

Dr. John and Mrs. Martha Johns

Interviewee: Dr. John and Mrs. Martha Johns

Interviewer: Dr. Courtney Tollison

Date: September 14, 2004

Editor: Ashley Hazelwood 4/29/08

Editor: Anna McDanal 8/02/2010

Editor: Dr. Courtney Tollison 8/09/10

Summary

- I. Dr. John's Life at Furman
 - A. Participation in WWII (pg. 4)
 - B. Going to Furman (pg. 4-12) Dr. and Mrs. Johns discuss Dr. Johns responsibilities in World War II and his entrance into the Furman student body after the war. They discuss what life was like at Furman, what they did on dates, and where they went after Furman. They also discuss the Plylers and building the new campus.
- II. Presidency of Stetson University (pg. 12-14) Dr. and Mrs. Johns discuss the people who served as president of Stetson before Dr. Johns and how Dr. Johns received the position.
- III. Coming to Furman (pg. 14-23) Dr. and Mrs. Johns discuss how they were reluctant at first to leave Florida, but also how Furman was persistent in pursuing Dr. Johns as a presidential candidate for the university. Dr. Johns discusses his decision in leaving Stetson to come to Furman. They discuss what Dr. Johns did as the new president of Furman -what he became involved in and what it was like to be Furman's president.
- IV. Furman Split with the Baptist Convention (24-40) Dr. and Mrs. Johns discuss how the Baptists wanted to control Furman, but gave little money. They talk about the incentive to split from the Baptist Convention and how the decision played out. They discuss how Dr. Johns knew how to handle the split and also talk about people's reaction to the split. They also discuss the way certain Furman people supported the split with the Baptist Convention.
- V. Grants to Furman (41-47)
 - A. Daniel (41-45) Dr. and Mrs. Johns discuss their friendship with Mrs. Homozel Daniel and how she left White Oaks to Furman.
 - B. Hollingsworth (46-47) Dr. and Mrs. Johns discuss how they came to know Mr. Hollingsworth and how he left large sums of money to Furman.
- IV. Changes to Furman (47-55) Dr. and Mrs. Johns discuss the continuation of building on Furman's campus but how it has continued to promote the same ideals and warm feelings that they experienced when they were students. They also discuss the building of John E. Johns hall.

Time Code

Minutes 0-5

- Introduction: Stetson University, serving in World War II, KA fraternity, Bea Plyler, eating meals in the refectory
- Minutes 5-10
Meeting Mrs. Johns; graduate work at Chapel Hill University; teaching and serving as president of Stetson University; Tom Hartness; Dr. James P. Crain; Alester Furman, III; Bill Timmons; Judy Cromwell
- Minutes 10-15
Process of Dr. Johns deciding to come to Furman; Bingham Vick
- Minutes 15-20
Dr. Gordon Blackwell; Mrs. Jones growing up in Asheville, North Carolina, and deciding to go to Furman after attending Mars Hill Junior College
- Minutes 20-25
Montague Hall; Dr. Winston Babb; discussion on their dates in the early 1940s; KA fraternity; Chapel Hill University; Stetson University; Geer Hall
- Minutes 25-30
Dr. Gilpatrick; Beatrice Plyler; discussion of the old campus; origins of the Furman lake and the Japanese garden; dancing on campus
- Minutes 30-35
Stetson University's desegregation under Ollie Edmonds and Dr. Hugh McEniry; discussion of student life at Stetson in the 1960s
- Minutes 35-40
Story of Dr. Johns' inauguration as President of Furman University
- Minutes 40-45
Dr. Frank Bonner; Dr. Johns' first priorities as President – increasing the endowment; Joe Roberts
- Minutes 45-50
Joe Roberts; Dr. Blackwell; Dr. Bonner
- Minutes 50-55
Discussion on athletics at Furman; 1988 football national championship; women's golf national title; balancing athletics and academics
- Minutes 55-60
1988 Football national championship; Dr. Johns receiving the Order of the Palmetto and the Order of the Crescent; Southern Baptist Convention; Stetson University
- Minutes 60-65
L.D. Johnson; fundamentalist takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention and how it impacted Baptist colleges and universities like Furman, Wake Forest, and Stetson; Adrian Rogers; Paul Pressler; Tom Hartness
- Minutes 65-70
Minor Mickel; the process of electing or selecting trustees at Furman; the fundamentalists; Charleston Southern; Jimmy Epping
- Minutes 70-75
Jimmy Epping; Wake Forest University; University of Richmond; Stetson University; Kresge Foundation; South Carolina Baptist Convention
- Minutes 75-80
Tommy Thompson; Neil Rabon; Larry Estridge; Dan Joyner; Charleston

- Southern; Bob Schrum; South Carolina Baptist Convention
 Minutes 80-85
 The South Carolina Baptist Convention and the vote to let Furman split from the Convention
- Minutes 85-90
 A.V. Huff; Hardy Clemons and First Baptist Church Greenville
- Minutes 90-95
 A.V. Huff; Jim Pitts; Jim Edwards; Minor Mickel; Tommy Thompson; Alester Furman, III; Jim Hamrick; Lloyd Batson
- Minutes 95-100
 Wayne Weaver; objections to Furman's position with the South Carolina Baptist Convention
- Minutes 100-105
 Athletic Directors at Furman: George Bennett and Ray Parlier; Wayne Weaver
- Minutes 105-110
 Relationship with Mrs. Homozel Daniel; the Peace Center; Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Lib Blackwell
- Minutes 110-115
 Dr. and Mrs. Blackwell; John and Beatrice Plyler; Mrs. Daniel giving money for the Furman chapel and leaving her home to Furman
- Minutes 115-120
 Wayne Weaver; Mrs. Daniel and White Oaks
- Minutes 120-125
 Hiring Barbara Kamieniecki to work at White Oaks; Dr. and Mrs. Blackwell; Dr. Shi and Mrs. Shi; Hollingsworth bequest
- Minutes 125-130
 Hollingsworth leaving money to Furman; Red Hughes; John Cothran; Ed Good
- Minutes 130-135
 Building and naming of John E. Johns Hall and the Martha Johns Seminar room; John Roberts
- Minutes 135-140
 Dr. Johns' history book on Florida during the Civil War; Vaughn CroweTipton; Keith Ray; Dr. Shi completing the new campus; Cherrydale; Younts Conference Center
- Minutes 140-145
 Buying the new campus; John Plyler; Jim Pitts; L.D. Johnson
- Minutes 145- 153
 FU cheer; process of Dr. Shi being named as Dr. Johns' successor

Transcript

DR. TOLLISON: Today is September 14...the afternoon of September 14, and my name is Courtney Tollison. I'm sitting here with President Emeritus Dr. John E. Johns and his wife, Martha Johns, and we're going to have a conversation about Furman. You were president [of Furman] from 1976 to 1994. Previously you were president of Stetson University as well as both of you were graduates of the [Furman] class of 1947. Why

don't you both start off by just telling me a little bit about yourselves, where you grew up and how you heard about Furman?

DR. JOHNS: I grew up in a small town on Lake Placid in Arcadia, Florida. Arcadia is approximately 65 miles south of Lakeland and it was a town of forty-eight hundred to five thousand. [It had] one high school in the county, DeSoto County High, and I graduated there. Through a friend that was a native South Carolinian the name of Furman became important in my life. He wanted to be sure I came to Furman, and I did. When World War II broke out, well, of course as thousands of others, I signed up for what was then the Army Air Corps, and was called to active duty in late '42. I went through the various flight schools, graduated as a bombardier navigator and, partly because of my size, my position in the plane was in the glass front nose. A six-footer would have had a problem with that. To make a long story short, I went overseas and flew my missions in 1944. I began the day after D-day.

DR. TOLLISON: So you were in northern France?

DR. JOHNS: Yes. I was stationed in England, but we bombed in support of the invasion and my first, the first mission I was on was not to the beachhead but was to Berlin. I figured they wanted to kill me right off, but I survived 35 missions and came home and went back to Furman, came back to Furman. I was a member of the KA [Kappa Alpha Order] fraternity. We had a house on the edge of the campus, so I did not come back to dormitory life. I came back to life off the campus, and as we have discussed, Bea Plyler... Bea was a handsome, beautiful young lady and she had two small boys, [no three children], and she loved to ride horses. She would come by the KA house in her jodhpurs, her riding outfit, and it would just empty the KA house. We all went running to the front porch. She, I think, secretly enjoyed that. She never admitted it, but at any rate, the first meal I had after I got back was an evening meal in what we called the refectory, which was the dining hall. I was with a group of KA's at a special, you know, our table, and I turned and looked at the door, and I said, "My God. Who is that?" and they said, "That's Martha Mauney," and I said, "Gotta meet her!" So I did, and I talked her into marrying me.

DR. TOLLISON: And here we are.

DR. JOHNS: And here we are on the bench together! But then from here I went to ...we married in August after we graduated in June, and went to Chapel Hill and began doing graduate work. I wound up with a PhD in history. I taught at Stetson University and then became an administrator and then president.

DR. TOLLISON: You were CFO before you became president?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, after never having had a course in business I became CFO. So we were at Stetson.

MRS. JOHNS: Twenty-eight years.

DR. JOHNS: Twenty-eight years, and I got a call from Tom Hartness, who was, I don't know whether he was chairman of the board of trustees, but he was the power on the board, and chairman of the search committee. I came up from Deland to Greenville in February of 1994, right?

MRS. JOHNS: No, '74.

DR. JOHNS: Seventy-four...no, '76, I'm sorry. It was cold, and I said, "No, thank you. Let's go back to sunny Florida." I went back in May. I was in West Palm Beach, and I got a phone call, and it was Tom, and he said, "We want to see you. We want to talk to you. We'll fly down any day next week that suits you." So, I of course said, "There's no use for that, but if you want to come, come on." Well, Martha had...I might have had... the president's home there, to me, is more beautiful than the president's home here. It's a colonial style, three-story mansion. Four big columns and...but Martha had coffee fixed for them, you know. The table all set with lace and all that, and so she sold herself to them immediately.

DR. TOLLISON: That wasn't hard to do.

MRS. JOHNS: I was being gracious!

DR. JOHNS: We walked around the campus and had lunch together, and I took them back to the airport. They flew back up here, and I knew I was going to come when they left.

DR. TOLLISON: Now who was, which trustees came down there?

MRS. JOHNS: Dr. [James P.] Crain, who chairman of the board of trustees, Tom Hartness, Alester Furman [III], Bill Timmons, Judy...who was the alumni representative?

DR. TOLLISON: I can look it up.

MRS. JOHNS: Here in Greenville; she lives here in Greenville. Anyway, there were five...Cromwell, Judy Cromwell, and she was representing the alumni. When they came down, John met them at the airport and then brought them to the president's home. I had coffee and juice and some little, you know, morning snacks, and then they left to go talk with him. Then they came back by, and they went over to a bank building, John was on the board, and they went over to that board meeting because actually John didn't care about Stetson faculty seeing him, you know. At that point nobody knew.

DR. JOHNS: No.

MRS. JOHNS: Then they came back by. They said, "We'd like for you to join us at lunch." Well, I sat there during the lunch not knowing what he had said or what he was thinking, but I think I knew, too, when they left that we would be moving here. But I'll

never forget, when they were getting in the car for John to take them back to the airport, Tom Hartness leaned over, and he just was standing by the car, and he said, "I just want to say we really do hope you will come" or "We really do want you to come" or something like that. He was so sincere, and of course that's one of his trademarks anyway.

Dr. TOLLISON: So what was going on at Stetson at this point in time? Was there anything going on there that would make you want to leave?

DR. JOHNS: No. In fact we were doing fine.

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah, they didn't want us to leave. We were happy.

DR. TOLLISON: How long had you been president?

MRS. JOHNS: Eight years,

DR. JOHNS: Yeah. It was different at Stetson in that it was a true university.

