Transcription of Interview with Dr. R. W. Squatriglia, Part Two, 3/8/2016

Tomczyk: Hello, I’m Charmaine Tomczyk, director of the Coastal Carolina University [history] Project which collects oral histories of individuals who have contributed to the growth and development of Coastal Carolina University.

Today I’m continuing my conversation with Dr. Robert W. Squatriglia who served as the first dean of student development in 1977 at Coastal Carolina College of the University of SC.

Welcome back, Bob; glad that we have a chance to chat a little bit more about student affairs and student life. Last time we talked you mentioned residence halls but I understand you have more documents that you want to share with us.

Squatriglia: Thank you and great to be with you, and great to be with the archivist of Coastal Carolina University. Delighted to be here today. As I reflected and looked through materials regarding about residence halls on the campus, it occurred to me, Charmaine, that there are really three parts to the residence hall picture on the campus. The first part of course is the HUD grant that we’ll talk about in a minute. The second part is the tennis house; the tennis house which I’ll get to in a minute, and finally there is the residence halls that finally came on line in 1987.

Let me start first with my arrival on the campus. When I arrived on the campus in November 1977 there was a good deal of concern and strong feelings regarding residence halls on the campus. In fact here is a copy of the student newspaper the Chanticleer in which they published the results of a survey in which it showed that 91% of the students are in favor of residence halls. So one of the first challenges that I had coming to campus as the new Dean of Student Development was dealing with that expectation on the part of both students and faculty on behalf of the administration.

What began in 1977 and ended abruptly in 1979 we call it the almost HUD Housing and Urban Development Grant Project. The second began in 1984 and ended in 1987 and we know as of the Woods Complex and we’ll talk more about the Woods in just a minute We know already of course that Coastal Carolina began as a commuter campus and there was great concern on the campus and in the community that we should have residence halls. Because the feeling on the part of the most of community and many of the students the only way we could become a legitimate university or in this case early on college was to have residence halls to provide a 24-hour 7 day a week experience for the students and by providing safe clean and supervised housing.

You already know we began as a commuter campus that meant a four and half day campus. On Friday afternoons the campus parking lot was empty. Don Thompson who was then dean of administration on the campus had been a white House Fellow and had contacts in HUD in DC. In 1977 Don, as dean of administration presented a four-page feasibility study on residence halls as part of his report to the College’s Long Range Planning committee to the Faculty Senate’s
building and Grounds committee and on Nov 21st to the Student Government Association. Now that all occurred before I arrived on campus. All endorsed the plan and the SGA president at that time Tim Meacham who coincidentally enough is now the university counsel, was as a part of that process. The student newspaper under then news editor, Mary Jean Baxley, and I showed you a copy of the paper, conducted an 8-point survey indicating strong student 91% support of dormitories. I expanded the study to support these findings.

Dr. Singleton, Dick Singleton, my old graduate school classmate, and the late Bill Baxley, both gentlemen of course are now deceased, contacted former Congressman John Jenerette and junior Senator (always Junior Senator in the state of SC), Fritz Hollings regarding contact of HUD officials in Washington, DC. Because I demonstrated student interest in off campus Student housing, I established the off campus information service OCIS and that service began in 1978. In that particular service I hired a student to basically gather regarding information on housing opportunities up and down the Grand Strand and in the community. She composed a three-ring binder of material that we used to list housing for students. Now that particular brochure is this one and I happen to have a proof copy of that. So OCUS, Off campus housing information service, conducted an expanded survey supporting student needs in January 1978.

Don Thompson of the administration and I visited UNC-Charlotte and UNC- Wilmington campuses to learn first-hand of their successful implementation of HUD grants. We were fortunate in that both of these campuses had had positive experiences. Don and I completed the HUD application and with the endorsement with the county Higher Education Commission, the Coastal Educational Foundation and students and faculty, we delivered the HUD application to Washington. There was a great deal of excitement in the Singleton Building then the just administration building, as we awaited the HUD call. HUD’s reservation commitment letter for a loan of $2.5 M at 3% interest over 40 years was granted to us. And that was to house 300 students.

**Tomczyk:** And what year was that, Bob?

**Squatriglia:** That was in 1979, pardon me, 1978.

The celebration and sense of victory was short-lived. A surprise to put it mildly, Jim Holderman, USC president on the Columbia campus was beside himself. Now I did not know Jim up until that point, but a very good friend of mine at the University of Illinois knew Jim firsthand. He called me as soon he learned I had been appointed Dean of Student Development at Coastal Carolina. And Stan, his name, said Bob, be careful, Jim Holderman almost destroyed the University of Illinois Chicago Circle campus. He is a vengeful and vindictive man; be careful. Well, I delivered that message immediately to Don and Dick and Bill so that we were basically on guard in terms of the kind of work style, management style, Jim had.
He, Holderman, convened a USC committee and that committee was formed and charged to evaluate our HUD reservation, the first HUD grant in USC history. I was a member of that system committee and we did have some very tense meetings. Jim could barely control his anger because we hadn’t consulted and we were out of the chain of command and worked directly with DC and the Senators. He was as surprised and we were delighted to receive news of the grant. Holderman’s system committee eventually supported the HUD grant in a carefully worded statement and it became part of a bill in the SC legislature sponsored by the local delegation.

The bill was passed and went on to Governor Dick Riley. Governor Riley vetoed that bill which meant that we could not accept the $2.5M award and we know of course that a certain agitated USC President was behind that veto.

