

HERBERT HUNT

—
**Mame Warren,
Interviewer**

Warren: This is Mame Warren. Today is February 9th, 1997. I'm in Dallas, Texas, with Herbert Hunt. I want to know how a Texas boy found his way to Washington and Lee.

Hunt: I had been attending the Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, and had reached what was known as the sixth form, or senior year, and they were starting to give the SATs, or whatever the tests were at that time, so I contacted my mother to discuss whether I should be taking them, whether I would need them, if I was going to go to school in Texas, and that most of the people up there taking them were on their way to Yale or Princeton or one of those schools. And her reply back to me was, "You don't need to take them. You've already been entered in Washington and Lee," or W&L, as she called it.

Frankly, I'd never heard of the school, but I said, "What is it and where is it?" And she told me it was in Lexington, Virginia. The bottom line, she was on the board of Mary Baldwin College at that time and was interested in seeing me go up there to a smaller school. So that's how I ended up there, never knowing until just before the end of my senior year that—well, it was earlier, mid senior year in high school, that's where I would be headed.

Warren: So you were sent to Washington and Lee.

Hunt: I was very fortunate. My mother was very straight-laced, and I felt like the rabbit that had been thrown in the briar patch went I got to W&L.

Warren: [Laughter] Oh, do tell what you mean by that.

Hunt: Well, I'm sure my mother had no idea how much social life there was at W&L.

Warren: Well, tell me what the briar patch was. Tell me about that aspect of it.

Hunt: Well, basically the social life. Of course, Mother serving on the board of Mary Baldwin College, why, she knew how strict the rules were there, so she assumed—I think she assumed that's what I was going to be getting at W&L. She had no idea that you were turned loose to do whatever you want as long as you conducted yourself as a gentleman.

Warren: And that code of the gentleman really seems to have been very pervasive. What did that mean to you? How was that presented to you, and what did that mean to you?

Hunt: Well, we wore a coat and ties, which you had to have on to attend class. Really about the only rules that you had were that you did have to attend classes faithfully, and, other than that, your time was yours with what you wanted to do with it.

Warren: Can you remember when you first arrived in Lexington, what your impressions were?

Hunt: Yes. It was a very pretty school, very pretty campus, not an awful lot different from being away at prep school for three years. I think you're probably too young to focus in on that time, but you've got to keep in mind that the whole country was going through a real change. In other words, we'd been through World War II, and during World War II, the only way to get around was by train, essentially. The Hill School is in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, so I was used to getting on trains, and before that I'd been to Culver Military Academy for summer school, summer camps. So, you know, I'd been riding trains since I was ten years old, where you get on a train, and a day and a half, two days later, you'd be at the other end.

But following World War II, why, this all was starting to change. In other words, we were going into the airplane age, and, as I recall, I flew into Washington, D.C., I guess, to start with and got down from there. But the campus, as I say, was, you know, a small campus and very much like the prep school I'd just come from.

Warren: You arrived at a particularly interesting time in a lot of different ways. One of the things that was happening was there were a lot of veterans there.

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: Can you talk about that?

Hunt: Well, it was a very different atmosphere from what I'm sure had taken place before the war, and it pretty well phased out while I was there at W&L. The Beta fraternity house had been what then would have been called a colored barracks, and the house had just been gotten back a short time before, a year or two before I got there, and so was old and beat up but remodeled, and I don't imagine it's changed much even today.

At school, why, obviously here were boys coming from high schools in their, oh, eighteens, nineteens, twenties, depending on how smart you were, how long it took you to get through high school, along with lots of veterans who were back on G.I. Bill, etc. In fact, there were many fraternity brothers that were well over thirty years of age that were back to either finish up in law school or finish their undergraduate work. And so it was quite a mixture.

I remember when Hell Week came around after pledging, I finally got to the point of Hell Week, and one of the things was there was a demand that all the pledges had to come down and march around the house with a half grapefruit in their hand. Of course, the house is on a hill there, as you know, and so it was down one side and across the front, and then climb back up the hill and around. Well, there also was about three or four inches of snow on the ground.

So after about the third round around the house, a couple of the fellows in the pledge class who'd been away in the service said, "This is enough of this," and waved and signaled all us young kids, and we followed them down to the diner and sat down and had breakfast. And it wasn't long before the actives, some of the actives showed up and said, "What are you guys doing?" And the older ex-G.I.s in the pledge class told them we weren't going to have all this stuff, that was the end of that. So that kind of finished up Hell Week for us.

Warren: Wow. I never heard that story before. That's great. That's really interesting. So what were the grapefruits about? Why on earth were you carrying grapefruit?

Hunt: Just because somebody had dreamed it up among the actives, I'm sure, that we should carry a grapefruit around.

Warren: How did you decide to join the Beta House?

Hunt: [Laughter] Well, I almost hate to tell this on myself, because it shows how mature I was. I had no idea what the fraternity system was and all of that, and, anyway, had signed up for the rush parties at the table set up in the Quad of what was the freshman dorm then, and had a party. Some other Texas boys were joining the Beta House, and there was all this conversation about, well, we need to stick together and all demand we get into this fraternity or that fraternity, which I didn't particularly care one way or the other.

But anyway, the Betas issued me an invitation, and I can remember—I think it was Brian Bell, and I said, well, that sounded like a good idea. "I'd like very much to join your sorority."

He said, "No, it's a fraternity."

And I said, "Well, what's the difference?" [Laughter]

And Brian, being willing to go along with it, he thought a minute and said, "Well, there's not a lot of difference, just one's for girls and one's for boys." So that shows how naive I was when I hit there.

Warren: That's great. That's wonderful. That's a great story. So was there something particular about the Betas that made them more attractive?

