Angela Cheves

Interview Session One: 19 January 2016

About transcription and the transcript

This interview had been transcribed according to oral history best practices to preserve the conversational quality of spoken language (rather than editing it to written standards).

The interview subject has been given the opportunity to review the transcript and make changes: any substantial departures from the audio file are indicated with brackets [ ].

In addition, the Archives may have redacted portions of the transcript and audio file in compliance with HIPAA and/or interview subject requests.

The views expressed in this interview are solely the perspective of the interview subject. They are not to be interpreted as the official view of any other individual or of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Chapter 00A
Interview Identifier

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:01]
OK, we are recording. Let me just put the identifier on. It is about 13 minutes after 1:00 and today is January 19th, 2016. I bet I even put 2015 in my notes here. Today I'm at the home of Ms. Angela Cheves in Houston, Texas, and we're here conducting our first session of an interview for the Making Cancer History Voices® Oral History Project run by the Historical Resources Center at the Research Medical Library at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Now, let me make sure that I get this right. You came to MD Anderson in '86, is that correct?

Angela Cheves

[00:50]
Correct.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:51]
And you were working with the Children's Art Project from the beginning?
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

Angela Cheves
[00:54]
From the beginning.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[00:55]
And most recently, and I just want to make sure I get your title right, you were serving as the Director of Marketing?

Angela Cheves
[1:03]
Associate Director of Marketing [ ].

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:06]
For the Children's Art Project and you retired just recently.

Angela Cheves
[1:12]
Yes.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:13]
At the end in 2016 or at the end of 2015?

Angela Cheves
[1:14]
At the end of 2015. December 31st was my last day after 29 and a half years.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:22]
Wow, that's really something. A long time with an institution. OK, well, I wanted to thank you first of all for giving your time to the project. Really appreciate it.

Angela Cheves
[1:34]
It was my pleasure. It was my life's work. I mean, I just loved it.
Well, good. I mean, I'm going to be asking you why.
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

Chapter 01
A: Educational Path;
An Early Decision to be an Artist and Education in Art

Codes
A: Personal Background;
A: Professional Path;
A: Influences from People and Life Experiences;

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:40]
We will be talking about that, but I kind of wanted to start just in the usual place for an oral history interview and ask you where you were born and when.

Angela Cheves
[1:58]
I was born in Houston, Texas in January of 1962. Actually in the Spring Branch area, which is also where I reside now. And grew up going to the public schools in the Spring Branch Independent School District. Then started at Vanderbilt University in 1980 in Nashville, Tennessee, and then I finished at the University of Texas in 1985 with an art degree.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[2:28]
All right. Well, let me ask you a little bit about your family before we get into all of that. What did your parents do?

Angela Cheves
[2:33]
And actually I'm glad you asked because they have influence. They've influenced a lot of who I became. My dad was really a salesperson. He was by training an elementary education teacher, but only taught for a year and was a salesperson and eventually had his own business in oxygen sales. The neatest thing about my parents was that they were artistic and they were people people. They were very gregarious people. My mother was an elementary education teacher, taught many years in the Spring Branch Independent School District and she was a real driven person. She participated in -- is it OK to tell you this now? She participated in a crewel group. She had real artistic friends and I still carry [that] with me, I think today, those four friends that were her art group that met once a week. I think influenced me greatly from a sense of interior design, fabrics. So I think as I made my own path, I always really carried a lot of their influence with me. I think my dad was probably very artistic, it's just that men didn't go that way so much, and my mom probably would have been an executive in a company if it hadn't been the '50s and the '60s. She was a really driven, strong woman. My dad's self-
employed business, he eventually had his own oxygen business and because I had been artistic and really started doing a lot of watercolors by the time I was 14, 15, the year I went away to college, they talked to a company and actually started a stationery business with my own watercolor designs. The reason that that matters later is because I, in those five years of college, I was away but I would come back and do press checks and we would talk, and look at the design, and this coming, but I wanted the stationery business. I learned printing and I learned about fulfillment and taking orders, so translate to then later I get the job at MD Anderson. I actually had a lot of -- I had some really good, basic skills that came from the business that my parents ran as a second business.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[5:00]

Really, wow. Yeah, I was going to ask you kind of when you knew you were going to be an artist. When did that happen?

_Angela Cheves_

[5:06]

Probably I think, my mom as a teacher probably saw that I was artistic at a young age, so I was taking art classes by third grade, and watercolor by seventh grade, and usually was in a class once a week. I really did that. My high school, I did a lot of artwork, and then in college I said I wasn't going to be an artist, but then I kept taking the classes. I kept thinking, “Oh, that would be a waste of my parent's education money,” and I’d consider doing medical illustration, but I couldn't cut the biology. So I really ended up with kind of English -- I ended up with a watered down art degree and an English degree, but I think that served me well later because I had the writing as well as the artistic abilities. The other thing about my mom that influenced, my mom and dad were real sociable people and she was a great entertainer, a cook, and I know that when I was interviewed for my job, that was one of the things that Karen Harrison was looking for was because she needed a person -- she needed that person to -- I was not an isolated artist type at all. I am also sociable, presentable, business, so she needed that well-rounded person and someone who could pull off events, which was part of my first job. So I think that those things that came from my mom and dad both that ability to be artistic. They helped make those things happen and encouraged it, then we had an entrepreneurial business, and I saw self employment and I saw business, and that matters later. Then that kind of socialization and artistic drive of my mom's all kind of make me who I am.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[6:57]

Sure, let's pause real quick.

[The recorder is paused.]
Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD  
[00:00]  
No, it's quite all right. OK, so we are recording again after just a little, quick break. Both of us, for the record, recovering from colds here. We have to stop a couple times. It's part of the seasons here. So that's actually a great analysis, kind of connecting the dots and all those ingredients that came together. Tell me about those college years. When you went, you said, what was your first intent when you went to college?

Angela Cheves  
[00:39]  
When I went to college, I really was looking at the medical illustration field, which requires a masters, because I could draw real detailed and still life, I mean, real things. I used my watercolor but there was always a real intense drawing underneath it, so I had thought medical illustration will get me an art degree that was justifiable, I guess, and would give me a career field. I didn't do well enough in the sciences to keep on going, but I think that was my intent. Then I always liked all the literature things, so I really kept doing both. Going to Vanderbilt, which was an honor and a great opportunity for me, I unfortunately was home sick and I just couldn't cut it. By the middle of my sophomore year, I came back home to Texas. So fork in the road. That would've been a great college to graduate from and I don't speak ill of the school at all, I think it was hard for me.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD  
[1:51]  
Yeah, and that is quite a ways away. It really is. I was wondering about the medical illustration. Obviously a very practical choice, but there were certainly other practical choices. Why? Was there some sort of draw to caring, medicine, what was the logical there?

Angela Cheves  
[2:08]  
I did not have a draw to medicine. Still, that's really on the periphery. I had also looked at architecture. I looked at interior design, so things that always were influenced by design. It's just that I really was trying to be very practical with it, but I was not particularly drawn about the medical things.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD  
[2:29]  
OK. So when you came back, went to U of H, did you do a double major?

Angela Cheves  
[2:34]  
I went to U of H for one year and then finished going on over to the University of Texas where I
finished my last two and a half years. I actually had two of the best classes. I always tell everybody about the University of Houston. I had two of the best classes I ever took, I always said, were at the University of Texas -- I'm sorry, at the University of Houston. So I give a shout out to the local university, for real. Then I went to University of Texas and was very happy there.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[3:03]

And where was that located?

*Angela Cheves*

[3:04]

The University of Texas in Austin.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[3:05]

In Austin, OK. And what year did you graduate?

*Angela Cheves*

[3:08]

So I graduated in 1985 and I have a bachelors of art in art.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[3:14]

OK, all right. Great. So tell me about telling the job and your job search.
Chapter 02
A: Joining MD Anderson/Coming to Texas; Joining the Creative and Energetic Team at the Children’s Art Project

Codes
A: Professional Path;
C: Formative Experiences;
A: Joining MD Anderson;
B: MD Anderson History;
B: MD Anderson Culture;
D: On Mentoring;

Angela Cheves
[3:18]
So I came out of the University of Texas and did a little bit. I had interviewed with some Arts Alliances group because there's advocacy and some things for the arts. I looked a little bit at that career. I ended up coming back to Houston and working for an art gallery in the Museum District, which was really probably sales because I was cold calling. It was corporate art placement and stuff like that. That was happening concurrent with I had a body of work, my watercolors, and about that time in our business Wheatnotes, which was my own, business was doing well.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[3:59]
I'm sorry. The name of your business?

Angela Cheves
[4:00]
It was Wheatnotes. W-H-E-A-T-N-O-T-E-S.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[4:05]
OK, why was it named that?

Angela Cheves
[4:06]
And Wheat is my maiden name, so it was my family name. Anyway, I'm telling you that because this is part of the bridge. So I worked for the gallery from June to October. I had an arts show in, I believe, November at the Cathedral downtown. Anyway, and another show in March in Brenham, so I had three art shows. So I finally stopped the gallery, decided to work full on my painting, and a little bit as a nanny, and I did that for the next six, seven months. And to say that I'm working as the nanny also, so
by that time I'd moved out of home, and I get a call from Karen Harrison who knew my family from [5:00] church. Karen, the Harrisons, and my parents were good, acquaintance type friends. Nice friends at Saint Martin's Episcopal Church, which is in the Tanglewood area, and as Karen would always say -- me and my dad would laugh, she really knew -- was, they were on a church retreat when mom and dad, I think, discovered they were pregnant or decided they were pregnant, so Karen always says she knew me from birth. I had been friends with her daughter who was two years ahead of me. So to say that -- and Karen was from this area too so we had gone to school a little bit with her kids, so Karen called me in June of '86 and said she had a position that she thought I might be just right for and I said at that point, I wasn't sure because I liked the family I was nannying for and everything. Not a week later, the family that I nannied for said they were moving to Dallas. So I picked up the phone and called Karen and said if it's still open, I would like to apply for it. By then it was getting put out on the open market. Karen would always say that she needed someone to come in and do the events side of the Children's Art Project because events and things were a big part of the business, and to have the printing and stationery background, which helped her tremendously. So I interviewed with Page Lawson, who was the Director of Volunteer Services at that time, an incredible woman. Karen worked for Page. There was an Assistant Director named Ann Gabel that also interviewed me. Then Karen's right hand person, Marilyn Healy, I also met with. At the end, I would think by the first of August, I must have known I had the job so I started on September 2nd. But I think that background of -- I think Karen, because she knew my parents some, was looking at that kind of event orientation that she knew my mom had had and that I had had with her, which helped along with the whole stationery business and just, kind of, I could do a lot of things. So that was really why I got the job.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[7:06]
So your first was Special Projects Coordinator, that was the official title.

Angela Cheves
[7:10]
Yes.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[7:11]
Now before I ask you kind of to detail what you did in that job, what was your impression of MD Anderson? Why did you want that job?

Angela Cheves
[7:20]
I think I loved -- it was very small. There were three people ahead of me. It --at [the Children’s Art Project, a part of] Volunteer Services-- looked dynamic, and caring, and fun. There was that sense of -- Karen was an amazing person -- so you just got this ideas bubbling energy, so that attracted me a great
deal. [I] would say the whole volunteer component, which had some older people obvious-- I was 24 when I got my job, so clearly almost everyone was older than me, but what's interesting about that is I love that. I, in fact, married a man who’s 18 years older than me. I was always an old soul and I loved that part of the job. I still think that was very influential in my life. I loved -- those women were probably in their 50s when I met those early volunteers because they had finished raising their families and were coming to volunteer. But they were interesting people wisdom, I loved being a young woman around them. Really, I can credit so many of those women, and especially Karen and Marilyn with, I would say there's kind of a third growing up that you do as a person which is first your family raises you and your school, but I think who you go to work for your first few years is a very important relationship and it kind of finishes your 20s. I think that they influenced who I am tremendously. So they were great people I wanted to work with. And then the patients. The whole pediatric patients because I did some art cl-- I mean, I would do artwork with the kids and stuff. I loved all of that. Then it was like planning a parade and create a luncheon to help thank the volunteers. I loved every aspect of it and it wasn't the same every day and that attracted me a lot as well.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[9:22]

Let me ask you a little more about what you learned from these women. What happened during that third growing up?

_Angela Cheves_

[9:27]

That third growing up, you know, I think one of the things, the culture was that -- and this is before everyone had a computer, and a cell phone, and all that -- we had lunch together pretty much every day. So they had kids that were close to Marilyn, and Karen had kids that were close to my age, plus all these volunteers, so I would hear things about how their marriages were, or how their children were, and how they raised. I mean, I still can hear Marilyn Healy going, “The first thing, when somebody says something I do not care for, I go “Hmm,” then I kind of count to 10 seconds to make sure I don’t say something that I don't want to say,” and I was like, “I'm going to use that. I think that all the time,” and they taught me about putting my family, my marriage, first and family first because I married the next year. So I think they were very important, kind of saying, “This is what matters in life and we're going to work hard, we're going to play hard, your family is foremost. Then we're going to figure out how to grow,” but you know, how to raise children. I just heard so many things. Then, of course, it was fun to be the youngest amongst all of them. Now that I've been I my 50s and I love some of the young people that have come into our office. It is so wonderful to be at that point of life where young adults are, kind of, making their life decisions and I think that I enjoyed getting to be that kind of a mentor to some of the younger ones the last few years and they must have enjoyed that about me. They're still very special women in my life. Just from work ethic and everything. But we would have lunch together every day, so you got all of life. I think it was a great teaching.
Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[11:32]
Yeah, sounds like it was an amazing experience.

Angela Cheves
[11:33]
Yeah, really great and because it wasn't just Karen and Marilyn, because there were volunteers, there were five or six every day. It was -- that's 30 influential people.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[11:41]
Right. Amazing.

Angela Cheves
[11:43]
So a great appreciation for just all the talents of all the older people, and funny, and witty, and writers, and all of it. Plus, obviously you saw all the people dynamics of how to navigate waters. This one's a crotchety person, this one doesn't stay on task, and you're learning all of those things about people. When we were in tighter spaces, I think that was important.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[12:09]
I'm sure. Lessons learned that would really help with management for sure.

Angela Cheves
[12:15]
Definitely.
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

Chapter 03
B: An Institutional Unit;
The Children’s Art Project: Art Classes and Memories of Patients

Codes
A: The Educator;
C: Formative Experiences;
C: Professional Practice;
C: The Professional at Work;
C: Patients;
C: Patients, Treatment, Survivors;

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[12:17]
Well, a little earlier you kind of listed some of the different things that you did and I definitely wanted to ask you about the pediatric patients. So talk to me a little about that. Had you ever encountered cancer patients before pediatric cancer patients?

Angela Cheves
[12:30]
I had not. I did not have any friends that had gone through that as young people. My family only -- I had dated and continued to date off and on in my college years a young man whose mother had breast cancer, but I think they actually kind of hid it from... I now can look back and realize what she was probably going through, but I didn't know that at 19 and 20. I didn't realize. So I really have not been around the cancer story very much. I can remember exactly -- there's really two patients that kind of strike me in my first year. One was a little girl named [redacted]. She probably was three or four and I guess I'm going to say, actually she smelled awful. I don't know whether that's all of those treatments that are just singing, burning. I mean, you're talking in the 80s, so we're in that treatment. I remember doing the artwork with her and it wasn't a soiled smell, it was just I think chemical. I don't know what that was, but I'm remember how somewhat listless, but my favorite child. The first year that we went to work there I was on the seventh floor and I believe what would now be just the old hospital. Pediatrics was on sixth, so I could drop down, and I did drop down to do art classes a lot, but my favorite patient was really [redacted], that's who I would say influenced me so much. [Redacted] and then [redacted]. His family was from Trinidad and he was a teenage boy. But for [redacted], he probably was 16. Again, I'm 24. Fifteen or 16, but we drew a lot together and then I watched him go through an amputation. I remember being with the family. We, my husband and I, I'm not sure if we were married quite yet then, but I know know we took them to Miller Outdoor Theater once, maybe for the July fourth. Those were the days were you did a little bit more of those things too. Like came over and fixed dinner for them, my mom had. I loved the Julys, that whole family. He also influenced kind of how I later managed artwork with kids because I'll never think this is the right time to tell the story. We had worked
on a piece of artwork but later when it became time to publish it, there were -- you have to learn and I haven't had art instruction classes, so the line between, “Let me show you how to do this,” and, “You do it,” or, “Here is an idea,” where that crosses between my piece of paper and your piece of paper. I had to learn some of that and I'll never forget just what I taught later as a manager and always watched my own teams. Because [Redacted] later told me when his card won and he was at a card announcement, he was like, “I didn't really do that piece of art. You did.” I learned never to touch someone's work again and that was a valuable lesson. I'm sorry that I had done that, but I had influenced a piece of artwork so much that I needed to back off.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[15:46]
That's a very valuable lesson as a teacher.

