large unified command, and that has been a history of Nova throughout the years. So my lead up to that is that the university has an undergraduate program within the Farquhar Center, Farquhar School or Arts and Sciences, that is independent of the graduate schools, of some graduate schools, so as an undergraduate program run by a different center than the Oceanographic Center, yes we would love to be able to offer some undergraduate programs at the Oceanographic Center, but we are not organized to do that, another center is. To what extent we can make that happen, we will see.
JP: Well, I hope that is Hanbury’s ultimate goal that he was telling me that yesterday, that is something he obviously cannot do right away, but …

DD: Yes, we would welcome that, absolutely. We think most science programs, Nova University is a private school, and we need tuition to make things happen, and often the undergraduate programs are lucrative that can support graduate programs, and we would love to be in that boat.

JP: And the board of trustees and the president, everybody sees that one of the goals of the future now is to increase undergraduate population and the quality of undergraduates. We are looking for the kind of programs that will attract good quality students to Nova, and he sees that as an area that would be very promising.

DD: We very much agree, and we have several proposals in to him to do just that.

JP: What about the course offerings in environmental areas?

DD: We have NASA’s program in marine environmental science, marine biology, coastal zone management, and biological sciences. There is an undergraduate major in environmental science that we think could expand, and we
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would like to be a part of that. There is an undergraduate major in marine biology that is a natural for us to be more involved with. Many of our faculty teaching undergraduate programs, and the historical reason is because we started the undergraduate sciences at Nova. When the undergraduate college started, it did not have scientists on staff, so it was our scientists who taught it. As time went on, the undergraduate colleges hired its own people, but those folks are mostly teachers and not researchers, so we think our role is to bring teacher-researchers into the classroom that can both bring cutting edge information into the classroom but also do research as well.

JP: And that is the way it should be. It should be the ability of researchers to inform other individuals as to what they learn is critical, plus it gives them an opportunity to do the kind of field work that you do all the time.

DD: I like your attitude.

JP: Unfortunately, I’m not the president, but he enforced that yesterday.

DD: Well that’s good to hear.
JP: That is something that he felt was important to the future.

DD: I think it is.

JP: Let me go back to 1978. Did you know much about the sinking of the Gulf Stream and what went on in the beginning. I know you mentioned that once the circumstances changed, once Bill Richardson and the staff had died, and then the program was in a very difficult situation. Do you know anything about the Gulf Stream or Richardson, or what happened?

DD: Only what I have heard ever since I’ve been there. I have heard conflicting stories that back in 1975 – As you mentioned initially, yes, when the Oceanographic Center started, it was a significant contributor to the university, but apparently stories are that it became less and less a contributor. Maybe even a drain. Maybe even in 1975 it had hard times financially. I don’t know, because I wasn’t here. Then, certainly after his death, it apparently went into hard times too. There were people here that weren’t getting enough grants to keep it running. So, that is why they actually did the hiring to infuse it with new people, and I guess it didn’t work. The idea was he was going to hire new people, and it would give him some time
to write these grants. You can’t just come in with a grant, or you would be lucky to, but apparently he felt in 1979 that it had not been successful, so that is when he went to soft money. That is when many people left. In terms of the demise of the Gulf Stream, you hear all sorts of stories about what really happened. There were myths about how it was taken out by a submarine, a Russian submarine. Other people said they had plugged up the scuppers, which are the drains, to put in some instrumentation, it took a wave, and the water couldn’t wash out. One of the old faculty members that I talked to is adamant that it was a hoax, and Bill Richardson was living in Brazil. I don’t think so, but that’s the stories that went on and still kind of persist to this day. This mysterious thing.

JP: They never found any bodies did they?

DD: To my knowledge they didn’t. They found a few life -- buoys and stuff.

JP: Preservers, yes, that all they ...

DD: I thought they might have found one body, but I cannot, I don’t know. They never found Richardson.

JP: Yes, this is an eternal mystery. No one really knows what happened.
DD: Nobody knows, but it was obviously a traumatic time for the center and the university.

JP: How much did you know about the university at this time. I have interviewed all the presidents, so I have a pretty good sense of they were having great difficulty staying afloat, just making the payroll, and in fact, the merger with MIT was done exclusively to keep it afloat. To save it, and without that money, I don’t think there is any question it would have gone over.

DD: Apparently so.

JP: Then, of course, over a period of time, that relationship soured for any number of reasons, and they decided they needed to get out because the burden of that arrangement was much greater than the benefit at some point. Were you aware of any of these activities?