DR. TOLLISON: It had a law school...

DR. JOHNS: It had a law school, a school of business, it had administration, and the liberal arts college, and a school of music, and in fact, the chairman of the music department here ...

MRS. JOHNS: Well, he's not chairman, but Bing Vick was a student at Stetson.

DR. TOLLISON: Oh.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, he graduated from Stetson and he came here after he did graduate work.

DR. TOLLISON: That's great!

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, we're proud of him.

DR. TOLLISON: I'm sure you are.

DR. JOHNS: But that is the story of the transition.

MRS. JOHNS: And we were totally happy. We had had our three children born down there and raised down there, and the way it sort of leaked out...Furman was playing basketball in Jacksonville, Jacksonville University I think. A reporter asked somebody from Stetson, "Does the president of Stetson support sports?" He said, "Oh, yes." That was how the word kind of got out that Furman was looking. Don't you think that was the way it was?

DR. TOLLISON: Were you all at the game?

MRS. JOHNS: No...and then somebody had been on, you know, the ten years you have your accreditation during evaluations, and John was to be on the Furman evaluation team as the president. After his name had been on the list, he called the headquarters where they were in Atlanta, and said, "I don't think I should stay on that because my name's been on the list." So he said, "But we understand you have withdrawn your name," and John said, "Well, that's true." They said, "Well, we still want you to be the one to do the accreditation for Furman." So he said, "Okay, since you understand all that." John came up, and then he called me and he said, "You know, I don't think it's just a coincidence, but I'm having lunch with a different trustee every day." So they were kind of looking him over. That was in March of '76, you see. That was soon after he had been up here and had said no, he was going to stay at Stetson. Then he came on up as one of the accreditation...but the head of our music school was also on the accreditation team, and he saw that group of Furman trustees walk across the campus when they were down to interview John, and the word spread. He said, "They're down here trying to get John." He recognized them, so that was how the word ...but we, it suited me fine to come back because I grew up in North Carolina so it was close to home right here.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, we can visit her home now in Asheville.

MRS. JOHNS: But we were happy there so there was no reason for us to leave. Of course the thing that, I think, brought us both back was alma mater, because we wouldn't have left there for any other place.

DR. TOLLISON: So it was the bad weather that made you not want to come up here.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, in January...

DR. TOLLISON: Anything else that was going on with Furman that wasn't quite as attractive? Or were you just very happy at Stetson?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, no, we were just happy down there, and John knew everything there was to know about Furman, because of having been on that team, you see. So he knew exactly... I always thought it was kind of funny. When Wayne Weaver, who was Vice President of Finance would send him documents for him to read before he came up here, and he would look at what they spent on grounds. He said, "I know where I can save a lot of money. I can save a lot of money. Look how much they spend on grounds!" Well, when we got up here, he found out why they spent so much because it's so beautiful.

DR. TOLLISON: So how did the trustees change your minds when they came to visit you?

DR. JOHNS: Well, I'd say their general description of what they wanted me to. Mostly, they gave me assurances that they would help me upgrade the faculty and...which is

always a challenge, how to handle that.

MRS. JOHNS: I think that's true, and I think John had been very successful in raising money for Stetson, and they wanted somebody who could raise money at Furman. Indeed he did, you know, [he] took the endowment from way down here to way up there, and besides, I think they were making a good choice.

DR. TOLLISON: Of course. What was the state of Furman at the time? Is it fair to...was it sort of on par with Stetson or was it not quite there? I mean, Gordon Blackwell was exiting ...

DR. JOHNS: I would say that they were about the same. That's not true anymore. I think Furman is many steps ahead now mainly because of the support it has achieved. Furman receives a lot of money every year, and of course the administration will always poor mouth, but you'll notice they're adding to the faculty and they're building buildings, and now its...

DR. TOLLISON: There's activity.

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah, and we'd always loved Furman and, you know, after having graduated. The way I happened to come.

DR. TOLLISON: Tell me your story.

MRS. JONES: Well, I grew up in Shelby, North Carolina, and I had two brothers who came to Furman before I did. The way they happened to come, because most likely they would've gone to Wake Forest, maybe, because that was a Baptist school, but someone from Furman, it was Richard, what was his name? He was director of admissions, [and he] came up recruiting in the Shelby High School. He was successful and got three really outstanding students from the graduating class of 1936, and one of them was my brother. I remember, [being] on the porch when they were talking about Furman, you know, when this fellow came because I remember thinking he was so nice looking, what was his name? I cannot say, but he was director of admissions. So these three, my brother and the two friends, came to Furman. Well, then later my second brother came to Furman, so naturally I wanted to come, too. So that's the way I ended up coming here. I went to Mars Hill first. That was a junior college north of Asheville, and I graduated there and then I transferred to Furman.

DR. TOLLISON: So you were two years at Mars Hill?

MRS. JOHNS: Yes, and then I came to Furman.

DR. TOLLISON: Third year.

MRS. JOHNS: Yes.

DR. TOLLISON: And you were living on the women's campus.

MRS. JOHNS: And I was...well, I was living...At that time they put all the transfers in Montague Hall on the Furman campus, on the men's campus. That's why I was in the dining hall when he saw me, and we had a bus that took us for classes. Then the next year they moved the girls to what we called the zoo, and I know you've heard about that. Well, that's what we called the women's college, and I would try to look at the schedule to see what elective I had so I could get on the men's campus. It worked out very well! He didn't have a chance. He thinks he [inaudible]. Anyway, so then we, of course graduated together. We wouldn't have been in the same class had he not gone in the service because he would have been the class of '44, so that's why we graduated at the same time.

DR. JOHNS: She's trying to let you know that I'm older than she is.

DR. TOLLISON: I don't know how... Were you at Furman one year or two years before you went into the service?

DR. JOHNS: Two years.

DR. TOLLISON: Two years, and then you came back.

DR. JOHNS: Yes.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay. What would you all do on your dates? Where would you go?

DR. JOHNS: Well, there wasn't too much to do. I happened to have a car, an automobile...

MRS. JOHNS: We went to movies, and I know you've read about Dr. Winston Babb, who was the history teacher. Well, actually, he and John were pretty close to the same age. I guess Winston was maybe a couple of years older. We would go out with them on Sundays and Mary says that I kept the children for them. I don't remember that, but I probably did. They had two little girls, Judy and another one.

DR. JOHNS: ...No Sunday movies in Greenville...

MRS. JOHNS: We went to Hendersonville.

DR. JOHNS: ...and the four of us would go up to Hendersonville. After diner we'd take in the movie...

MRS. JOHNS: And we went to Shelby a lot. We went to Hendersonville to a friend's house on weekends, and we had a lot of social activities on the campus. All the KA [Kappa Alpha Order], all the fraternities had big parties at the Poinsett Hotel, which was elegant, elegant, elegant. So we had plenty to do. I think probably more than they find

to do now. I don't know. I don't know what they do now, but we had a very good social life. Then we went to Chapel Hill.

DR. JOHNS: I chased her 'til she got there.

MRS. JOHNS: Then we'd go back to Deland, because he didn't go straight through to his doctorate. He get his masters, and then we'd go back to Deland and have a little boy, and then go back to school. Then Stetson said, "We want to keep you" because when John went it was for a one year appointment that first time. They said, "We want you to stay" and so they made it possible for him to keep going to school, then we'd go back and have another little boy. We had three eventually, and you know, it was a good life.

DR. TOLLISON: You're a history major and you were home economics.

DR. JOHNS: Yes.

MRS. JOHNS: Primary in education and Spanish.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay, and I think they stopped having the Home Economics major...

MRS. JOHNS: They did, pretty soon after that, which was probably a good thing.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay. What was the condition that the campuses were in when you all were there? This was right before the move.

DR. JOHNS: Well, Geer Hall was by far the newest, and it was in good shape. The arrangement, each...it was a man's hall, and it really was two small bedrooms, one on either side of a study room. You walked into the study room and went either to the right or the left to your bedroom, and...books and that type thing. So we had good accommodations, and mostly good professors. I would say Delbert Gilpatrick, who was by far my favorite. Gilly and I got along fine, and I know he was one of the...I don't guess I had been back up here as president two days before I spent an afternoon with Gilly. He was, of course, feeble at that time, but.

MRS. JOHNS: And through the years we had stopped to see him on Bennett Street here in Greenville. The woman's college looked pretty good. You know, those were the years when you'd have teas and they'd have silver services and, you know, everything was really, really lovely. Mrs. Plyler deserved a lot of the credit for that as she does for the whole campus. Even though it was old, it was really very, very pretty.

DR. JOHNS: The lake on this campus, whoever's responsible for that...that little stream was all that was there. They were in Scotland, and they got to saying; Wonder if we could have a pond or something, and so they wired the architects and the architects wired back two words: Lake feasible.

MRS. JOHNS: Did Bea tell you that? Bea Plyler? You know, she's so modest, she

doesn't...I have to say things for her. I have to give her credit where credit is due.

DR. JOHNS: Martha has a hard time saying it for her.

MRS. JOHNS: No, she deserves so much credit for the beauty of this campus, but she has such wonderful taste anyway. But they did...anyway, that's the story of the lake. Then when they said it was feasible, they dammed up that little stream and that's where the lake is.

DR. TOLLISON: You mentioned that they traveled to Versailles and to England, and that's where they got the idea for the fountain and the gardens and the...

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, and she is, I think, the one who suggested the Japanese garden because she used to ride her horse through there, she said, and it was a mess. It was wet, and I guess she thought that would be a good place for a Japanese garden, but anyway she did that. Of course when they moved out here everything was just exquisite, I'm sure. The women's dormitory was beautiful, you know, eighteenth century furniture and everything, but you can't keep that with students these days. [That is] not to say that they are so destructive, but it just doesn't work that way anymore. Everything's different. But Bea...so much of the special things, the trustees' board room, for instance, was always so pretty. She had a hand in everything of that nature. She plays it down, but she did. Dr. Plyler was a handsome man, but you know you kind of...we never felt like we were very close to him.

DR. JOHNS: He was a judge and acted like a judge.

DR. TOLLISON: What was his relationship to the students? Sort of distant, detached?

MRS. JOHNS: I never felt like I knew him. I didn't have much reason to see him a lot. You know, John was on some boards, and I think you met with some trustees one time about dancing over here on campus, because at that time we couldn't.

DR. JOHNS: I was on the wrong side of that.

MRS. JOHNS: I'm sure he was very, very nice but that was...

DR. JOHNS: Very polite Southern judge. A gentleman, but very careful what he said. He acted very proper.

MRS. JOHNS: Handsome man, very handsome man.

DR. TOLLISON: You've had plentiful opportunities throughout your life to observe college presidents from different perspectives. Did you learn anything from watching him from when you were a college student, or did you observe more? Did you learn more from watching the president of Stetson, say, when you were a faculty member? Did you learn things along the way?

DR. JOHNS: Well, let me put it this way. Both of the presidents that I served under were very reserved judges, and you didn't get much out of either one of them. As a result of that their secretaries became very powerful in the hierarchy. I know at Stetson there were two secretaries between you and Ollie Edmonds.

MRS. JOHNS: I think so...Terry Hood and somebody else, and he was gone a lot. He had a lot of other businesses, but he was pretty outgoing.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, a lot of timberland in California...redwoods.

MRS. JOHNS: Lovely wife.

DR. TOLLISON: Stetson desegregated under Ollie Edmonds, didn't it?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, Dr. McEniry, the dean.

DR. JOHNS: Hugh.

MRS. JOHNS: About the same time, probably, that Furman did.

DR. JOHNS: Hugh was probably the strongest, the dean of the university. Now, as I've already told you, you had dean of the business school and dean...but they were just higher paid faculty members. Hugh McEniry...if there was an executive president, he was it. You didn't take your problems to Edmonds, you took them to McEniry, and he'd give you an answer.

