

Introduction by Tomczyk:

Hello, I'm Charmaine Tomczyk, Director of the Coastal Carolina University History Project which includes interviewing individuals who have made significant contributions to the development and growth of the university. It is my honor to interview one of the university's noted founders who among other activities worked tirelessly for the institution's independence from the University of SC.

Clark Parker is a Certified Public Accountant in Myrtle Beach and a 1977 Coastal alumnus who has been named Outstanding Alumnus of the Year. He served his alma mater in key leadership positions: including President of Coastal's alumni association from 1979 to 1983 and he headed the CINO Club and the Coastal athletic booster organization in the early 1980s.

From 1987 to 1993 he served on the Horry County Higher Education Commission, and as its Chair led the movement to establish Coastal as an independent state university separate from the University of SC system. When Coastal achieved independence in 1993, Parker was elected to its first board of trustees, where he continued to serve for many years, including two terms as Chairman of the Board. In 2006 he was named an honorary founder of Coastal Carolina University. In this year, 2016, he has been appointed by Gov. Nikki Haley and confirmed by the South Carolina Senate as an at-large member of the S.C. Commission on Higher Education.

Tomczyk: Clark Parker, thank you for meeting with me today. I appreciate your taking the time out of your busy schedule to come and talk about Coastal a little bit. You started at Coastal as a student and so I want to ask you a little bit about what attracted you to come to Coastal as a student.

Parker: Several things one was there was not a lot of money so Coastal was a good option for me, a good opportunity. I got a scholarship, got a free ride to come here. I had a great opportunity to get an education here practically free. I've been blessed in many ways.

Tomczyk: How did you spend your time here because at that time it was a commuter campus wasn't it? Did you have a job while you were going to school or did you work on campus? Tell me more about your life as a student at Coastal.

Parker: Work study; I got 15 hours a week here at the school.

Tomczyk: What Department did you work in, Clark?

Parker: Actually I came here to be a coach or a PE major. I got here and sort of changed my mind because there were not a lot of courses offered at that time so I switched to business but I kept my work study all through college. I kept my work study all the way through college through the athletic department. So when I graduated a lot of people thought I was a PE major or an athletic major of some kind, but I was actually a business major.

Tomczyk: How did you find the College of Business at that time?

Parker: We had some good professors. Small classes which is probably a trademark of Coastal as far as having a good relationship with your teachers. They tend to care about you and help you through the process as well as challenge you to get through the process.

Tomczyk: You said that you first thought about doing something with PE but then changed. You obviously had to go to your advisor to get some information and change your major. Do you recall who your advisor was at the time?

Parker: I had a couple. Over in the business department, actually the math department. Marshall Parker was one of my advisors early on as well as Dr. Smith. Again they helped me a lot. I remember looking at the requirements for business, as far as the courses I had to take. Professor Collins actually looked at what math courses I had to take. And he said I'm going to need a lot of help. Well, I'm going to schedule as much time as you can give me. I'll take as much as time as you're willing to give me. He booked a lot of time for outside tutoring to help me get through some courses I had to get through.

Tomczyk: That was Gene Collins in the math department. At that time math was in the college of business and they have since broken off to science.

Parker: Right.

Tomczyk: So you worked how many hours on campus, do you recall?

Parker: Basically you got paid for 15. They always gave us more hours than that because athletics needed a lot of things. I think we all worked more than 15 but that was the maximum you had to get paid for.

Tomczyk: You were a fulltime student and working 15 hours a week. Did you get involved in other things on campus?

Parker: Eventually we got involved in a lot of things because there weren't a lot a students to do a lot of things, so a lot of people were doing multiple things. Marsha was involved with the Athenaeum (NOTE: *the student yearbook*).

Tomczyk: Your wife Marsha.

Parker: Yes. We got involved with that to sell ads and that kind of stuff and of course we were involved in athletics They were doing a lot of fund raisers all the time. At that time we were involved with vending to help pay for a lot of the athletic programs. A lot of athletic programs are funded through that. I remember my roommate who later became the women's basketball coach, when I was here at the time, he was going on his first trip and I remember the athletic dept. which was Walt Hambrick gave us three rolls of quarters that he got from vending machines and that was \$10 for each one of us to eat and \$10 for gas.

Tomczyk: That was your travel funds.

Parker: That's right. The first recruiting trip was a 30 dollar trip.

Tomczyk: Do you recall where that was to?

Parker: I think it was Marion High School. We got a couple of basketball players from over there.

Tomczyk: Who was your roommate?

Parker: Steven Taylor. He also coached softball for a period of time and then women's basketball for a period of time. I think he was the first sports information director here as well.

Tomczyk: So sports was really popular even back then. We really exploded recently with all of our sports and the conferences that we're in. But back then we had small fields to play on and not a lot of coaches. It sounds like you were still kept very busy.

Parker: A lot of the coaches were actually teachers. Vrooman of course taught history. Selwa taught geography, Selwa was the basketball coach and the athletic director for a period time. Vrooman was the baseball coach so they did multiple things.

Tomczyk: So you saw them in the classroom and outside of the classroom.

Parker: Yes, I had them in both cases.