DD: Well no I wasn’t really, back in 1978, just a junior professor, trying to write grants, do research, and stay alive, so I wasn’t really aware that so many maturations were going on. We had very limited, you know in my role I had no contact with the main campus other than HR, issues, so yes we knew that there were problems paying bills and things, because it was very hard to buy things
because the vendors were not real happy with Nova not paying them back. So, those were issues that lent to concern. I think one time there was a check, one of our payroll checks came, and it said, “If you don’t need to cash this right away, hold off” so, of course, everyone runs off and cashes it.

JP: Exactly the opposite results to what they attempted. You didn’t want to be the one person who got there last and didn’t come through. When you were occasionally on the campus, what was your impression of the campus at that time, late 70s early 80s.

DD: Well it was desolate. This building that we are in right now, was here, and trailers for HR and things. It was a pretty empty place.

JP: As you have observed over the years, what has been the impact of the change of this campus. When Feldman was president, he put in trees and landscaping, you know made it more livable, but then you get the law school, you get the new library, you get --

DD: Yes, the growth has been phenomenal. It has been phenomenal and good. These buildings give a sense of permanency and demonstrate to the world, you know there was
a lot of thought when I first came that it was sort of a matchbook university, and there wasn’t any substance to it. But now, I think that is largely dissuaded a bit. Certainly, it has helped to have a great looking main campus, and we are hoping that we will get the same kind of feeling of permanency and establishment with our new building.

JP: One of the issues earlier on, and I am not sure how much you are aware of this, but since the beginning, it was primarily through off campus educational programs. A lot of people saw Nova as this diploma mill. They didn’t have a central campus to speak of. The Oceanographic was out there, classrooms were all over the country, and other than psychology and some educational courses here, there were no undergraduate students, they were all graduate students. At a point throughout the 70s and 80s there was this feeling that this place might not survive. Where you aware of that and sort of hedging your bets looking for other jobs.

DD: Well no, I wasn’t aware of that, that it was in such tenuous position. I was given pause when we lost our contracts that maybe it was time to look around. We had the former director and many people left, and in fact I got a
call after they left. The director went to the University of Hawaii, and I was offered to go there. I didn’t take it because I had family on the east coast and it seemed like a long ways away. My wife and I talked about it, and I didn’t go. I often wondered what it would have been like to have gone.

JP: Well, there are a lot of people that I have talked to who have been on the faculty for a long period of time, and they had faith, and that was pretty much it, that this place would ultimately succeed, and part of it was, in your case clearly, the location. You have a marvelous location to do what you do.

DD: We have a great location to do what we do, certainly, absolutely. Yes, Richardson took great advantage of that location. He did some very seminal work on Gulf Stream and measurements there, and some of the physicists did too. Throughout the years, I have worked on the coral reefs of Broward county and things like that. It is very handy to be right there and zip out, and now we have a big program to continue that work throughout the southeast Florida reefs, and it is very easy to work because we can just zip out the entrance --.
JP: When you started, obviously, Miami was one of the national centers. Have you worked with them, interacted with them, a lot over the years?

DD: Yes, quite a bit. I worked down there, as I said, in 1979. I got the subcontract and worked there for a year and a half I guess. Doing some research with one of the people down there, both of them down there were in graduate school with me, so that was nice to know people and get that work. We were working on OTEC Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion, so we had some trips to the Virgin Islands, and things, looking at oceanographic deep water situations. Then, as time went on, I had a great friend down there, Peter Swart, who is an isotope geochemist, and I work on corals, so we formed a partnership that over the years he would do the chemistry, and I would look at the corals. It has been very successful for me, and hopefully for Peter. We have worked somewhat with them. I had a job interview down there, and considered it highly. But I didn’t take it, I stayed here.

JP: So that, over a period of time, has been a better funded facility, and has I guess a better national reputation, at least when you were starting here.
DD: Well, I think when they started here, they had a good reputation, I don’t know if they were --. Yes, they had a good reputation, they had some faculty. They continued to grow and develop much more than we did. Why that happened, I think maybe the main campus had more of a vision than we had. We were all on grants and soft money with very little university support. For a long time we were not supported well. We were kind of on our own. They were happy to have us as long as we had grants. If we didn’t have grants, you know, okay.

JP: Over a period of time that you have been at Oceanographic Center, what has been your relationship with the main university. How much influence/direction do you get from the president of Nova, or are you sort of semi-autonomous.