MRS. JOHNS: You probably learned a lot from Hugh McEniry.

DR. JOHNS: I'd say I learned more from Hugh than I did from Edmonds.

DR. TOLLISON: And he became president after Edmonds?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Is that correct?

DR. JOHNS: No, they brought a man ...

MRS. JOHNS: Paul Geren.

DR. JOHNS: Paul Geren, in from the state department. He had been ambassador to...

MRS. JOHNS: Libya.

DR. JOHNS: Libya. If you could do it the wrong way, he did it. He was there about...well, he brought one of his cronies in with him who was worse than he was, and sadly, was killed in an airplane accident. Because the law school was in St. Petersburg, you had to commute back and forth by air. That is, if you wanted to get anything done the day you went down, and the plane crashed just before it landed coming back into Daytona Beach.

MRS. JOHNS: But those whole two years were just disastrous. He was there two years, and it was...

DR. JOHNS: Students protesting in his yard, marching, chanting...

DR. TOLLISON: About what?

MRS. JOHNS: Wanting him to leave. A vote of no confidence, and that's what eventually happened. It was very traumatic for everybody, but especially for John because Dr. Geren was on his way to be interviewed for a position at the University of Kentucky, and his wife was driving the car. They went a bad rainstorm, and they had an accident and he was killed. She wasn't; he was. The Associated Press, I think, called, and how they got John's name we don't know, and John hadn't heard about the wreck, and said there had been an accident and what could he tell them about him. It was just such a shock.

DR. TOLLISON: Oh, I'm sure.

MRS. JOHNS: John said, "I'll have to get myself composed. You'll have to call me back." Which they did, or he got a number, or whatever, and then we went up for the funeral. By that time things had just integrated, so his wife was not speaking to any of the faculty members. I was able to keep communication, which was good, and I would say to her, "Elizabeth, they really want to come to see you." She said, "I don't want anybody over here," and it was very hard. John had to pick up the pieces, being vice president for, at that time, vice president for finance, and it was just very stressful. It was...those two years were so stressful, almost as much as the break with the Baptists up here, wouldn't you say?.

DR. JOHNS: More.

MRS. JOHNS: But it was just the wrong man. On paper, he had wonderful credentials. Wake Forest had been looking at him to be president. It just...it probably wouldn't have worked anyway, but...fine Christian man, I'm sure. I don't know...yeah, I think he was. She was, too. But anyway, that was two years because he was there after Dr. Edmonds for two years, and then John was acting president for a year and then they named him president. I always thought that was probably as big an honor as being invited to come back to your alma mater as president, because when your own peers want you to be president that says a lot, and they did appreciate John.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, the faculty down there was, as far as I know, one hundred percent. I don't know of anybody that...

DR. TOLLISON: So eight years later the Furman trustees came down and started talking to you all, and you all decided to come...

DR. JOHNS: ...back to our alma mater.

MRS. JOHNS: Here we are, twenty years later.

DR. TOLLISON: Tell me about your inauguration.

DR. JOHNS: Well, it was very exciting. It's a great honor, you know, but you put on all that paraphernalia and start walking down that aisle and get up on that podium, and you get kind of nervous. But it went off fine.

MRS. JOHNS: It was beautiful. It was in McAlister Auditorium...beautiful day during homecoming weekend, and if you see that picture up there on the left of him walking...

DR. TOLLISON: That one?

MRS. JOHNS: Yes. That was John in the academic procession. I've always loved that picture, and I thought, "What was he thinking?" because that was taken walking into McAlister. I've always thought, "What was on his mind?" and then that picture there with all those people in it? That was all of our family that was here for the inauguration, so it was quite a family gathering too.

DR. TOLLISON: Eugene Proctor told me a great story about how he became...he had to step in as chairman of the board just a few days before Gordon Blackwell's inauguration. I think the chairman of the board had been killed in a car accident, and he was so nervous, and he worried about it all weekend. He went to the restroom, and he was so nervous. Gordon Blackwell was in there, it was his inauguration, and he was taking some pills for his stomach because he was so nervous, too.

DR. JOHNS: If I had had them I think I would have taken them, too, but I didn't have any.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, you gave a good speech, but it was a beautiful...and I still love an academic procession and all the robes and the different color hoods. Way back, different schools would send these beautiful citations. I don't think they do that as much. He had some here, but he had a bunch of them ...

DR. JOHNS: I think they're up in the attic.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, I think so.

DR. TOLLISON: Did people from other schools come to the inauguration?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: From which schools?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, my. Harvard was represented...you know, in the academic procession Harvard was always first because it's the oldest and then they go on down, and if the president couldn't come they sent the representative, and my brother represented Furman or Emory.

DR. JOHNS: Emory.

MRS. JOHNS: He represented Emory, and...

DR. JOHNS: Well, I guess there were twenty-five or thirty schools represented.

DR. TOLLISON: Wow.

MRS. JOHNS: At least. It was very beautiful.

DR. JOHNS: And of course having everything on one campus was so much easier. At Stetson we had a branch at Melbourne once, on the Cape. The law school was in St. Petersburg. The business school and the liberal arts college and the music school were in Deland, and administratively it was...you can see, dealing with prima donnas and deans.... [inaudible]

MRS. JOHNS: Well, it was a beautiful inauguration.

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: And I think Frank Bonner thought that he had...

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah...

MRS. JOHNS: I know that he had pretty much planned it all.

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah, here you don't have those schools, so you deal with one man. You can get to know him and make friends with him.

DR. TOLLISON: What was your relationship with Dr. Bonner?

DR. JOHNS: Good.

DR. TOLLISON: Did you ever get to...I've been told by several people that they felt

that he hoped that he would become president one day. Did you ever get that sense from him?

DR. JOHNS: No, but I've heard it.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, from other people, and I think that would be a natural thing for him to aspire to. He'd been at Furman all [of] his career, from Alabama to the University of North Carolina to Furman, so it would have been natural.

DR. JOHNS: In their latter years both of his predecessors leaned on him pretty heavy for advice and faculty control.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, he certainly gets credit for building the faculty. Well, Dr. Blackwell, too, the two of them together. That was pretty much what they set out to do.

DR. TOLLISON: So it was a working relationship...?

MRS. JOHNS: John didn't have to worry so much about the faculty. He already had a good faculty here in place pretty much. You might want to keep adding to it, but he was going to focus on raising money.

DR. TOLLISON: What were your main priorities when you first came to Furman as president?

DR. JOHNS: Increasing the endowment and keeping the faculty strong. Strengthening some of the administrative offices, and then of course, really that helped a great deal when we got into the fight about who's going to control the institution. We had a good team in place to run the college without outside help. Now, I don't mean money wise, but trying to please every splinter group, we were strong enough that we didn't have to do that.

DR. TOLLISON: Let's talk about some of the people, some of the administrators. Joe Roberts worked with you?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah. Joe was wonderful for what he did. He was kind of the Baptist man.

DR. TOLLISON: The liaison between...

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, and Joe didn't have too strong of convictions on anything...

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, I wouldn't say that, but he could go out to churches and present Furman in a really good light, and he made it...

DR. JOHNS: Rural, he would go into a rural church and they'd want to carry him out on their shoulders.

MRS. JOHNS: He did a good job.

DR. TOLLISON: Did you hire him?

DR. JOHNS: Yes.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, no, he was an assistant to Gordon [Blackwell] when you came. I mean, had been, and you kept him, but he was ...I think you might have changed his title some, but he was doing the same thing for Gordon that he did for you.

DR. JOHNS: Baptist relations, but Joe was liked. I mean, the Baptists liked him, but he could talk to you five minutes and you wouldn't know...

DR. TOLLISON: It's okay because we can deal stuff. That's fine. I've heard it all. We were talking about the condition of Stetson after the president, Dr. Geren. What was the general sentiment after Dr. Blackwell left? Was it that Furman was in pretty good hands, that there was some work that needed to be done?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah. Oh, no, they left it in good shape, Lib and Gordon, oh, yeah. We stepped into a very...

DR. JOHNS: Peaceful.

MRS. JOHNS: Peaceful, happy situation, and we were welcomed with open arms. They made us feel so welcome, and.

DR. JOHNS: Gordon was ready to quit.

DR. TOLLISON: He was ready to retire?

MRS. JOHNS: He was ready to retire and ...

DR. JOHNS: He wasn't forced.

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, no, so it was just a very happy time.

DR. TOLLISON: And you all became friends with them?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah. Well, actually, we had known them before, and before you came back, we had been in a meeting in Williamsburg, and Dr. and Mrs. Blackwell were up there, and Frank Bonner, too, and you all played golf. So they had had a social relationship before. .

DR. TOLLISON: And did you all overlap any when you were president of Stetson and

he was president of Florida State, or was that when you a professor at that point?

MRS. JOHNS: No, I don't think so. I don't believe so.

DR. JOHNS: I knew him, I knew of him, but...

MRS. JOHNS: He was at woman's college...University of North Carolina, and then Florida State because I remember some of the other presidents, but no, we did not.
[Interruption from phone ringing.]

DR. TOLLISON: Was he teaching in sociology here? I think that was in the late thirties, maybe, so it was probably before you got here.

DR. JOHNS: Well, if he was I wouldn't have know it, but I don't believe I had a sociology course.

DR. TOLLISON: Gotcha. What about some of your priorities? Let's talk about...tell me about **Phil Winstead**, who was the secretary of the committee that selected you. Was he one of the people that flew down on the airplane?

DR. JOHNS: No.

DR. TOLLISON: No, he was not. Did you get to know him?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah. It's still...we were real friends.

DR. TOLLISON: Was he a trustee?

DR. JOHNS: No, he was... [Inaudible].

DR. TOLLISON: He was a faculty member?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: He chaired...

MRS. JOHNS: I won't say a word.

DR. TOLLISON: I wanted to make sure it didn't pick up our conversation. I don't think it will pick her up but we can wait a second. So he was chair of the faculty. He was the faculty representative on the committee.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay, and what department was he a member of? Do you remember?

DR. JOHNS: Sociology comes to mind. I wouldn't want to [bet] my life on that.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay, and he also was on the committee that selected Dr. Shi.

DR. JOHNS: Yes.

DR. TOLLISON: We're talking about [REDACTED]?

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah. That was Bea.

DR. TOLLISON: Oh. How is she doing?

MRS. JOHNS: She's doing fine. We were going to pick her up tomorrow for convocation so we were making some change in plans. We were going to pick up _____ Bonner, too. Yeah, Phil and...I think they've moved, I know they've moved down to Litchfield, I think. They stay down there all the time now.

DR. TOLLISON: What about athletics? I've heard you were a big athletic supporter. Tell me about...I know it's always sort of a juggle weighing athletics and academics, especially with the faculty always being concerned about academics being a priority. Tell me about how you juggled that.

DR. JOHNS: Well, I hope successfully, but my feeling is: if you're going to be in athletics, be in athletics, and if you're not going to be, don't get in it. I supported it unashamedly, and to some of the faculty's and all else I know...but we had some good teams.

MRS. JOHNS: Golden years, really.

DR. JOHNS: I don't know whether you noticed in the den there, the years we won championships I have rings in a frame in there.

DR. TOLLISON: No! I'd like to see that before I go.

DR. JOHNS: This is the national championship...

DR. TOLLISON: That's from 1988.

MRS. JOHNS: That's the big one, that's the big one.

DR. JOHNS: December 22, cold and...it was cold.

DR. TOLLISON: It was a great day for you guys.

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: December 22. Right before Christmas.

DR. JOHNS: The town threw a big parade for us.

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah. We had a lot of fans that flew out there, too.

DR. TOLLISON: Oh, I'm sure you did. That doesn't happen every day.

MRS. JOHNS: No. That's right.

DR. JOHNS: And we...

MRS. JOHNS: And we beat Georgia Southern in, two years before...

