

Oral Memoirs

of

Shirley Muse

An Interview Conducted by

Jesse Glasshoff

October 12, 2012

University of Central Florida RICHES of Central Florida

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Interview Histories

Interviewer: Jesse Glasshoff

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES of Central Florida Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Project Detail

RICHES of Central Florida is an umbrella program housing interdisciplinary public history projects that bring together different departments at UCF with profit and non-profit sectors of the community.

Central Florida has often been associated with large-scale, commercial tourism and housing development. While those aspects of Central Florida are important to the economic growth of the region, much of its history has remained unnoticed and under researched. The Public History program at UCF links many projects under one initiative to promote the collection and preservation of Central Florida history. By facilitating research that records and presents the stories of communities, businesses, and institutions in Central Florida, RICHES seeks to provide the region with a deeper sense of its heritage. At the same time, the initiative connects the UCF students and faculty with the community and creates a foundation on which Central Floridians can build a better sense of their history.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Shirley Muse is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on October 12, 2012.

Abstract

Oral history interview of Shirley Muse, collection cataloger for the UCF Public History Center, located at 301 West Seventh Street in Sanford, Florida. Muse was born in Corvallis, Oregon, on May 16, 1936. She was raised in the Panama Canal Zone. In 1958, Muse married her husband while attending Florida State University in Tallahassee. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Library Science that same year. She worked in the Florida Public School System as a Librarian/Media Specialist for 20 years until 1999. Following her retirement, Muse began volunteering at the Student Museum and Center for Social Studies. This interview was conducted by Jesse Glasshoff at the UCF Public History Center on October 12, 2012.

Shirley Muse

Oral History Memoir
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Jesse Glasshoff
October 12, 2012
Sanford, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Shirley Muse

Interviewed by Jesse Glasshoff October 12, 2012

Glasshoff Okay, we're on. So – let's see. Today's date is October 12th, 2012, and it is 10 AM and we're here at the [UCF] Public History Center in Sanford, Florida – formerly the Student Museum. Uh, my name is Jesse Glasshoff. I'm a graduate student at the University of Central Florida, and I'm interviewing Shirley Muse. Do you want to introduce yourself, Shirley?

Muse Good morning. I'm Shirley Muse. I'm the collections person in charge of the collection, and I've been here for 13 years – almost 14 – and loved every minute of it.

0:00:48

Student Museum Collections Manager

Glasshoff All right. Well, we'll go ahead and jump right into these questions. So how did you – how'd come to be working at the museum?

Muse Well, Serena [Rankin Parks] Fisher, who was the director of the museum in 1999, um, asked me if I wanted to volunteer, 'cause we were both media specialists together, and I worked at Sanford Middle School, and I knew a lot of the old timers here and their children, and I've enjoyed it very much, because I could follow it up over here and see pictures of the grandparents and etcetera [*laughs*].

Glasshoff So what – what has been your involvement in the museum? You said you're the Collections Manager right now. Uh...

Muse I have been doing all the numbering of the pictures, cleaning the glass, putting them back with new labels, trying to make the print larger so that older people can read it without having to get right up to it, and then if they want a copy of it, they'll tell me, or if they can identify someone in the picture that is not identified, then they will get in touch with me, make a note, and take the number down, then we go get the picture, and then I take it apart and put in the identity of that person that we didn't have, and it helps a lot, and they've identified family

members, and they've identified classmates from way back when, and it is really very, very satisfying to do.

Glasshoff Now, is that—is this the same job you've always had here?

Muse Yes.

Glasshoff Or have you done...

Muse I have done only that, because I was the only one that[sic] knew about cataloging, because I'm a retired media specialist. So it's all gone into the computer and we are getting there...

Glasshoff [laughs].

Muse Eventually, to the end, I hope.

Glasshoff [laughs] Okay. Well, it sounds like a pretty big task, and it sounds like you're the right person for it.

