

A.V. Huff

Interviewee: A.V. Huff

Interviewer: Courtney L. Tollison, Ph.D.

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Transcript

Dr. Tollison: Today is Monday, November 1, 2004 and my name is Courtney Tollison and I'm sitting here with Dr. A.V. Huff, former Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean and long-time History Professor, as well, and we're going to have a conversation about Furman and a whole bunch of other things as well. Alright, you are a 1959 graduate of Wofford College, we'll forgive you for that, (laughs). Just kidding.

Dr. Huff: They haven't forgiven me over there (laughs).

Dr. Tollison: (laughs) That would be something that would be harder to get over. And you have your Masters' degree and Ph.D. in history from Duke and a BD... it that a Bachelor of Divinity?

Dr. Huff: Bachelor of Divinity

Dr. Tollison: From Yale University. You're an ordained Methodist, United Methodist minister and came on the History Faculty in 1968 and then served as Dean from '95 to 2003. You succeeded David Shi as dean. And were recently retired a little over a year ago, end of 2003... so June 2003. And how are you doing? Are you enjoying yourself?

Dr. Huff: Oh, it's wonderful.

Dr. Tollison: I'm sure you're very busy still.

Dr. Huff: Yes.

Dr. Tollison: Not quite as busy?

Dr. Huff: Well, busy doing different things.

Dr. Tollison: Right. You wanted to focus on research?

Dr. Huff: Right. I'm busy revising my 8th grade History of South Carolina text book right now.

Dr. Tollison: Right, interesting.

Dr. Huff: Getting ready to do a paper on the history of the Upcountry for a symposium in Charleston next spring celebrating the 100th anniversary of the... no the 150th anniversary of the South Carolina Historical Society and the 100th anniversary of the State Archives.

Dr. Tollison: Oh okay. Now they're in that battery, or fire proof building in Charleston?

Dr. Huff: Fire proof building, that's right.

Dr. Tollison: Gotcha. Okay, tell me a little bit about... you grew up in Columbia. Tell me a little bit about growing up and college and graduate school and your time up to coming to Furman and also... Growing up is interesting for me as someone who grew up in Greenville, it's interesting to me how I thought about Furman growing up, how I thought about it when I was in school and how I think about it now. So if you can tell me as a South Carolinian tell me about sort of your mindset when you were thinking about, whenever you thought about Furman growing up. Did you think of it as a regional kind of institution?

Dr. Huff: Growing up in Columbia... well I was one of those people who can barely remember where I was on December of 1941 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and so, basically, I grew up during wartime and have several interesting memories of the war. Number one: Fort Jackson, of course, was a major mobilization center for the Army and so many of the people who were stationed there were looking for places to live for themselves and for their families and so we took in roomers during the war and I remember one particular soldier we had from Michigan who thought it was so strange to be in the South and all he wanted to do was talk about the Civil War (laughs) which was great fun.

Dr. Tollison: Well, that explains a lot (laughs)

Dr. Huff: I also remember that we lived just two blocks down the street from the house where Woodrow Wilson lived when he was a teenager and I used to play in the yard under the trees that his mother had planted and I remember when Franklin Roosevelt came to Columbia on one of several occasions, but on this particular occasion, since he had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the Wilson administration, he wanted to see the Wilson house, so we went up the street and stood on the corner and saw him ride by and that was very exciting. So when people ask me if I want to see the President I say "Well, I've seen the President. Why should I see another one." (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: (laughs) I'd feel the same.

Dr. Huff: (laughs) That's right. But it was interesting, you know, the county library for example was in the home of Dr. James Woodrow who was [Woodrow] Wilson's uncle. He had been fired from the faculty of the Columbia Theological Seminary for teaching evolution.

Dr. Tollison: That's a Presbyterian seminary...in Columbia?

Dr. Huff: It was in Columbia at the time. And then he became president of the University of South Carolina and he operated a book shop in this house and it became the county library.

Dr. Tollison: Oh.

Dr. Huff: The county librarian was the great niece of Wade Hampton, the Confederate general, and so when she talked about "Uncle Wade" it was just like he was right down the street. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Wow.

Dr. Huff: And so you grow up in a, you know, in a culture like this in which you simply breathe the historical atmosphere and you would have to run very hard...

Dr. Tollison: To get away...

Dr. Huff: To get away from it and not be historic. I became very conscious very early of race relations in the South. We had a black cook who my mother would take home in the afternoon and one of the things she liked to do was, as we took her home through this particular neighborhood, was to point out the children of the prominent white Columbians who lived in that area and so, you know, again this gave me another view of race relations and what they were like in the South, without any illusions. This interesting caldron of the changes that came about during World War II, the way in which this intersected with the South made to be a heady kind of mixture for someone to grow up in.

Dr. Tollison: Sounds fascinating, to say the least.

Dr. Huff: (laughs) But that's for another time.

Dr. Tollison: Oh wow, well terrific. Tell me about how you got to Wofford.

Dr. Huff: Well, by the time I was choosing a college I had fairly well settled on doing either of two things. I was either going to be a Methodist minister or going to be a historian and that seemed like a reasonable place...

Dr. Tollison: To decide to do either one.

Dr. Huff: And so, as it ended up, I decided to do both. (laughs) But it was a wonderful place to go because they had an extraordinarily good history department, both...

Dr. Tollison: Who were some of the professors in the History Department?

Dr. Huff: Dr. Charles Cauthen who was chair of the department had his degree from Chapel Hill in Southern History, Dr. Fletcher Green had written the still definitive history of South Carolina during the Civil War. One of the younger members of the department was Dr. Lewis Jones who also was a Chapel Hill graduate who also had worked with Fletcher Green and had done a history of the Elliott Gonzales family in South Carolina so they were people who were interested in some of the same things I was.

Dr. Tollison: Did you take a lot of religion classes?

Dr. Huff: I did, though I had a double major, almost a double major in English.

Dr. Tollison: English and History?

Dr. Huff: And History, yes. But I took Religion also along the way. One of the nice things about a liberal arts college, you can just go off in most any direction.

Dr. Tollison: Could you make a comparison in terms of how people in the state thought about Furman and Wofford? Was Wofford considered a more intellectually vibrant place at this point in time?

Dr. Huff: It was. It would never have occurred to me to come to Furman.

Dr. Tollison: You were Methodist.

Dr. Huff: That's right.

Dr. Tollison: Is that because Methodists went to Wofford and the Baptists...

Dr. Huff: Well, yes, to some extent. That was part of the expectation. On the other hand Wofford had a stronger academic reputation. It had a chapter Phi Beta Kapa in the 40s. And, I mean, there were also historical reasons for that because of the connection of Wofford and Vanderbilt, we don't need to go into that.

Dr. Tollison: I'm not quite sure what you're talking about

Dr. Huff: Well, Vanderbilt, of course, was established as The Methodist University in the South and most of the leadership at Wofford had been trained at Vanderbilt.

Dr. Tollison: Oh, okay.

Dr. Huff: In fact even the alma mater of Wofford and Vanderbilt are practically the same and the school colors are the same.

Dr. Tollison: And they were both identified with the Kapa chapter I assume.

Dr. Huff: Yes. And some of the leadership at Vanderbilt at the time had also been

Wofford graduates and so they worked very carefully with Wofford people to do the political kinds of things that were necessary.

Dr. Tollison: Yeah. It makes perfect sense, I just never, I know a whole lot about, well I know some things about Wofford but I don't know Methodists so I would have never thought about it but it does make perfect sense now that I do think about it. Okay, did you attend graduate school immediately after?

Dr. Huff: So, no, I went on to divinity school.

Dr. Tollison: Okay, went to Yale first

Dr. Huff: Yes, Wofford, again, had a rather strong tradition of sending graduates outside the South for their divinity school training and I knew a good many people who were at Yale and found it a very congenial place though I got the Fulbright Scholarship in the meantime. So actually my first year of divinity school was spent in Edenborough at New College so I did one year there and two years at Yale which made an interesting combination because there were a number of people who were in Edenborough doing the same thing I was doing that ended up in Yale next year. One of them, Andy Sorensen who's now president of University of South Carolina was there.

Dr. Tollison: Yes, was there while in graduate school

Dr. Huff: So I knew Andy back when.

Dr. Tollison: Gotcha. So why keep going to school after...

Dr. Huff: Well, it was, when I graduated I went into the parish ministry and ended up as an associate in Washington Street United Methodist Church in Columbia and stayed there for three and a half years. One of the best things that happened to me as result of that was that I met my future wife who was the director of Christian Education, though we didn't get married for ten years, I was a little slow. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: That's okay, it's the long run...

Dr. Huff: That's right. All that didn't happen until I got to Furman. But, thoroughly enjoyed my work in the parish. Had a great time. The two things that I didn't enjoy very much were going to meetings and writing reports. And so I finally decided I'd had enough of that and I would go back to graduate school in history and, of course, afterwards when I got to Furman and later became dean, what did I spend most of my time doing? Going to meetings and writing reports! (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: That's funny, that's ironic...