Tomczyk: Did you get involved in any clubs?

Parker: There were some fraternities started but I didn't get too involved with them because athletics pretty much took a lot of my time.

Tomczyk: Understandably, especially with fund raising, the booster clubs and the CINO Club. Were you involved in that?

Parker: We helped organize the CINO Club under Walt Hambrick's directions. When I first got out of school we helped as far as filing for the paperwork for the Secretary of State's office and getting organized and legally structured. I served for a couple of years as President of the Booster Club – we called it the CINO club back then.

Tomczyk: Coastal is Number One.

Parker: Yes, Ma'am.

Tomczyk: Who came up with the name of that, do you know?

Parker: Before my time they actually had a CINO Day. I think they still celebrate a CINO Day here. There are a lot of activities in the spring of the year. There was also a little restaurant in the Student Center where we ate was also called CINO's. A favorite handout; the only place you could get something to eat on campus.

Tomczyk: Oliver's was contracted, Oliver's restaurant in Conway, was contracted to supply the food there, so that's the place you went when you weren't working or traveling.

Parker: That was the only place on campus to eat.

Tomczyk: Amazing, we have so many more now. So what were your plans when you graduated?

Parker: I majored in business, accounting. My career path was to be an accountant, a CPA. Those opportunities came about. I became self-employed and became certified after that. We've been employed since 1981. It's been a long time. The years passed very quickly.

Tomczyk: Well that's good staying power; it's a tribute to your work as a CPA to have that kind of longevity. Why CPA? The business college has lots of majors and lots of career paths to take. Was there something about CPA and accounting that influenced you?

Parker: One of my summer jobs was managing a golf course – one of the accounting firms at the beach and the accounting firm was Smith Sapp, Bookhout and Crumpler. Mr. Smith of course had been a founder of the foundation for years. But one of their CPAs in there encouraged me – I was doing much bookkeeping for them. He was encouraging me to look at possibly a CPA career. Jim Bryan was the accountant. And later on – it's a small world, his daughter married one of my best friends who is also a CPA. It all comes around. I had an opportunity to work with him, with Mr. Foster Smith. During the time we were leaving the University of SC. He was on the foundation. I had an opportunity to work with him as well.

Tomczyk: So you stayed connected. Once you graduated from Coastal, you stay connected with a lot of the people who were here or affiliated with the university as well.

Parker: For a number of years Marsha [*Clark's spouse who accompanied him to this interview*] and I both kept the books and records; where I kept the scoreboard for the basketball games and Marsha kept the score book even after graduation for a number years.

Tomczyk: Was that an understanding you reached with the university; they asked you to continue that?

Parker: The athletic director asked us to do that as long as we felt we had the time to do that. We had a good longevity with Coastal in a number of ways. It's been our privilege to serve.

Tomczyk: Well, they obviously saw a special spirit in you that cared about Coastal and your willingness to serve as well.

Let's talk about independence since you mentioned it just a minute ago. The movement towards independence really was an idea that started a long time ago. Yet when you got involved in it, it really took off. Can you explain a little bit about your involvement with independence and how it started?

Parker: In 1979 it started for us in earnest because at that time Coastal had applied for a dormitory and got federal money – Senator Thurmond helped us receive some grant money to build a dorm. Well that

didn't matter to Carolina. Carolina basically shut it down, they didn't want us to have a dorm We were still a commuter college.

That got a lot of us upset with the university. As president of the alumni we basically got our Board of Directors to file a letter to ask to withdraw from the university then in 1979. All of our officers and directors of the alumni association wrote a letter to the commission saying we respectfully ask you to withdraw us from the University of SC because we are not being treated fairly for a number of reasons. That was the first letter we sent to the commission that went to the commission. I think John Dawsey was the chairman of the commission at that time. John Dawsey actually brought it to the commission that night for a vote; he put forth a motion and he couldn't get a second in 1979. So that was the first time we actually brought that issue to bear as far as a letter, a formal letter.

And then many years later I was asked to go on the commission in 1989 and so when this process went through we did a lot of study. I had to educate a lot of my peers around the commission because they loved the university, being Coastal Carolina University - College at that time. They didn't want to do anything to hurt the college. There was a lot of information out there about why there was a lot of issues about why we shouldn't leave and we were trying to identify what the positives were for us leaving. So once we did our homework; we did two external studies in the field. We actually went to the College of Charleston and met with Pres. Lightsey and they made a presentation to us. Because Lightsey had been in the system for a number of years and was hired as the President of the College of Charleston. Their last comment to us primarily was "If you want to grow, you got to get out." OK? That was what was sort of echoed through. We went to Francis Marion and did a similar thing with [Pres] Dr. Stanton. They did a presentation. I think five people presented arguments for us. Four of them was for and one was against us leaving. So Francis Marion had left the system in 1963 or 64 many years earlier and we had seen it grow dramatically compared to what we were able to grow during that same time frame.

Once we got that information assembled to our commissioners, we voted on a hot day in July in 1991, similar to today, to leave the University of SC system. It was unanimous. The foundation voted in that Athenaeum right behind us. And they voted unanimously except for one that was a trustee from Carolina that was Cater Floyd of Palmetto Chevrolet here locally. That's a little bit about the timing. A lot of information had to be shared to bring a lot of comfort to the lives of people what the affects would be. Really our toughest folks were the faculty on campus because their jobs were at risk as they saw it.

