

TRANSCRIPT- RUBY MURRAY

Interviewee: RUBY MURRAY

Interviewer: KIERAN W. TAYLOR

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KIERAN W. TAYLOR: Turn this on and check the levels here. This, this looks good. So just to start us out Ruby, can you say your name and when and where you were born?

RUBY MURRAY: Hi, my name is Ruby Murray. I was born in Kingstree, South Carolina. I am a resident of Berkeley County and I live in St. Stephens.

KT: Okay. Do you remember your first day of work? Any job? Tell me about what, when I asked that and something pops in your head, tell me about your first day of work.

RM: So my first job was a student employee at the College of Charleston for which I graduated from, but that was my first paying job. And I worked at the College of Charleston's bookstore and those experiences continued my love of books. And then, strangely enough, my first day of employment with the Citadel was January 17th, 1994. I arrive on campus and that's actually the start of Shannon Faulkner's first time taking full-time classes. So, I drive up on campus and there all these satellite trucks and I say to myself, oh, they're waiting for me. So, so that, that's a part of my journey.

Ruby Murray

KT: Oh my gosh! So that's your first day on the job? Did you have, was there an orientation before that, like, because I, you know, I think all staff and faculty have to go through at least a couple of days of orientation, but that wasn't your situation. Did we not do that back in the day?

RM: Back in the day, we didn't do that. I think a lot of that came afterwards. So prior to coming to work for the Citadel I had, I was working for the Berkeley County School System. And so, I was doing long-term substitution, things of that nature, but that was a hourly job, but it didn't come with benefits. And so I came like a Wednesday to interview at the Citadel. That Friday, they called with an offer and we did not go through the traditional two weeks' notice because I'd had a conversation with my principal. So that Monday morning I came to the Citadel to work.

KT: Had you been following the Shannon Faulkner case at all?

RM: I had some, some knowledge of it. Again, graduating from the College of Charleston, having opportunities to interact with the Citadel campus and having friends. I was quite aware of, of some of the stuff that went on.

KT: I mean, tell me what that was like then to be, you know, starting, just, you know, in the heat of that controversy?

RM: It was very interesting. The having the reporters on campus they would, when they could because as a day student, I remember she had this big leather coat and she would walk around. So the, the media was here for quite a while, just observing, doing reports and things of that nature. And then my first personal meeting with her

Ruby Murray

would have been, she came in to check out a book. It was like a recreational reading. So when I went to check her out in the system, there wasn't a record for her. So we get student tape loads of all students coming in on campus, but there was her name was not included in the tape load. So I had to ask her because she lived in her address was Powdersville. So I had to manually put her record in because it wasn't a part of the student tape load.

KT: Have you ever had that experience where a student's not in the database?

RM: There have been one or two occurrences, but that one stuck out to me because I would have expected

KT: That clerical error, clerical

RM: Error at that time.

KT: I mean, did, did you ever figure out why her name wasn't in there?

RM: I had my, my thoughts.

KT: Okay. What so what, what, how extensive was your interaction other than, you know, taking her information down? I mean, did you get a chance to talk to her at all?

RM: Not in that case, because again, that was, she came in January finished, would would've gone home for the summer and then her return where it had passed that

Ruby Murray

she could be a part of the Corps of Cadets. So that's when she came in that August. And we didn't see her after that.

KT: Okay. Okay. And so in, did that pose any challenges for, I mean, just with all the media attention, I mean, in terms of learning your job and, and kind of acclimating yourself to the Citadel, what was that like?

RM: Well, I started in January, so if you're in the book business or the library business, think about all the students that finished up their final papers and how many books you have to process. So coming to work for the Citadel library, I did not come from a library background per se. And I didn't think about her much. It was just processing, you know, learning a new job and then trying to get all the books back where they needed to be to start the semester.

KT: So your job, you were hired in as what, what was the position?

RM: I was hired as a library specialist. And at that time I was in charge of the circulation department staffing with student employees. Then subsequently my duties increased because in the latter part of say 19- the 1990s, we started doing reserve course materials, which would be where we physically held anything, a professor had books, things of that nature, but then we added the digital component and so that, you know, scanning and processing all of those things. So that was the first time the Daniel Library had started providing electronic reserve materials. And so, yeah.

Ruby Murray

KT: So, your responsibilities increased in that regard. Well, I want to go back and then come forward if that's all right. But so how, how long were you in Kingstree then? I mean, that's where you were born. Do you have memories of Kingstree?

RM: So I am the middle child of three sisters. So Kingstree is twenty miles from St. Stephens. And that's where the hospital that, or the doctor that my mother was using at that time. So where I live in Berkeley County, that's about seven miles from Williamsburg County. But life in Berkeley County and Williamsburg County was a little bit different. So because we were midway from Charleston being fifty miles to Florence, you either shopped in the closer towns or we would go to Kingstree to shop. So as a child going there for shopping things of that nature, but it was a different place because it was more agricultural. In terms of the residents, especially African-American families, you had folks where there was a lot more sharecropping in terms of, you know, the types of jobs where people had income, how they felt being where they were at. And so, we were always a little bit different coming from Berkeley County, where my hometown in my youth had about ten different companies that you can work for. And so a lot of the folks from Williamsburg County would come to Berkeley County for employment. Yeah. Because you travel where the jobs are.

