

**Oral History Interview of
Jim Brunjes**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
July 11, 2018
Lubbock, Texas**

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Jim Brunjes as he discusses his life and career as a financial advisor for various institutions, including Texas Tech University. In this interview, Brunjes describes the building of the Southwest Collection building and the Jones stadium.

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Daniel Sanchez (DS):

My name is Daniel Urbina Sanchez. Today's date is July 11, 2018, and I'm interviewing Jim Brunjes here at the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. Jim, thank you so much for coming in.

Jim Brunjes (JB):

Thank you for having me.

DS:

And could you please state your legal name?

JB:

Yes. My name—legally—is Jim C. Brunjes. B-r-u-n-j-e-s. I was born Charles James Brunjes, Junior. But I changed my name to Jim, which I go by, through district court in Bryan, Texas, approximately thirty years ago.

DS:

Okay. And why did you decide to make that change?

JB:

Well, I decided to make that change primarily because that's what I had gone by and that was the moniker that people called me. So people were all calling me and they would call me "Jim" and not "Charles", and so I changed it. It was also a name that was associated with my dad and I changed it to distinguish myself from him.

DS:

Okay. And what date were you born?

JB:

I was born December 13, 1946. My mother—well, let me start back. My mother and my father had met during World War II in south Texas. They had both worked in Harlingen and they—my mother had taught school down there and my dad was an Army Air Corps mechanic. So that's where I'm at. And after the war my dad returned to Waco, married to my mom, and he went to school at Baylor University under the GI Bill. My mother had graduated from Baylor in the late 1930s and my dad graduated from Baylor in 1950. We lived one of the oldest and now historic houses in Waco. It's famous for being—the house is right on 4th Street right across from Baylor University. It was noted for being such a—it's one of the oldest mansions in Waco, and now it's run by the Waco Historical Association. I grew up there. I got all the way through ninth grade there. I went to schools in Waco, a Catholic school called Waco Reicher. And then when I was a sophomore in high school my dad remarried and moved to Houston. I went to Spring Branch

High School in Houston. It was a—I'd gone from a high school that had two hundred and fifty people in grade seven through twelve—probably had fifty people in my class—to a class at Spring Branch High School where I had close to six hundred people in my classes. So I had all of the sudden gone from very small school to a very large school. I graduated from Spring Branch High School and debated where to go to college, where to go to continue my studies. About one week before classes started it was down to the University of Houston and Texas A&M, and I decided to go to Texas A&M. Primarily to get a little bit of distance between my university and my home. I thought I ought to go away. A&M was a great learning experience for me. I was not in corps at A&M. It was the first year it was optional. And it also happened to be the first year that women were freely admitted to A&M. It seems like light-years ago, but this was 1965. Until then the corps had been required of every student at A&M and only men had been admitted. I went there, I made some lifelong friends. One of my friends and I that were roommates there have continued on and we've now been friends for some fifty-four years. He lives in Tyler, and we still go periodically to football games and events at A&M. A&M was a turning point in my life. They gave me a very good solid education, and they also taught me a certain maturity. Until A&M I had been pretty loose. But one thing about going to school there is that you do learn how to follow rules. Rules and tradition are very important at A&M and both of those things were very important in my life. After graduating from A&M I moved to Arlington, Texas. I was working for a company called Lockheed at the time. They were building fighter planes for the Vietnam War. Primarily because of the job being very bureaucratic—I can describe it no other word—way—after three months I decided I wanted to do something different with my life and I went and talked to the Arlington School District about teaching school for them. At the time, they told me, "Well, we don't know if we have any openings." And then they said, "What would you teach?" And I said, "Math." They said, "Why don't you come in this afternoon and we'll talk to you." So I came in that afternoon and the next morning they offered me a job. Then, like now, math teachers were always in demand. So I realized that and I decided that I really could always find a job as a math teacher. That was great reassurance. I then went from there I got married in March of that year. My wife and I then went to summer school at A&M and she had been a student out here at Tech. So in 1970 we moved out here to Tech, and into Lubbock. I taught at Alderson Junior High. It was a great experience. It's funny when at that age—when I was about twenty-three—I said things about Lubbock that I probably regret later on, since I've lived here now longer than any other city I've ever lived in. But you know, when you're young and you're full of things that you want to do, it's not Dallas, it's not Houston. I've since come to realize that's good, because it's not Dallas and not Houston. But at the time I was wanting to kind of spread my wings a little bit more than Lubbock offered. I taught at Alderson and then had the opportunity—when I'd been at A&M I'd been offered a graduate assistantship. My degree at A&M—my first degree—was in mathematics, as I mentioned. My second, I'd been offered an assistantship in the statistics department—very close to math. And so I took—I called them up and asked them if they still had an assistantship open. And this was in 1971. They said they did and they would see about holding it for me. There was still an issue, though, because at