The library was at risk. I can remember one of the faculty telling us that Carolina was going to unplug us from the university library. I got a letter from Clemson that said "If Carolina unplugs us, can you plug us in?" There was a letter from the President of Clemson that said "If you need to be plugged in, we'll get you some library privileges." Of course we were paying for those and they were glad to sell those to us.

Tomczyk: I think many of the faculty at that time in fact for any years came from all over the nation which always surprised me. We really recruited faculty from all over – from major universities. I think they probably didn't understand or appreciate perhaps the history that Coastal had in terms of really growing up in a rural area that really needed higher education. They were probably coming from Ph.D. programs from large universities. We just needed to be educated. It sounds like you did a lot of legwork and study to make a good case for independence.

Parker: Well we felt like get it down to like it was a family. There were nine members to the family, nine campuses and for the university to show a lot of care, love and nourishment to those was difficult. You get a lot of kids to deal with, like in a family situation. And I thought we'd have a better circumstance of explaining our own issues and carrying our own problems there rather than being a part of a number of problems the university may portray. It took a long time for us to get our own individual presence there, or our own place at the table when it came to state appropriations and other arguments on behalf of the state for funding and other needs of the university. Of course state dollars got tightened. It's been tough for a lot of reasons but Coastal always had a way of working its way through its own problems a lot of times and help to fund their own issues. The county of course has always been very, very supportive. They have done their mileage that helped Coastal for a number of years. That extra funding was available. The one percent sales tax is part of the funding now. Another county initiative that has helped Coastal grow and maintain itself in the last fifteen years, ten years primarily. You look around now and you still see a lot of stuff still coming out of the ground. Construction coming in roads and other parts of the campus that you see sprouting up. There is a lot to be proud of and to be thankful for.

Tomczyk: That was many months that you worked on the whole independence issue and gathering information. Are there one or two events or meetings during that time that stand out for you as significant?

Parker: At the time, to our benefit, the university was changing presidency. Dr Holderman was leaving, Dr. Palms was coming in. We had a new man at the helm that didn't have a lot of history, good history or bad history. I remember one particular meeting over at Sumter. We were identified as me being the chair of the commission, ad hoc committee to study the system - to make improvements recommendation for changes. The faculty was upset because even though they are very close to the university, Columbia and Sumter are not very far. Those kids that left Sumter after two years of education and transferred to Columbia, they lost credits. Meaning some of their hours did not transfer which is crazy. They were attacking Dr. Palms because primarily we were supposed to be a part of the same system. Like our teachers aren't good enough for our courses to come over.

He got attacked that night at Sumter. I remember I was the only one who raised up, stood up and defended Dr. Palms and the university, saying "A lot of these problems you are talking about were here before him. He's here to try to find out what the problems are. You are shooting the wrong guy. He didn't create these problems, he inherited them." After that night Dr. Palms and I had sort of a good relationship because he felt like I was defending him in that room that day. From that point on I felt like I had a good relationship with Dr. Palms going forward.

Tomczyk: It's always good to take another person's perspective on an issue, isn't it? Hopefully the USC Sumter people were able to see that difference a little bit.

Parker: It worked out well I think for a number of reasons I think. I was able to visit that campus about six months ago. Now being a member of the higher education commission I visit there just to visit. A lot of things have not changed dramatically. The campus is still basically the same size. They are doing a lot of distance learning, that type of learning. But I look at the number of years that campus has been there versus where we are today. If we hadn't grown, and we'd been the same size, you'd see a different Coastal here today if that had happened to us during the course of the years.

Tomczyk: The years have made many changes to the University of South Carolina system. As you say, USC Sumter hasn't grown. And yet USC –Beaufort that used to be a two – year is now a 4 year. They have moved along with the times. I guess in part because of the leadership that they've had and the leadership they got from the system. They are looking for solutions to their issues.

Parker: Again we are blessed because of the ocean. Beaufort is close to the ocean as far as that type of location it has helped both of us.

Tomczyk: That's true I think we tend to forget how important location is in terms of recruitment of faculty and staff and students, and just livability.

Parker: Right.

Tomczyk: Clark, you want to tell us a little bit more about Coastal's history regarding USC -Coastal Carolina College and its expansion from two years.

Parker: We had a representative here in Horry County, Rep. Hodge who proposed the Hodge amendment in the legislature that eventually said if we could get up to 1000 FTE we could have that third year.

Tomczyk: Towards a baccalaureate degree?

Parker; Right, and so a lot of us to do that FTE count we had to take extra courses. So about 650 of us signed up take The History of Horry County. It was taught once a week in the gymnasium. We had a different speaker come in and share with us each week about the history of Horry County. So the students helped the opportunity to move forward to the third and fourth year program. So, The History of Horry County offered by various and many professors and teachers that came forward.

Tomczyk: So that increased the stats enough for us to move from a two year to a third year. And then it wasn't maybe a year after that or two years after that we were granted a four year.