Hunt: Well, we joked about this quite a bit afterwards. They were a congenial group, and one of the main things, the house was extremely close to the campus and to the classrooms, and I thought that was a good deal, where I didn't have to walk too far to get to class when I got up in the morning.

Warren: Well, it always looked very attractive to me. I figured if I was joining a fraternity, I'd pick one at Red Square. It made a lot of sense to me.

Well, talking about when you arrived, were you aware that you were arriving with Dean Leyburn, that he was arriving at the same time, and what changes he brought to the university?

Hunt: No, I wasn't aware that I was arriving with him, but when I got there, why, he was relatively new. Was he the year that I got there?

Warren: Yes. He came with you.

Hunt: Okay. I do recall that there was a world of conversation about Dean Leyburn and what was taking place at the university in setting it up and this sort of thing. Of course, keep in mind, the university had been disbanded for a period of time in there, or, if not disbanded, had been scaled way back for the Officers Training School, and so it was kind of a start-up situation.

Warren: Can you remember what any of that conversation was about him? I know it was a long time ago, but he really did bring tremendous changes, and I'd love to know what the students were saying.

Hunt: I really don't remember any of the details, just other than Leyburn was doing this, etc., and I just don't recall at all.

Warren: When I've talked to other people from your time period, I didn't know so much about Dean Leyburn at that time, so you're the first person from your class I've talked to in quite a while. So I was hoping maybe. But as a student, I wouldn't have been so aware of that either, but some students are more astute to what's going on on the Hill than others, not most, though.

Were there any particular teachers who made a difference for you?

Hunt: Yes. When I arrived, I hadn't decided what I was going to major in, and so I took freshman geology, like three hundred other freshman, probably, you know, to get your science credit. My father was in the oil and gas business. The whole family was in the oil and gas business, but I really hadn't thought about taking geology, but anyway, in my second year, I started—well, really at the end of my second year, I started thinking more about what I should major in.

Anyway, I came home, I guess it was Christmastime of second year, and my dad asked me how school was going, and I said, "Fine."

He said, "Well, have you decided what you're going to take?" So I started naming off courses, and he said, "No. What are you going to graduate in?" So I told him, well, I was thinking about geology, and his comment back to me was—it was in his office—he put his head back down and went on working, and he said, "Well, that will cost us millions."

And I said, "Why do you say that?"

He said, "Well, you know the geologist always wants to go deeper or wants to drill a well just to prove a point, a geologic point rather than a commercial point." So anyway, with that, I kind of decided, well, I'd go ahead and do it. [Laughter]

Warren: So you were a geology major?

Hunt: Yes.

Warren: I don't know that I've talked to any other geology majors.

Hunt: Well, there weren't very many of us.

Warren: And I know it was a popular course, but—

Hunt: For the freshmen, for your freshman credit. Freshman geology is probably the easiest of the science credits to get your one year of science, and that's why so many took it, but after your freshman year, why, I guess the largest geology class I had was six students.

Warren: Really?

Hunt: Most of them—well, I had many classes where it was just myself and the professor.

Warren: Tell me about that.

Hunt: Well, I think the year I graduated, there were, I don't remember, either five or six of us that graduated in geology. There weren't very many. And at that time maybe there was twenty-plus majoring in geology. So, obviously, you know, after you got past the freshman year and maybe some people were interested enough to take sophomore year, why, then it was only for those that were majoring in geology. And you still had all the different courses you had to take, so it literally just got down to where it was Marcellus Stowe, "Mars" Stowe, as we called him, Dr. Stowe, and just one, two, three students. Many of my courses were, you know, where I would get some guidance from him on what I was going to do, and then it was almost a class by appointment. You'd have an appointment to go by and see him. So it gave me lots of special attention, and there was no showing up not having done the work. Literally you knew it was just going to be you and the professor. There wasn't any way not to raise your hand.

Warren: So what does it mean? Did you go out in the field in Rockbridge County?

Hunt: Yeah, we had some field courses, and then also we had a project. I did a paper on the heavy mineral sediments, heavy minerals, of the James River, and it was published in the Virginia geological, state geological society's—oh, they publish papers annually, and it was one of the published papers that year. And in that case,

why, we went around gathering samples up and down the tributaries to the James River, the upper James River, and then taking them back to the lab and coming up with what minerals were in those samples. So then you could look back and figure what you might encounter up those particular rivers, which, of course, is the way that gold exploration was done in the early days. In other words, you'd hunt for a sample of gold and then start backtracking up the rivers that brought it down to hunt for the area to look for a gold deposit. Of course, I wasn't looking for gold. I was just doing an academic paper. And did a lot of spelunking, a lot of in the caves and that sort of thing, which I enjoyed.

Warren: Rockbridge County just sort of cries out for that kind of exploration, doesn't it?

Hunt: Well, there's lots of caves, yeah.

Warren: I've never done that, but I have young friends who do it, and they keep saying, "Well, yeah, we'll take you sometime." But I haven't actually gotten down in there yet.

Hunt: Well, you ought to go do it. It's fun.

Warren: Well, I would like to. I would like to. So did you go and explore around lots of places in Rockbridge County?

Hunt: Oh, yeah, pretty well all over the county. A lot of them are within walking distance of the campus itself, but some of them, you know, you drive out and around the area.

Warren: Would you go out with Dr. Stowe, or is it something you'd do by yourself?

Hunt: There were some classes that were taught by him in the field, but the mineral study I mentioned was done on your own, where you'd go out and gather the samples, and there you'd find a sandy spot and dig down deep enough so that you'd get something that wasn't contaminated last week, and grab samples. And you wouldn't take just one sample. You would clear off an area and take a composite

sample, a little bit from many different spots, and put it together, and then that's what you'd take back and analyze.

Warren: So I've got to ask you the follow-up question. Did this wind up costing your father millions?

