

**Interviewee:** Moser, Rita  
**Interviewer:** Robin Sellers  
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**Sellers:** Rita, would you tell me a little bit about where you were born and where you grew up, please?

**Moser:** I was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and grew up there until I left for college. And I went to Michigan State University, which is about an hour and a half from there. Graduated from Michigan State with a degree in English Education and decided to pursue a masters degree in Counseling, which I did at Western Michigan University, which is in Kalamazoo. With the masters degree, I began my work in university housing, working first at Northern Illinois University for a year and a half, and then I came to Tallahassee because I had a sister who lived here. And I started at FSU in the Fall of '76 as the coordinator – well, we were called residence counselors then – I was the resident counselor at Kellum Hall. Did that for two years, and then became Assistant Director of Residence Life; had that position for nine years – no, seven years, I'm sorry, nine total here at FSU. Earned my doctorate in Educational Leadership under Dr. Melvene Hardee in 1983, and in 1985 I left Florida State to take a position at University of Georgia as Assistant Director of Housing. And then in 1988, when Sherrill Ragans was promoted to Associate Vice-President, I came back to Florida State as Director.

**Sellers:** Of Housing. When you came here in the Fall of '76, you said it was because you had a sister here. Was she involved with the university?

**Moser:** No, she lives in the Tallahassee community and she had a friend who was Director of Personnel at the time who suggested that I write to Sherrill Ragans, the Director of Housing, and inquire about a position, which I did.

**Sellers:** What made you go into housing for students?

**Moser:** Well, it was kind of a blend, I guess, from wanting to be an educator and then being interested in counseling, working with students individually. Quite honestly, I fell into it, because I graduated with my degree in December of 1974, and school systems rarely have counseling positions available mid-year. So I saw in Western Michigan's placement bulletin about a vacancy for an advisor for Student Development and Programing at Northern Illinois University, and so I just decided that I would check it out. I ended up going there and I really liked working with students in that capacity.

**Sellers:** When you came here as Residence Counselor at Kellum, was Kellum still a men's dorm or had it gone co-educational by then?

**Moser:** It had become co-ed at that point. I was the first female to have supervisory responsibility for the building. That was something that I recalled in coming here that was a little bit of a change. It was not air-conditioned when I went there.

**Sellers:** Not even your offices?

**Moser:** My office and my apartment had window units. And of course, we were on the quarter system back then, so the students didn't come until mid-September. So it's a little bit easier to take the heat and you were most discomforted in the latter part of the year rather than the beginning, because students were here until sometime in June. But my second year, it was air-conditioned and it made a significant difference in the building. People were calmer, quieter, and part of that was they had their windows closed. So the atmosphere improved significantly.

**Sellers:** Where was your apartment in Kellum?

**Moser:** It was on the ground level on the northeast side of the building, and that is still the staff apartment.

**Sellers:** And where was your office?

**Moser:** Just south of the apartment, actually. You could go out the front door and make an immediate left to come in an exterior entrance and then go through another door to get into my office, so in a matter of seconds I could get from home to office and vice versa.

**Sellers:** Was your office always accessible to students? Or was that not necessarily your duty?

**Moser:** Oh, I had constant interaction with students. As the counselor of the hall, I had responsibility for all the student staff who worked in the building: the resident assistants, the receptionists. We hired students to help fill in hours that we didn't have a full-time receptionist there, and we have since gone to all student receptionists. We also had security staff at night, and they were students as well, for the most part. So I supervised all those folks, hired them, evaluated them. I advised the hall government, because each building had elected officers, floor representatives, and they had a budget to work with. So I work with them. I spent a good deal of time, I hate to say, on discipline. With a building as large as Kellum, because it's one of the largest that we have —

**Sellers:** How many rooms does it have? I know my husband lived there when he was here in the sixties.

**Moser:** Right now, the capacity is 538. It was a bit bigger then because there were some end rooms that we converted into floor lounges that were actually student rooms back at that time.