Tomczyk: Bob, so that bill was really about whether a four year campus could have residence halls. It was not about approving the money; it was about the ability to have residence halls.

Squatriglia: You are exactly right. They formed a system in order to basically support residence halls on the outlying campuses. So that’s what went forward and of course beneath that, or behind that was the HUD grant because if we had a Yes in terms of 4-year residence halls, then was right there, ready to go because we just happened to have the $2.5 M in our back pocket, Jim and we are ready to go.

The $2.5M award incidentally went to the University of Alabama at Birmingham. My friend at that time Vice President for Student Affairs John Jones called me because UAB was number 11 and they were an alternate. And when he called me he said “Is it true, Bob? Is it true that the campus turned this down?” I said “Yes, John we have”. Well at that point they were awarded our money. I told John of course that they should name their building after Coastal Carolina. They didn’t but at least I had we could claim that money on behalf of Coastal.

We know that some upstate institutions feared what a residential campus, a public institution near the beach would mean to their enrolment. I’m sure it was just a coincidence that Governor Riley was a Furman graduate, but we’ll never know.

There were prices to pay by some of us because of a vindictive USC System President. For example, Dick Singleton became Big South Commissioner. Don Thompson left and went to the Georgia College at Milledgeville, GA. The seeds had been planted for resentment of USC; for resentment of their blocking our advance and of course for the issue of residence halls on the campus. It was only a matter of time before we would cross that Big Ditch, as it was called, and develop the back part of the campus.

Now the second piece is the so-called tennis house. During this period of time in 79 until 86, the Coastal Educational Foundation bought the Fowler Farm. The Fowler Farm brick building is now part of the complex for maintenance and buildings and grounds.
**Tomczyk:** It was land adjacent to the existing college?

**Squatriglia:** It was an expansion of the college property to include the Fowler Farm and the Fowler home was a brick building. First it was called the Foundation House and then it was called the Fowler House and then it was finally called the Tennis House. Why the Tennis House? Marshall Parker was a tennis coach. He had some foreign students; students who lived outside the area and had no local housing options. So, he proposed to Dick Singleton that students live in that complex.

Well this was a brand new experience for us and I’m thankful that I was here because I had housing experience elsewhere. We prepared a housing contract, the first residence hall housing contract for students on the campus. In that we laid what their expectations were and what they could do and not do. I had visions of the tennis team using that as a beer hall after every victory. And of course the liability for the institution would be tremendous. That lasted for a year. Of course we collected rent regularly.

I became the first director of residence life for four tennis playing students in the Tennis House

**Tomczyk:** Do you remember how many students were housed there? Because it’s a fairly large home with several rooms.

**Squatriglia:** I think eventually it was six. It started with four and it was eventually six. I would make spot checks because I was very concerned about our image on that side of the campus and what might be involved. We all know Joyce and Marshall Parker – they are great people - and I can say this in all sincerity, he was quite naïve about the expectations of his tennis players after hours. So that was our second piece.

**Tomczyk:** These were international students who came with a different culture. Maybe they were unaware of the expectations for housing in the US?

**Squatriglia:** Good question because they had to be educated first of all regarding their responsibilities on this campus and had to be introduced to college residence halls in America as opposed where their originating nation was from.

**Tomczyk:** When you did spot checks were there any particular issues that came up?

**Squatriglia:** well as a matter of fact I was just perchance to check that the refrigerator to make sure the refrigerator was working and of course I found some libation in there as I recall. In fact I told the guys many of them were under 21 that it was against the law. So we covered ourselves in that regard, but the authorities would come and would search and find some things including illegal underage drinking. But for the most part those students were very cooperative. Particularly in light of the fact that I was a dean and they were tennis players. Of course Marshall Parker was very cooperated in all of this as well. So that lasted for a year. It was a great
experience. Thankfully that particular building became a target for use by physical plant maintenance and eventually it was converted into office space.

Technically speaking that was our first on campus living. We did have one more live in space and that was Clyde Overcash. Clyde was what we called jokingly, Dick and Bill and Don and I, the Ninth Vice President. Clyde worked on campus in that little building with his family and that where the motor pool was located. He would check cars and vehicles in and out and also be our night watchman. Clyde was a Police department of one. He did have a golf cart. We used to tease him about putting a blue light on that. We wanted to deputize him and so on. But technically speaking Clyde’s housing and the tennis housing were the first housing projects on the campus.

Tomczyk: He was not a police officer, was he? A security officer, maybe?

Squatriglia: He was basically a night watchman. He would handle emergencies of various kinds. He was really a great guy. He was an electrician by trade. He was a good man. We lived nearby in Quail Creek so he would call me whenever there was an emergency which were very few in those days because after all it was only the tennis house occupied in the evenings.

I’m going to fast forward a little bit and talk about residence halls part two. Because HUD resulted in disaster, hard feelings and very strong feelings about independence. There was a good deal of resentment on the campus. In fact I recall when Craig Wall, Sr in a meeting turned to Dick and said “Dick, if we go independent, how much will it cost to run this campus for a year?” that’s how strong the feeling of resentment was on the campus. Dick and I and Don looked at each other and smiled and we threw out a number out. And God bless Craig Sr, he said “we could cover that.”

Well, with that kind of resolve we knew we have the support of the local community. However, Don left and Dick left and as it turned out Bill and I were the only men left standing. Holderman was very vindictive. I know that he gave orders to the man who succeeded Dick to fire me; to abolish the position of Dean of students. Two of my faculty friends, Ed Dyer and Gerry Boyles happened to be part of a finance committee meeting in which they were asked a question about abolishing the position of Dean of Student Development. And they said no.