DR. JOHNS: Archrival.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, they had beat us.

DR. TOLLISON: So they played for the national title in '85 or '86 as well? I'm lost.

MRS. JOHNS: That would have been, was it just the year before that they beat us?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, '85. No, the national championship was '88.

DR. TOLLISON: So was it '87?

MRS. JOHNS: I guess it was '87, but they beat us just the very last few seconds in Tacoma, Washington. I mean, we went way out to Washington to play a school five hundred miles down the road! Three hundred miles, but they had been on, you know, to have that tournament, I mean the finals. So we went and they beat us at the very last minute, then the next year we beat them.

DR. JOHNS: No, I supported the athletics.

MRS. JOHNS: And we had good basketball.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, we had good basketball, and we had nationally recognized women's golf.

DR. TOLLISON: So had you...was that the spring in 1976 right before you got here when a woman won the championship?

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, and that was the first group we entertained. John came home and said, "You know, the girls' golf team has won the national championship. They beat San

Jose State, I believe it was...I think that's who it was. I don't know that anything's been done." We had them all over for a steak dinner, the first to our house. Beth Daniel, Betsy King, Sherri Turner.

DR. JOHNS: We're still friends.

DR. TOLLISON: They keep coming back.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Very supportive, wonderful ambassadors for Furman.

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah, and, see, they have raised a million and a half for the golf programs, men's and women's, golf programs.

DR. JOHNS: We had our own golf course.

MRS. JOHNS: ...done well too.

DR. TOLLISON: Was that, all eighteen holes completed when you were here?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay. That was already...

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, no, no, no. Not when we were students, is that what you mean?

DR. TOLLISON: No, when you were...

MRS. JOHNS: When we came? Oh, yeah...

DR. TOLLISON: I know they did the first nine and then a few years later they...

MRS. JOHNS: Eighteen, they had eighteen, and they had a small little place for the clubhouse, if you could call it that. So it's still not real large, but it's better than it was. But oh, no, it's a fine golf course now, beautiful golf course now.

DR. TOLLISON: Have you ever played any?

DR. JOHNS: Every now and then.

MRS. JOHNS: He played a lot when he first came. Well, as much as you could.

DR. JOHNS: We, those girls, though, still have a lot of loyalty to Furman, and Dottie Pepper...I believe she retired at the end of this season and is going to become a radio announcer... I meant TV, [and] work probably women's tournaments.

MRS. JOHNS: She had shoulder problems so she had to...health reasons.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay.

MRS. JOHNS: But Beth is still playing.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, Beth Daniel.

MRS. JOHNS: Beth was in the paper today. She's won a lot of money this year, probably \$400,000.

DR. TOLLISON: The program is coming up in October.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Are you going to play?

MRS. JOHNS: No, but we used to, we both played in it for years. Yeah, we played with Betsy, we played with Beth, we played with Sherri, we...

DR. TOLLISON: They're just phenomenal.

MRS. JOHNS: But then, you know, there came a time when we weren't helping the team very much. The team wanted to win, so they were very kind to us but we said it's time for us to bow out.

DR. TOLLISON: Tell me about the national championship. Is that the picture you all have with President Bush at the time, I guess, 1988.

MRS. JOHNS: Yes. They honored the team down in Columbia at the State House.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: And that must have been, I guess, in January after Christmas break?

DR. JOHNS: Yes.

DR. TOLLISON: After his inauguration, I guess, sometime in 1988.

MRS. JOHNS: November 1988, and something big was going down there, and I think we had the whole team down there, didn't we? They recognized the team, you know, and some of the others that are in that picture, it was quite exciting.

DR. TOLLISON: Oh, I'm sure. Any other accolades, any other phone calls from important people, well-wishers congratulating?

DR. JOHNS: They gave me the Order of the Palmetto.

MRS. JOHNS: You got that later, though.

DR. TOLLISON: After you became president?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah. It's in the dining room.

DR. JOHNS: It's the Order of the Palmetto and...

MRS. JOHNS: That was when you retired.

DR. JOHNS: ...and the Order of Crescent, which was second.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, which was second.

DR. JOHNS: I think they were both the same time. I got the Crescent, what, about two years ago?

MRS. JOHNS: Two years ago, and you got the Order of the Palmetto when you retired.

DR. TOLLISON: My aunt was just awarded the Order of the Palmetto this past spring, So...Ellen Tollison Hayden, she was the executive director of the Governor's School for Science and Math, the Foundation.

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, wonderful.

DR. JOHNS: Wonderful.

DR. TOLLISON: She retired as well, and but it was very exciting.

MRS. JOHNS: It's a nice honor.

DR. TOLLISON: It's a very nice honor, definitely.

MRS. JOHNS: The highest one that the governor can give.

DR. TOLLISON: Exactly, so I can fully appreciate the honor. Let's talk about the split with the Baptist Convention, and feel free to go as far back...I mean, I've done some research on this and know that some of these problems, these conflicts, the struggle with the power....

DR. JOHNS: You probably know more about it than I remember.

DR. TOLLISON: I doubt that. Do you remember...as students do you remember sensing

that there was any type of problems? Any struggles?

MRS. JOHNS: I don't.

DR. TOLLISON: You were not really privy to that kind of stuff when you were a student.

MRS. JOHNS: No.

DR. TOLLISON: What about when you were at Stetson, and, you know, Stetson is also in the Southern Baptist Convention. Were you aware of some of what was going on?

DR. JOHNS: The Florida Convention's far more...I'll say liberal that South Carolina, and I don't remember any real fights.

MRS. JOHNS: No, that had not come into play before...

DR. TOLLISON: I think it was early eighties.

DR. JOHNS: ...fundamentalists...

MRS. JOHNS: After we came here, we went to the Convention in California, and L. D. Johnson, the wonderful chaplain that Furman had was out there. We didn't know too much about the "politics" of all this at that time, and we'd say, "You just tell us who to vote for" pretty much because we didn't know, but it didn't take long to know that they were there to take over, They had a 10-year program, and they did it in ten years. You've read that, I'm sure, and...

DR. TOLLISON: Was it that deliberate?

MRS. JOHNS: Pretty much.

DR. JOHNS: On their part?

DR. TOLLISON: Yeah.

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: We weren't very organized because we didn't realize it was such a...we knew there was a problem but we hadn't gotten our...

DR. TOLLISON: They were very organized.

MRS. JOHNS: They were organized, and we hadn't gotten our crap together.

DR. TOLLISON: Was it a public strategy or was there a lot of...?

DR. JOHNS: I'd say ten pastors made all the decisions.

DR. TOLLISON: Nationally?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, for the group.

MRS. JOHNS: And they had decided to take over the Baptist schools and seminaries, certain Baptist colleges and seminaries.

DR. TOLLISON: They thought it would trickle down if they had control.

MRS. JOHNS: They gradually did it, and the one that was elected president out there was...what was his name? It turned out John had taught him at Stetson, but he was...

DR. JOHNS: Adrian Rogers.

MRS. JOHNS: Adrian Rogers was the first one.

DR. TOLLISON: What college was that?

DR. JOHNS: Stetson.

MRS. JOHNS: John, you taught him at Stetson, but he was a very outstanding Baptist minister in Florida, down in the Melbourne area, which was growing by leaps and bounds at that time because of the space program. It was the first church I ever knew that had a gymnasium and all these things, you know, and he was the one they had chosen.

DR. JOHNS: But he was so fundamentalist conservative, he would not wear a bathing suit when he went in the ocean swimming. He'd wear regular short pants.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, I didn't know that.

DR. JOHNS: I mean, just hung up on...

MRS. JOHNS: But anyway, that was that Mr. Pressler, Dr. Pressler, you know?

DR. TOLLISON: I've heard his name. Paul?

MRS. JOHNS: Paul Pressler. They had their agenda planned and they were able to get it, elect the people they wanted, and then from there it just progressively got worse. Then when you realized what was happening, that's when Furman and other schools...Wake Forest did it first, realized what was happening and they made the break, voted to let the trustees choose them.

DR. JOHNS: Well, Tom Hartness probably told you that he and I went to see several

ministers together.

DR. TOLLISON: He mentioned that briefly. Let's go back a little bit further. What were, specifically, some of the problems? I mean, I understand what they were trying to do, but how did it affect Furman specifically and your job as the board of trustees as well?

DR. JOHNS: Well, they wanted very conservative professors. I mean, fundamentalist professors. They wanted very tight social rules. They wanted absolute control of who joined the faculty.

MRS. JOHNS: And the board members. That was kind of where they started was with the...you see, the way they elected, in years before that, Furman would present a slate that they would like to have on the board. Didn't you do ten names?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: And it would be any of these ten, and they would just get it automatically. If they had three vacancies, three or four. Always from that list.

DR. JOHNS: And we had enough sense to be certain that there were enough Baptists in there, but our kind of Baptists, that they would elect.

DR. TOLLISON: But they'd still have to be from South Carolina.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, but then when the fundamentalists began taking over, they wanted their people.

DR. TOLLISON: So how many fundamentalists were...I mean, were these people that were name tagged or were they just so obviously...

DR. JOHNS: Yes.

MRS. JOHNS: You knew who they were.

DR. JOHNS: They were more than happy to get the limelight of being able to speak on the podium or have a couple of newspaper people interview them.

DR. TOLLISON: So power speaking...

MRS. JOHNS: Well, we even had a member of the board who was on their side.

DR. TOLLISON: That's what I was going to ask. Was it just one person or...how many people, how many of these fundamentalist appointees were on the board of trustees when you started to become very concerned?

DR. JOHNS: Two.

DR. TOLLISON: Two? And you realized...

DR. JOHNS: Yeah. I realized we had to stop that in a hurry, and we...

MRS. JOHNS: They can name so many a year, isn't that the way it was?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, and of course you can count on both hands how many years that would take, and we started resisting. Actually, it was the convention here in town that it openly flared because Minor Mickel was chairman of the board. We kept, I believe it was, two trustees that should have gone off the board; we kept them on so there was no vacancy, but the Baptists were raising hell about the fact that they didn't get on it. Then one thing that helped us a great deal was the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Charleston was very anxious. He was a stark fundamentalist. He was very anxious to start a Baptist college that was a Baptist college near Charleston. At that convention he made a fiery speech about what they needed was a Baptist college that had nothing but Christian faculty, I mean Baptist. So Charleston Southern got into the picture, and he raised...he did more than anybody else to bring the split.

DR. TOLLISON: Because he sort of...[inaudible]?

MRS. JOHNS: I didn't know that.

DR. TOLLISON: ...[inaudible] to have a college?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, and he's got one that's got about, I guess three thousand students. A gentleman that worked for me and was close to me until about three years ago... You know we used to go out to lunch up at North Greenville.

MRS. JOHNS: Are you talking about Jimmy Epping?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, he's still your friend.

DR. JOHNS: Well, he hasn't called me in two years.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, well, he's just been busy. He's an old friend.

DR. JOHNS: But anyway, he is doing well. He's increased his... Since he's become president, he's increased it by about a thousand students.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, you see, the fundamentalists went after...I used to see it was said, the Phi Beta Kappa schools: Wake Forest, Furman, Stetson, Richmond. They were the ones who really could afford to get out from under the Baptists. There was a time when

Furman would have really struggled without the money from the Baptists. They needed that money. It's true it wasn't a whole lot of money, but they needed it.

DR. TOLLISON: Right.

MRS. JOHNS: And, you know, then of course later when they didn't give a whole lot of money but they wanted 99% of the say in how the place was run. So, you see Anderson College, North Greenville College, the smaller colleges, stayed with them. Shorter College was a small one in Georgia, and now they've got a big fight going on. Mercer, you know...but it was the Phi Beta Kappa schools that were able to make it without the Baptist money.

DR. TOLLISON: Furman...the Baptists contributed, was it about three percent of Furman's annual operating budget at the time of the split?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay, so...I mean, all money is significant, but it's not a tremendous amount. Was that your thinking: that we can make this up?

