

DATE: July 29, 2011

INTERVIEWEE: Bill Allen

INTERVIEWER: Evelyn Taylor

ET: This is an oral history with Bill Allen who worked for the Camarillo State Hospital and also for the early years of California State University Channel Islands. The interview date is July 29, 2011. The interviewer is Evelyn Taylor and the interview is taking place at California State University Channel Islands. Okay—we are here at Camarillo State Hospital or the former Camarillo State Hospital, I should say, as we're actually CSU Channel Islands now. We are conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Bill Allen, who is a former employee of Camarillo State Hospital and also of CSU Channel Islands. So, I'd like to welcome you today, Mr. Allen.

BA: Thank you.

ET: The interview is taking place in our illustrious reading room here in the archives and we'd like to start off by asking a few questions about yourself—your personal background a little bit and then, we'll move on through the Camarillo State Hospital experience and then onto the Camarillo—excuse me, the California State University system. And then, we'll talk a little bit about your plans, since you are now officially retired. I know you got to have some big plans going on. So, we'll start at the beginning and go from there.

BA: Okay.

ET: So now tell me a little bit about yourself—where were you born?

BA: I was born in Fresno, California, in 1949.

ET: 1949 and how did you end up coming down to Southern California?

BA: I was—my father and I were in the plumbing business and work had slowed down very slow in the late 1970's and early 1980's and my brother-in-law worked here at the hospital at that time and he told me of an opening they had. I actually came down as a motor pool equipment operator. When I came down, I drove buses and stuff for the hospital for a while.

ET: Now, what year was this?

BA: That was 1981—November of—actually September of 1981.

ET: 1981. So now, you grew up Fresno?

BA: Yes, I did.

ET: Did you go to grade school and high school and all that there?

BA: Yeah, actually in Clovis, which is just outside of Fresno.

ET: Okay, I've heard of Clovis. What did you do after high school?

BA: After high school, I went to Fresno City College and had a building technology major and then, I worked—went through that for a couple of years and then, went into business with my father in the plumbing business. We did repair and remodel and some new construction.

ET: And—so after you moved down to Southern California—well, know you're married to LuAnn. When did you meet LuAnn?

BA: Right—I met LuAnn in 1971—actually, I guess it was 1970—we got married in November of 1971 and we've got two children, two boys—four years apart.

ET: And, I know you have grandchildren.

BA: Yes—I've got three grandchildren. My oldest son has a son and they live over in Henderson and my youngest son lives here in town—he actually works for the university

and his wife, my daughter-in-law, also works here at the university and they have two children—our grandchildren.

ET: So the nice thing about this facility back when it was a hospital and then obviously, too, when it became a university—is that it seems [seemed] to bring people together. For instance, you came here because of your brother-in-law....

BA: Right.

ET: What did he say—“Come on down, there’s work here”?

BA: Ah—he had—yeah, they had a listing of the jobs that were open at the time and I was able to start in as a driver and then, after nine months in the motor pool, a position came up for a steam fitter. I had piping experience or plumbing experience, so I went to work.

ET: And, what is that exactly?

BA: We actually take care of all the steam heating and cooking and hot water heating equipment for the whole state hospital.

ET: So now, I heard that originally when this hospital was built, that everything was maintained on steam—is that right? Is that—that’s why they needed you?

BA: Yes—pretty much so. Everything—all the cooking or 90% of the cooking was done with large steam kettles up in the main kitchen.

ET: Now, when you say “steam cooking”, how does that differ from electricity and gas and all of that?

BA: We had a boiler plant that produced steam that piped it all over the—

ET: Okay and you just turn on a knob on the stove and it comes up?

BA: Well, it’s a—they were big kettles—80 gallon kettles—stainless steel kettles—they were double jacketed and the food would go in the inside like a big bowl and the steam would

flow between the inner and outer jacket and it could be temperature controlled and raised and they cooked everything with—not direct contact with the steam but with steam heat in the kettles to cook the food and so forth.

ET: Wow, that's an interesting—I didn't know that. Now the steam plant—is that what's located down in the far, far end of that—it's a funny like looking little building on top of the hill?

BA: It's right at the end of the Dolphin Plaza in front of Arroyo Hall—I mean Aliso Hall.

ET: Okay and what's the official name for that?

BA: It was officially called the power plant when it was—.

ET: Okay. Wow, this is really interesting—so now, did they use that same water to heat like for bathrooms and showers and stuff?

BA: Used it to heat all the domestic water for showers and cleaning and—all the domestic water was heated by steam.

ET: When you turned on—if you were in the shower at the gym or whatever and you turned on the faucet was there—did that automatically—did it take time for it to heat up or was it always hot?

BA: No, it was hot, because what you had was a steam heat exchanger in a mechanical room that had coils again that were inside like a tank of steam would flow through the inner coils, heat the water and then all the systems had circulating lines, so that it was just about instant, when you turned the faucet on you would get hot water right away.

ET: So you want to make sure you had that cold water ready—(laughing).

BA: Right, right.

ET: And I know—I always heard that because when I first came here I was down at the old library right—which is currently the student union.

BA: Correct.

ET: And part of that building had been renovated and then part of it hadn't and that part of the building that hadn't which was closest to what's now the science department was always warm and that was what—probably because of the steam—

BA: That's—the main steam lines that fed the whole south complex came in underneath that building and they were—that was one of the first buildings built on the campus here. It was built in like 1934 so the insulation, of course, was older—not as efficient as what we have now and so you would get heat up through the floors. They were all concrete floors. Once they absorbed that heat they stayed warm for a long period of time.

ET: Yeah, there was no—yeah, it was warm there—I was warm there.

BA: Right, yeah.

ET: And so then—now did the heat—so did the heat come from well, it's now the library but used to be the old hospital and flow down or did it flow up from where like the science building would be now?

BA: It would flow up from—the power plant that's at the back side of the science building—the west side of the science building.

ET: Okay, so it flowed up. Now did it hit the north side as well?

BA: Yes, it went up. There's a tunnel that goes from the power house under the plaza—it's large enough to walk through—and the main steam lines and the conduits that return which is after the steam condenses it turns to water and goes back to be reheated or made into steam again to reproduce.