Dr. Huff: It's just one of life's little joys.

Dr. Tollison: So, when did you complete your PhD at Duke? What year was that?

Dr. Huff: Actually I left Duke in the summer of 1968. I didn't actually finish the degree until 1970. In fact in the summer of '69 and the summer of '70 I spent the summers in Durham finishing. You know I had visions of you know how people do of "Hey I can teach and do all this at the same time."

Dr. Tollison: It's so hard.

Dr. Huff: Of course another thing that was fun about my coming to Furman was that the month before I was to move here I got a call from Dr. Bonner wanting to know if I would be interested in living in a dorm because we had faculty members who were living in the dorms in those days.

Dr. Tollison: Now you were not married in those days.

Dr. Huff: Not married, that's right. So I moved into Poteat Hall my first year. One of the nice things about that was saving lots of money.

Dr. Tollison: Sure. (laughs)

Dr. Huff: On the other hand I happened to have two, what we called floor managers in those days, and both of them were in my initial Medieval History class and one of them used to laugh and say, well, at least he had a consolation at night when he would cut off his light and go to bed that he could look down in my bedroom window and still see my light on because I was getting ready for the next day. The first year of teaching, no matter where you do it and how, is a terrible experience! (laughs) But it was fun because of living in the dorm and getting to know students. I felt like I sort of got to know Furman from the inside out rather than just moving to town and being here for classes and that sort of thing.

Dr. Tollison: I'll bet that gives you a very interesting perspective

Dr. Huff: Yes. And so I lived in Poteat for a year and then moved into "E" dorm which is now Blackwell.

Dr. Tollison: Okay. That was a very new dorm

Dr. Huff: It was, brand new practically, and had some very interesting freshmen including David Shi who lived down the hall.

Dr. Tollison: And what was he like?

Dr. Huff: I'll never tell. (laughs) But it was interesting to get up three or four times during the night when people called in false fire alarms. You know after about the third

one you wanted to kill somebody.

Dr. Tollison: Right. Maybe this dorm business wasn't such a good idea.

Dr. Huff: And I remember after I had moved to "E" dorm we had a riot one night.

Dr. Tollison: About what?

Dr. Huff: I've forgotten about what... but there was great fighting and so on and it looked like, you know, somebody might get hurt. So I remember getting out in my bathrobe and going up the front of "E" dorm and just standing out in the middle of the quad and saying "Stop!" And they did. I was absolutely shocked! (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: That people were listening to you. Did you ever find out what it was about?

Dr. Huff: I've forgotten now what it was all about.

Dr. Tollison: Was it just a bunch of guys scuffling?

Dr. Huff: Yeah, you know, they'd been out partying and a lot of them had too much to drink, you know, they were throwing beer cans and whatever.

Dr. Tollison: Right. And so I assume "E" dorm was an all-male dorm.

Dr. Huff: Oh yeah. That was the men's end of the campus, that was the women's end of the campus and never the twain should meet except on certain occasions because that was the era and we had panty raids and I remember coming over with the guys on a couple of panty raids.

Dr. Tollison: Forgive me, but what exactly... Are women just throwing panties out their window?

Dr. Huff: Well the object was, of course, for the men to break into the women's dorms and run through the halls and steal underwear as a kind of trophy. But, of course, when the girls saw them coming they just went to the windows and pitched the stuff out. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Okay, gotcha

Dr. Huff: So it sort of short-circuited the whole process.

Dr. Tollison: I've heard the phrase before I've just never quite caught what the dynamic of it was

Dr. Huff: It's a quaint custom. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: I don't get it, somehow

Dr. Huff: Right. And then this was also the era of streaking...

Dr. Tollison: Well that hasn't changed

Dr. Huff: I remember one night right out in front of the administration building, we were all moving toward the... there was some sort of general unrest out here among the trees. And Dr. Bonner had come out with the public safety people and all of a sudden there was a male streaker who circled the crowd and that diverted everybody's attention.

Dr. Tollison: I'm sure. Now were you here... I've heard something about streakers at a commencement ceremony

Dr. Huff: Convocation

Dr. Tollison: Convocation. Yes, what was going on with that?

Dr. Huff: Well, I've forgotten what the occasion was, but we had an outside speaker and were standing on the stage in the auditorium and, of course, that was in the days when chapel and convocation were required, and so we had a full house. And suddenly right in the middle of the poor man's speech this streaker went right across the stage.

Dr. Tollison: Oh my goodness, wow

Dr. Huff: And I guess all those people who were asleep woke up pretty quickly.

Dr. Tollison: I would think so. I would think that would get people's attention fairly quickly.

Dr. Huff: So every student generation has its own kinds of things and those were things that went on. I got married, my wife moved into the apartment in the dorm. She has funny stories to tell about taking the clothes down the hall to use the laundry room and running into the guys who had nothing on.

Dr. Tollison: Right

Dr. Huff: Didn't bother her (laughs) Upset them a bit

Dr. Tollison: So how long were you all in the dorm after you got married?

Dr. Huff: We lived there two years and by that time things had gotten a little more difficult on campus and one night the sheriff's office had a drug bust in the room right over our apartment and Kate and I decided it was probably time for us to leave.

Dr. Tollison: Gotcha, gotcha. That's one other thing I want to talk about actually. I had forgotten about that. 1968. There was quite a bit going on in 1968 in this

country and on this campus as well. Let's talk about the student movement in regards to... You were not here when Joe Vaughn and the other students

Dr. Huff: No that had taken place just before

Dr. Tollison: But they were still students here.

Dr. Huff: Right

Dr. Tollison: Tell me the situation in terms of race relations among students. The first African American faculty member did not come here until much later.

Dr. Huff: Right

Dr. Tollison: What's up with that?

Dr. Huff: Actually the situation was pretty good on campus. Furman, of course, had voluntarily desegregated. The faculty, of course, was strongly in favor of it. Many students were also in favor of desegregation, some were not, but the atmosphere was such that those who were not really didn't always feel free to express themselves.

Dr. Tollison: So overwhelming a very supportive environment

Dr. Huff: It was fairly supportive. Now there were incidents that happened that were unfortunate.

Dr. Tollison: Anything about. I heard that the Klan came on the football practice field. Is that the incident you're referring to?

Dr. Huff: Yeah, the year before I got here L.D. Johnson had become the chaplain of the university and he and Jim Pitts were busy establishing the chaplain's office and they both were very, very outspoken about having an inclusive community on campus. I remember one of the most interesting programs we had in the student center that L.D. and Betty Alverson had arranged was to discuss race relations and they decided to have a panel discussion which L.D. would moderate. But they invited Theo Mitchell who was one of the local civil rights leaders and black political leaders and also the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan for South Carolina who lived in Spartanburg whose brother many Furman faculty members knew because he taught Old Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and was strongly supportive of the Civil Rights Movement and was married to a Jewish woman which...

Dr. Tollison: An interesting family dynamic

Dr. Huff: Yes, which is certainly not something the Ku Klux Klan promoted. Incidentally I took an alumni tour of the Museum of the New South in Charlotte a couple

weeks ago.

Dr. Tollison: I heard about that. It was part of the Furman Club?

Dr. Huff: Yes and I was very interested to notice that some of the Ku Klux Klan regalia that belonged to this particular man was on display.

Dr. Tollison: How's that museum?

Dr. Huff: Oh it's great, it really is. It's very nice. There are a lot of South Carolina connections as well as North Carolina connections. They've made an effort to kind of deal with both and so it was a lot of fun. But I remember the public safety folks were very much in evidence that night. It was a standing room only crowd in the student center. People were not quite sure what was going to happen but on the whole people were well behaved and it was as civil as it could possibly have been under the circumstances.

Dr. Tollison: Let's talk about Betty Alverson and her impact on student life here

Dr. Huff: Well Betty, at that point, she had been brought to Furman by Dr. Blackwell to be the head of a student center program and she had begun the CESC program and in addition to that had all kind of interesting programs, movie series, in the student center. Let's face it, in 1968 Furman was still a rural campus, it was still out in the country. Freshmen were not allowed to have cars their first semester, I think. So it was really very isolated and so this was a part of the effort by Dr. Blackwell to enrich life on campus and it certainly did. The CESC, of course, got students involved in the community in a very important way which Dr. Blackwell had been involved in this kind of activity when he was a faculty member here in the late 1930s.

Dr. Tollison: As a sociologist...

Dr. Huff: A sociologist, right. And they had been involved in the Greenville County Council for Community Development and so this CESC program really picked up on some of the programs that he and Miss Ebaugh had started in those days. Of course Betty Alverson...

Dr. Tollison: Was a student of hers...

Dr. Huff: Had been a sociology major and had participated in that program so it all worked very naturally.

