

## Dr. John Henry Crabtree, Jr.

Interviewee: Dr. John Henry Crabtree, Jr.

Interviewer: Courtney Tollison, Ph.D.

Date: August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004, 10AM

Location: Administrative Suites at Furman University

Editor: Anna McDanal - June 25<sup>th</sup>, June 28<sup>th</sup>, June 29<sup>th</sup> 2010

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Primary Topic: Dr. Crabtree's Years at Furman University

### Time code

#### Minutes 0-5

Introduction; Dr. Crabtree coming to Furman as an assistant professor of English; Francis Bonner, dean of the Men's College and Chair of the English Department; Chapel Hill; Dougald MacMillan; John Caldwell

#### Minutes 5-10

Furman's reputation in 1958; Jim Keller; Frances Bonner; Dr. Crabtree's first administrative appointment as Assistant Academic Dean and then Associate Academic Dean; Presbyterian Junior College; teaching Shakespeare at Furman; Ernie Harrell

#### Minutes 10-15

Dr. Crabtree becoming Dean of Students in 1968 and serving as Dean of Students from 1968 to 1972

#### Minutes 15-20

Dr. Crabtree's decision not to take the job as Dean of Students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte; becoming chair of the English Department in 1972; Stewart Patterson becoming the first Academic Dean; AV Huff; the search for the next Academic Dean after Stewart Patterson; Dr. Crabtree's appointment as the Academic Dean; Frank Bonner

#### Minutes 20-25

Disagreements with Frank Bonner; Dr. Bonner's legacy at Furman

#### Minutes 25-30

Dr. Bonner's continuing legacy at Furman, his creation of scholarships at the university; Rob McKinney as student body president; development of the College Preparatory Program for High School Juniors; Bill Lavery

#### Minutes 30-35

College Teaching Honors Program; Jim Edwards; James Bell; Duke Endowment; Dr. Bonner; University of Alabama, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Ernie Harrell

#### Minutes 35-40

Dr. Babb; Dr. Bonner; Dr. Crabtree becoming Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean; Furman's hiring process for professors in the late 1950s and the 1960s

#### Minutes 40-45

Al Reid; Marshall Frady

#### Minutes 45-50

- The evolution of the hiring process for professors over the last 50 years at Furman; Dr. Crabtree's position as minister of music at University Baptist church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina; attempts to bring a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa to Furman University
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Situation in Nashville in 1973 when Furman was trying to obtain a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa
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- Minutes 65-70  
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- Minutes 70-75  
More discussion on Furman's old faculty contracts: Jim Stewart
- Minutes 75-80  
Changing the faculty contracts; Benjamin Mays
- Minutes 80-85  
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- Minutes 85-90  
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- Minutes 90-95  
Process of changing the dress code for female students; Marguerite Chiles; no-alcohol policy on campus; Dr. Stewart; abolishment of the no-dancing-on-campus rule; beginnings of the curriculum reform in the 1960s
- Minutes 0-5  
Curriculum reform at Furman; Dr. Frank Bonner; discussion of the trimester calendar system that was developed
- Minutes 5-10  
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- Minutes 10-15  
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- Minutes 15-20

- Discussions of the further expansion of the study abroad department, including trips to Spain, France, Germany, and others; Willard Pate's involvement with the European foreign study programs; Bill Lavery as the first Director of International Study; Furman competing in the GE College Bowl
- Minutes 20-25  
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- Minutes 30-35  
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- Minutes 40-45  
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- Minutes 50-55  
Dealing with different issues while serving as Dean of Students; dealing with drugs at Furman University
- Minutes 55-60  
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- Minutes 65-70  
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- Minutes 70-75  
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## Transcript

**Dr. Tollison:** Okay, today is August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Wednesday morning, 10 o'clock, and we're in the Alester G. Furman Administrative Suites. Today I am talking with Dr. John Henry Crabtree, Jr. – is that your full name?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes.

**Dr. Tollison:** Okay, terrific. All right, let's just go over quickly some of the positions that you've...and some of the dates, if we can kind of pinpoint some dates as well, that would be good. I can definitely go back and look these up and verify...

**Dr. Crabtree:** I'm not sure I can remember...

**Dr. Tollison:** It's fine. I have similar problems of my own lots of times. You came here in 1957 as an assistant professor of English, and is your specialization in...? You are a Shakespearean scholar.