ET: Wow. Now, do we still have that going on now?

BA: Yes, we're still using steam in a number of areas. The dining commons is still—all the hot water is still heated by steam for dishwashing and restrooms and sinks and everything in that area and most of all of their cooking and stuff, of course, is all done by gas now.

ET: Okay.

BA: They don't use any steam for cooking.

ET: Okay, but there's still some that's going on there?

BA: Yes, and it's still used for the actual space heating of the buildings also, too.

ET: Well, so that was really a big job. That was a big responsibility.

BA: Yeah, there was quite a few thousands of feet of steam lines under all the buildings and it looped the whole campus—everything was in loops, so you could shut off if you had a leak or a problem, you could shut off an area and still feed the steam around the other direction, too, because that was all their heating and their cooking and their hot water was all produced by the steam, so we had to keep it in service.

ET: Yeah, that's a whole campus. Well, were you sort of a supervisor or were you under somebody and then, you eventually moved up or how did that work?

BA: Right. I started out like I said when I—after the motor pool, I went in as a steam fitter and I was working actually under the plumbing shop and the plumbing supervisor and then, another position came up as a stationary engineer and I applied for that position and was able to get in, in the engineering shop. And then, the engineering shop took care of all the equipment on the campus—all the cooking equipment, dishwashing equipment, all the heating and hot water pumps. Everything was taken care of by the engineering shop

so I worked as an engineer under a chief engineer for about five years and then, I promoted up to chief engineer.

ET: Now, who was your boss before?

BA: At that time it was John Rooton(?)—he was the chief engineer at that time.

ET: Okay, and then you got to move up.

BA: Right.

ET: Now, when you—okay, so I know you met LuAnn—wait, you met LuAnn before you came down here, but now, LuAnn came to work here as well.

BA: Yes, she did.

ET: What did she do?

BA: She started out up in the old admin building upstairs in the medical—well, it was actually I guess part of medical records and part of—they kept all the records and stuff for all the clients and so forth that were here so.

ET: And, that building's no longer here.

BA: No, it's where the reflecting pond is in front of the library now, right.

ET: And, then she moved over to the plant ops area.

BA: Right.

ET: And that's the current science building, right—that building there?

BA: Well, it's next to the science building—Arroyo Hall—it was actually—actually the first plant operations officer - where she transferred down to was over across from Manzanita Hall where the old fire station was—the hospital fire station. The corner office was a plant operations office right there.

ET: Oh, okay.

BA: And then, we moved from there over to plant ops was where the science—or where Aliso's Plaza is now—the Dolphin Plaza. They tore that building down now, but that's where the second office was and then, that's actually where the office was through the hospital times. When the university took over, we moved plant operations into Arroyo [Hall].

ET: Okay—which is—when I started it was in 2000.

BA: Right.

ET: So now—so you come onto the hospital grounds—what were your first impressions? Were you kind of wowed a little bit—thinking, well maybe I don't know about this?

BA: Yeah, the first time in—it was a very peaceful, nice setting and it's set out away from everything. It was—and as you walked around and seeing a lot of the clients had grounds privileges and were out on the grounds and—it was a little different, but they were people that all had problems that they needed attention and that's why they were here.

ET: Now, did you have a lot of interaction with the clients that were here?

BA: Somewhat, but not a whole lot directly. The psych techs took care of the clients most of the time. We'd work on the living units, of course, repairing heating and plumbing issues and steam or whatever was needed but, yeah, didn't have a lot of direct contact. Usually they kind of kept them away so they didn't get into whatever you were working with.

ET: Did you guys—did your family—did you stay on campus in the residential housing that was provided or were you in Camarillo or...?

BA: No, we stayed—when we first moved down, we rented a place that was actually over in El Rio, which is about where the auto center and stuff is now or over—

ET: Oh, Oxnard?



BA: Yeah, it'd be on the edge of Oxnard—it'd be on the north side of the 101.

ET: Okay.

BA: —that road(?).

ET: Did you ever stay on campus or did you know anybody who stayed on campus?

BA: We knew certain people, yeah, that lived up in the housing area.

ET: In the residential areas.

BA: Yeah, it had a number of people. Actually, my brother-in-law lived up there for a little while, when they first moved down.

ET: Well, now when you started your job, what was it about the hospital that most impressed you and what did you notice that changed or was there anything that you noticed that changed as the time went on, during your employment at the hospital?

BA: There was quite a bit of change. There was quite a bit before I came that was done by the hospital. The hospital was totally self-sufficient at one time, when it was first built. They had the buildings out on Lewis Road, they had a complete farming area, they grew all their own vegetables, they had a dairy, they produced their own milk and they had beef and they had pigs and they had a butcher shop down on the campus and they actually did their—the actually slaughtering and butchering and meat cutting and they had smokers—they'd smoke the hams and bacon and stuff.

ET: That's over by their—the shipping and receiving area?

BA: It would be where—it would be the end right next to it—it actually connects to the power house—the area that goes back towards the northwest.

ET: Okay.

BA: Where the paint shop is now and that's part of the old butcher shop area and food storage area.

ET: Well now when did that all go away—that part go away—do you know?

BA: The butcher shop and everything went away in the—it actually went away, I guess, in the early 1970's or mid 1970's.

ET: Okay.

BA: I didn't start until 1981.

ET: Okay.

BA: They still had cold storage boxes, still stored food, walk-in boxes over in that area and still stored a lot of food and stuff there but there was no more slaughtering or—I think the dairy actually went away a little bit before that. A lot of those happened when Ronald Regan came in as Governor and they'd done a lot of cuts and done away with a lot of the self-sufficient things and then, parents got together and they had clients' rights issues where they felt that the clients that were working out picking vegetables or working in the dairy and stuff were not being treated right. They thought they were being mistreated that way. Most of them enjoyed it very much. They had a job they could go to—they had looked forward to it every day, but some of them felt that wasn't the right thing, so they started clients' rights and everything started changing. As far as the living units, they used to be in long dorms with numerous beds in one big long dorm. They started dividing them up into separate bedroom areas, with only a couple of people in each one.

