

# ANNE FARRAR WILLETT

October 29, 1996

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Mame Warren,  
interviewer

**Warren:** I'm at Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, with Anne Farrar Willett. You go back a long way with Washington and Lee.

**Willett:** 1952, I think. '51?

**Warren:** My first question to you is, I just want to get myself straight. You went to Randolph-Macon. You grew up in Lynchburg and went to Randolph-Macon. Were you and Jim dating when you were in college?

**Willett:** No. I would go to W&L with boys, one good friend in particular, and met Jim at the Delta House. I suppose it was in 1949. We dated all during that spring. He was the class of '49, which, of course, was the bicentennial year. He graduated in '49, then went to Columbia to graduate school, but we continued to see each other until we married in November of 1950. So my life has really been Washington and Lee starting really then.

**Warren:** So you did have the experience as a college girl.

**Willett:** Oh, yeah.

**Warren:** Coming over to Washington and Lee.

**Willett:** Oh, yeah.

**Warren:** I want to hear that, because I haven't talked to that many women from that time period. And the bicentennial year, that must have been really special.

**Willett:** Well, it was, except that, you know, you're such dingbats when you're that age and all you're really thinking about is all the fun and what we're going to do.

**Warren:** Well, that's what I want to hear.

**Willett:** But I do still have the stamp. You know, Jim wrote me. His father was an alumnus, and I suppose our romance thrived because my mother remembered his father, for example, back in her days of going to parties at Washington and Lee, and one or two of her friends had known him. They were particularly interested in this nice Farrar boy who was Jid Farrar's – his father was known as J-I-D, Jid. You know, and how that would be. They said, "Well, can you believe this is Jid Farrar's son coming to Lynchburg to see Anne Scott?" So it was sort of only-in-the-South kind of thing.

[Laughter]

Anyway, Jim was called back in the Marine Corps. That was the result of – so I'm told, I don't think I was there – a big party in front of the Delta House. Everybody sitting out in the yard and all these boys were vets and all. He'd been in the Pacific. He had finished Choate and matriculated at Yale, knowing that he would turn eighteen that summer and go straight in the Marine Corps. But Washington and Lee being his father's college, he came back to W&L rather than to go on to Yale.

Frank Gilliam was an old friend of his father's and had always thought a lot of Jim as a student. And so when he rushed out and reenlisted, he reenlisted, as a bunch of them did, in the Marine Corps Reserve. I'm told they'd all been drinking beer that afternoon and thought it would be a good idea to go across the street to the post office in this sudden burst of patriotism. And, of course, the recruiter said, "Oh, you'll never be called back. I mean, this is just a –"

So Jim was the only one in the crowd who was a sergeant. All the rest of them had their commissions. So he signed up and, of course, along came the Korean War, and he was called back in as a sergeant. So after that year of servitude and great frustration for him, because he had expected to be at Choate teaching by that time, he was out and there was a telegram from Frank Gilliam saying, "I would like you –" something to the effect of, "Call me. Need help." You know, in those days, a kind of message from

Western Union. So he came to help Frank Gilliam out for a few months, and he stayed forty-two years or whatever it was.

**Warren:** That's the Washington and Lee way.

**Willett:** Yeah. So our earliest memories of W&L, at least mine, had to do with going over the mountain, and it was spring. Of course, rowing, crew, was a big sport then, and going over to the James River at Glasgow to watch the boys row and the competition. In retrospect, I realize now what a lovely, carefree, laid-back time and how much fun we had, because it was very intimate and probably still is. But, I mean, you know, all the Phi Deltas.

One prominent feature of those times, the closeness, the Jewish fraternities. There were two Jewish houses.

**Warren:** Tell me about that.

**Willett:** Our most intimate friends, several of them forever were in the Jewish fraternities, ZBT and Pi. I can't think of what it was, the other one. PEPs we called them, Phi Epsilon Pi. The PEPs. Just great friends. We had very strong, outstanding young men were part of the Jewish student group. Of course, obviously that sort of thing has past. We don't have that anymore. But I think we were enriched by our Jewish constituency at that time.

Frank Gilliam had a lot to do with that. He had a lot of ties, a lot of people who would recommend. I feel almost hesitant to talk about it. It sounds so sort of prejudiced to talk – maybe that's not the word. But, anyway, that was the situation. There were two strong Jewish fraternities. Very fine boys. Those who are now obviously grown, middle-aged men and many gone, felt that Washington and Lee had sort of failed them, I think, in this tradition. They were distinguished families.

One comes to mind because they're a Lynchburg family, the Schewel family. All the Schewel boys went to W&L and remain our pride and joy. I mean, the younger ones are still coming. So we've lost some of that.

**Warren:** Why do you think that's happened?

**Willett:** Well, I think it's part of the times. There's much more integration of – the separation of Jewish boys, students, just wouldn't happen today. It's all mainstream.

**Warren:** Now, do you mean that there are still Jewish students there, but they are not staying in their own fraternities, or do you mean that there aren't Jewish students there?

**Willett:** There are not as many Jewish students. I don't think we make an effort. I think the Jewish students – now, I'm talking about back now in the forties, Southern – well, you go back to Stephen Birmingham to read about the Jewish people. And in the South, you know, the financial houses now in New York, many of them were founded, you know, in the Alabama, down in Mobile. We're very strong in New Orleans. Very distinguished Jewish families from the South sent their sons to Washington and Lee.

I never thought about it at the time as being tolerant. It just wasn't. We were just all the same and great friends, and there wasn't any thought about – at least to me nor to Jim, because these were our best friends, and they were distinguished citizens in all their community. I think it must have had something to do with the Southern tradition. But then there were doctors. You know, the distinguished professional men, they went from Washington and Lee into medicine, into law, and were outstanding.

I think now maybe Jewish students would not feel and don't choose to come to Washington and Lee. In the first place, there's no synagogue. There's no life for them, and they probably prefer to be in an urban area where there is more Jewish life. But there was that strong tradition years ago.

**Warren:** When do you think that changed?

**Willett:** Well, I've forgotten the date. The PEP house was there where – we had house mothers, too, and the house mothers loved – I recall how the Jewish boys felt. They were so lovely to their house mothers. It was a gentle way of life. I just don't think that that tradition – I think the changes in the South, I suppose, and the

population. I don't know. It just seems to me that it sort of went – I'm about to say something that I don't have any idea whether it's true or not, to say that more Jews live in urban areas and choose large universities. But I don't even know the numbers of Jewish students now at Washington and Lee, but I dare say that it's gotten smaller and smaller and smaller over the years.

Again, I come back in my own mind to Frank Gilliam. And it's true, he almost hand-picked. He had friends who would say, "This is a really fine boy." And he would be much more interested in accepting that boy than a Jewish boy whom he didn't know. Again, I'm feeling really badly talking about this, because I think it makes Washington and Lee sound as if it were prejudice or very picky. But back in the thirties and forties you could be. It was a very family – you know, So-and-so would get on the phone and call and say, "Frank, this is a fine boy. I want you to take a look at him. He'd be just right for W&L." There was much more of that than there is now. Obviously, those times are gone.

**Warren:** That was one of the things that we've alluded to a couple of times in our conversation. It's like there's a profile for a Washington and Lee student, that a certain kind of person goes to Washington and Lee and is successful at Washington and Lee. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but would you go along with that?

**Willett:** Yeah. I think that's true. I think that we are now a national constituency. That's easy to understand at a time when we were fairly regional, to use a term, we owned, as it was, we owned New Orleans or Baltimore. By that I mean we were strong in certain cities. Of course, I think that young people coming along now, girls – but at that time, earlier, it was just men – students came along and admired people in their community who were outstanding, and wanted to emulate them. They were drawn to a place. It was a lot of family.

For example, I did a lot of research once on the – oh, Lord, anyway, I'll think of it in a minute, the family I wanted to specify. The Lykes family. And if you really go

through the records, I think at that time – this would have been about five years ago – more members of the Lykes family than any other family had over the years come to Washington and Lee. Now the girls have made such outstanding records.

Joe Lykes, for example, was a contemporary of my father-in-law, class of something like '14 or whatever it was, and on the board for years and years, and his sons came and their sons came, and now the granddaughters are coming, you know. So there are some families – and that happened to be the Lykes were New Orleans at that time but now Jacksonville, you know, Tampa families, the interests have spread and grown and grown. So there was a lot of that, which kind of maybe, as you say, a profile of the Washington and Lee man, now "person" with women.

Leadership has a lot to do with it, don't you think? We take such pride. I try to explain to people all the time that Washington and Lee, to me, I can almost get very emotional about it, the outstanding pre-professional education, which has turned out lawyers, teachers, the professions, and that's what we do best. We can't do everything, but we do that and we do that best.

Now, that's always been our strength, and don't you think that has attracted the kind of young people who seek to be lawyers or doctors or aspire to that, and here's a place that does it and does it so well? And, of course, that was Lee's plan. I don't have to go on about that, because you already know all that, about establishing these professional schools so that there were journalists. I don't think the world fully appreciates that and what it meant, at first to the South and now to the nation.

**Warren:** Talk to me about that.

**Willett:** About pre-professional studies and what Lee did to –

**Warren:** Well, what Lee did.

**Willett:** Well, the South was devastated, and his first thought – he wasn't thinking about – in those days it was very different. It was survival. He had remarkable vision that there was a need for men who wrote well and who could influence others,

journalists, in other words. There was a little law school in Lexington, of all places – I've never quite understood how that happened – but he incorporated that into the curriculum. The first journalism courses taught in any undergraduate institution in the country were at Washington and Lee – it was Washington College at that time – because of that. Law was the same. Engineering.

These professions, when he saw such a need out there after the Civil War, and that's what he thought his mission was, was to produce these leaders. Then medicine, all these things grew. The only program, I think, that he did not implement during his time was agriculture. I think he envisioned some sort of agriculture program.

But, you know, that's pretty remarkable, and people just can't – and business, the first business courses. I love to tell my prosperous friends who think they're such hotshots from important business schools that the first business courses at the undergraduate level were taught at W&L. They just can't believe that. Not that little place, that little college there in Virginia. But it's a powerful thing when you think about it.

**Warren:** It is. You're the first person to talk about that.

**Willett:** Really?

**Warren:** I've done the research and I know what you're talking about, but you're the first person to talk about that.

**Willett:** Oh, I just take such pride. We were a classical academy until then. Of course, science was taught, which gave us the base for all that's happened since then, but I don't think people realize what leadership early on Washington and Lee – without their doing pre-professional education – and the result has been the distinguished people that we all know about. And it continues.

**Warren:** And Lee made a lot of changes socially, too. He brought the speaking tradition.

**Willett:** Oh, yeah. Civility.

**Warren:** And the honor system.

**Willett:** Oh, yeah. Civility and all the things. I think older alumni, time is passing, so that those who lamented the passing of the speaking tradition are few and far between these days, and our students today would find it sort of, I'm sure, quaint that there were such strong feeling about that. But there was very strong feeling after the war when all of a sudden everybody didn't wear coat and tie. There were many alumni who felt that was a honor offense, that that kind of thing was just unimaginable. If you were a gentleman, which all, of course, Washington and Lee men were [clears throat], they, of course, wore a coat and tie, and they spoke to everybody whom they passed. Then, of course, the McCormick – didn't the McCormick legend, that's that how come McCormick became interested because he was spoken to by a student?