**Dr. Crabtree:** I became one. I arrived here with an unfinished dissertation, my wife, and three children--one of them was six months old. I came because Francis Bonner, who at that time was the dean of the men's college and chairman of the English department. [He] met me by accident in Chapel Hill. When he was recruiting and he offered me the job, which I told him I was not interested in because I wanted to finish my dissertation... But he demonstrated...well, from the beginning in my experience with him the consistent stuff that characterized much of his work over the years. I came down here to see what he was talking about. Also, I was urged to do so by the chairman of the English department of Chapel Hill. When he found out that I wasn't coming... [Editor's Note: Francis Bonner came to Furman in 1949 as an associate English professor. From 1953 to 1961, he served as the dean to the men's college while he was also the dean of the English department and the director of the Division of the Humanities. In 1961 he became the dean of the university, and later the vice president and provost. While at Furman he also served as the interim president between President Plyler and Dr. Blackwell for six months in 1964-65, an important time during Furman's desegregation process. He retired from provost in 1982, but continued teaching English at Furman until 1987.]

**Dr. Tollison:** Who was that?

**Dr. Crabtree:** A man named Dougald MacMillan. He was a highly respected, internationally known 18th century scholar. He was chairman of the department and he found out that I was not coming down. He said, "You're very foolish. You should go. You can finish the dissertation after you get there." And so I came, and I was...I spent most of my time out here on this campus. It was mainly mud and wind and rain. It was not an inviting place. I saw very little of the old campus. I don't think they wanted me to see it, because it was in such bad shape, because they had allowed the maintenance to deteriorate. [They] put the money into what they were doing out here. But I was really impressed by the quality of what I saw out there. There were just some buildings out here. I was impressed by the buildings, I was impressed by Francis Bonner, and I was

impressed by John Caldwell, and I met some of the faculty, but those meetings were very brief and so I can't really say I was particularly impressed by anybody. At any rate, I decided to take the job. My wife asked me when I got back, "What are you going to do?" And I said, "Well, I think this is what you and I have said we wanted." And it turned out that it was right, and I'm just here. I've been here ever since.

[Editor's Note: Douglad MacMillan was an English professor at Chapel Hill for over 25 years. During this time, he served as Chairman of the English department and he wrote the book: *English at Chapel Hill: 1795-1969*. Today, there is an award for meritorious teaching at the University in his name.]

**Dr. Tollison:** What kind of reputation did Furman have at that time?

**Dr. Crabtree:** You know, I didn't know anything about Furman, but I had a friend, well I had more than one, but I had a very good friend who sang in the choir at the University Baptist Church at Chapel Hill, which I directed, and he said, "Oh, you will like Furman. They have a marvelous music department." So that was the first thing I ever really heard about Furman, and then I met a man named Jim Keller, who is currently on the staff, who was doing graduate work at Chapel Hill then. He found out that I was coming, and he told me, "You will like Furman. They're very nice." From the beginning, I was very happy with the situation. I thought that men who could make the decision to move that college from downtown Greenville out here had to have an unusually high degree of intelligence, wisdom, courage, indeed daring. I recognized from the very beginning that Frank Bonner had a commitment to this institution that would make it one of the fine liberal arts colleges of the Southeast. So, I wanted, really...I wanted to be a part of it. [Jim Keller works is a part of the administrative system at Furman. In 2009-2010, he served as the senior program analysis for the computer and information services.]

**Dr. Tollison:** And so in 1962, that was the first time you became...operated in administrative appointment?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, in 1962 Bonner decided that he needed some assistance, and he offered me the position. That's the way it was done in those days...You didn't have to have search committees, you didn't have to have any input from anybody. He just did it and announced it. I had had a little bit of a taste of administrative work in my first teaching job.

**Dr. Tollison:** And where was that?

**Dr. Crabtree:** It was at Presbyterian Junior College in North Carolina. It no longer exists, but that was between my master's and...I took a three-year period between my master's and getting my doctorate. I was starting my doctorate, and I liked administrative work. I love teaching. I like administrative work, and so that began a rather long administrative experience. Then there was a hiatus, and then I was back in it.

**Dr. Tollison:** Let me jump back really quickly ... we were talking and you said you became a Shakespearean scholar. What was your training? What was your field initially?

**Dr. Crabtree:** My field was Jacobean drama, which is the period following Elizabethan drama, but of course my love was Shakespeare, and I wanted, above all else, to teach Shakespeare, but Professor Edward Vanderberg had a tight hold on Shakespeare.

**Dr. Tollison:** Here at Furman?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, he was a full professor and that was his field, which was good because the department allowed me to create some courses that had not been offered: Eighteenth Century Literature, American Drama, and of course in the Development of the English Drama. So that was excellent background for what I would eventually do, [which was] just mainly teach Shakespeare and freshman English, sophomore English. As the years went by, finally people began to think of me as the Shakespeare man at Furman.