DD: I think initially we were pretty autonomous. Back in the 70s or early 80s when the former director left and went to Hawaii, Abe became the center director for a while. So he would come over once in a while and talk, and then he appointed someone else. Really, we had distant relationship with the main campus. We didn’t have much to do with them for a long, long time. But as the main campus started to grow, we would begin to have more relations with them,
although being a distant campus, it has always been fairly separate. Today, I have an administrative role, so I come to the main campus frequently, and I believe they are most interested in us now than before. I think this grant has helped out a lot. This new grant has focused interest in us a lot.

JP: What would be, if you wanted to hire two new people, would you obviously have to get that approved by the president?

DD: Absolutely. I went to my new hire meeting yesterday. I thought I was 50/50 on that new hire meeting. I got 50% of what I asked for and then under consideration is the other 50%. Not approved, but not an outright “no”. We will wait and see. I got permission to advertise for it, although with some caveats there.

JP: But in determining the individuals, it’s not like if you were the dean of law school, you would send them three names and they would pick. The decision for the hiring is you or your faculty.

DD: Oh yes. In fact, law school would have that authority as well. They would not send anyone –

JP: It would through the dean.
DD: It would go to the dean, yes.

JP: Because the last dean, they sent over thirty names.

DD: Oh you mean to hire a new dean?

JP: Yes.

DD: Yes, well if they were going to hire a new dean, yes that’s a university position, but —


DD: Internally yes, we would have our own authority to hire who we wanted. We have to go through the main campus, present it to the provost to make sure he would have to agree, but we would conduct the searches ourselves and stuff.

JP: What about the evolution of technology from the time you arrive to currently.

DD: Well, when we first came, we had a kind of old fashioned computer from what I was used at Yale that worked though. They had a modem, which was like a 2400-baud modem, not 24,000, 2400, that they used to go to our super computer. So, computer-wise, we were pretty well off. I could run the programs that I was running before, here,
card readers and things, we had a computer director. That was pretty good in the communication. Over the years, with the PC explosion, we exploded with PCs just like everybody else. The physical oceanographers had good technology for a while with still mainframe computers while it lasted. Now, we are back in a kind of confusing realm with PCs and things. I would say the technology has sort of gone down. Before, we were going higher and higher technology wise with main campus, I think. But now we sort of leveled off, maybe even sort of behind other people. We don’t have the cutting edge technology. We are not at the forefront we have technology, but not like other schools.

JP: But do you still need some high tech machines?

DD: Yes, we don’t have those. We would have them if we could buy them on the grant, but we have had poor support for keeping up with advancements and technology. This new building, fortunately, has a pool of money dedicated to new equipment. Yesterday they kind of backtracked on that.

JP: So not only the physical facilities, but technology, this is going to make a huge difference for you?
DD: If they give me the money that is promised, we will be able to upgrade our equipment, yes.

JP: But it seemed to me that if you were going to do any kind of extraordinary research, you have got to have that equipment, do you not?

DD: Absolutely. In fact, it has been hard for us because it is hard to attract people. You say, come to Nova and write grants, and they say well, “where is my startup money?”. “Oh well, you don’t get much.” You know, it’s hard to get people, so we see this building at least to upgrade our equipment and attract some people.

JP: Now, when you are dealing with all kinds of activities relating to students and faculty, everything still runs through the university?

DD: Yes, the main campus has an infrastructure of how to run, administer master’s programs and things, so we do try to follow those rules very carefully, and it is convenient of course, who wants to reinvent the wheel. It is a little awkward in some cases, it is an awkward software to learn, but we have employees who know it and everything is on main campus. Initially, that was hard to
transition to, but it’s great. Before, we were just sort of winging it. There was a lot of winging going on initially.

JP: At one time, everybody sort of had their own -

DD: We had to keep our own records, money, tuition, and we didn’t know who to pay, oh my gosh. Then we have to talk (unintelligible) charging tuitions and people would let people come into class. “Oh, you want to come into class? You have to pay!” Things like that.

JP: George Hanbury was telling me yesterday, at one point they found at one of the centers, they had tuition checks in drawers that had never been cashed. Obviously it was more expense to the university, when you had all these different computer systems and all these different records keeping, and the university had a hard time knowing what was going on.

DD: What was going on, yes. George was instrumental in changing all of that.

JP: In fact, according to what he was telling me, it is just now getting to the point where it is more efficient because again that transition takes a long time.

