Frank Vattano Interview  
Janet Bishop, Interviewer  
May 8, 2008

INTERVIEWER: OK. This is Janet Bishop. And I'm coordinator for Archives and Special Collections here at Colorado State University. The date is May 8, 2008, and I'm here today with Professor Frank Vattano who is a University Distinguished Teaching Scholar. I'm here to interview Professor Vattano for our CSU University Scholars Oral History Project. And we are downstairs here in the Clark Building, Room A031.

And again, I'd like to thank Professor Frank Vattano for agreeing to interview with us. I look forward to our interview. I think it will be very exciting and hold some very interesting tidbits about CSU and help preserve our institutional memory.

All right. Thank you, Frank, again for agreeing to interview with us. I'd like to start out by talking a little bit about yourself and your family and your childhood. And the first thing for the record is could you state your full name for me and date of birth.

FRANK VATTANO: Sure. Frank John Vattano, born April 11, 1931.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, great.

FRANK VATTANO: In Chicago.

INTERVIEWER: In Chicago? So you answered my second question, which is are you a native of Fort Collins. Frank, could you state your parents' names and if you had siblings or have siblings?

FRANK VATTANO: Sure. My father was John, and my mother is Jenny. My father was an immigrant from Italy, and my mother was an immigrant from North Africa. I have two half-siblings, my older brother Tony and an older sister Serafina. And I am Frank.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. And just out of curiosity, where in North Africa was your mother from?

FRANK VATTANO: Tunisia.

INTERVIEWER: Tunisia?

FRANK VATTANO: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. So Frank, when you were a child, what were your favorite hobbies or pastimes? And do you think these translated into your future career path, or were they totally different?
FRANK VATTANO: Well, as a child, I was interested in a lot of things. I played baseball and I made model airplanes, but I was really interested in music. The family was sort of musical. My father used to play the mandolin, and relatives came over and had music sessions. And so I got very interested in music and listening to big bands. My original intention was to go into music, but I changed along the way.

INTERVIEWER: And not to leap too far ahead, did something significant happen to make you change your mind? Or was it a gradual--

FRANK VATTANO: Very significant. It happened when I was an undergraduate, actually.

INTERVIEWER: OK, so we'll hold onto that.

FRANK VATTANO: Certainly.

INTERVIEWER: And I'll ask you about that later. Frank when you were growing up in Chicago, in what part of Chicago did you--

FRANK VATTANO: The South Side.

INTERVIEWER: The South Side?

FRANK VATTANO: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: Great food in Chicago, great jazz.

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, it was an interesting life.

INTERVIEWER: So could you tell me this, who were your role models? And were they within the community or outside of your community? Were they in the media? Who did you look up to?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, there were several. I was interested in music. So I was very much an admirer of Art Van Damme-- I played the accordion-- who was, and still is, the finest accordion player, in my opinion, that ever played the instrument. I was interested in baseball. I thought I wanted to be a baseball player as a child. But I guess my real role models were my parents, my brother and sister.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Very nice. And you mentioned your father and mother a little. What were their professions? Or was your mother an at-home mom? Or did she look after--

FRANK VATTANO: An at-home mom, and my father was a professional furniture finisher. And he worked for a private company that built custom furniture for businesses in Chicago.

INTERVIEWER: And so Frank, you told me a bit about your role models. Did you have, as a child, mentors, people who guided you on the path to where you ended up?
FRANK VATTANO: Yes, I surely had some mentors. I think my family were, of course, primary. My older brother and sister and parents were good role models. But I also admired my teachers. And even when I was a young child, I thought, yeah, I bet it would be nice to be a teacher someday.

INTERVIEWER: So this leads into your grade school and high school education. And let me ask you this. Where did you go to school for grade school? And I'll also ask you the name of your high school. And what was your education like?

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, my early education in the public schools in Chicago. I went to D. S. Wentworth School. We used to walk to school. Everybody walked in those days. And I had some really caring teachers.

The school was an enormous school. Of course, when you're younger, everything seems large. But it was a very nice school. Everybody seemed to get along well.

And I used to love school. I think one of the things I liked about early school, I used to like the smells of the crayons and the clay. I always thought that was so great, and all the pictures on the wall. The teachers were very nice and loving. And it was a wonderful experience.

And in those days, you got a diploma when you were in the sixth grade, I think it was. And then we went on to high school-- well, I guess it's middle school. And in high school, I went to Parker High School, which was a campus-- it was a junior college on the same campus as the high school.

And it was a nice, scenic area. It was trees. I think the area's changed a lot since I was there. Now there's all kinds of other things there.

But high school was a lot of fun. Had some great friends. Had some good teachers. And music was always big.

I'll never forget, in grade school, Mrs. Kinney-- she was a music teacher-- and she had us singing all these songs which, by today's standards, would never be allowed in a public school. We're singing songs that are quasi-religious, the "Faith of our Fathers," and all those kinds of-- but anyway, we really enjoyed singing. The whole class sang, and she was a great music teacher.

And it was fun. I always felt very comfortable at the school. And it was nice because I could walk home for lunch if I wanted to, although we mostly ate in the cafeteria. And I just have fond memories.