**Warren:** Doremus.

**Willett:** Was it Doremus?

**Warren:** Doremus.

**Willett:** Well, I was close. Doremus. [Laughter]

**Warren:** They were within spitting distance of each other.

**Willett:** Yeah. But, anyway, that was such a strong tradition that alumni just couldn't believe we could possibly exist and still turn out gentlemen if we didn't dress properly. God knows not I, a woman. [Laughter]

**Warren:** Well, now, I want to pursue that little clearing of the throat there for a minute, and I think this will probably take us back to how we started, back in your student days, in your dating days. Were they all gentlemen?

**Willett:** Well, let's put it this way. I thought even the wildest party – and wild in our day was not all that wild – but I thought they were far more gentlemanly at Washington and Lee than at that other university across the mountain in Charlottesville. Now, it may have had something to do, do you think, with the fact that



I was very interested in somebody at W&L. But your question was were they not gentlemen or were they?

**Warren:** Were they gentlemen?

**Willett:** Yeah.

**Warren:** You cleared your throat. I just –

**Willett:** I think I meant that, well, you know, there were plenty of times. I go back to the times when discipline problems were settled, and settled fast, on Monday morning in the dean's office with the faculty member who had gotten the call, let's say, in the middle of the night from a friend in the community saying – Dr. Bean, for example, history, and a very straight, handsome, distinguished man who took no foolishness, and Dr. Dickey [phonetic], who taught math. They would be in Frank Gilliam's office Monday morning at nine o'clock reporting that the Betas or the whoever had partied all night and had disturbed Miss So-and-so, who had called and said, "Gleason (that's the doctor), you must do something about the – " Or maybe even the local law enforcement.

But it was settled, and it was settled by that afternoon, and the IFC, the Interfraternity Council – I don't know what it's called now – was told to do something about it, and usually by their Monday night meeting it was done. Students knew what to expect. They knew it would be settled. So there were a lot of changes of that sort over the years. Suddenly we had no house mothers, you know, all that fraternity deal was quite different, fraternity life. But the presence of house mothers made a big difference in those years, from a girl's point of view. When you were there dating, there was a certain decorum.

**Warren:** Tell me about that. What kind of decorum?

**Willett:** Well, for example, my mother-in-law, Jim's mother, just found it hard to believe when she would come to whatever and we didn't have – I don't think there was Parents Day – but in those days come to graduation, and that the house mothers were

expected to put on a lovely party for the parents and the young ladies who were there dating, and they had nothing to work with. So she gave the Deltas, I remember, a beautiful silver punch bowl and silver candlesticks, because she thought that was the proper way to do things. She just couldn't believe – we used to die laughing about it, which, of course, she was right. She just couldn't believe that some of the boys from the South whose, parents whose father owned big mills, didn't supply towels or sheets or things that made for nice, gracious living. [Laughter]

Well, I don't think there were many like that and certainly not these days. You just don't worry about it. But you understand that I'm just saying it was a way of life, and she just thought that if Miss – I think her name – oh, what was her name? Miss Bramley [phonetic] is what I want to say. That isn't quite right. The Delta House. Who was a charming Army widow, just a lovely person, and how could she possibly function if she didn't have the tools such as a silver punch bowl? I might add, that disappeared.

**Warren:** Oh. Really?

**Willett:** And I didn't feel free to go, as I should have, and put my foot down and tell those boys, who, after all, were only boys, that I would keep it for them, and whenever they wanted it, it would be in my attic or wherever.

**Warren:** I wondered about that.

**Willett:** I did retrieve the candlesticks. I just felt that at that time in the seventies, nobody was entertaining with silver candlesticks.

**Warren:** So it was in the seventies that the punch bowl disappeared.

**Willett:** I assume it was the seventies when those, you know –

**Warren:** So it lasted quite a long time.

**Willett:** A lot of going and coming. Yes, and the boys are very proud of it. The house managers liked that. They know the nice way to do things. But there were years there when things were pretty loose. I would say that it was in the late seventies. I

think the last time I saw it was I borrowed it to use it at Jimmy and Kitty's wedding, as a matter of fact. Took it to a party we were going to have, and then very conscientiously returned it to the Delta House. I have since regretted I did that. [Laughter] But, anyway, it was there. She had given it to them.

How did we get to talking about the gentlemen? I think the breakdown kind of came in the sixties and seventies, when things changed everywhere.

**Warren:** How does it manifest itself at Washington and Lee?

**Willett:** When the Cambodian issue and Nixon and all that? Well, my clearest memory of it is driving one morning. At that time, I was working at the VMI library, and I dropped Jim off at his office at W&L and went on down by the president's house down Washington Street and to [unclear]—I think there's something that maybe he hadn't gotten—at any rate, we were both stunned to see a mass meeting and students marching in front of Lee Chapel. It was the time during that crisis where students, you know, felt so strongly about—I mean, there was total disruption of classes and all that. I remember, though, going over to the campus and sitting out there on the front campus and hearing Bob Huntley, who was then president, address the students. We, both Jim and I, were so proud of him that he took the stand and, of course, the board behind him, that Washington and Lee was not going to close down and that they would be required to go to class.

You know, student were leaving. It's even fuzzy in my mind now. They were leaving. They didn't want to go to class. They were all going to go do something to express their frustration with the government and the things that had happened, Kent State and the Cambodian bombings and all that.

I do remember Jim getting a call from a parent. I've forgotten now who it was. And he was saying, "Dean Farrar, I want you to call John (or whatever his son's name) in there, in your office, and I want you to tell him that he is—" Oh, I've forgotten now his phrase. He said, "He's lost his mind if he thinks I'm going to pay for him to leave."

Something to the effect that, "He could leave if he wanted to. He could resign from Washington and Lee if he wanted to, and I would have him committed to the insane asylum." [Laughter]

I mean, there was such a surge of feelings, parents calling. "What's going to happen if my son leaves? Will he fail?" You know, "Will he flunk?" Those who have better memories about the academic situation than I will recall how we handled it. I think they had to have a certain grade. They had to take the exam. They would have to come back. I think, the more I talk about it, the more I think it was decided that if a boy was so disturbed about the situation he felt he had to leave school to go do whatever, he got an incomplete, and he would have to take the exam in order to pass. There was no freebies.

Bob was very calm about it all. I remember we were terribly concerned about what they – there was so much – UVA and there was damage going on. Students were really on the rampage, and I remember that many things of value were stored then in the ROTC building down there on the lower level, the whole collection of porcelain. The Reeves Collection was down there. And students themselves volunteered to guard that building. Because there was a lot of feeling that there was outside – and no doubt about it – agitators from coming over from Charlottesville and other places, wherever, were stirring up a lot. Because we were, you know, a little off the beaten track. But concern that there would be major damage.

Somehow we got through that. I think sane, quiet heads prevailed and faculty and Bob Huntley in the leadership role assuring students and families that Washington and Lee was not closing down, and they would be expected to meet their obligations as students, and was very reassuring to families. And we were all very proud of W&L at that time.

Has anyone talked to you about – speaking of that. I'm reminded of a time when we weren't so proud, when the board decided that Martin Luther King [Jr.] would not be allowed to speak?

**Warren:** Please talk about that.

**Willett:** And the invitation was withdrawn. It's hard to imagine these days. It just was a sad time, in our view. Jim felt very strongly about that.

**Warren:** Was the faculty and administration –

**Willett:** Oh, the faculty was awful through all that.

**Warren:** Tell me.

**Willett:** Well, we had a very conservative board, extremely conservative. Now, when I say that, understand that these were men who were committed to their college, their university, and felt strongly, I'm sure, that they were doing the right thing. But they were from certain states and backgrounds, and this whole integration thing was just anathema. They were just dead-set opposed.

It depended on your vantage point, I guess. It was the law of the land, and the fact that we were private didn't mean we could ignore that forever. Our peer institutions, you know, Davidson – well, that was a coed. They co-educated ten years before we did. I've forgotten now the years there in the fifties and early sixties when we were – Fred Cole was president, trying so hard to do the right thing, struggling with a board who just would not hear of black students. My husband was dean of admissions.

Anyway, it was finally decided that – I wish I had all of the documentation in front of me. and I don't, because Jim has done – somewhere we'll find it. I have put all my materials of that sort away. Nothing was lost. It may be on file in John Elrod's office, because he was very interested in the fact that Jim had done this.

But the time came when we were to accept black students. I always have taken great pride in the fact that no black student was ever accepted under any kind of formula at Washington and Lee. There was never, "We're going to have X percent in

next year's class of black students." We just didn't do that. It was so personal. The same policy, the same rule was applied. Could – these days we're talking boys. Could the boy be a success? There was no remedial work. Could he succeed? And that was the way it was.

And, of course, if you look back at the numbers, I want to say to you, and if I only had it to – I need the support, and I'll get it for you at some point – there was no attrition. They all graduated in that early class. Of course, this would have been probably about the class – oh, I've forgotten now.

**Warren:** The first two came in in 1968.

**Willett:** Yeah. I was going to say about the class of '74 or '72, along in there. And their records since then are perfectly – just wonderful.

**Warren:** Tell me about that process. Tell me what went on.

**Willett:** Well, I can tell you. Jim would go out to recruit, and I remember his recruiting at high schools in Philadelphia, and they were locked. That happens to be one – I remember him coming back and telling me, "You go to those schools and it's tough." And the schools were locked and feeling was very high.

Imagine going to, for example, Charleston, South Carolina, where we have very distinguished alumni, and the private school there always sent Washington and Lee such fine boys. He would be recruiting and talking to those boys and then literally going across town to the black high school to talk to those. And the feeling among the alumni and people, it was a time of a lot of passion and concern.

This was a whole new thing. But it was happening, and it just happened that Jim was hardly an agitator or hardly – what would you call it – agitator keeps coming to mind. By that I mean pushing integration for the sake of integration. But he believed in his heart it was the right thing for Washington and Lee to do. And the argument that General Lee would oppose this just never felt that was the case. Who knows? But he was a man of vision, and he was – it's been a long time since I've read Byrd's [phonetic]

book of the later years, but I think in there, as I remember it, there was reason to feel that he would have known that this was the thing to do, and that the future was going to require black leadership. And who could do it better than we?

So he did it and he did it so well. He had a great gift that I felt some of the others, people who were concerned about the problem, didn't really understand. He had no self-consciousness at all in talking to or in his ongoing relationships with black students. He never thought of it that way.

**Warren:** He, Jim?

**Willett:** Yeah. So I think he succeeded in bringing black students to Washington and Lee who did succeed because he had a God-given ability to communicate with young people, and it didn't matter who they were, whatever their background. He had that gift. And I think nothing was a greater source of pride to him than their success, ongoing success.

You've interviewed a number of them, so you know even more than I know just how successful many of them are. And they, of course, have strong feelings about W&L, both ways. It was tough for them, very tough. At the same time, I think they're very proud of their accomplishment, and it is their university just as much as it is anybody else's. I think now that's being realized.