I knew these would be awkward times. I was thankful that I did have faculty rank, I came with tenure as Associate Professor and that had been one of the advantages that I had in transacting business with Dick. That turned out to be an important issue because of my own security in terms of dealing with the aftermath and anger on the part of Jim Holderman. Of course Jim Holderman eventually had a sad ending in terms of his own professional career. People can google that to find out what happened to Jim.

In 1985, Ron Eaglin who had been at the USC Spartanburg campus succeeded Fred Hicks as Coastal’s Chancellor. Ron came in 1985. Now remember that Ron had been a part of the system study regarding residence halls. So he knew the issues; he knew that residence halls were not
only an issue for Coastal but also an issue for Spartanburg and Aiken. They too wanted to become quote regular collegiate experiences for their students.” They wanted to become regular colleges in the eyes of the community.

**Tomczyk:** That was the legislative bill that you mentioned. That would have affected them as well. They too could have residence halls on their campuses.

**Squatriglia:** Yes, precisely. They all had skin in the game sort to speak and they all knew the issue and whenever we had system meetings of one kind or another and we had them regularly, Jim Holderman in his effort to control and keep his fingers on everything would have retreats and at those retreat we would break up into various interest groups regarding our own specific responsibilities and in the course of those weekends we learned the needs of each other and I know that they were very supportive – meaning the other campuses - of what we were trying to do. They know if we took the point and we took the heat frankly that they would benefit as well.

So Ron was well educated he came from USC – Spartanburg as Vice President for Academic Affairs. And he knew wisely that he did have a honeymoon period with Jim Holderman. And because of that as we chatting that he did play very wisely, the residence hall card. He immediately pressed for Coastal’s case for residence halls with Jim and eventually was accepted. He did in fact put his job on the line in terms of urging Jim to do this. But he knew at the same time that this would be inevitable.

So Ron and I have that particular bond and we smiled at each other because Ron as an undergraduate had been an RA on a college campus just as I was. So he understood and appreciated the entire matter of residence life and that was a plus. It wasn’t necessary for me to educate Ron regarding what was needed for residence halls. He was knowledgeable and he took the point in terms of pressing the case for us to have residence halls.

**Tomczyk:** And you both knew this was an important part of student collegiate life not just academic side but campus life as well?

**Squatriglia:** Exactly in fact I wrote the feasibility study it was called “Coastal Carolina Dormitory Facility Feasibility Study” and it was used as a base for our for $7M for six buildings now known as the Wood and those came on line in 1987. I do have a letter that Pete Denton, Assistant Vice President to whose office this application went saying to Ron. . Saying, “Bob did a sterling job on this proposal and if we were to pay for this it would be valued at $60,000.” What I had done happily was keep all my notes and all my feasibility study data in terms of making our case. The groundbreaking for the campus was Oct 30, 1986. The Office of Residence Life was established in 1986. The six buildings brick and mortar complex that housed 426 students was completed in time for occupancy in 1987 with a few glitches now long forgotten, like inadequate furniture no chairs and a few other things that we had to deal with, but aside from that there was good spirit and excitement on the campus. And Kim Montague, the
director of Residence Life, who I hired in 1986 did a great job in terms of maintaining staff morale.

**Tomczyk:** Let me ask you to back up a bit about the $7M; that was a loan for the buildings.

**Squatriglia:** That was a bond.

**Tomczyk:** And Pete Denton was a VP of the USC system.

That’s right and it was basically a USC bond that had to run through the system. In those days everything had to run through USC. It was really comical. I had come from a campus, State University of NY at Albany, where as it turned out, many of the things that USC Student Affairs operations did, had been adapted from SUNY Albany. And yet I had to sit in meetings with a variety of our counterparts to hear how we should operate here. The centralization on the part of Columbia was so strong, that they treated Salkehatchie the same as they treated Coastal - our personnel hires, classification, budget, financial aid, graduation – everything had to run through Columbia,

**Tomczyk:** and promotion and tenure?

**Squatriglia:** And promotion and tenure.

It came to the point where we had to take the drive basically every two weeks to Columbia. One of the breakthroughs that we made - and Dick hated to drive and I don’t blame him at all I would be one of the drivers. They would call for a meeting at 8 o’clock or 9 o’clock in the morning. Of course that meant that we had to be up at 5 or 6 and on the road. I remember being a part of the system Commencement committee for X number of years and they would have a meeting that would be called at 9 o’clock. All they had to do - they, meaning the USC system people, was walk across the campus to another building. We if we were Beaufort, Spartanburg, Aiken we had a several hour trip. We finally suggested at a coffee break, why don’t we start these meetings at 10, work through lunch and then adjourn about 3.

**Tomczyk:** In fact Coastal was the farthest away of all the campuses so we had the longest trip.

**Squatriglia:** We had the longest trip - two and one half hours.

**Tomczyk:** this was the days before Skype so we didn’t have the alternative of being virtually there.

**Squatriglia:** Good point and in those days we only had faxes. So they would fax you a particular report and say read this before the meeting. They would sent it to you the night before and if you were out of your office after that thing arrived, you would have arrived at that meeting cold to read something that they were about to vote on.

**Tomczyk:** I remember many trips to Columbia reading the agenda on the way up.
Squatriglia: Exactly right. And remember it was a five hour round trip. Often times we would have as it turned out a 40, 50 or 60 minute meeting but five hours to accomplish it. So here again resentment built on the part of all the campuses, probably most by use because after all a five hours trip for a 30 minute meeting wasn’t very cost effective.

