

# Dr. Lloyd Batson

Interviewer: Dr. Courtney Tollison

Interviewee: Dr. Lloyd Batson

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### Transcript

**DR. TOLLISON:** Today is Wednesday, August 11, 2004. It's about 10:30 a.m. and we're sitting here on the Furman campus. I'm talking with Dr. Lloyd Ellis Batson today. You were a 1947 graduate of Furman; [you] attended North Greenville College for two years (North

Greenville Junior College, I guess it was back then), and you served in World War II. [You] graduated from Furman in '47. You began your first term as a trustee on January 1, 1963; you were appointed by the South Carolina Baptist Convention. You served five five-year terms under four different presidents, and in 1987 Furman granted you an honorary Doctor of Divinity. You are also a former president of the South Carolina Baptist convention in 1977. Is that correct?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Okay, we've got all the facts down, now we can talk.

**DR. BATSON:** We may mention it later in connection with the problem with the South Carolina Baptist Convention that one of the determining factors in my role was because I had been involved with the takeover. On a national level I chaired the 78-member board of... what was then called the Sunday School Board in Nashville. It was the largest thing that Southern Baptist do. I saw this process at work, and I didn't want it to happen to Furman.

**DR. TOLLISON:** We can definitely talk about that as well when we get down into the later stuff. I want to start off really early. [Let's] go way back. You said that your father attended Furman.

**DR. BATSON:** Yes. He was in World War I, and [he] graduated from here I think in 1920, but I'm not certain about that. That's a little uncertain to me.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Was he from around this area?

**DR. BATSON:** Up here in Mountain Creek section of Greenville County. Obviously he was a commuting student, a day student, because he also worked while he was here. He was pastor of churches also while he was at Furman.

**DR. TOLLISON:** He was a Baptist minister as well. And do you remember him talking about his student days, any memories that he had?

**DR. BATSON:** Very little. One of the prized documents that one of my brothers got was Daddy's transcript from Furman, and all his grades weren't the best, but he was working and...

**DR. TOLLISON:** He had other things to do. Did you grow up hearing a lot about Furman?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, some, but not the detail. We don't even know how Mother and Daddy met. Daddy was here at Furman. She was working here, but we neglected to ask him a lot of things, and that's a tragedy to me, and I'm trying not to let that be replicated with my children. I want them to know everything they want to know about us.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Okay. So you grew up in Pickens County, is that correct?

**DR. BATSON:** No, I... My father, after [his] Furman days, was pastor in the Greenwood area.

I was born in Greenwood in 1924, lived there one year, [then] moved down to Sumter County and then to Clarendon County. So I never lived in the upstate.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Okay, so that's why you mentioned that you had never actually been to the Furman campus?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Okay. You attended North Greenville Junior College for two years prior to serving in World War II, is that correct?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, I was there and volunteered in my sophomore year. [I] was not called, actually, until immediately after I was graduated, and I had the privilege of having full graduation from North Greenville. I spoke at the graduation.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Your fellow classmates asked you to speak or... ?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, whatever qualified you to speak, valedictorian or whatever, I don't know that sort of stuff.

**DR. TOLLISON:** And what was your, do you have majors in a junior college? What was your major?

**DR. BATSON:** No, but I came to Furman with enough history and English and math, actually, to start in to any one of those majors that I would have chosen. I did choose history with a minor in English.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Excellent choice.

**DR. BATSON:** I thought so.

**DR. TOLLISON:** So you majored in history here?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes

**DR. TOLLISON:** Okay, and attended Southern Baptist Seminary afterwards, is that correct?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, ma'am. I went there in the fall of '47; [I] stayed there a long time. Of course ,I did my doctorate there. [I] also taught while I was there; [I] instructed in Greek of all things.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Oh, my goodness.

**DR. BATSON:** You guessed what I said...

**DR. TOLLISON:** When you returned from war you began taking classes at Furman in January

of 1946.

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, in January. I don't know the day...

**DR. TOLLISON:** Okay. Talk to me a little bit about what you remember from college in terms of fellow friends (I know you mentioned Dr. Johns, [though] he wasn't Dr. Johns then, lived across the hall). [What was] the scene of the campus? The effect of World War II on Furman? President Plyler? Anything that you would like to share about your student days at Furman.

**DR. BATSON:** Well, it was an exciting time for me, and because I was in the early influx of veterans from the war, the pot was stirring of course. A lot of...my classmates, some of them had been at Furman before and gone to the war, but I was the new kid on the block. I was accepted on an equal with the rest of them.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Were there lots of others that were coming to Furman for the first time?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, well, a considerable number because Furman had been (I guess you could say it's always been provincial to a degree), but it had been probably a localized [school]. But the influx of students came from everywhere afterwards; everybody was going on the GI Bill and all that kind of thing. The GI Bill certainly helped me out.

**DR. TOLLISON:** A lot of others, too. Did you all have veteran's organizations, student organizations?

**DR. BATSON:** No, I don't, not that I know of. I was done with veteran's organizations. I'd been one.

**DR. TOLLISON:** You wanted to move on as a student?

**DR. BATSON:** But there was not any major hangover of military fever...except that some of the students were more mature than they would have been if they had gone straight through. That was both good and it did create some problems because the veterans tended to believe they had the answers to everything, and they didn't want to fit any regimented mold. That was a little problem.

**DR. TOLLISON:** The students were older. [Did] they tend to have more married students?

**DR. BATSON:** Yeah, that's... and that also, now Dr. Johns was not married then. He was across the hall in Mullen. Was it Mullen? No.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Manley?

**DR. BATSON:** Geer Hall. Mullens is in Louisville. But he and Martha [Mauney] dated. They had these prefab things back off there, and the married couples stayed there. My roommate at North Greenville was married during the war, and he and his wife lived in one of those ramshackle places. They were pretty dumpy.

**DR. TOLLISON:** What was his name?

**DR. BATSON:** Harold Moore, and he married a lovely lady named Becky or Rebecca. Harold's still alive, believe it or not, down in Georgia.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Did most of the married couples, if the men were attending Furman, what would, what did the women do?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, some of them were in school, too, because it was a good opportunity for them. At that time (and I can't think of the name), there was a dormitory, by the way, in which women lived right up above the dining hall. Do you know the name of that?

**DR. TOLLISON:** I think it was Manley. As you may recall, they called them the Manley women.

**DR. BATSON:** It might have been, I don't know, but I know that my roommate courted a girl that lived up there and married her. By the way, I've got a lifelong friend. [I] went to his 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary three or four weeks ago. I wrote Furman. I hadn't been here. I just said, "Assign me to somebody that you think can get along with me. I can get along with anybody."

**DR. TOLLISON:** To live with.

**DR. BATSON:** So, I walked in, he was already there and a freshman, but he had been in the Marines. He came in as a freshman. . . came out from behind the little closed place in there. He was from **Septola**, Georgia, and from that day, we've been very close friends. [Editor's Note: So far I have been unable to find any place resembling Septola, Georgia.]

**DR. TOLLISON:** What's his name?

**DR. BATSON:** Paul Nix. That was a fortuitous arrangement, really.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Tell me about Dr. Johns as a student.

**DR. BATSON:** Well, to begin with, he could wear what I could not. He had been an officer, and he wore these colorful trousers and stuff, you know, but he was delightful. He was just not presidential in appearance, because he was doing like the rest of us—we wanted to live out our own life. He was really a great guy and I... of course, Martha always steals the show, you know that.

**DR. TOLLISON:** What was she like?

**DR. BATSON:** He moved to a different step because of his involvement with Martha. I had no steady girlfriend. I liked them all. That was true. I went to New Mexico to get mine.