that time people were being drafted for the Vietnam War. I had to make up my mind whether I would go serve six months in Army service or I would go to graduate school. I went down to Houston to take a physical for the Army—and the actually the Air National Guard—and when I was down there I went by my draft board. And my draft board—this was November—and my draft board told me that they had already sent out all their draft calls for the year. That was 1970. And that I was not going to be drafted and that therefore I could just rest assured that I wasn't going to be drafted. Well, I basically passed the physical. Was eligible for the Army Air National Guard, being a paratrooper. Which I don't think is actually my lifestyle anyway, but I declined that and went to graduate school at A&M. Went to graduate school at A&M. Had a great experience there. Some outstanding statisticians, teachers, worldwide famous. There were some tremendous people taught me there. They also told me that I probably would do good if I just continued on and got my PhD in statistics. At the time I said, "I want to go do some things with my master's degree." They said, "Okay. Well, we'll have something for you when you come back." Also at the same time saying, "You'll never come back after you make some money." Well, they were right on the latter. After I started making money I had a family. I never did come back there. So I took my master's degree and I got a wonderful job in Buffalo New York. It was with a research lab. It started out as a division of Cornell University. It was called Cornell Aeronautical Lab. It then later while I was there changed its name to Calspan. But basically what we were doing there was we were doing research on how to shoot incoming ballistic missiles—intercontinental ballistic missiles—out of the sky with other missiles. Very tough. Somebody said that the best way to describe it was trying to shoot a bullet out of the air with a pistol. It was very exciting work, though. Computers were much slower then, so we had to do a lot of basic mathematic research just to figure out where the missiles were coming in. It's interesting as a side note, when intercontinental ballistic missiles come in they have a nose cone and that nose cone covers in kind of a—it's a cone shape. And it covers up the warheads, which are also built in a cone shape. So about the time it reenters the atmosphere, the nose cone of the rocket disintegrates. It literally explodes into many pieces. And at the same time you've got warheads coming in. So you will have, say, multiple entry warheads. You will have them coming in mixed with all this other space debris, for lack of a better term, and you have to figure out which one is the warheads that are flying toward a target at six thousand miles per hour. And then you try to shoot up a missile to knock them out of the sky. It was—we did research after a mission to try different ideas about how to program a machine to basically detect these. Never were completely successful, and the research goes on today. We were working on intercontinental ballistic missiles. You will hear such terms today as patriot missiles. They shoot rockets out of the sky. And Israel has a defensive thing called Iron Dome, which is basically a set of technology that the United States has shared with Israel to shoot missiles out of the sky. Along the course of being in Buffalo, New York my wife and I had a baby. That daughter was named Jennifer Ray. She was born in July 27, 1973. We, at the same time, I think always wanted to come back to Texas. Well, we had an opportunity. I saw this ad in a Buffalo newspaper. There was a company coming up there to recruit. That company ended up being Lockheed, and Lockheed at NASA Space Center

in Houston. So I interviewed with them. I had no idea that we'd be able to come back to Texas. I came back to Texas. Accepted a job with them. We were building with a ten person project team—we were building computer software that would replicate what is today called word processing. At that point in time NASA would send up a mission and they would have about what they called mission books, which told the astronauts what to do in any particular situation. Well, over the course of the mission certain components would error off or they would be taken out of service, and so they had to update those mission books. Well, it turned out that there was some, oh, forty to fifty mission books spread out between engineers, mission control, the astronauts themselves. And what would happen would be they'd make a change to it, and they had to try to update all the books. That was a big problem, to get everybody's book in synch. So we had built a computer based word processor at that time that everybody looking at it would be seeing the same information. The edits would be done so there. So that we did that. It was exciting work. It was also my first opportunity at management. I ended up at the end of my term with NASA—I ended up being the project leader on this ten person team.

DS:
Wow.

JB:

By now, I'm five years out of A&M, it's 1976, I have done programming, scientific program, shoot programming, shooting missiles out of the sky. I've done other programming for support of the NASA missions. I decided I needed to get some business experience. The University of Houston audit department was introducing a new position and a new idea, and it was going to be an auditor called a Data Processing Auditor, at that point in time. So I applied for that job. They hired me, and I went to work for the University of Houston in the audit department as the only computer auditor. And ended up being there. That was 1976. They had hired an investment manager at the University of Houston, and that investment manager basically was—he was stretching the—he didn't necessarily stretch the ethics of being an investment manager, but he stretched what would be regarded as good professional practices. He borrowed a lot of money on the University of Houston. There was a great deal of debate among the administration at University of Houston, because this investment person was making a lot of money for the University of Houston, but at the same time nobody fully understood what he was supposed to be doing. They asked me to write a computer program to basically control what he was doing. Well, I began writing that program and in the timeframe that I was writing that program it turned out that he was being investigated by the SEC, Securities and Exchange Commission, and the FBI because he was stretching the limits of what was reasonable and prudent investment management. He was basically borrowing from one investment type and using it to buy another investment type. So it was a Ponzi scheme, very similar to what Madoff has done within the past four or five years. Just a one investment triggers another investment and so forth. After a while, you have lots of investments, but you really don't have much cash. You may own millions of

dollars of investments on face, but in reality you own very little parts of each of them. Well, that caused quite a row at the University of Houston. They ended up basically going and starting a major investigations. I had the opportunity at that point in time to meet Herb Kelleher. Herb, who was the attorney representing the board of regents. He was investigating it. Herb Kelleher was a lawyer at that point in time in San Antonio and one of the founders of Southwest Airlines. He and I got to be associated through the U of H investment scandal, for lack of a better term. At that same point in time my internal audit boss and the vice president from Finance Administration all got fired. And so the University of Houston had to hire an interim vice president and they hired an associate dean from the College of Business and his name was Robert W. Lawless. Robert W. Lawless has an interesting career that sort of parallel tracks me. And he became the interim vice president from Finance Administration. I went to work for him, and he ended up—through being a spectacular financial person. No other way to describe him—he got the University of Houston out of the financial mess. I worked for him then for four years at the University of Houston. Tremendous learning experience. I became the director of management analysis, which was the area that supported the university's research and administrative questions. Similar to what institutional research does today in terms of the requirements. I became that position. I learned a tremendous amount from Dr. Lawless. Herb Kelleher came along in 1981 and hired Dr. Lawless to be his vice president of finance. He had been associated with him in the basic scandal at U of H, where Mr. Kelleher had represented the board of regents. Dr. Lawless had been the interim vice president and so he was able to make contact. Mr. Kelleher had been very impressed with Dr. Lawless and he hired him away from the U of H. I stayed at U of H—at the University of Houston. And then two years after that in 1984 there was an opening for a vice president for finance and administration at Midwestern University in Wichita Falls. Was a wonderful opportunity for me to become a vice president, so I went to Wichita Falls in Midwestern University. And for two years I learned how to be a vice president for finance administration. I was there two years. Worked under a president, Dr. Lou Rodriguez. Tremendous person. Learned a lot of things. He was a tremendous ethicist. He wanted to do everything ethically, in the correct way. It fit with my view of the world, so it was really a very perfect world. Then from there Dr. Lawless called me and said they had just created a new position at Southwest Airlines. And this is 1984, or thereabouts. The new position is going to be in charge of all their computer systems and in charge of their reservation staff. What the reservation staff at that point in time was about six hundred people. I had an opportunity to go work as the vice president at a Fortune 500 company, and learn that side of the world. I went there and had the time of my life. Put in the new—at the time they had a computer system that was about twenty years old to take reservations. Put in a new computer system that must have been okay, because it ended up lasting for almost thirty years. They just replaced it two years ago. So it was a system that took all their reservations, made them, priced tickets, did everything like that. Learned a lot at Southwest Airlines. By the way, Mr. Kelleher hired me at Southwest Airlines. I didn't work for Dr. Lawless, but Mr. Kelleher, I did work for him at Southwest Airlines. So that goes back to the days he had met me at the University of Houston also, and he

