

**Guillermo Bustamante**

JSF: This is an oral history interview with Mr. Guillermo Bustamante from Columbia South America. The interviewer is Jan Seymour-Ford. We're at Perkins School for the Blind on June 15, 2007. Could we start by asking you to, to tell us your full name and to spell it?

GB: OK. Last name first or first name?

JSF: Last name first is fine.

GB: Last name first?

JSF: Yes, that's fine.

GB: B-u-s-t-a-m-a-n-t-e. That's the last name, last name. My first name is G-u-i-l-l-e-r-m-o.

JSF: And could you pronounce it for us too?

GB: Bustamante, Guillermo.

JSF: Thank you. And could you, if you feel comfortable telling us, your year of birth and your age?

GB: Oh sure. I was born on October 30, 1938, and now I am, I'm going to be 69 on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October of 2007.

JSF: Thank you. And you live in Columbia, what City?

GB: I live in Medellin, M-e-d-e-l-l-i-n, Medellin Columbia South America.

JSF: Right, thank you very much Mr. Bustamante. What years were you at Perkins as a student?

GB: I was here from 1954 to 1957, 1954 to 1957, and then from 1960 to 1961 when I took the Teacher Training course.

JSF: Oh, I didn't realize that.

GB: A-hmm.

JSF: So you're a double alumni, alumnus.

GB: Yes.

JSF: How did you come to Perkins from so far away?

GB: A friend, a teacher of mine who was blind came to Perkins in the early fifties, forties, and he, when I was at school, he suggested that I could come to Perkins.

JSF: Was that Mr. [Cadaveet]?

GB: Yes, (inaudible).

JSF: I've heard from his family recently.

GB: Yes?

JSF: Yes.

GB: Really?

JSF: His daughter.

GB: Patricia?

JSF: No, Maria [Pelard].

GB: Maria [Pelard], oh yes, she's a medical doctor.

JSF: Yes.

GB: A-hmm.

GB: Well how did your family feel about you coming to Perkins so far away?

GB: Oh all right. They said it was, was going to be hard for but they wanted the best for me so we decided to come.

JSF: Wonderful. So they supported you?

GB: I got a scholarship from Perkins.

JSF: Ah!

GB: We had to pay some but not for first, actually got a scholarship for the, for the three years

I was here and for the Teacher Training course.

JSF: My goodness.

GB: A-hmm.

JSF: Did you visit, did you go back home to visit Columbia while you were here or did you stay here?

GB: Yes, I went home every summer. In '55, say '56, and I went '57, yeah, when I graduated.

JSF: Yes. So when you came to Perkins, what did you expect? What did you go...

GB: Well first of all, I wanted to, to go through high school and perhaps to the University, to college, and I wanted to learn English well because I spoke some English but not fluently.

JSF: So was that hard for you to come here and think...

GB: No, no, it was easy.

JSF: My goodness, you must be quite a linguist.

GB: Yes. I went to Michigan, University of Michigan.

JSF: Oh!

GB: To study foreign languages.

JSF: Before Perkins or after?

GB: No, after Perkins.

JSF: So when you arrived here from Columbia, was it hard to understand...

GB: People?

JSF: Teachers in the classroom?

GB: No, no, no. Somewhat but not very much, not very hard.

JSF: Oh, that's good. What do you remember about your very first days when you came to Perkins?

GB: My first very first day was I went to bed for a while and then I came, the director who at that time was Dr. Waterhouse called me to his office to say hello and to welcome me to Perkins. That's what I remember. And of course being at the cottage, something that was new for me. That's something I remember very clearly.

JSF: Ah. Well when you first arrived, was there anything that surprised you?

GB: The size, the size of the, of the school.

JSF: Ah. In all your time at Perkins, what was the most memorable thing that happened?

GB: The graduation day.

JSF: Ah! (laughter) That's great. In all the time that you were here, do you remember anything very funny that happened to you or funny that you saw?

GB: Funny, well, one day I, I got lost in the basement of the school. I was quite worried, I walked for a long, for half an hour or more until I came down to the gym and the, the watchman rescued me. (laughter).

JSF: How long were you lost?

GB: For about half an hour or more or so.

JSF: Oh my goodness.

GB: A-hmm, and it was very warm in the, down in the basement.

JSF: Oh. Of all your teachers, which ones were the most memorable?

GB: All of them, but perhaps Miss Alice Carpenter who was my English teacher.

JSF: Why, what made her so memorable?

GB: No, she was very nice and very kind and we got along very well. She was interested in learning about Columbia. She was very interested in, in foreign languages and foreign customs.

JSF: Oh, that's great. Among your fellow students, is there someone who was especially memorable?