Now we have second-generation students. Before you know it, we'll have third generation, you know. That is just thrilling. It just thrilled him that they got through their years, those tough years of being minorities in a very affluent climate and cared enough now to send their own children.

**Warren:** Tell me about why it was tough.

**Willett:** Well, socially, for example. Why, what social life could a young black man possibly find in Lexington? There was nothing. There were some who were aware of that and, for example, made it possible for them to have transportation down to Hollins. There were a few black students at Hollins.

I think we were all caught up at that time in the feeling that much could be achieved by being educated together, black students and white, the integration process. Bob Huntley, for example, did not want the blacks to have their own meeting place. They wanted a black headquarters. There weren't fraternities for fraternity men. And that was resisted not to deprive them of anything but just, I think, driven by the idea that to achieve integration successfully, that was not the way to do it. But, in retrospect, I think all of us would agree that that was wrong thinking. If you are one of a handful and you had no place to go to talk to your – it's just human nature. Jim and I learned first-hand when our son was an exchange student at Chung Chi. This would have been his junior year at W&L and he was class of '76. So that academic year he learned what it was like to be tall and very blond and blue-eyed, very fair, in a world of Chinese students, and he stood out like a sore thumb. He traveled all through Asia when his school term ended. Well, we died laughing because he used to tell us he was known as the Bill Walton of Chung Chi, the basketball player, because all of them were much smaller physically than he. He learned in a hurry what it was like to see very few of your own kind and to get a sense of what it's like to be a minority. You know, we have no conception of that.

Arnold Toynbee, during his years of lecturing at Washington, his year of lecturing at Washington and Lee – it was really a spring term when the Encyclopedia Britannica underwrote his presence. He'd been a collaborator, a colleague of Dee Meyers [phonetic], who taught philosophy, and Dee had formed a friendship with him when he did an index, I think, of some sort. He helped with the study of history, the multi-volume history that Toynbee was known for in those days. Dee had known him in England or somewhere. Anyway, they had formed a professional relationship and a close friendship.

So he came to W&L and he gave a lecture, a public lecture, every Friday, and Encyclopedia Britannica underwrote the expense and taped and published his lectures.



But he's talked to American audiences. This would have been in the late fifties, and we were still fresh from having won the war and we were, you know, we were the top of the heap. And he reminded American audiences, not just the W&L audiences but everywhere he spoke, the State Department. I was with him and remember the shock on some of the faces when he said, "You know, the U.N. is not a private club, and we white, Caucasians, whatever, are in the minority. That is there are far more Chinese than there are — " And it was a whole brand-new thought to us.

**Warren:** I need to turn the tape over.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

**Warren:** You started talking about Arnold Toynbee. Let's talk about Arnold Toynbee.

**Willett:** We sort of just came out, because it was a wonderful experience for me. He needed a secretary, and now I'll have to go back and tell you that the day I graduated from Randolph-Macon, I thought I was pretty hot stuff. Talk about top of the heap, I was an English major. I knew everything.

My father, who just absolutely adored me and all that, informed me, sort of gave me a shock when he said, "Well, honey, you are now qualified to do two things." I thought, "Two things?" He said, "You can file alphabetically and numerically. That's your total value in terms of any employer." And he said even in his office — he was in the insurance business — I was of no value to him except I could file. So I had just graduated. This was like, I don't remember, a Thursday or Friday. And he said, "Now, next week you'll go right downtown to Phillips Business College." This was in Lynchburg. Well, I was outraged.

Well, I, needless to say, have thanked him over and over and over and over and over again in my life, because it's the best thing that ever happened to me. Well, not really, as my English degree was wonderful. But here I was at W&L and I had three young children, and I had worked in the alumni office before I had children when we

first came to W&L. But here in the late fifties they were looking somebody to work for Dr. Toynbee for that brief period, and somebody said, "Well, maybe Aunt Farrar could do it." I had worked in the alumni—I could type and I could take shorthand.

So I don't remember exactly how, I guess Dee Meyers probably called me up and asked me if I'd like to. And I was just thrilled to death. My mother in Lynchburg was thinking, "Oh, darling, how can you possibly do that with three children?" But we had a very close friend at Randolph-Macon who said to my mother, "Of course she has to do it. She must do this." And Jim was very supportive, "Yeah, this is great."

My office was in the kitchen of Mulberry Hill. Mulberry Hill was, at that time, Miss Tyree, who owned it, Winifred Tyree, was away for the winter, so the house was rented. In other words, there were a couple of students living in the house, and so the Toynbees occupied the house, and my office was the kitchen. So my little typewriter. So I had the wonderful experience and delightful. His wife, Veronica, of course, was with him, and alumni chapters asked him to come speak and various clubs, women's clubs and things, asked him to come speak. And I took him to all those places and up to Washington to the policy-making committee, whatever it was called then, at the State Department. It was just a marvelous, wonderful experience, and we became very close friends.

He gave me a lot to think about over the years. He used to talk about the—what was his term? I would send out to colleges, Mary Washington and others who wanted him to speak, a list of his lecture topics. The colonial problem was one. And they would say, "Oh, that sounds nice. Would he'd come and speak on the colonial problem?" Well, you know, we thought that our colonial problem was probably the colonial problem. Well, it wasn't it at all. He was talking about the black situation, things that Americans did not want to hear in the fifties, the running sores on the face of the earth, the Gaza Strip. We were like, "Gaza Strip?" South Africa. The black problem

in this country. You know, these things nobody particularly didn't want to hear a British historian telling them about these problems, when you think about it.

Oh, I've thought so often of him when we've had now all the Persian Gulf problems. The oil, you know, the whole situation, what was going to happen out there. They were sitting on all this oil. And ARAMCO would send – American engineers would go out and they'd all live in a compound, whereas the Russian engineers who were there were living amongst the people. But we just didn't think about those things then. We really resented him telling us. [Laughter]

So I think they were very interesting times, and he was wonderful with W&L students. There was always a question period after those lectures. I suppose it's the – what's the method of questioning? Socratic method always is to turn the question back. You know, you don't state the fact. You know that better, I'm sure. The question is, "Is that not so?" A student would screw up the courage to ask Toynbee a question, and I always admired his, I think now I would say, Socratic method of answering the boy's question without making him look foolish at all and turning it, ending it with another question, which made the student, of course, pulled it out and made him more involved. And then a conversation would develop between teacher and student. It was a very interesting time for them, and it has certainly opened my eyes. I've been very grateful for that experience.

**Warren:** Were the lectures well attended?

**Willett:** Yes. Packed. Because a lot of townspeople. You know, it's wonderful. I miss now the academic community. Townspeople were there in large numbers, and people would come from other colleges around. When I sometimes mention in a conversation that I had a great time working for Arnold Toynbee at one time in my life, people say, "Who?" He's not exactly a household word, and his theories of history were controversial, and very controversial among the W&L faculty. Many of my dearest, dearest friends, European historians of great stature, will snip a bit at some of – he

treated centuries and millennia and all rather casually. [Laughter] Shall we say, he had the broad view. He didn't worry too much about it.

But, anyway, it was a stimulating time, whether you agreed, whether you were a scholar as, of course, full-time faculty were scholars, as our faculty were, or whether you were just plodding along like me and anxious to know more and stimulated by what he was telling us. But, yes, they were very well attended, and I've been surprised that—you ask Frank. I asked Frank once, Frank Parsons, where all that stuff is, and he said he didn't know. I think I probably have more of it and it's in a box somewhere, and I'll dig it out for you.

**Warren:** We need to find that, Anne.

**Willett:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Warren:** Now, did he have classes with the students?

**Willett:** No, not really classes. He was writing all the time, and if I had my materials here with me—I didn't bring all that with me. It never occurred to me anybody would be talking to be about my W&L life. He wrote in this tiny little script, and then he would give it to me to type. I would hold it sideways and upside down trying to figure out what—tiny little script. And he would write across the bottom of the page and up the side of the page and across the top of the page.

He must have gotten so tired of being invited by ladies to come to tea, but he would sit with his overcoat on and his scarf and his hat and at his desk waiting to be picked up when he and Mrs. Toynbee were going to somebody's house for something. He didn't want to waste a minute, and he didn't really want to leave his work. But that's the way he would do it.

I would then be handed a sheaf of papers with all this little scrunchy—you get used to anything. I got to the point—because I'd then have to type up these lectures or whatever it was, long letters or whatever he was sending back to the Royal Institute of

International Affairs in London. And she was his colleague. She did all of his translating.

**Warren:** His wife?

**Willett:** Uh-huh. And she did that right along beside him when she wasn't reading mysteries. [Laughter] They were delightful, charming people.

**Warren:** And so there was a lot of interaction with the Lexington community.

**Willett:** Yeah. Oh, yeah. Remember, again, these are the fifties when there were book clubs around. I remember taking him – all of a sudden, I had a lot of new friends who suddenly were calling me, did I think I could arrange for Dr. Toynbee to come to Danville to speak to their book club and others of that sort. He did go. He spoke at Randolph-Macon. I'm trying to recall. I think he may have spoken to the student body there, because he appeared on the front of the alumni magazine or inside – I'd have to find that picture somewhere – in academic robes, as I remember.

So he was asked by Sweet Briar and various places to come to convocations and whatnot. But, as I say, he was much better known then, I think, than he is now. He was talking about religious ideas that we were not accustomed to hearing. That is there is more than one way. Because he believed in, you know, the power of these great religions in civilizations. *East Meets West* was one of the titles of one of his books. We really hadn't given a whole lot of thought to that before the war. So here he comes in the late fifties and the world was changing.

So there was a lot to think about and a lot of resistance to all this, because we didn't want to think that we weren't this straight arrow. We were the good guys. We'd won the war. As I said a while ago, we certainly never thought of ourselves as minorities, which brings us back to where we were. In the first place, we've come – and these are very different years now, the nineties, from those years.

**Warren:** Well, that's why I think it's so important to talk to people who've lived through these various times, because it's so misleading to look at things only through

the eyeglasses of the nineties and their political correctness. We have to think about what it was like to be there then.

**Willett:** I hope the social life at Washington and Lee is as rich now. I think I mentioned this to you when we were talking last night. I think how fortunate I was to have my friends, Jim's and my best friends, as it were, men who had taught him. When he came back to Washington and Lee in '52, I guess it was, when we came back to live, he'd only been out, you see, he graduated in '49. So Bill Pusey had taught him German, and it was very hard for Jim to not call Bill Pusey Dr. Pusey.

But these were our colleagues and our friends. And nobody had any money. You know, the academic community, you just did it because you loved it. And the conversations were always, you know, I would hear them talking about books that suddenly I'd think, "I've got to read that." And I loved that part of our life. Of course, Jim was extremely bright in his way. He taught, but his strength really was dealing with students and working with students. But he had this mind and, after all, he was a Washington and Lee graduate and a trained mind and an English major and so forth. So it was just a very enriching experience and to interact socially with people who were much older. But there was never any thought of that. We were all colleagues and good friends.