Tomczyk: But a final point about the money, I’m sorry to keep going back to this. So initially the grant that we could have gotten was free and clear, whereas what finally happened was loan that we had to pay back?

Squatriglia: Well, the HUD grant was for 3% payback. There was a payback. But that’s a good question because the way Don and I had designed it, we had designed our finances on the basis of an 80% occupancy in the residence halls. That meant that we would never under HUD have a cash flow problem. We knew it was a lot to get 80% occupancy in the residence halls. That might not be the case if it were billed differently, in terms of 90 or 100%. It would make for limited budget and would make for a squeeze really in terms of collection. And one never knew about students in terms of their following through in terms of their commitment.

Tomczyk: While the survey showed they wanted residence hall that was no guarantee they would occupy those rooms.

Squatriglia: You’re exactly right. There was a sense gamble here and we had to hold our breath. That’s why we tried to document as much as possible through a variety of surveys.

And this is an interesting development that occurred consistent with your question. Now what were the steps involved in this process? How did it happen?

In 1983 a private developer constructed an apartment complex of 224 beds near the college exclusively, he said, for students that was called Crossroad Apartments. Now it’s called Coastal Village. In 1984 a second developer constructed a 96-bed in the Quail Creek Village area eventually owned by the college and now called the Gardens.

Now, both of those places were perceived by the community as being ours – being our responsibility and they weren’t. And yet we would receive complaints, naturally, about a student lifestyle in terms of noise, parking or whatever.

Tomczyk: so we did not build them nor did we manage them?

Squatriglia: No. They catered to our students. We permitted them to advertise on the campus because we saw this as a benefit to our students. However we made it clear to students and their parents that we were just providing information and we could not assume no responsibility or liability regarding this space. We told both of those developers that we could not be involved in collecting or follow up of any kind regarding their students.
In fact in the instance of the Quall Creek Village unbeknownst to me, when he came forward to meet with me, the individual who is still in the area and still a very successful businessman, was referred to me by a dear colleague, Jim Eason. Jim came to be and said “Bob, here is a man who wants to build residence halls and wants to cater to our students. Can you help him?” Well I did and I was happy to - down to the point of what would be the best facility to have, what the ratio of toilets to students would be, what the RA - resident assistant student worker - to resident should be -30 to 1 and a few other things. Lo and behold, that developer picked up an option on a piece of land directly across the street on University Blvd. And that housing complex became a real problem for us. Because Quail Creek village residents.

**Tomczyk:** Those were single family homes.

**Squatriglia:** Yes, single family patio homes. They assumed, Bob, they’re your students and they are doing X Y and Z, noise, traffic etc., loud parties on the weekends. I had no control over that. But what that did both of these places as we received the negative publicity for the most part that’s what made the papers and that is what was circulated, it really drove home the point that we needed to provide clean, safe, supervised for our students. I never missed the opportunity to present that to the Board of Trustees and to my administration counterparts to say we are taking a beating on this and we have to be in charge of our own destiny in terms of housing.

**Tomczyk:** And these residences that were in Quail Creek Village, you mentioned there were resident assistants? But not in those complexes?

**Squatriglia:** I recommended basically – good question -what I recommended to the developer was that he/she hire students and give them free housing so that they would supervise x number of students to control them in terms of expectations but also to be present when lightbulbs needed to be changed and other repairs and so on.

**Tomczyk:** Did they do that?

**Squatriglia:** Not to the extent. They did one to each building so the ratio was not good. Rather than having one to 30 they had one to 100 so they had one student per building.

**Tomczyk:** Again that hiring process was theirs.

**Squatriglia:** That was theirs, yes. It was all driven by money. I understand. They were in the business to make money. The construction in Crossroads Apartments was something that would make a Dean of Students’ hair turn gray quickly because it was all stick construction. When you have stick construction and you don’t supervise things like microwaves or popcorn poppers, hot plates, irons, coffee pots; you’re going to have a fire. And they did. Students would rush off to class and leave a hot plate on and they did have a number of fires there. It was all wood construction.
I shuttered when I drove by there and looked at the construction going up because it was flimsy. Not sound proof to any extent and it proved to be really a problem. So much so that that’s now called Coastal Village, and they are still in operation. I think they improved their overall construct. Students complained about it to us. I used to meet with those owners just to plead our students’ case. But all I could do would be to say was “we are not going to list you as an off campus housing facility.’

Tomczyk: That was our only recourse.

Squatriglia: The only leverage we had was to say we are not going to advertise. We always had a disclaimer that we were not responsible for the construction, for supervision or the safety. Now both of those complexes were to our advantage because people who might have been pessimistic about residence halls on the campus, began to realize that if students were living off campus maybe those students could become our customers on campus. That was the card I pushed and that’s the card that Ron Eaglin pushed.

In 1984 the Coastal Educational Foundation Student Residence Housing committee adopted a 5-year housing plan which I had written. In 1985 the Board of Trustees of the USC amended the SC master plan for higher education to permit housing on four year campuses. They passed that on Oct 10, 1985 and on May 1, 1986 the SC Commission of Higher Education approved that change. So the period of 1984 to 1986 was really critical preparation for residence hall projects.

We pressed the case for clean, safe, supervised affordable housing for our students. Every incident that occurred, every complaint that was filed by either of those two off campus facilities I used as a way to emphasize that the need was genuine and it was an embarrassment for the college. We had a responsibility I said to our students and their parents to do whatever we could assure the students’ safety. There were rumors of drug dealing and violence and so on in both of these places, particularly Crossroads.