KT: So, two sisters, and then tell me a little bit about the, your family. What did your parents do?

RM: So, both of my parents are from South Carolina, close to the town where I grew up. My father is the one male child of eleven sisters. Yeah. Think about that. And then my mom was one of seven children, that, that's two boys. No, I'm sorry. That's one

Ruby Murray

son and six girls. And so, I have lots of cousins, extended family. And so, being from rural Berkeley County, it's a place where you are pretty much related to everyone. And so that was a part of my excitement and moving away from a small town because everybody knows your family, they can look at you and I call it, do a visual DNA test. They look at you and they'll say, hey, you're so-and-so and so-and-so so.

KT: Yep. So there and I'm, I'm just wondering like where your parents at all affected by Santee Cooper, if they're from that part, that region, you know, the flooding project and the, the construction of those, those towns. I know that many, many people were displaced and those are strong memories for people who lived through that. But it was that any, was that a part of your family history at all?

RM: For my parents, everybody talked about the introduction of Lake Moultrie and what that meant for the area. For myself the [Cooper River] Rediversion Canal Project, which linked the silt and the, the stuff from the Ashley River that comes through Moncks Corner, that goes up to the lake system. So in St. Stephens, they built a dam that would hopefully help to clear up the silt. They also did a fish lift that would help the fish get from one part of the lake to the other. And so, the property that was purchased for that rediversion canal, it reshaped communities. Because again, we're talking about rural South Carolina where family members live close together. So a lot of folks are used to you live at the subdivision or the apartment complex where the, where your parents purchased. But for many of us, you live in areas where families either inherited land or purchased land. And so, your next-door neighbors are your cousins and things of that nature. So, for me the completion of the rediversion canal to leave my house now I have

Ruby Murray

to cross three, three bridges. The first bridge is like a mile from my house. And so just looking at the landscape, how it changed and where families' members lived versus where people ended up moving to support that project. And also for the town of St. Stephen, some of the rural areas any older homes, plantations, things of that nature would have been affected because of the scope of the, the Santee lake system,

KT: Where you in town or in the country?

RM: I live out of town. So I'm like seven, excuse me, I'm three miles out of the town of St. Stephen. But I'm on the line. So, St. Stephen is three miles. That way, Pine Hill, South Carolina is one mile that way. And yes, there was a difference. It's just small town rivalry.

KT: And that was like, you grew up on family land. I mean, he said some, you know, that had been in the family for several generations.

RM: Uh. And so my grandparents, my aunts, uncles, cousins, and that's kind of how it kind of circles out.

KT: And for the most part had, had worked as farmers?

RM: My grandfather was actually electrician. But people did farming even if they had other jobs. And so again, in that area, a lot of the men worked at the Naval Weapons Station, you know, the big employers of that time. So, my mom was an elementary school teacher, my father, the first eleven years after he left home, he worked for Bethlehem Steel in Baltimore. Then when he came back to South Carolina, he then

Ruby Murray

worked for the Naval Weapons Station until he retired. So, the whole idea of people traveling back and forth to work is, is something that's very natural. And a lot of people, again, from that area worked at hospitals, things of that nature. So, there was some rural transportation chances or people just carpoled.

KT: Yeah. Even while they maintain the connection to the land and the farm.

RM: Right. So you—

KT: There's always a couple of family members who are working in the city, working at the Naval Base.

RM: Right. Because I've been, and this is a little bit before me, but even as a child you work those other jobs, but to support income, you still planted cotton, did vegetables, things of that nature. So it, it was a duplicity in terms of working away from home, but then still having lots of responsibilities once you returned home,

KT: How old were you when you started? And I'm, I'm assuming here that coming to Charleston was kind of a big deal that there's a little bit of excitement around coming into the, into town.

RM: Oh, yes.

KT: And I'm wondering what are your memories of coming to Charleston?

RM: Coming to Charleston?

KT: Know why would you come? And what was that like?

Ruby Murray

RM: So, coming to Charleston was always a big occasion. A lot of, again, you're coming to doctor's offices. If you watch television, you saw all these commercials for businesses. So, coming down King Street and seeing the, you know, Jackson Davenport or these commercials it, it was really exciting. And then for, for healthcare. If you had to come to any of the local hospitals, things of that nature, and then that also put you in close contact with fast food. So that, that was the excitement coming to Charleston. You can go to Burger King, takes two hands to handle a Whopper, two to fist burger from Burger King. So, you could do the jingles, KFC, things of that nature. So, it was always that excitement and again, for shopping, but it wasn't an everyday occurrence. It was for special occasions.

KT: Right.

RM: And then by the mid-eighties traveling to Charleston just became more of a, a constant, but yeah.

KT: So how old would you have been before you came down without parents or without family members?

RM: Hmm. I think as a freshman for college.

KT: Not until college?

RM: Right. Again, you would come to Charleston, you would go to the Battery. So the Battery on Sundays was the place to be, people would be from one side of the East Bay Street to the other. And that, that also meant that the residents who had their houses

Ruby Murray

on the Battery probably were not home because of so many people in town. And so, I think that laid way for the Waterfront Park to just kind of shift people's, you know.

KT: Interesting. Yeah. I'd never thought about that, that, that Waterfront Park that there were those dynamics that, that absorbed a lot of that energy.