Hunt: Well, you know, you always have to ask who was responsible for the dry hole. No, I—you still have to, if you're going to be successful in the oil and gas business, you have to keep your feet on the ground. So I hope I've managed to do that through the years.

Warren: Now, what about other classes? As a geology major, I'm sure you had to fill other requirements. Were there other teachers in other departments that you remember?

Hunt: You know, I've forgotten his name, but I'll bet you I can go back here and figure it out. I took calculus my freshman year to get rid of my math requirement for a science degree. We got to, oh, about the middle of second semester, and I just could not comprehend infinity. I couldn't comprehend something that you couldn't put your arm around or couldn't pick up or couldn't ever reach. And it happened, why, the math prof, an older fellow at the time, I don't know whether he was an advisor to our fraternity. I don't think he was, but he was down at the fraternity house one afternoon, and a group of us were having a beer. That was kind of the practice, that the profs would visit the fraternity houses. It was that close an atmosphere. And he said to me, he said—or I said to him, I said, "Not doing very well, am I?"

And he said, "No, you're not."

I said, "Well, I'm probably not going to make it, am I?"

And he said, "Not in calculus." And he sat there a minute, and he said, "What are you majoring in?"

And I said, "Well, I'm majoring in geology, probably. I don't know yet, but I'm thinking about that." Now this was freshman year.

And he said, "Well, what degree have you signed up for?"

I said, "A science degree."

He said, "Well, if you're not going to be in physics, then—"

I said, "Well, I'm not going to be in physics."

He said, "Well, you're not going to need that much math." He said, "What math did you have in high school?"

I said, "Well, in prep school, trig was the last thing I took."

He said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do." He said, "I'll give you all my back exams, and I'll let you take the final exam in trig, and if you can get at least—" Let's see how he put it. He said, "If you get at least a C in it, I'll pass you and get you your math credit instead of the calculus, since that's not a requirement."

And I said, "Okay." So I got hold of his textbook for trig, and it turned out to be the same one I'd had the year before in prep school, so I went to work boning up, and I did pass all his tests and take his final and make it. So I got my year's math credit, and I don't want any more calculus. [Laughter]

Warren: I'll bet. [Laughter] Well, you know, that's one of the things that so impresses me, is this idea have how personal the relationships seem to be between the faculty and the students at Washington and Lee. You say that the professors came and socialized with you at the fraternity houses a lot?

Hunt: Some of them did. Some of them did. The older fellows didn't do it as much as, you know, the medium-aged and younger guys. But take, for example, Dr. Stowe. When API would come around, the American Petroleum Institute, he would take his students who were going to graduate, he'd offer them and take them with him to go to the APG convention. So I went with him, and I believe there was—I guess there was one other went with me, and we went to the convention

with him, at which he said, "Don't bother to go attend the papers or listen to the technical stuff." He said, "You need to get out and meet people and sample what's going on technically, but you need to meet people so that you can get a job when you graduate." And so, you know, you had that contact, that they'd actually take you out, and you'd do that sort of thing.

Well, at W&L, why, you know, we had a trip one weekend that we took off and visited an area down in southwestern Virginia, where a well was being drilled by Chevron, as I recall, and they were drilling what was known as a Fenster. In other words, they were drilling into an overthrust or a very complicated area in kind of a hole in the geology, and they did drill a dry hole. But we spent two days traveling around that part of the state, and there were five or six of us that were on the trip with him. We also went into a couple of mines with him, one underground, one above ground. So, you know, there was all of that kind of traveling together and that sort of thing.

Warren: Wow. That's very interesting. I haven't talked to geology people before. That's really great. Let's shift gears now. One of the things that we mentioned at lunch and that I saw in the yearbook, you played some football.

Hunt: Played at it.

Warren: Well, tell me about that.

Hunt: Well, W&L was trying to put together, as best I could tell, trying to put together a football team, a good football team for the two hundredth bicentennial year coming up, so they had a large number of scholarships out. In fact, I think on the whole team, there were only—at one point, there were three of us, and I think ultimately before I gave it up, I guess there were probably two of us that were not on scholarships. So the bottom line is, there was no freshman team and varsity team. There was just one team.

And so what would happen, we would play a freshman schedule, but the tail end of the team, each weekend would be cut off and would be sent to play the Staunton Military Academy or whatever. Let's see, we played a school over in Norfolk, etc. The bottom of the team would spend the week scrimmaging the varsity, and then, come weekend, the bottom part would go play the lesser schedule. And so it might be anywhere from eighteen of us to thirteen or fourteen that would be sent to play the prep school or the other school's—what can I call it, not lesser team, but they're—

Warren: Like junior varsity or something?

Hunt: Their freshman team or JV or what have you, and I can remember one weekend, why, we were playing, and we had a couple fellows hurt, and we were going to be disqualified if we couldn't come up with someone to take the eleventh man's position. So the manager/water boy who was traveling with us, he put on a uniform and played with us that game. [Laughter] Obviously, we took some pretty good drubbings under that, because, you know, we had been running no plays. Whatever we would play would be plays that were given to us for the varsity's opponent each week, was kind of how it worked, and we'd just kind of make up plays as we'd go.

Warren: Did you travel much with the football team?

Hunt: Not with the varsity. I did make a few games with the varsity. One kind of a funny instance happened on one game. We were going to the game by train, and I know there was lots of commotion, lots of talking, and finally one of the coaches came back to me and asked me if I had a credit card. I said, "Yeah, I've got a credit card." He wanted to know what credit card it was. I said "American Express."

And he said, "Would you be willing if we used it to pay for the tickets?"

I said, "Yeah, if you want to. It'd be all right with me." I'm sure it was no great sum of money, but the bottom line was, somehow or another, they had gotten off without the tickets for the football team—

Warren: Oh, no.