Dr. Tollison: Inherent in CESC was this a push to maintain the Greenville connections in terms of the Furman students being seen around the Greenville community since we were no longer...

Dr. Huff: That's right, exactly. And there was still a good deal of bitterness when I came

here among leaders in town that Furman had left Greenville.

Dr. Tollison: Really, that's interesting. So they really considered this not a part of Greenville?

Dr. Huff: No, no. They presumed that Furman had left, it had moved to Travelers Rest.

Dr. Tollison: But it was always a Greenville address though

Dr. Huff: Yeah, but it didn't matter. It was still out of town.

Dr. Tollison: That's interesting. So Poinsett Highway, this development is post-1961.

Dr. Huff: Right. In fact I remember as a Wofford student because I had some friends who were at Furman and we came out to see the new campus and all I saw was one building and a great sea of red mud as far as you could see. Even the trees had not been planted. And I thought "Good lord, why would anybody want to come here?"

Dr. Tollison: Compared to Wofford, you've got a beautiful campus as well. (laughs) that's funny.

Dr. Huff: So there was a good deal of psychological grieving that went on about Furman.

Dr. Tollison: Did any of this resentment, any particularly damaging effects of it. Did people tend to get over it in time?

Dr. Huff: Yeah, sure. Again for many years it created virtually two alumni associations because you had the people who had graduated and had gone to the old campus and then this campus and the two groups felt like they didn't have much in common with one another.

Dr. Tollison: I would think additionally with the co-educational element here it's a very different dynamic than what they thought about being Furman students as well so that's very interesting. And about how long would you say did it take for those feelings to dissipate?

Dr. Huff: I guess maybe 15 or 20 years

Dr. Tollison: Once you got enough alumni that had had an experience here

Dr. Huff: Yes, but it was an interesting problem.

Dr. Tollison: Well it's interesting... I guess I can speak on behalf of alumni now, tend to treasure those memories of that old campus that none of us ever saw. It sounds fascinating. The pictures are beautiful, the original Bell Tower and stuff like that so, it's wonderful to have the Bell Tower here, but when you think about the first Bell Tower which was built in 1854, wow that's really...

Dr. Huff: Well Furman was probably unique among small liberal arts colleges in the South for having as much participation in the national student movement and student unrest as it did in the 60s.

Dr. Tollison: Particularly, I would think, for a denominational...

Dr. Huff: Yeah. And while there certainly was not a majority of students participating in the activities, there were a sizeable number of people who were bright, energetic, good writers, good speakers, and so they had an influence far beyond their numbers.

Dr. Tollison: Would you care to share the names of some of the students?

Dr. Huff: Well, people like John Duggan, Jack Sullivan, Marybeth [?Pare?]. I remember I was the campus advisor for Wesley Foundation and Wesley Foundation was one of the radical groups on campus. In fact they had an underground newspaper that was published and took issue with Paladin. They called it "The Burro"

Dr. Tollison: I was going to say, was that "El Burro?"

Dr. Huff: Yeah.

Dr. Tollison: I didn't know that was Wesley. For some reason I thought that was more SSOC related.

Dr. Huff: Well the two groups were difficult because there was so much interaction between the two groups.

Dr. Tollison: So how did you handle that as faculty advisor? Were you perfectly aware of this newspaper?

Dr. Huff: Oh yeah, and attended the meetings with some great enthusiasm and...

Dr. Tollison: Now was that something that Dr. Blackwell was okay with, supportive of?

Dr. Huff: Well, he had a very interesting, I think, attitude toward it all. Many, many people on the board of trustees, for example, were very conservative, very suspicious folks

Dr. Tollison: That was back when they had a lot of Baptist ministers

Dr. Huff: Well yeah, and yet I think, somehow, the Baptist ministers had gotten a bad rap because some of them were also some of the most forward looking and forward thinking people

Dr. Tollison: Like Hardy Clemens

Dr. Huff: So you had even then you had at least two groups of Baptists, you had the conservatives who were terribly fearful that Furman was going down the wrong path and so on and then you had another strong group who were, in fact, convinced that Furman was going to be a strong liberal arts college and doing exactly the right things.

Dr. Tollison: Do you think the conservative element was more people that, of course, had been appointed by the Convention but were not ministers?

Dr. Huff: Well, there were some of both. It's hard to make a generalization. But Furman was very fortunate in having strong lay leadership from Greenville area that always supported Furman as a forward-looking institution.

Dr. Tollison: Have you seen Greg Michel's book, SSOC? Do you talk with him?

Dr. Huff: Yeah, but I never have read it

Dr. Tollison: It just came out.

Dr. Huff: Oh, did it?

Dr. Tollison: Actually, I think it's technically November of 2004 and he says... I'm trying to get him to donate a copy to Furman, to the library here. He says that he doesn't have a whole lot on Furman but several pages. He said for some reason, he didn't go into any details, that some of his Furman stuff got cut. I mean I've read... He presented a paper a few years ago to the [inaudible] Conference in the South, this kinds of stuff... So I know he's done extensive research about Furman, I was just wondering about the extent of which he covers it in his book.

Dr. Huff: Yeah, it'll be interesting to see. Yeah, I remember when he was here doing research I actually went through my calendars for those years and could point out to him when the SSOC chapter meetings were held because I had written them all down, you know, what the activities were and so on.

Dr. Tollison: Now were they regularly scheduled meetings?

Dr. Huff: Yeah, usually...

Dr. Tollison: Monthly? Weekly?

Dr. Huff: At least once every two weeks I think. Though, with the way those things went, they were pretty casual.

Dr. Tollison: Probably largely dependent on what was going on in the world especially in 1968.

Dr. Huff: But you know there were faculty members who were very supportive of the

movement and the very fact that we created the so called “free university” in the student center. And it was very popular. We had a lot of people who came.

Dr. Tollison: So would you say that you were... did SSOC really have... I know Al Reid was very supportive of SSOC as well. Was he... did they have a technical faculty advisor?

Dr. Huff: I’m not sure, they may have, but Al would have been it if they did.

Dr. Tollison: I have a quote here I want to read to you from Vernon Burton and if you could comment on it. It says, this is from an article I’m sure you’ve probably seen the article, it came out in Furman Magazine in mid-late, I guess late 90s “Although I never had them for classes A.V. Huff, John Block, William Lavery joined the History Department during my senior year and taught me one-on-one. Huff brought his minister’s sense of caring. And his commitment to social justice inspired many students” What I wanted you to comment on specifically was the coming together of this minister’s sense of caring with this student movement of social justice going on.

Dr. Huff: I think that was a very strong part of what I was all about. While I was in seminary at Yale there was a good deal of activity by students in the civil rights movement. Bill Coughlin, who was the chaplain at the time, he had several freedom riots in Mississippi. I never became involved in those because I realized if I were going to come back to the south and work in the southern white church, I simply couldn’t be identified on the front pages of the newspaper. And, in fact, when I was in Columbia, was involved in a good many of the strategy sessions and so on involving the integration of schools and lunch counters and that sort of thing. And it was much easier to do it behind the scenes, at least that was the way I chose to work.

Dr. Tollison: Well it seems to me that was the way a lot of the things during the movement took place in South Carolina specifically. Was this a shock to come back to the South or having lived here pretty much your entire life and you were gone, what, two, two or three years

Dr. Huff: Well I was at Edenborough for one and two at Yale

Dr. Tollison: Or did you always keep in the back of your mind that I’m going back to the South, I understand that...

Dr. Huff: Yeah, I had a very strong commitment. And one of the reasons that I was so eager to come to Furman was it was not only in the South, but it was also in South Carolina. And I felt that I knew the situation and knew people and could work to some degree in a way better than I could in a strange place.

Dr. Tollison: Well, I have to ask how many times has Wofford approached you because I know they have (laughs)

- Dr. Huff: Yeah, yeah It was a very difficult decision
- Dr. Tollison: I'm sure it was. I'm curious about what was is about Furman that made you stay.
- Dr. Huff: Well, it was partially this notion of Thomas Wolfe's idea that you can't go home again or maybe you shouldn't go home again. I didn't want to be in the midst of a situation where I was surrounded by my former teachers, in a very comfortable place.
- Dr. Tollison: The dynamics are a little different. I can certainly relate to that.
- Dr. Huff: Yeah. That's right. Now, I don't think that any of that would have been a problem because Furman was much like the Wofford that I had gone to. In fact when I walked into the History Department at Furman and found people like Al Sanders who had been students at Chapel Hill, students of Fletcher Green at Chapel Hill, with folks who at Wofford, Ed Jones who had graduated from Duke Graduate School just a few years ahead of me. So it was not like a strange place and yet these were not people who had nurtured me as an undergraduate and that was a good thing.
- Dr. Tollison: Gotcha, gotcha. That's interesting. I was just thinking that, I know they had to have approached you (laughs)
- Dr. Huff: I guess that was my own private declaration of independence... to say, you know, I want to go somewhere and be my own person and not be somebody who remembers me when.
- Dr. Tollison: Okay, let's talk about other things that were going on with the student movement. I understand that drugs got to be a pretty bad problem, the speaker ban was important, Vietnam...
- Dr. Huff: I guess it was the adoption of the speaker ban policy by the trustees that really ensured the success of the student movement on campus because we had a cause. And in order for protest movements to operate you can hardly exist in an abstract fashion, you have to have something to focus on.
- Dr. Tollison: Now I would think that would certainly be a cause that wasn't quite so radical that the majority of Furman students couldn't get their arms around it, or at least be somewhat supportive of it, wouldn't push it away.
- Dr. Huff: And of course there was all this constant unrest about whether there should be required chapel and required convocation and so this sort of fit into the whole caldera of ideas having to do with that. But I remember at one point we had a rally on the steps of the library and we had a march on the administration building...
- Dr. Tollison: And you were a professor but were participating.