ET: Well, when did that take place?

BA: That all started in about 1984—somewhere around there—1982—1984.

ET: Did that have to do with the fact that somewhere around that time that it became the—that the DDS took over and it was no longer the Department of Mental Health?

BA: No, DDS was—it was a dual—ours was a dual facility. We had mental health—the South complex was mental health and the North complex was DDS—was developmentally disabled.

ET: It used to be that they divided it between men and women, right?

BA: Right, originally the South side was the male side and the North side was the female side.

ET: And that switched—do you know when?

BA: Oh, that actually started switching, I imagine in the late 1970's, somewhere in there.

ET: So, then in the 1980's then. They—did they redo some of the construction in order to make sure that people had smaller living facilities?

BA: Yes, yes. They started doing fire and life safety upgrades and going to splitting the areas up, so they were a lot more individualized instead of large institutional setting.

ET: A lot of those were where the dorms are now, right—all of those areas?

BA: Some of them, yes. Most of this—well, I guess it was a little on both sides but it seems like more was done on the DD side—on the—

ET: Oh, on the North campus.

BA: On the North campus, right.

ET: Okay. So now, they had a children's ward there on the North side—was that there when you were there?

BA: The Children's was up where the housing is now.

ET: Okay, so they had already moved that out there.

BA: Up above the Town Center [Ed. Note: CSUCI Town Center], yeah.

ET: Okay, okay.

BA: Yeah, that was moved in—I think that was—the first [children's] buildings were built in the late 1960's. I think.

ET: Oh, really.

BA: Right.

ET: So they had moved them up [Ed. Note: to the new children's buildings], okay, before that.

BA: Right, so they had—yeah, the children were all up there—there were some as young as four or five that were up there institutionalized already.

ET: Adolescents as well.

BA: And then—adolescents, after they reached age 15, they'd go to an adolescents unit that was up in the Bell Tower area - actually in Unit 15 - and there were schools and stuff up there.

ET: I always have a lot of students ask me what was in the Bell Tower and I always answer a lot of things. Originally it was the original shipping and receiving for the hospital, right?

BA: It was, yeah, one of the original buildings—

ET: Receiving units.

BA: The Bell Tower and what's now Ojai Hall and the Student Union [Ed. Note: former House of Style and later first library of CSUCI], were the first three buildings built.

ET: So they had patients housed in the Bell Tower?

BA: Yes.

ET: What else did they have there while you were here?

BA: While I was here, the police department was upstairs in that area and they had the medical director and stuff was up in that area. There's an apartment up above that was where the medical director would stay. They had 24 hour shifts, so they would stay up there in that apartment, so they always had somebody in charge for medical issues that came up in the middle of the night or weekends.

ET: Well, I remember—I thought I remember back where unit 20 is and all that area over there by—across from Aliso or actually down more across from Hagerty Gym—

BA: Um hum.

ET: —that whole area—they had apartments up there as well, right? Were there doctors' apartments up there? I thought I remembered that there were little apartments—where they have the dorms now—the new dorms.

BA: Right.

ET: Am I remembering correctly?

BA: Umm, there were a lot of offices in there, but not really any apartments to speak of. There were nursing apartments over where Anacapa Village is.

ET: Okay.

BA: There was a number of—I think there were eight separate buildings that were nurses' housing and a lot of them stayed in that area.

ET: Okay, okay, maybe that's what I'm thinking of. Because I remember walking up the steps and there was like—looked like little apartments or something there so maybe that's why I'm thinking—

BA: Right. There was different offices and offices, bedrooms, doctors' offices, exam rooms, beauty shops, barber shops—different—each unit had its own barber shop, own beauty shop, own—

ET: Really?

BA: Yes.

ET: How many units?

BA: Oh, geeze, we had—I guess it was about 35 or 40 units so. The barber or whatever would travel—he'd be there like on Tuesdays—he'd just go in but you didn't have to transport the clients. That way they just came down to the—and there was usually 35 to 40 clients on each unit at least, yeah.

ET: So now, when you were here they had the bowling alley.

BA: Correct.

ET: That was being used.

BA: Right.

ET: There was a swimming pool I remember next to—

BA: There was one right where the science building is—down where Aliso is. It was like a—it was an Olympic size pool that was there.

ET: And that was really the only one, right?

BA: No, there was another pool up at the children's units, yeah, that was an indoor pool—it was all covered.

ET: Okay.

BA: It was a smaller pool but, yeah, still pretty good size.

ET: And so like cafeterias—each North and South campus had their own cafeterias?

BA: Correct.

ET: Now did you eat separately from the rest of—did each working crew or, you know, employees units or whatever, did you all go to one mess hall or did you have your own mess hall or—

BA: We'd usually—all of our group would meet in which ever shop you were in. We had a break room or whatever and we'd all eat in that area. Everybody brought their own lunch—you didn't—there was no—it was state food and you didn't—it wasn't served to the employees.

ET: Okay.

BA: They did have a canteen, which is down where the Hub or the El Dorado Hall is now.

ET: Okay.

BA: And it was divided in half and one half was for the clients—they could go in because they—for good behavior they received points and money and they could go and purchase stuff and then the other half was for the employees and they had a grill and stuff and served burgers and different things.

ET: Now, the old library—the House of Style—was that—when you were here was that the House of Style then?

BA: Yes.

ET: And what did they have there?

BA: That was all—there was—the clothing area. It was set up with racks like you'd see in a clothing store. A lot of it was donated stuff or it was—different manufacturers would, if they had leftover runs or stuff that went out of style somewhat or whatever, they'd donate it to the hospital and they had it all racked and sized and same way with shoes.

ET: Wow. So now was that for purchase for the clients or for—

BA: That was all supplied—no, that was for the clients only and it was supplied to the clients—that was part of their—they didn't pay for it or anything.

ET: Oh, okay.

BA: They could go down there and they'd pick out what they wanted and liked and—

ET: What to wear.

BA: Yeah.

ET: Now, do you know anything about the history of that building before it was the House of Style?