RM: Right. So you, you would come for those kinds of things and then you come down, you get dressed and you're just people watching and interacting, and then they would have like food vendors and things of that nature. But my first long-term stay in Charleston was as a college student.

KT: Okay. And so you, you come to the, what, what was your, your major at the college and what, why the College of Charleston, did you, where you had you given thought to any other colleges to attend or?

RM: So I had given thought to, I knew I wanted to go to college in state- you know- like normal students, you have these college fairs. And so I had gotten information for a whole lot of colleges, and there was a school in Anderson and the, and the card came. And so my oldest sister is ten years older than I am. And she was like, oh, I see you're interested in this school and what she says is well, "I just want to remind you of one thing that," and this is again, back in the day when people are not traveling like they do now. So, she said, "I just want you to know you will be coming home for Thanksgiving and Christmas." And so, let's just say, I lost that particular place, but secondarily to that my, as a, from a family of educators, the College of Charleston had a fantastic reputation in terms of success with your, what was then the NTE or your Praxis

Ruby Murray

exams. So think about you wanting to have whatever career you want, but your career also comes with national certification. So if you want to be an accountant, an engineer, or something like that, you have to take these boards and the score, first of all, you have to pass. And then at times those scores also played a role in what you were paid. So my mother had been doing a great inventory of the younger students coming in, who were teaching in the name that had the best results in terms of the success was the College of Charleston. Also at that time, what you know is Charleston Southern University was a Baptist College. And they had had a, a time where they had some financial issues. And so,

KT: It's that wasn't really much of an option then Baptist.

RM: Yeah. Not as much of an option. But the College of Charleston.

KT: You had family members to go to the college?

RM: Yes. I had had cousins that actually attended both the Citadel and the College of Charleston, but I had legacy cousins that in, in the school, you know, if you've attended. So I had cousins that had graduated from College of Charleston in the seventies.

KT: Okay. So arriving at CofC in the, what, mid to late eighties, right? Is that about right?

RM: Yeah.

KT: I mean, tell me, tell me about that. You know, moving into the city and starting at the college, what was the college of Charleston like in the, the eighties?

Ruby Murray

RM: So I think my, when I arrived at college of Charleston, enrollment it was about seven thousand. And as you know, that you live on campus or you commute. So, one of my funny memories moving from quote, the country to the city, is the sound of hearing fire trucks and ambulances. So if you live in a rural area if you're at home and you hear an ambulance or a fire truck, everybody goes outside to say, where are they going? What's going on? What should we do in the home? Especially if you have rural fire department, everybody responds, whether you're rendering aid or you're just being nosy. And so being in my dorm room, it took me a while to stop running to the window because it was so ingrained. So when I'm in Charleston and I hear sirens, it doesn't bother me, but if I'm at home on the weekends and something goes by, it's like, everybody's like, did you hear that? Where do they go? I went to cousin Lucy's or whatever, whatever. So, that, and things being open later those, those were some, that adjustment.

KT: Did your classmates pick up on the fact that you were country?

RM: Hold on. I'm just trying to think of my—not so much. And, and there were other people who were from rural communities. So, so we had that commonality. I don't know that it was as obvious that I was like running into the windows. But you had Francis, St. Francis hospital Roper, MUSC, or they called it Medical in that day, but it was, it just took me a while.

KT: Did you encounter like unique Charleston accents or not? Or not, not so much.

Ruby Murray

RM: Yeah. We all have different speech patterns, even myself. I sound one way here,

KT: But when you get home.

RM: Soon as I crossed the top of the bridge, I will sound totally different. I had lots of folks from Spartanburg, Greenwood, folks from Conway, Florence. So, to me, they had more of a Southern twang. And then they would say, I sound one way. And I was like, but this is what you sound like to me. My sister, who's ten years older than I am, her speech pattern is very lyrical. You would think she was from a Caribbean island, I think for myself and my younger sister, because of television music and things like that. It's kind of smoothed out.

KT: Interesting. In that ten years, even though you grew up in the same household, it's just that ten years difference.

RM: Yeah. Yes. Again television, and like I said, we will be somewhere and someone now, let me, if we're in Florence, folks from Florence would say, oh, you must be from Berkeley County or someplace else, or they'll say, well, you sound like so-and-so. But I think for my oldest sister, it's much more pronounced.

KT: Oh, so how did you get from CofC to-- because your, your major was you, you were not a librarian. You weren't on any kind of track to be a librarian.

RM: Correct. And so my undergraduate degrees in education, my master's degree from the Citadel is in literacy. And so I had this strange epiphany that happens to people

Ruby Murray

later in life. So I had worked in someone's library since elementary school. I was always part of the library club. In our small town, the library was open three days a week. Then it went four days a week. Then it was open five days a week. So I was always reading, always at the library, the college career, I was so focused on the education component. The voice did not say, well, if you love books that much, why don't you get a career? And so I did it the hard way. So our teaching faculty, the folks that you see in the military uniforms, they have their masters in library science. I do not. My youngest sister was an English major in college. She has her MLS and is a school librarian. So it's like I found my calling, but I just did it in a different way.

KT: And you'd mentioned earlier that you made this transition from, was it student teaching, or you had this job directly, just immediately before the Citadel?