Oh, incidentally, there were some wonderful scenes on the walls. During the Depression, the WPA work program used to hire artists to come in and paint historical scenes on the walls. And some of the walls had huge historical scenes of the landing of our pioneers on the shores of the United States, and all other historical events. And it was always nice to look up and see all these great historical scenes that were painted by workers.
INTERVIEWER: That sounds fantastic, and gave you a good visual sense as well, as a--

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, yes, gave you a sense of patriotism, and-- yeah.

INTERVIEWER: --history, and all sorts of things. You mentioned Miss Kinney. Any other teachers that pop into your --

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, yes, a number of them. I had a history teacher, Mrs. Farlow. And there were some others, a biology teacher that was very influencing. And then in high school, we had some interesting programs. I got involved in an area of printing. We worked in various laboratories, and they had a print shop there.

INTERVIEWER: A print shop?

FRANK VATTANO: Yeah, and I learned how to set type, and in the little California Job Case, which today is considered an esoteric art. But it was fun. And, of course, we had sports. I was on a wrestling team. And I had great friends. It was happy time.

INTERVIEWER: Very good. And did you-- just out of curiosity-- when you type set, did you create a school newspaper?

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, newspaper. We used to create some of the visual materials, some of the posters and things for the school and cards of various kinds for organizations.

INTERVIEWER: That's really neat.

So I ask this question-- it's the librarian in me-- over your high school and grade school experience, what books did you read? And did anything shape you in terms of reading? What were your favorite books?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, I was always interested in people's capacity to survive under adverse conditions. I don't know why. But I read a lot of books from survivors, from prisoners of war and from-- things that were-- brought out the best in individuals. And I was always inspired by how people could, under adverse conditions, rise to the top. That was awesome.

And, of course, you read the standard things in school. We read history books, and we read government books. And then, during World War II, when my brother was serving over in Germany, I read a lot of books about the war, and about the military. And that captured my interest during those days.

INTERVIEWER: It's funny, because Anne Frank was one of my formative books that I read, and I was influenced by her spirit in adversity. So grade school and high school in Chicago, and then let's leap on to college. And how did you-- I know that you came to CSU as an undergrad.

FRANK VATTANO: Well, right out of high school, I went to a business school. It was a one year program for what they called, business executives.
I took such things as accounting and shorthand. I was a stenographer. It was an interesting program. It was a year-long program, and they crammed a lot of things into a year.

And then right out of that program-- it was a year program-- I worked for the New York Central Railroad as a stenographer. And we used to do reporting on accidents. I would go along with the train master, and when an accident would occur, we'd go over and we'd transcribe all of the facts that led up to the accident.

I worked there for about nine months, and then the Korean War broke out. And so I decided my brother had been in the military, my father had been in the military, so I joined Air force in 1951, for four years.

INTERVIEWER: So you went to your business school in Chicago, then you found the job in--

FRANK VATTANO: New York Central Railroad.

INTERVIEWER: And were your parents, at that point, were they encouraging go enlist, or were they saying go to college.

FRANK VATTANO: Well, my parents always emphasized education, from the time I could remember. The more you learned, nobody's going to take it away from you. You can't go wrong. So when I took this business program because it led to a nice job, back in those days if you could get yourself a reasonably good job, it led to all kinds of things.

And so when I worked for the railroad, it was a very good experience. I worked in a train yard, in an office there, and I also worked downtown at the New York central office.

It was an exciting job. But then when the war broke out, it was almost expected that I was going to join the military, because my brother joined the military for WWII. And we were proud to do that. Some of my buddies came along with me, and we all signed up for the Air Force. See the world.

INTERVIEWER: Now for the Air Force, did you have to come here to Colorado for any training?

FRANK VATTANO: No, I went to Texas. They sent me to Boston University, to an aeronautics school. And as fate would have it, I ended up in the Medical Corps, and sent me back to Illinois, which was Chanute Air Force Base, 120 miles from my home. Which was sort of nice, because I could go home on occasion.

And I learned a lot in the military. That was a turning point in my life, I think. Especially since the GI Bill was available.

INTERVIEWER: So you said you learned a lot in the military, and it was a turning point. How was it a turning point, in terms of where you went education-wise, or your spirit?
FRANK VATTANO: Well, in the medics, I was stationed with a whole series of professionals. Psychiatrists, and I worked in a hospital, and I had the full run of the hospital. I could really learn anything I wanted to learn in all these different units.

So I took full advantage of that, and I met so many wonderful, professional people. And they all kept encouraging me. When you get out of the service, go back to college, go back to college.

So I did just that. I applied to Colorado State University, which was A&M at the time, Colorado A&M. And I was interested in the outdoors, because-- oh, I didn't mention this earlier. The Boy Scouts were a great influence on my life. No question about role models. But I liked the outdoors. I liked to camp.

And when we were talking in the barracks one day with a whole series of buddies who had been to Colorado A&M, the contract school for veterinary medicine technicians. And then they came back to the Medical Corps, and they inspected all the food that came into our unit.

And so, we were sitting around the barracks, what are you going to do when you get out, what are you going to do when you get out? I said, well, I don't know. I'd like to go study forestry. Oh, forestry? You've got to go to Colorado A&M. They got a great forestry program there.

So I thought that sounds good. So I got a catalog, and I applied to Colorado A&M. And Stella Morris, who was the registrar at the time sent me a letter, and it said as soon as you get out of the military, come on to CSU, and I did just that.