thought that I would be a good match for Southwest Airlines. Enjoyed the heck out of that. Had an opportunity—I really was searching and trying to decide whether I was more suited for the private world and private business such as Southwest, or whether I had really enjoyed higher education. Not expecting a job in the—to come about, because I was very satisfied at Southwest—a job turned up managing major projects for the Texas A&M University system. I went back to Texas A&M University. Took a job at their system offices. One of those great university titles—Associate Vice Chancellor for Something at the time. Anyway, I ran basically major projects for the Texas A&M University system. Put in a major accounting system that is used by all components of the A&M system. Was a very interesting project. Had about ten people working under me. A fine staff. They really worked hard. And then I got to about 1991, and Dr. Lawless had been president here at Texas Tech—Texas Tech University and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. He had been president for two years, and he called me up and said, “Hey, my chief of staff is retiring and I would like you to come out here and be chief of staff for him.” I came out here and I basically had a great deal of personal decision making to do between Texas A&M, where I was basically a small fish in a very large pond, or I could come out here at Texas Tech and be a much more significant part of the administration. I finally decided I would do that and came out here and joined Texas Tech on July 1, 1991. I didn’t know anything about Lubbock except the fact that I had lived here basically twenty years earlier. Now I was back out here and to see what the job would entail. Well in Dr. Lawless’s office—the Office of the President back then—there was no chancellor and it was a president over both the university and the health sciences center. Thoroughly enjoyed that. I enjoyed being a little bit closer to the students. Worked especially hard in recruiting presidential endowed scholars. Was involved in everything that went on at the university and the health sciences center. I enjoyed every, every minute of that. Dr. Lawless ended up—I did everything imaginable. Everything the president didn’t want to do or couldn’t get around to doing I basically did for him. I housed in the same office. I took care of his staff, took care of communication with the other vice president. It was a different world then. At that point in time there were seven vice presidents within the Texas Tech University system. You know, I made good friends with the other two vice presidents from physical affairs. Good friends with the academic heads at both the university and the health science center. Then by that time you took the two vice presidents from physical affairs, the two academic vice presidents, and dean of students and myself and a government affairs in there, and that was the seven vice presidents. Completely different than today. We have—they have more vice presidents at Texas Tech University than existed throughout the system then. We went in 2000—or, I’m sorry, 1996 Dr. Lawless resigned to take the position of president at the University of Tulsa. The board of regents—oh by the way I was in charge of the Board Office too during that tenure—it’s chairman was Ed Whitacre, chairman and CEO of AT&T. We worked very hard with him on the recruitment of John T. Montford as the first chancellor of the Texas Tech University system. Mr. Montford identified that he needed a president at both the university and the health sciences center. He did not have an academic background, so he basically hired Dr. Harrigan as the—Donald Harrigan—as the president for

Texas Tech University and appointed Dr. Bernie Mitemmeyer as president of the Health Sciences Center. He brought in several staff from his senate office in Austin. I was without a job. And so my background being chief of staff, Mr. Montford wanted to go with some of his own staff. He had his own ideas about what the physical officers should be. So I said, "Okay." Well, Dr. Harrigan—about the same time his vice president from physical affairs had resigned, and so he asked me if I wanted the job, so I took the job. For five years I was the vice president for physical affairs at Texas Tech University alone. I enjoyed that. I worked with students. I worked with student—all the vice presidents at the university. We had a tremendous time improving the university, improving the quality, building some major buildings on campus. And then at the—about 2000—Mr. Montford, the chancellor then, Chancellor Montford, came to me and said he wanted me to be his vice chancellor for physical affairs, meaning over the entire Texas Tech University system. He didn't have that position filled at the time, and he thought I would be very good in that position. So I did that position. Well, after some discussion with him. The discussion was interesting because Chancellor Montford said, "I want you to take this position." And I said, "Chancellor Montford, I can take that position and continue to do my old position at the university." That discussion went on for about two months at which point he became very frustrated, because he said, "I believe you should only work for me." And so I said, "Well, I can work for both of you and the president." Finally he told me that I had a choice. I could either come work for him or I could report to the person that was going to work for him. Not wanting to do that I told him I would take the position. So I became the vice chancellor of physical affairs at the Texas Tech University system. It was a brand new system then. We were putting it together. We had the university and the health sciences center. Still were trying to fill our way. There were only four systems in the state at the time. A&M's system, UT's system, U of H system, and the Texas State system. We were the new kid on the block, and so we developed a pretty good reputation as being really good and competent. We had folks here in the vice chancellor positions that were recognized as being the best in the state. I ended up chairing a statewide boards on computer information systems for six years. I chaired coordinating board committees on formula calculations on how to calculate formulas for all institutions. I chaired other committees at the coordinating board in terms of allocating capital funds for projects. Basically, we were all—including myself—involved in leadership roles statewide. Tech at the time had initially been thought of as a school far out there. Out of sight, out of mind out in West Texas. Basically, we, I think, established a reputation then of being a school that knew what they were doing and a system that knew what they were doing. 2001 John Montford leaves Texas Tech University System. He goes to work for AT&T. Dr. David Smith, the president of the Health Sciences Center at the time, accepts the position and he becomes the chancellor. So it's very, very interesting in terms of his term. He becomes the chancellor—in between, by the way, Dr. Harrigan served as the interim chancellor. He's always has kidded about him being the interim everything. But anyway, he served there. So basically I served and then Dr. David Smith became the interim chancellor there. David Smith served until about 2007, at which point in time we hired Kent Hance. He became the chancellor and I worked for Chancellor Hance through