RM: Immediately before the Citadel. So one of the things as a College of Charleston student, unlike the Citadel, there were lots of opportunities for college students to work and get experiences in various departments. And so, again, I worked in the college bookstore, ordered college textbooks, shipping, packing, all those things. And then I also had every other job that was available on campus, where I worked with students. And so the transition is just, I ended up working with the books and the books got me the job in the library. But the good news is I am now able to use my education background. My background in literacy, my background, and having worked with college students and high school students for so many years

KT: Who hired you at the Citadel, who, I don't even know who the director was?

Ruby Murray

RM: The director of the library was Zelma [G] Palestrant. And she was the director of the library. And I'm hesitating because I'm trying to find the words. So it's always great to take advantage of opportunities because you don't know where that opportunity will lead to another opportunity. So my sister did an internship with the College of Charleston's library, and then she worked at the Citadel. And so they needed someone to come over because they were having some staff meetings and things of that nature. And so that's how I first came to the Citadel and met her. And, and, and when I say met that, I mean, at that particular event, one of the events were just had a chance to say hello. So I think that connection, having had some experiences with the Daniel Library was helpful in terms of my career shift.

KT: And, you know, I'm thinking well, for me and for the students, what, what, what did the, you know, how, how would the Daniel Library look different in the mid-nineties? What, what would you know, what, what would the experience of going, because it's, you know, we all know it as you know, we have our interactions with the library, but what was it like in the mid-nineties that would be different for the particularly for the student experience?

RM: So you would enter the library, the same doors, but where that grand stairwell is, would have been the circulation office, where it had our reserve materials and we would meet and greet you. In terms of resources, back then everything was about Xerox copying, because you're not at where you have all the digital things that you guys have. So, the need to make Xerox copies, VHS tapes—I've tried to write some stuff down—fax machines, things are getting faxed back and forth, microfilm, which is that

Ruby Murray

small piece of film that you would have to take to a machine and then pay to print the pages. And so that technology had folks coming into the library much more often. Yeah. Then now for you guys, you enjoy more of a digital experience. And so, from that time to now, the library has also tried to keep up with technology. So not only was there the installation of the grand stairwell, but bring the building up to code in terms of providing data, because, you know, the big thing for us was we had fifteen laptops that we could check out. Now, I think we have what, 64. And just those, those things where there was some interruption in services, because we had to outfit the library with data portals, things of that nature. And so just trying to keep up with all the changes. So there used to be, when you go in the BOV area, you have all this open space, but those were once filled with all the Eric fiche, all the microfiche for everything. And so,

KT: How about, was there a physical card catalog still onsite, and you would use that in a digital an online catalog or was it just the physical?

RM: It was, we had the, the card catalog, and then we slowly started phasing that out, but yeah, we, we the card catalog.

KT: I'm not sure they know what a card catalog is.

RM: A card, a card catalog is a beautiful wooden structure that has shelves in it. And you would pull the shelf out and you would alphabetically look for whatever subject. So, if you were doing business, you would look it up or they had reference books where if you wanted like a particular author or things of that nature, when you don't use terminology, you lose it.

Ruby Murray

KT: I know, I know, I know. How do you explain the card catalog?

RM: So that was the paper form of what you enjoy doing when you go to the computer and you type in that you want to do a paper on *Tales of Two Cities* or whatever. Well, before it would have been, you went to this thing to find the book, *Tales of Two Cities*. Then, you would go to another resources to find authors who had done reviews of *Tales of Two Cities*. Then you would go to something else to find articles or journals that talked about the *Tales of Two Cities*. So now with the electronics that you enjoy, that's why we're able to convert space into usable space for you to study and things of that nature, because prior to that, everything required a separate resource..

KT: Yeah. And they, they were these huge structures in the library and you, you just have to, you know, scroll through it. I mean, there would have been probably like an like cards by author, subject, and maybe title where those like three separate do you remember what the standard was? You know, something like that, but if you knew the title of the book, you could go in the, you know, the call numbers in there.

RM: Then you could you subject areas

KT: Probably, by author and my God, how did we, how did we do anything?

Speaker 3: So you'll have librarians working, you know, in the new books, in the new card typing or changing. In that time they cannot erase nothing, you have to re make them.

Ruby Murray

KT: Yeah. That was a big job for librarians is to type those, keep those cards updated. And anyway, so you know, I know that a big part of that, I mean, you've long been committed, you know, I think I'm going to editorialize, you've had an expansive view of librarian and what libraries should be doing. And I'm thinking specifically about the kind of work that you do in connecting the larger community to the Citadel, and also to the work that you do with students, which in a lot of ways, it goes way beyond like the narrow definition of what your job is. And I'm wondering how, you know, was that there from the beginning, or did you have to create that space to be able to do, to, to kind of redefine your job?

RM: I think a lot of that came from me in that any job that you take, it comes with a description of what's required of you personally. Before I knew, I knew there was a term called "servant leadership". I brought a lot of what I had learned from home and, and from my community in terms of helping others sharing also being from a place far from Charleston, if you called and you asked, you said, do you have this part? Sure we do. And then, you get to Charleston and somebody made up the answer and they don't have it. They didn't understand what that cost in terms of time and money. So, because I had worked with students pretty much from elementary school, but again, my last time would have been with high school students. I kind of brought what happens when you leave high school, where you're comfortable to be in a big city, in a different place. Also again, the library served not only the needs of our cadet students, but we had graduate students who a lot of them were changing careers. And so, my philosophy was, you know, my philosophy of, I would say customer service was, hey, how can I help be warm and inviting? And a lot of times I try to go beyond that in terms of finding ways to not

Ruby Murray

only help and be an influence. Cause we had a lot of community members that visited the library. So a lot of, and what I would say to my coworkers or when we hired new folks, I would say, you don't have to do what you see me do because that's a part of who I am and what I'm comfortable doing. And so, a lot of times it'd be like, hold on, let me go get miss Ruby because she can help you with so-and-so and so-and-so.