INTERVIEWER: Fantastic. So CSU, or Colorado A&M, was the only college you applied to after the military?

FRANK VATTANO: Yes. Right.

INTERVIEWER: Had you been to Colorado ever before?

FRANK VATTANO: Never. Never been to Colorado, but it just sounded like a great place to be, because they had mountains and snow, and outdoor activities. And I thought, God, to be a forester, wouldn't that be something? So I came out here, and changed my major after the first quarter.

INTERVIEWER: So I have two questions. This begs the questions. Your family, presumably, back in Chicago had never been to Colorado, either.

FRANK VATTANO: No.

INTERVIEWER: So what was their vision of you going off to Colorado?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, they always encouraged us to do what we thought we wanted to do, as long as it was legal, as long as it was wholesome. They were pleased that I was going back to college. And of course, we had the GI Bill then, from the Korean War.
And they were delighted. Because they thought now we can visit you in Colorado, and we've always wanted to see that lovely state.

INTERVIEWER: So I'm going to leap a little bit ahead in my question cluster, because not only are you a faculty member here, but you were a student here. So when you came to Fort Collins, what were your first impressions of Fort Collins?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, I had never been that far west in my life. And when I drove into Fort Collins, I'll never forget it. There was this big A up in the mountain. We came in at Mulberry Street, which was the only access route into Fort Collins at the time. And I looked at this great big A, for "Aggie," and I thought there's a mountain, there's a real mountain there. And I was absolutely thunderstruck. I thought, wow, this is what I've been looking for.

And of course, there was A&M. And the first weekend, I took a ride up the Poudre River, and that was it. I was hooked. In fact, it was so exciting, I almost drove off the road. Looking up, I said, this is what they show in movies. Now I'm really where the movies are made.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that's wild. Did you drive out here with a buddy or anybody?

FRANK VATTANO: No. I actually came out by myself, with all my belongings. And so, I was sort of a pioneer in the family, coming out west and sort of finding my way. But anyway, it was a great experience.

INTERVIEWER: So where did you dorm, and who were your roommates?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, I was supposed to—

Being a little older than the average undergraduate, I decided-- and as a veteran, I didn't have to stay in the dormitory--

INTERVIEWER: What age were you, then?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, we let's see. I got this-- 1951, so I was 22 years old, I guess, at the time. Because I'd been in the military. No, actually, come to think of it, I graduated when I was 18. And I went to business school and worked for a year, so that was 21. So I was about 26 years old when I came out.

And I found a nice apartment on Howes Street, just six doors down from the Oval. And it was a delightful place. I ended up staying there for my four years. And I would walk to school. And I sort of thought it was sort of childish to be in a residence hall. After being in the barracks with 30 guys for four years, I thought, I don't need any more of that. So I got myself a nice little apartment on Howes Street, paying $30 a month including utilities. That was something.

INTERVIEWER: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] That’s amazing. So, Frank, you said you changed your major about a month or--
FRANK VATTANO: After the first quarter.

INTERVIEWER: First quarter. What persuaded you to change your major, and then what other concentration did you go into?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, this sounds a little capricious on my part. I was maybe even reckless. But I knew that I didn't want to major in forestry, because all the people in Forestry were saying, if you want to appreciate the outdoors, you better get something else, because you're going to work very hard and won't have a lot of time. And incidentally, there weren't many jobs in forestry at the time.

And so I took some interesting courses and I really enjoyed the professors, but I thought, maybe it's time for me to change. So I went down to the Veterans Affairs office and filled out the change of major form. And the clerk behind the counter said, what are you going to change your major to? And I said, well, I really don't know.

She said, well, I've got to put something down. So I said, you have a catalog? And she handed me a catalog, and I opened it up, and it said Psychology at the top. I said, put down Psychology. That's how I selected my major. And then I start taking Psych courses. And it was fortuitous. That couldn't have been a better choice, as capricious as it seemed.

INTERVIEWER: So in other words, if you had picked engineering, I would be--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

FRANK VATTANO: Well, I don't know if I'd have made it in Engineering. But somehow I picked Psychology, and it just sort of fit. I think it was one of those chance events that occurs every now and then.

INTERVIEWER: That's fantastic. So what were your extracurricular interests?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, I carried a lot of extracurricular activities with me. I still played the accordion, and I got a job in a nice band-- a Western band. Bob Swerer, who still lives in Fort Collins, and the Sons of the Rockies. That was a great experience. I've always lifted weights. I got back into my weightlifting again in Fort Collins.

And enjoying the outdoors. I picked up archery as a hobby, and started making my own equipment and started going deer hunting in the fall. Which was a big sport, of course, at the time. That's before bow and arrows were considered esoteric. Now everybody is shooting archery and all kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER: So, I'm going to ask you this question again as a faculty member. You told me a little of your sense of Fort Collins just driving into town. What was your sense of campus as an undergrad? What were your favorite buildings or building? Or did you have the one you always looked to?
FRANK VATTANO: Well, I was really fascinated by the Oval. Of course, back then, that was primarily what the campus-- and I think they had just started to build an Engineering building. And Green Hall was the first residence hall short of Rockwell. And my impression was, what a wonderful, delightful, quiet place. We could ride bikes. The traffic was almost nonexistent compared to today's standards. So you could ride your bike all over the campus and all over town.