**DR. TOLLISON:** To get your wife?

**DR. BATSON:** To get my wife. I met her in 1943 in Texas where I had gone for basic training, and I married her seven years later.

**DR. TOLLISON:** And what's her name?

**DR. BATSON:** Joy Louise Barrick. If we weren't on tape I'd tell you how I met her.

**DR. TOLLISON:** You're welcome to if you'd like, it wouldn't bother me.

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I've always gone to church wherever I've been, so the first Sunday I was there in basic training (the good Lord put all the mosquitoes he ever made down there in Camp Wallace, Texas) I found a chapel. The chaplain got to praying, [and] somewhere down the line he prayed and he prayed and he prayed. I guess I was irreverent, but I got tired of that. I looked up, and there was a pretty 16-year-old girl looking up at me. Our eyes met. Seven years later I married her; she was the daughter of the chaplain. I told him many times [that] if he had known what was going to happen, he would not have prayed that long that Sunday.

**DR. TOLLISON:** That's a cute story.

**DR. BATSON:** But we did not marry until after I had done my first degree at seminary.

**DR. TOLLISON:** What do you remember about the campus, the downtown men's campus?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, one of the chief reasons I liked it was because right down the hill was a brand new Krispy Kreme doughnut place. It was convenient, and I was totally satisfied. My impression was [that] it was well kept. I had no complaints with the operation at all. I was... Also, I taught in the afternoon over at Parker High School.

**DR. TOLLISON:** What did you teach?

**DR. BATSON:** A class of veterans in English. That's the best job I ever had.

**TOLLISON:** Really? Why do you say that?

**DR. BATSON:** Because at the time it provided me the extra money I needed. It paid two dollars an hour, a fabulous price at that time, and I taught two hours every afternoon over at Parker High School. I had fun because there were no restrictions on how I did it, and every once in a while (there are a few of those people left yet) they thank me for those good times we had.

**DR. TOLLISON:** How nice. That's very nice.

**DR. BATSON:** The dining hall was family style, and the food, I thought, was good, but you know what happens. It happens now, but [even with] that fabulous provision of food here, students complain about the food [because of] the monotony and whatever, or just because it's the thing to do to complain, I guess. But I thought it was good. They also served at the table,

brought food to the table. They also had a prayer before you ate, and about nine times out of ten, they called on me to pray (not because I had any particular touch with the Master, but I could talk above the din, and I could turn it up and didn't need a megaphone). It hasn't been long ago [that] somebody reminded me of one of the prayers that I prayed. That always astounds me when somebody reminds me of what I said. They were complaining about the food, and one prayer... and I happened to remember when I did that, my prayer was, that day, very short: "Lord, we thank you for those things that are good. Help us to make the most of those things that are not good. Amen." The facilities were, I thought, you know, coming from North Greenville... What a contrast between the campus at North Greenville then, but it's a fabulous campus now.

**DR. TOLLISON:** It is. I've seen it recently.

**DR. BATSON:** But the contrast between that and Furman was really impressive at the time.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Who were some of your favorite professors?

**DR. BATSON:** I guess Dr. Gilpatrick was, like just about everybody else, you know, and. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** Why was he so popular?

**DR. BATSON:** Well to start with, he was intelligent, and he was not cut-and-dry. I was majoring in history, but there was another professor here in history under whom I took several courses. He... would come to class with his dog-eared notes, untie the dirty string, and read from those things. But he had one factor, though, that, I guess it came in handy. My handwriting is terrible. Well, late one night I wrote a term paper, something about Indians, I don't know what it was about. When he brought those things back, I saw mine right at the top [and it] had an A+ on it. Dr. Taylor said when he started the class, "Now I want to read to you an example of a very good paper." He picked mine up. He never finished the first sentence. He said, "Ah, Mr. Batson, will you come up and read this for me?" What happened (I'm sure that it probably wasn't so)...but it seemed that the very first grade you made in his class was what you got during the rest of the time.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Well how convenient for you.

**BATSON:** And so, A+. Of course, it wasn't that bad a paper, but he just couldn't read. He didn't read it. People still have trouble reading mine, but my mother always said that she liked my sorry handwriting because she could make it say whatever she needed it to say. But, mentioning the campus... Dr. Plyler, I have a very high opinion of him, by the way. He was different from anybody I had had personal acquaintance with, and I had a few private conversations with him, and he was always nice to me. All of us students, particularly the veterans, oohed and aahed over Mrs. Plyler. She was a very young, beautiful lady. I've never heard anybody else relate this: I was either coming or going to that class over at Parker School, and I saw Dr. Plyler huffing and puffing in front of Geer Hall. He lived down the hill (down there in the president's home), and he was mad. You say angry, but he was mad. He had been summoned to the chapel by some dissatisfied students. Now, you didn't summon Dr. Plyler, but



he was on his way. He and I met, and I didn't go to the chapel, because, to start with, I wouldn't have been part of it anyway. He and I were standing in front of Geer Hall under his effigy. He had been hanged in effigy on Geer Hall, and I'll bet you that story is not written down anywhere. [Editor's Note: President Plyler had a Juris Doctorate, not a Ph.D., and thus is appropriately addressed as President Plyler.]

**DR. TOLLISON:** No, not that I've come across, certainly. What was the problem?

**DR. BATSON:** Oh, just general dissatisfaction with. . . some of the older students didn't think they were having enough say in what was going on. . . just general problems. I didn't go to the meeting (I mean that's not the way I do things anyhow), and besides I had to go to work.

**DR. TOLLISON:** How did Dr. Plyler respond to the effigy?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, he was just spitting and stewing. He was on his way, and I heard a report from it, but he didn't deal to kindly with the situation, but of course it was his job to listen. I mean you don't have to like what somebody's doing, but you need to learn the best you can from them. But I was a fan of Dr. Plyler. He had cooperatives that I had not been introduced to: his dignity and just general folks and manner of speech and that type of thing. As a matter of fact, I've liked every president.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Really?

**DR. BATSON:** Very much so, and each of them has had his own distinctive contribution to me. That's what I call divine economy. There's a place everybody has a place, and they need to be a different person here. You don't need just a carbon copy of somebody else. There's an opportunity, and each of those presidents did things for Furman [and...] he was admirably equipped. Like Dr. Plyler [who] got to make the acquisition, the change, [and] all of the decisions and get started into the moving of the student campus out here. Then was able to turn over the nucleus of a great campus over to Dr. Blackwell, and then succeeding... Excuse me, I interrupted what you were doing.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Oh, no, I'm just looking. . . So tell me about how you became trustee?

**DR. BATSON:** I came from the seminary to the pastorate in Pickens First Baptist Church in 1956. Then (I don't know for what reason) it wasn't long until I was involved with the Baptists locally and in the state convention. One of the first things [was that] I was elected to the general board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and I don't know how long I served there. I was on the executive committee of that, but this was a totally independent nominating committee that [was] elected each year by the state convention and all these agencies and institutions. Then that nominating committee presents it to the convention, and for some reason somebody... the nominating committee... I didn't know I was being nominated until I saw... Then the re-election process (it's new every time) [was] at the end of five years. You had to stay out a year, and then it was starting all over. Furman could request some people, but they hardly ever got everybody they wanted; but back in those earlier days the committee did listen. Now they got where they weren't listening. But Furman... an institution knows what needs are there and ought

to have some input, even if the election is done by somebody else. You need certain qualified people, and one of the things that Furman did not need but sometimes got [was] a whole bunch of ministers. Ministers are not just necessarily endowed to be financial experts or educational experts and stuff (well, they might think they do). I don't know how it got, just [as] I said it was my decision early in life to, if things happened, it happened. I was given that job, and it so happened that I got re-elected along the way.