KT: I thinking, you know, the, I mean, this, the Citadel you know, they're these barrier, you know, I think other colleges campuses are much more accessible to the, their larger communities, but the Citadel just being with the Citadel is being like physically a gated, you know, structure. There's some challenges to overcome to make the library or make the campus, you know, more welcoming to the larger community. And I'm thinking, you know, there's also definitely a racial component to that. And I know I've spoken to enough African-Americans who grew up downtown, who talked about being told by their parents, you stay away from, from that place, you know, that that can only be, you know, trouble and, you know, there was just all those kinds of feelings and a history there. So, I'm wondering you know, if you could comment a little bit about that and, and the role you've played in making it a more welcoming campus and welcoming library.

RM: I think what you say is quite powerful and it's not just how locals felt about the Citadel, but also the College of Charleston. So as a College of Charleston student, back and forth, you would get different responses from the locals. Some would be surprised that you would speak to them because they would feel that because you were there not so much, the College of Charleston had policies where for graduation, they

Ruby Murray

would cover up what is Randolph Hall and the Cistern, they would cover all that so that no one could look at graduation. Coming to the Citadel, there were folks who were not comfortable with the campus. A lot of times I would actually take the city bus from here, back to the College of Charleston. Because as I was working at the Citadel's library, my sister was working at College of Charleston library.

And so, the stories you would hear on the city bus about the Citadel, the College of Charleston, Mark Clark Hall just how things were done in Charleston. So the first thing you learned when you got on the city bus was, you know, you said, good evening, good morning, you spoke. And then some, they would ask you, well, why are you, where are you on your way to whatever, whatever, whatever. And even one of our librarians, his mother worked on campus and worked in the mess hall. And when he said that he had gotten a job at the Citadel, she was very, very concerned. And he yeah, she was very concerned. So he would have been one of our librarians and she was like, okay,

KT: But you ready for this?

RM: You need to be careful. But that was, it was a mixture of so many different things. So you think of the campus as a place where you come and you're getting an education, but there were also people coming on campus to work and to serve others. And so that overall treatment wasn't always the same. And so, as anyone knows, if you come upon me, I try to be warm and welcoming. And I think that job has allowed me to experience so much. And so I was, again, like I mentioned, Shannon Faulkner's first day. So, January 17th of next year, will make my 28th year at the Citadel. So, I was here when Genieve Hardney and Libby Henry, our two first African-American female cadets came.

Ruby Murray

I was here when Jeanie Mentavlos, Kim Messer, Petra Lovetinska and Nancy Mace came as our first four female cadets. And so think about the lots -- The Citadel never had a welcome center. Cadets would go to Mark Clark Hall. So the library was the one place that was open to the public. So because we are a public institution and the library is open to the public. And so just that opportunity to meet people from, you know, a part of their student journey, their graduate journey, or just folks coming to the library to use it as a resource. One of the gentlemen that you see all the time, Mr. Michael Bonaparte, one day he left his resume in the copier and it was one of those typed things. And one of the ladies came and said Ruby, I found this in the copier and I looked at it and I was like, ugh. So I called him and I was like Mr. Bonaparte, you left your resume in the copier, but if you don't mind, I could make some improvements to it.

KT: (Laughing)

RM: And so, he lives around the corner and, you know, he said, "you did my re—I didn't get any call backs, but since you did my resume, I got these calls back". So, seeing Citadel families return, alumni, people who have different interest, there's a—we've all heard of an Austin Martin, which is like a James Bond car, but there's something called an Austin Healey. So like what, prior to the pandemic, I had a couple come and I was like, oh my God, I just love this car, whatever, whatever. And they were like, well, you know, we have a festival we're going to be at the Yorktown, come on by. So here I am on a Saturday with all these beautiful classic cars, you know, having that experience. And so there are those beautiful experiences. And then there's the sadness

Ruby Murray

that comes from, you know, when cadets don't make the best decisions or you know, sometimes that's hard cause you're, you're disappointed in what's happened to them.

And most recently you've heard the name Myra Thompson as one of the victims of the Emmanuel Nine shooting. So, Ms. Myra actually got two master's degrees during the time that I was at the circulation desk. And then there's Cynthia Graham. Her too, actually, married one of my best friends from college. But what you may not know is that Cynthia actually worked for the Daniel library almost three years doing reference work. And she would have been the local librarian down at the Dart branch before she moved to West Ashley at the St Andrew's. And so, you know, coming into work that day and finding out that Cynthia had passed and watching the news and from Ms. Myra, they always had this picture where it was like right on her face. And you could just see look the gray.