Life is very different now. Lexington had no caterers, no dining hall. [Laughter] I don't know whether—I guess there's nobody to tell you about this, because they're all gone. I'm trying to think who. Well, there was no dining hall, so it was decided we had to have a dining hall. So it was further decided that a group should tour New England and look at outstanding dining halls at secondary schools and colleges. So Jim and Jim Leyburn and Earl Mattingly, who was then treasurer, and I'm trying to think who else, piled in the car and did the New England tour, which Jim knew so extremely well because he was a product of a secondary school, Choate, and knew all of the secondary schools and recruited there. He and Frank Gilliam knew all the right people.

So Frank Gilliam, Jim Leyburn, anyway, Earl Mattingly, this mix of people you cannot imagine being closed up in a car with, and they played word games and, of course, Jim Leyburn won them all. You know, it was really – it was very funny. It makes me laugh when I think about it, because Jim's stories about that tour. Well, they came back, though, and ultimately we have now our beautiful, handsome dining hall.

Well, now you can order food. You know, if you're going to have a party, if you Mimi Elrod decides to have a party, she can all the dining hall, and they do such beautiful, as you know, beautiful things. I think Parents' Weekends, sometimes Alumni Weekends, our alumni are just blown away. But as Jim said, "Well, they expect it to be first class." He always did, everything Washington and Lee did was first class. You don't do it if you're not going to do it first class. Over the years, I came to understand exactly what he meant.

Well, we were there before all of that. Dr. and Mrs. Gaines, graduation, always the reception at home. All the entertaining was done at home. I have to laugh when I think about all of us would cart our silver up for the reception for parents at graduation. The Gaines had a farm outside of town. Somebody from Building and Grounds would go out and whack down the climbing roses in June and all the lilacs and everything. All of us faculty wives, we'd be summoned to help. So somebody would do flowers, and somebody else would do something else. I can see those climbing roses now, twined over the fireplace in the president's house, just as it is now, over the mirror, over the fireplace. And so Southern. It was all just so Southern.

I remember a grandmother stepping up. I was pouring punch one night. She was a charming woman from Bethesda [Maryland] or somewhere. I knew her grandson well. She came over. He went on to become a physician. She came over and leaned over to me and she said, "Tell me, my dear. Does this handsome silver go with the house?" Because it was a very traditional house. Everybody knew it was Lee's house. And I looked around and I saw Nel Stallings' [phonetic] punch bowl, and my

candlesticks, and Virginia Drake's candlesticks, or Libby Washington's or whoever, you know. And that was just the way it was in those days. When anybody in the South, I guess, really had a party, everybody brought – and it always amused – I had to refrain, I wanted to burst out laughing right in this lovely woman's face. And I sort of said, "Well, yes." I don't remember what I said. [Laughter] So it was always that way. Whatever was going on, we just all did it. Of course, all that's very different now. We call somebody to do whatever.

I can see Mrs. Gaines. Mrs. Gaines was much younger than Dr. Gaines, and he always treated her like she was this china doll and would tell you about his having found this flower of his life in his class. He was a very eloquent, you know, golden-toned author and all. And I can remember Mrs. Gaines in the receiving line, and I said, "Oh, Mrs. Gaines, everything is just lovely." And she said, "Darling, I was making those tomato roses at four o'clock this morning." You know, to do a tomato, I've never achieved that skill, but it looks just like a rose. So even Mrs. Gaines had been up all night long doing it.

But it was a charming lifestyle. It wasn't just that it was laid back. It's just that nobody had any choice. [Laughter]

**Warren:** Well, it sounds like there was an army of women who were really making things work.

**Willett:** Well, faculty wives. Nobody objected to being called – you know, the term "faculty wife" is no longer valid, because it's "faculty spouse," because it's not just the women. But, you know, you've got to remember the forties and fifties, that's the way it was. Just as a great source, a great resource, for Lexington for so many years were the so-called law student wives. Well, that term certainly went out a long time ago.

**Warren:** Talk to me about law wives.



**Willett:** Well, law student wives, we all called them, they taught school. Many of them were putting their husbands through law school. Our public schools were wonderful in those days, because, for example, Bill Pusey was chairman of the school board faculty while on the school board, VMI as well, but it seems to me W&L predominately. And law student wives worked in all the faculty offices.

I remember Chester Puller's wife told Jim, flattered him out of his mind, when she brought their son for an interview, and she said to Jim when Jim allowed as how he admired General Puller and he was an ex-Marine Corps sergeant. And she said, "Oh, Mr. Farrar." She said, "General Fuller thinks the world is run by Marine Corps sergeants."

Well, we thought the world was run by law student wives. They were everywhere – the offices, schools, as I said – and were a huge resource to the community. That has phased out, of course. You understand it was all male. Well, now in these days and times, had those gals been around, they'd be in the law school themselves. I'm sure many of them were at least as bright or brighter than their husbands they were putting through law school. But that was the climate. That was the way it was then.

I hadn't thought about them for a long time, but I can think of those who worked in Jim's office and really did make the office go around. He couldn't have done it without them.

**Warren:** It sure sounds like it, to me. They were the oil that kept the machine going.

**Willett:** The improvements such as the law school – well, of course, the new law school – because it was on the front campus then. You know that. The law school was on the front campus under the Colonnade.

**Warren:** Tell me about it.

**Willett:** The relationship between the undergraduate and the law school was very, very close, not only physically but in every way, because the life of the school was there, all of it along the Colonnade. That was a change. Of course, we are much stronger. We're a different institution now. But that was a wrench when the law school moved across the ravine. And, again, there were many alumni who felt that was a major loss. Of course, in some ways it was, but on the other hand, look what we have, and the law school is so strong and all of that.

There's been a major effort for a lot of reasons to keep that bond so that they're not totally apart, each going at their business without any interaction. There's some, I'm sure, who feel strongly that – well, I know there are – that the law school should have its own development, it should have its own this, that and the other, and it should not be, I suppose they think, controlled, as it were. And I'm certainly not the person to talk to about that. I just know that there are two views of how that should be.

It used to be lawyers, as we called them, many of them were graduates of Washington and Lee and then went on, of course, to law school. But there has been that intimacy among our constituencies, and I think lawyers, law students, law graduates are reluctant to think that that will become weakened. So that's something that, as I say, I'm not really not qualified to talk about to give you chapter and verse on. I just know that and you can imagine there would be feeling.

There are those who came as the law school began to change, and we had students from Syracuse and students from here and there and other places. That was a cultural shock, to some extent, and I'm sure for them it was. We had been, I want to say, predominately – but I'm not sure of that, I'm not sure that the law school student body was predominately Washington and Lee undergraduates. Certainly it was more regional, just as our student body was.

**Warren:** It was high numbers.

**Willett:** Yeah. But it would be strong from the same community, same states where we were drawing undergraduates students. But I think it would have been mostly Washington and Lee undergrads. So that's been a change.

But I think on the whole, I was shocked here, when I first came to live in Chattanooga, to live at Lookout Mountain, talking to an alumnus and I said, "Well, have you been back?" He was a journalism major. I knew that. I hadn't known him as an undergraduate. I said something, "Have you been back?" And he immediately said, "No." He said, "Well, I stopped. I was driving through Lexington and I stopped there three or four years ago." And he said, "No, I'm not going back." He said, "I was shocked by the hideous buildings they've put up."

Well, I was shocked when he said that. But I figured obviously I wasn't going to change his mind, so I just let that pass. But he was referring to, I guess, the law school, Gaines Hall, the dining hall.

I think – well, now that we're talking about that, on the other hand, there's a family here whose – the grandmother is a friend of mine, and she was telling me about going to her grandson's graduation. Her son was a graduate, now her grandson, her son-in-law. And she was telling me how perfectly beautiful graduation was, how gorgeous the campus was, how beautifully done everything was, and, what pleased me more than anything else, how attractive the student body was. The valedictorian was marvelous. This is a woman who is so outspoken she would not have hesitated to tell me, "What a dump! Those kids!" I mean, in the strongest terms she would have said, "They were the pits." Not at all.

And many people, a number of people who saw on CNN bits of the Mock Convention, including the most loyal UVA alumnus in the world, who's here on this mountain, couldn't say enough about the Washington and Lee students and how well they performed, how articulate, how attractive they were, and the young women who

spoke. They just went – I mean, they raved more than I would dare rave, and I was thrilled to hear that.

So we have our, you know, our dissenters and our fans. That particular alumnus, I think, is missing a lot by refusing to go back, but then there are always people who want no change, and I can understand that, too, who want no change, and you have to kind of show them that it works.

**Warren:** One of the things I've found out in doing these interviews is that there are a lot of people who don't come back for a long time, and then something clicks. I think it's something in their own lives clicks and they come back and it works. So don't give up on that thought.

**Willett:** Well, you become conscious of your own mortality and –

**Warren:** And then they need to go back to the source.

**Willett:** And you need to go back and touch base, and it's thrilling to go back and find – you know, if you go back, for example, to find your old home, let's say, in the city, chances are it's been torn down. So it is a thrill to go back.

You and I were talking, I think, this morning earlier about how you loved seeing the stones that are worn in the Colonnade and the handrail in Washington Hall that so many before you – I'm reminded of someone who is not a Washington and Lee alumnus whose company sent him to one of our summer programs. It was one of those business efforts, I think. Jim was active in marketing those programs to alumni and all that for a while. We used to go to everything, which is something now that's changed a lot. We went to everything.

Well, this one morning I was there for breakfast with this group, because you had to make them all feel at home, you know, and all. And here came this guy puffing and blowing, and he was staying across the footbridge over at the Woods Creek Apartments. He came across, and he was just absolutely almost speechless. He said, "Do you people – " He said, "I'm at this place. I can't believe it. I walk across in the

mist across that footbridge, and I think George Washington made a gift to this place. Robert E. Lee was president." I mean, he was from a part of the country that didn't have this long tradition that we just take for granted, and it was newer. He just never got over it. The whole week he was there, he was just knocked out by the beauty, the reminders around us all the time. I've always loved the fact that the board decreed that the faculty houses – to us they were Dr. [Lucius Junius] Desha's house. The faculty lived, in other words, in the two houses on either side of the Colonnade. Only recently – I'm trying right now to think is anybody living in any of them. I don't think they are.

**Warren:** Dean Howison is in one of them.

**Willett:** Oh, that's right. Yeah, that one. But the board decree that when there were improvements made physically to keep them from falling down, that they would always be in use. I think in the early days they envisioned their being lived in by faculty, because that's why they were built. It was thought that it would be a good idea for these young men at Washington College, it would be a good influence to be surrounded by their teachers. But they are all in use for an academic purpose, which is very meaningful. They were built in, I think it's 1840?

**Warren:** Very close to that.

**Willett:** Yeah. And students may or may not realize that it's part of their everyday life. It's just great that we have – well, we've been so blessed. We've been protected and everything that could possibly still – well, we never had any money either. You have to remember that during the war, after the Civil War years and so forth, everything, they had to make do.