**DR. TOLLISON:** So tell me about the process by which you all decided to move to a new campus and the reaction from the Convention.

**DR. BATSON:** Say that again.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Tell me about the process by which you all, meaning the trustees, decided to move to the new campus.

**DR. BATSON:** No, that decision was made before I . . . they moved out here. . . I was not on the board when. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** I apologize. I was using '47 as your starting date and not 1963, January 1963. Okay, let's start with, let's see, Plyler was in his last year. Did you all have a feeling that he might be retiring sometime soon? Hadn't he mentioned to the trustees. . . ?

**DR. BATSON:** I'm sure that was so, and I think I was on the search committee for his successor, but as I said, I don't remember, but I think I was.

**DR. TOLLISON:** You were on that committee.

**DR. BATSON:** I have difficulty remembering that sort of thing, and of course I was brand new and would generally yield if it seemed nice and proper to somebody who knew more than I knew about that sort of thing.

**DR. TOLLISON:** What kind of person were you all looking for in terms of bringing in a new president?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I'm not so sure that there was an established list of criteria. There may have been, but Dr. Plyler and his cohorts had brought the nucleus of a great campus.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Who do you consider his cohorts to be?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, see, I was not on long enough to work with those. . . I am trying to think. I think I made a contribution to Furman—might be one of the best contributions I made to Furman. Somewhere earlier I was elected secretary of the board. I don't know what term, when it was, it might've been when. . . My handwriting was so terrible and it was such a nuisance for them to take what I wrote, and it wasn't long until they started having the president's secretary tell me. . . My sorry, like I signed lots of diplomas. It's a fun thing for somebody to come up to me, "Hey, your name's on my diploma." Both as a secretary and as a chair. I chaired the board

twice. That's the major contribution I made to the working process of Furman: being such a sorry secretary that they began bringing in the president's secretary.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Had it all typed out nice and neat, you know. So, January of 1963. What do you remember about the process by which Furman desegregated, recruited it's first African-American student?

**DR. BATSON:** That happens to be one of my choice memories. Of course Dr. [Frank] Bonner was a prime mover in that. I was on whatever the appropriate committee was, to which he reported the actions. It's been a source of great pleasure to me, that internally, (within the board) as far as I knew, there was not any resistance to that final action. If my memory's correct we were the first private institution in South Carolina to desegregate, is that...?

**DR. TOLLISON:** Furman was the first. Well, there was a Catholic junior college in Charleston that was actually first, but it was unpublicized. In terms of four-year private colleges, Furman was the first to make an announcement that we were going to. [Editor's Note: Columbia College offered evening classes to women and men, including African American men in the military, before 1963. Wofford College announced that it would accept applications from African American students after Furman announced its decision to do so, but enrolled its first African American student in the fall of 1964, before Furman.]

**DR. BATSON:** Right, and I had been pastor at Pickens when Clemson was involved in the desegregation, and a lot of our folk were graduates that had been involved in that sort of thing, but. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** Could you compare the two? Could you compare the two schools on their process?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, again, it would not likely to be an accurate assessment, but the process at Furman was, if you please, much more easily accomplished because there was nobody protesting to get admitted. There was no political stuff involved; Furman just did the right thing. [They] admitted them and then announced it. It was...you didn't ask permission from anybody. Now, it didn't sit too well with all the constituency in the Baptist Convention at that time, but it was...I felt as good about that as any single thing that was done when I was on the board, and that was pretty early in my journey with Furman.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Dr. Plyler was very supportive of that action?

**DR. BATSON:** By the way, I'm talking about making a contribution...well, I just thought that you don't take something back after you admit them, you know. Now, there was some disgruntlement, and to some degree Furman doing that helped get another Baptist college in the state started.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Charleston....

**DR. BATSON:** Charleston Southern Baptist College, because... Of course, there'd always been

a feeling in Charleston that they needed a school down there, and [they] would have gotten one at some point. I remember being embarrassed by somebody I knew very well in the South Carolina Baptist Convention [for] haranguing for starting a college down there and supporting it, and, speaking [at] the Convention, promising that that college would always do what the South Carolina Baptist Convention wanted them to do, as if, you know, Furman... There was some reaction, [though] it was just not what was expected in that day. On the floor of the South Carolina Baptist Convention some of the supporters of the proposed college promised that they wouldn't desegregate; they'd do what the people wanted. But one of the oddest things in the presence of God, I think (now you know I try [not to] trivia with the good Lord), but it was funny to me, because one of the first problems they ran into... Now that that new college, when it started, they were so dependent upon the Naval personnel. While they started with the promise it wouldn't be integrated they had to... in order to get the government money, you had to take whatever sailor or whoever sent them, and so they'd have them at night school someplace. But the good Lord uses lots of strange things ultimately, you know that. I was real pleased, and the quality of the students that were admitted, and you know some of them. . . [Editor's Note: The official name of this university is Charleston Southern University.]

**DR. TOLLISON:** The African-American students to arrive at Furman.

**DR. BATSON:** Right. The quality of the black students that were admitted, well, if you gave it a shot, you couldn't dislike them to save your life.

**DR. TOLLISON:** I know, very impressive people.

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, were then and are now.

**DR. TOLLISON:** That was quite controversial. Was that problematic for you?

**DR. BATSON:** None whatsoever, because personally, though I can't say that.. I grew up in a racially divided [era], you know, but it never was a problem with me. I like to tell people, when they'll listen, [that] as far as I know, in that sawmill village of Alcolu, I probably was the only person that was welcomed in every home, black and white. I went into [all the homes] in the whole village. Even before [I was] the paperboy and then a delivery boy for the company store and just as friends. But anyway, it was never an issue with me, and fortunately it was not an issue for my congregation because they apparently trusted me. I have never to this day had one of my members attack me for anything connected with what I've done for Furman, even with the separation.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Wow, thinking about it, that is amazing actually.

**DR. BATSON:** In part, I think they just, you know, they knew I wouldn't do something stupid or foolish just to... Well, I guess I've done stupid and foolish. . . No, it was not an issue, and I was real proud of it. I was supportive then and have been.

**DR. TOLLISON:** So tell me about, was it a very exciting time when Dr. Blackwell became president?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, because Dr. Plyler was widely appreciated, but he had done his thing. Everybody that I know appreciated [him] then and now, but Furman was then ready to move into a larger dimension in academically enlarging the borders of the curriculum and all that sort of stuff. Dr. Blackwell was...at that point, the epitome of what we seemed to feel we needed. There was a little, everyone... Dr. Blackwell, while he was a student here [...] had done been involved socially with some unpopular. . . I mean, he was way ahead of his time even while he was here, and you got that [from] professors and so on. It was a cause of real pleasure for me because there was the movement from providing facilities to “now let’s get with the program sort of thing” and let’s leave this localized university and move out into the world.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Was there a feeling that in the last years of President Plyler’s tenure... Was there a feeling that things had gotten somewhat stagnant?

**DR. BATSON:** Well of course I can’t document that, but that’s normally the case. There comes a time with most people [when] you [have] run your course. I don’t know whether I’m making sense, but I think there probably was that feeling. Now he made a wonderful contribution, but [it was] now time for another chapter.

**DR. TOLLISON:** So tell me about Dr. Blackwell.

**BATSON:** Well he came here... You knew him, didn’t you? [He was] such a gracious, loving, caring sort of person, and [he’d] pay attention when you... Well, I liked him from the start.