DD: It is becoming more efficient. What is happening though, is that, for example the birth of the personal
computer was great for productivity, advancement, but it also shoved more responsibility for doing things on the owner of the PC, and this software that’s been developed at the university, likewise, for example we have this new purchasing system called Ariba, it pushes a lot of the work effort. Instead of having a secretary that can help you out, so you can write your grants, you have to do it yourself. You have to do all your own expense reports, all sorts of things, which takes time. It is meticulous busy work that many of the faculty get irritated with.

JP: Most faculty won’t do it.

DD: Well, they won’t do it, except they have to do it, if they want to get paid back, so it creates, you know it’s a balance how much services going to do it versus how much the employee is going to do. Services have a budget, they want to save money and not go over their budgets. It’s easy for them to shove it off on the – but that isn’t a service then if the other person has to do it.

JP: That’s the whole idea of the service.

DD: I know. So it gets complicated.

JP: Describe to me the work environment in the center. Obviously, you probably have, for a school like
Nova, a lot more full-time researchers who don’t do a lot of teaching, so you have sort of an interaction between those who teach, but mainly researchers. So how is the work environment? Is there a lot of interaction with faculty? Do you go in together on grant proposals?

DD: Yes, we have some synergy of folks with grant proposals and some are just more individual. We have three sources of funding. One is from our master’s program, which provides salary for people to teach classes. One is from overhead from grants and contracts, or grants and contracts funding for salary, and then we participate with undergraduate college to teach the undergraduate, and that is a source of funding. So, the individual professor might have 50% undergraduate teaching, 25% graduate teaching, and 25% grants, or it might be 100% grants and no teaching, or it might be 100% teaching. So it varies greatly. On average, it is about 50% teaching and 50% grants. There is interaction. I think we are a small center. It would be better if we had more interaction. You would get more interaction if you have a bigger faculty. We have concentration in coral reefs, and that has been productive because it has brought in people who can better talk to each other and strategize, joint projects and things.
JP: Talk a little bit about your evaluation of the following presidents, and I am not sure how much interaction you have had with anybody. You have talked a little bit about Abe Fischler. Obviously, he kept it together at a critical time. What was your sense of him as a leader of the university.

DD: Well, I think you are right, he kept it together at a critical time. He was a good leader in general. I think he had a vision, he was very true to that vision. He wouldn’t depart from it, so points where people wanted to do things that weren’t consistent, he wouldn’t do it. I think he got bogged down maybe as the university grew. I have heard people say that maybe he was stuck in a smaller environment in his head, he wanted to keep control on everything, because he had to back then, and so it was hard for him to have the massive growth that we had in the past. Other people argue, “Well, maybe we should have grown a little more slowly” because it has incurred a big debt. I liked Abe.

JP: Did you have much to do with Stephen Feldman?

DD: Not too much. You know, at that point I wasn’t administrator, but I would fill in for the OC administrator when he didn’t want to come to meetings, which was
frequently, so I got to meet him and know him. I kind of liked him, but I didn’t know him well.

JP: Well, he was here such a short time.

DD: He was here a couple of years. He was kind of passive to me on the Oceanographic Center. He wasn’t excited with it.

JP: Ovid Lewis?

DD: Now Ovid was great I thought. I liked Ovid. He was an academician. He had that academic interest. He obviously like the Oceanographic Center, and I think he had a vision for us increasing and growing a bit. To me, he was great. I thought he was a wonderful guy.

JP: Ray Ferrero?

DD: Ray came just about the same time they gave me my job as a dean. A great leader. He decided that he would take the main campus up a notch and make that infrastructure that was missing. He wanted to make that a reality, and he has. I give him all the credit in the world. I think we now have a transition where we sort of built out, except for the Oceanographic Center, and we will be built out when we get this new building. I think the switch now, with the new president, is going to be toward
more quality issues and growth in academic reputations, which I think is overdue, and we are happy to be part of that mix.

**JP:** Then again, when you think about it, the campus is not 50 years old yet. You know, when you start a new university as a private university, it is difficult under the best of circumstances, and clearly in this case, there were some issues that nobody really could have foreseen, but the original idea was hailed by people all over the country what a great idea that they would start with just this graduate program. Then, of course, they had forgotten to work out some of the details of where you get the money to build this university. So, they had some growing pains, but it looks like, from the point it started to the present point, it has been amazing development.