That reminds me back to Dr. Toynebee, he so enjoyed his time at Washington and Lee, he and his wife. Her nephew then came as a student, Hugh. Hugh was coming. I forget the details now, but he was going to get there ahead of the student body. So the Toynebees had asked Jim and me if we would allow Hugh to stay at our house until

school started and he could get in the dorm. I now realize he was a very self-conscious young man, totally out of his element. He came from the north part of England up near York, and he'd gone to an academy right on the Scottish border, and here he was suddenly in the South.

I remember he being at our house, and he was – I was trying to give him the kind of food he was going to find, like sandwiches and stuff he was going to run into, and he would say things like, "Oh, you Americans do like things between bread, don't you?" And I was, "What?"

But one of the things, I pointed out the house that Matt and Maureen Paxton live in now. Matt's old, elderly cousins occupied that house and it's just this handsome, elegant, pre-Revolutionary house. Our house had a view of it, and I pointed this out to Hugh. Hugh Bolton was his name. And I said, "Hugh, that lovely handsome stone house down there in the field is a very elegant, handsome, pre-Revolutionary house."

And he turned to me and he said, "Oh, really? Which revolution?"

Of course, I immediately rose to the bait and said, "The recent unpleasantness with your country." [Laughter]

I often thought, speaking of minorities, that boy was blonde and blue-eyed, but he must have had a rough year as a young Englishman with no idea what he was about to experience. But anyway. [Laughter]

**Warren:** That's a wonderful story. I'd like to go a particular direction talking about young boys. What was it like for you to raise your kids in this environment?

**Willett:** Oh, it was just marvelous.

**Warren:** Tell me about it.

**Willett:** Oh, I never had to – my friends, with whom I had grown up in Lynchburg, and my sister were carting their children, carpooling, doing all that stuff all the time and complaining about, "Oh, I just live my life in the car. I always have to pick up somebody and take them to dancing school." None of that in Lexington. As soon as

the boys were old enough, they would either ride their bike to school – they could to Waddell, which was nearby – or they'd come home, drop their books, jump on their bikes, and ride over to W&L to the football field or lacrosse or whatever was going on.

The recent alumni magazine, the picture of Lyle, one of my grandsons – you know, the picture to which I refer? It's out on the porch now. He's shagging balls. It's déjà vu. That's what his father did. That's what Scotty did, both my sons. They just grew up on the campus, and the students were wonderful to them. Oh, the boys had, you know, their heroes. Butch West, who all of his sons have come from Baltimore to W&L and to the law school, he was back from Vietnam and he was in law school then. He was coaching lacrosse in the afternoons. Guys like that who had known Jim so well as students would take them even on the team bus, invite them to go on the team – oh, I remember the boys coming home, "Mom, we've been invited to come to the Duke game on the team bus!" Well, they were just thrilled. And they will tell you that. I'm sure if you've ever talked to Jimmy very long, you realize that it was just – I mean, it was like every day was Christmas for them to be part of that.

When Mock Convention was going on – they were just school children now – all of that, to be a part of it. Lexington was safe. Everything was five minutes away. It was just almost – the word "idyllic" comes to mind. Nothing's perfect, but it was certainly – we had decided Jim very much wanted them to have a secondary school experience. He had loved his. He certainly was the strongest possible supporter of public schools. It wasn't that. He just felt it was an enrichment that he would like to give his children just because he had benefitted greatly from it. So our boys did go to Episcopal High School at the ninth grade. But one reason, it wasn't just the experience, he wanted them to have – both of us want them to have an experience away from Lexington so that they could consider Washington and Lee along with other colleges. We felt it would give them a more objective view than had they just stayed in Lexington and never left.

So, as it turned out, it was their choice. We felt that we would choose the secondary school. Lee McLaughlin, who was much lamented, who died so tragically when he was just really getting started a few years into his job as football coach and then hadn't really even gotten—he was to take over AD, I think that fall and then he died. But our boys have gone to Lee's camp outside of Lexington, and he and Jim were great friends, and Jim admired him so as a man and wanted them to have that kind of influence. So that was one reason we chose Episcopal High. Plus the fact that from an admission officer's point of view, Episcopal boys did extremely well. Boys from Westminster and Atlanta and from a private school in Houston, St. John's, I think it was, just performed so well, he felt that that was the place. And, I must say, we also were influenced by the fact that we could be there a lot and see all their games and stuff, and that's exactly what we did. We were there.

I always felt they were the best years of Jim's life professionally, because it took him away from his office. He never gave himself permission to leave his office normally, and during those years, the six years that they were away, he was there often, and it was far better for him to be there, because admissions is pressure work. So I was always very grateful. Of course, his obligation, as he saw it, to his children was pretty strong, and therefore he was able to leave on that Saturday and go to their game and not honor that alumnus who might have called and said, "Could you meet us at your office Saturday morning? I want Johnny to—I want you to show him the campus."

**Warren:** Right.

**Willett:** Yeah. He ever said no.

**Warren:** We're at the end of this tape. I'm going to pop in another one.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

**Warren:** This is tape two with Anne Farrar Willett, October 29, 1996, Mame Warren doing the interview.



**Willett:** You had just asked me about the children growing up, and I was saying it was almost idyllic. And it was. It was a simpler time, and that part of it was wonderful. But I do remember the years they were students at W&L. At times that was a bit of a challenge, because the last thing I wanted to be was a hovering mother. So the boys, of course, as freshman, lived in the dorm, and then they lived at the SAE House their sophomore year. Then they branched out as students were beginning to do then with groups of friends, had places in the country. You know how they do and commute.

I tend to be sometimes rather outspoken when I'm aroused. Student behavior was one of the hot spots. Jimmy may have even told you about a student yelling once, and I immediately marched up to W&L, reported this vile language that I had heard—I have to laugh now—which is nothing compared to what we just take in stride now. And that boy apologized and apologized.

But I remember I was going on. I was in a hurry and had the gal, an old lady really, who helped me sometimes, she's in the car with me. She almost had a heart attack. As we came into Main Street, a car of Washington and Lee, a group of students was just flying down Main. They were on their way out to Zolman's Pavilion. And he just flew down the street right—I guess it's Shenandoah Road. But, anyway, all of a sudden, to my horror, a grapefruit landed right in the middle of my windshield and went "splat!" and this poor woman screamed, my passenger, who was terrified. I was just—it's a wonder I really didn't have an accident. Just went flying on by. And I just saw red. It was as if it was my own boys and, for all I knew, one of them in the car very well could have been.

But I turned that car around on a dime and thought, "I'll find out who did this," and followed this car out there, only to find that the police had gotten him before I got there. And I looked and there was Jimmy's best friends, the boys from the SAE House,

who were equally horrified to see me, that it was my car that they had thrown the grapefruit at and hit. Well, he's still apologizing some twenty years later. [Laughter]

**Warren:** Good for him. He learned a lesson.

**Willett:** Well, I learned to be a little more careful, because I sort of put blinders on, because for all I knew, it was one of my own sons could very well have heaved the grapefruit.

But they were fun years. We really enjoyed them, because their friends and their friends' parents became close friends. And, of course, they were the years when the lacrosse team was hot stuff.

**Warren:** You had quite a star there.

**Willett:** Hot stuff. And just had this wonderful group, parents who went to every game and became, as I just said, very close. We had a big party on Parents Weekend on the Friday night always after the – there would be a reception in the dining hall. The only time we could squeeze in a party would be after that at our house. So many alumni were so gracious to Jim, and he would want to entertain them, because in his travels when he was recruiting, often he would stay with some of these guys. So it was really a great, huge addition to our lives when we had the boys, and they were so happy at W&L and wonderful experiences for them.

Jimmy played football. I can remember saying, "Jimmy, wouldn't you like to have some of the boys, have them come out for supper Friday night or whatever?"

He'd say, "Yeah." Of course, boys that age are very casual.

And I'd say, "Well, just tell me how many do you think."

He said, "Oh, I don't know. Maybe forty or maybe, I don't know, maybe ten."

I mean – and you want to be with it, so I would just say, "Oh, okay. Sure." You know, I'd just go with the flow. [Laughter]

And Thanksgiving, there would always be a few boys who didn't go home for one reason or another, you know, the press of a term paper or something. So we'd

always have four or five boys there, friends of Jimmy's and Scotty's. Of course, we would have the turkey and all of that. And then I'd feel that I'd no sooner cleaned up the kitchen and, of course, they would immediately take their plates and rush to see the football game, because there was always big games all day. And they would all be in front of the TV all day. Then before I could recover from lunch, you know, the boys would say, "Mom, isn't there any turkey for a sandwich?" So it would be that all. But I wouldn't take anything in the world for the relationship we had with those boys. It was a big part of our lives.

Then as I think I've said to you, Scotty's junior year he came home. I was upstairs and I heard, "Mom?" I thought, "God, does he need money again?" You know, that was the only time they were home and had dirty laundry or what. I went down and said, "Hi."

And he said, "Hi. Is it okay if I go to school in Hong Kong next year?"

Once again, you don't want to, "Do what?" I can remember that conversation and me saying, "Well, I don't know. Let's talk to your father when he comes home." [Laughter] Long enough to give myself a chance to recover.

Of course, he did go and was very maturing, lonely, I think a good bit of time. Every once in a while, I think after a few beers, some of his SAE buddies would call him on the other side of the world and, of course, harass him and tell him they were on their way to Hollins and just wanted to tell him. Hope he was having fun at Chung Chi.

So we had varied experiences and, on the whole, very happy times.

**Warren:** So let's talk about happy times that are uniquely Washington and Lee happy times. Fancy Dress.

**Willett:** Fancy Dress.

**Warren:** You've probably been to more Fancy Dresses than almost anybody.

**Willett:** Oh! You make me feel like — [Laughter]

**Warren:** Did you go year after year?

**Willett:** Oh, yeah.

**Warren:** Well, I'm working on catching up with you. I never plan to miss a Fancy Dress.

**Willett:** I've got a picture, I think, for you of Fancy Dress of '53, maybe. Now, you asked me if I had pictures. We never could remember to take the camera or whatever, and we didn't have Pat Hinely photographing everything. That just wasn't done in those days, unfortunately. But, yes, Fancy Dress comes to mind. They were always fun. Jim was known in those years as the boy dean, because, you know, there were still students in school whom he'd known. And you realize, this was a mixed-up post-war crowd. You found yourself in class with students – your classmates were some much younger and some older.

Bob Huntley, for example, he wasn't in the service. He was a freshman, I guess, as I remember it, when we came back. Jim having graduated in '49, Bob was a sophomore at the Delta House. They were fraternity brothers. But there was this age difference.

**Warren:** Did you come to Fancy Dress as a student from Randolph-Macon?

**Willett:** Uh-huh.

**Warren:** Well, let's talk about that first.

**Willett:** Well, the first time I came, I was a senior in high school, and my father was dead-set against it, not to mention my mother, that I was too young to go to a college dance. This would have been like in February of my senior year. Well, the boy who had invited me was a freshman. This would have been '43. The boys hadn't even left en masse for service. He was too young. I guess I was sixteen and he was eighteen, I suppose. He was a friend, a W&L friend of a friend, boy, I'd grown up with and gone to school with a year ahead of me and he was now a freshman. So this friend of his had invited me to come, and my parents were saying, "Certainly not." And I was begging and pleading and everything, dying to go, of course.