BA: I'm not exactly sure. I think it—originally, when it was first built, I think was a living unit, because the long dorm—the portion that torn down and the two story section of the student union got built was a dorm at that time, I think.

ET: Okay.

BA: And same way—the unit going back towards the Bell Tower, that wing was also a dorm.

ET: Okay.

BA: Originally.

ET: Well, I had heard and I don't remember exactly who had told me that it housed adolescent boys but I don't know—I'm looking for verification on that one.

BA: Yeah, that—not as long as I was here and I never heard that for sure but it's possible—I'm not sure—I'm not sure of that.

ET: Okay. Now, what was—when you were here far back on the South quad those buildings that are—they haven't really done a whole lot with—the ones that are in the far back—

BA: \_\_\_\_\_ pilons—



ET: Yeah, that run parallel to the road—what were those?

BA: Those were all MD living units.

ET: Oh, you mean doctor living units?

BA: No, they were all client living units.

ET: Oh, okay.

BA: Mentally—

ET: Okay, mentally—

BA: Yeah, mentally disturbed—not DD [Ed. Note: developmentally disabled], yeah, right.

ET: Now, did we, to your knowledge, was there any criminally insane people that were housed here?

BA: Not at that time. Towards the end of the last probably four or five years that the hospital was in operation, they brought in some criminally insane—not real hard core really. Any that were real hard core—they had an admitting unit, which was over by the circle drive on the north side of the library building here [Ed. Note: the former medical hospital site] and they would bring them in and if they came in off the streets or wherever and they would diagnose what type of illness they had, they would place them on a unit first to see how their actions were and where they needed to be placed, so they were with the same type of clients as the rest of the area.

ET: When you—when you came here this building now, the library, that was the original hospital—the receiving and treatment unit, right?

BA: Yes.

ET: And then, in front of that was the original administration building, which is no longer here?

BA: Correct, right.

ET: What was—do you know what some of the—on the North quad—what some of the units were there? I mean it was developmentally disabled, but was there anything in particular that, you know, might be—?

BA: Well, they were all placed as to the capabilities of the clients and so forth.

ET: Okay, so different units, okay.

BA: Right, where the police department is in Placer—that was a UCLA research department.

ET: Oh, okay.

BA: And they had different students that would come out and they would study different behavioral patterns and different medications that would control those and so forth.

ET: What was the biggest change that you noticed from the time that you were here as a hospital employee? I'm talking about—well, let's do physical changes first, to when it became a university? I mean what was—to me, it was the science building going up—that was—you know, that was the big thing.

BA: Right.

ET: What was the biggest change?

BA: That was a big change or the Bell Tower was the first thing that was started, when they started making the classrooms and demo'ing out a lot of the interior walls and beams and replacing to where it could be used for classroom areas.

ET: So that was kind of the big—

BA: Yes, about the biggest and then, the science building went just about the same time period in 2002. They actually started 2000 in the Bell Tower and then 2002 for the science building.

ET: And then they got rid of the fire department here on campus.

BA: Yes, we had—the fire department went away when the hospital went away. Actually, those people went to work at different hospitals—the staff that were working here. Some of them went to work for Ventura County. Then, we contracted with Ventura County fire department for protection the first couple of years and then the price just got prohibitive. It got up to where it was—they wanted about a million and a half dollars a year to provide fire service on the campus and the fire station over by the airport here in town is only about seven miles away which meets the criteria for—they provided the service from there and saved us—

ET: A million dollars is a lot of money.

BA: Yes, a lot of money—it was just too prohibitive to spend that amount.

ET: Well, where was your office first when you first came on campus?

BA: When I first came on campus it was down—I don't know if you know where the carport areas are—it was down where the motor pool was, when it first started. They had all the buses and they also had food trucks and laundry trucks and warehouse trucks. All the stuff was delivered around the campus, so you'd work different areas, too.

ET: You had a variety.

BA: Yeah.

ET: Now, when—you got promoted to working on the steam component, where did you move to?

BA: That's into—where Chaparral Hall is.

ET: Okay.

BA: And, actually where the classroom area is or the research area is—right where the engineer's shop used to be and where the steam fitters were right behind there - in the plumbing shop.

ET: One of the things that I always found when I talked to people who worked here is that there was a lot of camaraderie. Did you feel that when you were working here? Did you—you know, at least among the people that you worked with because you probably—you know, you probably didn't have a lot of interaction with a lot of other people on the other side of campus—you know, fellow employees, but—

BA: Yeah, there was a lot—it was like a big family really and everybody was there to help somebody else and we worked together on everything.

ET: And you brought in your family. Now, did your children ever come to campus while you were working here? You know, just to see what daddy did or?

BA: Yeah, they were out a number of times. My boys were out quite a bit. We had an old water system that was put in in 1934 and it got to where in the early 1980's, we'd been putting in for years to get it replaced, but it hadn't happened and there'd be water mains that would break—just split open in the middle of the night.

ET: Of course, always in the middle of the night.

BA: Right, right—so they got to where there was something breaking in some area every week almost and a lot of times if it was a weekend or a Friday or something the boys would want to come out and see because we'd have tractors going and everything. I kept them over where it was safe, of course, but they wanted to see what was going on. They were there numerous times on different breaks and repairs.

ET: Did they ever switch that out and put in new waterlines and get that taken care of?

BA: Yes, finally in the—well, it was the late 1980's, early 1990's—it took almost eight years—there were four different phases. They couldn't get enough money—they put in loop around the South complex and then they did another phase and it'd go out to bid and get enough funding to put in another phase and finally four phases and got all the water mains replaced with—they're all duct or iron cement coated\_\_\_\_\_(?). They'll be there for another 75 years.

ET: Now, did you know of anybody on campus—any of the people that you worked with—who met their spouses or, you know, met anybody that eventually ended up being married?

BA: Yeah, there were a number of them that had, sure, yeah.

ET: What sort of social activities did the employees get to do while they were here on campus—did you have a baseball league or football?