**DD:** It has been amazing. President Ferrero has been a very dynamic true leader. He added, quite a while into his presidency, a vice president of academic affairs, which was Frank DePiano, who was a provost, which has been a step forward in academics. Frank has been great. Frank has the academic vision that complements Ray’s edifice building vision, so they are complementary, and I think that is going to be really transformational.
JP: It is really a good mix, because Ray is a task master. He wants to get things done. He is a lawyer, and you need to broaden the university’s focus a little bit to try to get the academic standards up, and so it is hard to do both at the same time, and it is hard to attract students unless you have the facilities of the campus. So, this sort of has come in fits and starts but, at this point, it looks like it is on track.

DD: I hope so.

JP: For everybody’s sake. Talk about this new grant you have gotten.

DD: Okay. Well, last year, after we came up with the stimulus funding from President Obama for research facilities, there was a request for proposals from the National Institute of Science and Technology, which is NIST, which is part of the Department of Commerce. And, it said okay, we alternate for new research buildings, and you have to have some tie in with the Department of Commerce, and give you $50 million as long as you match it, up to $50 million. This looked interesting to me, and I went to George and John Santulli, and said, “Okay, I want to apply for this. You are going to have to match it” A, and B, if we are lucky enough, and I would be lucky to get it, I will
need faculty and equipment to go in it. So, no problem, go for it. Write it. This proposal had three components. You had to have a good science research component that was 50%, and the other 50% included it had to be a great building, so John Santulli got the master planners – John is the vice president of facilities management. So, he tasked the master planners with helping write this, or helping design the building, so we wrote the proposal in a relatively short time, with lots of effort, to reflect – you had to have a research vision and you had to have a building vision. So, we wrote it, and it was interesting because we had to coordinate with architects and builders, and then we had to write the science piece.

JP: It took you about a year?

DD: No, I would say we wrote it maybe in three months or so.

JP: Wow, that’s pretty fast.

DD: Yes, we wrote it hard and fast. In fact, I had to go to Maine for my wife’s reunion and with her family and things, and I had to spend a lot of time when I was on that vacation, which wasn’t a vacation, writing that proposal.

JP: How much was the graft for?
DD: $15 million. So we were lucky. There were 167 applicants, and only 12 got something, and we were one of the two that got the full amount of $15, and we were the only biological applicants, so we were very proud and pleased that we got this new building funded.

JP: And the university is going to come up with the matching funds.

DD: The university has signed the paper that says we are going to do it. You have to sign a paper with NIST. You know, they say, “Okay you got the grant, now you got to sign the dotted line. Do you really want it.” The university agreed, which was wonderful.

JP: So this would be $30 million for the building and you hope technology.

DD: Yes, I would say the university is really going to be cooking if they do what they said they would. The university will probably cost $25 million, and the NIST was $15 million, (unintelligible). The reason it is more than $15 is because you have to do some site work and planning and things like that.

JP: And, your area is coral reefs, and obviously you are going to have the same problem that everybody who lives
anywhere near the ocean is going to have. This is an area of your specialty, the oil degradation of the coral reefs. So, what is the solution at this point, if any?

DD: Well, it’s very difficult. The first solution is to stop the bleed. Plug the well. Hopefully, they will do it. So, the second is to better understand the nature of the threat. I was in a meeting a month ago with Broward County Emergency Management personnel, and Senator Nelson came down, other people, Debby Wasserman Schultz was there, the coast guard guy was there, and they saying, “Well, Mr. Coast Guard guy, what are you going to do to save us?” He said, “As soon as I have a defined threat, I am there. I am going to act.” He said, “Right now, I don’t have a defined threat because we don’t know how much oil, we don’t know where it is, when it is going to get here. When we know it’s coming, we can begin an emergency response. But, right now, we need a defined threat. It is still thought of in that case. We don’t know how much oil is submerged. That’s a huge pot of oil that is floating around under the water. They haven’t well characterized that, how much there is, and where it is, and when it is going to get entrained in the loop current. Then, what is it going to be when it gets to us. Yes, the surface stuff is going to weather quicker.
It is going to be tar balls in some situations, but the underwater stuff will weather more slowly. It might slush up onto the coral reefs. These are just sort of all big unknowns. We don’t know what is going to happen.

JP: It could impact the coral reef, even if it doesn’t impact the beaches.

DD: It could, absolutely could. So, we are worried about that. We have extensive reefs off the keys along our coast, so get some proposals in to try to understand it better.

JP: So, what is the thinking now with the loop current? What is the likelihood that significant quantity of oil would reach South Florida beaches.