Because when vacancies occurred the managers of Crossroads wanted to fill those beds, so they rented them to non-students, to transients to laborers who were only in town for a month or so. You can well imagine what that meant to the safety of students in general and women in particular. And that was a great concern we had.

We saw residential housing as an institutional responsibility to students, parents and the community. The community thought that we should be accountable to those students and of course we weren’t. Now we eventually bought – because they went bankrupt - Quail Creek Village and we eventually -- they are now known as the Gardens --we eventually managed those. That particular complex is brick and block and some wood but at least they were safer because they were brick and block. If you ever want to see a Dean of Students go gray put students in stick buildings for the reasons I already outlined.
The Woods had to be self-contained. The plan that we had had to be approved by University system. We thought this was a great opportunity for us to not only build double-loaded corridors which mean double rooms down a hallway and with gang showers and gang toilets at each end and then to build a dining hall. That was the proposal.

Well USC was on its toes because what they did they said no, you can’t do this; you must build self-contained apartments. So elsewhere in higher education residence hall programs that began started as double-loaded corridors and gang showers. Your college experience and mine were certainly of that type. Only in the later years did apartment living come into vogue. We reversed the trend not because we wanted to but because we were required to.

We were told that if we wanted residence halls, then they had to be self-contained. Self-contained meant there would be kitchens, refrigerators – apartment living, and no dining hall. Well that was a setback but we couldn’t let that stop us and it didn’t. The Woods had to be self-contained with individual kitchens to preclude the construction of the dining hall. We lost out on the general purpose building because of construction costs.

We had planned to build seven buildings at $7M instead of the eventual six buildings. But when the estimates finally came in we found that we lost one foot of the dimensions of each room what is now called the Woods but we did retain the concept of each room having an individual window. I had mentioned earlier my friend Paul Malone had come down one day at a meeting and he turned to me and said, “Well, Bob, do you want an extra foot to the building or do you want a bedroom with a window?” I turned to him and said “Paul, this is not a monastery. We’ve got to have bedroom windows for our students.” So that’s how the bedrooms with windows came into existence but we were one foot shorter in terms of the dimensions. Everything was on a cost-per-foot basis.

**Tomczyk:** With today’s students I can’t imagine them living in anything other than an apartment style because they come from homes where they had their own bedroom – no matter how many children in the house and they are used to their own individual space. So it’s interesting that we had that from the beginning.

**Squatriglia:** Good question. I, and probably you, never had the experience of being responsible for preparing all of my meals. God bless Mom. I would prepare breakfast perhaps and a snack here and there; but that’s as close as she let me be to the kitchen. Can you imagine men and perhaps some women as well suddenly being responsible for three meals a day? Preparing them all - in their kitchen, buying food, setting up provisions in terms of refrigerator, learning how to thaw out a refrigerator, and clean a stove, and so on.

**Tomczyk:** There would be a lot of pizzas ordered.

**Squatriglia:** and a lot of cardboard. Well Kim Montague had been hired on my recommendation a year in advance. He was on board in 1986. I pressed the case with Ron Eaglin
that we needed to hire a Director of Residence Life one year prior to the opening of the buildings because there was so much to do. Staff had to be hired, staff had to be trained. Most importantly, the building construction had to be supervised. As I mentioned earlier, there was very little expertise on the campus regarding residence halls. We certainly had experience with classrooms but a residence hall is different. In a residence hall when a light bulb went out he or she wanted it replaced. At the same time if a door lock was broken that was a matter of security. We need to have an attentive staff.

So we had to press a case to have a free-standing independent maintenance crew that would work directly in Kim’s direction. And we did that. It was only one person but at least it was a person under whose authority he operated.

At the same time we had to recruit Resident Assistants. Now these were students who were hired for the purpose of interacting with students in their particular area of responsibility, either their hall or their building or both. That was important in order to develop a sense of community. For the most part the students who first lived on campus in these buildings were freshmen. This was their first time away from home. Ironically the RA’s had never, very likely, lived in residence halls themselves. So we had to prepare and train Resident Assistants who had never lived in residence halls to work with their charges who had never lived in residence halls either. So those youngsters didn’t know what they didn’t know. We had to acquaint them and bring them along with this as well so that was a challenge.

Kim had considerably experience in the Kent State programming and that’s why I hired him and he was very successful in that role. We called that complex the Woods. We called it that because it was out in the woods for no other reason. Now remember that was the first construction on the other side of the so called big ditch.

I mentioned earlier about the big ditch; that was the drainage ditch that ran from 544 to 501 in back of the campus. It was open and getting bigger each year through erosion. There was nothing on that side of the ditch.

I’m proud to say that I held out and Dick thanked me often for modified Georgian architecture on that side of the campus. So the Woods, those six buildings were modified brick, Georgian architecture. That became basically the base for that side of the campus; the cornerstone for the new side of the campus sort of speak. I’ve had individuals, particularly from the Wall School of Business, tell me “Bob, thanks for holding out for Georgian architecture.” Because it would have been much cheaper to simply build with cinder block. We could have had our buildings, all of our buildings including the general purpose building- the 7th building, with cinder block if it hadn’t been for brick. So that brick veneer over block was extremely important. And I’m proud we were able to do that.

