

Southern Voices Oral History Project
Florida Southern College

Interviewee: William "Bill" Barnes, Class of 1972

Interviewer: Jonathon Timpanelli

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Timpanelli: *So, I am with Mr. Bill Barnes, a graduate from Florida Southern High School [College] of 1972. Um, basically we're going to be talking about your time here at Florida Southern College and your*

in different ways that you wouldn't normally think of. Uh, you look back on things uh my opinion [mumble] you ask about the ... the college experience, uhm, I've got friends now that I e-mail—which wasn't invented back then—uh, that I keep up with now that were my good friends that, some of the people in these pictures, uh I talk to, ya know, every month, so you take that with you. Uh ...

Timpanelli: *That's great.*

Barnes: The college experiences, uhm, is a lot more than uh, ya know, what's on paper, [loud noise] that little piece of paper you get at the end.

Timpanelli: *Definitely, uhm, now, what made you, before college let's say, what made you start in theatre?*

Barnes: Um, actually, I can actually answer that question. In high school, uhm, I was pretty interested in sports and scuba diving and things like that and ... and I was trying everything, you know as high school kids do, and, uh, they had, a theatre production and I tried out and it was ... uh ... it was one of these ... uh, villains where they, ya know, old ... uh, uh, tie the damsel to the track and, uh, get saved by the hero, and I got the villain part. But, it interfered with wrestling practice and ... a little job, and I worked at Burger King after school and so I gave it up, and the guy, I went to see the show, and the guy that took my place and played the part, uh, got a lot of applause, and he did a really good job and it was very entertaining and I thought, ya know, I shoulda done that. So ... I did.

Barnes: How many people are here now ... how many students do you have?

Timpanelli: *I believe twenty-five hundred.*

Barnes: Okay. See, now when I was here I think it was only twenty-two.

Timpanelli: *Oh, wow. Yeah ... w ... I ... I know, and especially this year, it's been um, it's been a ...*

Barnes: I know you have more buildings now. No I've been coming back to reunions because I live in Orlando so I don't have ... not that far away.

Timpanelli: *What ... speaking of that, because you have come back, what are some things that have changed about the campus, um, or even about, like, if you've seen student life an ... and stuff like that,*

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Barnes: Going-going back to that, you asked me why I ended up in theatre at Florida Southern College. The guy that took my place, and did such a good job, one of the things he did was ad-libbed. Uh, one of the audience members yelled at him, and he kind of made this funny face, turned to the audience and

Barnes: That was very, that was very interesting. I think I was over my head for the first show but that's how you learn things sometimes. I got a call, somebody recommended me and to this day I have no idea, I got a call ... and this is how it happens, I got a call outta the blue, saying do you want a job in Miami with this show, it's in Miami right now, do you want it? You gotta be there tomorrow and I was there tomorrow [laughs] and got the job and did a good job ... there's a lot of people who end up going on the road once ... but if you do a good job you end up more than once. Like I said, a lot of people go out on the road, they only do one, and that's for two reasons, they don't like it or two, it's a tough deal. You have to make a show look exactly the same in every single theatre and sometimes they don't fit, you gotta make 'em fit and they have to ... when the curtain goes up it looks the same every time and that's not easy to do, so, you're always thinking, everything is different, move to the next theatre you gotta figure out how to enter from this side because you can't come in from the other side, a lot of stuff changes, but you have to make the show look exactly the same every time. And it's a challenge, but your original question was what would I recommend to people after you graduate from Southern, I hate to say this but I think it's up to you. I think what you think you wanna do, you need to go after and take a shot at it and you may find you go off in a different direction like I ended up doing. I directed a couple shows, I directed a show here in Lakeland, at the little theatre and got paid for doing it.

Timpanelli: *What show? Do you remember what show?*

Barnes: What was it ... ?

Timpanelli: *It's okay, if you can remember it later on, that's totally fine.*

Barnes: I can't remember that.

Timpanelli: *No worries.*

Barnes: But my point, they paid me; I remember I got paid eight-hundred dollars for that.

Timpanelli: *Wow.*

Barnes: That wasn't bad back then for a, 'specially a little theatre. But, you can't make a living on eight-hundred bucks even back then, because that was, those were few and far between. And I made a lot of money in technical theatre. I've done lighting and some other things so, what you get at Southern, in the theatre department is personality, I really do. What you do with that and what you wanna do with that afterwards is up to you. Most of the people, and it's probably true today, most of the people that go through the theatre department at Florida Southern do not end up being actors or technicians, they end up being lawyers and doctors and real estate people.

Timpanelli: *'Cause they take the skills and apply it to ...*

Barnes: Yeah.

Timpanelli: *And that I think is great.*

Barnes: And if you're one of those exceptional people, that are really good at acting, you may end up being a star somewhere, we've had a couple people go on but, anyway. That's ... I enjoyed Southern a great deal to be very honest, I had a great experience here. It was almost all theatre so ...

Timpanelli: *A mimeograph?*

Barnes: A mimeograph.

Timpanelli: *To be honest I don't ...*

Barnes: A mimeograph was a machine you used to make multiple copies of things back in the day. It cranked like this. It's no fax machine though.

Timpanelli: *So that's how you made copies ...*

Barnes: That's why it's kind of a bluish ink rather than black, it came off, you made one copy, it's almost like a printing machine, but it was really how you copy things, but that's a mimeograph and that's a newspaper article from the *Seminole* about that. This is Bob Dienst, the real estate guy out in Albuquerque, and this is Ray Fischer. This is Ray Fischer and he came back as a professor here. Connie Macarello is a professor up in New York in the theatre department. I don't know where. And that is myself. That is myself.

Timpanelli: *Now explain what's in the picture for those ...*

Barnes: Oh yeah.

Timpanelli: *... that can't see.*

Barnes: That's *Where's Charlie*. *Where's Charlie* is the musical version of *Charlie's Aunt*. Jack Benny made it famous on Broadway. "Once in Love with Amy" Is the most famous song from that show. And it was a nice little musical, Charlie wants permission to marry, and the only person who can give permission is his aunt. But Charlie's aunt doesn't show up so Charlie dresses up as a woman and plays Charlie's aunt so he can get permission to marry the girl.

Timpanelli: *That's hilarious.*

Barnes: So the two lead characters, myself and Ray, are trying to marry these two girls, so we need the permission of Charlie's aunt, so it's back and forth. There was a time when I was dressed in this with a tuxedo over it and the dress over that which is why I look pretty big in some of the pictures. I had three costumes on at the same time because I would, the name of the show is *Where's Charlie*, so where's Charlie? So I would run off stage and they'd take they dress off and I'd come back on in a suit and here's Charlie. Well, that's great Charlie, where's your aunt? Ah! Oh it was, I was on stage the whole time. I was either one or the other.

Timpanelli: *Now if you could pick a favorite show you were in ... ?*

Barnes: That would be it. I enjoyed that show a lot. See, *South Pacific*, that's a choir thing, not a theatre thing ...

Timpanelli: *Wow.*

Barnes: See, it's Branscomb A

when I said we always had notes, we always had notes. Mel Wooton was a perfectionist. "Bill that was very, very good, that was wonderful, but one little thing," ya know so it didn't really make any difference, you get done with the show and the applause is wonderful and everything, you get back there and you find it really was a good show, and he'll tell you that, it was great, but you need your timing different on this, that or the other thing, so that's what college is, it's a learning experience, I took a lot of that with me when I left.

Timpanelli: *Speaking of taking it w*