GB: I remember Manual [Germano] who was, who was kind of from Portugal, no he wasn't Portuguese, but his parents were Portuguese. H was a very good friend of mine and I spent

Christmas time at his house in, in [Prevatis].

JSF: So you got to explore a little bit of New England when you were here?

GB: Yes.

JSF: That's great. So what do you remember about Dr. Waterhouse?

GB: Oh, he was a very kind person. He helped me a lot. He always encouraged me to go on and one thing that I remember especially is that when I finished, when I graduated from the Teacher Training course, he offered me a job here.

JSF: Oh!

GB: I taught here for, for oh a short time for four months because I had to go home because at that time my father deserted the home, my home, and so I, I had to go home but he, I remember that very especially because he, he believed in me and he gave me a chance, the opportunity to work here. I taught English, and junior and senior high school.

JSF: Mr. Bustamante, I see [Alahandra] has no chair, so I want to roll this out here. I'm sorry, here's a chair. And you are welcome to keep it here. So had, if you had not had to go home to Columbia, do you think you would have stayed and had a career at Perkins?

GB: Oh yes, yes.

JSF: Oh. So you must have really liked working here.

GB: Yes, oh I enjoyed it very much, and I got in love with a fellow teacher.

JSF: Oh.

GB: But as she went to Columbia to visit us for a month but she didn't like it...

JSF: Oh.

GB: So we broke, but yes, I would have, I would have loved to have stayed working here. It would have been quite different for me. You never know what might have happened.

JSF: Yes. Yes. So when you were a student, could you describe a typical day, like get up in the morning and, and what classes did you take, what did you do?

GB: Ahuh. Well, we got up I think it was at 6:30 and we had breakfast at seven o'clock. At

8:30, we went to chapel, to the chapel services. Then I went to class, oh, I took classes, English, physics, biology, math, French and then that was all morning. We had lunch, we had dinner about 12 o'clock, 12:30, I don't remember, and in the afternoon, we were, we went to class again until five o'clock, from 1:30 to, to five o'clock.

JSF: My goodness.

GB: And then we had supper at six, then we had to go to study hall from seven to 8:30, and we had to be in the cottage at 10 o'clock in the evening.

JSF: That didn't leave very much time for hobbies or.

GB: No, no, no.

JSF: Or other activities.

GB: No, no, it was mostly studying all of the time.

JSF: My goodness.

GB: Hmm.

JSF: So did you ever attend another school for students who were blind?

GB: Yes, in Columbia I went to the School for the Blind in Medellin for five years, for my primary, my grade school.

JSF: So how did that compare to Perkins? What was different?

GB: Oh no, there is no, no way of comparison. It was a very, very small school and there, I learned Braille, I learned the usual, I took the usual subjects of primary or grade school, but no, Perkins is far above from that school.

JSF: So for the first five grades, you were at a school for the blind?

GB: Yes. Yes.

JSF: And then did you go to a school for, like a public school, or should you...

GB: No, no. From that school, I came to Perkins.

JSF: Oh.

GB: A-hmm.

JSF: So that was quite a change.

GB: Oh yes, quite a change. The grade school was, the studies I, I had in grade school were equivalent to when I came here to sophomore.

JSF: Oh, I see.

GB: Sophomore, freshmen and senior, three years.

JSF: I see.

GB: Ahuh.

JSF: Is the grade school where you learned English?

GB: No, no. Well, well, with Mr. [Calaveed] taught me English at that school.

JSF: Ah!

GB: But then I went to another, another Columbia American Center, this one only for teaching English, over there for a year. So when I came here, I got along pretty well with my language.

JSF: Did your whole family study English or...

GB: No, no.

JSF: You were the only one?

GB: No, only me.

JSF: So on the day you graduated, you said that was your most memorable day?

GB: I think so.

JSF: How did you feel about leaving when, when it was time to leave?

GB: I was very sad, I really was very sad but at the same time I was happy because everybody was going home again and I had, I had the expectation of coming back to the University so it was mixed feelings, mixed feelings. I don't know, it was mixed feelings.

JSF: So when you came to the University of Michigan, was that the next fall after you

graduated?

GB: Yes.

JSF: Ah! So you've had a lot of...

GB: No, two years, two years.

JSF: Two years later.

GB: I came in 1959.

JSF: Oh. So you've done a lot of your education in the US.

GB: Yes. Most of it, yes.

JSF: What was the most difficult thing about being a student at Perkins when you were here?

GB: Well I don't think there was anything especially hard or difficult. No, no, I think they, I took things as I came and I adapted to them easily.

JSF: Did you ever get into mischief?

GB: Mischief?

JSF: Yeah! Pranks?