*Angela Cheves*

[15:47]
It was a very valuable lesson and it was a valuable lesson later when I managed my team of graphic designers that were sometimes looking at people's artwork and were like, “I could make it better if it just tweaked this,” and with computers and stuff, you can tweak a ton, but that balance between maintaining the essence of the child's artwork and if we need to brighten the colors, or... It is a delicate balance. I was very attuned to that. To really walk all of us through, we need to feel good about if the child sees this published, do they still feel that it's their artwork? That's very important. It's important to make it marketable, but it's also important to maintain the integrity of their artwork.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[16:36]
Absolutely.

*Angela Cheves*

[16:37]
So it was really important. Anyway, that of influencing [Redacted] is always -- I really couldn't name the rest of them, but it was good.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[16:46]
Tell me about teaching the art classes. You said you hadn't been trained to do that, so that must have been like, “Oh my gosh, this is on my plate!” but at least it would only be --

*Angela Cheves*

[16:57]
You basically had three or four. At that time there were teachers from the Museum of Fine Arts from...
the Glassell School of Art and there were two teachers that came and taught on the halls every week. Noel Foreman, and I'm not going to remember the other person's name, but the museum had an association with us for many years with Pediatrics and the Children's Art Project teaching art classes, so I think I went in and offered to assist them and occasionally if they needed a substitute, but I often was not by myself. Again, I really wasn't -- I was too young and not particularly trained in that, but I would go. So I got to be around -- they were wonderful, creative women.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[17:43]
What was the reason for teaching art classes?

*Angela Cheves*

[17:46]
So teaching art classes in Pediatric in those days was one enrichment in diversion. We have always strived to teach different mediums and skills, to see things, and to do something that both resonate for the child.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[18:07]
Sure.

[The recorder is paused.]

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[00:03]
OK, we're back after a quick, little break. So you were talking about the reason for teaching art classes.

*Angela Cheves*

[00:09]
Right. And one of the things about teaching, so it's happening every week, it's diversionary, and some children really latch on to doing artwork. I'm remembering, I won't remember her name anymore, I mean, a kid who may say, “I was an athlete, and now I can't be an athlete, and I didn't even know that I could draw.” Now, suddenly you're excelling at something else, is a powerful confidence builder in a time where your body is going through a lot of, sort of being destroyed, and the life that you lived has changed.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[00:45]
So really an identity issue.
Correct. So to watch some children in particular really thrive in the art situation, especially when you watch a child who didn't even know they were artistic, is really wonderful. And when I think that they create something that later becomes published, that becomes a success, is a wonderful kind of side note to their experience at MD Anderson and we have always made a big deal about a child whose artwork becomes published and in the early years. We worked very hard to publish stories in their hometowns. Kind of, the year your artwork debuted was a nice, big year for you. We've always done big kickoff events that celebrated the new line, and would make a story, and would make a big push about it. I think a lot of them would enjoy that, and it kind of gives you some success when some things are not, and confidence. And the other thing is I think that as a child knows that their artwork is creating funds that help all of their co-patients. If you'll say it's like their co-- their friends on the hall, if their artwork created the funds ultimately that help them have good camp sessions and stuff like that, then I think that is empowering as well.
Well, tell me a bit about your roles when you came.

Angela Cheves

Well, I love to tell my first story about my first day at work because we were -- I've mentioned there was always a kickoff parade, and really we did them always on October 1st. They later became pep rallies, but there was always a kickoff event that really started the Christmas season because the project was a Christmas Card Project to begin with. So I started on September 2nd. October 1st is the date of the parade. That parade would wind in the Medical Center and Karen, I believe, and probably Page, had really come up with this. Actually, early -- so Steve Stuyck [oral history interview]. Steve Stuyck was there in those early years, obviously throughout his 40 years. So they had come up with, in that time, to create events that drew the media to come. So it was really designed to be a media event and we invited multiple people from each news station to come and ride in an open car, convertible car, in a parade with a patient and get to talk to them. Obviously, what happened was that they went back and their film crews came out, filmed them with the kids. It went that night on the news and they said, “A wonderful day at Anderson with the Children's Christmas Card Project and it's time to buy your holiday cards.” I [4:00] mean, that was the essence of it. So my first day there. Again, I'm 24, but my first or second task that Karen gave me was, “Please call this list of media anchors and invite them to come to the parade,” and I was supposed to call Dave Ward. OK, if you've lived in Houston, Dave Ward is still an anchor on Channel 13. And I'm 24, and I'm supposed to call the anchor of the news station at Channel 13? That was huge! I was so nervous. I remember that I reached him on the telephone and he said yes, but I was like uhh, you know, oh my gosh! So that was like goodness. We needed -- we would always have a theme to the parade from one of the pieces of artwork that year and there was a tin soldier and so we had kind of taken that as a theme. Myself and another volunteer, we sewed the costumes for all of the -- we sewed soldier costumes so that the people that would be in the parade looked like soldiers. Red
satin, but one of the other volunteers was like, “OK, I know how to sew.” That was one of my earlier skills so I brought that to the Project. Then the other thing was that you made walking cards, so a walking card was an enlargement. So again, this is in the days before technology, so we would get a big canvas on a frame and probably three feet by four feet, and we would recreate the child's artwork on the canvas. OK, I can paint. I painted all of those big canvasses so that they were the big visual in the parade. So two soldiers walked the cards down in the middle of the street, and then the car follows with the kid behind it, and the media. That's the essence of the parades. So it was a great -- I mean, my September was full on busy because I painted, made the costumes, made the calls, you know Karen was leading it, but I had many important jobs. So it was an awesome start.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[5:54]
No kidding, and talk about learning you could do things, like picking up the phone and calling some important person in town.

Angela Cheves
[6:00]
Yes.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[6:04]
So what about during the parade? Were you part of the parade?

Angela Cheves
[6:27]
I do not remember whether I marched with the car or whether I was helping conduct something. I was supposed to be taken -- in '87 then I took over running it. I guess Karen ran it that year and I probably was beside her, kind of learning what she was doing, but you had a couple of bands, like Bellaire High School band would come. There were three or four bands that would come from the high schools, so you had to get the car clubs to come and bring the old convertibles because you needed the convertibles. You need to make sure you had your patients, you had the media people, and then we always served refreshments afterwards, so you're asking Pizza Hut to donate pizza and stuff. And it went -- the parade that first year, first few years, went on the land that is probably now Alkek, and there was an old, big circle driveway that went up. Anyway, it was fabulous. Learn to make balloon art, we blew helium balloons. It could not have been a more wonderful event and a more -- oh my gosh, I could not believe I’d landed at this job because it hit so many bells about things I'd loved and could enjoy. And it was fun. It was fun. It was purposeful and it was fun. Then, you're watching all the interviews. Karen was a master interviewer.
Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[7:35]
Who did she interview?

Angela Cheves
[7:36]
Well, I mean, if a news station would interview her, she loved. And Page was great. Page was a pied piper, I would've followed her. Anyone who worked for her, we probably would have followed her to the moon and back, she was so amazing. And Karen was a lot like that too. In this day and time, I would probably guarantee they had ADHD, but I think that people who have ADHD, you know I put myself in there, are some of the most creative types. They're a little bit -- we weave a little bit, but they're really fantastically creative and dynamic people, and they were that, and their staffs loved them. They would've followed them anywhere. Just so vibrant and dynamic, so I'd love to say that October 1st, in all of my years it never rained. You know, you always had to kind of have a rain plan, but it really wouldn't have worked. (laughs)

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[8:27]
So it never rained?

Angela Cheves
[8:29]
It never rained and we ran outside events all the way through 2010 and it never rained.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[8:36]
That's amazing.

Angela Cheves
[8:38]
That is amazing. (laughs) That is amazing. I think part of the charm also, like for that car ride for the media guest, was that then they got to sit next to whatever patient that was for 15 or 20 minutes, so they really had some interaction with those kids, which I think made them have a real buy-in and was compelling. Then they had something to tell that they really wanted to tell when they went back to their news stations.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[19:02]
Absolutely. Where did the idea for --
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

Angela Cheves
[9:05]
I believe that was Karen.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[9:06]
It was Karen?

Angela Cheves
[9:08]
I know from probably '83 an '84 look like -- and this is me looking through scrapbooks and stuff -- they had events, but it could've been like a snow day, I'm not sure. They had some big, some well-known celebrities, so I think the whole kickoff event was part of it. Where they came to parade, I don't know because by the time I got there, we were already having a parade. And Karen had come on full time in 1980, so she had six years before I got there.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[9:42]
And it sounds like it was a pretty well-honed machine at that point.

Angela Cheves
[9:46]
Right. She had only three [staff]. It was really Karen, and then Marilyn that ran all the volunteer operations, and Anna Holtan that ran the -- was really her secretary.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[9:56]
OK, so you were doing some teaching, you were doing events like this, what were the other kinds of events that you helped or participated in?

Angela Cheves
[10:07]
Well, we always had a volunteer appreciation event in the spring and Volunteer Services also always had a volunteer appreciation event, but Children's Art Project, the Christmas Card Project, ran its own and as of this year. That is ending. We always ran our own and so coordinating that luncheon, doing it at a good price, we have always hosted it at the Junior League of Houston, which I think was very gracious about what they charge for us. Also thought it always met with the mission that it was a volunteer organization itself, so their volunteers served lunch. So what a nice equalizer, I guess, or synonymous with the volunteer organization. But at the luncheon, we always hung the Children's artwork up on the wall so the people who volunteered for us would come and vote on the artwork for
the next season and then we thanked them. They really had a tremendous amount of volunteers out in
the community, so it's running with a very small staff but it took a lot of community people to make the
sales and everything happen. That was the opportunity in March to say thank you and I would have
coordinated -- I coordinated that lunch, what the centerpieces looked -- made the centerpieces. We
always made everything. So I can arrange flowers. I mean, Karen was a good flower arranger, I was a
good flower arranger. I remember I took cards -- it was the tin soldier that year -- but it's like I put six
cards together so they looked like they were a container, just because we glued them together. Then we
put a pot of yellow mums in it and it looked just charming. It was figuring out how to do simple things
like that. One early luncheon, we had a theme that was seashells. So we bought a bag of brown
seashells, but the card was in real tones of purple, so we painted all the seashells purple. I love making
all that kind of visualization. I didn't work too much on the script than, I believe, some other people,
but how did the stage look? How was the room set? What were we serving? The invitations out, the
RVSP count, all the typical network was my responsibility, in which I loved doing that, and was pretty
capable about that very quickly. Then we actually went to Dallas and to Austin because we had
volunteers, maybe not in '86, but by '88, '89, we went to those other towns to also do appreciation
events. Smaller, but we would go to thank the volunteers in those towns as well. So kind of road-
showed it.
Chapter 05
B: An Institutional Unit;
The Children’s Art Project: An Autonomous Entrepreneurial Program within MD Anderson

Codes
C: Understanding the Institution;
B: MD Anderson Product Development and IP;
C: The Institution and Finances;
C: Discovery, Creativity and Innovation;
B: The Business of MD Anderson;
B: The MD Anderson Brand, Reputation;
B: Philanthropy, Fundraising, Donations, Volunteers;
B: MD Anderson Impact;
C: Discovery and Success;

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[12:46]
Now, you mentioned that the volunteer appreciation is not going to be held anymore and why is that?

Angela Cheves
[12:50]
As of this year it's going to fold into the big Volunteer Services ones, and everyone will just be a part of it, and I don't know yet how. Because we just merged with Volunteer Services again after... Since '99. We split in 2000. '99 or 2000. So I think the decision is that there doesn't need to be a separate Children's Art Project luncheon anymore. So I'm sad about that.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[13:20]
What do you think the impact of that would be?

Angela Cheves
[13:23]
Well, I don't know that they're going to put the artwork up anymore for display and I'm sad about that. I think there are a lot of people that enjoy it. I think there will be just a different way. I don't know. I think the impact would also be that I think you kind of feel close and special if you volunteer for the Children's Art Project, so how they continue that I'm not quite sure, but maybe it isn't going to be as separate anymore, it will just fold into to be a program of Volunteer Services. I don't know completely.
Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[13:57]
I mean, it is an interesting choice to have the Children's Art Project as kind of this autonomous thing.

Angela Cheves
[14:02]
Correct.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[14:03]
And the more you're talking about it, the more it's like, “Huh, you know, it really was this special group very dedicated to that.” So I'm hearing you correctly here?

Angela Cheves
[14:14]
Right. Yeah. I think that was part of the beauty for working for it, that was an amazing experience. I think that entrepreneurial spirit -- we were supposed to be self-supporting and we were -- was amazing. Along the way I think some problems came from that in that as you try to grow a business, it didn't report enough to a business unit and so I think it needed some strengthening and assistance from the bigger business planning, but I think they left us kind of out here as this entrepreneurial boat, which at this point is somewhat in dismay. Which is part of all the changes occurring right now.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[15:01]
I see. Yeah, it's funny. But you know I always say nobody sets out to be inefficient.

Angela Cheves
[15:11]
Correct.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[15:13]
But it grows that way because of the way an institution is organized at a particular moment, the particular personalities who are creating the project, and then as it gets larger, then the cracks or little issues start to show.

Angela Cheves
[15:24]
Yes. So at this point I think some of that has hit just part of what's happening right now in the whole reorganization of it. But in the early, that was amazing, which is why I would always say it was like
working for an entrepreneurial business under the umbrella of a big institution, but there was a flexibility and a fluidity and you could respond. You had an idea and you could make it happen pretty darn fast and honestly because you said you were from MD Anderson, you had the safety net of it but you could make a lot of things happen, which is just an ama-- and that goes back to my dad having been self-employed and stuff. I loved that small -- I loved it later when it got larger, but we have not ever been part of a giant, big department. I wanted that [ ] kind of slower way of doing things, maybe because we're self-funded, also released some funds to go just do things differently. We followed all the rules and we used purchasing, but it just moved differently. But the other thing is it's a different kind of business that the hospital's in, so to say does the hospital understand a product business? An arts and product business is pretty far out. They sell cancer care now probably as a product, but that's very different from a consumer oriented business that's product driven.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[17:01]
OK, so tell me about when you came in to work with the Children's Art Project and you were doing events. Now, you also did some work with the stationery. So tell me about that piece because that obviously was what took over for you.

Angela Cheves
[17:19]
Correct. Right. So in those days at the point when the artwork was chosen to be printed for the next year, for that next holiday season and that came from volunteers voting [ ] at that luncheon, then you say, “This is the design, if it's these eight designs. And it's April.” There's graphic processes that they go through and in those days you would have -- if the child had drawn it on an eight and a half by 14 piece of paper that didn't size down to the card format, at that point up in Medical Graphics, Ruth Reynolds, they would have repainted, copied the child's artwork onto a board in the format of a card. Very faithful, but you had to do it like that, and then that piece of artwork was color separated, which I would've looked at that with a printer to go -- and a color separation is how you're getting ready to transfer it into the printing industry. You're looking at how that color separation captured the artwork and I have a very good eye and learned to go, “That blue is not quite accurately represented over here. Can you tweak it by adding a little bit more cyan or a little bit more yellow?” In those real technical things. So getting that color separation right was very important. Then you're coming up with how many cards do we need this year and what are we going to order? And getting a quote from a printer. I know exactly what printer we printed with that first year. I did not know what kind of contract, like Karen, if they had done and it had gone through purchasing. It always did, but you would've said, “We want to print X number of cards. This is how many we need.” They were always in shrink wrap. We had a certain size envelope and stuff, so we had two sizes at that point. Then you go to a press check when they're ready, the day that the cards are ready, you go to watch a press run at a printers. They're going on the big machines. I had done that with my Wheatnotes as well. So there can be inaccuracies of color or holding registration by the way that the press is running, so my job would
have been to go and to ensure that accuracy, and that it looked as close to what we were trying to accomplish. There are always some happy mistakes in printing, like it looks a little bit brighter green. You go, “OK, I actually like that green. Let's leave it there,” but there's other things you go, “We can't,” but there will also be some colors. You can never get orange as good as orange looks, so then you have to go, “OK, I can live with that orange.” So those decisions about color and the registration always came under me pretty darn quickly. And how we boxed, and making sure it delivered. So from my earliest years working with Karen, but then I took over most of that by 1990 and kind of did all the print orders making sure everything was created and made the way it was supposed to be was my job. And that spawned into other product and so I guess I'll... So customers are always writing into the Children's Art Project or calling, “I wish you would make X, Y, and Z,” “I wish you would make ornaments,” “I wish I had a T-shirt with that design.” I think what was so fantastic about my job was that I was a lot of Karen's right hand because I wasn't running the operations part. So anytime there was a new idea, it was like, “Figure it out Angela.” So make an ornament. That was the first thing that we wanted to make.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_  
[21:12]  
When was that?