Cost constraints eliminated other features too. We wanted elevators because they were three story buildings, but the elevators went out pretty fast. Thankfully there were only three stories. I
still recall the friendly exchanges we had with Coastal Educational Foundation members regarding their experiences building apartments and my experience working with students. The appliances that we had and other things were a nightmare, because whenever an appliance went out – and they go out in your home, let alone out a college campus- that was a problem we had to have an inventory we had to have repairs, etc.

**Tomczyk:** I remember a time when the stoves in those buildings were removed. Do you recall that time and why that happened?

**Squatriglia:** Yes I do and I can tell you why. We virtually ran out of stoves and we had so many that had to be repaired, etc. but we did have a dining hall and we did offer a meal plan to students.

**Tomczyk:** So that was really the beginning of a meal plan where students could have a choice an option of meals plans to use on campus and they wouldn’t need to have a stove in their residence.

**Squatriglia:** Exactly. Now I was fortunate when we moved to the student center in 1978 to recruit professional food management out of Boston to provide the food service on our campus and that was replacing the Oliver operation that had been in the old Student Union now called the Alumni center or Atheneum Hall. They were prepared to get into food services if we needed them.

Now remember we lost that general purpose building. If we had had that 7th building that would have been a place where we could have offered food service. We didn’t have to call it food service to Columbia, but we could be ready to provide food service there if we had the structure.

**Tomczyk:** In the plans what was that building called?

**Squatriglia:** That was a General Purpose building.

**Tomczyk:** So it was for recreation purposes?

**Squatriglia:** and meeting space. I intentionally labelled it as that and they saw through it. They were really very hawk-eyed up in Columbia. All I did was label it as general purpose building and it would be a shell. Obviously my intention was if we had signed a contract with a food provider a condition of the contract would be that they bring in their own equipment. So all we had to do was supply a shell and they would outfit the shell. Well without that building and then with the requirement that they be apartments, we lost out on any place to provide food service of any size. Because remember we were still under a severe handicap in terms of the Student Center.

I recommended to Ron Eaglin that we expand the Student Center. There was a concrete slab that had been poured -this was under Dick Singleton’s leadership and the cooperation of Craig Wall
Sr. – a slab that became the outdoor programming space. Ron agreed to make boxing in that space the expansion of the dining hall. So when we were able to box in that space that was how we could provide a food plan for our students.

So we basically piggybacked on the snack bar as a way to offer food to our students. Then eventually we did have a dining hall then we were able obviously pull out all the appliances including refrigerators.

Now the Woods, they were apartments and it was geared eventually to graduate students or older students there. But the on campus housing was called the Woods it was fully furnished. There was a public space and then two bedrooms, double occupancy.

**Tomczyk**: I know there were some other things you wanted to chat about regarding students on campus. Before we go to that is there anything else about the dormitories or residence halls that you would like to fill in?

**Squatriglia**: Thank you. Well, one of the concerns we had at the time was safety and we did put up a gate and we did have a security officer on duty there 24 hours a day and that was an effort to control access.

**Tomczyk**: There was a little guard shack?

**Squatriglia**: A little guard shack with an arm, a parking lot arm for vehicle control. I also thought Ron Eaglin made a good choice a good decision by placing campus security under my responsibility and that meant that campus police and the residence hall staff would work closely together and be interested in the safety of students. We had golf carts providing security over there. We had a bike patrol, policemen on bikes.

There were no lights out there and that was my concern. I convened a campus wide safety committee to be involved in lighting on the campus. I invited the Director of Campus Security from Columbia to come down and take what I call a night walk. Now a night walk on a campus without lights was really an educational experience for faculty and staff who hadn’t been here at night. Then suddenly with golf carts and flashlights – we would bring them out to a particular point and then kill the flashlights. The point was here is where our students are walking at night.

**Tomczyk**: Pretty dark?

**Squatriglia**: Pretty dark and pretty dangerous.

And remember those were dirt roads. They were not paved at that time. In fact, we only had a paved road up to the completion of the 6th building at that time.

**Tomczyk**: So the horseshoe chanticleer Drive was not constructed?
It was not paved, it was in place but not paved. It was coquina. We didn’t have other things. We didn’t have a mail service; there was no post office. We had to provide our own mail service and we did that by building a building a building that had mail boxes.

**Tomczyk:** There were no call boxes.

**Squatriglia:** No call boxes which we have now. Also at the same time we didn’t have any of the support services that we needed to have in terms of expanded recreation because we were suddenly a 24 hour campus. One of the concerns that I had was to prepare the campus for being 24/7. The pressure that would be placed on the library, the classrooms, and faculty themselves when students wanted to meet on a Friday afternoon for example. That was an adjustment for a commuter campus. In addition we had the safety of students for hurricanes.

I chaired and established the first Hurricane Preparedness committee. We had faculty and staff on that committee and we surveyed a variety of campuses UNC-Wilmington, Miami, College of Charleston and others in terms of how they were operating

**Tomczyk:** And there was a time when that Preparedness Plan had to be put into action. Do you remember when?

**Squatriglia:** Hurricane Floyd was the one that was really the most dangerous for us. Hugo was dangerous, but thank the Lord, it wasn’t the danger that Floyd was. Fortunately with Hurricane Floyd we had good relations with UNC-Asheville. UNC-Asheville was in the process of completing their residence halls, but they were not occupied. So we chartered buses and sent those students who otherwise had no housing opportunities to UNC-Asheville - during Hurricane Floyd.

At the same time, we encouraged other students if they lived nearby to go home and if possible take a friend with them. But, it was important when we had that kind of evacuation to have a record, to know that John Jones was going with Sam Smith to Columbia. We had to have that kind of control in each of the residence halls; the checkout system. And the buildings had to be secured and we plugged them all.