**Dr. Tollison:** Right. So, 1962 your official title, the title of your position was Assistant Academic Dean and after one year that became Associate Academic Dean under Frank Bonner, who was....at that point was he Vice President and Provost or was he...

**Dr. Crabtree:** I think at that time he was simply Vice President.

**Dr. Tollison:** Blackwell made him Provost?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I've forgotten exactly when he added the title Provost.

**Dr. Tollison:** I think Blackwell. I can double-check that. So you were Assistant Dean from '62 to '63ish, and then Associate from '63 to '68, at which time you became Dean of Students.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah. Ernie Harrell finally said, "I've had enough, and..."

**Dr. Tollison:** Why do you think he said I've had enough?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, Dean of Students in the '60s was one hell of a job, and I had no interest in the position. I was very happy doing what I was doing and not very ambitious. They were searching for a Dean of Students, and I was paying a great deal of attention to the search, and on a Saturday morning I had a call from Frank Bonner asking me if I would come over to his house for a few minutes. And something said, "This has something to do with the Dean of Students." So I went over there, and he and Dr. Blackwell--I don't remember whether Blackwell was at his house or we went to Blackwell's house--and they talked to me about becoming Dean of Students. I agreed to do it.

**Dr. Tollison:** You knew it was going to be a big job?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, but I liked it. I was very different from Ernie. Ernie gave himself personally to that job. He would come out here at night [and] stay until three o'clock in the morning looking for students sometimes who needed help or students who had called and complained about something, or he'd found out that some students were going to involve themselves in violations of regulations and things of that sort. I told the President and the Dean, "You know, if I become Dean of Students, I will not give all of my life to

it. I'm sorry. I have a life..." It wasn't long after I went into the office (I went into the office in the summer)...and it was not long after I went into the office, one of the security officers called me at 1:30 in the morning and said that somebody called and reported breaking glass around a dormitory, and I got up and I came out here, and I found a problem. And I met the security man, and I asked him, "What have you found?" and I said, "Did you inquire as to whether somebody heard someone smashing a plate glass window or somebody heard somebody drop a glass in a sink? I mean, what are we talking about?" He said, "I don't know." and I said, "Don't ever call me at my home and get me out of bed until you have made an investigation, and you have discovered that the events warrant my coming out here."

**Dr. Tollison:** So it's just a different style.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Absolutely. Well, what had happened was that there was a middle-aged bachelor school teacher who was here doing some summer school work, and he was uncomfortable, and he heard somebody break some glass, and he called security. We never did find out what it was, but you know, the job is difficult enough. I mean, to come out here at...you know, to be called out here at 2:00 in the morning because a student has just been killed in an automobile accident and you stay until 5:00 in the morning talking to his parents and things of that...that's... you had to do...but these other things, no.

**Dr. Tollison:** Could have been handled by other people

**Dr. Crabtree:** And so, I didn't exhaust myself, and I continued to teach full time. I stayed in the job and had some interesting experiences.

**Dr. Tollison:** So how long were you Dean of Students?

**Dr. Crabtree:** About five years.

**Dr. Tollison:** '68 to '72ish?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, about five years. Again, I remind you that we're in an age in which college administrators were chosen by presidents and deans, not the faculty committees and so forth. After five years in that office, I was offered the job of Dean of Students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte with the guarantee that within a year I would become Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. So I had to make a decision, and I made the decision not only not to take that job, but to resign as Dean of Students at Furman. And I did. The same day that I told them...I went to Dr. Blackwell and said I wanted to teach academically, just... that's where I want to be, not student personnel, and I realized I had gained a reputation as a student personnel and I wanted to get back and so...

**Dr. Tollison:** Is that when you became chair of the department?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes.

**Dr. Tollison:** So you moved directly from Dean of Students to chair of the English department? And how long were you in that position?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I'm not exactly sure, but I think again it was about three to five years. That's when Furman appointed its first Academic Dean, and...well, I suppose it might as well be a part of the record... when I resigned, President Blackwell asked me if I would stay in the administration. He said, "I will create the office of Academic Dean, if you will take it." And I agreed to do it, and by then...back then you had to have a faculty committee--and the faculty committee did not recommend me. He appointed Dean Stewart Patterson, and Stewart Patterson held the office for, I don't know, it was three or five years, and I succeeded him. They had a search; it was very interesting. They had a search and the faculty committee recommended that they appoint either me or A.V. Huff. They didn't appoint either one of us. It was a local search, and...

**Dr. Tollison:** Local in the terms of in Furman...

**Dr. Crabtree:** In-house.

**Dr. Tollison:** Furman, okay.

**Dr. Crabtree:** In-house, and Dr. [John E.] Johns. . .the committee... Dr. Johns correctly felt that there was enough agitation in the faculty that they should go make a national search.