_Angela Cheves_  
[21:13]  
That is going to be '88.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_  
[21:16]  
Oh wow, so pretty early.

_Angela Cheves_  
[21:18]  
Pretty early, and I know that I stitched a prototype and then we also cut on wood a prototype because my husband was a woodworker. We had a scroll saw here. We cut out three or four designs. He cut them out on the Scroll saw for me and then I painted them to try and come up with a mockup. My family. My dad had a friend who was an entrepreneur and did a lot of things at that time already overseas. I remember I called Hilmar and said, “Can you help me figure this? Help me figure this out,” and he was really who helped me figure it out. So they were wonderful and that was my job, which is I think why I had such a unique position because almost everything that we did in growing the Children's Art Project, I really kind of was the person who figured out. They would say, “Go figure that out,” while they were making sure the mail order got packed and things like that. It was like figure out how we can make something, which brought in my design and interests and stuff really well. So anyway, we did ornaments first, and then we did a T-shirt, and then a tote bag, then probably a lunch
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

bag. Then pretty soon I think we went to a little gift bag and wrapping paper. Those are some of the real early things.

I also -- the other thing I did at the job was I placed brochures. We had a mail order business. They already had mail order. They had started with a type of a catalog I believe Karen's thing sort of said it, but I believe they started first just in bradded folders, but they printed by '83, '84 a small brochure and that would go to a customer if he said, “I want it at my home.” They also at that time -- all of this, of course, pre-internet-- we would receive mail from the electric company, and the banks, and everything. Well, they have mailers inserted in them that were small formats. So I always laugh and say that I know most of the towns in Texas that begin with Bs because one of my jobs probably summer of ’87 was, “Call all these banks. Just start going through the state of Texas and call these banks to see if they'll place our catalog, place our little brochures, and how many.” So I can do Brenham, Bonham, Burton, but because I was calling -- maybe the first day that Brenham, Texas [switched?] to town, but you know small towns. But sure, “We'll take 10,000. We'll take 3,000 and 2,000,” and pretty soon you might have placed a million of these little mini brochures. So anyway I did that for -- just literally call on the phone, “Would you place this little catalog [ ]?”

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

Interesting. Now, I thought it was really interesting that you said obviously MD Anderson is in the business of selling cancer care, but you guys were doing product design, and product placement, and marketing very early. Were there some moments when there was an issue because people didn't get what you did? Did that create some problems?

Angela Cheves

I think in the early years as far as administration, I think they thought it was pretty wonderful. I mean, I do. I think that. I think that early on it really became a feather in the cap of MD Anderson. We were probably one of the five, top premier kind of co-- it's so interesting because in this day and time there's so much conversation about cause marketing. It's a buzzword, but in those days, there wasn't. In the '70s and the '80s, there were a few projects. Chicago Children's Cancer Hospital had one. Somebody in Florida had one, and a California Hospital, and we would get phone calls two to three times a week, “We want to start a project. How do we start a project?” That happened my entire business, my entire career here, but you would not believe how many people called and really saw it as a forefront. And what I think it did for MD Anderson -- I remember going to a class, some communications class, but I really think it gave MD Anderson the soft sell. And I think it's always been the soft sell for MD Anderson. I don't have cancer yet, but it's a way that people associated and then when they cancer, they were like, “Oh, I've gotten cards from some place in Texas. Let me see what it is.” Like in January, if people had received their cards in the mail, we would get an amazing number of calls going, “I'm just cleaning out my Christmas cards right now and I see I got this card from your Project. I would like to
know how I can buy them,” and people would get their name on the mailing list. So it had such a following and such a reach because if you purchased a package of 20 cards, but you mailed them all over the country -- you may have mailed them to all your friends in Houston but you also could have mailed them to Oregon and Iowa. So you got this spread that was really amazing. So I think it's always been kind of a soft sell. It's a soft entry and soft sell of MD Anderson.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[26:43]
Now, how did you at the Project respond to these calls when people said, “We'd like to start something like this. Tell us how.”

_Angela Cheves_

[26:52]
At first, I think we would tell them a fair amount about how we did it. Later we got a little bit more protective of it because we didn't really want to have -- in some ways you're helping create your competition. So in the end as you started having a website and stuff, you would say that, “Most information you can see online. You can see our press kit,” but I think a few of the things that we did that I'd say would make -- and also we would tell people. By the time in the '90s when you're getting a lot of calls -- we had 10 and 12 people by then -- for someone to call as a volunteer and do, “We want to do a project in Milwaukee,” it's like you're not going to be where we are immediately. We would tell somebody start small. It's going to take you a few years to build up because this didn't happen overnight. I think probably -- I don't know.
Angela Cheves
[27:48]
I think one of the things we did to distinguish it was I will say, we had the intervention of a graphic
designer in place because I think sometimes, when I look at some other competitors, I think what they
have not done is take that -- I'm going to say, it's one tiny step, but it is a tiny step of refinement on the
artwork or a focus. So if you have a child create a piece of artwork and it has a windmill, and a barn,
and a blue bonnet, and butterflies are flying around here, an owl. When you take that piece of artwork
and you go down to four by six [inches], that is a lot of detail to have visible in the card, let alone if you
have a catalog and you put it like this [e.g. 1.5 x 2.5 inches]. So sometimes what you need to do is look
at that piece of art and go, “Let's just focus on the windmill for this card. Let's just focus on this section
[29:00] with the barn,” and I think that's probably some of what my eye did. So that way, when you
took that windmill, which was one section here, but then it was a beautiful windmill and a beautiful
scene, and I think that little tweak of refinement sometimes made our cards look much better, I think
than other card companies did, other businesses. The other thing often would be an expression. Faces
are difficult and to not have somebody look odd sometimes is literally a reshape of a millimeter of an
eyebrow, and it's just a slight arch up instead of an arch down, and if we can just make that little tweak,
it makes it more pleasing. The other thing is brightening the coloring sometimes because sometimes if
you're with matte pencils and stuff it's just scratchy, so we would just intensify that. I think that little bit
of refinement has been one of our [hallmarks]-- and that I feel fine about. That is not changing their
artwork. I did not draw that, we just made sure that it showed. I think sometimes really helped us [ ].

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[30:00]
Interesting. Yeah.
Angela Cheves
[30:03]
But you have to have a distribution system, you have to have a pipeline. So there's a lot to that whole part of the business.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[30:14]
When was the decision made? Was it bringing you on with your eye, your art background, your knowledge of printing, were you the one who said, “We need to have this refinement stage when we're selecting the artwork and taking it to the printer?” Basically lifting the level of aesthetics up.

Angela Cheves
[30:36]
Yeah, that's a great way to express that. I think that probably came from Ruth Reynolds, actually is an important part of the business as well because Ruth came out of Medical Graphics, so I worked with her always. She eventually became part of our department, but I think Ruth and I together as art majors and stuff could look at things and go, “What is off about this piece of artwork? If you just do that one eyebrow -- and I can show it to you both ways.” We would not -- for a long time we would not make that decision by ourselves. We would have showed that to Karen and said, “What if we just do this? It looks different.” I think that gradually happened, but I think having two art people take a look at it is key.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[31:31]
It absolutely is because somebody's who's not an art person could look at it and know something is off, but they would never know what to do. Never know.

Angela Cheves
[31:40]
Exactly. I think the Children's Art Project is always going to need an art based person that can look at it and make some decision like that.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[31:51]
Very interesting. Now, were there any other kind of project secrets, if you will, that were really important for the quality and effectiveness?
Angela Cheves

I think how we ran with volunteers, which is that you -- and I believe we would tell people -- using volunteers to be what a business would call the “you pick and pack,” your fulfillment. Your fulfillment really are volunteers served as the fulfillment piece in a mail room and most, any product business, is generally paying a staff to pull an order and pack it. So you would've been paying a labor rate, not a professional rate, but you would've still been paying people to pack. But because we always had our volunteers doing that, that's where our profit was because you were not paying labor to accomplish that. You might ask, we did not do a lot of things free from vendors. As I became more the Product Manager and everything, I do always think it's important to pay vendors. I think it's important to pay companies what they're worth and I think they do a better job. I probably always approach that also from having grown up in a small business household, you just can't give it away. They need to eat in order to stay professional. They can maybe discount their services a little bit, but they can't give it away. I probably wouldn't be ever an advocate for building something on a totally donated services. A printer and stuff, ultimately they've got to hit your print deadline because then it has to get into distribution. As far as I think, the third thing that made it so successful, and Karen would've addressed this, but I think that having the Randall's grocery stores and early on Pizza Hut, which did not stay with it, but we saw some major players that came on. But the Randall's were instrumental in saying, “Let's carry them in our grocery stores,” and you probably know I believe the Onsteads had lost a child, I'm pretty sure it's a child, to cancer. So he -- this is the older Onstead too -- I believe are still are BOV, Board of Visitors, but they're really who said -- and I believe it's '85 -- because we're already in Randall's by the time I got there. They're who said, “Come on into the grocery stores,” and Karen figured out how to do the fixtures. I started working on them when I got there too, but having a distribution widened it significantly because everyone goes to -- that was a brilliant move because everyone goes to the grocery store.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

Absolutely.

Angela Cheves

That's really -- I mean, you can look back and go, “That was a brilliant move,” because if you'd gone to a stationery store, not everybody needed to go to the Hallmark's but everybody needs to go to the grocery store. And they donated the floor space and floor space, I think for competing projects, if they can't get that figured out, then they're not going to be able to make a profit. But donated floor space for us gave us a profitable edge as well. So we called it on consignment, but they always took the product.

---

1 It was noted in Mr. Onstead’s obit that their daughter passed away:
(Date of access: 14 September 2016).
We placed it in their stores and all we asked was that you sell it for us, and you send it through your
cash register systems, and at the end of the season we'll pick it back up and take it from you so you
don't have to bear any costs of buying and gambling on a product. So we really built the business that
way and in 1991 as there was a look towards expansion, the Onsteads at Randall's were very gracious
and said we don't have to be exclusive anymore, please have our blessing to go approach Kroger's and
other companies. So that's how we also grew.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[35:58]

Now, I wanted to just kind of ask your insight on one thing. Because obviously, the visuals of the cards
are always really, really important, but I'm think too, suddenly here we have a distribution point and
having something really eye-catching to make people veer away from, “Oh, I got to get that steak to
dinner,” and actually stop in front of a display and look a little bit. So the visuals really are important.
Now, I know it's really hard because the cards are so various, but were there particular things you
looked for in the cards? Were there themes that you found were really successful?

*Angela Cheves*

[36:37]

Yes, I think always and all through the production you've always know they're just cards and Christian,
religious cards are important. A true Christmas message to this day we still receive a call if we don't
have enough of them, if we don't have a verse. In the early years, the kids wrote their own messages.
Probably by the late '90s we began writing messages. It just was another component. We didn't always
get it from the kid and we were having to figure it out. Later you really hone in and go, a card attracts
you, a card catches someone's attention, but if the message doesn't say what they want, they're not
going to purchase it. Yes, we always needed angels, we always needed Texas themed or a western
themed. We tried not to be too Texas oriented because obviously people who like boots, and horses, and
stuff too live in Arizona, and Wisconsin, and Colorado, so we try not to be Texas, but we'll always say,
“We need a western theme.” Since I said Christian, I will tell you the Jewish -- we had tried always. It's
one of the reasons they had note cards early on, white cards [meaning “blank cards”], because
obviously the Jewish -- we have a lot of Jewish volunteers. They didn't send a Christmas card and they
wanted to support it, so we always did a blank card. In later years we've done Chanukah cards and it's
always been a small contingent, but we've always tried to honor -- to have something for all of those
supporters. They can be very vocal if we don't. A little frustrating because they don't purchase a lot, but
anyway. So yeah, so all those things. Angels, western, always a type of a nativity scene. Then as we
continued to have a lot of business usage of our cards, we're always making sure that there was
something like a dove, or a bird, or bells. Something that would suit more businesses. They tried to be
more politically correct and not quite as much of a Christian message in their cards, so you're making
sure you have a balance. That's pretty standard anywhere.
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

Chapter 07
B: Building the Institution
The Children’s Art Project: Expanding the Business Operation

Codes
B: MD Anderson Product Development and IP;
C: Donations, Gifts, Contributions;
C: Discovery and Success;
C: The Professional at Work;
C: Donations, Gifts, Contributions;
B: MD Anderson Impact;
B: The Business of MD Anderson;
C: Portraits;
B: Building/Transforming the Institution;
B: Growth and/or Change;

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[38:46]
Interesting. Yeah. So tell me about how your role evolved because when you said the Project was getting ready to expand in 1991, I think you were in that Coordinator role until '90. So you were just moving to a new position at the time that that was happening.

Angela Cheves
[39:03]
Correct. So in '91, that's about the time that Tyrrell leaves -- I'm sorry, Page retires -- and Tyrrell Flawn comes on to be the Director of Volunteer Services. T-Y-R-R-E-L-L- Flawn, F-L-A-W-N.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[39:25]
OK, I hadn't heard that name. OK.

Angela Cheves
[39:27]
She's key. So Page retires and Tyrrell comes on to be the Director of Volunteer Services. Karen's still reporting to Tyrrell. She was also very dynamic. She was really well suited for the job. She was driven, she was different than Page, so you're probably trying to make things a little bit more businesslike -- that could've been a request of the institution -- than the way Page did thing, you didn't do anything that she didn't look at. She had a ton of energy, she touched every detail and she was driven. That was part of the move to expansion. So in 1991, we need to -- we hired a Retail Consultant, Jim Gillis and Associates, and their role was to help us really push out into the grocery stores and other markets. I
believe that we were already at Tom Thumb's in Dallas because they were always closely related to Randall's. Any expansion into Kroger's, HEB's, Fiesta's, at that time Albertsons, those all occurred in '91 and after as we had the Consultants. I paralleled some of that. I went on some of those sales pitches but not all. But I worked on the fixture part of the business because we had to have a way to deliver the cards now out in grocery stores out of town.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[41:02]
Now, when you say fixture, you mean the stand that they're in?

_Angela Cheves_
[41:05]
The stand that they're on. So when it was small and it was Randall's, we would use what we call a permanent fixture, which was really built out of an MDF that was laminated. They were heavy. We stored them in a warehouse and brought them out every season. At the point that you're going to start going all over Texas with them and into Louisiana, you got to figure out a different way. Jim Gillis and Bill Hall were helpful. It turns out there were cardboard companies, box companies that did what they call POS fixtures, which is Point-of-Sale fixtures, so that's when we started creating Point-of-Sale fixtures, which were cardboard. I worked on all of those things as to whether they're red this year, or they're green this year, what's the photography on top, how big is the logo on it, and then you've got to be standardized about the size of your cards so that they fit into the slots or the cubby holes. So we slimmed down from three sizes to two and you could turn it horizontal or vertical. How they filled the shelves so that if you had to work on whether the fixture got to heavy or too light, would you ship it? Would it go by delivery service? Was it too heavy to be lifted by a guy in the back room? All that kind of fixture business I worked on a lot, while there was another team starting work on building the accounts.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[42:31]
Now, to your recollections, what were the factors coming together that made it necessary to grow in this particular way at this time?