**DR. TOLLISON:** How did he handle Furman’s relationship with the Baptist Convention?

**DR. BATSON:** To start with, while Dr. Blackwell did not agree with lots of stuff, mentally, intellectually and otherwise (and perhaps religious)... He was not in tune with lots of stuff, but he had acceptance and appreciation. He did not show, openly anyway, any animosity or that sort of stuff, but he had people around him that were a little more in tune with the Convention. By the way, it may be hard to believe now, but one astounding big event at the South Carolina Baptist Convention was the Furman dinner in connection with the Convention. Crowds came, and then it dwindled to almost nothing... Well, I mean it about evaporated when the separation came about.

**DR. TOLLISON:** But, the Furman dinner, you mean the president of Furman would attend and Furman...

**DR. BATSON:** Furman had, at the state convention, wherever it was, in Columbia, Spartanburg, or Charleston, those were the. . . and sometimes Greenville. Most of the schools had alumni gatherings, and you didn’t have to be an alumnus to attend, but it was a very popular thing to start with. The Furman singers would come and perform, and the best program that went on was at the. . . and they had a particular time when they had all these dinners. It was a big event.

**DR. TOLLISON:** And it dwindled over the years?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, because [of] a lot of things. The, toward the. . . Well I don't know when they had the last one, but it was always popular. I went to every one of them; I enjoyed it. Joe Roberts was one of the best PR people Furman ever had, in my opinion.

**DR. TOLLISON:** How did he handle that relationship?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, Joe had, I'm not meaning a two-sided a disrespectful thing. . . He had the capacity to hear and relate to this group and the other one, and he was such a gentleman. To start with, he was smart, and a good preacher, by the way. Have you ever heard him preach?

**DR. TOLLISON:** I don't think so.

**DR. BATSON:** Joe was a front man with the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Of course, the president's always make a report to the Convention, or did.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Furman's front man to the Convention.

**DR. BATSON:** Right. Yes, that was what his job was. [He was] the PR man.

**DR. TOLLISON:** How did you...? Observing the president's report to the Baptist Convention over several decades, how did the reception of that president's report change over the course of these several decades?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, reports from the institution [were] probably the least appreciated part of the program, because you got to give facts and figures and that stuff. But now John Johns came along, and John wasn't cut out of anybody's mold, and he gave a lively report. He could make that Convention laugh even if they didn't like what he was saying.

**DR. TOLLISON:** So they had a good time listening to him?

**DR. BATSON:** But you have a limited amount of time simply because the institutions were a part of the program of these. . . day by day, they belonged, so-called. Furman never belonged to them, by the way. That was a shock to lots of people to discover that the charter never once made mention of the South Carolina Baptist Convention other than the election of the trustees. Nothing belonged to them. Everybody just assumed the Convention owned the property up here, but that wasn't so.

**DR. TOLLISON:** How important was Dr. Johns persona in the process of dealing with the Baptist Convention and then the split?

**DR. BATSON:** It was very important. He had the capacity, still does, I guess, to talk to people in understandable terms. Whatever was going on, he had a way about; [he] could hit [it] head on, but without alienating people, because he can walk in to anybody's office or group and. . . Yes, it was important because he was involved at the time this whole thing came. Of course, he got shot at then regularly because, that is, people who didn't like it because he's the president up

here. He could make sense out of it pretty generally.

**DR. TOLLISON:** What were some of the major... What were some of the instances that created problems between, just little things here and there, like the fraternity conflict...

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, that was... Of course, back earlier while Furman was supposedly still in good standing. Fraternities, largely because the public pretty generally sees the frolicking of a fraternity and not the strength behind it... It was identified in some people's minds with the so-called liberalism and stuff of Furman. Furman has always been, among all things, just a natural target for disgruntled people because they assume--largely it's assumed--that Furman had different values and core values and liberal stuff.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Why is that? It's assumed within the Baptist Convention.

**DR. BATSON:** Yeah, I'm talking about with the Baptist Convention. . . I hope I'm not being misrepresenting, because to some degree it's remarkable that it wasn't worse than it was [since] by and large, for a long time, Furman was the shining jewel. In these little social things. . . see, usually what you heard, the social part of Furman was what a lot of disgruntled people noticed. Of course even back before the war they had the teachers up here that some people thought [...were] of the devil.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Are you referring to Dr. [Herbert] Gezork?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes. Well, I wasn't here then but I knew about it.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Really? What did you know about him?

**DR. BATSON:** I knew very little, except what people said up there [that] they had a guy denying the Bible and all this sort of stuff, but as a matter of fact he probably wasn't. He was probably trying to get people to understand it better.

**DR. TOLLISON:** So he was quite controversial.

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, he was. Personality generally has as much to do with confusion as your stance on something. That's just human nature. I was not in the loop at that time, but the...I was always proud to be identified with Furman, still am. I don't reckon I always agreed with everything, but I support Furman.

**DR. TOLLISON:** What are some of the things that you haven't necessarily agreed with throughout the past several decades or so?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I'm not in a position to tailor an adequate program, but I don't know if somebody tells me this Furman student did so and so and that sort of thing, but I've not apologized to anybody for Furman. Well, I probably overstated. At anything you... In a board meeting, to this day, you've got to deal with this, you've got to deal with that, and you've got to deal with that, and while the final consensus was what I... In a given moment, I might not have

liked the asphalt they put on these roads out here, that Property and Grounds Committee, and I wanted them to do more with keeping the roads up, but you've got so much money. That wasn't my favorite committee, by the way.

**DR. TOLLISON:** What did you want them to do with the roads?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I mean I just think, you know... I always... Why do I want potholes and that sort of stuff, you know? But you've got to let things stand. And what I'm telling you, I overstated; I didn't always agree that, you know. You've got ideas, but you've got to have a medium. That's what the Board's for: to get together on little things and big things.

**DR. TOLLISON:** A consensus. So tell me about all the boards that you have served on as a trustee. You mentioned that you've served on all the trustee boards at one point or another?

**DR. BATSON:** The committees.

**DR. TOLLISON:** The committees. I'm sorry.

**DR. BATSON:** Well, you name them, I've... I can't think of one I haven't been on.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Well tell me which ones you have been on and your experiences with each.

**DR. BATSON:** Well, my favorite ones... I told you my least favorite was the Budget because I had the least knowledge, though I could listen. I listened. I formed a habit; I listen to everything I hear and try to process it. [I] don't always get it done. I enjoyed the Building and Grounds because there was always something going on. Even [when] we had to deal with whether we were going to try to get natural gas out of Strawberry Plain, or whatever. What's that place, that dump back out over. . . Did you know we had a big deal one time to try to decide if we were going to redo this system and get that trash dump that has this methane gas that. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** I didn't know about that.

**DR. BATSON:** You didn't know that we dealt with that over at least a year. It didn't make much sense to me.

**DR. TOLLISON:** When was that?

**DR. BATSON:** Sometime in the '80s.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Oh, I was a child.

**DR. BATSON:** I don't know whether they do it now, but any major trash dump creates natural gas and there is capability of piping it. We had one or more trustees that had special interest in that. [They] kept trying to get that thing done, and you know you always have to... you deal with personalities in any board. You've got to respect the person whether you think he's making sense or not. You can't just say, "Well, you're crazy." You've got to at least go through the



motions of investigating, but that was... I guess that might have gone on at least a year, but it would have just been a temporary thing.

**DR. TOLLISON:** So, Buildings and Grounds, and Finance. What were the others?

**DR. BATSON:** I always enjoyed the Academic Committee, and I'm still on that now and the Athletic Committee. You name it; I've been on it. You get stuck on them. Now they give you a choice.