Muse I love it. I love it.

Glasshoff I think everyone else agrees, because you're the person doing it.

Muse [laughs].

0:02:47

Museum visitors

Glasshoff Uh, so what—what kind of people—since you've been here, what kind of people do you see visiting the museum?

Muse Well, we have visitors to the area, especially those that may be putting their car on AMTRAK to send back up north, or to pick up their car from the trains, and then they come into town and want something to do, and we are listed, I believe, at the [Historic Sanford] Welcome Center, and also maybe at the Amtrak Station. Then we have the old-timers that want to come back and look at the pictures and think about the old days, and then we have students.

Glasshoff Okay.

Muse So we have quite a...

Glasshoff So tell me a little bit about the students.

Muse The students—we have mainly K[indergarten] through—well, we mainly have fourth-graders, 'cause we are with the fourth-grade curriculum.

Glasshoff Uh huh.

Muse And we teach to that, but then we have a lot of other students that[sic] come in for the events that we have, and they like to look at the pictures that go into the rooms and peruse what we have on display.

Glasshoff So – since you’ve been here for quite a while – you have been volunteering for quite a while...

Muse Uh huh.

0:03:50 **How the museum has changed over time**

Glasshoff What would you think – what would you say has changed in the museum since you’ve been with them?

Muse Well, for many years there wasn’t much change, but now that we have UCF [University of Central Florida] as a partner, things are changing for the better, and they are just doing a tremendous job, and I can see that it will go on and prosper and, I think just get better and better, and we are changing things now that we didn’t have the people to do it before, ‘cause there was only like a handful of us volunteers – maybe five or six that worked in the building, teaching the classes, and all of that, but I was the only one doing the cataloging, but then there were the gardeners, and they strictly stayed out in the Pioneer Gardens. So it’s been so many more people helping now, and we can see a real difference taking place now.

Glasshoff Okay, what was it like when you first got here?

Muse It was very quiet. We didn’t have many visitors. Well, we first had quite a few visitors for a while, but then when fourth grade would come, we were not allowed to have visitors at the same time, because we couldn’t have them intermingle with the students at that time, and that was, uh, school law to keep the children from wandering off or talking to strangers and everything, and we had to always abide by that.

Glasshoff So...

Muse Yeah.

Glasshoff Just to make sure I’ve got it clear: when you first started, fourth-graders weren’t coming in, and then, shortly thereafter, they were?

Muse No, they’d been coming in for years.

Glasshoff Oh, they were?

Muse Yeah, I misstated that.

Glasshoff Oh, okay.

Muse Yeah, yeah.

Glasshoff That's all right. I misunderstood you.

Muse Yeah, but they'd been coming – that's the main thing – the main that, uh, we did.

Glasshoff Yeah.

Muse Was with them, but then as soon as they left, it was open to the public, but then when the economy went down, we had to close down, and only had three days, we had to cut it off early, uh, so...

Glasshoff Okay, when was that?

Muse That was I think about three or four years ago. We had to start closing at 3, which didn't give you much time, 'cause the children were here until 1:30, and that was only an hour and a half, and a lot of people would have liked to come in, but we couldn't allow them to come in until 1:30, but many-a-times – I will say – the director stayed until 4 and 4:30 on their[sic] own, to let those people go through and give them a tour. So I – I had to hand it to them.

0:06:23

Exhibits

Glasshoff [inaudible]. So kind of in line with that, who do you – who would you say the exhibits are targeted towards? What are the goals of the exhibits?

Muse I – I think most of the goals of the exhibits are the fourth-grade curriculum, and the geography of Florida is included in that, and the history of the Native American, and also the pioneers – the early people that settled Florida, and – and that[sic] was[sic] the main ones, and that fit into the curriculum at that time, and I think now it's been broadened more, since we have other people coming in, and we've got new ideas, which we needed, and I think we also have welcomed it, because you get a little stagnant if you don't have new blood brought in, and I think that's been very good.