Faculty were very friendly. The students were friendly. It was a very rural environment-- a lot of agriculture students and engineering students. And back then, I think the ratio of men to women was probably 2 and a half, 3 to 1 men over women. So it was a different environment completely.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so, before in our interview, you had mentioned there were something like only 3,000 students.

FRANK VATTANO: Yeah there were about 3,200 students, and the Fort Collins population was something like 17,000 people. And so it was a very small college environment, and very comfortable. Everything was convenient. But we didn't have a lot of things. We had one restaurant in town and a couple of drive-ins.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of the restaurant?

FRANK VATTANO: The restaurant was Hansen's Cafe downtown. And then there was an A&W root beer stand on each end of town, and Morrie’s In-n-Out, which was drive-in kind of a place. And that was about it, except for the Northern Hotel, which on Sunday hosted an all-you-could-eat spaghetti dinner for $0.98 plus tax, which was $1.03. And the most wonderful meal.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I bet. It sounds good. And the Northern is still around, but I think there's a Starbucks in it now.

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, right.

INTERVIEWER: So again, another question I'll ask you as a faculty member coming back to CSU-- who was your president?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, President Morgan came in 1949, and I came in 1954, so he had been here about five years. And I actually got to meet the president once, because Lilla Morgan, his wife, was hosting a new faculty orientation. And they were looking for somebody to play the piano in the background. And I played a little piano in addition to the accordion.

So she found my name and called me up and said, would you be willing to play for the faculty reception? And I said, sure, of course. And so she said, what do you charge? And I said, well, I don't know. Would $15 sound reasonable? And she said, that sounds just about right.

So anyway, that's when I first saw President Morgan and recognized him as the president of the institution. But then subsequent to that, I would hear things-- read the student newspaper, which I
think came out once a week, then. And we knew that he lived on campus over there on Laurel Street and Shields and the president's home there. And so that was my first association.

And then later, when I was an upperclassman, I met my wife on the CSU Library, which is now the old music building which is going to be moving here shortly into the new facility. But her uncle was a very renowned professor on campus, John Olive, in the Zoology department. And through my fiancée at the time, and through Professor Olive, I got to hear a little bit more about Professor Morgan and his leadership on the campus.

And that's when he was really working towards making Colorado A&M a university. Because I graduated from Colorado State University in '58. They changed the name in '57, and I think I was the first class to receive my diploma from Colorado State University, which hangs on the wall there, and has William E. Morgan's name right in the bottom of it there, as you can see.

INTERVIEWER: That's fascinating. So there probably was a great buzz on campus-- excitement--

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, yes, yes. And most of the disciplines were very small. They were sort of more like conglomerations. English was mixed with Philosophy, and Humanities was mixed with English. They were more like divisions in the early days. Because the emphasis here, prior to 1957, was really Engineering, Forestry, Home Economics, and Agriculture.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. So, I have a question for you-- which I'll ask again about its burning-- but did you have any classes in Old Main, or was it--

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, I had classes in Old Main. I had mathematics classes in Old Main. I had English classes in Old Main. I had philosophy classes in Old Main. A delightful building, with the creaky stairways and the squeaky floors and the beautiful appointed banisters and windows. It was a very, very, very nice building.

INTERVIEWER: So was sort of the campus touchstone.

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, and they even had a theater in the Old Main, and we used to go to the theater, especially in the summer.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really? Was it a large theater?

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, yeah, it was a pretty good-sized theater.

INTERVIEWER: Did they do musicals, or just--

FRANK VATTANO: Well, they hosted outside events there, too. I remember seeing My Fair Lady back in 1956 that they had hosted. An off-site company had come for that.
INTERVIEWER: Interesting. So, we'll return to Dr. Morgan later in the interview-- your impressions--

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, I should add one other thing if you wouldn't mind.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, sure. Of course.

FRANK VATTANO: The Psychology department at the time was part of Education, and it was housed in a temporary barracks that the University had purchased or perhaps were given from the federal government after World War II. And it was on the quadrangle between the Animal Sciences and the Plant Science building. There were two temporary barracks there, and they were called South Hall. And of course, being that we had our department there, we used to call it South Hole, because it was like a hole in the wall. But it served its function.

INTERVIEWER: And how many students were in Psychology?

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, gosh. Less than a dozen.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so you knew each other.

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, we knew each other very well.

INTERVIEWER: Are you still in contact--

FRANK VATTANO: Yes. As a matter of fact, one of my closest colleagues is coming back for our 50th reunion coming up this year in Psychology.

INTERVIEWER: That's great. So, you met your college sweetheart here. And did you marry while you were an undergrad, or--

FRANK VATTANO: No, she graduated two years before. She was in Occupational Therapy and she graduated in 1956 and was working at Pueblo at the state hospital after her internship. And I graduated in '58. So I made a number of trips to Pueblo, and she made a number of trips up here. And she'd stay with her uncle who was on the faculty here.

INTERVIEWER: So Frank, CSU transitioned from A&M to Colorado State University. And you were a senior. And what made you go on to grad school, or--

FRANK VATTANO: Well, this is a major chapter in my life. I met a person from The Ohio State University who had come here in '57.

