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Book Reviews

Gator Tales: An Oral History Of the University of Florida I Was There: a Century of Alumni Stories about the University of Alberta, 1906–2006

Jeff Charnley

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GATOR TALES: AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA. By Julian M. Pleasants. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 2006. 364 pp. Hardbound, \$24.95.

I WAS THERE: A CENTURY OF ALUMNI STORIES ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, 1906–2006. By Ellen Schoeck. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: University of Alberta Press, 2006. 757 pp. Hardbound, \$39.95 in Canada.

Oral historians have begun to use interviews in significant ways to supplement what may be described as the more traditional institutional “bricks and mortar” histories of colleges and universities. Many large public universities in the Americas were founded after 1850 and first published their histories at the half-century mark following the beginning of the twentieth century. In many instances, these college histories focused on firsts and founders and gave particular attention to the physical development of the campus and especially the construction of buildings. These two books, one from the University of Florida in Gainesville, and the other from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, present an interesting contrast in the use of oral history in tracing the histories of these two universities from 1906 to 2006.

In the case of *Gator Tales*, historian Pleasants has written a book that will have special appeal mainly to alumni of the University of Florida. Professor Samuel Proctor, who died in 2005, just prior to the publication of this book, had written an earlier history of the university that covered the years from 1853 to 1906. He established the oral history program at the University of Florida and it is named in his honor. Professor Pleasants continues Proctor’s oral history work and presents in this volume nine major interviews with university presidents and administrators, prominent sports figures with university ties, as well as three additional “Outstanding Graduates” (v).

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