Parker: 1975 I think we were graduating our first four year graduates. I graduated in 1977; my wife graduated in 1978. I will tell this one story about my last year at Coastal. I had just a few hours to finish, I was hired full time to be on Coastal's campus. I was in charge of 24 student athletes, coordinate their work study and activities. It was a good time, we had a lot of things we had to take care of; find out about basketball and baseball and soccer and wrestling – just different things we had on campus. If you can imagine coordinating 24 student and me as a student. It was a challenge but also a blessing. Those guys were good friends of mine and they are still friends of mine today.

Tomczyk: I just can't imagine scheduling 24 of any kind [*of students*] but student athletes in particular because their schedules are so crammed with practice and classroom and out of classroom responsibilities.

Parker: Well, we had various responsibilities. The gymnasium was pretty new to us at that point in time.

Tomczyk: The Kimbel arena?

Parker: The Kimbel Gymnasium. We were doing PE and we were an intramural program that we were coordinating. Actually we were so small we were in charge of the car van to make sure they were cleaned and washed as far as the carpool taking care of the bleachers, taking care of the softball and baseball fields. So we were the manpower that did a lot of things that you now see done by administrative staff.

Tomczyk: Or outsourced for other services.

Parker: It was a very special time.

Tomczyk: A time when you really had to roll up your sleeves and do a lot of different things to get the job done. I wonder today how many people would be willing to do that. Rather than just say leave it for someone else or find someone else to do it. There was a real sense of ownership then to make the program work.

Parker: Everyone was very proud. Even though we were small we were proud of what we did have. *{Looks off camera where his wife Marsha commented to him}* One circumstance was I tried to make sure the baseball players took care of the basketball arena and the basketball players assigned to the baseball areas.

Tomczyk: Was there a reason for that? That's odd that they wouldn't take care of their own.

Parker: They were viewed like janitors almost. They didn't want other students making fun of them in the gymnasium. They were basketball stars at night and janitors during the day.

Tomczyk: I see, so that was a clever move then to have them switch to the other persons' court to clean up.

Parker: What Marsha is referring to we had a tournament going on a basketball tournament. Two of the basketball players came to me and wanted to earn some extra money and I didn't have a whole lot to do. We got to clean the bleachers tomorrow after the game. I had two Bergman starting players out there on the floor cleaning the floor and taking care of the gym. He comes out and sees us out there working and jumps all over me, thinking I'm wearing out his players before the night.

Tomczyk: That's right - or they would trip or get hurt

Parker: Right – whatever I was doing. He was just all over me. I remember the big 6'5" forward stepped between me and Bergman and said "Coach, it was my idea; it wasn't his." They played good that night. I think Lightsey was the guard that night. They had a great night that night so he basically proved him wrong - they could work and play ball in the same day.

Tomczyk: Well the basketball went to the Final Four didn't they at one point?

Parker: They did. They played in the NCAA Finals. That was a few years later but good athletes, very good athletes.

Tomczyk: You served on the Board of Trustees when we became independent. You served as its Chairman. As the key governing body of the university I wanted to ask you what those beginning years were like. Here we created a new Board of Trustees of our own. I can't imagine how overwhelming all the tasks that had to be done. The list of things that had to be put into place. Can you recount some of the big issues that the Board had to work on right away?

Parker: Well of course hiring a President was the first agenda item. That was a little bit of a task, but It worked through the process pretty well. We worked for a long time. The By-Laws committee – it probably worked the longest period of time to be sure all these things were put into place, safeguards, committee structures, various legal structures. It seemed like it took a long time to get through their process; as far as that piece of it. But a lot of care and concern was put into that process.

Tomczyk: It would be your guiding principles so you would expect it to take some time. I've never known a by-laws committee to work quickly.

Parker: No, and this one did not work quickly either, but it worked out well in the long run as far as the final product that was prepared. It brought a lot of people together that never had worked together on anything. Trustees from across the state. They represented each judicial, Congressional district. It brought together different ideas and different relationships. And those relationships were important when we go back to the legislature where there are those connections that we didn't have before. Those people that had relationships with those House or Senate members that we didn't have before. I think we did a good job; our president did a good job of working the State and getting credibility for our own independence, to merit our own independence. Fortunately for us at the same time of course Francis Marion and College of Charleston and Lander became universities at the same time so when our legislation came through, those other schools were helping us achieve that legislation to go through the process.

I know that when we did a presentation here locally, we did a commission meeting here where we hosted this ad hoc committee for the trustees. It was early June and they told me I had to really hammer down the reasons why we were leaving because we knew in July we were going to take that vote. And probably six weeks from that date we would be leaving the university officially. We had these trustees on campus in June the month before. We made this strong presentation about all the problems of the system and what the issues were. One of the trustees stopped me about 35 minutes into the presentation, he said "Did you ever see a jackass get stopped in a highway and you hit with a two by four to get him out of the road?" I said "No, I never seen that" [*He said*] "Well I'm that jackass and I'm stuck in the middle of the road and you hit me with a two by four. You got me clear with your message. You haven't been treated fairly and you need some changes made."

Tomczyk: You made a good presentation.

