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David R. Carr : Tribute and Memorial

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Dr. David R. Carr joined the faculty at University of South Florida St. Petersburg in 1971. He had earned his undergraduate degree (B.A.) at Colorado State University in 1964. He then attended the University of Nebraska, earning an M.A. in 1968 and a Ph.D. in History in 1971 from that institution. As he searched for a job in 1971, he decided to apply at USF St. Petersburg because it was one of only three institutions in the United States that was recruiting in his field of medieval history. After accepting an offer to join the faculty as an Assistant Professor of History, he left the land of the Cornhuskers for the Sunshine City. Before reaching Florida, he weathered an unexpected storm in the Peach State: While driving through rural Georgia in a U-Haul truck full of possessions with a VW Bug attached to the truck, he nearly faced arrest after getting pulled over by a "typical southern cop."

As Carr settled in, he shared a large office with two other historians. Located in the old "A" building, currently MSL, the office had impressive views of Tampa Bay and the setting "was as neat as I can remember, being from Nebraska" with nearly all of USF St. Petersburg's facilities located in the area presently used by the College of Marine Science. In a 2003 oral history interview for the USF 50th anniversary, Carr remembered the seminar he taught during his first semester was "quite challenging" and he considered the fulltime teaching load "a real baptism by fire." He enjoyed the experience, adding that he "thought (he) was a king" with his starting salary of $11,000 per academic year. One of his colleagues, Dr. John M. Belohlavek, another recent Nebraska Ph.D. and fellow historian, moved over to USF Tampa before the beginning of 1972, where he continues to teach today. Carr's other colleague, Bob Burke, had recruited Carr to USF St. Petersburg. Burke soon cleaned out his desk as well, though under much different circumstances than Belohlavek. Carr remembered that Burke left "under a cloud of suspicion, which turned out to be very accurate" because he had fraudulently tricked the institution into believing that he possessed academic credits that, in fact, were non-existent. Thus, by the end of Carr's first semester, he faced an uncertain future as a one-person history department.

Although he has changed offices a few times, Carr would enjoy that waterfront view for the next thirty-eight years. He held rank as the most senior faculty member in terms of service at USF St. Petersburg, and joined a small group of USFSP employees with more than thirty-five years of employment on campus. Although hired to teach medieval history, he once remarked that the teaching demands on a small regional campus led to expectations that he would cover a broad range of subjects from "Mesopotamia to Megalopolis." His primary areas for teaching and research were medieval, Renaissance, and Reformation history, as well as urban, social, intellectual, and constitutional history. Undergraduate courses taught during his long academic career at USF St. Petersburg included Western Civilization, Medieval History I and II, Modern European History I and II, Medieval Culture, Medieval Society, Medieval Politics, British History.
to 1688, Renaissance and Reformation, Absolutism and Enlightenment, Nineteenth Century Europe, Twentieth Century Europe, and Theory of History. He developed a number of special topics courses over the years, including: City in History, Daily Life from Antiquity to Present, and Law and History. He team-taught seminars and lecture courses on Social History in Europe and America (1400-1850), History of St. Petersburg (Florida), Princes and Despots, Western Urban History, Cathedrals and Cities, Slavery and Serfdom, and a comparative course on the American and French Revolutions, to name a few. He also offered courses at Florida State University's international campuses in London and Florence.

Carr witnessed the growth of USF St. Petersburg and often remarked about the pressures of working on a regional campus with a partner across the bay that had great aspirations. With the arrival of USF President Cecil Mackey in 1971, USF Tampa embarked upon an aggressive expansion of graduate and professional programs. Meanwhile, the curriculum at USF St. Petersburg supported junior, senior, and limited graduate programs. Carr watched as many faculty hired at USF St. Petersburg during the 1970s and 1980s were "nurtured through tenure and then snapped up by the Tampa campus." Although based in St. Petersburg, Carr and other faculty often taught exchange courses in which they offered sections in Tampa and Tampa-based faculty came over to St. Petersburg.

Carr certainly enjoyed how USF St. Petersburg maintained its friendly, interdisciplinary character as it grew. As he recalled in a 2003 interview: "You would wind up speaking with someone in economics or finance, perhaps as often as you would wind up speaking with someone in history. It was an interdisciplinary community which grew up quite naturally." He continued: "Even though we were jammed several to an office, the offices were great, and the camaraderie was great." As he moved from the overcrowded quarters on the peninsula to present-day Davis Hall in 1980, he appreciated that the sense of community continued to cut across academic boundaries. "There was a good deal of extramural gathering." He told the interviewer that "(it) has been satisfying to watch the campus grow. I'm glad it hasn't grown as much as say the Tampa campus. We can't spread out very much, so it's far more coherent and cohesive."