Glasshoff And it, eh – so would you say since you've been here, the exhibits have generally been the same?

Muse They have generally been the same. There's[sic] only been a few small changes when we got something that was really pertinent to that room, then we set up a little bit of a – a new part to that room, but that didn't happen too often, because we weren't really on the map that well. We didn't get the publicity that we've gotten now.

Glasshoff Can you give me an example? You said that every now and then, maybe one little part would change?

Muse Well, um, they were talking about, um, fossils, and one of our, um, gardeners was very interested in fossils and came from a part – a place in Georgia that they'd a lot of them. So when he went up there, he brought back a whole lot of them, and then they put this sand box in and then they put the fossils into the sand so the kids could take little rakes and find them, like they would out in the desert, you know, when looking for things. So that was a new one that was nice at that time, and I can't tell you exactly when it was.

Glasshoff That's okay.

Muse [laughs].

Glasshoff That's why we write things down [laughs].

Muse [laughs].

Glasshoff So what do you think they're meant to teach, uh – these exhibits? What – they're directed towards the students?

Muse Well, the Pioneer [Exhibit: Before the Settlement of Sanford] room showed how they lived, and how big of space – because we have a small, pioneer, log cabin. We have the cooking utensils that they used at that time in there. We have, uh, like, um, the – the pots that they used on the fire. We have, um, certain clothing. We have an old, pioneer-time nightgown that was actually donated, uh, just about – oh, about a year ago. The lady had two of them, and they're really tattered and torn, but we washed them, and we hung them up in – one in there to show that they wore a long-sleeved, uh, long nightgowns and long to the floor, you know, and then they, uh – we put one also into the, uh, Grandma's Attic. Yeah, so it was very neat, because the kids didn't ever think about what they would sleep in [laughs].

Glasshoff Right[?].

Muse But it – it was fun, and the kids got a big kick out of it. Yeah, and if they just learn a few things, you know, and then they go home and tell their parents. Usually, they come back with their parents and their sisters and brothers to see it on their own.

Glasshoff Yeah.

Muse It's nice, yeah.

Glasshoff Well, what, uh – through all the exhibits you've seen – and you've seen all of them really, since you've been here – which exhibit was your favorite?

Muse My favorite was Grandma's Attic.

Glasshoff Grandma's Attic?

Muse 'Cause I had a grandma that[sic] had an attic like that.

Glasshoff What was it like?

Muse Well, the Grandma's Attic—it used to have wallpaper, but they've since taken that down, and they'd pictures on the wall, but they were crooked, just like they would be if Grandma had put them up there to store them, and they got crooked. Grandma didn't go up there to clean it. They just let them hang, and they were just out of the way, and then there was[sic] toys in the attic, and you would know which ones were yours to play with, and they saw that, and then they showed, uh, cooking utensils that Grandma used in the kitchen area, at that time. They had, uh, the irons that you used to heat on the big, uh, stoves that had coal in it or wood-burning stoves, and then they have the iron that they would have to put the coals in the iron and do it, and, uh, they had a coffee grinder there. They ground the coffee to let the children see that. They made candles also, so the kids could see how to make the candles, and everybody got a turn to dip it, but we had to be careful of that—and you might get burnt. So we had to take that out, much to our discouragement, but sometimes you've to do that for safety problems. Yeah, but it—it was just fascinating, because there were instruments that were hung from the ceiling on wires, just to keep them out of the way, you know, 'cause Grandma stored all of that stuff up in the attic, you know, but it—it looked like a real grandma's attic. Yeah, and everybody—I think the majority of people liked that one. It brought back a lot of memories. You had the old-fashioned toys—the ones that were made of iron and they were very heavy, but the kids still played with them, you know, but, uh, we had a little bit of everything, and we always let them play with the toys. We had, um, the old, um, wood toys that you could—I forget what they were—but they had this—pieces of wood—it was called something. I cannot remember what it was, but you always had to get it back together and it clicked. It was really neat, and the kids had never seen something like that. I should have brought one with me. Yeah, but I didn't think about it. Yeah.