GB: (laughter) No, no, well, one day I was, I was left on campus because I went out with a friend of mine from Panama and that day the hour changed so I came an hour later than I had the past a permit to stay out, and so they sent me on, they punished me.

JSF: Oh, what did they do?

GB: No, I just had to go to a room and stay there for a couple, for an hour or so.

JSF: Oh, detention.

GB: Detention, yes. One detention.

JSF: So when you came back as a teacher trainee, how, were you here for one year?

GB: One year, yes.

JSF: One year?

GB: Yes, yes ma'am.

JSF: So was that when the teacher training was at Boston University?

GB: No, the teacher, yeah, Boston University, yes.

JSF: Oh.

GB: BC college, BC.

JSF: Boston College.

GB: It was BC, Boston College, Boston College.

JSF: Yes, yes. So...

GB: Boston University, BU.

JSF: What's the best single thing you can say about Perkins?

GB: The people, the people are very, were, and I think they continue, they continue to be very kind, very nice, very friendly. I think that's the best quality they have.

JSF: That's great. Well, having been here 50 years ago and coming back, what seems different to you?

GB: Oh, there are many, we haven't been, we went around this morning, walked around and there's many new buildings, many things, parks, trees, fields, playing fields that were not here when I, when I was here.

JSF: Were there things that seemed the same?

GB: Oh yes, the cottages, the main building, that's what, I've been in the Howe Press.

JSF: Ah yes.

GB: A-hmm.

JSF: What cottage did you live in when you were here?

GB: I lived in Elliott when I went to high school and in Tompkins, Tompkins when I was,

when I took the Teacher Training Course.

JSF: Ah.

GB: A-hmm.

JSF: Do you think you'll get a chance to visit them while you're here?

GB: I already went there this morning, to both of them.

JSF: Did you visit your old room?

GB: Yes.

JSF: Does it, did it seem very different or was it the same?

GB: No, the same, the same.

JSF: Oh.

GB: I don't know, I think Tompkins has a special program for special children or something about, we saw a little things for children, what do you call that now. Nappies?

JSF: Diapers?

GB: Diapers, yeah.

JSF: I think the students with multiple disabilities and the deaf-blind students are in Tompkins and the old boys side.

GB: Yes.

JSF: Is...

GB: That's what I, what I thought. Yes.

JSF: So I think you were, were you here when there was separation between boys and girls or was that, was that...

GB: Yes, yes.

JSF: Oh my goodness. So that was still here.

GB: No wait, the, the classes were mixed, it was a very mixed education, but the, of course the cottages were one on one side and one on the other side of the building. But the education was mixed, co-education.

JSF: Yes, yes.

GB: A-hmm. Are they still the same or not?

JSF: Oh it's in fact the cottage, I think even the cottages are mixed now, although I might be wrong about that. The little children I think are mixed, but maybe the boys and girls are separate now.

GB: Yeah probably.

JSF: They probably, probably.

GB: Ahuh.

JSF: So is there anything, is there anything else that you'd like to, to have us know about your time at Perkins or memories of Perkins?

GB: No, no, I'm very happy to be here and I've been dreaming of this visit for a long time. I made a big sacrifice, Columbia sacrifice to come, but I wanted to come and I wanted my family, or part of my family, to come too.

JSF: Yes.

GB: So I'm very happy, very satisfied and I'm glad to, to be able to see, to visit the cottages where I lived, the rooms, I went to the classrooms I used to take classes at, to the chapel, going to the Dwight Hall, all that. I'm very happy.

JSF: Well great.

GB: Completely happy.

JSF: Do you think there's anyone else here from your class?

GB: I don't know, I don't know, I haven't, I haven't been in touch with, I left all contact with all my classmates. I remember the names of some of my classmates, but I don't think, I don't really know if they're here.

JSF: So the techniques you learned while you were a teacher trainee, have you used them

through your career as a teacher?

GB: I worked in Columbia for five years with, worked for the National Institute for the Blind, but I was director, I wasn't a teacher. No, I haven't really taught blind people. I, I have, I worked, I worked in Columbia for 22 years as an English teacher but with sighted people.

JSF: I see.

GB: Ahuh.

JSF: Do you feel that this is where you learned to be a teacher?

GB: Where?

JSF: Here at Perkins?

GB: Oh yes, definitely.

JSF: Well great. So, is there any, any advice that you would give to current students today?

GB: No. Well, I, one say work hard and don't worry that the things will come out the best way possible.

JSF: Well, great. Well thank you very much, Mr. Bustamante.

GB: Oh, it's been a pleasure Jan, and I will not forget the Braille.

JSF: Oh yes, let's do that right now. I'll turn the, the.

GB: Do you know if, who else has been...

**End - Guillermo Bustamante**