Carr's service grew along with the boundaries of USF St. Petersburg. He led and participated in a number of faculty committees and faculty governance units. During the 1970s, he served on the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Faculty Advisory Committee, as well as the Faculty Advisory Committee for USF St. Petersburg. He also offered his sage guidance to the USFSP Library Committee, University Library Council, the Lecture Series Committee, the Honors Program, Faculty Senate, and the University Undergraduate Council, among other bodies, from the mid-1970s into the 1980s. A member of the Advisory Board of the department's popular *Tampa Bay History* journal, Carr also became faculty advisor for a USFSP chapter of the Society
for Creative Anachronism. Carr attained the rank of Associate Professor in 1989. A sample of governance duties during the 1990s includes stints on the Campus Faculty Council (and its successor body, the USFSP Faculty Senate), Commencement Committee, and Scholarship Committee. He oversaw the USFSP Honors Program from 1992 until 1995 and maintained a busy regimen of administrative duties in 1998-1998 during his year of service as a Faculty Assistant to the President.

Carr's administrative responsibilities expanded as legislative mandates compelled USF St. Petersburg to seek separate regional accreditation. From 1999 until 2002, he served as director of the USFSP College of Arts and Sciences and also took an important administrative role in directing USF St. Petersburg's SACS accreditation efforts beginning in 2001. He earned rank as a full Professor of History in 2004.

As he took on these tasks, he also continued to work with students and pursue scholarship. He served as a participating faculty member or thesis director for at least seventeen students who graduated from the USFSP Honors Program. He also chaired or participated in more than thirty thesis or graduate committees from students pursuing an M.A. in History or the Master of Liberal Arts. In addition to book reviews, articles, and book chapters, he authored History and Its Uses: A Guide for Studying History (Sarasota: Omni-Print, 1974) and edited The First General Entry Book of the City of Salisbury, 1387-1452 (Trowbridge: Wiltshire Record Society, 2001). He served on the editorial board of Rethinking History, a London-based periodical devoted to the field of historiography, from its inception in 1997. For awhile, he also edited The Historian, a journal published by the Phi Alpha Theta collegiate history honor society. He delivered many papers on areas of research interest in the history of the Middle Ages, Marsilius of Padua, Cities in Feudal Society, and other topics at international, national, state, and local professional organizations.

His work extended beyond the boundaries of USF St. Petersburg through his involvement with cultural and historical organizations in Pinellas County. A member of the Pinellas County Historical Commission from 1975 through 1978, he played an important role in the establishment of Heritage Park (now Heritage Village), the county’s open-air museum near Largo. He also served as a founding officer of the Pinellas County Historical Society, an organization established in 1976 to assist Heritage Village. He provided guidance for early exhibits and collections at the Village, offered fieldwork and practicum opportunities in historic preservation, and helped to establish a successful foundation for this important site. In addition, he has served on the board of the St. Petersburg Historical Society, as a commissioner and chair of the St. Petersburg Planning Commission (1982-1987), and as a commissioner on the St. Petersburg Historical Preservation Commission (1985-1987). As evidence of his leadership on city planning, he donated his working records from his involvement in revisions to
the City of St. Petersburg’s comprehensive plans during the 1980s to Poynter Library’s special collections and archives. He has also donated a small collection of political ephemera.

David Carr told an interviewer in 2003 that he took greatest pride in his work as coordinator and director of USF St. Petersburg’s College of Arts and Sciences as USFSP carved a separate identity and prepared for regional accreditation. Despite the growth that has occurred over the past thirty-eight years, Carr still enjoyed the focus on smaller classes and interactions between students and faculty: “We are fortunate not to have a lot of land to expand on.” He added, “I would hate to see (USF St. Petersburg) get too large. It has an intimacy that both faculty and students enjoy.” His final thoughts during that interview showed his profound affection for USF St. Petersburg and his hope that we would shape our destiny within the USF system: “The most ardent hope I have is that Tampa stops viewing us as a threat and starts seeing us as an attribute. When that day comes, I’ll probably have to check my pulse to see whether or not I’ve died and gone to heaven.”

Composed by Jim Schnur
Sources consulted:
USF 50th Anniversary Project oral history interview, conducted 6 October 2003
David Carr’s vita: http://www.stpete.usf.edu/coas/history/DCarr/Carr.CV.htm