Hunt: —and they were afraid that when the conductor came around to get the tickets, which, you know, the tickets were always taken up on the trains at that time, that they would have a problem. But as it turned out, the conductor took their word that this was a school and that they did buy the tickets. So he was willing to forego using my credit card, and they worked it out.

Warren: I didn't know there were credit cards back then.

Hunt: Yeah, there were some kind of credit cards. Maybe it wasn't American Express. I don't remember, but it was a credit card, and they came around wanting to know if I had one.

Warren: You were the hero there for a few minutes, I guess?

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: So you were on the team with Walt Michaels, right?

Hunt: Yes.

Warren: Everybody mentions Walt Michael's name. What was he like?

Hunt: Walt was a super guy, very plain vanilla, very quiet, very athletically talented person. Walt is one of the few people that I have seen on one occasion, I guess, and I get a message from him every now and then. As a matter of fact, because my brother's in professional football, owning the Kansas City Chiefs, occasionally he'll see Walt Michaels, etc. But anyway, Walt sent back through somebody an honorary card for the Jets, making me an honorary sideline Jet member, along with a letter saying, "If you're ever up, come down to the sidelines and watch the game with me."

Warren: That's great. Those Washington and Lee connections are everywhere, aren't they?

Hunt: They help.

Warren: I'm very impressed with the networking. So you were around. You weren't on the team, but you were around during the Gator Bowl season.

Hunt: I was no longer on the team. I'd quit in my sophomore year. Late in the season it became obvious that I wasn't big enough to be out there, etc., but the Gator Bowl came after that time frame. The Gator Bowl was '50, wasn't it?

Warren: I think so. I think so. Well, what was it like on campus? Was it frenzied? Did people go crazy, knowing they were going to a bowl?

Hunt: Oh, yeah. Everybody was very excited, and we had a very good team going. One of the big sports was to sit down and figure up how much we would have beat So-and-so had we played So-and-so. And basically, the way they would do it, they would say, "Okay. We played West Virginia, and the score was this. Such-and-such team played West Virginia, but they lost by thirty points. So that makes us thirty points better than that team, but that team beat Army by ten points, so that makes us forty points better than Army." And, you know, he'd get up to where he'd get some pretty astronomical scores like we'd be eighty points better than So-and-so.

Warren: That's great. And I take it this was happening in the fraternity houses after a beer or two had been consumed?

Hunt: Absolutely. Everybody would sit down and try and figure them out.

Warren: So the social life was pretty good, I expect, back then?

Hunt: Well, I wasn't the most avid social life fan, if you're talking about dating girls.

Warren: Did you have a car?

Hunt: Yeah. I did have a car by—I don't remember exactly when it came. I guess it was probably in my sophomore year. Social life, I met my wife through W&L. One

of the fraternity bothers got up at lunch one day, clanged on his glass and stood up and said, "I've got some things I have to study for tomorrow. I found I'm going to have a test in so-and-so. I have a date down the road at Hollins College. I've never met her, but I understand she's a super girl, and all the people tell me she has a great personality. Will someone take my place?"

And then, of course, a chuckle around the room, and finally I said, "Okay, I'll go." And that was the blind date on which I met my wife, Nancy, who was going by the name of Kitten. Turns out she was from El Paso, Texas, and I think he did say the girl was from El Paso, Texas, so that's one of the reasons I held my hand up, and later married the girl, four years later, after we got out of school, both graduated.

Warren: That's a wonderful story. I love blind-date stories that work out. So that meant you spent a lot of time going back and forth between Lexington and Hollins?

Hunt: Yeah. But I must confess that my wife went back to El Paso and attended UTEP.

Warren: What's that?

Hunt: University of Texas in El Paso. And I guess that was after her freshman year, so we really only dated one year in Virginia, and I continued to date girls at Hollins, but I guess my love was already set, so I ended up, usually in the summer, why, I would go out to see her, etc., until we decided to get married.

Warren: Well, I do hope you have some memories of road trips, though.

Hunt: Oh, I have lots of memories of road trips.

Warren: Oh, share a few with me.

Hunt: Well, we went down to Hollins one time, and they had a little Caesar down there who was a guard. [Laughter] And he was always giving the boys a very hard time about being on the campus, etc. I was not involved in the group, but I was there the night that they decided, "Well, we're going to fix little Caesar." So they got him and handcuffed him around a tree in the Quadrangle at Hollins, and took his

pants and socks and all, stripped him from the waist down, and left him out there in the Quadrangle. Of course, there was quite a bit of flak from Hollins and from the Washington and Lee president, etc., over that particular incident. Fortunately, I was not involved, and I think nobody got hung up by their thumbs over it, but they were warned that it should never happen again.

Warren: There are some pretty good pranks that happened.

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: Was his name really Little Caesar or is that what you all called him?

Hunt: That's what we called him.

Warren: So I suspect you were probably pretty popular, having a car, is what I understand. There weren't very many people who had cars.

Hunt: Well, there were a lot of cars, but there weren't all that many, and, you know, you could get three to five guys go have a date, and you'd end up with six to ten people in the car when you'd go out, so it was kind of crowded, yeah. A lot of fun.

Warren: And what kind of stuff would you do when you went out?

Hunt: Oh, we'd do all sorts of things. There was a nightclub in Roanoke, as I recall, that was a colored night club, and we'd often go to it because it had good music. You know, I mean, nothing uncommon, but it would be a group of both, even though we weren't integrated at that time. Oh, we'd do all sorts of things, go have picnics, etc.

Warren: Did you used to out to Goshen Pass?

Hunt: Oh, yeah. I've swam Goshen Pass many times. In fact, every time there was a good rain, why, we'd try and head to Goshen Pass because there'd be enough water to swim the rapids.