BA: They had—yeah, there were softball fields in the South quad, there was a big—there were bleachers and lights for nighttime playing and big backboards and then, they had horseshoe pits and volley ball nets and there was stuff over in the North quad. And there was a number of different—yeah—there were different teams and yeah, we did a lot of—the plant operations group, we'd go out usually a couple of times a year on camping trips—go off somewhere as a group and—

ET: Oh, that sounds like fun.

BA: Yeah, it was a lot of fun. We'd get together and go to Santa Barbara or somewhere and all get together and spend a weekend camping together.

ET: You obviously then all got along.

BA: Right, right.

ET: That's cool—that's great.

BA: It was a great group. Most everybody got along very well.

ET: Did you ever get to attend any of the client functions that they had? You know, like the art shows or anything like that?

BA: Yeah, we had different ones that we attended and then, when I was driving for the motor pool, we'd take bus loads down to the Ice Capades or they'd take them down to Disneyland or the Rose Bowl for a football game or whatever. There were all kinds of events—

ET: But they got to go out—the people that went.

BA: Right. And then, they'd take a lot of day trips where they'd go out for a bar-b-cue at the beach and different areas along the coast here that they'd travel to.

ET: Sounds like fun.

BA: Yeah.

ET: So it's kind of contradictory to what we'd picture to having the patients just sitting at home and twiddling their thumbs and watching TV or wandering around aimlessly through the hallways.

BA: Right.

ET: Now, I mean obviously that wasn't going to be for everybody but for the people that could do it and were able to....

BA: Right, right. They had recreational therapists that would get the groups together and they'd go out again, if they were capable, play volley ball or down at beach or they'd—do different things. They'd take hikes and so forth. They had—up above the housing area—there was a camp set up, up there where they could go up. They had a Boy Scout

group and one of the psych techs was a Boy Scout leader—had the uniform for them and everything. They'd take them a lot of times and put them on a bus and they'd go out and drive around the area four or five miles around and then end of driving up to the camp and they thought they'd went off somewhere to camp and they'd spend the night or weekend up there and bar-b-cue and—.

ET: That was cool.

BA: Yeah.

ET: That's fun.

BA: Go on walks and everything.

ET: Now, when you were here did you know of any patients who had managed to escape or walk out—just walk out the backdoor?

BA: We had—we had certain ones that would escape and walked away, of course, yeah. There'd be search groups or they'd go up the mountain like up north of the Sage Hall and stuff and then they'd get up there and they wouldn't come down, so they had to go up to get them and that was pretty steep—a lot of cactus and a lot of times they'd bring them down and they'd be full of cactus thorns and go to the clinic and get all of them picked out.

ET: There were the—La Cholla, the jumping cactus, too, huh?

BA: Yeah, yes.

ET: Well, I have photographs of and I'll show them to you—I forgot to bring them in with me—that depict a fire that looked like it was fairly near campus. Do you know when that was?

BA: Yeah, that was actually before I started so it had to be in like—well, it wasn't too much before so it was probably like 1977 or 1978.

ET: Okay. It looked like later—

BA: And it burned—it started in Simi Valley and it burned across the Conejo Grade—it jumped the freeway, burned over the hills there and came in the backside by the housing area by the dairy. It came across there—burned down a number of the power poles that supplied power into the campus and—so they had generators. We had back-up generators and stuff. They ran on those for a while, while they got lines back up and so forth.

ET: Oh, wow, I didn't know that that was close—

BA: It was a pretty large fire, yeah—

ET: Yeah, if it jumped all the way from Simi—oh, my goodness.

BA: Yeah, it was—and it was one of the Santa Ana winds and there was heavy winds and it just kept pushing the fire and—

ET: So that was you think in the late 1970's?

BA: I think it was the late 1970's, yeah, before I came down here.

ET: So now, of course I have to ask the question, have you ever encountered any ghosts because you know my students are going to ask that.

BA: No. I'm sorry—I've never seen any ghosts out here. I've been here at all hours of the day and night and—

ET: You ever have anything crazy happen?



BA: No, never have. You'd hear different sounds especially when you're off working under a building or something by yourself, but most of it usually was steam lines that were heating and contacting and expanding and making noise.

ET: And the clang, clang, clang.

BA: Right.

ET: I remember being in the old hospital - that was how it always was, when you were here - the clang, clang, clang.....

BA: Yeah.

BA: We worked down in the morgue many times and they had a refrigerator and, of course, it was all refrigerated units there and they'd go out in the middle of the night—alarms would go off and the operator would call and you had to go in and take care of getting that back up in operation.

ET: That's underneath here and on the opposite side of where I am, right?

BA: Yes. It'd be down—the elevator used to go down—the one that's back here is the original location.

ET: Okay.

BA: And, it was a little to the west of that.

ET: Now, was the observation room—was that near the morgue?

BA: There was an autopsy room.

ET: Autopsy room—

BA: It was right next to the morgue, yes.

ET: Where they'd set up and it was—

BA: It was a viewing area, right.

ET: Yes, yes, oh that was for autopsy.

BA: And that was for psych techs—they had to go through—well, there were two different viewing rooms. There was also up in the operating rooms upstairs—on the front of the building, there was another observation area where the psych techs sat—they required them to go in and see different surgeries and how they did different procedures and so forth.

ET: Really—for the psych techs?

BA: Right, right.

ET: Now, you mentioned earlier about there being a walkway underground. Is there some sort of a walkway or crawl space or whatever that connects all of the buildings on campus underground?

BA: Pretty much all of the buildings have it—they're raised floors and they have—because all your piping and everything is underneath the buildings and most all of them are—have four to five feet of clearance underneath. You can't walk actually or I can't, but you can crawl and get through. I started up by the Garden School looking for leaks on steam lines and stuff and crawled all the way from up at the front corner of Garden School under the buildings and came out up in the powerhouse, without coming out from under.

ET: Wow.

BA: So, they all kind of interconnected where all the piping and stuff ran.

ET: Someone had mentioned that there were—they referred to them as secret rooms in various places underneath on campus. Do you know what they would mean by that? They were underground—there were rooms where people would go and—I don't know how many patients would try to get away, you know.