INTERVIEWER: On campus?

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, a new faculty member. And he absolutely took the place by storm. He was a brilliant teacher, a wonderful psychologist. And he sort of took me under his wing, and
we built a laboratory-- he and several of us students. We carved out a laboratory in South Hall for doing experiments.

INTERVIEWER: What was his name?

FRANK VATTANO: His name was Richard Pears-- P-E-A-R-S. And to this day, we communicate with each other on email.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, my.

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, so we've stayed in touch with each other all these years. Anyway, he influenced me to go on to graduate school. I had no idea what I was going to do. I thought, well, maybe I'll go on a graduate program someplace. Well, he got me in his office one day, and he said, Mr. Vattano, what are you going to do when you finish? I said, well, I don't know. I might consider graduate school. He said, might consider graduate school? Young man, you're going to The Ohio State University. And I said, what?

So he turned around, got on his typewriter. Start writing me a letter of recommendation to his major professor, Delos Wickens, who was a very renowned psychologist. And that was the beginning. I applied to Ohio State, graduated in '58. We got married the week after I graduated in Cerrillos, New Mexico. My wife's from Santa Fe. And we drove out to Columbus, Ohio, sight unseen, on the recommendation of my major professor.

INTERVIEWER: That's an amazing story. And were you focused so much on your graduate work that it wouldn't have mattered where you were? Or did you drive into Columbus thinking, wow, this is a big change from Fort Collins?

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, he had filled me in so much on the school.

Well, Columbus, Ohio, was quite different than Fort Collins. And Ohio State is one of the largest universities in the nation. I felt a little bit humbled in going to see all these huge buildings and a huge department where there were hundreds of students. I think we had 200 students in the graduate program alone.

But it was a marvelous experience. I met some wonderful people there. And my whole career, my whole life had changed at that time because now I'd got my first flavor of teaching as a teaching assistant. And that really turned me around.

INTERVIEWER: One quick question back to your mentor and professor. You had mentioned off camera that he was only a few years older than you?

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, he was a young buff. A brilliant guy. He spent some time in the military too. But I think he's about four years older than I. And we hit it off together even though he was a professor and I was a student.
But he was a very engaging person and wanted to perpetuate his kind by sending me off to his alma mater in experimental psychology. And so I had the same adviser that he had at first. So I spent four years at Ohio State. And my wife was working as an OT, occupational therapist, in the university hospital until our first child was born.

INTERVIEWER: Fascinating. So you mentioned a bit about your first taste of teaching at Ohio State. I'll talk to you a little later about your philosophy of teaching and what teaching has meant to you over the years. But expand a little bit about that first bite of teaching that you never shook. You became a teacher later on too.

FRANK VATTANO: Well, again, it was a fortuitous experience. I had gone to Ohio State on a research assistantship, doing research for the Air Force under Professor Wickens. And I think I had just gotten my master's degree.

And I was in a car pool with some other students. We lived about seven miles from campus. And one of the other students was a psychology major. And one day, he said, I'm going on an interview, would you take my class for me?

And I said, your class? Tell me about your class. What are you talking about? He said, oh, we're talking about the brain and behavior.

And I had minored in physiological studies here at CSU. And that was one of my interests. As a matter of fact, they used the same book that I had used here. And so I was familiar with it. I said, yeah, I think I could handle that.

And so I took his class, and it went very well. In fact, one of the students came up to me afterwards and said, oh Dr. Vattano-- and of course, here I am, a lowly graduate student-- she said, I really enjoyed that class, that was a lot of fun. And I thought, wow, I may have found my niche.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. So did you ask him ever again if you could teach some--

FRANK VATTANO: Well, as it turned out, I got a teaching assistantship the next year under Professor Wickens who was running the entire program. And so for the next two years, I taught two sections of psych. Actually, I taught seven quarters in a row and became an assistant instructor there before I graduated.

But I should have mentioned this earlier-- not that it's important-- but most of my career going to school, I funded myself through playing in bands. When I was in Columbus, I played in a number of jazz ensembles. And at CSU, I played with a country-western band. And I played the accordion for about, well, 17 years or so until I didn't need the money anymore. So I decided to change careers and do something legitimate.

INTERVIEWER: So two questions come to mind. Do you play accordion today?

FRANK VATTANO: I have, yes. I still do, but not as much as I used to.
INTERVIEWER: And the second question is with all the various jazz bands that you played with, any memorable musicians or artists?

FRANK VATTANO: No, they were combos. See, when I was in Chicago as a teenager, when I was 16, 17 years old, we formed our own combo. And back in those days, every cocktail lounge in the city had live music. High fidelity was just coming into its own. And so we played an awful lot of weddings, and parties, and receptions in various places in Chicago.

And then at CSU, we played for square dance festivals, we made some recordings. And Bob Swerer is still alive today. He lives in my neighborhood now. He is a wonderful musician. And he started the Club Safari.

And then when I got to Columbus, Ohio, I played with some really outstanding musicians. And that really helped me to get through graduate school. Because assistantships were not that lucrative.

And with a family, you had to sort of make it on your own. So I was playing three, four nights a week for many years as a Columbus, Ohio-- playing with some comedy groups. I think that's where I got my flair for teaching was playing music with a comedy group.

