Panel 31: Past is Prologue: An Enduring Legacy

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The notion of “change” has been a constant at USF St. Petersburg since its inception in 1965. Changes in the faculty and staff, new and innovative degree programs, new and improved recreational activities, and—of course—an endless stream of master plans and expansion proposals have greeted each generation that attends new student orientation.

A beacon of learning along Bayboro Harbor, USF St. Petersburg has transformed from an overflow facility and—later—an upper-level outpost to its present role as a distinctive, autonomous institution within the University of South Florida system. While “change” will always remain an inevitable part of the landscape, the excellent academic and co-curricular traditions established by earlier students, faculty, and staff provide an excellent guide for present and future generations to follow.

Whether one attended the Bay Campus, the Bayboro Campus, USF St. Pete, the University of South Florida—St. Petersburg Campus, or USF St. Petersburg, those who have come to this special place along the harbor will always have fond memories of their time here in classes, at the Stick & Rudder, the Tavern at Bayboro, the pool, the regatta, the Friday night movies, the Wednesday “brown bag” lectures, and countless other events.

Shana Smith (a.k.a. Shana Banana—a nationally known children’s entertainer), an alumna from the mid-1990s, summed it up best in a poem:

Music wafts across the Bay
As we sit at the Tavern and discuss the day
Salt on my skin, now just sittin’
And listenin’ to someone sing and play
The manatees come up to hear
As we raise a glass of coke or beer
Palm trees dance, oh such romance
I’m glad I went to school right here.

Memories of those great times
Stay big like St. Pete’s bright sunshine
Starfish and crabs, hours in the labs
Deep-sea swims and fishin’ lines
And now today, when I’m out in the world
That campus is like a rare pearl
The friends, the fun, it was such a treat;
There’s no place like USF St. Pete.

“In any good organization, there’s a blend of the old and new. Sometimes it’s hard for those about to retire to pass the torch to the new generation, but the new generation will do just fine. The organization gets stronger with each growth phase.” – Dean H. William “Bill” Heller in July 1999.