BA: Didn't really have any secret rooms. There are a lot of basement areas—most all of the mechanical equipment is in basements. There's probably 45 or 50 basement areas throughout the campus, but most of them are just mechanical rooms. Well, this building—most of the area that the library is in now had a complete basement underneath it—there was—a lot of it was used for storage and they had a lot of medical supplies and different stuff was stored down in that area. It did have a few—later on some art classrooms and stuff down in there also.

ET: When you were here, you know, the old courthouse that's in the South quad—was that here when you were here or was that built at some point, when you were here?

BA: Yes.

ET: Because it used to be here in the hospital, right?

BA: Yes, yes. It was there when I started here in 1981.

ET: Okay.

BA: And that used to be so they didn't have to transport clients, because they had to get with their conservators and depending on how they were placed in the hospital, they had to go to court every so many months or years depending on when—. They'd have a judge come in from L.A. or from Santa Barbara or from other counties and hear the testimonies or the cases as to what was needed or if they still needed care or if they could be released or whatever. Some of them went to board and care homes if they were far enough along.

ET: So, did you see the closure coming? Did you know that it was really going to happen or did it kind of blindsided you a little bit?

BA: Well, a little bit, yeah. They'd talked about it closing for probably as long as I'd worked here. And, there were different hospitals that had closed. Stockton closed down just

before—well, about three years before we did. We actually went up there and got a bunch of different tools and equipment and so forth, when it closed and brought it back here and installed different things—dish machines and so forth. But they had talked about it and then it finally came down. I mean we knew about six-eight months before it closed, but that's really when we finally got the announcement. That gave you some time to get on a list to interview for different state agencies or whatever.

ET: And then how did you decide to come back to—well, at that time it would have been CSU Northridge—did you kind of just know that that's what you wanted to do was—or did it just seem like a natural transition to you or—did you stay on during the warm shutdown?

BA: No, I didn't stay. I went to work up in Paso Robles for the Youth Authority up there.

ET: Okay, so that was—what, for a couple of years you did that?

BA: It was actually 15 months, yeah.

ET: Okay.

BA: I went—the hospital actually closed June of 1997 and I started up there June 2, 1997, and then worked until the second week in September of 2008.

ET: Okay.

BA: I was able to get back on down here. The Chief of Plant Operations at that time, Dutch Grafter(?), had asked me to come back if I wanted.

[There was some blank space at this point – less than a minute]

ET: When you came back on campus, what was it like for you? Had they made any changes? What was the year you came back to work as a CSU member—employee.

BA: Yes, I came back to—

ET: And what year was that?

BA: That was in 2008.

ET: 2008, okay.

BA: Actually, September, before they even had re-opened—

ET: 2008?

BA: Yeah.

ET: Okay—and so things had changed....

BA: Pardon me—1998.

ET: 1998—okay, 1998.

BA: Yes.

ET: And, so things had kind of started to change and—

BA: Not at all at that time.

ET: Oh, not so much?

BA: No, I came back before—actually, we were getting things set up and they had—just had the dedication or just had taken over the facility. They had the signs that were going out on the freeway that Caltrans brought out and they had like a—

ET: Dedication.

BA: Dedication of the University taking over the property. So it was—yeah, it was just—didn't actually get many employees—there was only I think, seven of us at that time.

And—

ET: Who were some of the ones in your group?

BA: Well, it would have been—well, we had—Handel Evans was here, was the president at that time. Then, we had a couple of people that came from the Chancellor's Office, Noel

Grogin(?) and, let's see, Dutch Grafter(?) was here as Chief of Plant and oh, they had—okay, we had a couple of people that stayed through the warm shutdown. We had a carpenter and mechanic and they did all things—they mowed lawns or whatever they needed to do to keep everything going at that time. We didn't have too many people. We started hiring people right after that.

ET: For such a big area—not so many people to handle.

BA: Right—no, they kept them pretty busy.

ET: Now, what did they have you doing when you came back? What was your position?

BA: I came back as the Maintenance Director.

ET: Okay. That was a big job because—

BA: Yeah, everything was starting out and we didn't have—we had—

ET: What to do?

BA: Yeah, we had to end up hiring a couple of engineers and hired one plumber, had two electricians and well, the one carpenter who had stayed over, he was here.

ET: Okay, who was the carpenter?

BA: Richard Ellis.

ET: Okay.

BA: Right. And, one plumber that we had went to work over at the Youth Authority.

ET: Now, the California Conservation Corps—were they here when you were an employee at Camarillo?

BA: Yes—not when the hospital was here, no. They came after.

ET: Okay, they came in after.

BA: Right.

ET: When it was the University—Cal State Northridge—was here.

BA: Right. Well, they were actually here with the hospital, but they were up at the housing area. They were up—their camp was up above.

ET: Okay.

BA: 15 homes(?) is where they stored all their equipment and stuff up there.

ET: And then they moved to the North quad.

BA: And, then they moved them down to the North quad, yeah, that was after the University—

ET: They were going to get rid of all the homes anyway.

BA: Because that's when we—yeah, because we demo'ed all the stuff up there—went through the demolition and all on that.

ET: Now—so how did it feel coming back and knowing like this was going to—this is like another chapter—another book?

BA: Well, yeah, it was neat. It was a challenge—there were a lot of ideas of what they were going to do and we didn't have much too work with then. We had very little funding. We used a lot of stuff that we could sell—each from one place or another to get things up and operating. But, as it went along we got more funding and everything was actually under the Chancellor's Office at that time. They controlled all our projects and all of our—anything that when on until we got delegation and it took probably four years to get that—it was after the Science building. They did that building, too. So, they were over taking care of running the actual construction of those—the Bell Tower and the Science building, Aliso Hall.

[Blank space of a couple of minutes]

ET: Oh, okay. I had a coughing episode and now I'm back to business here. So, coming back on campus which was now Cal State Northridge, what was one of the first tasks that you had to do?

ET: Put them in line—what were some of the first tasks that you had to do?