DD: I think it is highly likely. It’s just a question of when. The loop current, this summer, has been behaving not as expected, so we have been lucky. We have kind of dodged the bullet, but it has entrained some oil, and some of it is headed toward the keys, and I believe that it will be more, soon.

JP: There is a large quantity of oil.

DD: I know, that is the thing. With this quantity of oil, you are not going to dodge the bullet. It is going to
happen. The question is when, how much, and what form the oil is going to be. Is it going to be a toxic state or relatively weathered tar ball state.

JP: By the time it gets that distance, it would be more weathered and less toxic, I would assume.

DD: Yes, you would hope.

JP: But oil is so toxic anyway, less toxic but still a great threat.

DD: It could be. It depends. You know, if it is floating and is kind of these tar ball things, you know the coral reef is on the bottom. It is going to float over, Short duration. If it is in the water, sort of like a vinaigrette, it washes up on the reef, that is probably not good news.

JP: And the issue, obviously, for the state of Florida is the same as Pensacola’s already seeing it’s tourism and the beaches are - that’s Fort Lauderdale.

DD: Yes, there are two issues. One is, coastal resources have value. It is easy to conceptualize the value of a beach because people use it. They go out there, they swim, they like it, they pay money to go to it, buy all the amenities. But, the coral reefs are extremely valuable too,
and people are beginning to realize this offshore resource like a reef, you know huge amounts of economic activity result from reefs. Five South Florida counties, Monroe, Broward, Dade, Palm Beach, Martin, is like $6 billion annually, 71,000 jobs, you can tie to coral reefs, so once you think of that, in addition to all the intrinsic benefits like biodiversity, that value is enormous. So, you want to preserve those coral reef resources if you can.

JP: A lot of people don’t even know that coral is a living organism.

DD: Yes, I think there is confusion that coral is—they are learning.

JP: But not a good way to lean that lesson. Now, I don’t know if you are involved in this or not, but I read somewhere not too long ago that people are now planting new coral in the ocean bed.

DD: Yes, that is correct.

JP: Are you involved in that.

DD: Yes, we are a little bit. We have two initiatives. One is an initiative with the nature conservancy, which got a grant from NOAA to establish underwater nurseries, and this is in the keys, in Dade
county, and in Broward county, and it essentially is to collect small specimens, or break off small.

**JP:** Just break off and replant, as it were.

**DD:** Well, to put them in nurseries, so they put them in an area. Yes, to break it off, you have to go to the bottom, and they will grow fine, and get big in a short time, then those bigger colonies can be transplanted back to damaged reefs or injured reefs that don’t have the big colonies.

**JP:** Is this expensive?

**DD:** Well, it is relatively, although it depends on, yes, because it is people intensive, you know people are expensive. On the other hand, it likely is the way to repopulate injured reefs that are in distress.

**JP:** This is a pretty new idea, isn’t it?

**DD:** Well, it is, it is in a way.

**JP:** You know you can grow coral, but I am not sure I have really heard that people were using nurseries, as it were, to grow coral in an organized way.

**DD:** It is an interesting view of the world. Back in when, you know coral reefs now are under severe stress. We
have lost a lot here in Florida and everywhere all across the world, lots of decline. Back in the 80s, when that decline wasn’t as evident, people didn’t want to do that. NOAA thought it was just worthless, why bother to figure out ways to grow coral reefs, they already grow. As the coral reefs got more and more degraded, that interest has picked up. Now, there is an interesting twist on this. So, these underwater nurseries have been established, we have some in Broward, but I don’t know if you caught it, but there was an NBC news show a week ago on the nurseries, saying, “We’ve got these wonderful nurseries, and an oil spill coming, bye bye, maybe.” We had submitted, and we have an on-land nursery at the Oceanographic Center. It is very small. We had submitted a bit proposal to build an on-land nursery, for the exact same purpose as the underwater nursery, except it would be on land. The rationale being things can happen underwater. Wipe out the stocks, you want to have a buffer. You want to have an on-land component. We weren’t funded for that, but sure would like to have it now.

JP: It may change now.
DD: However, we also, there is some new money as a result of the oil spill for research, and we were considering reproposing that –

JP: Now is probably a good time.

DD: But politically, we have learned that the people in the keys, managers down there are saying it’s not going to come, so they are against it, because their position is we are not going to have an oil spill.

JP: Their position is they hope they don’t have an oil spill.

DD: Exactly.

JP: Well, the issue also in the degradation of coral reefs is one, ships run aground all the time, I guess, pollution, global warming, and are you as a scientist a believer in global warming?