2013—2012, rather. At which point Chancellor Duncan was hired. I enjoyed all the chancellors and the presidents I worked for. I learned something from each of them. President Lawless, I learned a tremendous basic administrative rules and guidelines and how to serve as the leader of a large organization. Chancellor Montford put together a very large system and started the birth of the Texas Tech University system. It was very interesting when all that was happening. A lot of people were debating, “What is the system role going to be? What is the university role? What is the Health Science Center role?” Just a very, very interesting period of time. Then we come along to Dr. Smith. He learned a lot, especially with his medical experience and how to treat very special people. Around that time also toward the end of Chancellor Smith’s term here we added Angelo State University to our system. That was a very exciting time. And finally we were, I believe, recognized as a system, because we had more schools than just the university and the Health Sciences Center. Mr. Hance expanded the system. We continue to grow and have added under his leadership—Mr. Hance’s—we added the Health Sciences Center at El Paso. I worked closely with all the presidents. What an outstanding conjuring of presidents. Probably the best set of presidents we’ve had in my twenty-five years here at Tech is the current set. Each one of them is unique and each one of them is very qualified to run their institution. I’m proud to call all of them friends and do to this day. I stayed here when Chancellor Duncan took over. He had some very exciting things he wanted to do. One was to begin the process of laying out the business plan for the School of Veterinary Medicine. I was pleased to work on that project. He laid that out and we’ve done that. Last December—this was a great honor—but the board of regents named me a chief financial officer emeritus, and that was the first university administrator to be named emeritus position, so I’m very happy with that.

DS:

That’s great.

JB:

That’s great. That brings you up to date. [Laughs]

DS:

Yeah. And you know, we’re talking about the growth of the system and you mentioned a few of them. Angelo State and of course we took Health Sciences Center in El Paso, also. But even recently we’ve got that new facility in Costa Rica now, so there’s a whole university.

JB:

Oh! I forgot about that. The Costa Rica thing was interesting because I was on the committee that developed the business plan for that and for the university. Costa Rica was interesting because we had started a project—they had started a project at the university. The Office of International Affairs had started it. They had had some preliminary discussions with the folks in Costa Rica. They had not got very far. The chancellor made the decision—Chancellor Duncan—

that we needed to either decide if we were going to do it or not. So we got on the committee. He appointed a committee. He was gracious enough to appoint me to the committee. I got on it in the first, oh, the first eight months I was on the committee I continued to give him reports that it was not going to work out. It was not going to work out financially, because one of my goals in serving on that committee was to make sure that we didn't get into a situation where Texas Tech University and its limited resources and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center were spending their resources on a facility in Costa Rica. I said if we can work it out with the folks in Costa Rica, where through financial planning, tuition, things like that we were able to direct funds directly that are generated in Costa Rica to the education in Costa Rica students at Texas Tech University Costa Rica that I was okay with that. Well, we did that and I am so excited about that. It's hard to think of in one sense because it's so far away, you know? But it's very interesting to me that the week—or one year before we announced our opening date we—Southwest Airlines began flying to Costa Rica. So my old airline had decided to start flying to some Central American and Caribbean type countries, and one of the countries they picked was Costa Rica. I ended up doing a lot of research. Had several opportunities to go down there, but finally at the end decided I'd let everybody else go and I did not go. But Costa Rica is a very exciting opportunity. It's going to be one of the few international campuses built by a Texas university, or supported by a Texas university, that's going to be successful. Costa Rica is a wonderful country. A rich, rich heritage and tradition. They are—if any country has a chance to be the equivalent of the United States, it's them. They have a lot of positives. They have very high education standards. The only thing they're missing is the ability to go to higher education, which they've been lacking. And now that's completed with Texas Tech. Five, ten years, it's going to be a gem in everybody. Costa Rica is a very strong technical country. They have a very skilled workforce. And so it's going to be a very, very good opportunity. Thank you for reminding me, Daniel.

DS:

Well, you know, I remember because just last month they had the librarian for the campus down there was here with our library system for a couple of weeks.

JB:

Well, that was what was good—really good—was that we had expertise in a lot of areas. We had, like, librarians. We had—here at Texas Tech University—we had academic folks. We had computer folks. We had lots of people here that knew how to put together an infrastructure. And at the same time we had an opportunity down there, they were willing to work and they worked very hard. But they needed just some guidance. Like, a person spending two weeks up here just going through what is organized, what areas do you do things in, what areas are going in the future? And things like that. Had that in a lot of areas. So when it came to support mechanisms, such as libraries, computers, all those things you see supported out of the provost office here and not reporting to a dean that's where they needed the help. We were going to set up the academic

side of it. They would establish that and go with that. But the support organizations they needed help on and we were glad to help. It also ended up being that we thought we had the people that could dedicate the time to do that. That's very interesting that you said. Of course, not being in the flow anymore as much as I was I did not know that, but I'm glad to hear that.

DS:

Yeah. Yeah. And it's, you know, when y'all began the discussions were y'all talking about initially being heavy on the engineering degrees down there?

JB:

That's right. They have some very technical companies down there and they're very solid technically. They've got companies down there—if you'd talked about technical names here in the United States—Honeywell, Bell, any company involved in technology—they have a branch probably. They have a branch factory or facility down in Costa Rica. What they really are wanting to do is to train Costa Ricans in how to be able walk into those plants and be an engineer and have that. So their model was really not much different than Tech. They admired the Tech engineering area. At the same time, they said, “Well, we'll get into some other areas.” Especially in the things—other areas of liberal art. “We'll do them secondarily.” But they're primarily wanting to be—they like the “tech” in Texas Tech.

DS:

Oh good.

JB:

Yeah.

DS:

Yeah. And I guess when y'all first got your feet wet would be the campuses that y'all had abroad, like in Spain?