Parker: Right. And so consequently at first the university did not want to let us go for a number of reasons. I think some of them would comment we were the jewel of the campuses. I remember writing a private letter to Dr. Palms. In that letter I basically said something to the fact that "pretend it is your son

and your son has grown up and he's ready to go on his own. You got a couple of choices. You don't want to bar him from leaving home and you want to help him establish himself and get started. You can help us a great deal by helping us get started. And helping us become our own freestanding university. You can be that partner or that father however you want to see that. "I remember getting a call about a week after he got this letter and he said "You didn't courtesy copy anyone on this letter." I said "No, sir. That's for you to do as you please." I remember that morning I get this call. When they were talking about taking the call they said Dr. Palms, he is somewhere over Oklahoma in a plane and he wants to talk with you. I took the call that morning and he's talking about this letter I wrote him. He said "I agree with what you said. I want to present to the Board of Trustees on Tuesday", I think it was. He said, "for full cooperation in leaving the University of South Carolina with our blessing." I thanked him.

Tomczyk: Were you surprised by his decision?

Parker: I knew that he was a fair man because the first trip he came here we just announced in July we were leaving and in early August he made a trip here. His trip here was to change our minds basically. He flew into the airport in North Myrtle Beach. They were looking at his schedule. They asked me to pick him up. They said "Clark, you will have his ear for about an hour and a half in the car; we want you to talk to him." We took him to several meetings scheduled that day with the Foundation, with the Commission, with the Faculty Senate here on campus and with some key folks he wanted to see. He didn't know exactly what the arrangement would be so he had a student who was from Conway who was from Carolina drive a car here and meet us at first. He wanted to make sure he got from point A to point B and had someone who knew. I was kidding the young student that was with him. I said "I'm not ashamed to ride around with your President. He's going to be riding with me and you just follow us and you can park your car on campus."

Tomczyk: So that's how it went.

Parker: That's how it went. We had a good day. And I feel like he had good meetings all the way through the day. At first they rejected us leaving for a number of reasons.

Tomczyk: Can you name one or two of those reasons why they were rejecting? Some may be obvious, but...

Parker: They felt like our diploma, the students who were in the system they thought their getting a USC affiliated degree would have a problem.

Tomczyk: It would have USC and the logo on it as their diploma document.

Parker: That's right. They felt like we hadn't really took into all consideration all the cost and what it would cost to be a free standing university. Fortunately or unfortunately, when I was on this ad hoc committee, they gave us a lot of research information. They gave us this one little sheet that I beat them over the head with later on. It was talking about the cost of allocations. Each one of the campuses was billed back for services. It listed them and the very first one was aircraft. OK - Which means we were paying for the President's plane.

Tomczyk: Private plane.

Parker: That's right. I went to the first meeting and I had this letter and said they charged us for the plane no one had ever seen it, let alone rode in it. No one had ever seen it. We were paying so much per year for this airplane. That was just one item on that list and it got everybody sort of excited about why they were charging us for certain things. The transition was very good with Dr. Palms's insight as well as cooperation. Our first president had a lot of connections. Dr. Ingle had a lot of connections with Carolina.

Tomczyk: Well, Dr. Ingle worked at USC Columbia for many years and he knew the players and he know the statehouse a bit too.

Parker: He did. He knew his way around Columbia in a lot of ways politically, as well as inside the university system, which helped out a lot.

Tomczyk: Anything else about specific issues about the independence that come to mind?

Parker: There are always critical times and some things that happened. I remember we hired consultants to come in and tell us about the system and give us recommendations. It was called the Fretwell Report I believe. There were three notable academics that were hired to study our dilemma and come back with a recommendation of what we should do. They interviewed a lot of people. They interviewed a lot of Coastal people, they interviewed a lot of Carolina folks and they interviewed a lot people in our state about what our situation was and what they should do. Initially they came back and said, renew your contract, stay in the system and get a better deal.

It gets to the commission. I have to give credit to Gene Anderson. He basically quickly said "I want to make a motion to not accept the report and send it back to committee" right before our meeting.

Tomczyk: And Gene was on the Higher Education Commission and he made that suggestion?

Parker: He made that **motion** in the meeting later on. And we basically kicked it back to the committee for further study. And then we basically sort of analyzed what they were saying. There was a minority opinion and a majority opinion. One person was very much in favor of our leaving and two were in favor of our staying. We basically took the minority report to see if we can expand on it. We did a lot of research to throw documents to that. I have to credit Liston Barfield who was the House member at the time. Each one of us was assigned 30 minutes with one of the consultants. We would combine our time together. We would have an hour with one of them. I got 30 minutes. They would hear two songs differently. We combined our time together and kept this one guy, this one interviewer, professor, interviewed us together for an hour. That was the one that had the minority report when he came back later. We felt like a number of things happened at the right time.

Certain people claimed certain roles to make all of this happen. The commission like I said voted unanimously, was like a family to me. We spend a lot of time. I can remember when we made a presentation to the students, for example, the SGA. I asked Ernie Southern, who was a member of the commission, to go with me to this meeting. He had been a principal, a baseball coach. I made several comments about why we should leave the system, why it would benefit the students.