DD: Yes. I sure am.

JP: Not hard to judge to the increase of the water temperature is it.

DD: No. No. And corals live close to their upper thermal limit, so it increases higher than normal bad for them, and they get bleached, and that is one of the reasons
that we have lost a lot of corals here, but bleaching is funny. Sometimes they bleach, then recover, but they are stressed. They are under poor condition, health condition, so then diseases can wipe them out. So, some people won’t attribute that to warming, but it really was the ultimate proximal cause.

JP: Without the warming, the other circumstances would not have taken place.

DD: Yes, it is a big issue with coral reefs.

JP: So, what is the general consensus about how to deal with the oil spill if it does show up in Broward County?

DD: Well, you know there is not much you can do. There’s not much you can do.

JP: You could use the skimmers and you can clean the beaches, but if it gets in the mangrove, --

DD: That is exactly right.

JP: That’s it!

DD: That’s right, absolutely. If it is non-weathered, relatively non-weathered, and kind of what we see on the TV, that is going to get into the mangroves, coat the
roots, and that will be a problem for years to come, but to the extent that it is going to harm the reefs, we just don’t know. It depends on the persistence. If it is a short ephemeral thing, it probably won’t be too damaging. If it is a long-term thing, it is scary. There have been some studies in Panama looking at the effects of oil on reefs and mangroves, and the length of the exposure is what really is the worry. It really hurts it.

JP: What is the focus in the Oceanographic Center in terms of international studies? Do you, I notice you have been to Panama, and you have been to Haiti and a few other countries, do you work, and your students work, in the international cooperation with these other countries?

DD: Yes, we take anything we can get. We have people now working in the Red Sea doing work with Saudi Arabia, and some other people. We have studies in Mexico, where we are going work on Mexican reefs, so we view it as an opportunity. Of course, coral reefs are in the tropics all over, so we love international work.

JP: Have you had any sense of what it is like to be a private, not-for-profit university, instead of a public university. Your experience, I guess University of Maine, is a state –
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DD: Public, right.

JP: Public university, but Yale and Nova are private. What has been the difference in advantages or disadvantages with being at a private instead of a public university?

DD: Well, it’s hard to say exactly. I think the significant advantages to being a public university. I think the bureaucracy is huge in a public university, on the other hand, you have a structure there that is supportive of faculty and to extent you can support your faculty, that is the core of what you do and how you grow, I think public universities may be better for building a higher quality faculty. On the other hand, they are huge bureaucracies that can’t move fast. Private universities can move fast.

JP: There is a flexibility. Of course, in this day and time, if you are a state university, you are getting budget cuts.

DD: You are getting budget cuts.

JP: But, nonetheless, they have a program that enables you to build your buildings.

DD: Yes, it is interesting how they are getting all these budget cuts, but you see these new buildings popping
up, because they get in the pipeline, they are state
university.

JP: It only takes them 4 or 5 years –

DD: But once they are there …

JP: Once they start, they are in the pipeline. The
problem is now they have built these buildings, and they
cannot staff them. They can’t put in the computers. In some
cases, they have these buildings they cannot use.

DD: Yes, I can imagine.

JP: But, I guess there are advantages and
disadvantages. When you look on your time here, what would
be the most positive and rewarding experience you have had?

DD: Well, I think the ability to conduct some good
research that I am proud of, published papers, and I think
that has been rewarding. From the National Coral Reef
Institute, we have a National Coral Reef Institute that was
a very exciting time, still is. We got some base funding
from congress to form that, make that run, that has been
wonderful. This new building is really challenging, but I
think it is an advancement, so there are kind of three
milestones that I like to think of.
JP: What about your most disappointing and negative experience?

DD: Well, I don’t know, you know it was shocking to sort of get fired back in 1979, and have to go out on our own. On the other hand, you know, it didn’t kill me, I made out all right I guess. I would say disappointments have included some of the educational opportunities. We have not been able to expand our education due to the turf issues here at Nova, they are pretty non-horizontally oriented, there is not much vertical integration here.

JP: So that is something that you think is essential for the future?

DD: Well, I do. I believe in the model of vertical integration, whereas the discipline sort of drives the undergraduate and graduate programs. So the model is the undergraduate college is built up of a series of disciplines. Obviously, you are going to have an administration that holds it all together and gives a curriculum and organizes it, but the disciplines are the guiding factor, so the psychology department would have a graduate program, an undergraduate program, and be involved in the undergraduate college, but here we started differently, so instead of having it organized by
disciplines, it is organized by school and so there has been sometimes not as much incentive for the individual schools to interact, and that probably has contributed to some of the insular nature of how we behave. On the other hand, a private university, you have got to get money, give power to the center, so they can go forth and generate that money as needed. That has been the philosophy.