JB:

Yeah, Spain. Spain is interesting. Seville is interesting. I would say that Spain we got in, but we didn't have as much support from the country where we were in Spain. We went to Spain and basically we were providing a lot of the support end. We had gotten our—I think we had learned a lot from that. We had to have people in the country committed to it and really wanting the university there. We couldn't do it—and this is one of the faults, I will say, with Spain. It's kind of evolved into a study abroad program. In other words, people from here go to take advantage of Spain and the culture there. We're not as directly involved in the students—Spanish students—in their training, their orientation, their education. We're not as involved there. That's why I think it's important. Costa Rica is a little bit different in the fact that in Spain we don't

educate Spanish—the people from Spain. In Costa Rica, we are educating Costa Ricans. And that's a big plus. Plus the fact that Costa Rica is very supportive and their going to do it. In Spain we basically have provided most of the support there.

DS:

So you already knew the pitfalls, that's what you're saying?

JB:

Yeah, that's—

DS:

Basically we're going to be a drain on Tech.

JB:

Well, you know I said that we had trouble with the first eight months of the Costa Rican project. That was a problem. And Spain was a great model for what we didn't want to have happen. We didn't want for Spain—for a model to become where we provided resources from here to go there. And they didn't have as much of a commitment as we did. And so we did learn a lot. So as we kept talking about it and we said, "Now, we want to make sure they understand,"—meaning the Costa Ricans—"that they understand that they're going to be responsible for this. They're going need to build facilities, they're going to need to do this." And they kept coming back and saying, "Yes, we understand. We understand." It took us about—oh, took us about five months or so to negotiate the final contract, because one of the key things in the final contract with them was to make it very clear who was responsible for various aspects. And it was never a question that they weren't going to be responsible, it was just one of those technical things; how do you word this? Because they got into the dilemma of some things where we said, "Well, we need to control the academic side of it so that you can be an accredited program." You can't just hang the Texas Tech name or any accredited university on a building and then it becomes accredited.

DS:

Right.

JB:

You have to be involved in helping to make sure that academic quality is met. That the academic standards of SACS, you know, is met in the criteria and that the program is at least as good and rich in quality as it would be as if it was at Texas Tech. Well, that created some issues because they would say—the Costa Ricans would say, "We want to be in charge of it." And we would say, "You can't be completely in charge of it because you still need to do it under our name—our brand." And it was more of a question of semantics than it ever was. They were very eager to be involved and they would've wanted to be more involved if they could have.

DS:

Can we take a break?

JB:

Sure. [Pause in Recording]

DS:

Well, we left off—we were talking about the semantics. Making sure that the role between Texas Tech and Costa Rica was thoroughly laid out and defined.

JB:

Uh-huh. We'd talk about the—one of the interesting things about being the CFO [Chief Financial Officer] is you try to anticipate problems. You try to—some people say, "Well, your job all you've got to do is straighten out problems." Well, no, the real job is trying to figure out how to prevent most problems. There's a term called "risk" in business, and really a CFO is a risk manager. He's trying to figure out ways to mitigate the possible risk in any venture. You know, whether you're building a building and you want to make sure that you try to figure it out in such a manner that it meets what the people want the building to do, and also at the same time it doesn't exceed the cost of the building. And so one of the big things that you do in being the CFO is making sure that you try to mitigate risk. Well, one of the great risk mitigators is contracts and trying to define what is actually the responsibility of both parties in a contract. So it's very important that you read contracts and do things such as that. It was very interesting to me that probably all the buildings that have been built on the Tech campus since about—well, the past twenty-five years—I was involved in most of them. But yet my involvement never was past the point of getting the project started and construction started. In other words, I would be involved in figuring out where we were going to get the money, and then how it was going to be built, what it initially looked like and making sure that it had a good contract signed to start the project and to do the project to completion. But once they started the construction on the building, I hardly ever was involved. Somebody would say, "Well, how's that project coming?" And I would say, "Well, I really don't know because it seems like it's coming along okay. It's not over budget. It's doing what it needs to be." Speaking of over budget, reminds me of one of the projects that we did was the United Spirit Arena—now called the United Supermarket Arena. That was a tremendous effort by Tech. Started—actually, most people don't know this—but it was actually the result of the fact that the city of Lubbock voted not to build an arena. And back in May of 1996. After they voted not to do it Texas Tech took it over and decided that they would build an arena. So I was involved in developing the financing plan for that. It's hard to believe that it came on board and online in 1999. So 2019 it'd be open twenty years. It still seems like a new building to me, you know, so and everything. I was very fortunate at that point in time. I was involved in both the project to build it in terms of determining the financing. And then President Harrigan asked me to run it for the first five years. So the first five years,

operationally, it reported to me. The current operation manager over there is Kent Meredith, and he's a great guy. So he's been here about twenty years now running it. I forgot to mention in the earlier part that somewhere along the line I had a wonderful daughter. Her name is Jennifer. She's now—she's—let's see. She will be this month forty-five. She is in Brooklyn, New York. She's the vice president for operations and special events for the New York Hall of Science. She's been doing that for about eight years now. She graduated from a university in New York. She went up to New York when she was seventeen and now she's going on forty-five, so she really has been very successful and I'm very happy for her. I also am married to formerly Marie Meyer, now Marie Meyer-Brunjes. She's a wonderful wife, and we like to travel. We're doing a lot of traveling. She has six children, I have three children including step-children, and between us we have eighteen grandchildren. They're all over the United States so we end up traveling to see them. So retirement has been very good to me. I enjoy it very much.

DS:

You know, I'm going to go back to you were talking about the building. You were probably involved with the early stages of this building, then?

JB:

Yes. Oh I have a—I do have an interesting story. I was—this was a special item and it was from the legislator of the library appropriations. This building was on there and we ended up splitting the money up so that—actually, the Preston Smith library at the HSC and this building were both built with the same appropriation. But I have to tell you this interesting story for this building. As you come in the front door, there is a mock-up of Governor Preston Smith's office.

DS:

Um-hm.