**DR. TOLLISON:** How did the various presidents balance athletics and academics?

**DR. BATSON:** Of course, that's an impossible job. I mean, to make everybody happy because you've got constituents out there that think athletics is it (though Furman hasn't got in the same category [as the] Clemson people)... While I had no responsibility for it, I think it has been well handled for Furman. Furman has absolutely surprised me at the quality of its athletic program. It is an academic institution, but there's no reason you can't have both. I would not be in favor of trying to make Furman known for its athletic teams. I think we have become that as a natural flow. In my opinion, it's been pretty well balanced. We take what is given to us. We don't try to overdo...

**\*All of this wasn't anywhere in the original transcript, but it was on the tape.**

**DR. TOLLISON:** In term of your relationship with Alester Gordan Furman III...what do you remember about Alester? And Furman, Jr., as well?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, Alester, Jr., my... I knew him also. But most of my understanding of the relationship had to do with chairing of years in which I was really not on the scene and his working with Dr. Crain, the pastor of Pendleton Street Baptist Church, who was a most unusual character?

**DR. TOLLISON:** How's that?

**DR. BATSON:** Well he grew up here, and he had a sense of humor... He got to be a friend of our family and he was just...e\Every once in a while down in his mouth a little, down in that sawmill village of Alcolu [Editor's not: unsure of what he says; he gets really quiet].

**DR. TOLLISON:** Can you spell that please?

**DR. BATSON:** A-L-C-O-L-U. Adleman Lumber Company—the name I think was for the daughters of the owner, and the abbreviations was the makeup of it... But Dr. Crain had the ear of the basic constituency of Baptists, and Alester, Jr., had the ear of the financial community of Greenville. While [I was] largely away between my graduation and divinity school, all this was going on. But because I attended Pendleton Street Church when I was a available. I rambled all over the state...I was...not even... I wasn't a pastor, but I was available to preach. I hitchhiked, walked, rode buses all over the upstate filling in. Most of the time I didn't get paid, [but] I was getting the experience, though.

**DR. TOLLISON:** That's important.

**DR. BATSON:** But anyway I had more fun doing that, but I enjoyed Dr. Crain besides his... But he had such a raw sense of humor. He was a very smart man. His most famous sermon by the way was called "Be Not Like the Mule;" that's a phrase out of one of the songs, by the way. He read that thing hundreds of times, I reckon. Be not like the mule. There were more anecdotal stuff about him, some of it true and some of it mad up. It all came out the same way. That trill... I mean, you know the history of Furman more than I do. You read and put it all together. There are three heroes right there, as far as movement. And of course with the movement, came the blossoming of Furman University. As it began to... If it had stayed down there it would have been about the same really. Well, it wouldn't die out I guess. They had to move if from down there.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Because of the condition of the...

**DR. BATSON:** Well, sure because of the buildings and the space problems and that sort of thing. It just made sense to find another place. And I don't know all the factors that got it really going, but Furman did realize what was happening. And when I came to Pickens there weren't hardly anything out here but mud and a dormitory buildings, stuff like that.

**DR. TOLLISON:** How did most people at the Baptist Convention feel about Furman wanting to build a new campus?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I saw it that the ones that mattered wanted it. Now, I don't say that nobody's unimportant, but the shakers and the movers, I think they saw it. At times they were generally... So, as I said, they were they shining stars of the institution.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Is this when Furman's Board became known as the Country Club Board? Do you remember anything about that?

**DR. BATSON:** Do what now?

**DR. TOLLISON:** Is this when Furman's Board of Trustees became known as the Country Club Board? Do remember hearing anything about that?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, that was one of those things kicked around but obviously it was... In my opinion it was not a widespread thing, but you had to have some people that went to country clubs. They had the money to do it. This is Furman. This campus would never have come to pass if we had only ministers on it. There was a time when that was pretty largely. Back then we had a lot of them. I don't put that assessment because I only knew the ones starting in... Well, I knew a lot of the trustees after 19... [Editor's note: This is the end of the tape, and the next tape doesn't have pick up the end of the date.]

**\*End of the added segment**

**DR. TOLLISON:** Walk me through your involvement with the split with the Convention as a trustee. How did this happen? You all started discussing...who first introduced the idea of splitting with the Convention?

**DR. BATSON:** I don't know that I could introduce who first started it. I know I was involved in the earliest days of it, and I'm frank to say my decision [was] to cast my lot with the separation—separation meaning electing its' own trustees, because that effected and would effect the separation. That probably was the single hardest decision I ever had to make because I [had] always identified with Baptist life, and I'd had about every job [at] South Carolina Baptist Convention...and some the national convention had to offer and...By the way, I don't intend to seem to be vain except [to mention that] it just happened (but I of course, the years back then when I was pastor) [that] some of the ministers around come to me [and said], "Well, how come you've got all these jobs and we don't?" I said, "I'll tell you how you do it. You stay right where you are and do your job properly and they'll come to you. You don't have to go looking for them." I had had the privilege of—might be debatable privilege—being involved, but Furman... I don't know where it started actually, either from the process [...or] from the board itself. My guess is that the younger leaders in the Greenville area were the initial catalysts, and some of the lawyers could fake it through. You know that story of how they got together and found all these ways and applied them and so on and so on, but we. . . Let me back up and say what happened to me, because this takeover... That's not a general term; in the Southern Baptist Convention [it] started in the late seventies, [this] conflict between the so-called fundamentalists or conservatives and the liberals. Those are misleading terms and confusing terms but the. . . I served 11 years (the longest, I guess, anybody ever did on the Baptist Sunday School Board, which is now called Lifeway or something). It's the publishing arm, the program arm, and all that for whatever, the largest single budget thing that Southern Baptists do. In the late, the middle seventies they began to arise...what I call power hungry people (that's subject for debate but that's my interpretation). You're acquainted with the plot. They just, by the way, Southern Baptist Convention...at the national convention celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year of the takeover. They had a program celebrating it up yonder. When those (my wife calls them the three Ps—Pressler, Patterson...and that bunch got together and concocted a brilliant scheme [on] how to take control of the Southern Baptist Convention. You took control by taking control of the local boards, and you put on one at a time, or two or three, and pretty soon you'll control it. I was on the board in Nashville, went out there about once a month because I was always on the executive committee. The very first person put on the Sunday School Board by this Southern Baptist Convention...the appointment power...the nominating committee and the appointed powers of the president led the capacity [to appoint] one at a time, or two or whatever. The very first person that was put on that Nashville thing was assigned to one of the committees I was chair of. They said they put that onto me because they thought I could handle it, but I don't know. [Editor's Note: The interviewee refers to Judge Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson.]

**DR. TOLLISON:** So these people stood out in the sense that they were part of a certain camp? They were very open about their views?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, yeah. Well, it came on as a... When you are little and small you have to be more careful about [how] you do your thing, but the obvious task was ultimately to take total control. From the ultra-conservative fundamentalist position, and this fellow that was assigned

to me published a yellow-sheet paper in North Carolina... Well, I knew better than just to... You know, I had to deal with him, and I got along with it, but they slowly began to put on... By the time I got to be chair of the board there were a bunch of us. But you've got to work, and that was the way the...slowly... but a guaranteed way for you to...if you can pick your people to go on the board you can ultimately control. That affected me because I saw... Now South Carolina was a late bloomer in terms of influence by the strong fundamentalists. There always have been some, and South Carolina was one of the latest ones to be greatly affected, but the same process was started through the nominating committee; you got your buddy put on the nominating committee and this sort of stuff, and then... I didn't want to see [that] happen, and we began to have some here at Furman. It was not Furman's pick, and [they] just didn't seem to fit, and I didn't want Furman to be victimized like I had seen beginning on one that I was on in Nashville up there and we talked about this, we had one of the key moments. . . a lot of things went on behind the scenes, some I was a part of and some not, but an important one, we went down to Daufuskie Island, have you come across that anywhere? We were hosted by one of the trustees out on Daufuskie Island, and the executive committee... This was one of the major subjects of discussion: what can we do to keep Furman from being taken over by this rising tide of people who were ultra-conservative. Conservative...I don't have any problems with sincere people. If that's their stance, fine, but when you get into political movements it's just...it's kind of hard that you have to counter political maneuvering with political maneuvering yourself. I mean, in the sense that you have to plan, think, and be alert to what's going on. In my opinion, that meeting down there was a key moment. Now, there were a lot of other things. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** Do you remember what year that was?