JP: Yes, that’s the whole idea, is that if you can get your money and expand --

DD: Go for it --

JP: So, sometimes you do lose the horizontal concept, which I think George Hanbury is looking to try to reestablish what initially was the basis of the university over a period of time.

DD: I am not sure that was the initial basis -- maybe Abe’s vision, but it never really --

JP: Yes, it was his vision. That was never a reality, but when he started, because he was an educator. That was his educational philosophy. Now, how much interaction do you have with the general public? What do you do to tell them about what is going on in your center?
DD: Well, we have, we give talks on an ad hoc basis to community groups and things. I would say generally our outreach to the public is more limited, and that is because if you looking to raise revenue and pay for faculty’s time through that, we cannot get grants from public outreach, hardly, to do that, so we try to be good public outreachers, but I can’t say we do too much of it. We are trying without development efforts. You know, we have a big effort to try to raise money for this new building and things, so we are trying to do more and more outreach that way to get donations.

JP: So, do people in the community know what you do?

DD: I would say we are not as well-known as we could be.

JP: Would you do things like bulletins, open house, anything like that?

DD: Yes, I think all those things you would try to do, newsletters and open houses. Send people out to give talks to local – and people do that, it is just that we don’t really concentrate on it, because it takes a lot of time. You sent the faculty out to give a talk to the Rotary, that is time away from here.
JP: Well, maybe with your new building and there will be added attention.

DD: We hope so, yes.

JP: To what goes on, and in that way, maybe by sort of reordering your concept and priorities, because now you have the facilities and that staff to do things you couldn’t do before, maybe that will enable you to be more proactive in the community.

DD: Maybe. We will try. We are certainly going to try. We have just written a grant, NSF, to get one of these COSEE grants, which is Coastal Ocean Science Education and outreach grants. If we get that, that would be actually quite nice for outreach.

JP: I have pretty much covered, I think, the questions that I have for you in terms of the center and the university, and I realize that you are in a unique position because you are physically removed and over a period of time, literally you have not been a central part of this campus. That is about to change. Is there anything that you wanted to talk about, or bring up, that we have not covered.
DD: No, I think we have sort of covered it. We have a vision to absolutely become more involved with the main campus. We view our role as science educators as well as researchers, so the extent to which we can participate in the undergraduate programs and teach science, it does not have to be all at the Oceanographic Center, and it isn’t now. We can send people out to the main campus to teach, so we see that as a good roll, and we want to be partners and participate in main campus life, and I think the main campus is very helpful with this new building.

JP: There is something I meant to ask you about, and I forgot, what relationship and interaction do you have with the water management districts in Florida, particularly South Florida?

DD: Not too much. They used to be giving some money for everglades research and things, but they are not even doing that much anymore. We don’t do much everglades research. We had a professor who was interested in that, but she left.

JP: What is your general take on the organization of the state by dividing water managements districts into five different districts, and the way they try to control run off and preserve water, and all that, does this seem like
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an effective logical approach to what I think is going to be the critical issue of the future for the state of Florida?

DD: Absolutely, you are right, water is going to be a critical issue, and we are running out. Too many people. I am not sure what the answer is and how to -- you know it is pretty autonomous, each of those water management districts.

JP: It is a unique system. As far as I know, there is not anything else like it in the country.

DD: And a lot of the effort, at least in the South Florida Water Management District, is managing the everglades water as opposed to drinking water and things. The everglades system is just amazing. I have been up there, the South Florida Water Management District is all computer controlled, and all these tremendous efforts.

JP: You know, everglades restoration project, which is still long-term but obviously the federal government does not realize how important that is. Whether they will ever get there …

DD: Well, it never will be restored to what it was, restored more to what it was, I guess I could hope.
Interestingly, Broward took a big hit when they drained the Everglades, but when they stopped that drainage, they kind of rebounded. What the Everglades restoration has not addressed really well, I don’t think, is offshore effects. South Florida Water Management District just deals with fresh water, and then the object is to go to tide and then after that, we don’t care about any more --- that’s out territory. We need to worry about that.

JP: Anything else that you would like to mention or talk about?

DD: I think we covered a lot of things, so thank you.

JP: On that note, I will end the interview. Thank you very much.

[End]