JB:

Governor Preston Smith was alive and he was employed by Tech. He worked very closely with us at the President's Office. The chief university architect, he comes over as they're building this building—comes over to me and says, "We've got a real problem." And I said, "What's the real problem?" He said, "Well, you told me to get together with Governor Smith and get all of his archives together and put into the building his office. Do a replication of his office. And he said that was a wonderful idea, and I really was proud of that and that we came up with that idea, so we did it. I had told him then to get together with Governor Smith and make sure he got all the mementoes that he wanted in his office and everything and to get the desk and everything. Well, he did all that and then he came over to me one day and he said, "Mr. Brunjes, we've got a problem." And I said, "What?" He said it was the Preston Smith office in the Southwest Collection building. I said, "What's the problem? Is it coming along?" He said, "Oh yes sir. It's going to be really nice, but I've been working with Governor Smith and he wants it to be a

working office where he sits in it every day.” So he had gotten the impression that it was going to be *his* office, just like a business office you would have anywhere where it had a working phone, working typewriter, everything. But we finally—I sat down with Governor Smith and said, “We’re not going to ask you to be on display like in a zoo or something. We’re going to ask you—you will have a regular office, and we will have this as a display permanently.” So he was a great man. I was privileged to know him also.

DS:

Well, this tells you about how things get heard but misconstrued. Because the story I always tell patrons—because it’s the story I heard—was that he wanted a life-sized mock-up of his office, which would have taken up more than just that--

JB:

Oh it would have too. Oh and when we got—

DS:

Than that area.

JB:

--We squeezed it down to what is there. He wanted a life-sized and working office.

DS:

Well, I didn’t know the working aspect. That takes it to another notch.

JB:

That took it to another notch! He wanted to have a desk where he would come in in the morning at eight thirty, sit down, take his phone calls there.

DS:

Wow. I mean, he was a great guy but.

JB:

He is a great guy! But that part is true. Not only—it wouldn’t have been just as small as it is, it would have been a full-sized. And it would have been the size of the Governor’s Office, so you can imagine. It was a big office—

DS:

That’s got to be big, right?

JB:

Yeah! [laughs]

DS:

Wow.

JB:

So it was interesting there. So no, this was a building—this building really has met everything that I wanted it to. Plus, it's a great location. A very beautiful building. I'm just very pleased with this and everything. And one of the interesting things—one of the great things about the jobs that I've had here is I've served a great many regents. They've all been wonderful. I've never met a regent that wasn't in love with Texas Tech and didn't want to support it. I always come here and am reminded of the globe downstairs and Jim Sowell just becoming fascinated with that and wanting to get it for this building. So every time I come over here I usually walk by there at the end of the hall and look at that globe. I forgot its name, but know which one I mean?

DS:

Yeah, the Coronelli Globe?

JB:

Yeah, the Bernalli Globe.

DS:

Coronelli.

JB:

Coronelli. Yeah, that's it. That's it. That's wonderful, and it's got a rich history and everything.

DS:

Yeah, and in fact he's continued to give, so now we have the Sowell Natural History Collection.

JB:

Oh really?

DS:

I think it's the Sowell Family Collection is the actual name.

JB:

Well, they have two wonderful people that were both very involved with the university. You have Jim Sowell, who was the regent that was in Dallas. And then you have Virginia Sowell,

who was the associate provost who was very involved. Terrible thing happened to her. She was coming back from Austin after Christmas break and down near Tahoka her car hit some black ice and went into a, basically, an overhead. An overpass column. So she died there. Was well loved here too, also.

DS:

You know, you've seen a lot of growth in Tech from when you got here. What stands out most?

JB:

What stands out most about Tech is it's how it's managed to grow and still keep the same feel that it had. And that is one of opportunity. I am very pleased at all the opportunities Tech's presented students, and at the same time has taken advantage of opportunities to do what they need to do. Tech is not as big—doesn't operate as a big school like A&M or the University of Texas. It still operates as a medium-sized school where there's still enough room that people, if they really want to do something, can do something. I've always felt, when I was here administratively, that people could walk in. Some of my good friends are people that came in with a problem to the financial officer. They wanted to see somebody that was in charge of money and talk about it. They did and they're still good friends of mine. Lewis Held, who is an interesting person in his own right, was on the faculty senate and he and I became friends over the years. Many people like that. Being able to help faculty members, being able to help staff. One of the things I forgot to mention is Mentor Tech. I began the Mentor Tech program. And when we were beginning it, I was looking at statistics for Tech and we really had an issue. And we still have, but it's much better. An issue at Tech with first time college students, minority students. I was trying to figure out ways that we could help those students. I had a person on my staff at the time named Cory Powell, the vice chancellor for equity reported to me. At the time, I gave them the challenge with coming up with the program. Well, they came up with the program and Mentor Tech was born. Originally started out we scraped together enough money to support probably a little bit less than a hundred students, and now it's over a thousand students. Each one of the students that's in the program is identified and has with them a mentor at Tech—faculty, staff, someone that basically they can go and talk to as often as they needed their freshman year to help get direction on what they need to do to solve issues with them. Both personal, educationally, and with basically figuring out how to get through college. Great program. Great success. Cory Powell did a great job with it. Great people working to make sure that they help. And it really helped their retention rate, their graduation rate is really improved. And so that's a positive. That was something I really wanted to address and I really couldn't figure out how to address it, just to say, "Okay, the students arrive here." And at that point in time, it can truly be said that there weren't anybody that looked like them. This is twenty years ago. So there were very few Hispanics or very few blacks, and so they were here by themselves. And so as we've expanded for great reasons the enrollment in those programs, we've also expanded this program

that helps primarily them. So that was most exciting program. They gave me a recognition about five years ago and I truly, deeply appreciated it.

DS:

You know, it's interesting you mentioned that because I think that first year was really where that retention really needed to happen.

JB:

Yeah.

DS:

And that's why they targeted them. I mean, there's—you're looking up there. You see that little red and black plaque up there?

JB:

Uh-huh.

DS:

That's from a group of students that we had a reunion for here, I think in '09. They started the first Hispanic organization on campus back in 1964. They called themselves Los Tertulianos, and that became the Hispanic Student Society years on down the line. They talk about—in interviews and stuff—about that difficulty of coming. Because most of them came from, like, Pecos, Dimmit, small communities.

JB:

Yeah, right.