BA: Well, we had to start getting—the biggest thing was office space and stuff at that time, because we had people starting that were getting everything started and people coming over from the satellite campus in Ventura and Northridge. So getting office areas and stuff set up. We had to start getting security set up—changed all the street lighting and all the type of pictures and stuff to get more security lighting—repairing different things that were safety issues and needed to be corrected before. And then, of course, getting in they were starting the remodel of the Bell Tower area and getting a lot of utilities secured and working with them to get things changed over and replaced and stuff that needed to be replaced that wasn't actually drawn up on the original prints and so forth.

ET: You brought up security—did you have a lot of former patients that were trying to come back here?

BA: No, just mainly we needed to get the Code Blues [Ed. Note: equipment] set up and wired in, so that they had—so when the students did arrive on campus, if there was an issue, they were able to contact the police department or get a hold of someone to help if there was an issue and they said provide ample lighting and so forth throughout—add a lot of lighting to buildings and exterior and so forth.

ET: They did a lot of construction in the admin building, right?

BA: Just mainly just the admin, just mainly did—well, we did some wall partitions for offices and that, of course, change HVAC and stuff to accommodate that, different lighting and



power and then we—of course, the hospital didn't have much of any data so we had to get the data system set up. It was actually in the basement of the old admin building—the original data lines and equipment and servers and—.

ET: Yeah.

BA: Right—so we had to get that into all the—supplied into all the classroom areas and offices and so forth. So there was very little if any—well, they were starting to go to a computer system but, it was like an older coax system at that time that they were putting in to do medical reports and so forth, but we couldn't really use any of that for what we needed for—those technologies had changed, of course.

ET: When you first came here—there were so few employees—did you find yourself doing more than one task—sort of working outside of your class—

BA: Oh, yeah—everyone was—

ET: Did they call you and say “Bill, I need you”?

BA: Right. You ended up doing whatever was needed. You got it taken care of and that's what was good. The people that were here would all—the electricians, if need be, would be out helping run pipe or plumbers would be over helping pull wire or the—everybody worked together to get the job done. Like I say, we didn't have a lot of stuff, so if we needed something or needed lighting we'd go find it on an old abandoned building or whatever and get it up to provide what we needed for the time until we could do something else or get funding to do more.

ET: Yeah, because funding was always an issue particularly in the beginning, because they were trying to figure out what they needed and how to get it through and all that.

BA: Right, right.

ET: What were some of your—what were your first impressions about the differences—obviously the clientele was different, but were there any differences that you saw as far as your role goes in providing, you know, the types of service that you did between the Camarillo State Hospital and the University? Were your—how to put this—did you notice any differences or were you pretty—once, you know, you got on track with your job—you know what I mean?

BA: Yeah—as far as maintenance and repair and stuff—

ET: Not so much of a difference?

BA: Not a whole lot, no. Things are, like I say, a little more sophisticated, a little more advanced than what the hospital had. Mental Health and DDS [Ed. Note: the entities that oversaw the hospital] had very little money for repairs and so forth, so a lot of the stuff was run down and needed repair and so—it was a lot better with the University. There was a lot more funding that became available and we were able to advance and get things done correctly and yeah, it's real good to see it and see it coming back that way.

ET: Was it—do you have a preference? If you could go back, would you rather work for the hospital or would you rather work for the university?

BA: Well, I think I'd rather work for the university, yeah. The hospital was good—there were a lot of rewards in what's supplied to the clients and stuff—a lot of them appreciated everything very much and it was good to see some of them advance and so forth, but it's a lot better now. The campus is changing a lot and I'm very happy to see it as a university. It's been great being able to be part of it and see it come back to life more.

ET: Seeing the students move on is more of a—it's very rewarding being part of it.

BA: Right, right.

ET: You're a part of making that happen.

BA: Yeah, some of the clients had been here 30-40 years so—and you know they're never going to advance much past that—at least the students are all learning, moving on, getting into new jobs and new phases in their life so—

[BA telephone interruption]

ET: So is there anything that you would like to add in to your experiences either at the hospital or here on campus—anything that you think that people would be interested in knowing about either place?

BA: No.

ET: Any important people or, you know, notable events or circumstances or anything—anything “juicy”?

BA: No, I don't think so.

ET: Darn—okay, well I tried.

BA: I don't like rumors.

ET: That's just—that is the best way to go. Well, I mean, I know that when it was a hospital, but probably before your time, there were several actors or actresses who came to stay at Camarillo. Was there anybody who you knew of who came to stay at Camarillo, when you were employed there?

BA: Well, there were a few people—Phyllis Diller's daughter was out here for years. She was here well, right up to the end. She actually got transferred out of here, when the hospital closed.

ET: Oh, wow.

BA: And—I'm trying to think of the—there were a couple of others—I guess Marilyn Monroe had called the night she committed suicide or whatever and talked with staff and they tried to get her to come in or get somebody to bring her in or whatever, I guess, and—supposedly and it didn't happen. I was trying to think of what's her name—Ray—Charlotte Ray—

ET: Charlotte Ray?

BA: Yeah. Her daughter was out here. She used to—she'd come out like at Christmas and throw a party for the whole unit that her daughter was on.

ET: Oh, wow.

BA: She was a very nice lady. She was always doing something for the hospital or donating something.

ET: That's cool. Somebody had said to me—I don't know if you've heard this—one of the old time vampire actors—either Bella Lagosi or Lon Chaney— one of them—well, I guess, both of them had been here, but one of them stayed longer—I always forget which one it was that stayed longer. Did you ever hear that?

BA: Right—I think it was Lon Chaney—yeah, it's what I had heard.

ET: They were sort of like friend-enemies—they were kind of bitter rivals, but yet loved each other like friends—what an interesting relationship.

BA: Um hum.

ET: I was trying to think of somebody else. I know they filmed some movies here during the period of time that you were employed here.

BA: Yeah, when we first came back before we had students and stuff and they were filming movies—sometimes two or three movies going at one time here.

ET: Did you film anything, when you were here as a Camarillo State Hospital employee?

BA: No.

ET: Okay, so it was mostly the university.

BA: Right, because cameras and stuff like that were forbidden—there were signs and notices as you came in the front gate that there was—or front road—there was not actually a gate but photography and stuff was not allowed, because it's your privacy issues—they didn't want people taking pictures of somebody's relative or so forth.