Dr. Huff: Yeah, right.

Dr. Tollison: Was that odd?

Dr. Huff: No, because we had other faculty members too. John Block was involved, Bill Lavery was involved, Tony Arrington was involved. There were, you know, a number of us. I remember one of my favorite people at Furman in the early years when I was here was Miss Alice Adams who worked in the library, just a wonderful person, but in many ways just very typical of a Southern lady. And Bill Lavery and I were going up the steps of the library one day and she stopped us and she said "Now I like you young men very much," she said, "and I want you to stay at Furman a long time," she said, "just be careful what you do." (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: She didn't like any unpleasantness.

Dr. Huff: No, no. And I remember the afternoon that we had the rally on the steps of the library and then we were marching over here in front of the administration building and were gonna make a series of speeches.

Dr. Tollison: Was this a parking lot or was it grass?

Dr. Huff: It was all grass. It was a grass square.

Dr. Tollison: Was there any parking lot over here?

Dr. Huff: Well, no. There was just a road around it.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Dr. Huff: And there were four big trees that sort of marked it out.

Dr. Tollison: So there were was that road to the women's, to Judson, and there was a circle. This was all grass. Okay

Dr. Huff: So that's where...

Dr. Tollison: So when did this get here?

Dr. Huff: Well, all this happened with the... in the 90s. So it hasn't been this way very long.

Dr. Tollison: I think it was here in '95 when I got here. Must have been early 90s.

Dr. Huff: But I remember when we were marching across the, well, what's the site of now Johns Hall, coming over here. The department chairs were having a meeting upstairs on the second floor of Furman Hall which is where they always met and I remember looking up and the curtains were closed except I saw at one point

the curtains opened and I saw Dr. Bonner peering out and I thought 'Oh my god we're done for!' (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Oh no!

Dr. Huff: And of course we came, made our speeches had a petition to present to Dr. Blackwell, he very judiciously was off campus, so we came up here and presented it to Dot Ensor who was his secretary who very graciously received it thanked us very much.

Dr. Tollison: Now was this the time that there were some of the secretaries here that were... 'cause there were stories that say that the students, after the rally, stormed the administration building.

Dr. Huff: No.

Dr. Tollison: Most of the people I've talked to say, that it didn't happen, but there are stories that say that they...

Dr. Huff: I think that there were, you know, half a dozen of us who brought the petition up and that was all there was to it.

Dr. Tollison: Did the secretaries look intimidated in the slightest or uncomfortable?

Dr. Huff: No, no they weren't as far as I know.

Dr. Tollison: So we can put that story to rest. (laughs)

Dr. Huff: One more example of what a university is like.

Dr. Tollison: How things go.

Mr. Huff: But then, of course... And you asked about Dr. Blackwell's attitude. He, of course, had been very instrumental at Florida State in bringing the University there through the McCarthy era. So in some ways this was very small potatoes for him. But he was very pleased, I think, in some ways that there were people on campus who were activists and were not asleep.

Dr. Tollison: Because, privately, don't you think that he would have been supportive of the movement

Dr. Huff: Yeah, I think that this would have been the kind of thing that he, himself, would have done as a student.

Dr. Tollison: Had he not been president...

Dr. Huff: Yeah. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: And did you all know that? Did the students know that? Did they know just how supportive or how radical he had seemingly been as a student?

Dr. Huff: Yeah, I think so. There were whispers and of course there were people on the faculty who had been students at Furman when he was a student and so they had known him.

Dr. Tollison: He told me stories about how the president was always calling him to his office because he was writing socialist propaganda in the newspaper. (laughs)

Dr. Huff: But again you know we had certain roles that we fulfilled. I found myself doing certain things as dean that I would have opposed had I been a faculty member.

Dr. Tollison: Like what?

Dr. Huff: And I frankly welcomed faculty who opposed what was done because I think that's part of a healthy conversation that goes on in an academic community.

Dr. Tollison: Can you think of any specific incidences that...

Dr. Huff: No, these would be just administrative things. I don't think we had any major ideological crises.

Dr. Tollison: It's just interesting to me about how you bring up an interesting dilemma about reconciling the personal with professional responsibilities.

Dr. Huff: Yeah. And you just realized that you're in a different situation, in a different time, and you're representing a different stake in the institution. And I suspect that not all administrators at Furman, in the long history of the institution, have looked at it quite that objectively. And it's hard to do because you get involved in personal struggles as well as, you know, dealing with issues and it's hard not to take it all personally. But you know, you sort of say I'm the dean and deans represent the administration and represent the trustees and these are faculty members and they are representing a certain point of view and then you go at it. And that's a good thing.

Dr. Tollison: Yeah. What did you learn about being a dean? What did you learn from the various deans, like Dr. Bonner, John Crabtree...

Dr. Huff: Those were the two. Again, they were different personalities so I learned fairly early on that there was, you know, there was no "dean type" because everybody's going to do it a little differently. On the other hand, just simply being in the office means you represent certain kinds of things. It was always interesting. For example, during the days of the student movement it was decided that, in fact, if there had been a takeover of the administration building or if there had been an effort to take over the administration building, that the dean's office would be a kind of information center of the campus and locks

were put on the doors and so on at that time. And I used to laugh and tell Peggy Park, I said "Well, the radicals have taken over the office but it's almost twenty years late." (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Let's talk about her. She was here for a really long time, observed a lot of very important...

Dr. Huff: That's right. Here's somebody who worked at Furman for forty years, who was hired as a young secretary. She had work experience before she came here but practically right out of the commercial program at Parker High School. And I think Dr. Bonner realized that she had an extraordinary talent, not only for organizing the office and doing a wide variety of things, but also had tremendous personal interactive skills with people. And she was able over the years that she was here simply not only to break in new deans as we came along but to read our personalities in such a way that she could represent who we were to the people she had to work with. Very often could make decisions at a certain level about funding things and keeping accounts and so on without ever having to bother the people who were in the office.

Dr. Tollison: That's a major help.

Dr. Huff: It was extraordinary. I mean it really was.

Dr. Tollison: That's a very unique talent to be able to do that.

Dr. Huff: Yeah, and on the other hand I found out that I would never make a major decision without talking with her...

Dr. Tollison: Really

Dr. Huff: And getting her insight about it. Because very often the kinds of decisions you make in an institution are problems that occur from generation to generation and so it's not like you're inventing the wheel every time you do it. And so to sit and hear her reflect on how things had been done in a certain way in the past, not that she was an advocate for any particular point of view, but just simply to reflect on how all that happened. It was also a great comfort when I got into the office, and remembered that similar kinds of things had happened before, to be able to pick up the phone and call Dr. Bonner or to call John Crabtree and just get them to ruminate about their experiences, not that they ever, in any way presumed to tell me what to do and that was an extraordinary kind of relationship to have with people who had been in the office before, just simply hear from them how things could be done. And then, of course, there's a network of deans that develops. Dan Maultsby who was the dean at Wofford had been a student at Wofford when I was there, even younger than I am. But it was very comforting just to be able to pick up the phone and call Dan and say "Listen to this," you know, "what do you think?" And he'd do the same thing. And many afternoons we'd just get on the phone with one another.

Dr. Tollison: More objective opinion perhaps...

Dr. Huff: Yeah, and likewise you make friends with deans at other institutions and just simply to be able to pick up the phone and call the dean at Davidson, or Sewanee, or Birmingham Southern, or you know, or somewhere.

Dr. Tollison: I'm presuming the issues are...

Dr. Huff: Are similar.

Dr. Tollison: Exactly.

Dr. Huff: And, of course, a number of these dean sessions are held two or three times a year and so you get to meet people on a rather regular basis. One of the nice things about Tom Kazee coming to Furman was the fact that I had known him while he was the dean at Sewanee and we had been in meetings together, exchanged ideas and so on.

Dr. Tollison: That's interesting.

Dr. Huff: So I could very easily without any problem, you know, assure people when they said "Oh what's the new dean gonna be like?" You know, "You're gonna like him." (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Let's talk about selection and your selection as well while we're on the topic. How did you get into the dean position?