_Angela Cheves_
[42:40]
I think they were looking at it going we are doing great here, so why not make it bigger? And it would bring in more revenue, which created more profit, which created more programs. I will not know whether that was from a PR standpoint, whether that was the drive for growth, but I think it's interesting. I think businesses always go through these points where you're either going to grow or you're going to stagnate, so I think like '91, '92 was one of those years where like, it's a new director, I think that's the mark of a new director too, is, “Make my mark.” So part of it is I want an expansion.
We went as far as Tennessee, we went to Ohio with Kroger's, too far to tell the story about MD Anderson and that day and time, we came back. But from then we were very saturated all across Texas and in those years, it was pretty soon when we picked up the Florida connection. That was when MD Anderson was starting to do their outreach centers. So MD Anderson Orlando had been formed. We quickly partnered on that, kind of piggybacked, I guess, on that project, and grew to work with the retail grocery stores in the Florida area around Orlando, and in fact has been a big part of the business. We grew to pretty much having 800 stores out in the Florida area. So if we had 1,200 to 1,500 in the Texas, Louisiana area, we would have 800 in Florida. They tied in with the MD Anderson Orlando. So I would say we really work to cover to the southeastern United States.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[44:15]
Wow, that's amazing.

_Angela Cheves_

[44:16]
But then you're starting to have trucking companies and a really important Central Freight was key. For many, many years Central Freight delivered our fixtures without any charge. Pretty amazing actually. There have been other -- I do not remember as well all the other trucking companies, but Central Freight was really key in that. Sometimes also, part of what was need was once someone said yes -- it's just like the Randall's -- once someone said yes, when you went to Kroger's and you said, “They were like, “I'm going to do something like Kroger's did,” well, the same thing happened in trucking. It's like if Central Freights did it, I'm going to figure out how to do that too and be a good partner to them. So if you get one key player on board, it helps in your conversation with the rest of them as well.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[45:08]
So you were on the phone with truckers too?

_Angela Cheves_

[45:09]
Right. And I think one of Karen's -- you know Karen was such an amazing, gracious, steward, everything. She did not miss at figuring out how to say thank you. We sent thank you gifts to the truckers. I don't remember, you know, a bag of popcorn, a flashlight in case you have an emergency, I mean we did all sort of neat things like that that would kind of -- and it wasn't -- it could've been tschotchkes, there are many companies that are built on ad specialties, but we found some way just to say thanks. She really, really did that.
Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[45:44]
That's such an important word for anything, but certainly a volunteer.

Angela Cheves
[45:49]
And she just breathed it, I think. I think most of us that work for her, you learn that as well.
That's really cool. Well, tell me about the next role you took on, which was Program Coordinator at that point.

Angela Cheves

Right, so the --

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

From 1990 to 1994 just so I can get the dates down.

Angela Cheves

The product line and everything started to get larger. We started to create a spring line with a spring catalog. I always managed the design of the catalog and of the printing of the catalog as well, so anything that was tipping on that. So now you began to have a Christmas line and you had spring line, which was filling my year up more. In '90 to '94, I was also still doing the luncheon and stuff and the reason '94 starts to make a split is I was feeling like I couldn't do all of it, which is why we hired a Special Events Coordinator and she -- I began to supervise her and pulled out the events day-to-day,
although I still always loved it. But anyway, I think the product line was just -- so I think '90 to '94 I was moving over to being more specifically product and also I was beginning to mature and have more leaderships role and --

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[47:07]
In what way?

_Angela Cheves_

[47:09]
I guess I think I began to take that segment while Marilyn [Healy] was running the volunteer and operating, you know, getting the packages packed and everything like that, but things were about marketing. I was just kind of growing in to some of that. Anyway, we were still small but probably by '90 or '94 we may have been six to eight people, and we hired an art teacher, Mary Bellos, in '89.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[47:38]
And this was a person who'd specifically teach the art classes?

_Angela Cheves_

[47:41]
Right, and at that point she began to be really the coordinator with the pediatric patients all the time and do art classes. She was wonderful.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[47:50]
I guess I wanted to ask at this point, what were the lessons you were starting to learn about marketing this kind of product? It's very, who'd have ever thought? You know? Marketing products from a cancer institution. I mean, wow. That's something you don't normally think about if you think about sales or marketing.

_Angela Cheves_

[48:13]
I think, and I don't remember, probably St. Jude's was out there a little bit, but there were some charitable, whatever they were funding for, that would kind of take an, even now with the cleft pallet, they kind of a -- I'm going to say a pitiful look because I'm not sure what -- that really tug on your heartstrings, pitiful, you know, the patient is practically dead and we're going to photograph that and pull on your heartstrings to raise money. I think we made pretty early on -- I'm not sure if we ever said it, but we always tried to be more of a healthy look of a child. Yes, bald-headed, but still because so many kids were bald-headed in those days, but you still hoped they looked healthier, but bald-headed
versus they're at their last. So I think maybe that's an optimism. We never told the story of the child on the back of the card. We said their age and where they're from is enough.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[49:14]
Why was that?

*Angela Cheves*

[49:15]
I think it was like we weren't going to exploit them. I think there's a line between marketing them and exploiting them, and I think that we're very careful to stay classy. I guess to say classy, and I think good or bad, I think Karen and I both came from, kind of, just an appropriate, classy approach to things and I think that was it. It could look fun, but we weren't going to exploit it. So then you get the, “We've always tried to maintain,”—I mean we have changed our logos. You know, the way the mark was done or whatever, probably 10 times. That's always working with Steve Stuyck's office a lot, communications, how that went, until eventually their department split between communications and marketing. Now I have lost track of what you were talking about.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[50:06]
Oh, I was asking lessons learned. This is right on point. I mean, I can imagine too, if you were going to have a child's story on the back of a card, I don't know, as a parent --I would definitely want to be knowing about that, and have input in that, and maybe even say no.

*Angela Cheves*

[50:26]
Correct. So whenever a child was photographed, or... I mean, one, they release their artwork. Two, the children talk to MD Anderson when their art is -- it's really released so that we have the rights to it and a person can decide not to, but at that point we own it. There's always a notification to that patient and to their family that we're going publish it, whether they're deceased or alive, and we try to -- also, like maybe we're going to publish the art of 15 kids, but I might decide to tell the story of five of them because I think they're interesting patients and they're both young and a young one and an old one, a black one and a white one, a girl and a boy, so that became my role over the years, was kind of balancing those story lines and in early years, it's kind of like what's the theme of the catalog? Are we going to say thanks to the truckers and kind of tell the story of how it happens this year? Is the 20th anniversary going to highlight the story of a program that we fund, like camps? So those themes that you would talk about, things that made people feel like they were connected and that they were helping, I think that's what people really want to do is think they're making a difference. One thing I love about the Children's Art Project Christmas Card Project, I always think that it made a difference and this was from working early sales in the general public. I remember working a couple things were -
- I will apologize about myself, if I thought it was some snobby, well-heeled young lady, whatever, and a guy that comes up to buy cards from me at a sale like at a market, and he looks all like a biker. Then he pulls out $50 and he buys a ton of cards. It makes no difference, and everyone wants to help, and everyone feels like when they bought their package of cards, they made a difference. To me, that has always been also what is so neat about the Children's Christmas Card Project and Children's Art Project and MD Anderson is you don't have to be a big donor. I always call it, it's a product for every man and they feel like they made a difference by buying. That they're helping that fight against cancer. Really important. Nowadays, I know development is real tuned into that with their annual campaign, which is that they're helping that the people who are $10 donors, they cultivate and eventually become your big ones, but you can't miss, and if you only think that people are only interested in $500 donations, then a lot of us go, “I'll never get there,” but it gave them a $10 package was a way that they felt like they made a difference.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[53:10]
Well, you know, and if you buy $10 of cards every year and you then --

Angela Cheves
[53:15]
You have eventually.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[53:16]
-- you do and then you tell your friends, “Hey, these are great cards. Why don't you buy them too?” No, it may not turn into the million dollar donation, or whatever, but it can add up. It does add up.

Angela Cheves
[53:29]
We tune into things like that. Like our catalogs. We had to put a card in the middle our packages of cards later, we called a bounce back, which you could use them for years. If you would like to get on our mailing list, if you would like to join a friend, we tried to create the opportunities for you to join. But I do, I think we have some really loyal customers. I mean, I think they're aging out from the earlier ones, but still I think people are really impassioned about it.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[53:58]
Well, tell me about this role. I mean, you've talked about some of it. During that four year period, were there particular landmark advances you made as you were kind of taking on more of a leadership role with the Project?
Angela Cheves

I just think figuring out how to print on different substrates and also how to package it because pricing it, and packaging it, and making it are all components of that. So just to say, “I want to make a piece of art into something,” you still have to make it at a price that is affordable for whoever your target audience is to be able to afford it. You have to be able to make -- printing on paper is radically different than printing on fabric, and you have to figure out -- and some artwork is never going to work on the fabric that worked on paper. I think learning those differences in those days and because I was green -- I mean the next time they hire what would be a Product Manager, they're going to know a whole lot. The world is much more sophisticated, but in those days, “OK, print T-shirts.” I had to learn from a lot of vendors but my very first year we did a darling design, it was on a red T-shirt and it had white underneath it, which is probably a flashing -- anyway, half of them bled through and the red ink -- we had such a customer service problem, which I personally handled. Oh my gosh, but [I] learned by trial and error. One thing which I always loved was as I made more and more products, I love learning about every one of those different substrates would be a word for the material, there's different substrates, there's different time lines, there's different ways that inks affect things and how you manage the cost, and what you can do on this, so that came to be quite fascinating for me and I have loved that. We would probably call that production, but how to make something is just a fascinating world in itself. Then you always have to think, “How am I going to get it packaged?” because it needed to be able to go through our mail order. If it was going to go sit on a fixture, it has to be able to sit out there and be handled and not ruined, so that it doesn't come back damaged, or the consumer doesn't buy a damaged product. But you need to be able to see through it, so we were always looking for more of a clear packaging, and whether somebody could take it out, or take it in, where your pricing was. The pricing and the bar codes -- we went into the bar coding system as that became the way that all stores -- every company has a bar code associated with them. So coding became important, but you want a price on it so that the seller at Randall's can see what it cost or the vendor is, but I wanted it small enough so that if they gave it as a gift, it was not looming on the product. When we got to a point where we could do removable tags so that the consumer can buy it, but before they gave it, they can remove the tag. And did it have a a credit line that said on the product itself that said, “This was made by a patient at MD Anderson.” How can I get that line in the neck of the T-shirt or under the design? All of those details ultimately make a different, I think. I think we strived over the years to make interesting products that responded to people's interests that we could manage the inventory on, and over the years I think as things grew, I think our vendors became very important partners. My best vendors really came from people who also bought into the mission of it. They really loved, think they felt like they were part of the business as well, but they made a difference in doing the best job that they could in printing it, or making a catalog look as good as it could. I always give them -- I think those partnerships were important.
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

**Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD**

[58:09]
Now, were you involved in establishing those relationships too?

**Angela Cheves**

[58:13]
Yes, and I've always worked with the purchasing department in terms of bid writing and vendor research and stuff like that. Sometimes vendors would come to us and go they have an idea, and if it was a low enough spend, I could kind of try it, but at some point you had to get them into the more major pipeline of -- you had to go through a competitive bid in order to get in there. There were also years where you could write what was called an exclusive acquisition so you can kind of go, “This is really different and we want to partner with this company,” but that had to be well written in order to be convincing and because the state of Texas has to say -- and several people higher up have to go, “OK, this exception is really OK to do.”

**Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD**

[58:57]
So what would be an example of a vendor who would come and propose a project?

**Angela Cheves**

[59:03]
Well, certainly the most known one would be the Radko ornaments, although we went to speak to them first, but having to get that product (ringing phone) I'll turn that off.

**Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD**

[59:20]
No, it's OK. It's fine. Just wait until it stops and then... Because we can -- it doesn't matter. Here we go So you were saying Radko.

**Angela Cheves**

[59:44]
Right, and we began -- now I'm going to jump ahead because Christopher Radko was in 2003. I can't remember now. As you got to know different reps from different businesses' creative retail packaging, you would go, “They kind of taught me about gift bags and if I could do wrapping paper or if I couldn't because of the minimum,” so I learned something every time we were trying to do something like that. A good vendor would bring you ideas. They would have also gone, “I went to market and I saw this idea. I think it might work for Children's Art Project,” which is again I would say were your better one. If they could say, “I think this would work,” then I could go yes it would or it wouldn't. We did -- anyway. We have tried many things once and we didn't always keep on going, but many things once. We made a singing Christmas card, which was a cassette tape that had the kid's voices on it. Recording
studio, the whole deal. That was an amazing project.

**Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD**

[1:00:52]

And how did that work out?

**Angela Cheves**

[1:00:54]

It sold. I mean, it did great. Karen was gung-ho about that one. We made placements with the Kimberly Clark company who maybe he had cancer there, but we did -- for about three years -- we did paper placements that were sold in industrial. We sold them and then they did. They did beverage napkins that were tray for in hospitals and schools, and we did some really interesting projects. People have always called from the outside going, “You know what? I would love to do something with you,” and then you have to go, “I think that works,” or, “I think it doesn't.” We, over the years would have a lot of call. Like I like to put the Children's artwork on the face of my music album, like, really what you're going to be selling is the music. The music is the value of it and I think you're just kind of using the Children's art to be a marketing ploy and I think we're not going to do that. For instance, if the music was the child's voices then it would have really made sense. So actually one of my look backs when we were cleaning out the archives for Javier was like we had done phone cards. I had forgotten we had done -- [1:02:00] you know, I had $10 of phone service on this phone card. I had forgotten that we had done those. Anyway, just funny. Lots of different things, but Radko. Radko's a good thing to talk about a minute. By that time, Shannan Murray has become the Director and she became the Director in 1997. She worked under Tyrrell. Karen, they kind of sidelined her. Actually in '94, they hired Lee Herrick to be the Head of Children's Art Project and they kind of had Karen in an advisory role. Those are years I am not -- that's one of the reasons I was actually going to retire on top. I never wanted to be pushed out. So I began to witness that a little bit. I do think the business was probably getting a little bit bigger and Tyrrell -- we needed to grow into the next thing and not being just a really small entrepreneurial business, we can't have more business practices And that isn't where Karen came from. She came from a volunteer at MD Anderson who was very innovative in ideas, but the business side of it wasn't. They had put some things in place, but I think Tyrrell probably finally kind of made a decision to move Karen over to more of an advisory role, hired Lee Herrick from '94 to '97. Lee was good, she was a writer. I'm digressing. I'll give you this.

**Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD**

[1:03:27]

It's OK. No, that's important.

**Angela Cheves**

[1:03:28]

I would say she was -- I wouldn't have said anything major in particular happened with Lee, but Lee
was a good, gentle, balanced, professional. Handled the reporting structures that they needed, all that. Then Lee leaves and Shannan Murray is hired by Tyrrell to be Head of the Children's Art Project still reporting to Volunteer Services. Shannan came -- she'd been a marketing director at Coca Cola. She was really trained by Coca Cola and Minute Maid. So she came from a real product background, and was quite dynamic, and she had volunteered at the hospital before and then learned of the job. Shannan started to take it into new places and good. She had a ton of energy and she's who left in June [2015]. She was great. We worked alongside each other for many, many years. She and Tyrrell, I think was partly good partnership, partly not. And Karen stays until '99. So I'm just kind of telling you that background. Radko comes about in '02. Because in '03 we get a call from a customer saying, “I really think you all oughta do these ornaments,” and she had learned who was the Texas rep. Anyway, Shannan was on it like hot potatoes. I mean, and that was Shannan. Shannan was all over ideas. If we were going to do it, we were going to do it big and Shannan always wanted to be ahead of the curve. I would say that was really one of her marks was Shannan was like, “We're going to get out there before our competitors do.” So we made a first ornament and I did not know what Christopher Radko glass ornaments were. Shannan did for her family. I did not know what they were. I remember that we had to make, if it was a high enough number that scared the pants off the rest of the managers, all of us, but they sold like hot -- they sold amazingly, and we actually remade the ornament twice, and it was beautiful.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[1:05:36]
What was it?

_Angela Cheves_
[1:05:37]
It was called “Gift Heart” by Ellen. It was beautiful. I did send that over to the archives with Javier. It was beautiful. With that, we really began to take off. The Radko business was amazing. Shannan was smart about it. Radko really had its own following, so a lot of people --

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[1:05:59]
People collect those.