**DR. BATSON:** No.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Do you remember the name of the trustee that hosted you all?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, yes, Mr. Dwight Holder in Pickens was the one hosted.

**DR. TOLLISON:** At his home?

**DR. BATSON:** His folks did... He had a home on Daufuskie Island and he was a board member of whoever the governor...whatever down there. He had a house at Hilton Head as well, but I think he also had us as a board down at Santee one time, because he was head of that. He was a businessman but he also headed [...the] Santee-Cooper Power Project down there. At any rate, it was at that point that openly we began to discuss, "Hey, we've got to come up with something."

**DR. TOLLISON:** What did you all decide to come up with?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I don't know that we ever made any decisions then, but the seeds may have been sown. Then some of the...well, I don't know all that went on, but some of the astute young Furman people, attorneys and stuff, discovered that the charter could be a way to come at it. At any rate, I'm repeating but I went through, this agony, because at heart I was and still am... if you let me define what Baptist. . . Baptist has so many dimensions to it, and unfortunately, in the mind of some people now, Baptists are this loud and cantankerous group.

But the heart and soul of Baptist life was decent people and always have been in it. It was an agonizing thing. I had people from Furman to come over to Pickens to talk with me, and this kind of thing. We were over at...not the country club over there but...where it's Furman now, some of its meetings. Used to, anyway, we had some of the executive committees...

**DR. TOLLISON:** The Poinsett Club?

**DR. BATSON:** The Poinsett Club. It had gone on a long time, and I was still dealing with it. And whether you can understand this or not, at that luncheon meeting at The Poinsett Club, I told this committee, "I'm with this effort." I had agonized, but whether you can understand it or not, a remarkable peace came to me that day, the day I got those words out. Now I still had to deal with the repercussions of what we had to do and that sort of thing, but from then on I felt that I had the blessing of God.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Were most of the people on the committee ministers as well?

**DR. BATSON:** No. At the moment I don't remember whether there was another minister or not on the executive committee.

**DR. TOLLISON:** But you all were appointees of the Baptist Convention?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, we were all. Every one of us [was] nominated and elected by the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Every trustee, and you could not be, at that time you had to be a member of a South Carolina Baptist church. You could have no outsiders. Now we've got more outsiders than we have...I mean beyond the borders, than our movement to a national university can... But then from that day, I was able to just go on and do what had to be done. It's got nothing to do with this, I guess...but the day, and we had a lot of these ministers on the board with other persuasions, the day the board met that was going to deal with this motion and action to amend the charter, I asked to be the first to speak because I wanted all those other people to know where I was coming from.

**DR. TOLLISON:** And what did you say?

**DR. BATSON:** I just voted my approval. I wanted them to know how I was going to vote. I wanted it up front, and I don't know that I persuaded a one but I, because I had come to that point. I didn't want to do all this. I would have liked to have had us in harmony, you know, and all that sort of stuff, but I was at peace. And the same thing [happened] at the state convention. You see, we had, at some point, a liaison committee from the state convention and Furman University who worked out some kind of solution. Well, you've seen that. Well, I was on that thing as a member of the board. Then when it came before the convention, and it was voted down, I was the only one that got to say a word about it. There was a procedural matter that was misused in my opinion, but I wanted. . . not that I had any persuasion but I needed to let South Carolina Baptists know where I was coming from. I was dyed in the wool Baptist. So the president of the convention was a lay person and I went to him and I said, "I know that this recommendation that comes from. . ." We worked a long time, this liaison committee, to recommend that Furman have... You know, you read that stuff, and we had a sort of working

together that we could have a cooperative thing and I, the layman minister president of the convention, I went to him and I said, "Now I know because the [type of] convention this thing doesn't have to have a second, but I want the privilege of saying a word and seconding the motion." And he said, "You don't have to do that." I said, "I have a right to do that." I got to say a very limited thing: that I was a member of the board of trustees, I was a member of that special committee, and I wanted to second this. I'm the only one that got to say a word for Furman at that session. Well, I had to do that for myself, not that I had any clout with anybody because they were going to do what they wanted to do anyhow. But you know how all that came out. I'm sorry I got off track here.

**DR. TOLLISON:** No, we're right on track. Thank you for sharing that. How was Furman different when your sons came here from the time when you were here?

**DR. BATSON:** Much more expensive than I could afford. We were in an amazing acceleration of our expense, and now it looks kind of laughable, but when my older son. . . the cost doubled at least from the time he was a freshman until the time he was a senior and graduated, but fortunately both of my boys were able to get academic help and so on. My younger son was the one that got a general excellence award and summa cum laude. Now the other one probably is more intelligent, actually, than the. . . but my older boy just wanted to get what he wanted. He didn't care about getting grades. He's a school teacher now. My younger son is a professor at Union College and is connected in New York.

**DR. TOLLISON:** He was the one that was summa cum laude? Which one was summa cum laude?

**DR. BATSON:** The professor, the younger one. He finished it the year I got. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** But he won a general excellence award?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes.

**DR. TOLLISON:** The same year you. . .

**DR. BATSON:** The other son could have done, it but he didn't care about grades. On all of those tests, measurement, IQ, and all the achievement stuff, he actually scored higher than Charles did. But Charles was the one that made good grades; the other one didn't care. He wanted to get what he wanted out of a course. He kept up his scholarships and stuff. There's seven years difference between them and so there was a little. . . but Furman was good and helpful, and I've been very proud. I tell people Furman has got the best help available; they'll work with you. As Dr. Johns used to say in his mannerisms...you know, people complain how much it costs to come to Furman. He'd say, "You wouldn't walk into a automobile showroom and see the sticker price and go write a check. You want to know what it's going to cost you. Well, come to Furman and ask them what it's going to cost me. Don't get scared away from what the ticket price is." And Furman's Benny Walker...I've always thought that Benny was the best there is in terms of helping people.

**DR. TOLLISON:** He was great.

**DR. BATSON:** And I brought... We had some boys in our community, two brothers whose daddy had left them when they were [children] and [whose] the mother worked two jobs in the mill. They were both sharp students. I came over here to Furman, took those two boys and saw that they got graduated from Furman. I don't know where we are in this... I don't know how much time you were going to spend today...

**DR. TOLLISON:** I just wanted to ask you one more question about your opinions regarding Furman as an institution...Furman's religious identity since Furman has split. Maybe you could comment on the spirituality on campus among the students.

**DR. BATSON:** Let me go back to the split. I maintained then, I do now, that Furman...and the state convention lost something important. It's unfortunate that it had to be, but it had to be. I could not conceive of Furman being under the control of the people that have control of the Southern Baptist Convention. I just cannot conceive of that. But with... I lost, what were we... .