Warren: That's one of my favorite things to do.

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: Still. Well, somebody I was talking to—I always try to ask around before I go to see anybody, somebody told me I should ask you about having tire tracks on the back of your sports coat one time.

Hunt: Tire tracks on the back of my sport coat.

Warren: Does that ring any bells?

Hunt: Oh, yeah! Yeah. We were on a trip. We were going to—I guess we were going to West Point, and one of the boys, one of the boys in the front seat, a couple of football players, Herb Miller, I believe. I don't remember who all was there, maybe Jack Crawford. Anyway, one of them dropped a cigarette, and it was a Jeep or a Land Rover-type vehicle, and of course, it was a metal floor, but one of them was smoking and dropped their cigarette, and they both started looking for it, and we ran off the highway. And when we did, we hit where there were poles joined together by cables, and a cable wrapped around the back tire, and so when it got out there, well, this cable was pulled taut. It didn't pull out the next pole, but the car turned over on its side.

Bottom line, I was thrown out of the car, through the roof of the car, because it was canvas, and it was cold as I can remember. There was snow on the ground. And I did have a tire track across my back. Is that what you were referring to?

Warren: I don't know. I don't know. He just said, "Ask him about the tire tracks on his back."

Hunt: Who was this?

Warren: Dan Wooldridge.

Hunt: All right. [Laughter] Anyway, after we got the car pushed over and righted up, why, I had a date waiting on me, and so we said, "Well, is there any sense—" and, you know, the car was going to have to be fixed. I said, "Is there any sense in all of us staying?"

And they said, "No, I don't guess so." So I got out and hitchhiked on in and met my date, who was a girl by the name of Betty Butler from here in Dallas.

Warren: Well, you can't keep those ladies waiting.

I'm going to turn the tape over.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Warren: Now, when I was looking at your yearbook, I noticed that there was a big fire on Main Street in December of 1950. There are some pictures in the back of your yearbook. I wondered whether you saw that or—

Hunt: Fire on Main Street?

Warren: Is that the '51 yearbook?

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: I'm a big one for local history, so I'm always—

Hunt: It may be on the back. Let me see.

Warren: It's right towards the end. You can see the aftermath of a fire. It was at the corner of Main Street and Washington Street. It was one of these groupings.

Hunt: Oh, I know what you're talking about. Downtown burned down.

Warren: And it must have been a big deal.

Hunt: Oh, yeah. The main block of downtown Lexington burned down, across the block in front of the hotel, and it burned the whole block down.

Warren: The whole block?

Hunt: Yeah. It took out the whole block. I'd forgotten about that.

Warren: Did you all go up and watch?

Hunt: Oh, yeah. Yeah. It was quite a disaster. It burned—if you'll check the city records up there, I'm sure you'll find something about it.

Warren: Oh, I'm sure I will, but I just noticed it, and I said, "Oh, I've got to ask him about this."

Hunt: Yeah. Well, it was just a fire. There used to be a restaurant on Main Street up there across from where the hotel was, but essentially it was that whole block that caught on fire. They took it out, which so often happens, you know, in small towns.

Warren: That must have been a big deal. Now, all right, you mentioned a restaurant. A while earlier you talked about going down to the diner. Are you talking about Steve's Diner?

Hunt: Steve's Diner.

Warren: Tell me about Steve's Diner.

Hunt: Well, Steve's Diner was a—at that time it was like the old-fashioned diner. It really looked like a dining car, and had booths in it, and it would stay open all night, being on the highway there, would fill up with truckers, etc., but it was a place that you could go get something to eat regardless of what time of night it was. So bottom line is, it was kind of a hangout. I can remember it had, in letters that had been poked in, I guess like felt, you know, where they have the things that you can stick them in, and it said, "Be patriotic. Lick your plate clean." Obviously a holdover from World War II, and it was still up there even then. But Steve's Diner was down below the filling stations there.

Warren: I'm hoping to get a picture of Steve's Diner, because it obviously—

Hunt: Well, the last time I was back, Steve's had moved. It had been torn down and Steve's was moved out of town up on the hill up there.

Warren: Right. Right. Even that's gone now.

Hunt: That's gone, too?

Warren: Yes.

Hunt: And then, of course, there was the grill on up the street going the other way, but it closed at night. You know, after twelve, one o'clock, it would close. It had good chili. I remember being in there one night, all sitting around drinking beer.

The goldfish-eating craze was going on, and they had a fish bowl in the front there. One of the guys had had a few too many, reached in and got a goldfish by the tail and swallowed it, and they didn't discover it until we started paying the check and going out the door, and they really put up a real protest about that. [Laughter]

Warren: Well, that's the first goldfish-eating story I've had. What other Lexington hangouts were there?

Hunt: That's about it. There wasn't all that much to do in Lexington.

Warren: It was sort of a sleepy little town, wasn't it?

Hunt: Well, it was either those two or one of the fraternity houses, and, you know, with all the fraternity houses and the lounges and the parties that went on, you didn't need to have other places.

Warren: Tell me about the parties. What were they like?

Hunt: Well, you know, parties could be at almost any time any night, but often some of the early party-goers would start on a Thursday night and have a party, but normally, you know, sit around and drink beer. It was always the joke around the Beta House that their children were going to be born blind and deaf because the basement, the lounge, was always dark, and the music was always turned as loud as it would go. [Laughter]

Brian Bell, I can remember he always would like to play the piano. The piano was on the main floor. He couldn't play it very well, but he liked to play it anyway because everybody would sing with him.

Warren: Were there any particular bands you remember, or musicians, acts that would come?

Hunt: Not really. I know for the Fancy Dress they'd always try and have a pretty good-sized name band, and that was more for girls, I think, than for the fellows.

Warren: Did you go to Fancy Dress?