**Sellers:** Were they two to a room?

**Moser:** Yeah. Kellum, I think, has three or four single rooms in the whole building. So in advising student groups, I also served as an academic advisor for non-declared majors, and the students that were assigned to me lived in my building, so it was very convenient for them to have access to their academic advisor.

**Sellers:** Back up a minute and talk about the relationship between males and females. Was it one floor males, one floor females? How did that work and do you think it worked?

**Moser:** It was stacked. The men's floors were the lower floors and the women's floors were the higher floors.

**Sellers:** Kellum is what – eleven?

**Moser:** Ten stories. And back then the elevators only stopped on 3, 6, and 9. And one elevator, the staff elevator for which you needed a key to access it, that stopped on every floor, but that was the only one. We've since updated a little bit and put new elevators in.

**Sellers:** Did that meet fire codes back then?

**Moser:** At the time, yes, because the firemen could have access through the staff elevator, so it wasn't a problem as far as safety. But the co-ed really works; it still does. We right now only have one building that's all female, and that's Jennie Murphree Hall. Dorman Hall was our other female hall until just a few years ago when we moved the Honors Program out of Landis to begin those renovations. Then we made Dorman co-ed, and it was more requested as a co-ed building than it had been as a female hall. Until Broward closed for renovations, it was an all male hall and it was the only one we had for a long time.

**Sellers:** You think the co-ed works better than all-male or all-female? Is that because it's perhaps a more natural living arrangement for the students?

**Moser:** It's more natural, and when you're eighteen years old the women are interested in the men and the men are interested in the women, for the most part. And so they like being around the opposite gender. Planning activities for the hall is more fun when you've got a mixed group. I think, too, students form some more genuine friendships when they have that kind of environment than perhaps would have happened in earlier eras when the genders were separated.

**Sellers:** You said you had some discipline problems. What kind and how did you deal with them?

**Moser:** Probably the most frequent one would have been noise; behavior associated with

alcohol, which may have been vandalism; people getting into verbal disagreements, those kinds of things. And we had a process that we followed to make sure that students had due process through the discipline that we do. We also wanted it to be educational and not just punitive. Back then, I think we had — we might have charged students financially for certain things, but we really tried to not have sanctions be associated with money, but rather it be something a bit more thoughtful and educational as far as maybe doing something that associated with what the infraction was. So they had to think about it, maybe write a paper, something like that.

**Sellers:** You were there for two years? And then when on to —?

**Moser:** Assistant Director of Residence Life.

**Sellers:** So you kind of went from one cosmos to the whole world.

**Moser:** To really working with all the halls. At the time, there were two of us who were Assistant Directors. Actually, the Associate Director of Housing had been Carol Ritchie, and she left. And I was hired as interim Assistant Director at the time I was initially appointed because Carol left to go do doctoral work. So there were two of us as Assistant Directors, whereas before there had been an Associate and an Assistant. But Chris McCray was the other Assistant Director, and he and I had full responsibility for the entire residence hall population, staffing, and programs. So we worked with all the halls and all the staff.

**Sellers:** Where were your offices located at that time?

**Moser:** We were in Cawthon Hall. We were on the first floor of the south side of the building, and after a short period of time we actually expanded into the west wing of the first floor and took over some of what had been student rooms because we needed space for more offices. So Residence Life offices were located on that west side of the first floor until we moved to the Student Life Building in 2000.

**Sellers:** And what exactly did you oversee and do?

**Moser:** We were responsible for all of the student hiring, supervision, evaluation. We were responsible for all student discipline. We were responsible for all of the full-time A & P as well as graduate assistants who had the residence life responsibility for each building. So really, the only part that we weren't responsible for were the facilities themselves. The staff, the custodians and the maintenance staff, they reported to a different part of the housing operation.

**Sellers:** If you had a facility problem, who did you contact and how were they to work with?

**Moser:** In each building, or in maybe two smaller buildings, we had a hall manager, and we today have the same kind of staffing arrangement.