DR. JOHNS: We didn't miss it.

MRS. JOHNS: They made it up through foundations because sometimes they ...

DR. JOHNS: Go to New York, and it seems they would read the papers and they knew you were in the middle of a fight with a bunch of kooks before you got up there. You walk in, and they're on your side immediately.

DR. TOLLISON: And who is this? People in New York?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, the foundations.

MRS. JOHNS: Kresge Foundation, all those, you know.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay.

DR. JOHNS: And large corporations. Like down at Stetson in the law school, the Fords of Ford Motor Company poured a lot of money into...

MRS. JOHNS: Firestone.

DR. JOHNS: Firestone. Did I say Ford? Firestone. Heck, well, it goes on a car. A Ford automobile has got a lot of Firestone tires.

MRS. JOHNS: But they did support Stetson very well.

DR. TOLLISON: So how many...okay, so this is 1989 or so, and you've got two fundamentalists on the board of trustees...was it about that time? Because it was '90 that you all first said, "We don't want to split but we want to have some control over bringing in our trustees." Were the Baptists...you were supplying the names to the Baptist Convention and they were totally disregarding what you had supplied at that point?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Naming just the people that they wanted?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: So in order to pass this kind of legislation within the board of trustees clearly didn't have to be, votes didn't have to be unanimous, because you two dissenting, at least.

DR. JOHNS: But you had to move before you got more than two.

DR. TOLLISON: Right. So what, was it two thirds...it's a two-thirds vote to pass any type of?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, but the Convention, then that was in the fall... In the spring, the Convention held a special convention in Charleston.

DR. TOLLISON: This is the spring of 1990?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: In Columbia, maybe?

DR. JOHNS: No. It was in Charleston. They voted to kick us out, and...

DR. TOLLISON: This is after you'd gone through the waiting period...that was in 1992.

MRS. JOHNS: Gosh, let me think.

DR. JOHNS: Let's see, I've left off...is when...

MRS. JOHNS: In '94.

DR. TOLLISON: But in 1990 you all told them that you wanted to name your...put your contributions in escrow for...

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: That's in a meeting here in Greenville, it was the regular state convention, but someone made the motion that they put the money in escrow and it passed.

DR. TOLLISON: Was that, they usually meet in November, right?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: In 1990, Okay, so they put the money in escrow...

MRS. JOHNS: And one of our own trustees supported all that, one of the fundamentalists tried to...

DR. TOLLISON: How about some of the other people that were involved? I want to talk about some of the trustees that were sort of helping, leading you, very supportive of you, helping you lead the charge. Didn't a group of alumni come to you and express their concerns?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah, mostly lawyers.

DR. TOLLISON: Who, was Tommy Thompson in that?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Who else was".

MRS. JOHNS: Neil Rabon.

DR. JOHNS: Neil Rabon and Tommy Thompson...

MRS. JOHNS: Larry Estridge, was he involved?

DR. JOHNS: Larry Estridge.

MRS. JOHNS: It's all in that book.

DR. JOHNS: Dan Joyner. Dan Joyner, of course, is not an attorney, but is well known in town.

DR. TOLLISON: And these are people that were keeping up with what was going on and...

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, and they wanted to...well, they just began doing a lot of research and John said, "I'm all for you if you can find a way out of this."

DR. TOLLISON: So they came to you and said, "Let's try to break away," and were you

at that point, had you thought about it?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Had you shared it with anyone?

DR. JOHNS: No.

DR. TOLLISON: Or was this too radical an idea?

DR. JOHNS: Well, we tried to keep it as quiet as we could until we got the law, and the lawyers sent a committee several times to Columbia, and met with [REDACTED], who agreed with them on what the law said, and then we presented it to the Convention. That's when the Convention voted to withhold our funds until their lawyers had a chance to look. In the meantime, the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Charleston was running all over the state saying what they needed to do was let us go and build their own college in Charleston, and that's Charleston Southern now.

MRS. JOHNS: And then y'all did attempt to work with the fundamentalists, but that Mr. Schrum, who was chairman. After they'd been meeting for a whole year, lots of meetings, they just threw that out immediately, but that was when everything was downhill---uphill for us. So it was a good thing.

DR. TOLLISON: So when the alumnus came to you and said, and proposed, you know, we've been researching the possibility of breaking away. They'd looked at the charter to see who actually has ownership over the University, et cetera, et cetera... I want to get sort of a feel for your mindset at that point in time.

DR. JOHNS: More power to them.

DR. TOLLISON: Had you considered doing this?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yes.

DR. TOLLISON: Had you wondered if it was possible?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay, but hadn't looked into it extensively.

DR. JOHNS: Well, I hadn't hired a lawyer because I knew that some of the best young lawyers in Greenville were working on this, and I met with them at least three times and discussed at length what they were thinking and what I was thinking. It came down we were all thinking the same thing. I was thinking administratively; they were thinking legally, which was what should be. They were in absolute agreement that Furman did not belong lock, stock, and barrel to the South Carolina Convention.

DR. TOLLISON: Do you remember the ins and outs of the charter, exactly what the relationship...?

DR. JOHNS: No, I don't.

DR. TOLLISON: I'm sure it's just a matter of wording, really.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, but it's in that little book.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, in fact I was so disgusted with it that my mind has put aside a lot of that petty stuff. All I know is that after the special convention in Charleston...

MRS. JOHNS: It was in Columbia. Are you talking about the one at the fairgrounds?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, that was Columbia.

MRS. JOHNS: That was Columbia.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, that was in Columbia.

MRS. JOHNS: It was in May. A very hot dy.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, because I remember thinking that it was the correct place to hold such a convention. It was in the stables.

MRS. JOHNS: Of the fairgrounds, and that's when they voted...

DR. JOHNS: To kick us...well, to the split.

DR. TOLLISON: So there weren't a whole lot of people that were associated with Furman, but this is a convention of delegates from South Carolina Baptist churches?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah. I'd say a thousand people.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay. What was the vote, do you remember?

DR. JOHNS: No, but it was overwhelming.

DR. TOLLISON: Overwhelming to let...?

DR. JOHNS: To split.

DR. TOLLISON: At this point the Baptist Convention was tired of Furman...

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, and it was what we wanted, too.

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: So it worked out.

MRS. JOHNS: It worked out.

DR. TOLLISON: Wow. And so you guys were...describe how you were feeling.

MRS. JOHNS: It was a very stressful time, because you didn't know what those yokels were going ...you know, the things about Furman and all, but it was very stressful that whole year. John would have retired probably sooner. He was about seventy, but he wasn't about to back off of that fight. He was the right one for the job, and he knew those people and he knew more about Baptist politics, so to speak. Who would have wanted to come in to a fight like that? You couldn't have gotten a very good ...

DR. TOLLISON: Your father was a Baptist minister?

DR. JOHNS: No. He was never ordained. He was a layman, but he was in Baptist politics all his life, just about. He taught school.

MRS. JOHNS: And he had been president of the Florida Baptist Convention.

DR. TOLLISON: Oh, so you...

MRS. JOHNS: So John...

DR. JOHNS: And he was superintendent of the Florida Baptist Children's Home, supported entirely by the Baptists and foundations. So I grew up from a child to the Charleston Convention knowing Baptists and what they thought.

DR. TOLLISON: And how to handle that relationship.

DR. JOHNS: And how to handle that type of situation, so I didn't get high blood pressure at all, except one or two times.

DR. TOLLISON: Did you travel around to Baptist churches talking with them?

DR. JOHNS: Occasionally.

DR. TOLLISON: What was your purpose usually in talking to them?

DR. JOHNS: Talking about Furman and its mission.

DR. TOLLISON: The Baptist structure is very democratic, so it's very feasible that a specific Baptist church could have independently maintained their contributions to

Furman without...

MRS. JOHNS: And they did. Some did. After the split many Baptist churches kept giving to Furman.

DR. TOLLISON: I've heard great stories about you walking into rural Baptist churches and everyone loves you as you're walking out.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, he did a good job. He could speak their language and it was sincere on John's part. When things were going, you know, when it was all very good, he enjoyed going out to the churches, and he felt they deserved to know what was going on at Furman. They were supporting us and so it was a happy, harmonious time, and I think they all really loved him at that time, and some still did after the break, but not the fundamentalists, but he enjoyed that. He really did.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, I knew them and could speak their language. They understood me, and [they understood] that it had to be done because we would really be in a mess now. I mean, it's getting worse, the fundamentalist control, and I might add the leadership of the faculty here was very surprised that I stuck it out, see, because of my father. Me being reared in the Baptist situation, and...

MRS. JOHNS: What A. V. Huff's article states is that when it came time, you were an unlikely candidate, but you kept to it, and did it. You were the man, I think he said, the man for the job. A. V.'s article is just wonderful, the whole...he did a great job from the very beginning of the movement until it was over.

DR. TOLLISON: Let's talk about the reaction from people around the state in terms of did you all receive letters of support, did you receive ugly phone calls...?

DR. JOHNS: I received one letter that consigned me to hell from a pastor.

MRS. JOHNS: He called you Judas. I read that not too long ago.

DR. TOLLISON: You still have it?

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, I still have it. A lot of them were thinking things, but they didn't put it in writing, but one man did write.

DR. JOHNS: The pastor of a small, small church within fifty miles of us.

DR. TOLLISON: Really? Did you find that statewide most of the...I mean can you break it down in terms of how some of the churches felt about things in terms of the upstate, midlands, and low country. Was there any part of the state that was more conservative or more of...

DR. JOHNS: The low country, because of the pastor of the First Baptist Church in

Charleston.

DR. TOLLISON: It tended to be more conservative.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, and he was bad-mouthing us, as I was saying, because he wanted to start his own college, which he did. We had more support from the urban areas, from the midlands and the upstate.

DR. TOLLISON: Hardy Clemons was pastor of First Baptist Church?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah, big supporter.

DR. TOLLISON: Was he a big help?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: Very.

DR. TOLLISON: He was very much in line with what your agenda was?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, absolutely, and he went on to be the first president of the moderates in the Convention.

DR. TOLLISON: Right. He told me a story about how he went out to...this was in 1989, I think he said it was, and he hadn't been in Greenville for very long and was still feeling things out, and came back and announced that he no longer considered himself a Southern Baptist, and that he would no longer be attending any more Southern Baptist Conventions and that if they needed to talk about things they could, but he just wanted to get that out.

MRS. JOHNS: That's the way we felt after we went to California, too. We did go to one more; we went to one in Dallas, but that did it. Once we went to the one in Dallas we said, "That's it."

DR. TOLLISON: So when you...it was eighteen years or so, that you were president, you all only went to a handful...

DR. JOHNS: To two.

DR. TOLLISON: To two?

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, I guess just two.

DR. TOLLISON: Before the '90, I guess ...was there one in '91?

DR. JOHNS: Well, now, that was state conventions.

DR. TOLLISON: Oh, okay, we're talking Southern Baptist Conventions.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, we didn't always go to those, but we did go to...always we went to the state convention.

DR. TOLLISON: You were required to report to the Baptists...

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah. The state of the union speech, and he did at the one here after they voted to put our money into escrow. John said, "I just don't understand." It's all in that article but that was a pretty stressful time.

DR. TOLLISON: It's a fascinating story. What an impact to have made on...

DR. JOHNS: Well, it had to be done. As I say, some of the faculty members didn't think I'd follow through because of my background, but they wanted me to.

DR. TOLLISON: Overwhelmingly? The faculty ...

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: We've got a little plaque out there. They framed a bullet on the day that everything happened they commemorated it by saying you bit the bullet, and it's out there on the wall.

DR. TOLLISON: Which faculty members were especially supportive of the plan to you?

DR. JOHNS: Alumni come to mind. The chairman of the faculty? Who was in history, Martha?