_Angela Cheves_
[1:06:00]
People collected them and that it was Radko ornament with the design of a patient was amazing. My own job started to morph again and that point -- that's '03 and I've jumped you a little bit, but the concept of how to take things into three dimensional work, you're always looking at ornaments, even when I was doing wood ornaments. You're having to answer, “What is the back of the artwork like?” Because the child sometimes only drew the front, but you have to finish it. Well, then going to the
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

Radko ornaments was a real, “What does the back look like?” So between their company, and our designers, and our thoughts, we would come up with, “How would she look if that angel rounded out and stuff?” But it was very interesting. That packaging, that's when we began co-branding, so the boxes are branded with Radko and Children's Art Project. We came up with insert cards that told a story of the patient -- I mean, featured their artwork So if you're on the back of a card -- this is so oral, so I'm very visual, I'm wanting to show you. If you're on the back of a card, it says, “This card is designed by Michelle, who is a patient at age 15,” you know, well you couldn't do that on the glass ornaments. So all we could get on the glass was a signature. We never did anything that didn't have the child's name on it. But in that box, we would do an insert card. So it would show the piece of artwork so that somebody could see this three dimensional object came from this piece of art and then that card would say, “This design was created by patient Michelle, age 15, in conjunction with the Christopher Radko company.” So we figured out a way to really carry on the conversation, I think. I did jump way ahead.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:07:50]
No, that's quite all right. Now, what was the negotiation process like with Radko, or ironing out?

Angela Cheves
[1:07:57]
Well, one thing that that was one of the first times, Kimberly Clark would've brought in the legal department. So did Radko for sure because at that point we had -- and that made some differences in the whole purchasing system because you had to -- that was when we said, “We want to create this partnership with this company and they are not something that you can go buy on the open market like widgets. It's not like go have a big bid for mattress -- I mean wheels,” and that has always been challenging with the purchasing department. Procurement. They're very important people. They are all about the bottom line and stuff, and we're saying we want to partner with a well-known consumer brand. This will heighten our exposure and our look, I mean everything about MD Anderson. So we kind of had to get an exception to that because for years, it's probably less, but for years the ceilings were $15,000 that you could spend to open a purchase order with anybody you want to do business with, but after $15,000 there's all sorts of rules that start to come in. By the time we got up to making four ornaments a year, fewer than 100,000 easily, so we had to find a way to work that out. Part of that worked out through the legal department. I would say that the lawyer, legal department, over the years became important partners with us and Steve Haydon has really been particularly instrumental. So he would write a thing that kind of protected the integrity of the artwork of the MD Anderson brand while saying that we were going to have this partnership using these pieces of artwork for a term of two years or three years. And once we got contracts like that structured it, for all intents and purposes, superseded the purchasing laws, rules. So that would give us the permission then to then spend the money. We had contracts with that, so when we wanted to partner with a name brand that wasn't going to go through just a general bidding process, then we would work with the legal team.
Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

[1:10:09]
So how does it work out with Radko? Does the ownership revert to Radko at a certain moment? Or... Oh yeah, it's actually... Yeah, I'm hoping it doesn't stain the table because mine just -- let me pause the recorder really quick.

Angela Cheves

[1:10:27]
I can't remember where we were.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

[1:10:30]
Where we were, well, I had just asked you -- let me just say for the record, we took a quick break to just take a break and also wait out a leaf blower across the street. (laughs) But where left off is I was asking you about that legal agreement with Radko because my question was, they were making -- who owned it and could they --

Angela Cheves

[1:10:50]
And you asked who owned them and everything. Actually we did own them and because Radko never -- although we were interested -- they never really went into the business of selling them on our behalf. So we did own, it would almost be like doing a private label, but I had all of the production run, and managed it, and sold it ourselves. We also could not return it to them if it did not sell. So we owned it.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

[1:11:19]
OK, now, how many? Do you recall how many ornaments were made the first time?

Angela Cheves

[1:11:23]
Well, the first year was one. The second year was three.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

[1:11:27]
But how many of each design?

Angela Cheves

[1:11:30]
We ended up running at first about -- “Gift Heart” I think sold over 3,000. Phenomenal. Then the next year we ran “Gift Heart” some more, we did a little pig, and we called him Cow Pig, and look at me, I'm not remember what that third design was. Anyway, we were doing runs of about 1,200, I would say
with a 1,500 but we also hit some inventory problems pretty quickly. It took us forever to sell the Cow Pigs, so that became a more sophisticated part of the business as you're really trying to figure out, and now it costs you a lot. Because paper didn't cost a lot. You could make something, the profit margins were huge, and even if they hadn't sold, you hadn't lost that much on them. But once you got into some names like the Radko ornaments, your margin wasn't exactly at 50%, and to hold onto that inventory you'd expend it a lot. So that became more of a learning curve in the 2000s as we were figuring out which designs sold and which didn't. We would have liked to have said that if we could clear out a design by two and a half year or so, we had done fine. We hardly ever anticipated clearing out a design in one year. Maybe the first -- maybe '05, '06, '07, and then by '08 we start [1:13:00] to have the economic crash. We may have also made too many designs. Hard to know. It's hard to balance between. People are going, “I want this style,” and, “I want this style,” and then you have a couple of going, “I think this design would be good,” and, “That one.” So how to do that business. I think we could have expanded it a little too much which later created some glut of inventory, and how to manage -- you had your most loyal customers. They'd seen it this year, they didn't want to see it again. So how to manage that, which is all product company's issues I think over the years became difficult. That's a difficult one. Florida was always a place where we managed our cards going, like if they -- Florida cards would debut primarily in the Texas market and then the inventory that had been returned, we would use to pack out Florida. At that point, they were finished. So having a recycling system, or a reallocation system, was important, but ornaments was a little bit more difficult. That said, there are also things that might not sell in their first year and strangely would sell in their second year. That is the non-science of product development, you cannot -- so you can see trending, and you can figure out, but sometimes it would like lift in one area of the state and it wouldn't in another. Those are the years in the 2000s we started really taking our show on the road, so to speak. We went to more markets in other cities. So we had started with the Nutcracker Market in Houston, which if you know about the Nutcracker Market sponsored by the Houston Ballet, we began with them as they began. '87, '88, small. They get larger, but those are the years where Junior Leagues are sort of building up, so Austin has a big show that we go to, Dallas had a show, we've been to several out in Oklahoma and Louisiana, and always have had a good following there. So you would take the ornaments because people were beginning to be interested in more things besides cards and as people began to decrease how much social correspondence they were using, writing, it became important for us to diversify our line. Are we good?

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[1:15:19]
Yeah, we're good. Something made a funny noise, so I was...

*Angela Cheves*

[1:15:22]
I may have scratched my head. It became important to have a diversified line because not everybody was sending cards and we were beginning to see that trend, so we were trying to figure out where else do we build the line? Plus, people wanted it.
Well, just to -- I'm sorry, I just wanted to ask a question to close out the story of the ornaments. So were they considered enough of a success that it's a continuing --

Yes, and we really continued on them to this day. We probably got to a point where we probably thought five ornaments debuting in a season was enough. Their minimums tended to be at about 1,000 units. The last two years I got it negotiated down to 800. But being able to manage that so that we'd have a pretty good sell through became important, they have a development time line of about eight months, so they require getting started on them in December in order to be able to deliver in August, but they've always been successful. They're a high revenue maker and there are people who really do collect them and they're special.

I bet, yeah.

We did over the years diversify and work with two other glass companies, which I think produced some other good products, good other Europe glass, but they don't have the following that a Radko does.

Oh, I'm sorry, I interrupted you. You were starting to talk about the fact that people were asking for other products.

Right. So over the years, so that's when we also, I believe, tried. We would try and try a lot of different products both by a consumer, getting some questions for I want this type of product, or I've seen it in a marketplace. Part of working on product development I think tapped in too. I was a girl who liked to go shopping and that became important. I like to wander through a store just to see what's out there. Well, it became important to see what was out there. So I would always just go into Bering's and look in at some of the nicer gift stores going, “What's moving well? What looks hot? What looks new?” Eventually we started going to market as well. The biggest market in Atlanta and going to Dallas just so we would start to see some other product partnerships.
Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:17:48]
Now, when you're saying you went to market, what was the types of market?

Angela Cheves
[1:17:51]
So we would go to the Atlanta Gift Market [wholesale show] and then you could look at some things and go, “Our artwork would look good on that type of a product, would it look darl--” and then you would start to make a business arrangement with that company to go, “Would you develop something for us kind of in a private label way?” Unless it was a name that we felt we would benefit by having the name. We did have a partnership with Reed and Barton for three years and they did some glass work that was beautiful in a different [way than] Radko. We did some ceramics and some snow globes with Radko as well, we used their name. We did phone covers. We worked with a company Uncommon and we branded with the Uncommon things. There are other companies that have made things worse that we don't tote their their name at all.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:18:46]
Now, I think I recalled when I was interviewing Nancy Loeffler, that she was on a committee --

Angela Cheves
[1:18:54]
I was going to talk about that. That was going to go there. So after markets, the other way of being out in the public was to have what we call trunk shows. The Special Events position, which I was no longer running and eventually was no longer supervising, but was always in partnership with, we began to develop a format called trunk shows. So we would really create an in-home sale, Nancy Loeffler was key to that. That hostess in the Loefflers and Charline McCombs. Nancy and Charline McCombs hosted our San Antonio and I do believe we really started it with them. As well as Anne Mendelsohn had hosted in Houston, but they would create their invitation list. We designed their invitation. It said, “Come see the Children's Art Project in our home,” and part of that arrangement was it's a big enough deal to get invited to go to their house, so people come to their house, have a drink, have an appetizer, whatever, and also go shopping. So they really promoted the Children's Art Project and an event might last three or four hours. [1:20:00] We really became quite -- that trunk show business became quite a big deal. We went to all the major towns really tapping into the Board of Visitors. We would work with Development and their events team [with] [Mary] Kathryn [Cooper] and staff to kind of go, “Who do you think would be a good hostess of a party in Dallas?” That led to Peggy Sewell hosting events for several years in her home. May or may not have co-hosted Kit Moncrief in Fort Worth. In Austin, the Bauer House, usually the Chancellor's house, would be the host house. So we really learned to take our show on the road. Some of my favorite part of the job. Nancy Walker was really instrumental in that
business and Nancy [and the CAP staff] had come to manage the events deal, she came from kind of an interior design background. So she made some amazing displays in the early years because we would try and -- we called them table top shows at first, later we called them trunk shows. But she would create like table vignettes where you would see the product in use, which was really trying to kind of inspire to go, “Oh, I could do this at my home with that product.” They were fantastic. You'll see when Javier [Garza] and staff is going through some of the boxes, you're going to see some of the photography. Then we would have different sales tables set up. So we would really learn to do our show on the road and I win on a lot of them. It's one of my favorite parts of the business. I think I loved interacting with the customers. I just loved being with the customers, I liked selling, I liked talking about our products. And for me, even being a product developer, I always learn from watching people. I would generally go and work a market and I would work several trunk shows, and I would learn a lot. You also hear what people wanted. People like Nancy Loeffler and Kit Moncrief, they were instrumental in kind of going, “Why don't you develop this? This is something my friends would buy.” So we tried to kind of up the sophistication level.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[1:22:00]

What were some of the ideas they come up with in development?

*Angela Cheves*

[1:22:03]

Like Corpus Christi is -- Glenda Kane was a big hostess down there. I can think of one that was a don't -- but they always wanted to know what the Radkos were. That was a big deal for a long time. Have a Limoges box, now I never did a Limoges box, I was like that is just too out there for us. Couldn't do that.

*T.A. Rosolowski, PhD*

Out there in terms of price points?

*Angela Cheves*

[1:22:33]

Expense, price points, and stuff. I just didn't think that was going to work for. But that did create -- we did a Waterford paperweight because of one of them. That's when we started dabbling in some product line that crossed $100. So we would try a few things. You obviously were going to narrow -- I mean, every time you cross a price level, you reduce kind of how many you're going to sell. So you have to be careful with that, but we did a lot of silk scarves. We had done silk for a long time, but like Kit Moncrief, she used to buy six scarves and have a blouse made out of the scarves and they were gorgeous. But they were the ones who wanted things like with Waterford, and just some of that -- I'm funny because I'm remembering things that we didn't accomplish. Some of them also would be so out of -- like that is not going to work.
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:23:35]
What were some of the things that you knew weren't going to work? I mean, that's interesting information too.

Angela Cheves
[1:23:29]
Yeah, there was these types of -- it's like a fairy or a doll. It was like -- oh, Paige Fertitta had them in her home because they posted for years. I was like that would be when I could become -- what would be the word? Sometimes when people are going and when they're a voice of, let's say, power and influence, and they're going, “Why don't you try that? Yes, you should!” I'm like, “Oh, not going to work. Our art doesn't translate into that thing. I don't think we're going to be able to sell them,” but I think they would go, “I want you to make these because everybody has them.” But it's like you're looking at this. And it was a fairy. I think they were fairies that were figurines. And it was like that fairy is that kind of company's embodiment of what a fairy looks like. Where are you even going to get a sense of the Children's Art Project on this fairy?

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:24:39]
Interesting.

Angela Cheves
[1:24:41]
I've always dealt with those kind of requests. I had to be a little -- I don't want to say I was doubtful, but you had to be shrewd about how you, but you also had to be careful about how you handled somebody saying, “I don't think that's really going to work but I did hear you.”

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:24:56]
I could see you using the 10 second rule, that count to 10.

Angela Cheves
[1:24:58]
Yes. Exactly.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:24:02]
Sure, dealing with people --
Angela Cheves

And Shannan wanted to be really responsive to them and we did try. I'm not going to be able to pull everything out of my hat but we did like that anyway. So I think in producing those table top and trunk shows took some of our brightest, creative staffing because it also has this you're going to come into this house, you're going to look at the surfaces, the lady will have ordered tables-- you got like four hours to get it all set up. Then you're going to sell and you're going to break it down. So it's very intense in labor, but I loved that. Come in here and make it look magical in four hours and all of our stuff, but I think that you generally would have parties that had 100 to 125 people and I think it has been very good for the communities where we went and was a part of them connecting with MD Anderson. I don't know how much of that's going to continue beyond Susan French, I think we're probably going to be pulling back because they're fairly labor intensive But I think they were significant and we have had a lot of -- in the 2000s, there were a lot of wonderful Board of Visitor people that really hosted us and made it happen. Really, people who kind of put their muscle behind it and made an MD Anderson statement in their hometown. We went to Midland, Brownsville, McAllen, Corpus, Dallas, Fort Worth, Tyler. [Dollie Dible?), We went as far as Jackson, Mississippi twice. We did one in Knoxville. With Radko, actually went to Los Angeles and to Chicago and to New York and did something in their showrooms where they had invited people and we brought up stuff to sell. It was neat.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

Wow, that's very cool.

Angela Cheves

You know, like the Radko, they would make a wreath with all of the ornaments from us and then auction them off. Of course Christopher would be there and we would bring a patient. Those were some spectacular media events too, and great for the patient. I mean, we would take a patient with us. It was neat.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

Now, because the Radko is kind of starting to answer my question, but you were saying that these parties would take MD Anderson to these communities to make a connection. So obviously there was a broader impact than just people plunking down some cash for a few isolated objects. What did you see as being the larger impact of those events?
Angela Cheves

Yes, right. Well, I think that people -- there are always going to be people who kind of want to interact by shopping and with a brand, but I think often we would take it sometimes. We would take a doctor to be part of a present-- like we might have a 15 minute presentation by them, so they would tie in. We would work sometime with Development Officers in that are to kind of go, “How would you like to do this?” Some cities the Development Officers would come and join us for the day so that they were also with their people, many of them that they knew, but kind of interacting in that setting versus a lunch meeting or whatever. So I think people -- like when we went out to Los Angeles, we took a physician. I remember that Mrs. DePinho one of the the last times she came to Austin and spoke, they went to a 10 minute, informal, standing in a living room kind of speaking about the impact of childhood cancer and the impact of the Children's Art Project on programming. So kind of in an informative MD Anderson way, I think that's valuable. I think going to the community and the other things you see is this is like, it's what I was saying about every man. It's like if worked the Austin Christmas Affair Market two years ago for three days, it was like the way that people come and go. I saved my catalog, I know exactly what -- I always make sure I spend money at this booth when I come. And I hear that at Nutcracker, it's like over that kind of commitment, I always make sure I buy something from this booth when I come. Over, and over, and over, and I just think you cannot -- I mean, I think that's golden and is amazing about people's commitment I think MD Anderson's reach, but it's a way that they are interacting with MD Anderson. They may have had somebody treated and they may not have. I've always said I thought people bought either because they had somebody affected by cancer and this was a way that they could help or they bought and said, “For the grace of God, it's not my child.” I think they were usually motivated by one of two things. I either have a family member and this is something I can do, or thank God it's not my [kid]. That, I think is over and over is a motivator.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

Would you like to close off for today? We're about 20 minutes after 3:00.