ET: So, you were here, when they came into the hospital, into the morgue area—some of the rock bands and used the morgue area for their own videos—

BA: Yeah, right, that's where they've done some of the wild paint and stuff.

ET: Yeah, the green paint—for the background.

BA: Right, right.

ET: When you decided to retire—what year did you make the decision and what year did you retire?

BA: We made a decision, yeah, about the middle of 2006 and then, retired December 31<sup>st</sup> of 2006.

ET: What prompted you to do that? Just wanted to relax?

BA: Just wanted to, yeah.

ET: You put in your time.

BA: Right—ready to go off and do something else. We traveled around, did a little stuff for a while and—

ET: And then they called you back. Ha-ha.

BA: Got numerous calls back and I kept saying no, I don't really want to go back yet but—  
anyway, they said oh, can you come back for a couple of days a week and then it turned  
into five or six days a week and anyway....

ET: When did you start coming back a couple of days a week—this year?

BA: Oh, no, that was—it was nine months after I retired actually.

ET: Really.

BA: Yeah, it was September of 2007.

ET: I remember your retirement party so—you know what they say about this place: you  
check in, but you can't leave.

BA: Can't check out—yeah—came back.

ET: They just needed you.

BA: Yeah and when I started, I mainly came back on the infrastructure project, because I was  
pretty familiar with all the existing utilities and stuff that were buried out here and what  
was live and what was not and what could be removed and what needed to be tied in and  
so forth.

ET: For the university.

BA: Yeah, so that project took almost—well, we had design and stuff that took almost—a  
year almost and then, it started December of 2009, I guess. No, it was before that—it  
was September of 2009 and it went through—we just finished up here about six months  
ago—the infrastructure project.

ET: Did you—when you were here as an employee of Camarillo and then later, the  
California—CSU system—were you aware or were you made aware of the security  
issues with the doors that, you know, the two sided keys and two keys, I guess, for one

door and that sort of thing. Did they kind of—did they talk to you about that after being an employee here and then coming—after being a Camarillo employee and then coming into the CSU system—did they kind of go over all of that with you? Did you have anything to do with the changing out of the keys or any sort of, you know, thing like that—security purposes, you know?

BA: Well, we, yeah, we changed out—we had to change out numerous locking systems and secure certain areas and we had a problem when I first came back - there was all kinds of people wanting to see what was here and what had been here, so we had to keep all the units locked down as tight, as we could for liability issues. We didn't want somebody getting in and getting hurt.

ET: Now, on your murals that—we have still quite a few of them here—

BA: Right.

ET: Did they have—where did a lot of the murals come from? Were they done during your period of time here and who did them, do you know?

BA: Well, a lot of them were over in the North complex.

ET: The Walk of Fame?

BA: The Walk of Fame—that was done—that was actually one of the psych techs that worked here that did most of those—with the stairwells going up from the Walk of Fame—some of the pictures going up there and so forth.

ET: And then there's some around—I don't know if there were any in your area—I know there's a few around the hospital area. Was it different people, do you know, or pretty much the same person?

BA: It was different—no, it was different people, yeah. They even had—at one time they had some clients that had done some of the artwork, too.

ET: Who did the artwork in the cafeteria salon?

BA: I'm not exactly sure who that—

ET: The deer scene.

BA: Yeah, that's been for—

ET: A while, right?

BA: Oh, yeah—long before I came here it was done. I'm not exactly sure who did that.

ET: So now you've sort of permanently—you're in permanent retirement now.

BA: I'm going to be—yes, after tomorrow.

ET: After tomorrow?

BA: Yeah.

ET: And everybody knows this?

BA: Right.

ET: But what are you going to do after that? What are your plans for a new life? Are you going to do more traveling?

BA: We're going to do some traveling. Right now we bought 12 acres up in Idaho out of—about half way between Boise and Twin Falls—a little town on Glens Ferry where the—actually the covered wagons crossed the Snake River in that little town. It was—

ET: Oh, wow.

BA: —a ferry that would load them up and that's how they—when they came across the—anyway, it's just a little town of about—I think there's 1200 people or something in the whole area and we're outside town about five miles. Anyway, we're going to—I got a



building built up there—shop built a couple of years ago and we're going to load some stuff up and get our—we got power into the area now, had it ran it and drilled the well last year and we'll get the rest of the stuff—get ready and probably next summer we'll build a house up there.

ET: Oh, that sounds like fun.

BA: Yeah.

ET: I guess that will be your—will that be your second home or sort of a—or a permanent home?

BA: I think we're going to end up permanent there, yeah.

ET: Okay.

BA: We like the area real well and good people and it's just a different—a different life style than here actually and everything kind of—

ET: Yeah—slows down?

BA: Slows down, yeah, yeah. A lot of nice, friendly people, yes.

ET: Oh, wow, well that's exciting.

BA: Yeah, we're looking forward to it.

ET: Well, is there anything that I've missed that we haven't really discussed either regarding the hospital or CSU that people might be interested to know?

BA: I think we've covered a little bit of everything, yes.

ET: Well, thank you so much.

BA: Well, sure—thank you.

ET: It's so nice to see you again.

BA: It's good to see you, yes.

ET: I had no idea that you were on campus.

BA: Yeah, I've been here for a couple of years now.

ET: Oh, my gosh—well, you are on that end of town!

BA: Yeah.

ET: And the best of luck in your Idaho home—that sounds lovely.

BA: Oh, thank you.

ET: Does it snow where you are?

BA: A little bit, its—yeah, we're kind of what they call a banana belt so it does and we'll get two or three inches in a storm and it's gone in a couple of days.

ET: And how many acres?

BA: I think it's got 12—it's planted in alfalfa right now.

ET: I think that's—yeah, that great. Are you going to have a little farm with animals?

BA: We're going to get some, yeah, yeah—get a few animals and get some horses for the grandkids.

ET: Well, they'll have a ball.

BA: Yeah.

ET: Yeah, that's fantastic, congratulations.

BA: Thank you.

ET: Well, we'll conclude this oral history.

BA: Alright.

END OF INTERVIEW