MRS. JOHNS: A.V. Huff wasn't a Baptist, though.

DR. JOHNS: No, but he was a power in the faculty, he was with ...

MRS. JOHNS: And Jim Pitts, the chaplain, of course.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, Jim was a big help, and...

MRS. JOHNS: Edwards, was it?

DR. TOLLISON: Jim Edwards?

MRS. JOHNS: Jim Edwards was the chairman, I think. I think he's in some of those pictures.

DR. JOHNS: Let me put it this way; let me turn it around and say I don't know of anyone that was strongly opposed.

DR. TOLLISON: What about trustee members? Who was especially...I know Minor Mickel was chair of the board. Was she very involved?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah. Locally. Now, she was not known in Baptist circles outside of...is she a member?

MRS. JOHNS: Yes, she's a member of First Baptist Church.

DR. JOHNS: You know she's deathly sick now.

MRS. JOHNS: But John and Minor spoke, during all that time, almost daily. And Tommy Thompson, the lawyer, the three of them. Minor did a super job.

DR. TOLLISON: She had [inaudible] as well.

MRS. JOHNS: I'm sure when she was chosen president she didn't know all she was going to have to face.

DR. TOLLISON: She was the first female chair of the board, is that correct?

DR. JOHNS: Yes.

DR. TOLLISON: And the trustees elect the chair of the board?

DR. JOHNS: Yes.

DR. TOLLISON: Does the president provide recommendations or is it entirely motivated by the trustees?

DR. JOHNS: No.

DR. TOLLISON: Wow. What a responsibility.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: What other trustees were very supportive of you during that time?

DR. JOHNS: Alester.

MRS. JOHNS: Alester Furman.

DR. TOLLISON: Which Alester Furman?

MRS. JOHNS: Junior. His father had passed away by then. He's still living. Alester, Jr. is still living. He lives up on Paris Mountain. No, he's Alester the Third. I'm sorry. His dad was Alester Furman, Jr., and he had passed away. It's Alester the Third, and he's been a trustee for...

DR. JOHNS: And Jim Hamrick over in Spartanburg.

DR. TOLLISON: What about Lloyd Batson?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah, Lloyd was big.

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yes. Lloyd was the limit for that crowd.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, Lloyd was a big supporter.

DR. JOHNS: In fact, there wasn't a member of the board that... [Changes tapes]

DR. TOLLISON: How did those two trustees that represented the fundamentalist faction, how...this has got to be uncomfortable for them.

DR. JOHNS: It was, and they got off just...They resigned, one of them by letter and the other one did come to the next meeting, [and] very tactfully said that he didn't feel that he should stay on. The rest of the members of the board very tactfully agreed with him. I mean, there was no...

DR. TOLLISON: There wasn't a whole lot of acrimony going on?

DR. JOHNS: No. Since then, we...see, the Convention in Columbia voted to cut off all funds, and then the problem was to find out how much money had been given to the Convention in Furman's name, and that was done by accountants, and we got that money. So there was no hangover.

DR. TOLLISON: And churches knew from that point on that if they wanted to give money they were to give it directly to Furman?

DR. JOHNS: That's right. And every now and then we'd get a check.

DR. TOLLISON: Wow. That's such a fascinating story. I'm sure there were alumni that were, that fell on both sides of the coin. How did you handle that? Did you, and I'm sure it was in the Furman magazine, was there an issue dedicated to explaining this, or at least an article?

DR. JOHNS: An article. Surprisingly, not many alumni objected. You see, the rift was all the way through every church, and the pastor of the church usually won out. So we had, Furman had sympathizers all over the state, and particularly among the alumni, even

a good number of Baptist preachers who graduated here. So really the pot didn't boil after Charleston. When they voted to cut off their funds that pretty much did it. Columbia, why I keep...why Charleston...Oh, I know. I try to forget, but I used to contend that they held the Convention in a very appropriate place, in the stables.

DR. TOLLISON: Let's talk about Wayne Weaver. Did you hire Wayne Weaver?

DR. JOHNS: No, he was here, but I swear by him. I think he was great. Now he and David didn't get along.

DR. TOLLISON: That's okay. We need to be accurate.

DR. JOHNS: Why, I don't know.

DR. TOLLISON: Well, people have differences in philosophy.

DR. JOHNS: That's right, and Wayne, I depended on Wayne I guess as much or more than anybody because he ran a tight ship and the trustees liked him. They trusted him.

MRS. JOHNS: They really did.

DR. JOHNS: And I don't know anything about what happened after I left office, but Wayne and I got along fine.

DR. TOLLISON: He's in charge of the endowment. What's his specific title?

DR. JOHNS: Vice president for finance.

DR. TOLLISON: Vice president for finance. So he's in charge of...?

MRS. JOHNS: He was up here a long time. He was here, and then he left and went with a company over in Spartanburg for just a couple of years and realized that he made a mistake. He went, I've always heard, he went to Mr. Furman, Jr., who was chairman of the board then, and said, "I really would like to come back." Then he stayed all through his career, and I don't know anyone who wouldn't say that Wayne Weaver is just as fine an individual as you would find any place. He worked just as hard for the First Baptist Church in the financial area as he did for Furman. He was...everyone could count on him and the trustees trusted Wayne, John trusted Wayne, and everybody had a world of respect for Wayne Weaver.

DR. JOHNS: I never got an audit report that wasn't...everything was hunky-dory.

MRS. JOHNS: Are you going to interview him?

DR. TOLLISON: He's not on the list.

MRS. JOHNS: He was great for Furman. He did a wonderful, wonderful job.

DR. TOLLISON: What about Ray Parlier?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, Ray's a good old boy.

DR. TOLLISON: He was A. D. from, I guess, 1989 to 1995.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, you know, he followed a great fellow. George Bennett. George is over at Clemson now. Maybe you've been reading about him lately. He was a Clemson graduate, but Furman had hired him as athletic director, and he was just wonderful, he and his wife both. Then when he left to go to the Baptist Hospital in Nashville, Ray Parlier, was his assistant and really George was...he was great for that; going to meetings and getting people and to talk about sports and all at Furman, but Ray was doing a lot of the work, and it was only logical that John would name him as...

DR. JOHNS: Ray had a speech impediment.

MRS. JOHNS: And he didn't have, he just couldn't do what George was so good at. So it was a tough act to follow, but he had worked hard and he deserved a chance. How long was he here?

DR. TOLLISON: Six years.

DR. JOHNS: He's in Tennessee now. He runs...what is it?

MRS. JOHNS: Chick-Fil-A. Very successful, very successful. At the time it was not a popular appointment, but the people realized that he had been doing the work behind the scenes. He hadn't been taking a thing away from George, he just made it possible for George to do things. When it was his last week at Clemson they had a parade, they call it the First Friday Parade, and he was leading the parade last week, and he was... and George was just great, and he was ill and was out in Texas, and there was a little [bit] in the paper, everybody sent him a card, between a certain time, five days, and they got fifteen hundred get well cards. George and Nancy were wonderful, but Ray Parlier did a good job, don't you agree?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, Lord, yes. He did the work and George was the front man. George was smooth.

MRS. JOHNS: Ray did have a difficult speech problem, but he did the planning for the team when they had road trips and that kind of thing, he figured it all that. He was good. He did a good job.

DR. TOLLISON: What about your friendship with Mrs. Daniel?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, that's right, we haven't talked about her. Well, we met, of course,

soon after we came up, and she was a very private person, but she loved to laugh, she loved funny stories. She was a delightful person, and as I say, she was one of the founders of the Rose Ball that they have at the Poinsett Club every two years, and she invited us to be her guests, and she would take the Blackwells, and Henry Carr, and then later when he married Lillian, and we'd get dressed up and he'd would come driving in her limousine (it was a stretch limousine), pick us up, and we'd go down to the Poinsett Club and we had a good time, but we did that just a couple of years before she died, and she wasn't one that you'd just knock on the door without calling her or anything, but she was always very nice to us, very pleasant.

DR. TOLLISON: She took you to theater events?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah, and then when the Peace Center opened she had that box, and she just always invited us to go, and she would have...the lady who lived with her, Marjorie, and sometimes her secretary and sometimes the secretary's husband, but always she would have Gordon and Lib Blackwell, and John and myself and Henry and Lillian, and it was just wonderful. We'd go and sit up there in that box with her, and she liked for John to come by, especially during the Baptist time, the break, even though Minor was, and her family [inaudible], John would stop in the afternoon and tell her what was going on, because she had contributed, she and her husband, so much to Furman. You know, Daniel Dining Hall and the music building and other things, scholarships and all, sp she deserved to know. We had a very good relationship with her, and then Christmas before she died we had gone up to take her a little gift of some kind, and we were sitting in the library, and I mentioned that there had been an article in the magazine "Southern Accents" about her architect, who was [Philip] Shutze, and she had not read it, but she had the magazine, so she asked Marjorie to get it. Marjorie got it, and she handed it to me and said, "Martha, read it to me." So I read the part that Mr. Shutze had said. Now the article was about the architect, but in the article he said his crowning achievement was the Charles E. Daniel home in Greenville, South Carolina. More specifically, the fireplace in the dining room. And I've always been so glad that I said this, because I said, "Mrs. Daniel, I don't remember the fireplace. Could we go see it?" and she said yes. So we got up, and she was a little feeble by then; John got one side of her and I got on the other and we walked into the dining room, and the dining room had this beautiful Waterford chandelier with little tiny lights in it, and that's the only light in the dining room other than in two cabinets that has a display of her birds, so it's not well lit. She said, "Well, it's not very bright in here because Charlie said we would always eat by candlelight" and they did. That house didn't have a breakfast room. They ate in the dining room all the time, so when we moved to that house we ate in the dining room, too! We were there eighteen months, but we did eventually have a little table in the kitchen. But anyway, so we're looking at this fireplace, which was hand carved and it has a bird in it with a rose in it's mouth -she loved roses -and so we were admiring it, so we started back around the table, and she just kind of dropped her hands and just looked at us and said, "You know, I have left the house to Furman, and everything in it." Well, the first part of it, that she'd left the house, was enough to take our breath away, but when she said "and everything in it," well, I did have tears. I hugged her and I said, "What a wonderful thing for you to do" and John embraced her and then we never mentioned it again. We saw her

again, but we never mentioned it. We didn't tell anybody, we did tell Wayne Weaver for security reasons; and we did see her a good many times after that, and she had a beautiful garden, a wash with the man that worked outside a lot, and she would send him down with a little basket. It would have maybe green beans and lettuce, beautiful lettuce. When she died, that garden was just beautiful, but she would give things to the Blackwells and occasionally send things to us, too, and we took her to some nice dinners. There was so little you could do for her.

At that time, the symphony was doing dinners in private homes, and they'd have ten people, maybe, to raise money, and we would invite Mrs. Daniel to go to those, and we did that several times. There was so little you could really do for her, but she never entertained at that house after we knew her except on Sunday afternoons. She loved to have little musicals, you probably heard about those, and she would have Ruby McDonald from our music department to come and play the piano, and it would be Gordon and Lib Blackwell, Martha and John, and Henry and...I don't remember Lil ever coming that much, but I remember the last time we went there, Henry was there with his little boy...and a couple of other couples. We'd just sit in the, at that time I guess you'd call it the music room, it's that little first room to the right. Later I had the piano moved into the living room, but she enjoyed having those little musicales, and then she was in a group, and you have maybe heard about this, and it was Henry Carr and some of her friends from way back, and they'd go to the mountains. Every Sunday they'd take a mountain trip and eat up there someplace, but there toward the end she didn't get out a whole lot. She did go to a lot of Furman basketball games, and Gordon and Lib would pick her up occasionally. We would pick her up, and then of course we would always go inside. Sometimes Marjorie went also, but I think...I guess having that much money, she didn't feel secure to be...you know, you didn't know if somebody would try to kidnap you or whatever. But really, the way we knew her, she was very easy to know, easy to talk to. I remember when I had a birthday party for Mrs. Plyler...I guess it would have been the...maybe 80th birthday, I had invited Mrs. Daniel, and I was really excited we were living here, but she called. She wasn't well that day, but she... she certainly was a great friend to Furman, to leave that beautiful home. Not only that but all the other things. I mean, of course, the chapel. Now I think we...John might have known and maybe others that she was going to leave the money for the chapel, but it was in her will.