DS:

So they came here and they feel alone and they found this core group of about a hundred. [laughter] And so they all hung out—

JB:

But you said a hundred. That is—I believe that. And you know what? They can feel pretty lonesome in a school of about twenty thousand, you know?

DS:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And they talk about those difficulties. But luckily, since they had all been at like the head of their class each—so they were a little more suited than, you know, like most students are just coming in that are the middle of the batch. And so they found each other and

they helped each other, and they all came through school. They all went on to have successful lives and stuff.

JB:

But that's great. But, you know, I really believe if you get a student back for the second year you've got an incredible chance of them succeeding. Because by then they have a little bit of an investment, and you can usually figure out how to help them out. Or they can at least know where to go. But when I came here to Tech I think we were about twenty-four thousand. That's stretching it. And you know now we're going to be forty thousand here in a year or two.

DS:

Wow. It's amazing numbers.

JB:

It's amazing numbers. And it's been a controlled growth, though. It's not been like all of the sudden—it's not like the GIs coming back from World War II when all of the sudden it just popped up. It's been a sustained growth that always—you know. Dr. Harrigan told me something interesting one time. I said, "Well, what's the secret to Tech? How are we going to maintain our position? He said, "Well, we're going to just maintain our position by being where we are." I said, "What's that?" He says, "Let me tell you this, a student in the state of Texas has really three choices to go to school. To go to a quality school away from home. They're UT Austin, A&M, and Texas Tech." He said, "The student that's filling out a form and wants to pick one those three schools. They're going to pick one of those three schools. But the people that pick UT are never going to pick A&M second. They're going to pick Tech the second. The people that pick A&M are never going to pick UT second. They're going to pick Texas Tech second. And there's going to be some that pick Texas Tech." So he says, "We've got a great chance, if we do it right, to be on all three lists of people that want to come to college. Nobody else has that. A&M students won't go to UT. UT students won't pick A&M. We just need to keep getting those people." And we do. We do. We get—I still think it's amazing the number of students we get from Houston. We got lots of students from Houston. We've got lots of students, of course, from the Metroplex. We always have, from the Metroplex, but I think that it's important that we continue to do that. So a lot of positive things. I think our growth—what's amazing to me is that we've managed to do it. We may be a little bit more crowded, but we managed to make it work within what we got. We haven't gone out and built a lot of new buildings just to build buildings. We put buildings where we needed buildings and everything. About, I guess, twelve years ago we were building a res hall every other year. Now we've got kind of the right amount, the right number. Now we're kind of settling in. Plus, you got to figure out a way to pay for all that, you know, and everything and get students there and everything and get students there.

DS:

And there's the other larger—the large role that we never—haven't discussed. The role of athletics and those facilities and those funds.

JB:

I was here with Dr. Lawless when the Southwest Conference—probably the best word to use is blew up. Because it was not—and Bob Bullock was an interesting guy. The Bob Bullock Museum is named for him. He was the lieutenant governor at the time, and basically at the time they were talking about A&M, A&M was going to go to the Southeastern Conference. University of Texas was going to go to the Pac-12 or whatever its equivalent is. The west coast conference. And Tech and Baylor were going to be left, basically, out. “Wherever you want to go, that’s fine. We don’t care. But you’re not going to go into a major conference.” Well, they had some overtures from the Big 8, and Bob Bullock called the presidents together, and including the president of Baylor and the President of Tech, Dr. Lawless, together. He put them in an office and he says, “I want you to understand this.” Now, as background you have to understand that Bob Bullock went here as an undergraduate and went to Baylor to get his law degree. Tech didn’t have a law school at that point in time. So Bob Bullock felt really good about Tech and he felt really good about Baylor. He called the—he told the A&M and UT presidents, “Y’all can go ahead and go your separate ways if you want, but if you do you’re not going to see any state appropriations from here ever.” Now, there’s some debate about whether he could have done that, but there is no debate that he could have reduced their appropriations because of what they get from the PUF, Permanent University Fund, or AUF. He could have just said, “You’re going to count that as revenue for you. So you’re going to have that reduced.” And if he did it would have been about a 25 percent cut to both of them. Well, both of them decided then that A&M and UT could work with Tech and Baylor and try to put together a framework that those four schools then could go in and merge with the Big 8. Because the Big 8 was small by standards then. And—I don’t know what that was. Anyway, could go in and needed to be bigger to compete with the SEC and the Big 10 just in sheer numbers, and the Pac-12. What they needed to do was make their conference bigger. So they were happy to have four schools in it. So the four schools went and joined with them and then formed the Big 12. So it was a good match, but we’re really in the Big 12 because of one man, Bob Bullock, who told the presidents of A&M and UT, “You will take Tech and Baylor and put them in,”—what became the Big 12. He said, “I don’t have any ties to TCU, SMU, Houston. Y’all can just let them go.”

DS:

Wow.

JB:

Yeah. So it was an interesting time.

DS:

Had y'all seen that the demise of the Southwest Conference was on the horizon? As administrators?

JB:

No. Well, I don't think—no. Because you have to understand the Southwest Conference was interesting because it had SMU, TCU and Baylor as private schools. So it was over there. And no, because as it turned out, it was really fortuitous because it turned out television really jumped in and changed the whole world of intercollegiate athletics. And conference—up until then TV had been controlled by the NCAA. They had picked games and they had talked about how much. And then all of the sudden conferences became involved. So it was an attempt—while it was A&M wanted to go to the SEC, because they hated been in a conference dominated by UT. Turned out they did, eventually. UT just wanted—UT didn't—I think this is true—UT didn't think the Southwest Conference had enough prestige, but thought that they could have more prestige if they joined schools like Stanford, University of California at Berkley, USC, schools like that they would have more prestige. So they thought they could go that way, and they thought schools like SMU, TCU, Baylor were holding them back from going that way.

DS:

Wow.

JB:

Yeah, it was kind of amaz—nobody really saw it until that—that was also—we were also fortunate that that happened during the set time when the legislature was in session. If it had happened outside of that I'm not sure if he could have pulled it together, but he did.

DS:

Yeah, because we wound up—because of that we wound up with the records for the Southwest Conference here in our building.