Dr. Huff: Well, I guess you get to a certain point in your academic career in which you're going to continue to teach and after you've been the department chair, which I'd done a couple of times, you're either going to move on into an administrative position like a dean's job or you're simply going to spend, you're going to get out of administration and spend a lot of your time doing research and writing. And frankly I was poised to do either, I could have gone in either direction. I thought over the years that I had had enough of, enough experiences at Furman so that I could bring something to the dean's office from the faculty. So David Shi had set up a very intentional kind of process of having a search committee that invited people to make an application. And then the candidates were narrowed down to a group of, there were three in that case who were interviewed on campus and I was one of those.

Dr. Tollison: Would you care to share the outcomes of the other two?

Dr. Huff: Well, the off-campus fellow I can't remember. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: The other one was on-campus.

Dr. Huff: Was on-campus, Ken Abernathy in Computer Science. And that was a little dicey

in a way having one of your colleagues and you're sort of going head-to-head, having a series of public forums, and having people come ask you questions and so on. We agreed early on we would not go to each other's. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: That's smart. Do you think there was something about Furman as a liberal arts institution wanting someone that was from Humanities?

Dr. Huff: There certainly had been a tradition of that. Since I had been at Furman all of the deans had been from Humanities except Stuart Patterson who was Chair of the Chemistry Department.

Dr. Tollison: When did he serve?

Dr. Huff: He was prior to John Crabtree's

Dr. Tollison: After Dr. Bonner

Dr. Huff: Right. Well actually Dr. Blackwell had changed the administration somewhat and Dr. Bonner moved from being Dean to being the Provost and so when Stuart Patterson served as Dean he actually served under Dr. Bonner as Provost so it was a little different kind of relationship during that period. And then when John Crabtree first became Dean he also served under Bonner until Bonner retired. And then Blackwell created the Vice President and Academic Dean position.

Dr. Tollison: Why do you think Dr. Johns did not want to continue the position of Provost?

Dr. Huff: I think Dr. Blackwell felt more comfortable with that kind of situation because he had been at a series of universities and had worked with layers of administrators and he wanted to be free, as President, not to have to deal with a lot of the internal campus issues that a President often has to deal with. Johns' major experience had been at Stetson which is very much like Furman. David Shi's experience had been at Davidson which is very much like Furman. And so I think it's just personal preference. And you'll hear lots of stories to the contrary. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Now tell me about... and what would those stories say.

Dr. Huff: Well, Bonner, of course, had been at Furman a very long time and he was used to operating within the campus and making decisions at a certain level and there are all kinds of stories that Johns and Bonner, at various times, clashed.

Dr. Tollison: Bonner had aspirations to be President, didn't he?

Dr. Huff: Well, he had been acting President after Dr. Plyler retired and the time that Dr. Blackwell came. It was actually during that interim year that the campus was integrated which was a very interesting step for the university to take during that period.

Dr. Tollison: Right.

Dr. Huff: On the other hand, knowing Dr. Bonner, he was an extraordinarily loyal person to whatever President he was working with.

Dr. Tollison: So he sort of understood boundaries.

Dr. Huff: Exactly

Dr. Tollison: Still remained deferential

Dr. Huff: Right. And I think that's, in a sense the Dean is always middle management if you want to put it into a business-kind of context because, as I used to like to say to faculty members, a college president is probably the closest thing we have to an absolute dictator (laughs) in America.

Dr. Tollison: Wow

Dr. Huff: Because, in fact, if you read the constitution and bylaws of the institution of the trustees who have absolute authority vested in the President.

Dr. Tollison: Okay

Dr. Huff: And then he chooses certain people to take certain responsibilities but he ultimately has those responsibilities and has to account for them.

Dr. Tollison: Now to what extent does he have to have trustee approval? He's limited somewhat isn't he?

Dr. Huff: Well, and this is one of those points of tension in higher education.

Dr. Tollison: It's the nature of the beast

Dr. Huff: Exactly. And there's cycles in which these things operate. But you have... David Shi happened to come to the presidency at a time nationally when boards of trustees were becoming more active and involved in the activities of the campus. This also happened to coincide at Furman with the transition between denominational control and total control, ownership by the board of trustees and its related financial responsibilities. And so when the relationship with the Baptist Convention ended there was no longer that guarantee of funding, no longer a ready supply of churches that could be approached for raising money and producing students. And so in many ways the board of trustees took on themselves the responsibility for doing those things.

Dr. Tollison: Now that also explained why Joe Roberts left after Johns? He moved into development for a few years?

Dr. Huff: Right, because he was basically the Assistant to the President for Denominational Relations.

Dr. Tollison: Which was no longer needed.

Dr. Huff: No longer needed, right.

Dr. Tollison: But he did stay on...

Dr. Huff: He stayed on

Dr. Tollison: for a two years after the split.

Dr. Huff: And became basically the Director of Stewardship, I'm not sure that was his formal title or not. But to work with donors...

Dr. Tollison: Did he become that immediately after the split or was that when Dr. Shi became president?

Dr. Huff: No, I think that worked out maybe before Johns retired though I'm not positive. I'd have to go back and look.

Dr. Tollison: Tell me about how you all selected Tom Kazee because I'm sure you were part of that process.

Dr. Huff: No not really. I tried to be as helpful as I could but I did not want there to be any even appearance of my trying to be involved in or manipulate the process in any way and so in the... I didn't know who they were considering when the committee met, you know, you heard rumors. But nobody gave me any inside information. I'd go down to the faculty dining room and hear rumors just like everybody else. (laughs) And then when folks were invited here for the interviews I met them all and tried to orient them a little bit to the Furman situation, you know, what the working relationships within the administration were.

Dr. Tollison: Has the dynamic changed a little bit? I would think that it would have had to have because, just that little comment that you made about "I go to the faculty dining room just like everybody else." Because you had been a faculty member for so long and that's what you had been doing for decades so it would be a very natural thing for you to do. Now I've never seen Tom Kazee in the faculty dining room when I was eating there every day so it has to have a lot to do with the fact that he has never been a faculty member here. So the dynamic of the relationship has got to be a little bit different.

Dr. Huff: Could be, but I don't know because one of the things that I've done when I retired was to decide that I was not going to be on campus.

Dr. Tollison: Looking over somebody's shoulder...

Dr. Huff: And finding out what was going on. And when people have tried to tell me something I basically have said "Well isn't that nice." (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Does he consult with you just like you consulted with Crabtree and Bonner?

Dr. Huff: He's called me a few times but basically to ask me things that were not clear. By the time I left Peggy Park had retired, Priscilla Foreman, of course, left shortly after I did. So his office staff was practically new. And so he's called a few times to ask something. But he had an advantage that I didn't have and that is he had been a dean before. So a lot of the things that I had to learn through observation...

Dr. Tollison: So different strengths.

Dr. Huff: Yeah, exactly. And again... Of course it's very hard for me to know precisely what the relationship was that Dean Bonner had to the faculty members of an older generation because he had been their contemporaries on the faculty and he knew them in a different relationship. He had a much different relationship with those of us who were younger because we practically held him in awe. And I just simply was determined that I was going to try to maintain as much of that collegial relationship with faculty as dean realizing that, you know, some things would have to change, that I had before.

Dr. Tollison: I'm so amazed at this... I never... I've spoken with Dr. Bonner on the phone several years ago, obviously not now but it's interesting how people talk... most people have just an incredible degree, incredible amount of respect for him and, like you said, some people just sort of held him in awe, but also tempered with this... he wasn't very popular, he wasn't a very warm person, this kind of thing. What was it about him that just made people... was it this distance which sometimes seemed aloof or cold... that made people sort of put him on a pedestal.

Dr. Huff: Yeah, you probably can get a better view of Bonner from Peggy Park than anybody else. So if you'd like to talk to her some time she'd love to talk to you about her experiences working with all of us and you'll get a whole different view of what deans at Furman were like from her office.

Dr. Tollison: I'll might have to do that.

Dr. Huff: But one of the things that she always says about Frank Bonner is that he was an incredibly shy person.

Dr. Tollison: So that could be seen as aloof.

Dr. Huff: And people interpreted that as aloof. He also had been trained in the Army

during World War II as a member of the OSS. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Wow.

Dr. Huff: So he had that... And when he became Dean of Men at Furman which was in effect, was the Dean of Students for the men's campus and was responsible for dorms and behavior and all of that...

Dr. Tollison: The disciplinary aspect...

Dr. Huff: He had a legendary reputation of being the kind of person who could sniff out misbehavior, you know. (laughs) And know what people were going to do before they did it and that sort of thing. And some of... well he figures in one of Pat Conroy's novels in helping to organize the Furman campus when the Citadel cadets came up to try to do mischief the night before a Citadel game.

Dr. Tollison: Is that... not the most recent one about the basketball team.