Angela Cheves

Whatever works for you.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

Why don't we do that? It's sort of a nice place to stop.

Angela Cheves

Nice break. Super.
Making Cancer History
Interview Session: 01
Interview Date: January 18, 2016

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:30:20]
All right, well I'm turning off the recorder at about 20 minutes after three o'clock.
Angela Cheves

Interview Session Two: 8 February 2016

Chapter 00B
Interview Identifier

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*
[00:00]

*Angela Cheves*
[00:33]
Good morning. Sure.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*
[00:34]
And walking on over from the Mays Clinic. (laughs) All of that.
Well, last time we had finished talking about the trunk shows and we're going to be talking about some other events that you helped put on to market products. You had in mind some things you wanted to chat about. So why don't I just let you take over the story and continue?

OK, thank you Tacey. I believe we had covered trunk shows throughout the state and some out of state places. So really -- had we discussed parades and pep rallies? Had we done those more?

We just touched on it your first day as part of your first day activities.

So I think that was going to lead us to, I would all it, the PR marketing side of the Children's Art Project.
And there w-- it had begun, I would be very sure that Page Lawson and Karen Harrison had designed -- and working in conjunction with Steve Stuyck, who was head of the Communicates Public Relations Department of MD Anderson -- and later Jane Brust, who worked with Steve in those early years. They had come up with a process of having a kickoff parade at the 1st of October and I may have touched on it, but I'm going to lead from there, which was designed to bring media onto campus and they -- it was always at the 1st of October, beautiful, we invited the kids -- the young patients who were designers that year -- to ride in an open convertible with a media guest from the different television stations at that time. And we invited from every channel, so everyone can -- you know, you'd have three or four anchors from each channel come, they would be in a car with a ki-- with a patient, and ride, get to know them, and then they would go back to their station obviously and be able -- their cameras usually came and they would go back that evening. Of course it was like, “Guess what we did today?” You know, the kind of social side of a news station. Parades ran from early '80s all the way through early -- probably mid-90s, at which point we -- because traffic was becoming a problem at MD -- at the Texas Medical Center. The blocking of roads even for an hour was very difficult and stuff. So we came up with a new format. By that time, Nancy Walker had joined our project in 1995 and was, at that point, Head of Events. She converted the parade format to what we call a pep rally format. We would host it on the lawns of the HMB, Houston Main Building, track, which was to the west of the building. That address was 1100 Holcombe, I'm pretty sure. So that was great. We continued the 1st of October. They were wonderful, they had clowns. The other thing -- the other participants that would come -- at that point, we began decreasing the use of the convertibles, and those were a lot of historic automobile clubs in the city. The other support we had was from surrounding businesses like the Holiday Inn, Pizza Hut, different Blue Bell. They would come and bring food to have out on the grounds of both the parade and the pep rally for guests and patients after the event. So those were significant partners as well.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

Can I just ask you, I actually am kind of clueless here. What's the difference between the parade and the pep rally format?

Angela Cheves

Well, a parade would have started -- like we would have started in a garage, either garage two, later garage 10, so you would line up the group and then the parade would come -- would have a route. And it would go around the hospital and people could step out of -- what would have been like Clark Clinic or in the early, early day on the old side, which is on the Bertner side, but people could step out. Both patients and employees could step out, create an audience waving and stuff. We would have bands like Bellaire High School band and -- we always had two bands and there was a second one [St. Thomas
Bagpipes]. Bellaire is who I'm remembering the most -- but so you would come around and in front of the hospital and go around and then it would come on the back of -- I want to say I'm not remembering John Freeman -- you would come behind there. So it would make kind of a circle around the building, which gave a route to wave and you got to feel like a celebrity. When you came to the pep rally, the format changed in that the child would kind of walk a really short distance on the track and come to a stage and the stage had a big balloon arch, we had kind of, you know, some clowns, and the Bellaire band kept coming. They would just be stationary at that point in order to give that sound. So what you lost was the format of the route, but you had a stage and an MC and you still -- it became a little bit more difficult to create the feeling of an audience because by then we had crossed over to the street over to the HMB, which was farther from the hospital. So a lot of employees -- we're a healthy family -- it was a little harder to come over across the street to be in the audience, but we still managed to create enough of a feeling of an audience. Free food always helps with that as well. And they were typically held around 10:00 in the morning, 11:30 in the morning, right in there. So does that answer that?

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[6:32]
Yeah.

_Angela Cheves_
[6:33]
So that gave that, and then people kind of wandered on that yard, and stuff like that because HMB used to be a beautiful piece of property. So anyway, the pep rallies. So again the stations would come, they would still kind of come, get to know a kid, get to the stage, introduce them, working on that. As you hit the 2000s, or hitting 2000s, we keep doing pep rally but of course, we're beginning to watch that HMB is going to come down at some point. You begin to see the splintering of media. There's a couple -- few more stations, but people are busier. Texas Medical Center's harder to get in and out of, so for a news station to come over here, an anchor has parking issues, time issues, it's just not as quick as it once -- you know, as it was in the 80s and the 90s. But we kept up with that all the way through 2000 and I believe, I'm going to say '10 -- no, 2009. In 2009, HMB's literally going down so we're having to come up with a different format. And about that time -- so we were considering kind of changing to a red carpet kind of feeling, trying to take the pep rally but maybe change it and try to move indoors because we had been really fortunate that rain had never occurred, but obviously it was always a threat. And sometimes it was hot as heck as well.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[8:07]
Oh yeah.

_Angela Cheves_
Interview Session: 02  
Interview Date: February 8, 2016

[8:08]
So about at that point, MD Anderson had entered a marketing agreement with the Galleria, the [Hines?] Department in the Galleria, which was -- at that point had become -- was run by Simon Malls, is the parent company of the Galleria in Houston. So the Marketing Department was placing actually big dollars at the Galleria on a three-year contract to advertise MD Anderson, specifically Children's Cancer Hospital. It was very pediatrics oriented and I'll do a small segue there. Because of that multi-year investment, the Galleria to have a visual presence and advertising dollars and stuff like that, they had the third floor in Galleria three, [9:00] they had created a children's playscape area and it is called The Little Galleria, and around it is really MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital Little Galleria. It has a -- there's a marketing feeling about MD Anderson all around it, both by the naming and Children's Art Project had worked with the Galleria and marketing department to do all of the graphics that wrap the big columns and create a hallway to a family lounge and everything. So it was kind of neat. And the reasons that presence matters and those dollars matter are that Galleria had a fashion show and event over two nights -- a day and two nights -- over in the Galleria in the first week of September. They had space and availability -- so they had two evening events and they had covered the ice of the ice rink at the Galleria if you know that. Well, they offered MD Anderson, they said, “We would be happy to partner with someone in MD Anderson to do a luncheon on the ice because it's already covered for the two fashion shows. It's unused. Do you have any ideas or would you like to use it?” And the developments events team said -- it was July that year, it was end of June, first of July and the development office was like, “We can't jump that fast,” but we were in a meeting and Children's Art Project was like, “I think we can.” So we -- it ended up giving us a great venue to kind of do the fourth generation of a marketing PR event to kick off this season. And we ended up hosting for five years a fashion show and luncheon on the ice with the kids being -- walking down the runway, getting a whole highlight about their artwork on the big television screen -- you know, big screens behind it. It was quite -- it was really a neat event. Has been great. So that came both from community people who bought table tickets. So at the point we'd come a long ways from a parade.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*
[11:09]
Yeah, really.

*Angela Cheves*
[11:10]
But I still think the focus was still the same. It was trying to highlight the child who were designers that year and their current artwork. And of course at that point you're kicking off cards and gifts are available now at Randall's and you know, our catalogs are out. You can go online and you're still trying to create an event that creates a message that the media picks up. So--
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: February 8, 2016

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[11:35]
So you said that this is for five years and--

_Angela Cheves_
[11:38]
So we ended it. The 2014 was the last year. And in the fall of 2015, we did not do an event. So that comes partly into the new leadership, which in part -- so we'll go over there.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[11:50]
We'll talk about that. Yup.

_Angela Cheves_
[11:51]
So at that point -- but I do think Children's Art Project always worked to make it special. For a child whose artwork was selected that year, that was kind of the neat part of -- you got to be a little bit of a celebrity with it and we always try to play stories in their hometowns and things like that. Of course some children were better speakers than others. One other person and I'll -- this is still staying over in the PR communications area.
We had -- I'm going to name them -- we had several significant people along the way in the public relations and communications department that really were instrumental in creating, in writing stories and getting those words out. That's Jane Brust who began that. Jane, J-A-N-E and then Brust, B-R-U-S-T. It went then Leslie Friedman, F-R-I-E-D-M-A-N. Leslie became the PR person from, I believe, '97 to -- no, '87 to '94. And then we had Andrea, A-N-D-R-E-A, Frankfort, F-R-A-N-K-F-O-R-T, and then in 1999 significantly Gail Goodwin came to be the communications person for the Children's Art Project and for pediatrics, which later became CCH, and Volunteer Services. All to say that those PR people are really creative. They're good storytellers and they're good PR people. Gail was an amazing person. I know the institution knows Gail well from all of the writing that she did in messenger and later her own cancer battle, but Gail was amazing. So Gail was also when you come to the point of those fashion show and luncheons, we did a lot of things that look like you are arriving at the Oscars and you are being interviewed and Gail was a master at it. She had such a way with words and a gift of gab, a way of making the kids comfortable and feel really special while she kind of drew out some questions. She would be standing there with a microphone and we would do kind of a red carpet with a backdrop and everything, and she would be interviewing him, and then it was feeding onto the screen. So people could see it, so she did a really great job of that.
That's very cool.

And Nancy Walker was the Events Manager at Children's Art Project for many years and she made that event. She touched every detail just perfectly.

And I'm also struck too that there's this interest from pretty important commercial giants here at Houston, which talks about the fact that the Children's Art Project has really done its work in building a reputation, understanding that there's a team there that can partner with and create an event that will be “worthy” or “appropriate” for those venues.

Yes. I agree. I believe that is correct. So I think one thing that I always was -- I think that if we did something at the Children's Art Project, we were going to do it top notch and we weren’t going to skimp. We were professional, classy represented the institution in a number one type way and I think that the staff that had been gathered along the years really carried that banner and did a remarkable job of making that happen. Several, I mean, Nancy amongst myself, we looked for opportunities to make a good partnership and we could pull it off. And I do think that says a lot. I think that says something about that. Kind of taking the MD Anderson mantel or the Children's Art Project out into the community and that we were a good partner.

Well, and I'm remembering too, the conversation that we had in the first session, where you were talking about how this was really sort of an entrepreneurial little island and people were creative, they were very assertive with their ideas and it seemed like there was a lot of payoff in giving people that freedom and the range for their creativity.

And I think Shannan Murray, that was the director for 18 years, so she's going to run from 1997 to 2015. I think that Shannan really came from a marketing background out of Coca Cola and Minute Maid, but she came from a -- she was like, if there's an idea starting to happen in the United States about marketing, she was going to jump on it, and she was going to make sure that we were out there in
the front rather than where we had an idea, she wanted to get to market with something or out into the PR world, or the media world, she wanted to get out there. She really loved that and had a tremendous amount of energy. And she led that charge, which I think also stimulated all of us and gave us the -- she was an executive director -- so gave us the permission and the go to make it happen. But because we were nimble enough, entrepreneurial enough, we also could. So that stays in that PR world of she really led the partnership with Christopher Radko that really was a benchmark in terms of raising the level of product coming out of the Children's Art Project. Christopher Radko was such a -- had a phenomenal brain anyway -- and she drove that I want to partner with them and she did many things. I remember when Facebook came out, she was like, “We need to get on there,” and she was fast about it. Long before and I was -- she was like, “We need to be out there,” and she was faster at making, I think, making that happen and kind of giving us the push, really driving to get there in the early stages of Facebook. And we built quite a following.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[17:57]
What year was this?

Angela Cheves
[17:58]
I'm not going to be able to quote you (coughs) excuse me. Facebook's almost about nine years -- is Facebook nine years old? Nine, 10 right now, but we were allowed to have an account and MD Anderson was in its early years of figuring that out as well, but we had an account. Several other departments had become more streamlined and more run by the top at this point, although Children's Art Project still has an independent Facebook site. But we built up to about 22,000, 24,000 fans. There was a crash of the site that had a lot to do with the MD Anderson departments as well. That was frustrating for our manager that ran it and then we had to build it back, but indeed we did. It has more than 30,000 followers. That's a pretty significant number in marketing. If we ever had compet-- I mean, people who follow or you know, if when -- I want to say competitors in a healthy, good way, but if you're looking at that, that's significant for somebody to build that up. I think that's part of that early -- the way marketing and media starts to splinter. I think what gets complicated there is that the institution starts to get bigger and bigger and I'll come back. Like, the institution couldn't put the resources behind us having a writer for all of that kind of work, that a Facebook and Twitter account and stuff takes. So we had a staff person, Kelly Renner, who really took it and ran with it, but she was probably a little bit more on the technical side of it. Wouldn't alway-- I guess I can say that I think the writing -- we could [20:00] have done a little bit better on it, but we had to go it on our own and that's when you start to get there's -- as marketing starts to -- early days you had TV stations, you had a newspaper. You had four channels and you had four main networks and a newspaper, but as it starts to fracture into all -- which all departments are facing -- it's hard to have enough resources to do all that. That becomes one of those areas where MD Anderson, who had funded the communications team person, let me [walk my hair?] It's about 2009, about 2010, they start to say, “We can't invest in a whole person with you all anymore
and we'll give you a quarter,” and we went way down in the asset of a communications person having it because we couldn't fund that. So it's like we were very homegrown, but I feel like that's one of the points where we start to lose some institution connectivity. If we ever go and kind of when we're moving, that became challenging because the person that they put for us as a quarter, they gave us, when we went from full-time Gail who was practically embedded in our department and went on events, everything, to a quarter of, a 25% staff person, who was straight out of college and a male. There's a difference between having a seasoned person, at least three quarters time and a woman, who was experienced. All of those things start to matter, so I -- his name, it doesn't matter, he was a good guy, but it was hard.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[21:43]
Bad fit.

_Angela Cheves_
[21:44].

Just wasn't a great fit. They have changed that as of last spring and I'm thankful. I think that will be helpful.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[21:53]
What were you seeing when you did have a person of the right profile doing that writing? How was -- what was increasing? What was happening that was so good to see when social media was...

_Angela Cheves_
[22:09]
When social media was working?

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[22:10]
Yeah, or just with all of these.

_Angela Cheves_
[22:11]
Well, one thing is social media gives people a way to dial on directly with a department. So you start to see immediately you can test your product you can go, “What do you think of these five designs?” You start to think product testing out of it. Communication. You suddenly have more people than people who used to write in a letter saying, “I love my products. I just sent my cards out. I love those too.” You can post programming where people are more constantly than a cataloger waiting for a news story, if
something great happens at the hospital, they had a good art session or a camp, those photos would go up. You can post all of those things. So people really start to have a conversation with you, which is pretty wonderful and I will note this one for confidentiality, but I see right now, I am seeing that now we've been stymied all of a sudden, and so I see the number of likes and followers is way down, and there's very little storytelling all of a sudden because there's a big withdraw of that. I think that's going to be damaging because I think that people -- I just think people think they are really involved with MD Anderson through the Children's Art Project and you take that out, it's a different story.
Well, just as you were mentioning, I realized that one thing we hadn't covered last time were all the various activities that are fueled by the money that the Children's Art Project generates and certainly if the people who are participating in those kinds of things have the ability to post pictures, then suddenly the people buying cards have a much more personal feeling, like, “Wow, I have a lot of cards and look, the money's doing this. I sort of know these people since I'm looking at their pictures and reading their messages.”