Tomczyk: Did you have a feel in advance of whether the students were for or against?

Parker: We didn't know exactly where the students were. We felt like they would be. Once they had more information, they would be more inclined to vote in favor of it. He made a statement that's very appropriate to our baseball today. He said, "Think of it like this. If we want to stay in the minor leagues, let's stay where we are. If we want to step up to the majors and play with the big boys, then we need to leave." And that was from a baseball coach back in 1991.

Tomczyk: And that clearly resonated clearly with the students.

Parker: They knew exactly what he was talking about.

Tomczyk: The SGA also did a vote for independence, did they not, in favor of?

Parker: They did. And the faculty had also, a lot of support groups and organizations throughout - the Chambers of Commerce of Myrtle Beach and Conway and Georgetown and the Georgetown. Higher Education Commission. I think the pivotal vote we got was from the State Higher Education Commission. When they voted to support our efforts to leave that became a statewide group that gave us a lot of credibility. I credit that to Fred Sheheen, the director of the commission at the time. He died recently by the way in a car accident about three weeks ago.

Tomczyk: Oh, I didn't know that. He did a lot of work in the commission. A lot was happening in the commission during his years.

Parker: A lot of good things were going on.

Tomczyk: Yes, absolutely. So, for the students, as you mentioned earlier there was a concern about the diploma. So when we did get our independence there was an option for the students wasn't there, for that diploma? That was one of the concerns early on for the students. We listened to them. What about the diploma? How did that work out for them when independence came?

Parker: Anybody already enrolled in the system they had that choice of graduating in cooperation with the university to get the USC diploma if they sought it, if requested it. A lot of folks didn't request that.

Tomczyk: So they had an option. If they started with USC- Coastal, their diploma could be a USC diploma if they chose. And that was the case for about a year?

Parker: Two years in transition.

Tomczyk: A couple of years.

Parker: I remember about four years after that they allowed the members of the trustees who were alumni if we wanted a Coastal Carolina University degree, we could get one. So about four of us who were alumni got Coastal Carolina University degrees after we became trustees. Yes about four of us.

Tomczyk. I didn't know that. When you think about that whole movement and it really was a movement that took as you said a lot of work from many people. Was there anything in that you would do over?

Parker: I don't know if I'd do over. I think the trustee that talked about me getting hit in the head with a 2x4? He honestly went back and tried to get some things changed quickly, but there wasn't time to do that. When the vote actually came down from Carolina, when the Trustees voted to allow us to leave - there was one vote against us. He felt like we didn't give him enough time. My only regret there was I could have told him earlier because we were on the same ad hoc committee. We became friends even though we disagreed on some issues. I regret that he had some strong feelings about that. He was trying in earnest to do some things about it, but we didn't give him enough time to do it. Again our minds were made up months before so it was a matter of timing and circumstance.

Tomczyk: So you would have hoped for a unanimous vote there just as you did with the commission locally.

Parker: Right, we had one dissenting vote.

Tomczyk: But a win is a win.

Parker: There you go. Yes, Ma'am.

Tomczyk: Anything else about that time that you were involved with the Board of Trustees? Any Board of Trustees' issues that after independence now and you dealing with hiring a President and doing the bylaws, anything else during your board of trustees' years that stand out as being especially hard won?

Parker: Well the decision for football was a big decision.

Tomczyk: Tell me a little about that. That took a while too. There were multiple studies for that.

Parker: It came through. It took several years to get to the football program. But go back to some influences. We had an Athletic Committee meeting at Francis Marion Univ. We were playing Francis Marion in basketball. We felt we would have us all over there. We called an Athletic Committee meeting. We asked Dr. Stanton to talk to us because he just came out of James Madison and they started a program of football a few years before he left there. We wanted him to comment what football would mean to Coastal Carolina and would he recommend or support it. He basically was very favorably in the process. I remember his quoting something like this, He said, "It will boost your numbers as far as enrollment because for every student that actually makes the team, he probably brought one or two friends with them who didn't make the team and they brought girlfriends to see the boyfriends play. So for every athlete that might be on field there are probably be five of them that came with them." So he gave numbers like that. Also he said it will create an atmosphere that you never had - never had for other sports. They'll be eating in the parking lots, they'll be grilling hotdogs. They won't do that for basketball because it is too cold, or for other sports it would be too hot. But for football, the fall season, it will create an air, an atmosphere on campus that you don't have. And he was right about all those things.

Tomczyk: Absolutely because with football comes cheerleaders and a marching band and all those other things that bring more school spirit.

Parker: Right. So I go back to Francis Marion had an influence on our football program I also look back at the people who helped us through the process. I mentioned Dr. Stanton at Francis Marion. Dr. Lightsey at the College of Charleston. Dr. Smith who is a retired president of Francis Marion but he's on the Lander Board of Trustees. He and I had a lot of conversations. Two days before our vote, I went and asked him if he would come to our meeting and be a part of that because we were using him as a consultant.

Tomczyk Is that Arthur Smith?