INTERVIEWER: But the operative question is did you ever play accordion for your students?

FRANK VATTANO: When I was an undergraduate, I had to give a demonstration speech. And so I decided to talk about the accordion, its history, and how it works. And so that was about the only time I think I ever played.

But I would run into students every now and then on a gig. And I'd try to disguise myself because I didn't think it was too professional at the time to be playing at some of these cocktail lounges. I was the only non-drinker, so I used to have to drive everybody home.

And every now and then, I would run into a student. And they'd look at me and say, aren't you? And I'd say, well, I have a brother, maybe you're talking about my brother.

INTERVIEWER: My twin brother.

FRANK VATTANO: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: That's pretty funny. So I think, Frank, I'm going to ask you one more interview question cluster. And then we will have part two, as we mentioned.

But now you're at Ohio State and finishing up your graduate career. Did you come immediately back to Colorado? Or what happened to you?

FRANK VATTANO: I graduated in 1962. The world's changed so drastically, as you would expect. Back in those days, everything was done by word of mouth.
My adviser, Dr. Wickens, one day said, well, you're going to be finishing up here this year. Where do you want to go teach? And I said, well, I like the west. My wife's from Santa Fe, and we went to school in Colorado. And I think it'd be nice to go out west.

And he said, well, I know some people out there at the University of Denver. I know them at the University of Colorado. Why don't I just make a few inquiries? And so in that time, he wrote a letter.

And lo and behold, about two weeks later, I got a response back from University of Denver. The chair there said, well, I don't have a position right now, but I think I might be able to create one if he's what you say he is. So lo and behold, I get this phone call out of nowhere in Columbus inviting me out for an interview to University of Denver.

And so I flew out. And that was March 1962. And that was the beginning of a great ride.

INTERVIEWER: So tell me a little about the ride, about the University of Denver. We'll start with that.

FRANK VATTANO: Well, I hadn't been on the campus. Even though I went to Colorado State in Fort Collins, I had never been on the DU campus. Although we used to drive to Denver to go to a pizza place right near the campus. Believe it or not, there were no pizzerias in Fort Collins in the '50s.

INTERVIEWER: None at all?

FRANK VATTANO: No, there just weren't any. We used to have to drive to Denver, or Greeley, or Cheyenne to go to get a pizza. But anyway, I got this interview at the University of Denver, and that was a marvelous experience. They were just like family, very friendly and very, very supportive.

And offered me the position. So we moved out to Denver. Denver had some houses that they rented out to faculty members for the first two years. So we were fortunate enough to get a nice little bungalow just a few blocks from the campus. And met some wonderful people there, some just great psychologists and very, very close mentors.

They really took you under their wing. They wanted to make sure you were going to be successful. Again, it was probably one of my fortuitous experiences of having arrived. It was a private school. They do things a little bit differently than state schools, a little less formal, more informal.

INTERVIEWER: I'll ask you to expand on that. So what's the formality you see in a state school versus a private school?

FRANK VATTANO: It's a smaller school. They had 7,000 students there at the time. And I was interviewed by the president for a job, which was a little bit unusual. It was called a chancellor, Chancellor Alter.
And I thought, I'm going to meet the chancellor of the university. Yeah, he likes to talk to new prospective faculty members. And so I was impressed with that first of all.

And the size, just the smallness of it, and the students were smaller classes. Made you feel like you were a member of a community of scholars. It was very nice.

INTERVIEWER: What was the focus in psychology at-- in your psychology department at DU, what was the focus? Or what was the area that--

FRANK VATTANO: Well, the big focus, of course, was teaching along with research. And I applied for a grant at the National Institute of Mental Health. And I got a grant to study learning.

One of my areas was learning in planarians, little flatworms. Can you believe that? I started out with flatworms, and I ended up with college sophomores. That's quite a gap.

But anyway, I got this research grant. And had some pretty good success in publishing a few things. But then I got very interested in teaching honors students. And they had an honors program at CSU. So one of my responsibilities--

INTERVIEWER: At DU?

FRANK VATTANO: At DU. I'm sorry. At DU. But I only stayed at DU for two years. And then I came back to CSU-- this is another long story-- for a year, went back to Denver as an administrator, and then came back to CSU. So I was at DU twice and CSU twice.

INTERVIEWER: So you were at DU from 1960 to '64, studying the worms and doing research. Tell me a little about how, in '64, how you came up to Fort Collins.

FRANK VATTANO: Well, my wife and I always loved Fort Collins. So we came up to our old alma mater and just looked around. And I met a few people. And Stan Ahmann who was academic vice president at the time, said, we're going to have an opening coming up next year. Would you consider coming back to your alma mater? And it just sort of shook me up. I thought, gosh, because I really loved DU. It was a great place.

So we talked it over and decided to come back to CSU. And that was the busiest year of my life, because I started the previous CSU program. I produced two courses, one of them a television course in psychology, another one a study skills course. And I was teaching a full load. When I look back now, I don't think I could have possibly done all those things in one year.

But then I got this call from DU, and wanted me to come back as an assistant dean of Arts and Sciences. And I couldn't believe that only three years out of graduate school that I had an opportunity to go into administration and in the psychology department as well, teaching. And it really pained me to leave CSU, because it was such a warm place to be.