And I kept saying that lady looks familiar to me. And it, it took about three days and then it hit me. That was Myra Thompson, who was the wife of one of the ministers on Bull Street from the Reformed Episcopal Church. And that would have been the aunt of one of my best friends from college's husband. And so you, you have where you're working with the public and meeting people and you experienced these highs and these lows. But I think what's important is the relationships that you build. My mind is not like- I wish I could be like a historian- so the way I catalog things, I'm horrible with dates. I recognize faces. I wish I could be more precise in some things, but even this past matriculation, there was a gentleman and I was like, "oh, you look so familiar to me".

You know? And so nowadays people get really nervous if you're like talking to them. I was like, but I know you asked it. I know you either from here or the College of

Ruby Murray

Charleston, he's almost defensive. I was like, you worked on your master's degree. And then he was like, or even one of the professors - professor Jim Smyre. I remember him because he's a Citadel grad and being in the, I take it back. I'm not sure whether he's a Citadel grad. My interaction was with him in the library. And so, when he first came on back on campus, he was like, oh, I work here. And so now when I see him, I still address him with that familiarity because I remember him from that time.

KT: I'm finding like, COVID has really messed me up with people. Like I felt like the discontinuity is, I don't know, I've just, I'm forgetting names. And at least that's what I'll pass it off on.

RM: It is names. It's not seeing people in their regular spaces also as a result. It's not your imagination,

KT: Faces. You know,

RM: For a lot of folks, they have retired or have been unable to return. I know for myself my job changed where I stopped working with students and started managing the Friends of the Daniel library, which is the lecture series. And getting away from working with students, it's been a little bit different. So now it's like, we're on the third class where I don't have that same kind of connection because I, the best way to explain it. And I saw one of them and I call all cadets, my cadets. I saw one of my cadets and I said some Foster, well, yeah. Cause you know you're a sophomore and there was like, "no, Ms. Ruby, I'm a junior," because the last time we had any interaction they would have. And then the class before it was half of the time, then the previous freshmen class.

Ruby Murray

KT: Well, let me, oh, I mean, I could, I could ask you questions for three weeks, but I got to restrain myself, jump in. What, what questions do any of you have? And you can either you know, the mic should pick it up or if you want to come up closer, that'd be fine.

Student 1: Yes ma'am, so one of the questions I had was outside of going down to Battery Park, while you attended the College of Charleston, what was the night life like, like were people going downtown? What did, what was the college student doing on a Friday night besides going to the Battery?

RM: Well, the College of Charleston was not party central. Let me say that. For now, the fraternity row was always super-duper busy. So that was without saying my amazement being able to see, so the fraternity houses are on Wentworth Street and then there's Glebe Street that comes back to Randolph Hall. But first time I was able to stand on the street and smell beer that far down, I was totally amazed. So we for the African-American students the, again, the sorority and fraternity sponsored parties at the Stern Center. And then there were a lot more house parties. So a house party is just a group of friends. You go to whose ever apartment or whatever, whatever. And so that was that. And then College of Charleston basketball was big. And so a lot, a lot of folks went to basketball games on whatever nights.

There were clubs on King Street. So there were places for people to go, lots of bars. I will date myself. When I came to Charleston, the drinking age was eighteen, then it went to twenty one. So yeah, so there were, there were lots of fun things to do, but in comparison, I will say in comparison to my friends who went to different colleges, we

Ruby Murray

thought we were doing stuff, but we weren't, we weren't partying like fellow students. So sometimes I, I feel like cadets in terms of you have to find a party. But our, but our campus just wasn't party central.

Student 2: With technology changing, how do you foresee the library itself changing in the next fifteen, twenty years?

RM: Even our library is in the process of changing. So, like I said when you come into the library and you look to the left all that seating area where the lab, where the computer terminals are and all of that seating, previously all of that would have been reserved books, where you are on the right side- where you see all of where a Starbucks is- all of that would have been reference. So every day, even I can't keep up with the changes in terms of the building. You will see less and less physical materials. We spend almost \$200,000 on electronic databases. And so the library itself will move towards being a physical place where hopefully more students have study areas. Because anytime you get rid of any space, you want to return it to where our students have quieter places to study. In terms of the technology, I almost can't keep up. So when I stopped working with reserves and just going upstairs to do fundraising, I think what did we, we had, you could borrow laptops and some calculators. Now we have everything from GoPros, every kind of camera you can think of. We even have a flipping metal detector. And so the types of every charge or a Mac cords.

And so the needs of the students are being recognized, but the swiftness of how technology changes is like I go downstairs and I'm like I don't quite know what that is used for. So I will say that we're doing a great job of trying to keep up, but the vision is

Ruby Murray

endless in terms of what may be the next big thing. I know a of college campuses have where the library is a place where you can have like lockers and things of that nature, where you can get deliveries and things of that nature we're restricted by space. But that doesn't mean that the next big idea won't land at the library.

Student 3: Do you think, the library will ever go like totally virtual and never have and get rid of all their physical books or...

RM: I would say not in that there's something to be said about physical resources. The South Carolina libraries have this consortium. And so what, we actually have a lot of history books that other libraries don't have. And so I think the state is trying to not have so much of a duplication of services. And this weekend, what, there was a power outage at the game. Everything electronic is real fantastic when it works. Was out in Sumter, South Carolina and for whatever reason, hey, I got a conspiracy theorist seriously power outage there, power outage in North Charleston, then I'm in Sumter. And like the credit card machines are going down. And that was a lot of unhappy folks. So I think there is value in having those physical resources, but as you've heard of ransomware and different things, when you come become totally dependent, that means you have to have electricity.