Hunt: Yes.

Warren: And did your future wife come?

Hunt: Yes. She even—had her come up for Fancy Dress all the way from Texas. I guess it was the sophomore year after she came back home and showed up, and I had a rented costume for her, which is what they used to do.

Warren: And was Fancy Dress a big deal?

Hunt: Well, it was a big party. Oh, yeah, it'd be a three-, four-day party. It would start, depending on how soon your girl could come, why, it would start Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Always a big brunch at the frat house on Sunday late morning, lunch-type arrangement.

Warren: Sort of wind the whole thing up?

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: Now, where did all these girls stay?

Hunt: Well, a hotel downtown. Often, as I recall, they would—sometimes they would have a room in somebody's home or something in town, there'd be three or four of them in a room, but usually they came with a chaperone and had to report in by a given time, and I don't know, they must have slept four in a bed or something like that in the hotel because there weren't that many rooms in town, obviously.

Warren: It doesn't seem like there could have been. I'm always intrigued where this tiny little town absorbed all these girls, where they all stayed. So was there a big Texas contingent?

Hunt: Yes. Yeah. There were quite a few Texas boys up there, and there's still. You'd be surprised how many boys periodically go right out of Highland Park High School to W&L. But when I was up there, why, there was a boy by the name of Eric Gambrell from here in Dallas who died shortly after college. John Ryan was there from over in Fort Worth. So there were always quite a group of Texas boys. One problem with the Texas boys is a lot of them would go up there for a year or two and

then go to the University of Texas. Paul Stephens was a friend of mine that went up there, he was an SAE, again, I don't remember whether he stayed one or two years, but then he went to the university. A boy by the name of Don Lloyd from here went up there but didn't stay, I guess, over a year. I think he even left in mid-semester. I don't recall right offhand.

Warren: Now, would they leave because they had to or because they wanted to get back to Texas?

Hunt: Oh, some of both. There was a boy by the name of Dick Brown that went up, but he was very sweet on a girl here in Dallas and he came back just because he wanted to be near his girlfriend.

Warren: That's a good reason.

Hunt: Yeah. I guess so.

Warren: We talked about this a little bit at lunch. You were there with a bunch of really remarkable people were there at the same time you were, or at least they've gone on to be, make names for themselves.

Hunt: Yeah. I think that's basically that, you know, it's a time frame that—getting old enough that you know a lot of people, and, yeah, there were some people there that are well known. Roger Mudd was there, Pat Robertson, and John Warner. He was a Beta and one of my roommates.

Warren: Was he?

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: Tell me about John Warner as a student.

Hunt: Well, you need to talk to him.

Warren: Well, I'm hoping to, but, like I say, it's always better if I know something about them.

Hunt: John was a very—I'm sure he made good grades. He was a very astute student and was a typical politician even in college. He's done well. I don't want to be recorded on that. I'm surprised how well he's done.

Warren: He's married well.

Hunt: Yeah. Yeah. John and I—let's see. You know, at that time, the Beta House had big rooms on the third floor. There were only three of them plus a trunk closet on the third floor, and, of course, housing was pretty tight back in that day and time. And the two rooms on the end—oh, they could be anywhere from—there were bunk beds in there, so there could be anywhere from eight to twelve people in each room, and then the center room was six or eight. So I say I roomed with John Warner. We were up there in that melee, and, you know, you room with a lot of people when you have those kind of arrangements.

Lamar Wangert [phonetic], who we mentioned at lunch time, who I'm sorry I can't find in the books, he was in law school. He and I roomed together for a year or two years. One or two? I guess it was one year we roomed together in what was a trunk closet. It had a double bunk, deck bed in it, bunkbed, and the bottom line is we'd have to take turns getting up because there wasn't enough room for two fellows to stand up in the room at once, and especially with him because he was about six feet five and 240 or 250 pounds or so.

Warren: I expect you let him get up first if he wanted to.

Hunt: You had to let him get dressed and out of the way before you could get out of the bed.

Warren: That must have been tough if you both had class at the same time. So was Fred Vinson a Beta, too?

Hunt: Sure. He was a Beta. Fred was a real congenial guy, one of the older fellows, thirty-plus.

Warren: He was? Oh, he was a veteran?

Hunt: Oh, sure.

Warren: Oh, I didn't realize that.

Hunt: If you'll go by and if you'll take the, say, 1948 *Calyx* and the '51 *Calyx*, and you look at the pictures of the people, you can see they start to get younger as you come forward. Yeah, Fred was a veteran and a very congenial guy. As a matter of fact, I used to go to Washington, D.C., with Fred on weekends sometimes, and also Brian Bell was one of my fraternity bothers. One weekend I went home with Fred Vinson, and we stayed at his place there with his mother and father, and we got there, and his dad, Justice Vinson, asked me if I knew how to play bridge, which I did not. They handed me Goren's book and said, "Read this." We got there about two thirty or three o'clock in the afternoon. He said, "Read it and study it," so I read it and studied it. And then we had dinner, and then we sat down to play bridge.

That was on a Friday, and on a Sunday afternoon we came back and we had never left the bridge table other than to eat and sleep. So I learned how to play bridge.

Warren: They took it seriously. That's fascinating. Did you know Charley McDowell?

Hunt: Charley McDowell.

Warren: His father was in the law school.

Hunt: The name is familiar. What class was he, do you have any idea?

Warren: He was either '50 or '51, I'm pretty sure.

Hunt: Was he in the law school?

Warren: No. Charley's gone onto make a name for himself in journalism.

Hunt: I really don't place him, so I probably didn't know him very well. But I'll find his picture, I'm sure I'll know who he is.

Warren: How about Pat Robertson? Were you friends with him?

Hunt: Yes, I knew Pat.

Warren: What was he like as a student?