JB:

Yeah, I know. That is fantastic. I think it's interesting that you know Tech was the next to the last school in. The last school was U of H in '76. But Tech came in in '59, and so probably it meant—probably the Southwest Conference meant more to Tech than any other. You know, if you look back in the archives and the newspapers back then, the fact that Tech and the Tech students that were here during the time that we got into the Southwest Conference was the biggest event in this school's history. One of the biggest events. It wasn't as important at the time of the Big 12 formation, because at least we had been recognized as equals with A&M and UT. In the Southwest Conference we were equals with A&M and UT. Before that there was A&M and UT in the Southwest Conference and nobody else. Houston has fought for years to try

to get the recognition Texas Tech has. I was there at Houston for eight years and Tech, and it's completely different. Our reputation is completely different than theirs. Know a lot of people at U of H and had a lot of friends there, but never it has achieved what it should be able to achieve there in Houston.

DS:

I mean their splashes, especially in the sports world. With like Phi Slamma Jamma.

JB:

I was there during the golden ages. It was kind of interesting. They joined the Southwest Conference and then proceeded to win three out of the four football titles the first four years they were in the conference. And then that got them to 1980 and then they had Phi Slamma Jamma. Just incredible there. But Phi Slamma Jamma never won a national championship.

DS:

No.

JB:

They just killed them. I never will forget that shot by North Carolina State and I just still can't—and of course they end up showing it all the time because it's such a unique sports moment when they did that. I just couldn't believe it.

DS:

And ironically they lived by the dunk and they died by the dunk on that one.

JB:

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. But it was interesting. They never could—when you're the CFO in a major university you end up being involved in athletics. It's just such a big dollar amount. Even now it's such a large part of the Tech budget. You end up being involved because also unlike other parts of the budget that basically stay the same during the year because of appropriations from the state, tuition, they basically stay the same throughout the year, athletics can have a major change just by winning and losing. So you have to follow athletics very closely because you don't want to get into the situation where you're losing a lot of money. Well, U of H had that problem. That even when they had Phi Slamma Jamma they were losing a lot of money every year and we had to supplement them from the general fund. So here at Tech we supplement them a little bit, but not a whole lot when you compare it to the overall budget. We supplemented it last year I was here about two and a half million. And that, by most standards, is a very small amount. I don't know, I guess it's because of the nature of the beast that they do not make money. Athletic departments do not do that. You just do what you can to get by.

DS:

You know, we talked about athletics and part of the budget. Jones Stadium has gotten so many renovations over the years.

JB:

Uh-huh.

DS:

Since you worked on this aspect of it, how do you decide that expansion is better than building something new?

JB:

Yeah, that is a good question. Jones Stadium especially in athletics. A lot of that is, quote, "Keeping up with the competition." You know, a lot of it—especially the part that is player oriented, like the athletic training facility, the football locker rooms, the baseball locker rooms, things like that. Even softball and other things. So you do that because that helps on the recruiting side. But the other side is it's fan driven. In other words, keeping your fans involved and keeping them interested. I don't think—we looked, to answer your first question, we would always put together a financial model that said, "This is going to increase the number of seats that are available, or the number of people that can attend by so many." And then we would discount it or knock it down a certain percentage to give us a little coverage in case they didn't show—they had losing years or they weren't able to obtain that level of people attending. So that was pretty conservative. We also had backups with the university, but we never had to exercise those. The athletic department here in terms of paying for their renovations and expansions has always been—that's always been a priority to them, so they've done it. But you've got to get to the point where you have competitive facilities so that people walk in and look at it. Jones Stadium, when it had a capacity of about forty-five thousand, was just not very—the right size for this university. With eleven thousand student seats it just didn't have very much left capacity for just general fans. I think it's about the right size now and it's got those amenities that people are willing to pay for. I mean, I never—one of the biggest surprises in intercollegiate athletics to me is the pricing of luxury suites and things like that. I mean the fact that athletic departments can charge twenty-five thousand dollars for an athletic suite for a football season is amazing to me. But they're able to do it everywhere, whether it be UT, whether it be A&M, whether it be Tech. One of the biggest fears that I had when I was here and people said, "What would keep you up at night in terms of risk?" My biggest fear, always, was that A&M and UT would leave the Big 12 and Tech would be left with what people considered a minor conference and they'd stop coming to football games. I think it's interesting, the new Baylor football stadium seats about forty thousand. So it's much smaller than their old one. But it reflects their trend in their attendance. I still would be worried if I was at Tech that we would ever get to the point that we were playing in what people considered a minor conference, not one of the Power 5 conferences.

I think people at Tech would not come to games like they do now, because we are in a Power 5 conference. It's important that we maintain our reputation in the Big 12, because if we don't and we ever were—either the Big 12 disbands or something else happens—it would be disastrous. It would be very serious for this institution. Tech would then be viewed back in the way they were in the pre-Southwest Conference days as a second-rate institution. That's—

DS:

As unfair as it is, right?

JB:

As unfair as it is. You know, you'd like to say, "Well, things like that shouldn't matter." But yet when you look around I think that's one of the problems that U of H has. They're viewed as second rate, you know? And they'll never get up to the status of some other institutions you know. Memphis has the same problem. Memphis is a pretty good school academically, but you know the athletic department is not much so it's viewed pretty—it's hard to get past a certain—unless you're of course Ivy League or something like that. Harvard, Yale, those schools. But other schools—all the schools in Florida that are becoming very large, very competitive, but are still in minor athletic—Central Florida, South Florida, Florida Atlantic—they're all very big schools and they're becoming the powers in Florida, but still Florida and Florida State are going to be the two major schools. So it is interesting. A lot of good schools in Georgia, but you know, they can't break through without that, you know.

DS:

Well, we've kind of meandered all over the place. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you'd like to talk about?

JB:

No. No, I think I'm very happy with what I've said.

DS:

Okay. Well, I thank you for coming in. And really appreciate it.

JB:

Thank you for having me. Well, I appreciate it, so.

DS:

Thanks.

JB:

Okay. *End of Recording*