My mother, when she had come to Washington and Lee and VMI dances in her youth, had stayed at Miss Lizzie Graham's. Miss Lizzie took student dates. And she lived right over near the VMI gates. So finally it was decided, "All right. If you can stay at Miss Lizzie Graham's, you may go." Well, as it turned out, what they didn't know was that by then Miss Lizzie was very old. She had lost most of her sight. She had no idea of who came and went when. She no longer ruled or sat in her parlor and checked the girls in, I guess.

So I just had a marvelous time, and it was quite unlike going to a high school dance in Lynchburg. I'll never forget walking into the ATO House, which was this boy's fraternity in those days. It's now Seven Hills. It was a very handsome fraternity house. I remember walking in. I was just ga-ga. I was so green. I knew I didn't belong there. I was so unsophisticated, trying to be very cool. I remember we walked into the hall and there was nobody. There were no students around in the living room. And somebody said, "Oh, go on up. Everybody's upstairs." And I just nearly fainted. I thought, "Upstairs?" Having been told, I'm sure by my mother and my father that I was to do this and not do that and whatever.

Well, it turned out that, of course, I became quite accustomed to that. What they were doing, they had a big galvanized tub in the middle of the hall upstairs and they had beer in there, and they were all just partying and, you know, everything was perfectly safe. There were house mothers, so everything was just as it should be. But it was an eye-opener to me. That was my first. And this boy was so nice and he knew my parents. I'm told he did his serious partying after he had dropped me off at Miss Lizzie Graham's. [Laughter]

But then I went off to college after that. And, you know, the funny wrinkle there is then I met Frank at Georgia Tech, and life at Georgia Tech was much like life at Washington and Lee. So for those two years that's where I was, then came back to Randolph-Macon my junior year, because my family had close Randolph-Macon ties

and wanted their two daughters to graduate from there. In those days, there was much more transferring than there is now, I suspect. It had been decided that Agnes Scott would be very good preparation, and I would get a good basis, a good base, and come back to Randolph-Macon, which I did. And then that was different, because all the boys then were coming back after the war. It was crazy, mixed-up. These were vets then. You know, they had fought in the Battle of the Bulge and all kinds of things. So now they're back in school. It was a little poignant, because some didn't come back.

But we had a great time. All my friends in Lynchburg, girls I'd grown up with, we were just having a marvelous time, because everybody we knew suddenly was back. There was gas then and we could all drive and come over to W&L or VMI, as the case were. And boys, many of them, were trying to make up for lost time. So it was a loose, happy time, and faculty, I think, in both places were understanding. You know, VMI, in particular, it was pretty hard to keep a boy locked up in barracks when he had landed at Anzio.

So it was an interesting time. I can remember some physical, some disabilities as a result of the war among these young boys.

**Warren:** Did you go to Fancy Dress the bicentennial year?

**Willett:** Oh, yes.

**Warren:** 1949?

**Willett:** Yes. Jim invited me. I came to Fancy Dress with him, yeah. I'm trying to remember whether we dressed up. I came to Fancy Dress and – it's funny, I don't remember. I remember distinctly coming a couple of years later when we came back. So that would have been '49. We were married in '50. And then by '52 or '53, we were back. And I remember that more vividly.

I really don't remember Fancy Dress of '49 too well. The faculty chaperoned. I remember going up to speak to the Gilliams, but I don't remember much about – and I remember there was a party that night. People used to go watch the sunrise over on the

footbridge. I remember that. I don't know why I don't remember the dance that night, the ball, as clearly. I remember things going on around it, and I remember going and watching the sunrise and the band, part of the band. You'd have a combo from whoever. The orchestra that had played for the dance would go and, you know, just a jazz session kind of thing down at the far end of the footbridge toward the stadium. And lots of people would straggle on over, and it was fun. You know, everybody thought it was daring to stay up all night and watch the sun come up over there and the band playing. I don't know. Maybe they still do that. Because Fancy Dress is now a big time.

**Warren:** Well, hasn't it always been a big time?

**Willett:** It was the social event of the South, yeah. It pleases me to see they really get into it and the decorations and all of that. Of course, the gym, the old gym, was not exactly the most elegant place in the world, but it certainly served its purpose.

As a matter of fact, I think '49 may have been the year of the blizzard. You check the records. One of the Fancy Dress years, and it may have been that one, I don't think it was canceled, but there was a huge blizzard, because I can remember my friends at Randolph-Macon, everybody wringing their hands whether we were going to get over the mountain.

**Warren:** Wow, that would be—

**Willett:** Oh, it was a crisis. Major crisis. Maybe that's why I have just a vague recollection of the ball. But, anyway, you look it up and see.

**Warren:** I will. I didn't know that.

**Willett:** And I will dig out that picture of '53. I remember we were all dressed up. White tie. I think, maybe, Jim had a white tie and tails.

**Warren:** Oh, I must see that. I must see that. So through the years, how did Fancy Dress change?

**Willett:** Well, I think we went and we probably got burned out. I mean, we went and went and went to everything. And now when I see Kitty, my daughter-in-law, and whom you know, struggling to balance everything and particularly with Jimmy responsible for a lot of what's going on – but it was just expected. We saw it sort of as our duty, really. There was no resentment of the fact that, "Hey, gosh, I ought to be getting paid for this."

I must say I enjoyed it. I didn't feel put upon that I was supposed to be there or be in a receiving line or be doing something, helping. There wasn't any of that. It was just part of our life. I guess, too, you have to enjoy all these people, and Jim knew them all and thoroughly enjoyed them. And at that time, some of them had known his father. Back to what I said earlier, I always enjoyed the fact that we were all different ages. I think we would have missed a lot if your life is just go to work and go home, go to work and go home. We thought we were really lucky.

**Warren:** I thought the most charming thing about Fancy Dress was that socializing, getting all dressed up and going and socializing with people of all ages and all status. I have good friends in Buildings and Grounds, and there they all were all dressed up.

**Willett:** Oh, yes.

**Warren:** And that was wonderful.

**Willett:** Well, now Buildings and Grounds is something that went through my head a while ago. I think I alluded to them once, and I thought briefly that I want to come back to tell you. You obviously have had the opportunity now, and you have been sensitive to the fact that Buildings and Grounds – we call it Buildings and Grounds – was such a valued part of the Washington and Lee family.

**Warren:** Talk about that.

**Willett:** Oh, Jim thought the Buildings and Grounds guys were it. He would no more have overlooked one of these guys or asked them to do anything that would be an imposition. He thought they made the place work, and, of course, he was right. And, I



mean, he wasn't the only one who felt that way. Buildings and Grounds always came to graduation. I mean, they not only put up all the chairs and did all of that, but they stayed and thoroughly enjoyed it. I say this not in a light way of "we" and "them" or "us." I just can't tell you the affection and respect, I keep saying that Jim felt. Well, that was, of course, that was my experience. But everybody had that feeling.

**Warren:** There isn't much "us" and "them" at Washington and Lee.

**Willett:** No. No. When there was that recent flap, I was just aghast, and I thought, "Oh, thank God Jim is spared this." You know, had it become a greater flap than it did. It just would have devastated him and many others who over the years had felt that way, and I know from my own son's attitude that it's still there.

**Warren:** Very much so. I think that that was a quirk that happened.

**Willett:** Yeah. Yeah. It was not typical. It was not typical at all of W&L. Something we just said I meant to come back to. I've forgotten. I'll think of it in a minute. Along those same lines. But, yes, people all got dressed up and went.

**Warren:** And everybody just parties together and has a great time.

**Willett:** Yeah. I think the Christmas party at W&L, that's an innovation that has come since our time.

I guess I was about to say the time did come when it got a little old. You know, you do get to the point you think, "Oh." I can't say that in later years we went to every single one of them. And then our children, too, as they came along, I didn't really want to be looking over their shoulders all the time. So we kind of didn't do quite as much, I guess, as we did when we were much younger. The Mock Conventions were part of our lives.

**Warren:** That's my next question. Tell me about Mock Convention.

**Willett:** Oh, gosh. I sensed from the little I saw here on CNN that everybody went, went to everything. I remember Jim had what he called Sport Central at our house where he framed all these athletic pictures of not just of our children but his good

buddies, certain students. The news office would give him these prints, football shots, lacrosse, and all that. He stuck them up in our utility room, which he called Sports Central. And to this day, some of those guys will ask me, "What did you ever do with Sports Central?" It's still in boxes probably at Jimmy's house. Among that were letters from like Richard Nixon thanking Jim, because his advanced guys would come. Anybody who was coming, not just Nixon, but any of the big speakers.

As a matter of fact, we were standing in the balcony of the old gym when Alvin Barkley dropped dead. Standing right across, looking right down at him, right directly across from him. Again, everybody went to everything. Who took that picture of – wasn't Frank. Frank Parsons. I'll think after a while who. I may or may not remember. John Jennings. John Jennings took it, now in journalism. He was a student, and he had his camera and clicked it. *Life* bought it, I think, or something. Anyway –

**Warren:** So what's the picture?

**Willett:** Alvin Barkley, you know, dropped dead.

**Warren:** Yeah.

**Willett:** Right there on the podium, and he had just finished staying, "I'd rather" – what's the verse from the Bible? "Than sit in this seat of the Mighty." And with that, he dropped dead. I remember Jim turning to me and saying, "Quick, we've got to – I'll get the car. I'll go down and see if we can take Mrs. Barkley over to the hospital or something." And I remember thinking, "Oh, no." Remember, I had then – I don't think I had three, I had two young children. The car was just full of junk and all the children's gear. There was hardly any place to – I remember we got Mrs. Barkley in the car and he roared off and left me standing on the sidewalk, which was fine. But that was more appropriate. I had all the mess that you have when you've got children in the back of a station wagon.

But we didn't miss much, you know. When I think back and the letters, you know, the children would get a kick out of the letters being from [Barry] Goldwater and

thanking Jim for maybe having picked him up in Roanoke at the airport. I mean, everybody pitched in. Again, I'd forgotten about that. You just did what – somebody, "Jim, could you pick up So-and-so?" It was just that kind of life. It wasn't as structured as it is now. We didn't have student helpers. What's the group that –

**Warren:** [Unclear].

**Willett:** Yeah. So all of them came through, all of the political figures. CONTACT was just starting in those years. [Barry] Goldwater spoke, and we all thought Goldwater was the bogeyman. If you read the newspapers, you thought he was going to hit the button and blow up the world. Just as there were William Faulkner and – what's the very distinguished black writer? He was the first, as far as I know – you could check me on this; Frank would know – the first black speaker, maybe, in Lee Chapel. Who wrote *The Invisible Man*?

**Warren:** Ralph Ellison?

**Willett:** Yeah. You check with Frank. I think it was Ralph Ellison. I wouldn't want to be held to that, but I remember he was probably the first. Could that be? I think it may have been.

**Warren:** I don't know the answer to that.

**Willett:** Well, you see, again, Jim could have told you everything he said. But all these people came through and there we were, sitting there. Some benefitted more than others. I'm a good example. I didn't benefit as much as I should. I can't remember it all. But I think it might have been Ellison speaking to this audience, you know, who were shocked that they were sitting there listening.