Dr. Huff: No, no.

Dr. Tollison: But that's the one... the paperback with the blue cover... is that the one you're talking about?

Dr. Huff: Yes. But Bonner was the one who organized all that, who basically called out the ROTC and manned the gates...

Dr. Tollison: Oh my.

Dr. Huff: And opened them when the Citadel cadets came on campus and then locked them. And then captured them and held them captive down in the basement of one of the men's dorms. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Now is that the same trip that the horse was blinded?

Dr. Huff: No, I think that was a separate trip and so this was sort of retaliation.

Dr. Tollison: Goodness. All these stories

Dr. Huff: Of course, I had participated in some of that when I was a student at Wofford. Because one of the things that used to happen is that students on these rival campuses would invade each other's campuses, particularly during football season. And one of the things we had to do as freshmen, I remember, was stay up all night and guard the campus because we had rumors Furman students were coming. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Oh, that stuff just doesn't happen these days.

Dr. Huff: It was quite a time.

Dr. Tollison: But it sounds fun, exciting I guess.

Dr. Huff: Kept us busy.

Dr. Tollison: Let's talk about this Black History course, the Black History course you taught here. Who requested that, how was it received among students, was it considered controversial? What was the tone of the class?

Dr. Huff: It really arose out of the whole student movement activity and the fact that black history was really becoming recognized outside of black institutions as a legitimate area of study by the 1960s and early 70s. Now there had not been a, you know, courses in black history at Duke, for example, when I was there in graduate school. So this was something brand new that was emerging.

Dr. Tollison: So how did you develop...

Dr. Huff: We first of all offered it in the Free University.

Dr. Tollison: Now exactly what was this program? Did you get college credit for it?

Dr. Huff: No, no. It was purely voluntary evening classes that we held at the student center.

Dr. Tollison: How often did you all meet?

Dr. Huff: Once a week, I think.

Dr. Tollison: And it would it go on all term?

Dr. Huff: Yes, I think so. But for several hours a session. And, you know, there were very few textbooks, very few of the standard monographs that now...

Dr. Tollison: Versus today...

Dr. Huff: Well yeah, were not around.

Dr. Tollison: So it's a select group of students that would be interested in this, that were taking this course.

Dr. Huff: So I talked with the people in the History Department about, you know, adding it to the curriculum and I don't remember that there was any opposition at all, I think people were rather enthusiastic about it.

Dr. Tollison: Who did you talk with specifically? Just shopped it around?

Dr. Huff: Well yeah, and the department was small enough in those days so you just walked down the hall, walked from one office to another. After number two in those days the History Department only had one telephone. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Ooh, I'm trying to think what a disaster that would be today.

Dr. Huff: Well the phone would ring and the chairman would pop out of his office and say the phone's for so and so, and it led to much closer communal living.

Dr. Tollison: Sure, sure.

Dr. Huff: Of course many of those people had been on the old campus and all the History Department offices were in a big room, you see, and at first they didn't even have a telephone so they were accustomed to living in very close quarters. They used to do at Wofford, the History Department, the faculty members occupied one room, they just had a series of desks in the room so it was, you know, quite different.

Dr. Tollison: Were most departments like that?

Dr. Huff: Yep.

Dr. Tollison: Hmm. That's a... I used to hear stories about...

Dr. Huff: And one of the things about moving to the new campus was that, actually, the professors would have their own offices.

Dr. Tollison: Was this popular?

Dr. Huff: Oh, this was looked upon as a tremendous advance.

Dr. Tollison: But there's something that's lost.

Dr. Huff: Yeah, yes there is.

Dr. Tollison: In terms of the sense of community, a little bit.

Dr. Huff: I remember very well one of the first years that I was here Miss Ebaugh came out, would come out occasionally and visit. And I just remember the first time I was aware of who she was we were sitting in the old History Department offices on the second floor of Furman Hall, though that's not where my office was when I first came here because there were too many of us for the first time to be in that suite, and I heard this powerful voice just echoing down the hall and somebody said, "Oh, Miss Ebaugh must be here." (laughs) And she had had this reputation for years. She never needed a loudspeaker. When she came in the door you could hear her talk and people always laughed about her classes because if she didn't shut the door she just broadcast all over...

Dr. Tollison: Everybody got an education.

Dr. Huff: Yeah, I mean she was a wonderful character. I remember taking a history seminar over at her house one day and she regaled with all kinds of stories about Greenville and it was wonderful.

Dr. Tollison: Now why don't you think Furman has an African American studies concentration like we have an Asian studies, a Women's studies concentration?

Dr. Huff: I think it has to do with historical circumstances. Of course there was no such thing as a concentration in those days. Asian studies, when it came along, became a department. But actually what Asian studies ought to be is a concentration. That's what it really is in present day parlance. And I used to laugh and say "Well, if I were the next Dean I would make it a concentration."

Dr. Tollison: Oh, I'm sorry I thought it was.

Dr. Huff: No no.

Dr. Tollison: I thought it was similar to Women's studies. But Asian studies is a separate department.

Dr. Huff: It's a separate department but it has no faculty of its own. All the faculty members are drawn from other departments.

Dr. Tollison: But you can major in Asian studies.

Dr. Huff: But you can major in that.

Dr. Tollison: Hmm, okay.

Dr. Huff: But again that was the only way they knew to do it at the time that it was put together. Because larger universities like Harvard or Yale had many departments that were committees, basically, that operated that way. So I think Black Studies was caught between the department model and the concentration model and it's kind of existed out there in limbo. Now there used to be, and I don't know how many students there were, but there were the occasional students who would do an ICP in Black studies or African American studies.

Dr. Tollison: Why... These are odd questions I'm asking you so I apologize...

Dr. Huff: Oh, no.

Dr. Tollison: Why do you think Furman doesn't have a system where we have Minors?

Dr. Huff: Well that was one of the things that disappeared in 1968.

Dr. Tollison: Let's talk about that curriculum development that changed then.

Dr. Huff: When I came in the fall of 1968 this was the inauguration of a major curricular and calendar change at Furman and it was an extraordinary time. People were absolutely convinced that this was a major step forward in the academic program, that they were creating a program which would produce extraordinary graduates. The theory was...

Dr. Tollison: What had the system been – semester?

Dr. Huff: The system had been a semester system with three-hour courses.

Dr. Tollison: With majors and minors?

Dr. Huff: With majors and minors, pretty typical of most institutions. And, of course, the 60s was an era of curricular innovation and experimentation. So there had been a committee at work three or four years working on this and actually when it was implemented the committee that was working on it had not really worked out the details of what it was to be like. The faculty simply passed two working documents which if you go back and look in the faculty minutes are very sketchy concepts of what the curriculum ought to be and in fact many of the things which were supposed to be implemented never were. Some of the things, some of the so called "radical aspects" of the curriculum never, were never put into practice.

Dr. Tollison: What were some of those?

Dr. Huff: Well for example there was to be a senior seminar which included all the liberal arts and sciences. Back to this old notion, a medieval notion of bringing all knowledge together.

Dr. Tollison: That sounds amazingly difficult to do.

Dr. Huff: (laughs) Well, and I think it was so difficult that they never could get it together. They did institute the departmental seminars and those became highly successful.

Dr. Tollison: I think that's a beautiful concept. Mine was incredibly successful.

Dr. Huff: Really? One of the things that did not work likewise was the final comprehensive examination. You had to take a full week of examinations covering the field of history, for example.

Dr. Tollison: Like you do in graduate school.

Dr. Huff: Yeah, I mean it was really very close to the whole idea of prelims. And doing it and grading it just about killed us all. We didn't really have adequate faculty

resources to do all that. Some departments for example right off the bat had their students take the graduate record exam in a particular subject matter and they just gave up on the whole idea at the beginning. There were... The winter term was created in order to have experimental courses and of course that's where Black History was first taught for example. It was an experimental course in the beginning.

Dr. Tollison: After it was part of the Free University?

Dr. Huff: Yeah, before it moved in as a regular curriculum course. And we actually had a Dean of the winter term who published a separate catalog of all the courses that were offered in the winter term.

Dr. Tollison: Now do you think that concept has sustained because I do know of universities that have what they consider a "J Term" or something like this, that really do have some very specific, very interesting experiences offered, this kind of stuff. But it seems like Furman doesn't necessarily have that. That it's just a shortened term where we offer the classes that we offer in the fall-spring sessions.

Dr. Huff: Well and see that, I think, was the result of a compromise. At Furman it's always been a very conservative institution. It may take some progressive steps but it always does it very carefully and very thoughtfully. And so the January term for example at Wofford has been much more successful in fostering this kind of experimental course.

Dr. Tollison: They sound like amazing things

Dr. Huff: Yeah they do and we all tried. I remember Bill Lavery and David Parsell offered a course called "Prison Literature" and what they did was to find examples of literary compositions that had been written in jails over the experience of Western History, some of Lenin's writings for example, obviously Martin Luther King's letters from the Birmingham jail. So there were these kinds of interesting... I offered a course once in the "American Character" which was great guns in the early 70s in lots of places but it didn't make it. We didn't have enough students interested in it.