DR. JOHNS: I did.

MRS. JOHNS: It was in her will, but I always thought it was sad, that she didn't go ahead and give them the money to build the chapel for the pleasure she would have received from it. Look at the pleasure that the students and everybody...the community have received from that chapel and now with that beautiful Hartness organ in there, but that was not the way she wanted it. But her house was beautiful. We did not change anything. I would say we did a little spring-cleaning, and I did redo the kitchen. I had it painted white [with] pretty wallpaper, and we spruced it up.

DR. TOLLISON: You mentioned you just cleaned some things and ...

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, you know, needed new lampshades, but nothing big. It was...you

know, you can't really improve on perfection, and all those antiques were just beautiful. The articles that are written about it. I know you probably have read and seen pictures. So we just spruced it up a bit.

DR. TOLLISON: And you all had just finished this house.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, we'd been here about a year and a half when we moved up there, and we were there eighteen months.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay; and you decided to go there for security reasons?

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, and we you know, Furman inventoried everything. That was in Wayne Weaver's department.

DR. TOLLISON: He said you had told him, and he changed the locks that very day, the day that she passed away?

DR. JOHNS: Yes.

MRS. JOHNS: Well, you know, there were a lot of people that probably had access and a lot of things could have walked out of that house. You know, the artwork, the silver that was in it. They couldn't walk out with the furniture, but they could have certainly, you know, if the wrong people were in it, and then after she died Furman did have security there at that front gate. Of course it's not gated in, there's not a fence around the place but it's on nine and a half acres, and they did send, after she died, I mean right after she died they did have a security person there for a good while.

DR. JOHNS: You know, from this room you could go in the back of the house. The front of the house, it must be 150 yards off of the street before that.

MRS. JOHNS: Which is Warwick Road. That's really the front of the house, and what you see from Roe Ford Road is called the arrival entrance and the materials about it.

DR. JOHNS: Get a picture of the Stetson House.

MRS. JOHNS: Okay, I'll show it to her in a minute.

DR. TOLLISON: Did he mention that you thought Gordon Blackwell might have known that she intended to leave the house to Furman?

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, I don't know really why I think that. I've just always thought that. There's no way to find out, but I just always felt that.

DR. TOLLISON: Tell me about some of the other things that you...you went through her luggage and her...

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, well, you know when we...we started, I guess, pretty much in the kitchen, and I guess we squatted down and, you know, old stuff, because she'd been there a long, long time ...

DR. JOHNS: Charlie died in 19...

MRS. JOHNS: In the early sixties.

DR. JOHNS: I thought it was the fifties.

MRS. JOHNS: No, I think it was in the sixties. I think it was '64...and just, you know, got rid of stuff that...but we didn't just throw anything out; certainly not anything of value. Anything that we thought could be used anyplace at Furman, like the drama department. Her niece came and got things, and of course there were specified things in her will that went to the family members, but things that were just left.

DR. TOLLISON: Her niece...?

MRS. JOHNS: She had a niece, I think, in Georgia, that came up. But we just, you know, clothes that were left, they could use in the drama department. Some of the luggage that was there, I remember that we sent over to the drama department. Anything...and some linens that had been used but they were perfectly good. We called the hospice and they said they'd love to have them, so, you know, between what I was thinking and what people at Furman were thinking, there were a lot of us over there working. It wasn't just me. Norma Floyd, who was Wayne Weaver's secretary, was pretty much the one in charge of inventorying everything. They put all the silver in the living room and photographed it and Furman came and...this is all in a book, everything that was in that house. We were busy doing all of that, getting it all fixed up, and I don't remember the first...I know the first time we opened the house was to students, freshmen, that September...

DR. TOLLISON: For orientation?

MRS. JOHNS: Yes, during orientation, and it looked so pretty with all the lights, and the garden was so beautiful. The girls looked so pretty and the boys were so handsome. It was really a lot of fun. Then, as I said, we had Furman faculty, we had the maintenance people, the United Way, the Red Cross. You name it. Anybody that wanted to raise money, they called and wanted to have their fund raiser at White Oaks, and we let them pretty much do it.

DR. TOLLISON: What did Furman provide? Did it provide house cleaning or...?

MRS. JOHNS: Well, I had a wonderful, wonderful person named Barbara Kamieniecki, because we didn't move up there right away. We'd go up there but we didn't live up there, and I knew I wasn't moving in until we had plenty of good help up there. That was a big place, and even though we had plenty of services from Furman, and they knew we were

looking. A staff member told me that I might be interested in interviewing Barbara Kamieniecki, and she was an answered prayer. She was absolutely wonderful. She's still there, and I know that Susan has said, "Oh, I don't know what I'd do without Barbara Kamieniecki" and I don't know what I would have done without her. She came in. She was born in Poland, and she had two young boys and her husband, and they had gotten out of Communist Poland, and you'd never know it now, but they were, her words. You know, she got the dictionary downstairs, and she'd come in sometimes and say, "What does that word mean?" But Barbara could cook, she could clean, and she is absolutely wonderful. [Editor's Note: Barbara Kamieniecki worked at White Oaks until soon after the Shi's retired in 2010.]

DR. TOLLISON: Did she live there?

MRS. JOHNS: No, I think... I don't know what they call her. She should be called an executive housekeeper, but she was such a hard worker. I'd say, "Barbara, we could get help from Furman for this." "No, Mrs. Johns, I can do it." But now she does a lot of the cooking for all the big things they have. You'd be surprised. She had been employee of the year at the Hyatt before I hired her, and had worked at Mom's Kitchen, and all that good food at Mom's Kitchen, all that homemade bread and lemon tarts, she made some for me, but anyway, so I hired her. She has just been a Godsend to White Oaks. I mean, within a month, she knew who the plumbers were, she knew who the painters were, she knew who to call. I mean, I could go on about our business, entertaining, which we did a lot. Susan Shi can; Susan did a lot.. Oh, Barbara Kamieniecki has been wonderful, and then Blakey Earl, who had worked for the Blackwells, for their tenure, and for our full tenure, went on up there with us also, not to live in but to work until she retired. And then when the Shis moved in, she had Barbara plus someone who had worked for her before, named Dee, and I'm not sure of her last name; and then of course Furman assigned two men to the yard, to the grounds, and they were there full time. There are four full time people up there, but it takes it.

DR. JOHNS: Your camera's blinking.

DR. TOLLISON: Oh, that probably means that I need to put in another tape. Excuse me for one second. I just have a few more things ...I hope I haven't taken up too much of your time.

MRS. JOHNS: No, you're not. Do you want to take a break? Would you like a piece of cake and some Coke or something? Is this a good time to do it or do you want to keep going while we're at it? [Break to change tapes and eat.]

DR. TOLLISON: Okay, here we go again. Just a little bit more. Okay, where did we leave off?

MRS. JOHNS: I think we left off talking about Mrs. Daniel. We probably have finished that.

DR. TOLLISON: And White Oaks. Let's talk about the Hollingsworth bequest; when you found out about it and you're very involved on the board of directors now ...

DR. JOHNS: Well, Mr. Hollingsworth was a very eccentric individual, and very private. His uniform was a pair of overalls and brogans. He very seldom came to the campus. He came once in a suit, and hardly anyone recognized him. I would speak, and he would speak. He invited me out to see the plant, and I went to see the plant, and he told me about his semester at Furman, and that after one semester he had to go to work. Red Hughes was his buddy out here.

MRS. JOHNS: Red Hughes was a trustee and a very close friend of Mr. Hollingsworth.

DR. JOHNS: In fact, I would say one of the few that Mr. Hollingsworth had, and I was called one day to an attorney's office downtown, a large firm. The attorney said, "John, I want to tell you something, but I want you to know that if Mr. Hollingsworth ever finds out that you know Furman's in his will, he'll cut it out."

DR. TOLLISON: Why did the attorney want to tell you?

DR. JOHNS: He wanted me to court Mr. Hollingsworth without Mr. Hollingsworth knowing I was courting him. I mean why I was ...

MRS. JOHNS: Mr. Hollingsworth was already giving some money to Furman. Every year this lawyer would call John around Christmas time and John would go down to the office and pick up a check, but before that he had told John that he was he going to put Furman in his will, but he didn't want anybody to know it. We could understand that because everybody would be after him and when you said few friends, he probably had friends, but Red was probably his best friend.

DR. JOHNS: Very few.

DR. TOLLISON: A private person.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. JOHNS: So about a month or two months after David became president I went up and told him. I emphasized don't let him know you know. Well, the next thing I knew, he and the director of development Don Lineback visited Mr. Hollingsworth. Well, he didn't say anything, but it frightened me. But anyway, everything worked out fine. The man died, and Furman's in the will for forty-five percent of the income. Now, not forty-five percent of the estate, but the income, and it amounts to about a half of a million dollars a year.

DR. TOLLISON: And you're on the board of directors for that?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah.

DR. TOLLISON: And Furman appoints three people or does the Hollingsworth Fund appoint?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, three people.

DR. TOLLISON: Furman appoints them. So it's you and, who are the other two?

MRS. JOHNS: John Cothran.

DR. JOHNS: John Cothran in real estate and Ed Good, who is also in real estate. Ed Good and John Cothran. John is real close to David.

DR. TOLLISON: Okay, and how are you all hoping that this will benefit Furman?

DR. JOHNS: Well, money. Most of the wealth is tied...practically all of it is tied up in property in the lower part of the state and in factories. Well, let's see...two factories in Germany, one in Brazil, and one in Thailand, plus, of course, the one here. The cloth does pretty well, but the real money is in real estate and timber, so that's how that's going to help is there ...

MRS. JOHNS: It's more machinery, isn't it, than cloth? It's more machinery, isn't it, that makes...I never have understood what...

DR. TOLLISON: So at this point it's difficult to put a lump sum on it in terms of how much it will benefit Furman?

DR. JOHNS: Yeah. I couldn't tell you how much. If they just up and sold everything they had, it would be in the several hundred millions. The income off of it, as I say, is mostly timber and manufacturing, but Furman does get about a half million a year.

DR. TOLLISON: Tell me about...Johns Hall is a beautiful addition to the campus. How did they tell you all that they were going to name the building for you?

DR. JOHNS: I don't remember.

MRS. JOHNS: I don't remember. I guess the trustees told John that they were...I did, I believe that was in a letter that I had from Furman. I believe he was the one that made the motion that it be named Johns Hall. Anyway, the trustees did it, and I'm sure they told him, but I don't remember.

DR. JOHNS: Nobody told me until they started.

MRS. JOHNS: We needed a new academic building, and they honored him by naming it for him, which was wonderful.

DR. TOLLISON: Very appropriate.

MRS. JOHNS: I do get goose pimples when I see John E. Johns Hall.

DR. JOHNS: And I appreciated them doing it before I die.

MRS. JOHNS: I'd say, "John, did we ever dream that this would happen?" You know, he never dreamed about even coming back to Furman, and he said something about when we were... and I said well, I knew when we graduated and we were going to get married, I knew whatever he decided to do he would be successful. If I had thought you wouldn't, I wouldn't have married you.

DR. JOHNS: And that's the truth.

MRS. JOHNS: I just thought that he was going to be okay. I wasn't going to marry an old bum, but anyway, we could never have imagined the turns that our life has taken. I mean, when you start to be a history professor you're not thinking about being a college president. It seems that actually for David and John that maybe the directors of development are the ones who sometimes get into being president in some cases. I know that's what happened at Stetson; he'd been director of development at Wake Forest and then came to Stetson in that position and then was made president. You know, we could never have anticipated it, but we wouldn't change a thing. It's been wonderful.