Parker: Ah, I have to make sure to get his first name right. He was the President of Francis Marion before Dr. Stanton. His first name sort of escapes me right now. He was a heck of a gentleman. [NOTE: After the interview, Clark confirmed the name Dr. Walter Douglas Smith, first president of FMU.] Politically he had the pulse of everyone in the state. He could tell you who could help in whatever process. I remember him being with us that day we voted to go independent. He was at the table with us. Dr. Singleton might have been a little bit jealous that we brought a Francis Marion person to the Coastal table to share with us. But I thought it was a very good day for us, for Dr. Smith and Dr. Singleton. Dr. Singleton probably wanted to see that day more than anyone else; that Coastal was moving in a direction by itself, independent and full authority to do the things we needed to do.

Tomczyk: ...which I suspect was really what the founding fathers had always hoped would happen in the Independent Republic of Horry.

Parker: Right, and a lot of it transferred. They made a major commitment to provide education for this part of the state and a lot of them had seen even in this picture [Parker holds a framed photo of Horry County Higher Education Comm. Members after the vote for independence on the steps leading to the Atheneum] were the original foundation members. These guys I spent four years with and one lady or two ladies actually, Ruthie Kearns and Lib Shaw. Ruthie is still very involved with the Commission. Of course, Lib Shaw is deceased. John Dawsey is in this picture and others who I talked about. Gene Anderson and Robert Rabon and others that committed a lot of time. I was there four years and we did a lot of research and spent a lot of extra time and extra meetings. These people put forth the time and energy to do what they thought was good for the institution.

Tomczyk: And it clearly was and it shows today.

I'm going to shift to some general questions that I ask all the people I interview. They are more generic kinds of things. For example, what do you see as the biggest change at Coastal since you were here as a student or on the Board or from any chronological starting point, what's the biggest change?

Parker: Well of course when I started here we had about 340 kids. There are probably 10, 300 now, right? Consequently that growth is what you see the biggest change in. I think the bigger we get sometimes we lose more intimacy as far as that is concerned. Coastal has been, by design, not grown dramatically or too quickly. They tried to pace their growth and that's a good thing because we've got to make sure we have quality faculty in the classroom to teach and a good ratio of students to faculty. That's important because we want everybody who comes here to have a pleasant experience as well as get an education. Part of that education is having to deal with people and your faculty come from a wide variety of backgrounds. They have dealt with a lot of different issues across the country and across the

world. I'm proud of the faculty we've got who are recruited at Coastal as well as retained. Looking at the number of students who apply here versus the number of kids get accepted here, it's a big difference. I don't know exact numbers but I think we accepted 203 out of 1100 applicants last year. [NOTE: the 2015 CCU Factbook states "percentage of accepted applicants enrolling totals 26%", page 20.] We are growing at a pace that is good and healthy for everybody.

Tomczyk: I think that managed growth issue is probably true for any business but may lose some quality in taking in too many. Coastal has been and the Board of Trustees helps in making those planning decisions on how much we are going to grow this year and the financial implications of that and others. That is a significant change no doubt that is far reaching. So with that what are some of the challenges that come with that? You mentioned a little bit about the size - too big a size sometimes may bring a challenge. Do you want to elaborate on that?

Parker: What I see maybe distance learning. Like Liberty University has done a good job of taking that classroom to the bedroom kind of philosophy and that has grown sort of exponentially for them. Right now we are basically limited by acreage and land. We might see more and more of that growth for us going in that same kind of direction. I see dollars coming out of Columbia being tighter because there's a lot of demand for tax dollars in this state. Coastal has traditionally over the number of years gotten smaller pieces of the pie than a lot of other institutions for a number of reasons. One thing they did when they went for formula funding when they held you status quo. Meaning at the time "You are not going to get more than or less than you got the year before." They held a lot of these campuses at that level. We saw very little growth in our state dollars. Right now I think right now the common phrase is "we are not state supported; we are state irritated."

Tomczyk: [Laughter] I heard it was state supported then state-assisted, but I hadn't heard state irritated. That's the next phase, I guess.

Parker: Right. But with dollars being tighter it's going to make us have to be more efficient. Which with Coastal I would be very proud I think Coastal has been very efficient in many areas. You look at what it costs to educate a student here versus attend Clemson or Carolina. Our numbers are dramatically much more efficient. Challenges are always going to be there. For us to compete worldwide, we still have got to recruit the best faculty and we still have got to recruit the best students that we can while maintaining that Horry County flavor and Georgetown and make sure we don't forget our original mission to help students in our immediate area.

Tomczyk: How do we do that? That's a great observation. How do you catapult yourself into the future for bigger and better things and yet still remember your beginnings?

Parker: I know when I was on the commission here, we were still providing scholarships to the top ranking students coming out of our high schools. We were still in a lot of cases getting the number two or three students below the line. I think a lot of quality students are coming out of our public schools here. A lot of our teachers that are going back to Coastal and are coming to Horry County Schools or Georgetown Public Schools. We have a natural incentive to help those students because they are one of our own. Those teachers are bleeding teal for us out there right now. I think those opportunities are going to get better. I think that we are going to see more and more students looking at other options and

looking at Coastal as their first option rather than their second or third. That's what we hope to see and we are seeing.