And we had a nice house on Peterson Street. But I thought, gee, a challenge like that doesn't come by every year. So I went back to DU and spent four more years there as an assistant dean,
an associate dean, and then I got to be vice chancellor for student affairs in my last year there in 1968.

INTERVIEWER: Fascinating back and forth--

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, people couldn't figure out what I wanted to do, and I couldn't either. Two wonderful schools. It's just terrific.

INTERVIEWER: If I may ask, and I'll ask about your vice chancellorship at DU. But back to the '64-'66 era when you're back at CSU [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. You mentioned that you were doing videos from television. You were one of the first innovators for that.

FRANK VATTANO: Yeah, that was the year when CSU decided they were going to go into television. So my chairman at the time said, we're trying an experiment teaching courses on television. Would you be willing to do that? And being sort of a brash young guy and having had some experience as an entertainer when I was playing with these jazz groups, I said, well, I'd like to try that, because I think psychology is a very visual discipline. And if you can give me some resources, I can probably visualize some things, and that might be a lot of fun.

So we made a course and produced this course. We rented the equipment. CSU didn't even own a camera. We rented the whole IBM two-inch quad machine from IBM for a couple years. And I produced the psychology course, and one of my colleagues in the College of Business produced a course in accounting. His name was McCosh, Ted McCosh.

And it was fun. I really enjoyed that. And I took my tapes with me when I went back to DU so I could use some of them in my own classes. And then they kept teach-- they were using my tapes here for four years when I left.

INTERVIEWER: So was this inter-university closed-circuit TV?

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, closed-circuit TV, all on videotape. And they would run the classes with a teaching assistant, and they'd show my tapes, and then they'd have a discussion once a week and they'd have tape twice a week. And I look back at those tapes, and I think, how pathetic was a talking head with a few demonstrations here and there? But it was a beginning. It was black and white. No color.

INTERVIEWER: How many other institutions were doing such things?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, actually, when I was at Ohio State, they were doing some television work. It was coming on in its own back in the late '50s and early '60s. Everybody thought television was going to be the answer. Large classes, big screen, and you don't have to hire any more professors.

Well, that was foolhardy. But it was a great experiment, and we learned a lot. I learned an awful lot about myself watching myself on TV. I used to have to hide all sharp objects, because it's no
ego trip when you're watching yourself repeat words-- I'll never forget. I was doing a study skills series. It was a half-hour program, and I used the word "behooves" 32 times.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you counted.

FRANK VATTANO: I counted after the program was over. I thought, what am I saying "behooves" for? Oh, gee.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, it's torturous to hear when--

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, it is. Like I say, it's no ego trip. But you learn a lot about yourself and what you shouldn't be doing when you see yourself on television.

INTERVIEWER: So in a way, it helped your teaching [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

FRANK VATTANO: Well, I think so. I recommend it to students. In fact, subsequent to that time, when I was working with graduate students, I insisted that they videotape their courses and take a look and see where they wanted to change a few things.

INTERVIEWER: So let's talk a little about, from CSU, you went back to DU.

FRANK VATTANO: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And how was the transition from faculty to vice chancellor?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, to assistant dean. One of my other mentors was Ed Lindell, who was the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at DU. When I first got there, he was the associate dean. And then his dean went on to become president of the University of Oswego in New York, and Ed Lindell was moved up to the dean.

Well, we had struck up a pretty good relationship when I was working on the honors program, because he was the director of the honors program. And he just decided that he was going to invite me back to DU. And I said, Ed, I don't know anything about deaning. He said, I didn't know either, but I'll teach you. Well, if you're willing to take that chance, I guess I can take the chance too.

So anyway, he was a terrific guy. He later went on to become president of Saint Peter's College in Minnesota. But he was a terrific, terrific guy. Scholar, and a very, very great person. So I learned an awful lot about how campuses are run and how curriculum is put together. And I learned a lot about students and some of their behavioral problems.

I was baptized there for three years, and then when they wanted to get a vice chancellor for student affairs-- this was in the days, the tumultuous days, of riots and student sit-ins. And it was no fun. In fact, after one year as vice chancellor for student affairs, I could see that this was not going to be-- I spent more time with the FBI than I did with my colleagues, trying to anticipate what the next student unrest was going to be like. It was pretty uncomfortable.
INTERVIEWER: This was about '68?

FRANK VATTANO: Yes, this is '68. They had Woodstock West on the DU campus, where the students decided-- see, many of the students at DU were out-of-state Easterners, and they carried some of their behavior patterns with them. And they decided, if they can do it at Harvard and Yale and Princeton and Columbia, we can do it in Denver.

So they staged a big sit-in of the administration building and the registrar's office. And we had the paddy wagons carried them out, and they were suspended. Those were not the fun days in higher education.

That's the same year, when I came back, when they burned Old Main in 1970 or '69, in May.

INTERVIEWER: It's 1970. Yeah. So unrest, which actually sounds a lot like CU Boulder more than DU.

FRANK VATTANO: Oh, yes. Yeah, well, DU, they called themselves Harvard of the West. I don't know if that's something to model after. So those behaviors spread across the country back in the days when Students for a Democratic Society-- the SDS-- and, of course, the Vietnam War. Those were very, very tumultuous days.

INTERVIEWER: Hard to be an administrator.