0:12:29

How the museum has impacted visitors

Glasshoff [inaudible]. Thinking about the exhibits and the changes through time, which parts of the museum do you think had the most impact on the children that have visited—the K through 12th grade] children?

Muse I think the Geography [Lab: Where in the World Are We?] room, because the map of Florida is large enough they can walk on, and then they have to learn the names of the cities and where they're located, and then they have kind of like tops—there's holes driven in the actual map, and you have to take the top that has the name written on it. Pensacola—they learned that it went up in the panhandle. Um, Tallahassee was up north—part, and then there was Miami, and there was Orlando, and they'd to put the right one—the answer—in that position, and they loved doing that, because it was big enough they could walk

around it and look, you know, and then actually put that in themselves, like they named it, and they felt real good about that in fourth grade.

Glasshoff Mmhmm.

Muse And then I the second best was Grandma's Attic. They liked the interaction, because they always gave them time to play with the toys and pick them up and touch things, because that's how we believe, that you should be able to touch things.

Glasshoff Mmhmm. So aside from the children that have visited, uh, how do you think, uh – how do you see that the museum has had the most impact on the larger community?

Muse Well, I think Sanford citizens that have been here for years love to come back and reminisce, and they see the houses that they used to walk by on their way to school, because they are still here in the pictures the same. A lot of them in Sanford have been restored and that's just beautiful thing, but they can come back, and they find people on there that[sic] they haven't seen in a long time, and it brings back memories, and if you get two or three of them from the same class, they start talking, and they really enjoy it, and they end up spending several hours here many-a-times, particularly the older people, because they are just so excited to be back in their element of time, you know? Yeah, and that toy with the blocks was the Jacob's ladder, and I know a lot of people would know exactly what I'm talking about. Yeah, there.

0:15:23 **How the community has impacted the museum**

Glasshoff So the decisions to make changes in the, um, museum that have happened recently – and through the time of the museum since you've been here – how do you feel that the larger community has impacted the goals and the direction of the museum?

Muse Um, that's a good question, because not many changes were made for many years, 'cause we didn't have the people to do – to make the changes, and we didn't have an assessment of what we needed. We didn't have time to do that, and it's something we are working on very diligently right now, and I'm very pleased about how it's going, but at the time, we were so short-handed, and we weren't all professional museum people, and that makes a big difference, 'cause you don't realize exactly what goes into making a museum meaningful to that community until you start studying it like we are now, and it's really, I think, had a big impact on everybody working here, and I find we all are working together as a good unit, and that's – makes me feel real good [*laughs*]. I really do.

0:16:34 **How the museum has impacted Muse's life**

Glasshoff So how has the museum affected your life?

Muse Well, my husband passed away, um, in 2007, and I find if I don't get here to work at least two days a week, I get down, because I meet all the people here, I have something that's purposeful in my life, and I'm seeing things coming to fruition, and that makes me feel real good, but I've always liked detail-work, and I always feel like anything that has to do with books and pictures and things that have to do with one particular area has got to be a good situation to present to the public. I really do.

Glasshoff And how has it—how has it affected the way that you understand Sanford?

Muse I find the people are so friendly and so happy to know that we treasure them and their city as something very worthwhile, and has been very, very, um, very instrument—instrumentally with the—sending things from Jacksonville, the transportation, the steamships all here, and then it's disseminated out along the—the coast—the east coast, the west coast of Florida, and it's been very interesting for me to learn about it, and they, I think, are proud that we are studying this and keeping track of all the pictures and everything, so that we can look back and see it, and General [Henry Shelton] Sanford—he lived right here in Florida, right at the top of the hill here for many years, and he has a real connection to this city, and I've been amazed at how many people have visited his grave up in Connecticut, and we have pictures of that downstairs on the Sanford, uh, bulletin board right outside the office, and the man came and brought me the pictures all on a CD, and I made copies of them with his permission, and I—I thought it was very exciting, and then when people come in and see it, they're even—they say, "Oh, that's new," you know, and I say, "Yeah, we got those by him giving them to us," and it was wonderful. Yeah.