Right, and they still, I think, I wouldn't say that they've harnessed that wonderfully and I think MD Anderson has really beefed up its own social media team. They have Megan Maisel and all them, they're doing a terrific job, but they have not integrated Children's Art Project into that storytelling. They've left us out here and I think that's a big miss in these last five years. I think that's a big miss, so we're creating and running our own study. They have a team of seven, we have one -- one, one and a half -- and she's doing that along with her other job. I think that's a miss. So we -- but I know that they can't do the resources everywhere and where now it was linking with Children's Cancer Hospital and Quinn Franklin over at Child Life and stuff, she's doing a good job of posting stories about, you know, when it's a, “We're having an art class. We're having teddy bear clinic,” those are some of those things that the funding touched. But we talk about the business story, I think, for years it was very -- so we will get into the business. Let's get into that touchier stuff a minute because if you want to understand where thing's going, you are having businesses booming its growth. We hold a good staff, steady coming through. If the economy is high in Houston, we are doing great. We had several years we had big corporate sponsors. Some of that backs out after Enron, like Enron used to underwrite a card and things like that. That comes down. We still can -- we're still doing great after that, but when
the bust hit in the '08, we took a big hit then as well. It was difficult to start recovering from there because, I think, the world kind of took a -- the United States took -- a different look at consumption right then. I think people’s incomes dropped and some of us, “Well, maybe I don't need all this stuff that's been fueling this economy.” So I feel like that hit the Children's Art Project. Took us two or three years to kind of start to recover from there. I think slower for some people to come back, plus you have millennials, young people coming in that are not purchasing as much. Their mom's and dad's houses are drowning. They don't need as much stuff as we do and you have suddenly, you start to have a proliferation of causes that are really now, everyone can use the web. All of the platforms to tell their story and so it's finally becoming very polished. We were really early cause marketers. There were a few big projects in the country, but nothing like there is now. Now there's tie-ins corporately with, you know, Red Heart Week and so GAP carries red shirts that -- you have all of that and it's good. It's important in the United States. It's all that cause marketing, but I think the competition for people's mind, hearts, becomes much tighter and I think that has affected the Children's Art Project.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[27:38]  
Let me just quickly go through some of the numbers because they're pretty incredible. The first, in 1973 when the project started, it made $580. And then the increase in numbers is pretty incredible. In '74, it was $1,215. In '75, $12,040. In '76, $49,164. So obviously people realized that they had hold of something that was very appealing here. And the numbers just keep going up. By the time we get to 1980/81, it's $148,787. '85 $770,000. We get to 1990/91, break a million with $1.7 million. The source that I got this from doesn't have 2008 and the next few year we have 2005/2006, $6 million and change. Then in 2010/2011 a little bit of a downturn, about $4.4 million. So there was a little bit of a downturn coming back, that's what you were talking about.

Angela Cheves
[28:52]  
Right.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[28:53]  
What was the most recent in 2015/2016? What were the numbers for that? Do you have the --

Angela Cheves
[29:00]  
They're going to be around the $4 million.

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD  
Around $4 million, OK.
Angela Cheves

Part of running a business involves creating money for the proceeds account, which is what you call when you take the profit of the business annually and you say, “We're going to take the profit that we made this year. A normal company would've given that to their stockholders but our stockholders was the patient account, so we would move it over once a year. It would go to the proceeds funding account. But that was becoming challenging. That was becoming challenging in here. You still have enough staff burden and the diversification of product probably does take people to run it. We had very little. We had staffed -- we probably had the staffed up probably around 2000 and we stayed pretty flat, maybe one to two all the way coming up into [2014]. We stayed really at about 25 people. Very little turnover, in fact, really maybe one or two. Very stable, but we're all fractured a lot because the market is -- you're trying to be -- Shannan's deal was, “Let's be everywhere.” Sometimes that probably, I think, from a resource standpoint was a little challenging, how to figure that all out. But you know, the flip side was that entrepreneurial spirit, “Let's try it and see what works.” So we were doing that a lot and the product line, that diversification of the product line, became more expensive. And sometimes I think that we did some amazingly beautiful fantastic products, but it does cost to invest in all of them and most of them do not have the margins that paper has and I think that became a challenge in creating a proceeds account that stayed healthy. So at this point today that is very challenged, it's very low, and that is part of what the retooling will hope to accomplish. Confidentiality I would say I'm not sure if it can be fully accomplished as long as MD Anderson does not fund the salaries of the people that work there. Because they fund out of what is created because it ran as a self-funded department.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

So the proceeds pay salaries as well.

Angela Cheves

Right, so the revenue pays the salary as well.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD

I see. Wow.

Angela Cheves

So you have people who -- but MD Anderson can also -- but while MD Anderson and the state dictate kind of the leveling of the salaries, I would say they stayed on the average -- some low to some average -- we wouldn't have... I think the top people were paid well. I think a lot of medium people stayed
pretty average. It was hard to ever move or raise it, but certainly if you had merits we -- so the MD Anderson institution would say, “All merits need to happen,” so we had to make it happen out of that revenue, whether our business had done well that year or not. I was not that business manager as much, but I know for Shannan and Françoise, that's challenging to figure that out. I think that it was born out of running on that model, but I think that was one of the things Shannan was really stating by five and six years ago, “This can't work anymore, and this business model needs to change, and you fund your marketing department, you fund your development teams to be out there in the state and the country in the name of MD Anderson. Why are you not funding the Children's Art Project?”

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[33:10]
Yeah, I mean just as you were describing that I was thinking it's a really funny trade off. On the one hand there's all the independence, the autonomy.

_Angela Cheves_
[33:17]
Correct.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[33:18]
But there comes a point where you want to say to the institution, “You have to step off. We've done our due diligence, we made a successful product here and a successful program. Now you need to show that you're behind us.”

_Angela Cheves_
[33:33]
Correct. So I think that remains the challenge. I think the challenge and as Susan French is coming on, what I hear is they're not going to do that until it's completely healthy again, but some of it I have to look at and go, “I think some of that is part of the formula of making it healthier. If Shannan's job was always to be out there talking, giving interviews, talking to the media, pushing the name of MD Anderson, being at meetings for executives managers around here, her salary should not have been covered by the pro-- maybe the warehouse guy's salary needs to be covered by the proceeds of the business, but I don't think all of them did. Your Events Manager, your people who were really making the out in the community effort, I think --

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[34:21]
I mean, it's almost a development job at that point.
Angela Cheves

[34:23]

Very much so. I think there could have been a h-- there should have been some look at a hybrid. We weren't changed for our space and they certainly have handled our technology, computers, but other than that, I mean that's a little bit complicated. I think some of that is what has bred -- some of that bred eventually reached the point at which it reached last summer.
Chapter 12

SEGMENT TO BE SEALED UNTIL 2019
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: February 8, 2016

Chapter 13
B: An Institutional Unit;
The Children’s Art Project: A Great Work Environment with Great Volunteers

Codes
B: MD Anderson Culture;
B: Working Environment;
B: Institutional Mission and Values;
C: Dedication to MD Anderson, to Patients, to Faculty/Staff;
C: Personal Reflections, Memories of MD Anderson;
C: Volunteers and Volunteering;
C: Giving Recognition;
C: Human Stories;
C: This is MD Anderson;
C: Personal Reflections, Memories of MD Anderson;
C: Donations, Gifts, Contributions;

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:00:35]
Yeah, well, you wanted to talk about some of those significant volunteers you worked with.

Angela Cheves
[1:00:37]
Yes, I have. I think that coming out of Volunteer Services and I think there are people that they came on and figured -- Karen and all them -- figured out how to create a sales force with those people. Those companies in the early days, there were a department store in Houston named Sakowitz [ ] out of Texas, they're out of Houston and in those days... Anyways, Sakowitz allowed us to set up sales in their front lobby entrance and we had volunteers in like four significant parts of the city of the state, and they -- this is early days -- but we would ship cases of cards to their garages and stuff and then they took care of manning in the Clearlake area. So her name was Stella Kiefer, K-I-E-F-E-R, and her husband Hank, but we shipped cases to their garage and then Stella ran the sales in the Clearlake area. Of course in the spirit of legals and controls, that would never happen anymore. But that Sakowitz gave us the space to do that, that Stella and Hank took it as their passion and their job. They had volunteers and friends. They would set up, they had cash boxes. This is the days before charge machines. You ran it like that. They ran Christmas card sales. Pat, and I am blanking out on Pat's name. Another early volunteer Jerry Davis and I believe she still volunteers over at Rotary House, but Jerry typed invoices, answered phones, she was wonderful. Waneda Courter did a lot of bookkeeping, came in three days a week. Hank Fowler was an accountant volunteer. Then a wonderful volunteer named Carolyn Hamrick, H-A-M-R-I-C-K, and Carolyn worked for us for about 15 years. She came in four days a week. She was a widow. She had her own desk and she ran with our retail team the consignment, [1:03:00] kept
the accounts, did the ship out to them, the return to them, the balance, and everything. Carolyn was amazing. So those are some early -- Dorothy Kemp, K-E-M-P, ran Corpus Christi and did a remarkable job. Several of them, Dorothy Kemp, kind of worked with the Texas Federated Women's Clubs. Andy Margaret, Ann Beardsley, B-E-A-R-D -- Beardsley, because she has an L-E-Y in there, Beardsley. Wait. Texas Federated Women's Group, so if they were the coordinator of sales in Austin, then they used their Texas Federated Women's Clubs to be the staff and women selling. Anyway, they are remarkable volunteers that were definitely in those early years and carried through. Then of course Rock Robinowitz began in those early years. By '86, being a consignee, which means he carried the cards in his own grocery store downtown. When he retired, Karen says, “I have a volunteer job for you. Come work with me.” So he began in '91. He helped us on our Exxon accounts. He has packed orders, sold cards, taken them places, it didn't matter. Rock really just retired last year, so he -- one of the other neat things that's happened with volunteers at our offices, we would have young volunteers like in the summers and stuff, and that mix of old age and young age, so Rock is one of those that he could just joke and have fun with the young people as much as he was a friend to all of the older guys.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*
[1:04:47]
Is there -- I don't know, just a question is occurring to me. I'm wondering if there is a certain type of volunteer who comes to the Children's Art Project, you know, as opposed to...

*Angela Cheves*
[1:05:03]
Yeah, I do know they have recruited through the Volunteer Services Department, but we had our own Volunteer Coordinator at Children's Art Project, so they could reach out there or through Volunteer Services and then come to the Children's Art Project to work. I think a lot of them wanted to volunteer for MD Anderson and our cancer cause, but they didn't want patient contact, so this has always given people who that wasn't their comfort zone but they wanted to work on that, it gave them that avenue. That is, in fact, I know how we've gotten several of them. The other thing is that I think in a socializing deal, I think working as a volunteer at the Children's Art Project, has that same effect maybe as an old quilting bee because I think a lot of volunteers in the hospital, you tend to be in individual placement. So you're out on a floor and you're working, but you'd have the Tuesday group, which has about seven or eight women and men and they all work together They generally have lunch together, then they work another hour. So it has a socializing component to it, which I think for a lot of -- I would say more of them are widows or widowers, not all of them, but I think some of them have worked and then retired, others were homemakers and that's going to be changing. I just think it has had a socializing -- so the Friday group has a different personality than the Thursday group, and then the Wednesday, but they're close to each other. So it kind of has that quilting bee feeling-- that's how I would describe that a little bit.
Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:06:41]
Yeah, that's a great way to describe it.

Angela Cheves
[1:06:47]
In the Tuesday group, they don't always come at 8:45, they leave at 11:45 because they always go out to lunch together. They do not stay, but the other groups would stay and have lunch together, and then go back and [work] until 2:00. Our current volunteer, LaTroy Jones, who has been the Volunteer Coordinator now with them for about seven years, he's really good with them and he's a young guy. I did not anticipate that he would have done well, but he does. He takes great care of them and makes a fuss over their birthdays and jokes with them, but figures out -- one of the other neat things is they observe things. I think we walk the line between how much should they know and how much is not appropriate, but they see things from a different standpoint. If they unpacked a show, it's like, “Why'd you take so much inventory?” So being sure that they're on the end of understanding the why something is done is important. They know how it packs best in a box better than anybody and they take great pride in making sure we have enough bubble wrap to get it delivered somewhere without breaking it. How does it fit? Kind of standardizing who wants to -- you know, people will say, “I'm a packer versus I'm a puller,” because they each have their specialties. I think a lot of the men like to work with putting it in the boxes more, which is a little bit more physical. You got to get it fit just right like an engineer and then get it taped and all of that stuff.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:08:23]
Well, you know, working with volunteers is just such an art because here are people who are giving their skills and time and energy and for nothing?

Angela Cheves
[1:08:33]
Yes. Yes!

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:08:34]
No monetary reward.

Angela Cheves
[1:08:37]
Correct. So when we would have our designer announcement introducing the kids who won, who were going to be new designers, we always make sure that they are invited and that we run some shuttle vans from our office to get them across the street or whatever. We have certainly that core group of really
pulling them in. They really love that. I think a lot of them feel -- they are fighting. I do think MD Anderson's an amazing place and it is, like you'll say, from the housekeeper's down to the top doctor. Everybody's fighting the fight and doing their part and our volunteer's feel that as well, even though they're not interacting. They know they're doing something important and they take it very seriously. Anyway. It's just neat. So many significant -- and people, Pat Raymond, who's been there now, she's probably 28 years. Pat came probably in her late '50s because she's kind of like an aunt or mom to me, but she's turning 81. She's been there a long time. Fridays. Always Fridays.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[1:09:43]

Wow, that's amazing people have volunteered for the Project for so long. Is that unusual in the institution?

_Angela Cheves_

[1:09:50]

They have some that are that long. I mean, they have a few. Actually, Gerry Berard is the Volunteer from -- and G -- he's actually an unusual spelling. G-E-R-Y and then Berard, B-E-R-A-R-D. Yeah in his earlier years, he would come -- I think he came from a Catholic Church and maybe had a cancer touch, but Gerry we could call if we needed extra volunteers on a Tu-- he would bring a group of younger people, they were in their 30s and 40s, to pack on Tuesday night. When we were super busy, we need Thursday nights too. Gerry could rally people to come and pack. Amazing, fun energy. We need people in the Thanksgiving Day parade, “OK, I'll bring 10.” It was just that. I think it was wonderful. At this point, Volunteer Services will probably say, unless they've gone through our entire orientation and stuff, they cannot come and be in the parade. That's hard for everybody. They'll have to figure out how to balance out the episodic spontaneity of a short term volunteer versus a really long term, but wonderful. And Debbie Armes, D-E-B-B-I-E and then Armes A-R-M-E-S. Debbie Armes can work on our Macs, Macintosh computers, and archive the artwork. It keeps the whole ordering and numbers system. She packs on Thursdays. She would come and do art on Tuesdays, pack on Thursdays, and then she takes the Houston Museum of Natural Science their Christmas tree. She always decorates the tree for the Children's Art Project down at the Museum, comes up with the theme, you know, we kind of check it but she really takes that as her baby. So they just have really led and take it real seriously.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[1:11:42]

And some of these tasks that you're talking about, they're essential services for the running of the Project and for its financial viability.
Angela Cheves
[1:11:50]
Absolutely because if they were not doing the pulling and the packing, some of that archiving, I would have needed another 20% probably staff person to just do the archiving that she keeps up with. Yeah, you would have to find other positions if somebody wasn't going to be packing and handling returns, all of it. So yes, they've been really instrumental.

[Redacted]
I did want to touch on some of the most important programs that are funded by the Children's Art Project.