**DR. TOLLISON:** We were talking about Furman's religious identity.

**DR. BATSON:** I then, now, and always will believe that Furman needs not to be an indoctrination school. That's not our point. You know, you've got specialist schools for that. [Though] I [do] hope that Furman will never sweep under the rug it's religious heritage. Now I don't mean that that would have to be tailored toward any particular expression of it, [and] I am appreciative of the fact that Furman now is able to recognize people from whatever religious persuasion. [But] I sincerely hope that the time will not come when Furman will black out "Cristo" in the seal. Now I don't want it there to represent "we're going to tell you the one way you ought to believe." That's not the point. But I'm very appreciative of the openness in the religious attitudes and relationships, and I think that needs to be encouraged. It's in that sense that I said I think the...South Carolina Convention lost identity with a great, towering liberal arts school, liberal in the sense of liberating the mind...setting people free. I don't want religion...I don't Furman's religious identity to fence people in. I want it to let them find themselves in it and that sort of thing. But I don't know the answer to that. I personally would hope that as one way to signal something of the past that there would be, for example, a Baptist chaplain. Now, gratefully, you can get some people that aren't in a straight jacket. There are lots of good, wonderful people who still have Baptist principles, [and] I'm not talking about denomination, I'm talking about the tried-and-true Baptist principles. The organization is not that important. But that's my feeling and hope, that Furman, with all of its' exciting advances does not dismiss religious values from this basic stance. How you do it, well, that's up for grabs in terms of how you implement that. One of them is this openness. I don't want Furman to become a recruiting place for converts...that doesn't sound right, does it? What I'm talking about, where a particular set of camps... it's created some problems. Overzealous students of whatever religion, you know [will say], "You be mine or you aren't any." But I feel generally encouraged. I don't have any say-so now about lots of things. I'm glad I don't.

**DR. TOLLISON:** ... come to meetings or...

**DR. BATSON:** Well, of course I don't know how many years I'll have this relationship. It's not guaranteed or anything because you get re-elected every three years just like the rest of them. Goodness knows I appreciate being chosen. It's a real honor, but if the time comes when they've used up their quota (you know there's a limit of how many you can have), I'll gladly, even if I'm still one, yield to somebody else. I mean, I have no vested interest as such in it. I'd like to come to these meetings. The very first meeting I went to after I was elected as a trustee emeritus was at somebody's house, one of these palatial places that some of the trustees have. I drove up in my dilapidated automobile; I've got the best automobile in Pickens County. It's an '86 Chevrolet. Now my wife drives that other one, but this one's my pick all the time. Well, I identified myself to the...they had a person out parking people in the yard. I said, "I'm Lloyd Batson. I am a trustee emeritus, whatever that means. That parking attendant said, "That means you get to eat a lot." And I enjoyed that part of it. Furman's still in my blood.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Anything else that you'd like to add that you think is important...?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I was going to mention that...you probably have it in your history somewhere...but the year I was president, I don't think we mentioned it... You mentioned the relationship between North Greenville and Furman.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Yes, let's talk about that.

**DR. BATSON:** Because we never lost North Greenville from the convention point... It just nearly disappeared, as did Anderson, but the... Some of the people got to feeling... There is an education committee of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and that education committee was chaired by Dr. Rogers of Florence, I think. He was editor of the Florence paper anyway, and he was a prime mover in getting Francis Marion College down there. He was on that committee, and some others, and they had to deal with North Greenville. Well, one of their ideas was... probably somebody's written a history. I haven't read it, but that put the governments of the... running North Greenville, taking care of it, give it to Furman. Let North Greenville be integrated into Furman's economic programs, supplies, all that sort of stuff, and let North Greenville be an adjunct campus to Furman. Did you know this was going on?

**DR. TOLLISON:** No, I didn't. No, I did not.

**DR. BATSON:** All right, this....

**DR. TOLLISON:** Well, let's back up. North Greenville was having what types of problems, that it faced closing?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, because it was in bad financial condition, and it had problems with its presidents...There were two or three of them. I've forgotten which, inept, or not too good, that's not a good term, because each of them, I guess, was doing what he thought...but North Greenville had hard times and that education committee felt that there could be a place for Furman which was successful. Dr. Johns was president at the time [and he thought] that North Greenville could benefit from Furman's help and purchasing equipment, taking care of the



program, even that matter. It never was fully defined as to what that relationship would be, but there was worked out, and I can't give you the details of it, though I sat in on lots of those meetings because I was president of the convention, and of course I was trustee too, . . . dealt with on both sides, but that committee came up with a program, a proposal, indeed, that there would be an integration of some sort between the operation of North Greenville and of Furman, which effectively put North Greenville under control of Furman. Well, that was the big deal that year at the convention, and the constituency of North Greenville rose up and voted it down, which was good, I think, because I can't imagine . . . well, I guess there could have been some way. We'd be inheriting so many problems.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Did you get the impression that it would have been a satellite campus of Furman, or that it would. . .

**DR. BATSON:** That was one of the possibilities: that it would be a satellite. Furman could put some of its programs over on that campus, that satellite part of it, and hence become involved in its financial support. There was some impassioned, and I remember I . . . a member of our church now was chair of the board at North Greenville.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Who was that? What was his name?

**DR. BATSON:** James Black was the chair of the board at North Greenville, and he was all gung-ho for North Greenville, and he was not a member of our church at that time. But he came to me and told me that. And I said, "I am going to preside, and the only thing I can promise you is [that] you will get an equal and fair hearing at the convention." And I gave it to him, and he thanks me every once in a while now. You know, you don't know at any point whether the outcome is going to be what it ought to be or not, but I couldn't be vested interest in . . . but at any rate I think in the long run it probably was the right thing for everybody concerned . . . that they voted that down. It wasn't long until it began to pick up, but that was, I don't hear much about that anymore. There was that possibility, and it was presented to the South Carolina Convention, that Furman become the mama of that child up there. That's what it amounted to, and to take care of it.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Anything else that you'd like to add, that you think is important?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I don't know what's important or not, you know. I told you I didn't try to plan anything, but I have believed that the four presidents that I have been connected with. . . Now, under Dr. Shi always been as an emeritus, [but] I tend to meet him, and I'm interested in it, but I don't take part, I don't vote. That's one of the things you don't do in it, but I'm excited about Furman's future. Now I think that we've got a fabulously endowed president in so many directions, different from Johns or Blackwell or Plyler, but he's supposed to be different.

**DR. TOLLISON:** They're different from each other.

**DR. BATSON:** That's exactly right. It's an exciting time, and I'm just sort of watching it because without . . . when Furman does something that some people don't like. Well yes, I'm over that but I don't have a vote, that's not my problem.

**DR. TOLLISON:** You can get out of it.

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I hear a lot of stuff, a lot of good things happening at Furman.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Well, thank you very much. That pretty much takes care of everything I wanted to talk about. We've covered Dr. Crain, we've covered both Alester Garden Furmans...

**DR. BATSON:** By the way, every time I think about how Alester III, opposed the football stadium coming to here.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Really?

**DR. BATSON:** He didn't like it at all.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Why not?

**DR. BATSON:** He thought it would intrude on the integrity of the campus and the beauty of it. Of course, I think he later changed his mind, but he argued that seeing some big old ugly stadium in the middle of this beautiful campus...but, you know, you have to look for it to see it. Initially he was one of those that opposed it, putting the stadium. . . but that, to me, was one of the best things. Two good... it wouldn't have hurt if we had sold Serrine Stadium to Greenville High School or whatever we did, and then when they. . . but the county bought the old campus part of it down there, wasn't it?

**DR. TOLLISON:** Yes. I think it was a shopping center first.

**DR. BATSON:** Yes. That shopping center was a fiasco from day one, for some reason, I don't know. It never took off. The building was sorry and leaking and I don't know what all kind of problems, I don't remember this tale of that, but. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** It caught on fire, didn't it?