0:19:14 **Most memorable visitor**

Glasshoff So kind of moving in a different direction now [*laughs*]*—*you've worked here quite a while, and you've seen a tons of people come and go. Uh, who do you think was the most memorable person to you that has come to visit the museum?

Muse Well, I think, Mr. Douglas Stenstrom, who was born here in 1921, and he passed away in 2010. He was a fantastic person, and he—he was in the World War II in the South Pacific. He attended the University of Florida, the University of Virginia, Stetson College.¹ He was a county judge, he was a state senator, and he did many more things than that, and he would come and sit and talk with us when we had an event, and he'd sit for an hour or two, and when he left, he always left a check for us to put into the—the—the bank for keeping this place going, because he was very attached to it—both he and his wife, and they were lovely people, and with all that education and everything, he always found time to stop by, and we just really delighted in him, and I think everybody did, because you couldn't walk by him without saying something to him, 'cause everybody knew him. Yeah, it was wonderful. He was a wonderful man. Plus he

¹ Present-day Stetson University.

has a school named after him out in Oviedo, Stenstrom Elementary. Yeah, he[sic] a very generous gentleman.

0:20:54

History Harvest and future projects

Glasshoff So kind of moving away from that, uh—do you’ve any people in mind that[sic] might have gone to the school here that we could contact for future projects at the museum?

Muse Well, to tell you the truth, Jesse, I gave a whole list of them to Dr. [Rosalind “Rose” J.] Beiler, and they are a lot of the people—the Stiffys—and they are local people that have been here for years and donated their time in many schools and for many activities, and then, um, there’s, um, Bill Robinson. He’s a local person that lives here, and he is just as friendly and happy a man as I’ve ever known, and he went to school here, and his picture’s down one of the bulletin boards downstairs. Plus there is a number of other ones, but I—I can’t remember them all, but I did give her a long list of them with phone numbers, and how to get a hold of them.

Glasshoff That’s good news [laughs].

Muse [laughs] In fact, you could get that list, if you’re interested, from her. I’m sure.

Glasshoff Do you’ve any ideas about spreading the word about the history harvest?

Muse Well, I think one of the best ways we could do it is to get *The Orlando Sentinel* columnists—there’s, I think, a Kay—Kay Richardson or—or something. I can’t remember her name, but there’s[sic] several columnists that[sic] do stories on this, and also *The Sanford Herald*, and if they would do a piece on it and tell ‘em we’re looking for people to bring in things for this, um, um, history harvest, I think it would get out real quick that way, because most people take that *Sanford Herald*, and if—if they don’t get *The Orlando Sentinel*—I know friends do, and they pass it around the neighborhood, but I’m sure there would be a lot of people that would be interested in it if they explained what it was and what they want to do. I think it would be great, and I’m excited about it. I really think it will be great.

0:23:00

Closing remarks

Glasshoff Well, thank you for doing the interview. I think that’s[sic] all the questions I have.

Muse You’re quite welcome.

Glasshoff Is there anything that you wanted to say—that you wanted to add?

Muse No, I'm just so happy with the partnership that we have. The people that are coming to work and help are so good, and they are doing a tremendous job, and it makes me feel so good that it's going to be carried on for years to come, really.

Glasshoff [inaudible].

Muse Yeah, I really am.

Glasshoff Okay. Again, thank you for doing the interview.

Muse You're quite welcome.

Shirley Muse

Interviewed by Jesse Glasshoff October 12, 2012

End of Interview