I think it's important to know how the funding occurred and to know that the staff at the Children's Art Project does not direct or influence that program funding at all, except for the Executive Director position, and all of that has fizzled in the last two to three years right now too under all the transitions and changes we're having, but we always -- the money was moved to a proceeds account and then there was, they called it a Proceeds Allocation Committee and the Proceeds Allocation Committee served as the decision maker for years. Shannan and Steve sat on that committee, Susan French came to many years in her role as a Volunteer Services Director, so did several people from Pediatrics. Then people submitted basically a grant application. In essence, an application and a justification to the Proceeds Allocation Committee, which took three meetings to determine what they were going to fund that year. A position like mine was not involved with that at all. I think that's right. I think that separate is probably important. That means that, in fact, my role, the longer it went, I was very uninvolved with the patients except for the ones that I photographed. As I mentioned, Leon Benavides was most closely linked with patients, but as far as us influencing that that program gets awarded funds and this one doesn't, our staff wouldn't know that. Some people who are more in the know, over the years they really built a Proceeds Allocation Committee. It was well built. It had a rotation of three years. People were on it. There was always a volunteer on it. Rock and Pat have both served on it, but they had somebody out of the Business Affairs VP Office on the committee. Steve Stuyck, we had an outside person, like somebody from Kroger's or Randall's, so you had kind of an outside corporate involvement on it. So that became the Proceeds Allocation Committee that created the decision making on that. I believe that Shannan would give a report about where we were for the year and where we weren't, and keep them a
little bit abreast of how we're building it, but decisions obviously been one of the most significant programs that we fund in certainly the camps over the years. [ ] Camp Star Trails, and then Camp AOK. I believe the concept of taking the patient and the siblings to an away camp with medical people to take care of them -- and that came on in the early '80s. I am more than sure that the Child Life [1:16:00] Department, even in its early business, pretty much directed it and said this is a really important thing. I think all of us have always been proud of how much we funded on that. We really underwrote those camps completely until the last three years, I believe. I [ ] proud of that in the good years and that they created that Pediatrics Scholarship Program that we paid for college funding for many, many years. I love that. I have always loved that it said that people were living through their cancer treatment and could go on. I think it's so significant. It is no longer funded or run by the Children's Art Project, that's become a Volunteer Services probably six or seven years ago, but I think important. Then I think over the years we've done music therapy, writing therapy, there were entertainment things. They've used art in different ways. The ski trips, I don't know if you know about the rehabilitate ski trip we funded? We were a part of that for years.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:17:07]
Yeah, I interviewed Norman Jaffe and he talked about --

Angela Cheves
[1:17:10]
OK, significant. No longer-- had finally decided to not fund that program. It cost a lot for a few kids, so that came off the table at some point, probably mid to late 2000s, but what a great program. I know Shannan went on that program, went a couple times, she said to just watch the power of somebody learning to ski when they thought they couldn't was really powerful. We, over the years, know that Mia Gradney, one of the anchors, a well-known media anchor in Houston, Gail and Shannan took her on a trip. She saw the skiing and she did a three part series on it. I mean, that was an amazing story to tell. I think -- I'm going to weave, but that relationship part, at the end of the day, you know, somebody has to be a people person. Shannan built great relationships and I think a lot of us did. Nancy did, I did, Gail did, we built relationships with people in the community and the media, and I think that in those best years, it was really important because Shannan, she can pick up the phone and call her, and Gail could talk to a news reporter and say, “We've got a great story for you to cover.” That comes because you know somebody and you can pick up the phone and they know you're going to have a good something to tell, or a quality product to report on. I think that -- but to just think that happens because you put it out there, you do have to work your contacts, and you have to have relationships with people. I think you have to have relationships with people to advance most things ultimately. It doesn't matter. You have to have some interest in just generating it, in keeping it going.
Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:10:04]
And you can't do it alone. That's the thing. Those networks are so essential.

Angela Cheves
[1:19:14]
Even now, I'm proud of what Shannan did. [I only did?] Corporate Alliances I saw, their report on the official website, they list five partnerships and three of them Shannon, we, worked on. They've now gone under the name of Corporate Alliances, but out of five, three of them. You know, that's remarkable, and that is because we went out there in the name of MD Anderson and made a partnership with Kendra Scott. We had a longstanding partnership with the Palais Royal Stage Stores, which has just moved to Corporate Alliances. She was signif-- Shannan worked with them when Elaine Turner was like -- those were good creating those partnerships and I'm not sure that we could -- that's why I think we probably would've been a better fit than Corporate Alliances, but anyway We'll be the next story.
Chapter 15
A: View on Career and Accomplishments;
A Satisfying Career Working with the Children’s Art Project: a Creative “Company” within MD Anderson

Codes
C: Human Stories;
C: Offering Care, Compassion, Help;
C: Patients;
C: Patients, Treatment, Survivors;
C: The Professional at Work;
D: Ethics;
A: Activities Outside Institution;
A: Career and Accomplishments;
A: Professional Values, Ethics, Purpose;
B: MD Anderson Culture;
B: Working Environment;
B: Institutional Mission and Values;

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[1:20:08]
Now you're talking about the things that you're really proud that the Project did. Are there certain things in your own record, all of the stuff that you did, that you just point to and say, “Yeah, I'm really proud I did that. Really satisfied to have done that.”

Angela Cheves
[1:20:28]
Well, I think as a body of work, I think when I packed the archive, when we packed the archives up and looking at the end of the year to go and say that it's probably more than 2,500 products that I really loved or touched. It's kind of amazing because I would look at it and go, “The season's 40,” but when you add it up, it's really an amazing [inaudible], it's a body of work and that I knew a lot of the children that created that artwork, and got to kind of have a conversation. To know them I think is pretty remarkable. I think photography, you know, photography of patients and stuff we have had over the years some kids that were terribly behaved. The photographer and I had worked together for almost 24 years or whatever and it's like, “My gosh, we've been shooting for an hour and we're not going to get anything,” but you know what I learned? It only takes one. It only takes one shot and all of a sudden, “Oh my gosh. We just got it. Who would've thought when they were practically kicking and punching, or whatever?” Then you got it and it's a magical shot and that kind of elation, or that you can tell their story, and I did love the photography aspect and visual of course, but I think to tell that story and that their families got copies of those photographs, which they got to use to have at their home, to later use
on their own Facebook sites or in their memorial services. For a lot of patients that pass away, when they do, if they've been a part of the Children's Art Project, we do a lot to help them have visuals and that's just a neat side thing, but it's kind of a whole completion. Leon will be, if he knows, and of course patients aren't passing away as much as they used to, but if we ever knew that somebody was, we were considering a piece of artwork or we had made a decision that was going to be a Christmas card but we had not made the formal announcement and Leon or a nurse over in Pediatrics who knew that they were really ill or dying, then we would make a run over to go be sure that they knew that their art had won. How cool?

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[1:23:00]

Yeah. Well, obviously it had -- that was a really important thing for a child to have a piece of art chosen and to know they're contributing to something.

*Angela Cheves*

[1:23:10]

Yeah, and even -- very sensitive about it, but I think parents of families when a patient has passed away, they've come to the announcement parties, I think, for them to know that some part of their child is living on. It's important and it mattered to them, so they didn't walk away. So you would think, “Oh gosh, do they want that to happen?” but they did. That's pretty neat. I mean, I think that was neat. I think always having sort of another idea, or, “Let's analyze it and see what didn't work but let's figure out something else,” I just think that the opportunity to have been in an environment where you could create, where you figure out how to go do the next thing, and how many things we've figured out as a small department, which would have been a small company, is pretty neat. Pretty amazing. Whether to partner with a product or to do a media piece, to go to New York and pitch. I mean, I've been in New York and pitched our stuff. Who would've ever thought I'd have gotten to do that? And have things appear in a story later, or a gift guide, is pretty wonderful. So I think I was very fortunate.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[1:24:40]

Well, it was funny when I asked you about your background, even going back to early education and you just immediately started connected the dots between -- it's like you were meant to do this. It's like the job was made right for you.

*Angela Cheves*

[1:24:55]

Yeah, and I think another interesting thing because over the year I really was the point person for purchasing with our department and small business, I connect that I consistently hired a couple of freelance designers and my photographer. There are many people who produce products. They are small business. You’re not talking big corporations. You’re talking offices of ten. And so when you
loop around to the accounts payable, and their check is hung out for four months, three months, or asking somebody to do something for free -- I grew up in a -- my dad was self-employed after -- he was a teacher, but eventually he had his own company. It was like, I heard that dinner conversation about we haven’t been paid yet. I was passionate. I always knew how important that was. And, actually, my husband was self-employed, too, so we worked -- I got to work here, but he... So it’s like when we took too long to pay the photographer, and for that, oh, it’s hung up, I was like, they need to be paid. This is important. And I took that seriously. We’re not just -- you’re not just processing somebody’s piece of paper. You’re processing their dinner, you know? I think sometimes people in AP -- I mean, that whole -- you don’t remember that.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[01:26:20]
Yeah. Or people are just really not aware.

_Angela Cheves_
[01:26:22]
Not aware of it.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[01:26:22]
People who have a salaried position, they don’t --

_Angela Cheves_
[01:26:24]
You don’t.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_
[01:26:25]
-- they don’t realize.

_Angela Cheves_
[01:26:25]
So I was always glad. I mean, I carried that mantle of growing up in a self-employed household, and actually being married to a self-employed spouse, it -- when he -- you’re a sole proprietor, it makes a big difference. So do you ask sole proprietor to -- people -- a creative -- a product company has a great idea -- and this is another thing I was passionate about in my role as buying -- if somebody brought me an idea and said, “We think this -- we had this idea this might make a great product,” it’s like, I always tried to be able to make the purchase ultimately with that company, because they brought that -- why would I steal their idea, then go put it out in a bid to get it into the open market, show somebody -- because I had to learn about it from that originator company. I wish the Anderson had a better way to
handle that, because then it’s not -- they’re not high-level intellectual property, but on the other hand, if they know how to make something, and they brought the idea, I think it’s important to honor them, not be raped on the payment of it, but if it’s fair, it’s within reason, that decision should go to that company that had the initiative to reach out to you, that brought the idea, that did test samples to kind of go, “I think this would work.” It’s like, I think that’s important to honor that business person. And I tried to do that, as well, because I managed those -- I managed that decision about making that purchase and stuff. And not in a cronyism way; I just think it’s honoring the person who had the idea. And then, you take small businesses who are a backbone, and MD Anderson says you need to go through a four-month bidding process, which is hours upon hours upon hours to create those -- to fill those documents. Some of them don’t even come in through these portals and stuff. I just think you say the State of Texas wants to support that, but you make it so complicated that I think you lose. They don’t have the hours. If they’re small businesses, they have to be out making money, and the hours it takes to do those projects, be sure we have all of that documentation, it is a lot. So I think those things will be challenging, also, for Children’s Art Project, even going forward. And the functionality with state rules, which is difficult for -- I mean, the State is fantastic, it standardizes, it [stays?], all of those things, but that was always challenging about making a purchasing decision when you saw a great idea, because by the time the idea was hot, sometimes if you couldn’t get it under the $15,000 for a quick purchase, and you had to go through the bidding process, oh my lord, by that time that idea might’ve been old. Very frustrating. If I go to work again in product development, that will be one thing I will hope: that I would not work for somebody that was so hamstrung by that.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[01:29:41]
Interesting.

Ms. Cheves
[01:29:43]
To add that layer of just pure bureaucratic legalese process in to make a decision, to make that purchase.

Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD
[01:29:54]
Is that where you see your next move? Into product --

Angela Cheves
[01:29:57]
I hope so. I hope I can -- you know, I hope I can -- I do hope that I could go to work possibly for another -- a cause or entity or a smaller charity or something, and take -- be able to help them use... I do love kids. I love the whimsicalness of [their artwork]. So do something to kind of help them build awareness of whatever their cause is, with a product leaning. But I think probably what I know is I like
the smaller side of it. I like the building it up. I think once it -- I think businesses go through important - - the entrepreneurial and the family stage, and then you finally become the big bureaucracy, and I think I like the smaller side. I like -- I don’t -- I like touching a lot of it, and I love -- I like thinking and dreaming -- I like making it work, and figuring out how to make it better, whether it’s the process part or the creative side. I love working on all that, so I hope I’ll find something like that.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[01:31:04]

What is --

*Angela Cheves*

[01:31:05]

But...

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[01:31:06]

What have your years at MD Anderson done for you?

*Angela Cheves*

[01:31:09]

Well, I mean, who knows what I thought I would’ve done once I wasn’t going to become a medical illustrator. So I was -- I am blessed to get to work here. And I think that part of -- if you stepped on an elevator, and the housekeeper person, as well as the doctor, is fighting the battle of cancer, I think is really -- is an amazing culture at MD Anderson, and I will always appreciate that, even -- I have not been, as I said earlier, I have not been touched by it very much, so I’m a little removed from the cancer story, but it’s pretty important. And I’ll tell you -- I will also tell you that’s a good thing, those of us who work outside of the clinics, I think people having a chance to be in the hospital and get reminded of it is very important, and I think as a mom, and as a just person that has always given -- it has given me great perspective in life. So don’t sweat -- you know, the don’t sweat the small stuff is the real truth when you see people over there. And if we went to sell -- set up a table and sell Valentines for four days over in a hospital lobby, just to interact with customers who end up patients or family, you can call it retail shopping, just therapy shopping, because you’re like escape, or somebody’s like, “I wasn’t gonna be home, so I’m so glad I got to get something for them,” was just -- I’m glad we could be that little -- you know, some little part of it, happiness part of it. And I will never forget a patient one time that we asked for -- I asked for a number on their credit card slip, a phone number, and he goes, (laughs) he goes, “I don’t even remember my home phone number because I’ve been here nine months.” I was like, oh my gosh. So I’m really -- those things were good for me, just being a normal, nonmedical person. Those were great life reminders, and I think that I was -- you know, those provided good dinner conversations for my own family and kids growing up, so I think they have a neat perspective, even though I wasn’t on that side. I wasn’t on the medical helping side, but I still think I’ve been able to kind
of give that their part of life. But what -- wasn’t that where we were?

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[01:33:40]

Yes.

_Angela Cheves_

[01:33:42]

Just what did I get out of it? But I walk here, and this building -- we have incredible resources at MD Anderson. That’s an amazing blue chip type building. So I just -- but I think they will be challenged over the years between becoming so numerically driven, data driven, that how do you keep the personal side, and the relational, and you give your employees and people time to be those people, both to their colleagues, and I think that you get a better department when you -- they’re able to contribute and to be in relationship, in pleasing relationship with each other. And I think the advent -- I think that the coming of computers and stuff has -- that’s a challenge to keep that, because we can do so much in our own little space. And I’m a believer in a lot of the Myers-Briggs understanding about people, and I did need to focus in my office, but sometimes my best ideas came from getting to be around a table in a meeting. And one other -- it’s interesting, now, as my daughter enters the work world at 24, and she’s a real extrovert, and I think the ideas come, but we ask even your extroverts to sit in your cubicle or in your office and stay on task for eight hours a day, and are you getting their best work, because they’re not interacting with people where it gives their energy? Just when you look at the difference between an extrovert and where they get their energy, and you say, “Be at this task at your computer,” and it’s like so I was lucky to come up in the younger where you had to do more things together, and then because my position -- I think managers and stuff get to be in more meetings, but you ask your rank and file people, they’re just supposed to stay task oriented. So how are you going to get the best out of them if they’re never at a table, at a group where their ideas are stimulated because they’re together? I think it’s a challenge.

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[01:35:49]

Yes, that’s an interesting management perspective. You know, how do you help people tap into what they do best? I mean, as an introvert, you know, I don’t mind sitting, but, you know, it’s important to get other perspectives, and to have sort of the fresh blood and the fresh ideas coming from being on a team, or being in a meeting. There’s always a balance to be struck.

_Angela Cheves_

[01:36:13]

Of course you need to go recharge, and you can’t have people in that all the time. But I think how -- and I know the huddle rooms are doing that, but I think the crisscrossing, I think, will be a challenge, and there’s so much data to learn, and to manipulate numbers. But I think Anderson’s doing a neat job
Interview Session: 02  
Interview Date: February 8, 2016

about understanding the generational differences, and across teaching and stuff like that. So I think they have their eye on that. I think they’ll do a good job of that. So I think [01:36:58] pretty close.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[01:36:45]  
Well, is there anything else that you’d like to add?

*Angela Cheves*

[01:36:49]  
No. I think we’re wrapping it up pretty well.

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[01:36:52]  
OK, good. Well, it’s been really, really great talking to you. Yeah.

*Angela Cheves*

[01:36:56]  
Yeah, thank you.

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

And we kind of got into a whole lot of areas I hadn’t expected, which is neat, so --

*Angela Cheves*

[01:37:02]  
Is that all right?

*Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD*

[01:37:02]  
Yeah, this is a great perspective, you know, to bring, so I’m really happy that you, you know, were enthusiastic about taking part in the project. It’s, you know, going to be a really great contribution.

*Angela Cheves*

[01:37:13]  
I know. I think so. I think, you know, it may not live, because I think I’ve gotten enough perspective to also go -- sometimes there’s a time and place for things, and I always -- I, at this point last year, used Blockbuster as an example, and say 20 years ago I think we thought you can’t imagine living without Blockbuster, and now they’re almost gone. So I don’t think anything’s permanent anymore, so, you know, maybe the Children’s Art Project will have a time and then a closure, and I have come to that.
Nothing is forever, so...

_Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[01:37:48]

But it’s a fascinating business story, whatever its, you know, ultimate fate, and the business story is going to live now, you know, because you’ve told it for the archive, and I think that’s really, really terrific.

_Angela Cheves_

[01:37:59]

Yeah, I appreciate it. So thank you so much. So thanks for being interested.

_T.A. Rosolowski, PhD_

[01:38:05]

Well, appreciate your time, and I just want to say I am turning off the recorder at about quarter of 12:00.

END OF AUDIO FILE