**Tomczyk:** Because if you had a call from a parent they would want to know where their child was and who they were with.

**Squatriglia:** And then we asked that student when they arrived at their destination to call back and basically check in with us. We saw that not in locus parentis but as an opportunity to really discharge our responsibility and assure parents of the safety of their children.

**Tomczyk:** So the plan worked?

**Squatriglia:** It worked to the point where many of us were awarded with a President’s Citation. And we are very proud of that; the fact that we had such good teamwork. That was campus
wide. We found that the campus preparedness plan we had put into effect worked. But most of all, our students were safe.

**Tomczyk:** Bob, speaking of students, you wanted to expand a little bit about our conversation last time regarding student memorials of student deaths that occurred under your watch as Vice President.

**Squattriglia:** Thank you, I had already mentioned that my own undergraduate experience at William and Mary when I was an RA and we had a student death an untimely death my senior year and what that meant to the campus. Then later when I was Assistant Dean of Men at William and Mary was in 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated and that campus had to work with that grief and that sadness. So I was aware given the recommendation for the man I worked for, Ernie Boyer, at the State University of New York how important it was for a campus to be both celebrated and supported. And I brought that theme and that insight with me.

The first death that we had on our campus in 1978 was a student who was a basketball player and he died of a congenital heart. The second death that we had was a Student Government Association Vice President whose family lived in California. He died, sadly, in a motorcycle accident. That was the first memorial we had on the campus. We used the Wheelwright Auditorium as a place to have a memorial. The Chaplain, Ron Lackey, and I provided the opportunity for students to speak. The young man was eulogized. The parents were unable to attend the memorial. We made videotape of that. And that became a precedent so every time we had a memorial service we videotaped that and gave that to the parents or the family.

**Tomczyk:** It’s important to note that this was all happening way before things like Columbine and other university campus tragedies where counselors were brought in and people were allowed time to grieve and gain support from the campus community. You were doing this back in the 70s.

**Squattriglia:** Yes, at the same time we provided counseling by chaplains. I had established a Horry County Ministerial Association annual meeting on our campus cooperating with our ministers and those ministers came to campus to counsel with our students and also our Director of Counseling at the time was Betsy Puskar; she was our Director of Counseling.

**Tomczyk:** Was she also a faculty member at that time in Psychology?

**Squattriglia:** She was part time faculty and part time counselor which was often the way we were able to provide a service. She had release time and she did a great job for us. Eventually she went back into the classroom and we replaced her with a full time counselor. Those counselors were available to provide support.

The next death that we had and the first to occur on our campus was a young lady named Becca Jones. Becca was a great youngster. She died of natural causes. It turned out she had,
unbeknownst to her family, a heart problem. When Becca died it was really a very, very sad situation. Kim Montague called me to say that she hadn’t been in classes and we discussed what to do. I suggested he bring a female police officer with him and check her room and they did and they found sadly that she had died in her bed of natural causes overnight. The parents of course were grieved. They came to the campus. We did have a memorial service for her.

It turned out they were related to our college physician, John Dieter. Becca, Rebecca, Jones is still memorialized on our campus with first a plaque and a tree that was planted in her honor and then secondly, the family donated an aquarium – she was a marine science major – they donated an aquarium in her name. Again we had a memorial service. The parents were here this time. They did want it. We did arrange to have it. They came back for the service. They did not participate in it but were overwhelmed by the outpouring of love and support from the faculty, staff and students. That too was really sad.

Later we had another tragic death and that was a young man named Chad Beaty. Chad was a student leader. He was again a vice president. He had a brilliant career. He was killed in a single car crash sadly. His fraternity brothers were very deeply saddened by that. They felt guilty because they had permitted him to drive when he shouldn’t have driven. He was eventually memorialized on the campus with a Chad Beaty Victory Bell.

**Tomczyk:** Which is over near Brook Stadium?

**Squatriglia:** It is over by Brook Stadium and it is rung every time we have a victory. That’s a nice memorial. His fraternity brothers also donated a patio in their memory but also in honor of Chad at the Alumni Center.

I use that tragic situation as a teaching point with our students in terms of their responsibility socially. His brilliant career was cut short tragically at that death.

Over the course of this time we also instituted memorial services in Spadoni Park. Spadoni Park itself was a memorial to Nicky Spadoni who was killed in a drowning accident. I had envisioned that park as being a connection between Wheelwright Auditorium and the Student Center. Back when Spud Spadoni called Dick Singleton to ask Dick how he could memorialize Nicky, his son, and Neil Graham, his best friend who was one of our students who had drowned in a boating accident as well down in Murrells Inlet.

I suggested to Dick that we eliminate Singleton Swamp. Spadoni Park previously had been wetlands and had been a place where students simply tromped through there and would bring mud into both the Student Center and Wheelwright. Spud was thrilled to be able to do that and I can say miraculously X number of loads of coquina came in one might and before you knew it we had Spadoni Park.
**Tomczyk:** It’s a lovely park with a lovely fountain now and a pergola with Lady Banksia yellow roses on it – very peaceful and there’s a stone monument there for Spadoni.

**Squatriglia:** Also there was an Atheneum there that we used as a memorial to commemorate those who died the previous year and at one time the carillon, the bells, would strike for those who died the previous year. Whether that tradition is continued today I don’t know.

**Tomczyk:** the Atheneum that you mentioned I think was really a white gazebo that was since moved over to the Science building.