**DR. BATSON:** I don't know, but when we got rid of that thing I said, "Hallelujah."

**DR. TOLLISON:** When you got rid of the shopping center?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Did Furman own the shopping center?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, they. . . whatever the property... Yes, I guess they did. I guess they had a long-term lease on it, maybe. I don't know what they did, but I know that the city council finally bought that thing.

**DR. TOLLISON;** And how long did Furman retain ownership of the women's college property,

or did that immediately transfer to the city of Greenville for Heritage Green?

**DR. BATSON:** Now I'm not conversant with that. That's not, I just don't know that.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Okay, I can look that up.

**DR. BATSON:** I know that, I guess my graduation was over there. They used that, the auditorium over at the. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** Oh, at Ramsay?

**DR. BATSON:** Well, I don't know what it's named, but there's one big auditorium over there, and I know that when my father was given his honorary doctorate I came from Louisville and they had it on the woman's campus...

**DR. TOLLISON:** Did the building have lots of big steps and big columns out front?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes.

**DR. TOLLISON:** And so that was Ramsey Fine Arts Center.

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, I guess that's what it was.

**DR. TOLLISON:** And you all had Class Day over there? Class Day, with the daisy chain?

**DR. BATSON:** That's right.

**DR. TOLLISON:** That's the day before you graduated?

**DR. BATSON:** It led to lots of stuff over there, and I still laugh about. . . this is totally peripheral.

**DR. TOLLISON:** That's fine.

**DR. BATSON:** My boys laugh about this, the day their father did purple oratory over there in that place. I don't know when was the occasion, but I was taking classes over there, riding that notorious bus that old Pete Willis drove: the shuttle bus between the campuses. Well, you don't have reason to know that a whole bunch of taxi drivers in Greenville went over to the Pickens County Jail, broke out a prisoner and lynched him because, I forgot what he'd done. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** The bus driver?

**DR. BATSON:** No, I rode the bus over there and I was telling you about a speech I made over there.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Are you talking about Willie Earl?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes, Willie Earl. You know about Willie Earl?

**DR. TOLLISON:** Yes, I do.

**DR. BATSON:** At any rate, Willie Earl was in the Pickens county jail, and these taxi drivers came over there and lynched him, all right. Well, on some occasion, I don't remember now what it was, and I still have the handwritten manuscript. I made a speech to a congregation entitled *America, The Land of The Free and The Home of The Brave 1947 Style*. I might as well take on that justice thing. You mentioned that campus over there because we had classes over there and activities because there was not a...the chapel at Furman was pretty small. Over on the old campus.

**DR. TOLLISON:** So you all would go to the women's campus. . .

**DR. BATSON:** A lot of things, a lot of big things took place over there. It had a large auditorium.

**DR. TOLLISON:** You graduated over there, and you said your dad received his honorary doctorate there. You also mentioned that your father and you and your brother all have honorary doctorates from Furman, and we're gonna have to check out to see. . .

**DR. BATSON:** I'd just be curious, I mean we're all grateful for it. . . of course my father and my brother are dead...he died of Alzheimer's. . . but to nearly have to go two years anyway. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** Was he a Baptist minister as well?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes.

**DR. TOLLISON:** All three of you were?

**DR. BATSON:** Yes. As a matter of fact, my mother and father had six sons and five of them were pastors, and never in my lifetime did Mother and Daddy suggest to one of us that we ought to be a minister. Never. I appreciate that. It came individually, and at one time there were five of us pastors in the state at the same time, but all in different parts. We never were close; we didn't have to take responsibility for the other factions. I never asked anybody if that happened, it could very well be, and might be some that got more than that.

**DR. TOLLISON:** I doubt it. That's pretty impressive.

**DR. BATSON:** It just happened that way, but the two older sons and my father were back yonder in nineteen fifty-something. It was after the 125<sup>th</sup> celebration.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Oh, 1975. . . no, 1976.

**DR. BATSON:** Well, it may have been the centennial then, because I was at Louisville

Seminary, the southern seminary, and we drove down for that, so it would be nineteen. . . when?

**DR. TOLLISON:** 1926.

**DR. BATSON:** 1956?

**DR. TOLLISON:** The centennial of Furman was in 1926, and in '76 the United States had the bicentennial, and Furman had it's 150<sup>th</sup> .

**DR. BATSON:** Right, but there was something Furman was celebrating and, because they gave five honorary degrees at that session, it was some big, maybe. . . what's the sesquicentennial? That's 150, but I don't know what it was?

**DR. TOLLISON:** But you were in the seminary.

**DR. BATSON:** I was in Louisville. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** So that would have been the 1950s?

**DR. BATSON:** I'm thinking 1951 or something like that, because Furman was organized in 1826, and you add five to that and you get fifty-one, now what was the five? You do the math, I don't know. I could have shown you that you are facing the most ignorant man you've ever met.

**DR. TOLLISON:** That's not true at all, that is not true. I'm going to do this math here.

**DR. BATSON:** I don't know what it was.

**DR. TOLLISON:** 1951, that was Furman's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**DR. BATSON:** Well, that's what I started out thinking it was.

**DR. TOLLISON:** And you think that was what it was?

**DR. BATSON:** That's what I think I mean the 125<sup>th</sup>, because I know it was in that early part, because my wife came up with me and. . . but Daddy was pastor, a respected pastor, not of a large church, but he was the pastor for 34 years at the same church. I just made 33 1/3, I didn't quite catch my daddy's...I was pastor at Pickens for 33 1/3. . .

**DR. TOLLISON:** What was the official name of, what was the title of your church?

**DR. BATSON:** In Pickens?

**DR. TOLLISON:** Mm hmm, in Pickens.

**DR. BATSON:** Pickens First Baptist Church. During that time I had all kinds of jobs, even...off the record, college president.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Of where?

**DR. BATSON:** I'm not going to tell you. . . North Greenville.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Oh!

**DR. BATSON:** Dr. Donnan, the president, wanted me to succeed him as president.

**DR. TOLLISON:** What year was this?

**DR. BATSON:** Back yonder someplace, but actually it was Dr. Donnan that got me before the church in Pickens. Dr. Donnan was the president

**DR. TOLLISON:** Donald?

**DR. BATSON:** D-O-N-N-A-N. He had taken a liking to me when I was a student there, though I got in trouble. . . He found me up a flagpole stringing toilet paper, and I had to tell him that I had a calling to the pastoral ministry and that is when he wanted me to come up there; then opportunity came later for another shot at it, but down the line part of the time when they are in a mess, and I sure didn't want that, but still he had a trustee who was a member of the Pickens First Baptist Church, and so, as a matter of fact, I was doing the baccalaureate sermon at North Greenville and arrangements were made for the Pickens Church to hear me preach, and that's what got it started. He recommended, I wasn't going to come to help him out, then he wanted me close by. I'm so glad that I had a calling, and not only that but to stay right there. I came to stay, and I'm glad now because I'm having more fun in. . . I'd been in about every church in Pickens County, and know so many people. They about get in the way sometimes, because people expect me to remember them.

**DR. TOLLISON:** I'll bet.

**DR. BATSON:** Stuff doesn't stay up there as long as it used to.

**DR. TOLLISON:** Well, thank you very much for coming to talk with me today. I really do appreciate it.

**DR. BATSON:** I apologize for rambling so much.

**DR. TOLLISON:** No! No, I've enjoyed every minute of it. Thanks for sharing your memories and your time as well.

**DR. BATSON:** Well, just put me down as a Furman fan. Alright?

**DR. TOLLISON:** Okay, I can definitely do that. This will be typed up, and I'll get it to you in the mail.