Dr. Tollison: Hmm. Sounds like a fascinating concept.

Dr. Huff: Well, yeah, I thought so (laughs) I thought it was gonna be great.

Dr. Tollison: Especially because of the unique intersection that you would bring to that course.

Dr. Huff: And this was another thing, I think there were a lot of Furman students who were not willing to risk trying something different when they could in the same term get a requirement out of the way. And you know how Furman students are they're pretty...

Dr. Tollison: So when you make it an option that's when they...

Dr. Huff: They're gonna choose the tried and true

Dr. Tollison: I gotcha yeah. I'm trying to think if that would work any better today [inaudible] (laughs)

Dr. Huff: Now one of the things that did work well was that a lot study abroad was focused in the winter term. And the program in the Middle East...

Dr. Tollison: and Russia...

Dr. Huff: Russia. I mean those things have flourished. There are certain courses in certain departments that have been designed specifically for the winter term. All the years that I taught History 40 which was Colonial and Revolutionary U.S. it was never taught in the winter term. It was designed for eight weeks and you know we would go traipsing off...

Dr. Tollison: Field trips?

Dr. Huff: Traipsing off to [inaudible], yeah. And it was more fun to do things like that.

Dr. Tollison: Why was there an excitement about these curricular changes?

Dr. Huff: There was the notion that Furman was going to make...

FLIP AUDIO TAPE

Dr. Huff: All this was really a part of Gordon Blackwell's aim to make Furman an institution that was going to be "great by national standards," that was sort of the theme of his administration. And Furman was going to have a curriculum that was going to be innovative, it was going to be challenging, we were going to attract a much narrower group of students. And this was the whole aim of the thing. And, as a matter of fact, the way the curriculum was devised people did, in fact, I think sometimes, require six hours of work in a four hour course.

Dr. Tollison: What's the thinking that meeting for 50 minutes, or an hour and 15 minutes as in the case of the winter term, five days a week is more beneficial to this learning process than the different amount of time on Tuesdays or Thursdays, or Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, or maybe even Saturdays, I guess there were some courses then...

Dr. Huff: Well the idea was that every class was going to be long enough so that you could have a kind of seminar experience in the winter term. Now the fact of the matter is that an awful lot of professors just simply sort of shoehorned their lectures into those longer periods without creating any kind of different experience. But when I was teaching a winter term course that was when we

tried to, you know, read primary sources, read historical interpretations. And so often in a 50-minute class you'd just sort of get it going when it's over. And the idea was that if you had that extra time that you could really get into it.

Dr. Tollison: Dig deeper.

Dr. Huff: The problem is, of course, that you require more reading and outside work because you're meeting people every day. But the idea was that if you could concentrate on fewer subjects and do it in greater depth that you'd come out for the better.

Dr. Tollison: So a more intense learning experience.

Dr. Huff: And of course it's always interesting that when the curriculum is debated, as it has been periodically every five or seven years, one of the points that some students make is this calendar makes us work too hard. (laughs) Which is not calculated to make the faculty respond positively.

Dr. Tollison: Right, I wouldn't think so. So here we go again.

Dr. Huff: Oh yes.

Dr. Tollison: Having discussions about these changes.

Dr. Huff: And really I think the faculty in 1968 and in those early years of this curriculum and calendar had a sense of ownership of this experiment which gave it a kind of enthusiasm to the learning experience. And, of course, you had the, you know, the times were friendly to that sort of thing as well.

Dr. Tollison: Was there a model that this was based off of?

Dr. Huff: Yeah, there were other schools who were doing a similar kind of thing.

Dr. Tollison: Let's talk about your experiences with Foreign Study and the development of Foreign Study. You came here the year before the very first student sendoff foreign study...

Dr. Huff: It was really Dr. Bonner and I think the generation of faculty members who had been in World War II who saw really the importance of a travel study experience. Let's face it, even most faculty members before that time had never been out of the United States, many of them had never been out of the region. And suddenly they were thrown into this world-wide experience and they not only studied about London and Paris but they'd actually been there. And Dr. Bonner had this rather curious way of doing it. He got money from the Duke Endowment to send faculty members to Europe for several summers, just on a tour, on a trip...

Dr. Tollison: Faculty development.

Dr. Huff: Faculty development kind of thing.

Dr. Tollison: With the thinking that they would make contacts over there.

Dr. Huff: Right. And so he had this notion in the back of his mind "How do you keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Paree?" kind of thing. (laughs) And sure enough people came back from these experiences and began to think about how could they use travel as a way to enhance the experience. And the program in England was the first one.

Dr. Tollison: Tell me about Willard Pate and her role in that.

Dr. Huff: Actually Willard, I believe, was not the first person who went on the annual program. Bonner hired a young man who was in graduate school with me at Duke to go make the initial contacts in London with Birkbeck College. John Block was involved with the program early on. Then, of course, Willard got involved not only with her passion for studies in England and travel but, I think very seriously, because she didn't have a family, she could travel more easily than some other members of the faculty and so she became involved. It was a natural, of course, for the language folks. The religion people became very interested. Some of them had been involved in archaeological digs in Israel. And so it began to blossom and grow. I got involved at first because I was teaching the Ancient Medieval History. It so happened that I showed up here in the fall of 1968. Winston Babb who had taught Ancient Medieval History had died the previous year and there was nobody to teach those courses so I began to teach them and when the religion department was looking around for somebody from history to complement their program in the Middle East I was the logical person to go. Bob Crapps and I went together, actually we went twice. The first time we went Kate and I were newly married and Bob and ?Dody? went, Kate and I went, actually one of Bob's children went along, and we had an extraordinary experience.

Dr. Tollison: And where in the Middle East did you go?

Dr. Huff: We were scheduled to go to Israel... and that's when the 1972 war broke out and at the last minute we could not go. So we redesigned the trip and we went to Turkey and Greece and Rome and Italy primarily. So it turned out to be a study of Paul's journeys and letters and ancient Greek and Roman history. And it was so hastily put together because of the fighting in Israel that sometimes we didn't know until the day before where we were going to be the next day. And so Bob and I at times would be staying up practically all night sitting out in the hall of the hotel trying to put together some sort of lecture and itinerary for the next day and then checking out with the travel agent "well can we do this?" and then we'd go here. And while it was exhausting it was also exciting.

Dr. Tollison: I'm sure.

Dr. Huff: (laughs) Then the third time I went was on the fall term in England program and then I did a month's study of the history of Rome after we left England. And again we were sort of thrown together at a hotel in Rome with a group of students and had an extraordinary time together. In fact the chairman of the board at the church I go to is one of the students that was on that trip and one of the alumni I saw at Charlotte at the Charlotte Club meeting not long ago was on that trip. It's kind of a camaraderie that develops among people with that study abroad program and it's really very interesting. Of course the trip to Rome we unexpectedly were in I think it was the second public audience that Pope John Paul II had when he became Pope. The previous Pope had died while we were in London that year and we used some connections we had to get into the audience and were able not only to hear him but also to speak to him and so we've all got pictures. (laughs)

Dr. Tollison: Oh my, that's remarkable.

Dr. Huff: My daughter, who was very young at the time, he picked up and held up and we got a picture of that. In the England program Marsha Gambrell who was on the program volunteered part of her study was an internship in Conservative Party headquarters in London and she made the acquaintance of Margaret Thatcher. And Margaret Thatcher's son and she actually dated him a couple of times while she was there. (laughs) So you never know what these things...

Dr. Tollison: Taking her home to meet mom?

Dr. Huff: You never know what these things might lead to.

Dr. Tollison: We've touched on it, but any other comments that you'd like to mention about this historical relationship and the constantly evolving relationship of the City of Greenville and Furman

Dr. Huff: I think there was a natural affinity for the first hundred years because the town itself was small enough, Furman and the Women's College were right in the middle of the city, faculty members were intimately involved in the life of the town as well as in the life of the university. So there grew to be a kind of collegial relationship between town and gown which was very important. That changed dramatically as Greenville became larger after World War II when Furman moved here and you had that sense on the part of a number of people in downtown Greenville that Furman had left them, it was developing a new identity. And we were. You know this was six miles out in the country in those days. Furman students didn't necessarily have immediate access to automobiles to get to town. The faculty members, after the college moved here, began to build houses and to live in this area rather than the heart of town. And so it took a very special effort on the part of the university to try to re-explore, re-orient the relationship and I think this is one of the things that David Shi has worked so

hard at trying to nurture and it's been very successful.

Dr. Tollison: To an extent it's got to be a more formal effort.

Dr. Huff: Exactly. You have to invite people from the chamber of commerce to come out and have lunch.

Dr. Tollison: You're not gonna run into them walking down Main Street.