I remember when Duke Ellington came. It happened to be at VMI. I was introduced to him, and I didn't know whether to shake hands with him or not. This would have been in '51. I didn't quite know how to – I did, but I remember going thinking, "What do I do?" And I've often wondered where they stayed. I suppose after

that gig, after they played, any of the black musicians, they just moved on, because there certainly was no place for them to stay in Lexington.

**Warren:** That's an excellent question. That's an excellent question.

**Willett:** Unless they stayed at – you know, we had a wonderful black community. Again, the black community in Lexington was much a part of university life, because there were so many who worked in Buildings and Grounds. Their jobs were certainly menial, but when you look at it from another point of view, they were permanent jobs and worked for, as Jim would say, first-class people. There was a warm relationship, I think I could really say in all honesty, because we had many black friends. And when Jim died, John Elrod said to me after his funeral, "I couldn't believe how many black people were there." You've got to remember that Jim was – remember his barber cut his hair when he was a student, and he was devastated by his death. And then he became a house boy at the Delta House. I guess he did both. He learned to barber.

So little changed in a little town like – I guess I'm going to use the word I'm hesitant to use, but perhaps Lexington was unique in that way. How do I know? That was only my experience. I can't say it was really unique, but certainly there were not many communities like that. Academic? Do you think it would be that because the only two games in town were academic, there was more a collegial feeling? I don't know.

**Warren:** Are there any particular people in the black community whom you think would be good to interview?

**Willett:** I'm sure there are. So many whom I knew well are gone now, the ones that rush to my mind. But, yes, and I'll think about that, and my son, Jimmy, will know exactly the answer to that. Yes, as a matter of fact, Napoleon.

**Warren:** I've got him on my list. I've already talked to him.

**Willett:** All right. He comes to mind. And Jimmy would be able to tell you whether there are any others.

**Warren:** Any women?

**Willett:** Of course, Dolly, his wife. But those who worked, the one who I wish you could have talked to, is gone. She worked for people in town, but she cleaned W&L offices at four o'clock in the morning before she – so there were people like that. There may still be. I don't know whether Page – she was a woman who did a lot of parties. I'd have to find out. I don't know whether she's still there, still living that is.

**Warren:** Let's talk about coeducation.

**Willett:** Oh. Yeah. Well, you know that Davidson co-educated ten years before we did. It was a tremendous problem to my husband, who knew it had to happen. Remember, this is his university that he loved more than anything in the world, and he did not want change for the sake of change. There was no gimmick. But there were those, again, this conservative board, who thought that, "Oh, it's just a passing fad, coeducation." And, again, the old argument, "General Lee's college, how could we possibly handle women? He would never have done that."

Remember, he was interviewing, going to high school nights, going to secondary schools everywhere, and he would come back and tell me how students would stop and want to talk about Washington and Lee, if this was a big gathering, as high schools had and still have, I guess, college night kinds of things. They would look at the literature and then say, "All male? Forget it," and move on. In the meantime, Davidson and others were interviewing, accepting women, and accepting male students who wanted coeducation.

He tracked applicants over the years. If an applicant was offered admission and declined, he always followed up with a questionnaire asking them to please let us know why did you choose not to come to W&L. And over and over the overriding reasons were – well, three come to mind, I think, that were predominate. One was, "I have two brothers. My father can't afford to send me. I'm going to UVA, the state school." Second was often, "I want an urban. I've decided I don't want Lexington. I want to go

to school nearer a big city." And then, of course, there was, "I want coeducation. I don't want an all-male school."

Now, there are young men Jimmy's age right here on this mountain, alumni who tell me, "Well, you know, it was ruined." They're most critical of the coeducation and of John Wilson's courageous decision to improve the fraternity houses. And I'm thinking of one young man here who's – well, he's in his forties now. He's a young man to me. I just can't believe he's still objecting. It may be that he just doesn't want to send money. I don't know. But he's objecting still to those two things.

But, anyway, coeducation, of course, was just critical, and it was so hard to get alumni to understand. And poor John Wilson. The abuse. It was one of the happiest days of Jim's life when the board made that decision, as close as the vote was. He felt that W&L was at a crossroads and that its excellence was becoming constantly weaker. Of course, alumni didn't want to hear that, because we could still fill the beds. And they would say, "We don't need it." Well, you know, you could fill the beds, but you certainly could not be selective. And the faculty, our pride and joy, the jewel of Washington and Lee is this marvelous faculty we've always had, well, they weren't going to stay around and just educate – you know, they'd be gone. So it was a tough – boy, feelings ran high.

**Warren:** Tell me about that day. Where were you the day of the decision?

**Willett:** Oh, we were just waiting. As soon as – I can't remember who called. It may have come over the radio. We jumped right in the car. Jim went right straight to the president's house to embrace John Wilson and congratulate him.

**Warren:** Did you go, too?

**Willett:** Yeah.

**Warren:** Tell me about that. Describe it to me.

**Willett:** Oh, it was so emotional, right in the driveway. You can imagine John just drained, though Anne always said he has a tough hide. Oh, it had to have been – and

then, of course, the abuse poured in, that he wanted to change it. He did it in an underhanded way. Of course he didn't.

You know, nothing succeeds like success. It gradually subsided, and then all of a sudden the most violently opposed alumnus is writing about his darling daughter. [Laughter] So it took a while. But it was, as I say, a very emotional time. We just happened to have been just thrilled to death, because it was better for the university. And the difference immediately, because, of course, that first group of girls, they had such guts, first of all, and they were a very interesting – I'm sure you've talked to some of them.

**Warren:** Tell me about them.

**Willett:** There's one I would like to tell you about that you would enjoy talking to. It was she who pointed out to me that they were such a different group. They weren't your typical – they didn't have the kind of relation – I think what she said, as I remember it now – I hadn't thought about it in so long – she was telling me that dorm life, it wasn't just a bunch of buddies living together. They all were very different, and they were chosen because they were different. They had a strong bond because they were the first crowd, but they weren't all warm and fuzzy, as I think she put it, together. They were different. There were some who were athletic and some who were musical and some who were this and some who were that. But they, of course, took tremendous pride in the fact that they were the first class.

But Washington and Lee students, the only thing I can say in defense of the boys who were seniors and who had heard all of this going on most of their college career, you know, are we or aren't we, the class – I forget now, the class of '84, maybe – anyway, the senior, you know, over and over it was said that the quality of the student body was not as good as it had been. And I think Bill Hartog would tell you right now that it still, in spite of all of the success, has not reached the level of, I think it was the class – he has paid many tributes to the quality of the class of '64, '65. You know a lot of

them – Buck Ogilvie. A lot of those guys who've come through. I can hardly speak of him right now without emotion. He just died. Oh, God. I'll come back to it in a minute. I know it just as well as I know my own name. Mason Newt. He was part of that era. He was a trustee who just died a few weeks ago in Richmond. These men now, I don't think anybody would question they were the strongest. Many of them played football on that Lee McLaughlin team that was number one in the country of small colleges. It was just a real high point, high water mark in quality in every way. And then it began, for the reasons I just gave, to slowly, slowly, slowly drop off. If it were your livelihood and you were in charge, you saw it and were very sensitive to it. But if you didn't understand it and were able to see that we still had large numbers decline, you weren't seeing that the quality was gradually eroding, and that was what was hard to sell.

So that class of young men who were in those last classes in the eighties just before the first women came in probably were very self-conscious and felt they'd been abused and run down, you know, as if they were dummies. Of course, they weren't. But it certainly wasn't a class that you could compare to those classes at our high water mark in the sixties, early seventies.

So the girls had to then take a lot of that resentment. You know, there were teeshirts that really were crude. It was a tough time, but they survived, and more and more girls were – and I remember our friends, our colleagues and friends on the faculty who talked about the difference in the demeanor of the students. Like it or not, these were bright girls who were brought in, and they were a big-time challenge, those who had been admitted and as they came in, big-time challenge to the boys.

Jim used to get such a kick out of seeing them all sitting in the car, good friends sitting there talking about class and that kind of camaraderie which he felt was so healthy and so to be desired, so much better given to changes in society and, you know,



the need for them to go to school together, because they were going to have work together.

So it was, from our point of view, extremely exciting. And then when Episcopal High School co-educated some years later, he said, "Just watch. It's going to be a mirror image." Because it was a small all-male, high-quality academically, and it has been, it's just been a mirror image. Their student body has gotten a lot larger, and I don't think anybody has really wanted our student body – I've never heard anybody say they wanted it to double or become quite large. And I feel for the board. They've had a lot of hard decisions to make that have to do with how we're going to balance the men and women.

The only negatives – and I think about this sometimes, particularly in development, I've seen some interesting examples of success. When women leave, their name changes, for one thing, when they marry and go away, and it's harder to track your constituency. That's a challenge. And the other thing is that men have always made the philanthropic gifts.

**Warren:** It's going to be interesting to see when they start coming.

**Willett:** Yeah. But some of these young women already are becoming very successful in their own careers.

**Warren:** They sure are.

**Willett:** And are making significant gifts. And I think the fact that this thing that's been instituted through the Alumni Association where the senior class makes a gift to the university is going to be enormously helpful in focusing. They leave here knowing that – and I imagine the numbers are increasing, and one difference is going to be that they're going to split. The gifts may be smaller because, let's say, a couple, he went to Davidson and let's say that she went to Washington and Lee and they're going to split their gift. It's going to be two gifts.

**Warren:** They're going to have to encourage more romances at Washington and Lee, aren't they?

I'm going to flip the tape over.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

**Warren:** I'm sort of looking at the clock and thinking we have talked a long time and I'm afraid I might be exhausting you, although you're not —

**Willett:** When am I ever allowed, as Frank's children said, "You mean, they're asking you to talk?" Nobody's ever asked me to talk. Is that on?

**Warren:** It's on.

**Willett:** Well, of course, it's such a pleasure to be asked to talk about all of this, though it's very emotional. [Willett crying.] I'll recover a little bit, because really Jim would have been the one.

**Warren:** I know.

**Willett:** But, anyway —

**Warren:** It's okay. It's okay.

**Willett:** As I said a while ago, as I said it to you, I thought, yeah, he never thought he did enough. But I think W&L people do feel that way. But I can give you all this silliness and foolishness and the fun part, but he would have been such — I'm sure others have told you this, he would have been such a resource, give you far more meat than I can. But life is not always fair.

**Warren:** Well, that's why I think it's so important to talk to all of you who are with us and get you while you're here.

**Willett:** Well, imagine how lucky I am to have our son there, and Jim did live to see that and to be so proud of him. He felt he was doing it right and he felt that it was of value to the university to have this sense of continuity, not because he thought his record was so great that it should go on, he didn't feel that at all, but he just felt that the sense of tradition, that everything doesn't change, and that at a time when so much had

changed, maybe it was good. He would never have been so arrogant as to say, "Oh, they've got to put my son in there." But he just felt, I think, that that was, you know, a sense of, well, there's still some of the sameness. And I hope that will be the case.