**Squatriglia:** OK, so the gazebo is gone; thank you for being current. Also at the time that we had student deaths, we had a young man who was on active duty. He was a test pilot for the Osprey, a Marine Corps plane, experimental at that time, and he was killed in a crash. He was a senior and I recommended we give him a posthumous honorary degree. Well, Academic Affairs declined that but instead proposed a certificate of attendance. So we use that certificate to this day. I was able whenever we had a student death, to present that certificate to the family on behalf of the university.

**Tomczyk:** I think subsequent to that Academic Affairs recommended a policy by which a student to get a diploma if they were so many credits short of their graduation requirement. I believe so even though they didn’t get the diplomas then, it did prompt discussion to have an exception made for those students who were so close to graduation.

**Squatriglia:** Excellent. That’s great. One other memorial, sadly when 9-11 occurred in 2001. The campus was struck as the entire nation was. We did have a memorial then. We had 3000 flags on the Prince Lawn and I treasure some pictures that we have of all of us putting flags up. That was an opportunity for the campus to coalesce in terms of its grief. We did have memorials as well. It was just a sad time in the history of our nation.

**Tomczyk:** Well Prince lawn being in the center of campus it got a lot of foot traffic. To see all those flags up was very moving; it was very significant and it put meaning to the size of the tragedy.

**Squatriglia:** Speaking of Prince Lawn, I proposed that as a programming space because we were really squeezed for space for students to have anything. Sometimes we did use the horseshoe but that was kind of was kind of out of the way. So I proposed that we use Prince Lawn and I did that through the planning committee. We had to restrain it. We finally agreed we could only have events there after twelve o’clock. We had to mute the music, etc. etc. I’m pleased that we still have the Prince lawn; it’s the center of the campus as it should be.
Tomczyk: And now there is a huge sound system that’s permanently set up there.

Squatriglia: Oh, there is?! Well we’ve come a long way from bull horns and whistles haven’t we? [Laugh] One last thing about memorials; I’m pleased that I was able to order a flag that commemorated the deaths of all 3000+ during 9/11. I ordered two of those flags and had them displayed and I’m happy to say that they are still on display in the Student Union. Also at the time with Geoff Parsons, I suggested we order international flags and our budget would buy them for all the countries that were represented by our international students.

Tomczyk: Geoff Parsons was the Director of International Programs at the time.

Squatriglia: Yes, ma’am, we hired Geoff to work with Steve Nagle. This is back in the days of Jim Rex. Jim Rex and I agreed that we needed to have a student affairs person working with international students. Steve was faculty and had his own responsibilities.

Tomczyk: and I should correct myself. It was Dr. Steve Nagle who was the Director of the International programs and Geoff was the Assistant director. When Steve retired or left that position, Geoff did become the Director of International programs.

Squatriglia: Yes, and he continues in that role; he does a great job. He’s become a world traveler because he has visited and works with student everywhere.

Tomczyk: And still visits the alumni, I understand he went to Iceland with the President and others to see the alumni chapter up there.

Squatriglia: And that Iceland alumni group came about because we had recruited soccer players. So those soccer players made good in their own land and we have a very active alumni group there.

Tomczyk: Well thank you Bob. Is there anything else about those kinds of ceremonies that your office was in charge of? I really think they built a sense of community not just around the event or around the death of the individual student, but in so many other ways of really engaging the entire campus community.

Squatriglia: When I came to this campus it was a unique opportunity for me as Dean of Students. As I’ve talked over the years with friends of mine, very few of us have had the opportunity to come to a campus to plan the student services covered there and to be in on the ground floor to provide the services. Basically I’m happy to say and proud to say I was involved in the establishment of all out of the classroom services for students. That was quite a challenge but also I look back with satisfaction.
We were limited in terms of resources. I found that over the years I rented people because we were restrained by USC and the entire system in terms of the kinds of the salaries we could offer. So we recruited for the most part young professionals at the entry level; we trained them for a period of time, and after four or five years they went off to do bigger and better things. But they had their start here at Coastal Carolina University. We have many friends nationwide who had their beginnings on this humble campus that has become the university today.

We wanted it to be a celebrative campus with awards and traditions and we’ve done that with the various awards that we have. The Honors Convocation that I am happy to have recommended and it has grown. I chaired for years the Commencement Committee and that Commencement Committee has grown into quite an activity. I was concerned about chairing the Commencement Committee so that the role of students would continue to be prominent. I happy to say that the faculty and staff that I worked with were very supportive and very effective in that regard. The honor cords that we had on the campus became the honor stoles and that became a fundraiser as you know. And you own distinctive work with ODK, the first honor society on campus used that as a fundraiser to fund the Lackey Scholarship among other things.

It was really a great ride and a great experience to serve as the University’s first Dean of Student Development and First Vice President for Student Affairs.

**Tomczyk:** We are fortunate that you took the job and that you stayed in the job and kept the attitude you did in trying to make the best experience for every student who came on this campus.

**Squatriglia:** Thank you I appreciate that remark and also the thought of a dear friend of ours, Eddie Dyer, who’s told me more than once “Bob, student services on this campus stand on your shoulders.” That’s nice to hear.

**Tomczyk:** That’s a lot of feet!

**Squatriglia:** Yes it is [laugh] a lot of foots over the years.

**Tomczyk:** Well thank you Bob for talking with us again about your long career at Coastal in so many important capacities.

**Squatriglia:** Thank you for your service as the archivist. Best wishes

**Tomczyk:** Thank you.