FRANK VATTANO: Yeah. And I kept thinking, what am I doing talking to all of these crazy students who wanted to demonstrate, and they wanted to smoke pot on campus, and all these crazy things. I thought, I think I've got better things to do with my life. I think I'll go back to psychology.

INTERVIEWER: So that's what brought you back to CSU.

FRANK VATTANO: Yeah. So anyway, Stan Ahmann called me one day, because he knew that I was getting a little bit unhappy with all the things going on on the DU campus. So I got this call one day from Stan Ahmann, our academic vice president. He said, we're going to open a new office on campus, an assistant vice president for instructional development, teaching and learning and helping people put themselves-- and he said, we think you'd be a good candidate for that. And I said, well, if I could leave my present situation, it sounds like a pretty good challenge. So anyway, I came back in 1969 and been here ever since and done a number of things.

INTERVIEWER: Which we'll get to. I have two last questions before we have the first part a wrap, if I may. And I'll ask them in this order. You mentioned Old Main as a touchstone for many people on campus, and a creaky, yet lovely, old building. When you came back, Old Main burned down, what was the effect on campus of the burning of Old Main?

FRANK VATTANO: Well, it was a very emotional effect. That building, you see the lithograph on my wall of Old Main, that was done by my brother-in-law, Jerry West, who was a student here-- he and his sister, my wife, were students here together. And he's a very well-known artist...
in Santa Fe today. He made a lithograph, made 20 copies of that Old Main, and we gave the first copy to Bill Morgan, because Bill Morgan retired in ’69, the year I came back.

Well, that was such a revered place on campus that it took a long time for people to realize they had lost a great landmark. And that lithograph, I think that's number 3. The first one went to Bill Morgan. The second one went to the president's office. And I got number 3 of 20.

INTERVIEWER: So you mentioned President Morgan. Tell me a little about your impressions of him as a faculty member, starting from your ’64-’66 stint at CSU and just how you felt about President Morgan.

FRANK VATTANO: Well, President Morgan was a good friend of Chancellor Alter at the University of Denver. They were of the same school, you might say. And in fact, DU offered an honorary degree to President Morgan, and President Morgan offered an honorary degree to Chancellor Alter. And they were pretty good friends.

And I'll never forget, when I left DU to come back to CSU, Chancellor Alter called me in his office and said, I'm sorry to see you leave. But you're going back to a good school, because my dear friend, Bill Morgan, is the president there. And he says, we like to keep things within family. He said, but if you ever want to come back, you just let me know, and we'll arrange that.

So anyway, Bill Morgan called me up as well, because they had been in cahoots. And he said, I understand when you were going down there, he said, my good friend, Chester Alter. So I sort of became acquainted with President Morgan via Chancellor Alter at the University of Denver.

And I remember going to a faculty meeting once when I was here those two years-- I mean, when I came back to CSU in ’64. And President Morgan was giving a presentation to the legislature, and he called the faculty together to give us a report. And I was so impressed with his astuteness and his grasp of the institution and where it was as a land grant university, historically, and what the needs were of the faculty, and that we were striving to become a first-class liberal arts university-- not liberal arts but a research university, but with a liberal arts flavor in terms of its scope of its programs.

And I thought to myself, now, there is a man who really-- he had a pretty good background. He went to Harvard, and he went to Texas A&M, and he worked in Washington during World War II. He had a great resume. And I was very impressed, and I thought to myself, now, we are lucky to have a guy like that as the president of this institution. He was the kind of guy where, like the old commercial with E. F. Hutton. When E. F. Hutton speaks, everybody listens. When President Morgan got up to speak to the legislature, they all put their pencils down and just listened, because he had something to say.

INTERVIEWER: And I've heard nothing but great things about President Morgan.

FRANK VATTANO: Yeah, terrific guy.

INTERVIEWER: So you knew him as a faculty member. Did you know him off campus?
FRANK VATTANO: Well, for the last 10 years before he died, we had lunch together about every two weeks at his house when he retired. He was living over there on Lake Street, right around the corner from the campus. Was it Lake Street?

INTERVIEWER: Off of Remington.

FRANK VATTANO: Remington Street, yeah. Remington Street. And we struck up another relationship with another colleague of mine on campus, Shelly Godkin, who was the professor of aerospace science. And they had a little club, a little lunch club. And he asked me if I would like to join them. So I said, I'd love to.

So for about 10 years, we had this luncheon going over at Bill Morgan's house. And we would pick up the lunch and bring it in and sit there and talk for an hour and a half, two hours, about the good old days. And I learned more about this institution from those informal talks with Bill Morgan than I could have ever, ever gotten through reading or talking to other people. He was just an incredible, incredible person.

INTERVIEWER: And how long was he president here, again?

FRANK VATTANO: 20 years, he was president. From '49 to '69.

INTERVIEWER: So quite a while. So Frank, I think we will stop here. And then next time when we talk, we'll talk a bit about daily life at your office where you taught and worked, a little bit about your philosophy of teaching and research, a little bit about lessons learned here at CSU, and a little bit about the evolution of CSU as a land grant--

FRANK VATTANO: Sounds exciting. I'm looking forward to it.

INTERVIEWER: I'm looking forward to it too.

FRANK VATTANO: Good. Thank you for doing this. I appreciate it.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.