Hunt: Well, I don't know how good he was as a student, grades, etc., but a very congenial guy and [unclear].

Warren: All right. And you were there with Roger Mudd, too.

Hunt: Yes.

Warren: And he was one of those veterans.

Hunt: Yes. Yes, he was.

Warren: Do you remember him particularly?

Hunt: Oh, yeah. I knew him. You know, he was a big dog on the campus in the journalism school and all, and I didn't know him intimately, but certainly he would know who I am and I know who he is, and then we had contact.

Warren: Now, speaking of being a big dog, I got this picture of huge signs for Fred Vincent running for something.

Hunt: Running for president.

Warren: President of the EC?

Hunt: Of the student body.

Warren: So he was a politician.

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: Do you remember that election, and did you get involved in student politics at all?

Hunt: Oh, there really wasn't all that much to student politics. It was a matter of putting up some signs, and then everybody voted, but as far as getting out and doing any door-to-door campaign or anything like that, there wasn't—it was, you know, very low key, you just put your name up and say, "I want to be it," and maybe get some of the leadership in some of the different houses to say, "Okay, guys. There's an election up. Vote. I can't tell you how to vote, but if you want to vote for this guy, it'd be all right with me," you know, that sort of thing.

Warren: Did you get involved in politics at all?

Hunt: No.

Warren: How about the Mock Convention?

Hunt: Yes, yes, I took part in the Mock Convention, as everybody did. The whole student body was there.

Warren: That was '48?

Hunt: Yeah. No, '49. '48-'49 year.

Warren: Did you have memories of what it was like? That would have been the first one after the war.

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: That was probably a little different then. Tell me about what you remember.

Hunt: Well, as I remember, one of my friends dressed up as a very pregnant lady, and another one was dressed up as would-be husband, and I was the one marching behind with a shotgun, and the pitch was that it's a shotgun wedding, but she's casting two votes for—and I don't even remember who we were assigned, or whoever we were assigned. I didn't see a picture in here, but I'm sure there were pictures that were taken of the whole group coming down.

Warren: I think that was one of the years you got it right. Did you nominate Dewey? Do you remember?

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: Yeah, I think that was one of the years they got it right. Well, the Mock Convention is still a very big deal. It's one of the big shows we put on.

How about—one of the things that I think makes Washington and Lee really stand out is the Honor System.

Hunt: Uh-huh.

Warren: What are your memories of how you learned about the Honor System, and what did it mean to you?

Hunt: Well, basically, it worked on the basis that you were expected and, you know, there was no effort that I ever knew of by anybody to cheat, but you were expected to always conduct yourself on the basis that there could be no suspicion of you. You were expected to do your work and tell the truth, and bottom line is, it worked. Now, I know what took place with the football team later on, and obviously the Honor System was much more important than football because they did away with the football team for a period of time. And when they did bring it back, they did it on a much lesser scale. I think it's probably one of the most important things about W&L, is the Honor System.

Warren: Has it been a presence in your life since you left there? Is it something that you still think about or you're aware of?

Hunt: Oh, yeah. Of course, you know, I'm in the business world where, you know, I don't have to worry about that sort of thing, because whatever I do is—you know, you have a certain amount of security around an office, but as far as I'm concerned, that's just to make sure your files don't get lost. [Laughter] I think the Honor System is very important. It is a disadvantage for an American businessman, especially doing business overseas, because corruption does take place in most foreign lands, and that's something we don't ever participate in. I'm not trying to be self-righteous, because if you ever get involved in that sort of stuff, there's no end to it, and we've walked away from many a transaction because it smelled. You know, if it's not on the up-and-up where you don't mind anybody looking at it, I don't want to be involved in it. So, yeah, I'd say it had an effect on my life and still has an effect on it. That's the way we've run our business.

Warren: It certainly seems to have made lasting impression on most people.

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: In fact, I often wonder why—I'm very aware now that there's this huge Washington and Lee network of people who didn't necessarily go to school at the same time, but it seems like if you know somebody went to Washington and Lee, you know they're okay. You can trust them. So I think that is a real lasting benefit to the Honor System.

Hunt: Yeah.

Warren: And the other thing that impresses me about Washington and Lee is the speaking tradition, the idea that everyone says hello to everyone. Was that very much in—

Hunt: That was very much the case, but, of course, I came out of the Hill School where it was also the custom to speak to everybody. So it wasn't all that much difference for me, but I note this today, I still am probably a little out of place, because I speak to people all the time on the street, etc., and I get some funny looks for doing it, because most people walk by and look away, or that's their demeanor to do it, and I always make a point to speak to everybody.

Warren: Well, I have one last question on my list, and then anything else you want to talk about. But I have heard more than once, and I can't begin to tell you—don't ask me who told me this because it's a long time ago, before I really knew who you were, but somebody told me that you bought a gas station in Lexington. Is that true?

Hunt: Yeah. I didn't physically buy the station. The station belonged to the dealer, but I bought the lease on it from a fellow who—well, it was a Sinclair station. Of course, Sinclair no longer exists. Remember it was the picture of the dinosaur, the brontosaurus. Anyway, it was just below the Beta House there, and I guess I owned and operated it for two years, two school years and one school summer, and so I learned at a very early age I'd rather be in a business where I don't have to deal with the end user. I'd rather—just because there's so much work and contact that has to go to it.

Warren: So why did you do it? Why did you have a gas station? That's unusual, for a student to have a gas station.

Hunt: Well, my father's in the oil and gas business, and, of course, he would have told him me not do it had I asked him. I didn't ask him. I understand that when he found out I'd done it, that he said, "Well, he's going to learn a good lesson."

[Laughter] But anyway, you know, I thought it was a way to make a little money, and, bottom line, I could run down there after school and work, make sure—you know, had to have hired people with it because it stayed open 'til midnight, and I even tried staying open all night, but we were so confined there, we couldn't handle trucks, big trucks.