You have to have, when was last time you went to print something and it said, your driver's no good, but you just got the printer. And so, the danger is once everything becomes electronic, you see that we're not having a lot of good success and keeping ransomware from holding from the smallest town to a major corporation hostage. So, we have to balance our smartness, but I think physical books are here to stay. The quantity

Ruby Murray

may continue to reduce, and yes, there are colleges and areas that have gone completely virtual, but that just means every penny that they spend has to go to the cost of those indexes and databases. And so, if we're spending \$200,000 on us for a portion of it, imagine what the budget is for that school, where everything they receive is electronic. And with providers, there sometimes is no competition.

So if you need Jstor and they raised the price by whatever percentage, but you don't have anything physical today you're going to have to pay for that. So you gotta be careful in these games that we sometimes play, you have to look at it from several resources. So, I have all my books electronically, but then at home, cause I'm a bookaholic, I have my book collection, where for me,

KT: When you say home--

RM: Okay. I use a dualism. I live in St. Stephens. I work in Charleston. So, I'm in Charleston, Monday through Friday then.

KT: You're on campus.

RM: And so during the weekends,

KT: So where are the books?

RM: All over, all over. The only thing that has slowed me down with my book purchasing is over the years, working in the library, all that humidity and stuff like that, my allergies are a little wonky.

And so I've kind of gotten away cause, you know, if someone is, if there's perfume on the book or cigarette smokers or something like that but I, I like listening to

Ruby Murray

music and reading a physical book. Cause if not, you have to have your electricity, you have to plug it in. And so I have my hurricane books. Cause if there's bad weather, I'm going home and I'll have to have my reading material.

KT: St. Stephen is still home?

RM: Yes and no. I have. So at the beginning of this conversation, I talked about my mother and father being from large families as Marina can tell you, I am from Miami to New York, several times a year, just visiting with family. Don't know what the family structure will look like because now the younger cousins do so much with technology, but our relatives that of our generation, we visit together.

We travel together, we do these kinds of things. So you know, from Miami, my love of Cuban food, Dominican food. My aunts live in Rahway, New Jersey, which has a huge Lithuanian community. So I, I am a contradiction on many levels, but again, that's from being from a very small community, but having that desire to learn about others and do different things. And so, it's like over the years, my family actually waits for us to come to town because we're like, we're going this way. We're going that way. The mistake I made as a college student was not studying abroad. So now I have to study on my own dime. And so I traveled, we traveled internationally and have again met people where you have that connection.

Student: You were talking about your first day on campus with it being Shannon Faulkner first days, I'm just curious. I had kind of two questions about that. What was the overall vibe on campus like those first couple of days? And then adding on to that, I'm

Ruby Murray

sure you know, that Pat Conway is working in the library here, at The Citadel. What are your thoughts on him? Paying Shannon Faulkner tuition when she became a day student.

RM: Which one let's let, let's start with Pat Conroy and then remind me of the second question. Because to know Pat Conroy, the kind of man he was and his, his kindness and he had his own tough row to hoe with his books, *Lords of Discipline*. And so we would have, prior to his illness, he would come in and we would have these book signings. And so everyone, you're either buying the books for your bringing in your books and that man would sit there and not only autograph every book, but having an in-depth conversation to that person who he was autographing the book for and, and why, why, and to whom and what did this person. So to have those encounters with him and how he felt for that period of time, where he was pseudo non grata at his beloved institution, I could see where he would look upon her desire to come to the Citadel whether right wrong or indifferent, but pay homage to that.

So that doesn't sound strange at all. And you remember that big speech where he invited the class of—which one was it? To come to his, his funeral for which there were cadets who did this whole, did a graduation speech. And he said, invited that class to come to his funeral. So that speaks to the man and maybe what he was trying to do. So, so that makes sense. So far as her coming on campus and what the Citadel environment was, again, it was a duality, it was the folks who were some kind of upset. Oh, they had t-shirts you, you read, you know, the 1900 and 1 that t-shirt. Yeah. So it, it was there even amongst employees, there were those who you know, welcoming their students. We had the director of marketing at that time. His name was Terry Leedom. And what, so he presented the Citadel as anti-Shannon Faulkner with no exception. So some of the

Ruby Murray

comments he made in the newspaper if you remember, I'm trying to make sure I'm not getting my people confused.

But yeah, so some of the things he said in newspapers sometimes I get leery of campus surveys so that he, he sent out a survey and asked, what was your opinion on her being on campus? So he got the results. Then he went on local radio and said that nobody at the Citadel wanted her, her there. So alumni had their reasons. My position was I've been the person in a place where you're not, you don't feel welcome for reasons beyond your control. So just those years of save it, save the males in that, that whole vibe. It, it was, it was taxing.

KT: The library, where did your fellow librarians come down? You think generally?

RM: Oh, talk about a ride back in the wayback machine. Again, because I did circulation and I was out front so, and, and that's why I make a good circulation or information person. Cause I'm talking back and forth, cataloging people in the back are not the life of the party. So I don't really, and we had an older staff, one of the librarians, her, excuse me, one of the technical people, her husband was Lee Martin, who was the director of human resources when I came. So I can't tell you that I remember specifically what a lot of them said, some of the older ingrained librarians were not impressed. Yeah.