I hope others will feel that Jimmy and certainly Kitty, who at a time when a lot of young wives maybe resent the demands that are made by their husband's position, if ever there was a team, she works every bit as hard as he does and loves it. She's that kind of person who enjoys the wives who come back with the Alumni Board, and of course, the husbands now who come, because increasingly there are women particularly in the law school. And she makes such a huge contribution and doesn't even – there are times when I've heard her say, "Oh, I'm so tired of this," or that, but it's her life and she loves it and loves Washington and Lee, and they seem to work it out pretty well together.

So what is it? Nothing ever really changes, I guess, sometimes. On the other hand, my father-in-law, I'd get so tired of hearing him say, "Well, there's nothing so permanent as change." So I guess it all depends. I would think, "Oh, I wish he wouldn't say that." Well, at this age I know all too well that that's true.

But it has certainly been an incredible experience for me living here, at Lookout Mountain, having only lived in Lynchburg and Lexington, and to come here and suddenly realize I'm surrounded by Washington and Lee. It has meant so much to me and has made the adjustment so much easier that I have an identity here just as Frank does. You know, it's not quite the same, hardly, but I'm not just dependent on him to make friends. Because I went to camp, for one thing, over at Camp Allegheny right outside of White Sulphur, and so many girls here went to Allegheny and we were friends when we were fourteen and fifteen. It just happened. That's just sheer dumb luck. But the Washington and Lee tie is tremendous.

By the way, there's one Dr. Gaines story. Do we have time? I must tell you.

**Warren:** Oh, please. Please.

**Willett:** This was before Jim and I were married, the summer after he graduated. There was a boy named Mitch Lewis who was a Sigma Chi, and he had been dating Mrs. Gaines' niece, and she spent a great deal of her time with Dr. and Mrs. Gaines. She'd gone to Randolph-Macon and was in my class. Her name was Marie Roberts, and I was Anne Scott, so we stood in line, R and S, together or sat alphabetically in classes together. So we were friends. Mitch had asked Jim to be in his wedding. He was being married in the Episcopal church in Lexington. Marie's mother and father were from Houston, I think, in Texas somewhere, I think. Anyway, the wedding was to be there.

It was my first, I guess, exposure to Lexington in the summertime, with one other exception I'll come back to, because things were dead and no students around. Well, the party the night before was out at Penn Robin [phonetic], which was the Gaines' farm, and they had this beautiful party with Japanese lanterns hanging all in the trees and everything. And then the wedding. When I first arrived, I was told that I was to stay with a Miss Gadsden. Well, the Gadsden house is now the Besadson [phonetic] house. You know, right on the corner there? You know, the post office and then the Episcopal Rectory, and then what is the Tutweiler house now used to be the Barkley house. The heart of town. You know, the big houses, the three houses that are right beyond the post office?

**Warren:** Yes.

**Willett:** Well, the Gadstons were the maiden ladies with Charleston background. Their father or something had been—I forget. Forever, in Lee's time, they were all family friends, and they were the only two left in the family, the Gadstons. And I remember going upstairs, that big old house, nothing had been changed in a hundred years, and it was much like Charleston, which was their family's background. I remember being intrigued that the rush matting, the floor, which served as the carpet in this guest room, was literally—I still can remember it—it was stuck to the floor. It

didn't move. It had been there for so many years. Well, anyway, that was not what I wanted to tell you.

I was staying. My roommate there was the fiance of Eddie Gaines, Dr. Gaines' youngest son, Anne Rosewell Johns from Richmond. So she and I are all dressed up in our evening dresses, and off we go down the street to the Episcopal church to the wedding. I realized – Jim was a groomsman, and Eddie, her fiance, was a groomsman because it's his cousin being married. I realized that we were very important guests. Because of that we were ushered to a prominent position in the church.

So we are sitting there in the pew watching the wedding take place. As the wedding party left the church, the bride and the groom left and the bridesmaids and the groomsmen, and then Dr. Gaines, who came with Mrs. Gaines on his arm, the aunt and uncle of the bride, and when he got to our pew, because his future daughter-in-law was sitting there, he stopped dead. He had a white tie and tails and white gloves. And there we were, these two little girls. He stopped dead in his tracks and bowed from the waist and kissed her hand, then proceeded out of the church with Mrs. Gaines as if nothing had happened.

It was the most Southern – nothing pretentious about it. It was Dr. Gaines. That was so typical of him. And he then proceeded out. You can tell it made an impression on me. Nobody before or since have I seen, nor could have anybody else have done it.

**Warren:** How charming.

**Willett:** Oh, it was the most charming moment. It was just really – and as I say, it made a lifetime impression on me. Very gracious, not a word was said. But all eyes –

**Warren:** Well, I'll have to speak to John Elrod about hand-kissing, that he needs to work on his hand-kissing.

**Willett:** All eyes were upon this lovely young girl who was to marry his son.

**Warren:** Oh, that is so charming.

**Willett:** He was a very charming man. And as his life declined in later years, it was very tragic. But he could literally charm the birds out of the trees, literally. And I know you've been told that. There's lots of documentation about what a remarkable man he was. There are orators, I guess, the political speakers, but they can't hold a candle to that kind of Southern tradition.

**Warren:** I've heard tapes of him, and it's a remarkable voice.

**Willett:** Clever. Wonderful wit. Well, just an unusual man. W&L has really been gifted in those who have served. Each has brought their own strengths. Have you talked to anybody much about Fred Cole?

**Warren:** I would love to hear more about Fred Cole.

**Willett:** He was the shyest man. He was so shy, very inarticulate. So difficult for him to speak publicly. I remember once we went to the board meeting. I guess it was the one that had to do with integration, and was at the homestead. I remember Jim saying, "Poor Fred Cole." He said, "His hands." He was a chain smoker, and his hands would just be soaking wet. He had to struggle with some extremely conservative – Governor Holt in West Virginia, known as Rocky Holt, and others who, you know, as I said previously, that whole problem. It was accomplished, but he lost his job. In effect, they got rid of him.

But we on the faculty, the staff, are indebted to him forever, because until Fred Cole came along, people just assumed that you could live on your salary. Jim's salary – now, obviously the dollar was a difference. The year we went with \$1,200 a year, we lived in a prefab that is now torn down. It was over there across from East Nelson Apartments. That was just the way it was.

Fred Cole changed all of that, and for the first time there was serious benefits and serious increases. I mean, nothing huge. But we were never reimbursed. Our early years there were such, I mean, if you were asked to entertain, you just entertained. We were never reimbursed, never paid for a bottle of whiskey or anything, no matter

how – I can remember we would have eighty-five parents, and I'd made the food all night long the night before. And Jim would go down and take practically the mortgage money and buy the booze. I would say, "Jim, I just can't understand it." "I'm not asking anybody for anything." And he never did.

**Warren:** Oh, my gosh. Things have changed.

**Willett:** I can remember – oh, I'll tell you something that was significant at W&L, the Baker Scholars. We got a grant from the George F. Baker Trust and a man named Sherry Logan. They were interesting years. Sherry Logan managed the trust in New York, and Jim implemented the Baker Scholars Program. There are alumni right now – I wanted to do some research on this while I was researching for the campaign, and never had the time to do it. The grants that came to us for financial aid, and it was a competitive scholarship, there were certain institutions picked, and we were among the few who were picked for this. Really it was quite an honor to be on the receiving end.

The reason it popped in my mind was because Sherry Logan was coming down to meet with these prospects. We were going to entertain him and have a party for him. I believe it must have been the year Toynbee was here, because he was a great fan. We'd invited him specifically so that we could have the Toynbees, and he was thrilled out of his mind. And Jim said, "Well, what are we going to do the rest of the weekend?" And I said, "Well, we could take him over to the Greenbriar or over to the Homestead and have lunch." He said, "Yeah, that would be a good idea." Well, I want to tell you that I think we did without a Thanksgiving turkey or something that year. It was just tough. If it was a sacrifice, you just found the money to do it.

The young faculty over the years who have come and complained and complained and complained, I could never bear to hear it, because they had this wonderful help toward educating their children with the tuition grant, and they could always turn in to their department head or however it's done now, a chit for what they had spent. And there was none of that. But Fred Cole did – to come back to the

original – he did make a huge difference in the quality of life for faculty and staff, and I don't think he's probably remembered enough, recognized enough for what he did. He survived – he didn't survive, in terms of his presidency, the integration, but he had the guts to see it through.

**Warren:** What do you mean he didn't survive his presidency?

**Willett:** He left. I can't tell you. I don't know exactly. I wasn't privy to that. But I know that I've heard Jim say the board just pushed him out.

But the good Lord – what made me think about all this was when I said Washington and Lee has always had the right man at the right time. You know, He really has looked out for – W&L had been blessed over and over again in its leadership. You'd had Dr. Gaines at that time after the Depression and the years when you needed that. And then it had Fred Cole, who was not an easy man to know. He was not Mr. Congeniality. The alumni never knew him. But he had to bite some tough bullets, and he did. He didn't back off from it, and it happened, the integration, the black situation.

Then right at the time when we needed someone who was articulate, and Bob Huntley's legal background and during the crisis that we talked about in the beginning, the Cambodian thing, when a lot of colleges were just going bananas, he was so strong in that crisis and he was during the campaign, the campaign of '78, as I told you earlier, he really was the key to success of that campaign. It was Bob Huntley's campaign. And the faculty was grateful to Bob. Bob had been a member of the faculty and he continued the benefits like TIAA and all that kind of thing. I'm not sure he instigated it. But, anyway, he saw to it that there were improvements. And had it not been for him, Sidney and Francis [Lewis] wouldn't have given the law school. So there's always been, it seems, the right man at the right time.

Then John Wilson came along with his marvelous gifts. His command of the English language is just mind-boggling. And the physical changes that he brought about were so needed. I'll never forget. It was almost like he woke up one morning –



he woke up two mornings and had a revelation. One was the need for the fine arts. You cannot expect to draw the best students if you don't have the performing arts. And then one morning literally he woke up and thought, "The science program. We've got to do something. We've got to do it right now." And the urgency. He sent us into fund-raising. I was writing the proposal for it. But the proposal, as demanding as it was to put together, was really negligible, because it was John who went out and could tell the major prospects why we simply had to have it. Certainly I couldn't have written anything that would move people like John could.

Now we have John Elrod, whose interests are very different, and his concern for financial aid for students—I know that's close to his heart—and for integrating various cultures. I mean, it's a huge challenge that any educator, I think, is faced with right now. All of these things. For me to imagine in my college days that Spanish would be a second language, and all the Asian students. You know, it's just a very challenging time, and it will be interesting to see how it goes. He and John met. They were so close as administrators, and he did have that wonderful opportunity. So much of what's happening now has grown out of what's happened in the last, what, fifteen years? So I think the good Lord has looked after us.

**Warren:** Well, that's a very nice story. I could talk to you all afternoon, probably tonight and tomorrow, too.

**Willett:** No. No, you can't either.

**Warren:** But we'd better wrap this up. Thank you so much.

**Willett:** I'm still overwhelmed, because it's just wonderful to be able to say what it meant.

**Warren:** Well, it's wonderful to capture it, and I'm honored to be the one to do it.

[End of interview]