Bottom line is, I just thought it would be a good way to learn business, and then it also was a way for me to study. In other words, after dinner at the fraternity house, I'd go down and keep the station open 'til twelve o'clock and take my books with me and sit up there and do my homework and studying between filling up cars. And, of course, you didn't have that much business that you didn't have time to do it.

I do remember one disaster. A guy came in. He'd bought some new tires and wanted me to change them out for him. And I told him, I said, "Okay, I'll do it, but," I said, "I'll tell you, I've never changed a tire before, but I'm willing to try." And after about a hour and a half getting the first one done, why, he said, well, he says, "I understand. Thank you." [Laughter] And he didn't make me do the other three.

Warren: Were there many students who had businesses going on or were working like that?

Hunt: Oh, one boy had a slot machine in the fraternity house that was business. He made money. Every now and then, it would hang up, though, and it would pay out—it would give out—it was a nickel slot machine that would give out nickels

regardless of what came up on the front. So I think finally he pitched the machine out. In other words, you could stand there and just put a nickel in and get three or four back each time until it emptied. But mechanical problems put him out of business.

A lot of people—I don't know of a lot of people that were in business or trying to do something like that, but, you know, it's always a way to earn some money, so I just thought I'd give it a try. The reason I got out of it was that, summertime, when you weren't there, why, you just literally had no control over it, and things went to pot in a hurry. So I figured after two school years I wasn't going to try another summer.

Warren: So what did you do then? Did you find somebody to take your lease?

Hunt: I sold it.

Warren: Well, that was an education, then. You learned you've got to stay around and watch your business.

Hunt: That's right.

Warren: Well, we've gotten through my list. Is there anything we haven't talked about?

Hunt: Nope. No big questions.

Warren: Actually, you know, on tape we didn't talk about the Bicentennial, that you were there during the Bicentennial.

Hunt: Uh-huh.

Warren: Do you remember any of the events or anything that happened?

Hunt: Yeah. You know, the Bicentennial was a big affair. I don't remember that there were any great social events that went with it or anything of that sort, but I do remember it was very much on everybody's mind, and were we going to have a good team, etc. Other than that, I don't remember an awful lot about it.

Warren: I only have a few pictures from the Bicentennial, but they always prominently figure President Gaines. Was he as much a presence on campus as he appears to have been?

Hunt: Yeah, he was very much on everybody's mind. He was a dynamic speaker, and, yeah, he was very respected, very looked up to or whatever you want to have it. Whatever happened to him, out of curiosity?

Warren: He retired, but stayed in Lexington, and then died very shortly thereafter, just a couple of years after he retired.

Hunt: I see. Okay.

Warren: But he stayed pretty close and actually continued to help raise funds for the school.

Hunt: Does the president still live in the house up there?

Warren: In the Lee House. Sure does. Sure does.

Hunt: And does the garage that Lee—Traveller's stable still the garage for the Lee House?

Warren: It sure is. It sure is.

Hunt: I'll be darned.

Warren: Well, I sure want to thank you. I appreciate this. It's been a real pleasure for me.

Hunt: All right. Good. [Tape recorder turned off.]

Warren: We've got one more story coming.

Hunt: Well, as concerns the ex-G.I.s, and I should have thought of this. You mentioned did any other boys do anything to earn money. This boy, Toby Hanson, as I recall, he was an ex-paratrooper, and he used to go to the air shows that might be around the country on weekends. Bottom line, he'd take his parachute and figure out how to get to the nearest air show, and he'd do one or two jumps, and he

usually got twenty-five dollars a jump. So he could earn fifty bucks on a weekend making air shows.

There was another boy named Posie Starkey, who was a fraternity brother—both of these are fraternity brothers—and he was ex-service. I don't remember exactly what he'd do, but he'd take off on jaunts like that for a weekend or so.

Then there was some boy in the house I remember, and I can't put a name to it, that when the Korean War broke out, he had been a sergeant in the U.S. Army, but he had been assigned to Korea as an advisor for the South Korean Army for several years at the end of World War II. When the war broke out, he was in law school, and he got his orders two days after the North Koreans made their move, and his orders were to report to Tokyo and pick up his uniform. We got a letter back from him about a month later, and literally within ten days after he got his notice, he was in the front lines in Korea. So that sort of thing was happening with the ex-G.I.s that had been in the service and then came back. It was a very unusual time.

Warren: How about younger people like you? Did you get drafted? Was there a draft?

Hunt: There was a draft when I was in high school, and it ended, I think, my senior year. No, I take it back. Since I was going to college and I was a science major—that's one of the reasons I took science—I was deferred from the draft. Then when the Vietnam War broke out—oh, I take it back. They had stopped calling up people on the draft just as I got out of high school. Then when they started on the Korean War, they reinstated the draft, but since I was in college with a science major, I was deferred. Then I was married, and while there was still a draft out there, they weren't drafting anybody that was married, and then they started drafting married with one child, etc., two children. I was always a child ahead of them, so I missed it. I missed it. And finally, I guess it was [Richard M.] Nixon that did away with the draft. Who was it?

Warren: It was during Nixon's administration.

Hunt: Yeah. It was Nixon that did away with the draft. You know, I just happened to be in there where I didn't have to go, and I didn't go down and sign up.

Warren: Were your classmates signing up when Korea broke out?

Hunt: No. No. I mean, it was strictly a matter of being called up. It wasn't like World War II where people rushed off to enlist. I think the world had had enough of fighting, and they weren't anxious to go halfway around the world.

Warren: I would think your generation would be very realistic about what it meant to go away to war.

Hunt: Yeah. Okay.

Warren: Thanks.

[End of interview]