KT: Other questions? Is um—anything that, that you feel that, that I did not ask, or maybe something you touched upon that you wanted to elaborate on or, you know, what, what did I miss?

Ruby Murray

RM: I think we covered everything. I will say to the cadets. I talked about my first job being at the college of Charleston. So whether it's a paying job or an opportunity to do an internship, you want to take advantage of those opportunities because that helps you to learn about how businesses run, how business runs, how you know, financials the whole, the whole nine. Again, having that responsibility as a college student to order thousands of dollars' worth of textbooks or working for programming for the college where you, whatever you do, you have to account for the, the money that is spent, you're, you're responsible for the health and safety of students. So all those things were really valuable to me. And you had asked about our, our proudest moments and how you interact with people.

Sometimes you don't recognize the value of that interaction until later on. So two stories I'll share with you. Again, I remember faces, but it's when it's time for me to go home in the evening, I can't find my car keys. And so we've had long-term folks come to the library, whether it's reunions, whatever reason. So there was this one particular gentleman that I didn't know personally, but I remembered his name and I would see him different places on campus. And so it wasn't that he knew my name, I remembered his name, but, you know, how is your son, blah, blah, blah, blah. So I had just taken over, left from circulation and reserves, had just started the friends of the Daniel Library, which is our lecture program. And so you do fundraising. And so this particular day the gentleman comes in and I'm like, "oh, hey, I'm so glad to see you".

And he's like, so what are you doing now? And I'm like, oh, I'm in charge of the friends. And he was like, well, I have some, I tell me a little bit about it. And so he was like, well, how much have you raised? And I'm like, oh, I've raised about \$3,500. And he

Ruby Murray

was like, well, tell me, what are you thinking about doing? So we go through this conversation, blah, blah, blah. Then he whips out his checkbook. And so he says, well, all right, I want you to be able to do some of the things. And he did not look like me at all. He's from the Northeast, but he whips out his checkbook and he says, okay, I want you to be able to do some of the things you've talked about. And I was great friends with Angie [Le Clercq] who was our previous librarian.

And so he wrote me a check for \$6,500 to bring my fundraising total to \$10,000. And that was again, simple things, acknowledging conversation, the spirit hat, treating people the way you want to be treated. And then my second story would be it's okay to know stuff, even if it's a lot of stuff. Cause sometimes when, you know, a lot of things, you're like, hmm, well, I don't want to come across overly knowledgeable, even though you don't want to be the and so I had done an interview for the Citadel for a program that we do in February where we have an African-American Bazaar. And so this gentleman saw me on the news, contacted me to set up something where he could meet with the community and some cadets. And so and, and this gentleman was with the Navy. And so at the time my nephew had switched his major to, from engineering to something called health physics. I had never heard of it. I didn't know what health physics was. And I'm like, well, how's he going to get a job? So health physics is how you use radiation and health and industry. So again, we're at this event and so they're trying to get students to think about going into the military and focusing on the new NPOC program, which would be nucleus, submarines, and warships.

And so what, and we're talking, there's all kinds of folks. Then I was like, yeah, because, you know, once you get out of the military you need to find jobs. And so you

Ruby Murray

can go to—what was it? You can go to nukejobs.net and you can find all these nuclear jobs. Did you know that 114 nuclear power plants in the, whatever, whatever. And so he says to me, he was like, oh man, that sounds fantastic. Do you want to go and see a nuclear submarine? I was like, oh, that is fine. He, he gets my information. He doesn't say anything. I don't say anything. And then I get this letter. So if that was like February, like in May I get this letter and it says you've been selected to be a part of the, the Navy's educator program. And so I thought I was going to Goose Creek to see a nuclear submarine.

They flew me, I went to San Diego and we actually went out on the nuclear submarine, the San Francisco. And so I say that to students, when you have folks come on campus and they do their presentations, you use that opportunity to introduce yourself, to them, find some commonality. You never know where it's going to lead you. Even if it's a job, you probably don't even like, and you think, I don't know if I want to do that. Take advantage of these opportunities because those interactions, the ring will do a lot, but you have to have that experience. So being a Citadel grad may get you the job, but how do you plan on keeping the job? And so, I encourage you just from listening to me, today, what do you need to know? You can be from anywhere. You can do anything if you treat people well, if you give of yourself to others, your trajectory is, is endless.

So I've enjoyed my time working for the Citadel. Any day I get phone calls or whatever from grads, sometimes when I'm going up north, I call my cadets and we meet at the stretch Stafford exit 143 B in Virginia, all my cadets from Quantico, we'll meet in the shoppers parking lot. Again, these students from all over the country, all over the world, they don't look like me, but the commonality is we have the Citadel experience

Ruby Murray

I've learned from them. They've learned from me. And that's what networking really means. You can't use a Citadel network if you don't know any Citadel people.

KT: Thank you so much for joining us today. This was terrific, you know, great way to start our semester. Right?

RM: Thank you all so much. I'm so honored to gotten this chance to tell you a little bit about myself. And if you see me around campus, let me put my little mask on. So I'm the little short lady that walks really fast down the sidewalk.

RM: Well, yeah, I'm that invite myself to class. Cause I love the whole series you guys did with

End of recording

MLL 12/7/2021

RM 1/25/2022