DR. TOLLISON: Tell me about the Martha Johns seminar room that you surprised her with.

DR. JOHNS: Well, I just thought that if my name was going to be on it, hers ought to be apart of it, too.

DR. TOLLISON: Absolutely.

DR. JOHNS: So I asked Lineback what that room...I'd take that room because it really has.

MRS. JOHNS: It is the prettiest room.

DR. JOHNS: It's the choice room, I think, and he told me. I said, "Well, I'll write you a check," and I did, and they did.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, John and the boys did that, and it really is a pretty room, and the dedication was really, really beautiful and exciting. That write-up was so nice. I believe John Roberts in development did it, and Marketing did it, and it was in the publication about how so many people came from five different states. We had Florida, some Stetson friends that came, and I believe if we had invited a hundred more they would have come.

DR. TOLLISON: I'm sure they would have.

MRS. JOHNS: But we did have a lot of friends who came and a lot of family who came, and it was a beautiful, beautiful time. Exciting time.

DR. TOLLISON: What's your field of specialization in history?

DR. JOHNS: American.

DR. TOLLISON: American? Which time period?

DR. JOHNS: Actually, post...

MRS. JOHNS: Mostly southern, I guess. He's got a book up there on the Civil War. He wrote a book on Florida during the Civil War.

DR. TOLLISON: Really? My boyfriend's father would love that. I'll have to buy a copy and get you to sign it.

MRS. JOHNS: It's up there somewhere. It's been out of print but...

DR. TOLLISON: Can you still purchase copies of it?

MRS. JOHNS: I don't know, but do you know that last year we had an e-mail from a teacher in a middle school in Florida who had read that book, and her students were going to do a play, and he had referred to that play in the book. We couldn't believe it, just all of a sudden; and then, of course, they're building a Confederate museum here, and they want John to... and all of a sudden that book was coming into play. We hadn't thought about it for a long time, but anyway it's up there somewhere: *Florida During the Civil War*. The state of Florida published it.

DR. JOHNS: It was in their centennial publication.

DR. TOLLISON: And you serve on the chapel guild, is that right?

MRS. JOHNS: Well, they haven't said anything to us since the new chaplain came, but maybe we are still...I don't know. When we built the chapel they asked for me to be on it, and it was good to have ...you know, we had several faculty wives and everybody had, and musicians, to have some input about who could use it and how it was going to be. We did meet fairly regularly but come to think of it, I haven't had a meeting since... so either they don't know that we were a committee or they've decided that...I'm sure that in time he'll probably re-establish it, maybe with us or with somebody else. Whatever Vaughn CroweTipton decides is fine with us. I think he's doing a really good job, as is Ray, Keith Ray, his assistant. But now that you mention it I don't know.

DR. TOLLISON: Well, tell me about what you all think about the direction Furman is going in now and how ...you've all been part of Furman since the 1940's. So how do you

think it's changed and how have our priorities changed, the character of the place? What's stayed the same? But not the campus. Obviously that's very different.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah. Well, I'm glad he's completing the campus. That needed to be done.

DR. TOLLISON: What's this...I've heard people refer to... people who know the big picture...I understand that he is actually completing the final phases, and that inherent in that is that this was actually part of the big plan?

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah. They had a master plan, and everything, Courtney, is just almost exactly where they planned it on the master plan. The chapel, you know, it's wonderful the way they've been able to follow it. Younts Center probably wasn't on it, the master plan; hopeful, maybe, but not in any specific place. But the chapel was, and other buildings.

DR. JOHNS: And Cherrydale is on the spot where the trustees stood and decided to buy the property for Furman.

DR. TOLLISON: That's a beautiful...

MRS. JOHNS: Dr. Plyler brought them. She probably told you they were thinking of three places, and then he brought them there. He used psychology on that to save the best 'til last.

DR. TOLLISON: The mountain range and the view, all the land. It's wonderful.

MRS. JOHNS: Isn't it gorgeous? Yeah, I would say that Furman is still, even though it's nationally recognized and all that, it still has that warm feeling that has always permeated Furman.

DR. JOHNS: For a small school...

MRS. JOHNS: I really think that if you ask, well, people like we are, who graduated in the forties or alumnus who are coming back, I think they'd feel the same way. That it's bigger, it's more beautiful, but it still has those qualities that made Furman so special.

DR. TOLLISON: Dr. Pitts told me a great story that sort of illustrates the character of Furman. He decided when it was time to decide a new chaplain, you walked around on campus and asked people what they thought, and asked Junius Gladney, who was working in the Paladin, about how a lot of things were done in terms of just relationships.

MRS. JOHNS: Oh, yeah, John is a people person. John related to everybody on the campus.

DR. JOHNS: Well, see, we used to give dinners for the...

MRS. JOHNS: Facility services to get together.

DR. JOHNS: Down at their shop, and we'd feed the whole bunch.

MRS. JOHNS: And John would say, "I can't do what I do without you doing what you do. You are important." And do you know, Courtney, we still see those people and they still will say, "We appreciated that."

DR. TOLLISON: I'm sure they did.

MRS. JOHNS: Because John made them feel a part of it and told them how much he appreciated them, which was genuine, sincere.

DR. JOHNS: Can you imagine what this campus would look like if they let it go?

DR. TOLLISON: I think it would grow up pretty quickly. There's a lot of green stuff over there.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah. In fact, I sent an e-mail the other day to Rick [inaudible] to tell him what a good job ...because Furman keeps our yard up, too. What a good job they do, and how much we appreciate them, and I said, "They work hard and they do a good job, and they're not only people who work here but they're friends, too." They told them that I had sent that. The people need to be told that they are appreciated.

DR. TOLLISON: Sure, I agree.

MRS. JOHNS: But John was very much a people person. And we appreciated Jim Pitts, too. He certainly did a good job. He followed L. D. Johnson. Dr. Johnson had been so beloved, but by the time Jim finished, he was beloved, too.

DR. TOLLISON: I've heard. I know Dr. Pitts, but I've heard things about Dr. Johnson, about what a special person he was and how important he was to the Furman community.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, he really was. He was special, and I'm glad we did get to know him, but Jim Pitts has been very special to us.

DR. TOLLISON: Well, I think that's about it. Can I get you to do your FU cheer? I've never seen it. I keep hearing about it but I've never seen it. You'll have to do it for me.

MRS. JOHNS: Do you remember it?

DR. JOHNS: I can't forget it! That's the day that...it was the first ball game that David came to as president that the students started the chant: Come on down, Dr. Shi, come on down, Dr. Shi. He went down there and he gave them the yell.

MRS. JOHNS: Two, four, six, eight, who do we appreciate?

DR. JOHNS: And they never have called him since.

MRS. JOHNS: Come on, we'll do the yell.

DR. & MRS. JOHNS: FU one time, FU two times, FU three times, FU all the time!

MRS. JOHNS: You know, Courtney, everybody loved that and they loved the fact that we'd go down to the students, you know.

DR. JOHNS: The townspeople would stand and give it.

MRS. JOHNS: We loved it. Everybody did.

DR. TOLLISON: That's great. I'm glad we have it on tape now.

MRS. JOHNS: I'll show you two things about that before you leave.

DR. TOLLISON: Oh, great. I'd love to get some of those pictures on my camera as well, if you don't mind. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you guys think is important?

MRS. JOHNS: I can't think of anything.

DR. TOLLISON: I think we probably covered a lot of stuff.

DR. JOHNS: We certainly feel that Furman is treating us the way that we like to be treated.

MRS. JOHNS: Very thoughtful. We get to vote on everything and enjoy it, but we don't have any responsibilities.

DR. JOHNS: And we know so many former presidents who can't say that.

DR. TOLLISON: I've been told that Furman treats their former presidents very well.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, they do.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, and we appreciate it.

DR. TOLLISON: What other things do they...I mean, they help you with the yard and they include you in...

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, you know, convocation, and if John wanted to march he could, but he never does that. Dinners and...we don't go to White Oaks to everything and we don't expect to be invited to everything, but the things that we should be, we are included, and

we appreciate it and enjoy it. It's fun to go and not have the responsibility, and you know, a lot of times people say, "Do you miss it?" Well, you miss it in a way, but it was time to move on, and we're happy with David and Susan and the way everything's going, so that makes it easier, when you're happy.

DR. TOLLISON: Tell me about...we didn't really talk about how he was selected. He was...you brought him in as Dean, right?

DR. JOHNS: Yes, with malice aforethought.

DR. TOLLISON: And you said that you'd been keeping tabs on him?

DR. JOHNS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. JOHNS: Yeah, he had followed his career and knew he was well respected in educational circles and all, but actually the trustees named the president. They had a committee and that committee would come over. I guess, I don't know if they all came every time they brought somebody over there, but anyway the trustees interviewed the people, and they narrowed it down. I guess they narrowed it down to five. I think you said he was chairman, but I don't remember that he was chairman.

DR. JOHNS: I think he was.

MRS. JOHNS: But that was their decision, but we were happy with that decision.

DR. TOLLISON: He consulted with you all?

MRS. JOHNS: Not with me.

DR. JOHNS: Briefly.

MRS. JOHNS: They knew...well, I did say something one time, but just sort of an aside. We were happy that they were named.

DR. JOHNS: Well, as I say, we have been very fortunate in that we have been able to adapt happily to whatever it is, it is.

DR. TOLLISON: Well, thank you so much for spending this time with me today.

MRS. JOHNS: We've enjoyed it, Courtney. Thank you for asking us.

DR. TOLLISON: I have enjoyed every minute of talking with you all, so I really do appreciate it.

MRS. JOHNS: It isn't work, when we can talk about Furman.

DR. TOLLISON: No, it's not, is it? I completely concur.

MRS. JOHNS: We love it.

DR. JOHNS: Where do you live? Here in town?

DR. TOLLISON: Well, I was living in Atlanta before I started teaching here in January, and I actually still have a lease in Atlanta on an apartment that's running out in the middle of this fall. So I'm hoping to be back in the...

DR. JOHNS: Well, are you meeting classes now?

DR. TOLLISON: No.

MRS. JOHNS: This has been her project for several months.

DR. TOLLISON: All summer, for the most part.

DR. JOHNS: That's great.

MRS. JOHNS: It will be a wonderful thing for Furman to have.

DR. TOLLISON: I'm so excited putting it all together and from here this process is going to work is that the tape will be typed up by a transcriptionist, and I will mail you all a copy. It will probably be about a month or so. I'll mail you all a copy and at that point in time you all can read over the whole thing and then you can add little things or if you want to..."Oh, I didn't really say that the way I wanted to" you can go in and rewrite the sentence or something and then if you could just mail it back to me. Then I can type that stuff in, and it should stay over in the archives, the transcript and the copies of the tapes and stuff.

MRS. JOHNS: I think it's a very good thing.

DR. TOLLISON: I think it's important to Dr. Shi.

MRS. JOHNS: And to future people.

DR. TOLLISON: Future researchers, certainly. A lot can be learned from the past. I know it sounds like a cliché, but it's true.

MRS. JOHNS: Right, and if you don't get it. I mean, we're not young but Mrs. Plyler's in her nineties, you know. She's sharp as a tack.

DR. TOLLISON: I enjoyed talking to her quite a bit.

DR. JOHNS: That low country brogue.

DR. TOLLISON: She showed me members of her family, Dennis and all those people.

DR. JOHNS: Yeah, the Dennis family was a political powerhouse.

DR. TOLLISON: That's what I understand, and her father. ...

DR. JOHNS: When I first came up here the Dennis' ran the Senate, and they didn't cross him. He could help you, and he didn't forget his sister.

DR. TOLLISON: She is a lovely person.