Tomczyk: I think you also mentioned location earlier. We are blessed in that the population of this area is growing. People are naturally moving south. We kind of reflect the population that resides here. That's another way that we are growing in spite of ourselves.

Parker: This is a good place to retire, military as well as others. We see a lot of our client base coming from New Jersey and Pennsylvania and those northern states are coming here primarily for weather and taxes, property taxes.

Tomczyk: Yes, absolutely. Well we talked a lot about independence. So my next question is: What was the most significant event at Coastal that changed you or had an effect on you during your time here. Are there some other events that really were a significant change? Clearly independence would be one, but what other event that really was a significant change for you that affected you in a particular way.

Parker: I think I mentioned before my decision to come here was driven by a lot of issues. I received a scholarship from Georgia-Pacific Foundation. My scholarship was greater than my tuition so I actually had extra money. So when I graduated from here I felt like I was blessed because I graduated with no debt which very few students now graduate today without debt. My wife also graduated without debt. She received a Horry County Higher Education Commission scholarship. The very commission I served on later on, she received her education through that process. So I felt that one, I had been blessed in so many ways for the opportunity to be here. Timing. They were able to add that third year at Coastal during the time I was here. They added a fourth year when I was here. Coastal and I grew up together. We were both born in 1954, that's my age. I felt a natural identity with Coastal in a number of ways. Also, I was truly blessed at the timing I came through here. I came here and I got a good education. It allowed me to raise my family here. I met my wife here. So a lot of good things happened in my life through this process.

Tomczyk: I'm curious about the Georgia Pacific scholarship. How did you even know about that? Did a local high school counselor tell you? What high school did you go to?

Parker: Aynor High School. I had a good counselor, Mrs. Hucks was my counselor. I originally planned to go into the military. Four of us had actually talked to the recruiter about signing up.

Tomczyk: What branch?

Parker: Air Force. Going into the buddy plan. Fortunately for me one of my buddies went out early; he went to Texas. He went to basic training, came back and talked us all out of going. He said you all don't want to do this. It was tough. You all don't want to do this. You all should all go home to college. That was the turning point for me.

Tomczyk: He was the scout and he reported back.

Parker: So, I turned my direction to college and I was not prepared for it. The athletic director and football coach Ed Jones at Aynor and my baseball coach Charles Stoudemire helped me to look at what

was available and the Georgia Pacific scholarship was identified for me to apply for. That's when I met the professor who came here later - he was on the Board of Education at the time. English Professor Wife. Anyway, I'll think of his name in a minute. [*His wife Marcia off camera offers the name: Parker*] Yes, it was Parker.

Tomczyk: Joyce Parker

Parker: Joyce Parker was the English teacher but her husband was actually at Horry County Schools.

Tomczyk: Marshall Parker

Parker: Yes, he was coordinating the scholarships so I met him before I got to Coastal and before he got to Coastal. As a student here I worked for two good employers. That helped me also with scholarship money during my time here.

Tomczyk: So as you think about your time at Coastal, Clark, are there any specific events you would like to recount or any specific memory or impression you would like to leave us with, in conclusion.

Parker: In conclusion I think Coastal has been blessed to have a family atmosphere, not only the faculty but to the students, to the staff. A lot of students coming here basically are needing a lot of help and assistance. A lot of them are coming from other places and they are homesick. I think that's taken care of after a period of time.

Tomczyk: And first time college students as well so their parents really may not be able to give them much advice.

Parker: To me Coastal has been that intimate relationship between the students and faculty and an administration that cared. They portray and study upon those students. What lasted with me over the years, we need to help each other in this process. The faculty to me have been extremely kind and considerate of helping me get through things that were tough. I've been able later on in life, I returned that favor with some business issues they needed to get through. To me it has been the closeness and caring relationships that I've seen with the faculty and staff. And the athletic dept. struggled living off of dimes and quarters from the vending to competing in a world series. So things have come a long way.

Tomczyk: Clearly they have, and you are still involved in higher education. Weren't you recently appointed by the Governor to serve?

Parker: I was appointed in January last year by the governor to cover an expired term that expired June 30th. I spent basically two years, a year and one half there.

Tomczyk: At the SC Commission of Higher Education.

Parker: Yes, Ma'am. That was a great experience for me. I met a lot of universities coming through there for various needs and circumstances. We met with a lot of issues. Of course funding is an issue all across. The state of SC lags behind our sister states, Georgia and North Carolina in what they commit to higher education. Again I think that's really a priority. I'm hoping that the legislation will see that it's a

greater priority than they have seen in the past. It's a process of education as far as substantiating what you are fighting for. A lot of the institutions have fought for a lot of good issues. I see funding still going to be a struggle in the years to come.

Tomczyk: We have been fortunate too to have eleemosynary organizations like the Coastal Educational Foundation and of course the Horry County Higher Education Commission with public funds that help supplement .funding that is available We have been blessed, the university has been blessed in that regard, and for the people who serve on those groups including yourself.

I really appreciate your taking time and going down memory lane with me and talking about some things going on at Coastal particularly during independence time. I want to thank you for your service. You have really made a difference in the state and at Coastal. Thank you.

Parker: My pleasure. Thank you.