Dr. Huff: No, that's right. Because they're not going to know who the people at Furman are they need to call and vice versa and so it just has to be worked out.

Dr. Tollison: Let's discuss, you mentioned Blackwell's MBA vision earlier with Ray Roberts. Let's talk just briefly about that.

Dr. Huff: I think that when Gordon Blackwell came here because he not only had been a student at Furman, he had been a faculty member at Furman, but then he had taught for a generation at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, he'd been president of the Woman's College at Greensboro, president at Florida State. So he saw the opportunities that were involved in having an institution become a much more integral part of the community and also of the region. And he saw that having some kind of Graduate Business Study might be a way in which Furman could involve itself with the community. And actually there was a study committee that worked for a long time, Charles Brewer was on it, Ernie Harrill was on it, Ray Roberts was on it I believe, to discuss whether or not Furman should actually have a business school. Ultimately the decision was made not to do that, to concentrate our activities on the undergraduate experience. However, the possibility of having a graduate program here, an MBA program, was very attractive. And Blackwell was responsible for bringing Ray Roberts from Winthrop, who had been dean of their program, and [Art Malone?] from Old Dominion here to try to develop an MBA program on this campus. Ultimately we joined forces with Clemson and developed a Furman-Clemson program using our faculty and Clemson faculty. Then we ran into accreditation problems with the business degree and Furman realized that it simply could not, didn't have the resources to have an accredited business program at that point. Now we could have had one later under different circumstances but at that point we simply could not have an accredited program without having a business school. So what Furman did then was to basically withdraw from the program but provide Clemson a place on this campus to operate the MBA program and so for a number of years there was a Clemson-Furman MBA program, then later a Clemson-at-Furman program. And then when the University Center was developed downtown it was natural that that program should move there and away from the Furman campus and we gave up any part we had in it, which was a hard decision to make because it had become a part of who we were.

Dr. Tollison: We're talking about two decades ago.

Dr. Huff: Yeah, that's right

Dr. Tollison: Let's get into the split between Furman and the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Dr. Huff: Okay.

Dr. Tollison: I need to find a more pointed way to ask you this because I'm not going to ask from the historical perspective of let's go back to the early 1800s or even earlier than that actually. Let's talk about the more immediate historical perspective... maybe say, like late 70s, early 80s, this fundamentalist takeover kind of stuff.

Dr. Huff: That obviously was the occasion for the governance dispute. Had there been no fundamentalist effort to take over the Southern Baptist Convention this certainly would not have come, probably in my time at Furman. But what turned out to be a carefully orchestrated effort by the fundamentalists leadership to take over not only the Southern Baptist Convention but the institutions of the Convention and then to move from the Convention institutions, like the seminaries, to the institutions of the constituent state conventions, that people at Furman began to watch with a great deal of alarm. And it's ironic in a way that one of the things that John Johns had been hired to do as President of Furman was to nurture and strengthen the ties between the Convention and the university because there had been some feeling that during Gordon Blackwell's years that there had been such an emphasis on improving the institution and making it more than just a local or regional institution but giving it some national thrust that the ties with the Convention had been overlooked. Now I suspect Gordon Blackwell would take great umbrage at that because he certainly spent a good deal of his blood, sweat and tears while he was president trying to keep the relationship going.

Dr. Tollison: And both of their fathers had been Baptist ministers, is that correct? Dr. Blackwell and Dr. Johns?

Dr. Huff: Well Dr. Johns' father was a lay person but he was director of Florida Children's Home...

Dr. Tollison: Which is a Baptist institution

Dr. Huff: Right

Dr. Tollison: Gotcha, gotcha

Dr. Huff: So John Johns had lived in Baptist institutions all his life and the political way of working within a denomination was just second hand to him. I mean it was something he grew up with, he didn't have to learn this, it was in his genes. But when it became clear that there were people in South Carolina who were trying to seize control of Furman University and make it perhaps basically a Bible

College that the leadership, both Johns and some of the trustees, became alarmed. Now this became obvious because Furman had worked out a tacit kind of agreement with the Convention that basically, even though the Convention nominated and elected the trustees, that the president would meet with the Convention nominating committee and would bring with him a suggestion of nominees of trustees that would be acceptable to the institution. And when it became clear that the nominating committee of the trustees controlled by fundamentalist forces were no longer selecting trustees that were acceptable to the institution it became a matter of pure arithmetic to see how many years it would take for those trustees simply to change the administration, change the character of the institution.

Dr. Tollison: After developing as a majority on the board.

Dr. Huff: Exactly. Now because Johns and the administration were so committed to working within the denominational structure they were very, very hesitant to take any action that would damage the relationship. And so it really became a number of the alumni who took the leadership in bringing the governance struggle to a crisis point. Now one of the interesting questions to ask about it is – no, Johns did not take initial leadership in the position and if you talk to some of the trustees or some of the alumni who were involved in the process they would have you believe that they, in fact, pushed Johns and some of the more hesitant trustees into taking this step. Is that the case? Or did, in fact, was Johns savvy enough to realize that he himself could not do it but somebody else had to do it and therefore... In other words, who was manipulating whom at this point?

Dr. Tollison: Right

Dr. Huff: And Dr. Johns was very kind to let me sit in on a number of those meetings along the way and I don't know the answer to that question.

Dr. Tollison: I don't either and I asked him specifically about that. I was trying to get at what... you put that very well. I was trying to get at that... his reaction because in one sense I got the feeling that he knew that this needed to happen when it did happen and perhaps had an awareness that diplomatically he couldn't be the one to do it. In another sense when I told him, when I said, but then he would back off and say but they approached me. And I said "But how did you react to this, were you very pleased?" "Well, yeah." And so there was never a very there was never anything directness about it... that's interesting. You bring up a very interesting point.

Dr. Huff: So you have... it's the dilemma the historian always has by assembling these primary sources and what do you make of it. You know I'm working on a problem right now of trying to reassess one more time what role Charles Pinckney had in the formation of the constitution. And so you've got all these notes and documents and you sit them all side by side and they don't answer

the question. (laughs) And it's interesting to have lived through a crisis and to have in some instances watched it and still not know what happened because the historian always, I think we always, in the back of our minds say "Well if I had been there I could have figured this out." Well I know now that's not the case.

Dr. Tollison: So do you think that there was... that it was just very... it had become very political? Do you think there was a lot of stuff that had a major impact on how this played out that was said behind closed doors or under the table. Why do you think it is that it's difficult to pinpoint the dynamics?

Dr. Huff: I think that all those things. And some of it I think has genuinely been forgotten now.

Dr. Tollison: Because so much of that, I think, is underestimated that in terms I think that how much those little comments can create a climate that's lost, if you don't preserve it [inaudible]

Dr. Huff: I mean you'd have to know who rolled their eyes at who and when.

Dr. Tollison: Even the tiny little things like that that make a big difference. Okay.

Dr. Huff: Sorry I can't help any more.

Dr. Tollison: Oh no, it's food for thought (laughs). Continued food for thought. And you think Furman's a much better place without the constraints.

Dr. Huff: On the whole yes.

Dr. Tollison: What do you think has been lost?

Dr. Huff: I think that there are some things that were very important to the institution that have been made much more difficult because we don't have an institutional church-related voice that now speaks to the kind of values that this institution has represented for 175 years. I think all of that is still here, it's in the warp and weft of the institution. I used to like to point out to young faculty members how being a Baptist institution was present at Furman not so much in what was actually written but just simply in the folk ways of how faculty debates went on, for example. I remember having this conversation with a former president of an institution that grew out of Quaker tradition and she said, you know, "I can relate to that because of the way the faculty makes decisions at my institution is that they never take a vote, they operate out of consensus." And she said "It takes us three times longer than most institutions to make decisions because, though that's not written anywhere, that's just simply the way within this culture that it is done."

Dr. Tollison: Now do you see more of a hierarchy at... when you were a faculty member at

Wofford did you get that sense of more of a Methodist preference?

Dr. Huff: Yeah, I think for example at Wofford the president traditionally presided at faculty meetings and we didn't, the dean did.

Dr. Tollison: And here there's a chair of the faculty...

Dr. Huff: Chair of the faculty...

Dr. Tollison: That is faculty

Dr. Huff: In fact, the position of chair of the faculty at Furman is much older than the position of president. There's been a chair of the faculty since the beginning, that's in the 1850s

Dr. Tollison: Since '59. Oh that's interesting (laughs) and very Baptist.

Dr. Huff: That's right. I mean that's just the way it is.

Dr. Tollison: Very interesting. Okay. So you think that without this institutionalized influence or this relationship that... do you think it's something that will...

Dr. Huff: It probably will develop in a different kind of way. Though I'm also a firm believer in the old Alphonse Karr dictum that the more things change the more they remain the same. You look at the board of trustees. It's not much less Baptist.

2:15:55 INTERVIEW DOES NOT SEEM TO BE OVER