**Dr. Tollison:** Why was there agitation?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, [there were] lots of little groups who wanted this person and not that person. There was particularly a group...and I know about it because they went to the president when I was in England teaching, and they didn't want me appointed because they said I was Frank Bonner's boy, and they didn't want me appointed.

**Dr. Tollison:** People who had problems with Frank Bonner, or they wanted someone that they thought would balance...

**Dr. Crabtree:** They wanted someone that they thought was a county club man, and so they did a year's search, national search, and [the] committee recommended me and A.V. Huff. So John Johns appointed me, and I think within six months I had established the fact that I was nobody's boy.

**Dr. Tollison:** How did you do that?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, by openly disagreeing with Frank on certain issues.

**Dr. Tollison:** What were some of the issues that you all...

**Dr. Tollison:** One of the most... one of those cited most often... is very trivial. Frank was the Dean as well as Vice President, you know. . .if we had a snow, a bad storm, he would demand that school stay open and that the faculty turn up. Furthermore, there were times that he would run buses all over Greenville to pick up the faculty to be sure they got here. He and I disagreed on that practice. We had had a bad storm and he boasted publicly...not publicly, it was at an executive committee meeting. The president had what he called a budget committee in those days. He had all the vice presidents, the Dean, and various other people, and Frank said, "Well, I got them here." And I looked at



him and I said, " Yes, you did, but I don 't think, Frank, you ever consider the fact that one of those men was Ernie Harrell and that he drove here. He had a heart attack over a year before. Suppose he had had a heart attack out there in that icy snowy highway. Would it have been worth today? I think...I don't believe in that kind of risk-taking. So we'd lose a day of classes. I don't believe in that kind of risk-taking." I said, "I don' t intend...and I see this as part of my job description to make those decisions, and I don't intend to devote myself completely to a policy that is: Never close the school for bad weather. " And the word got out, and I've always had the feeling that John Johns went to two or three key faculty members and said, "Pick your boys. I ought to know you'd be wrong. Crabtree's got a mind of his own." I don 't know; I think so. But at any rate, Frank... As Academic Dean I reported to Frank Bonner, and we got along very well because we respected each other. We disagreed and had some unpleasant moments, but I've never worked for anybody in my life that I admired and respected more.

**Dr. Tollison:** Let's talk a little bit about...unfortunately I'm unable to speak with Dr. Bonner. I spoke with him on the telephone when I was an undergraduate here doing some research, an independent study I was working on... spoke with him on the telephone for about 20 minutes or so back in 1999, but obviously I'm unable to speak with him right now. So if we could maybe spend a few minutes talking about him...talking about his legacy here.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Furman is, in my opinion...if Furman owes its current reputation and position to anyone man (which to say of course it doesn't)... You know, it's the combined efforts of many, but Frank Bonner was probably the most important man at Furman from the late ' 60s into the '80s. He had a commitment to academic excellence that guided him in all of his efforts to achieve the Furman that was ultimately achieved. It was funny, because Frank is best remembered by many people for a strict disciplinarian: for having many old-fashioned ideas; for being the dean who made men wear socks to class; who wanted his faculty to wear coats and ties in the classroom; who was an upholder of rigid rules and regulations having to do with behavior and so forth. He did not like the student power movement, he didn't believe in that sort of thing, and yet he knew that the academic reputation of a college depends upon the quality of its faculty and its students, and he created a faculty and student body, ultimately, that would basically overthrow the principles with which he was associated mainly. In other words, he created a faculty that had very diverse political, social, and religious opinions. He created a faculty that was not going to let a dean tell them what they could or could not wear, could or could not eat, could or could not drink. I mean, they simply wouldn't go beyond a certain point. He created a faculty that would ultimately assert itself and establish itself as an important and powerful administrative body. He brought in... the brighter the students are, the more difficult they're going to be to teach because they're going to have minds of their own.

**Dr. Tollison:** How did he do that? Did he get involved with admissions?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Scholarships to start with. He did everything he could to raise money to improve scholarships at Furman. He was very active in the admissions process. There are students, former students with whom I remain in contact, who would never have come to Furman had it not been for the kind of active involvement of Frank in the admissions process. He called me to his office one day...I think this was when I was Associate

Dean. I think it was that period, he called me in his office one day and he said, "Look at this list. I've got a list of ten men here whom we have admitted and they're going somewhere else. I don't want to lose them. These are excellent students. I don't want to lose them. I want you to get on the telephone and offer all of them a scholarship." That was a good scholarship. I think I remember the amount, but I'm not sure, but it was a good scholarship. It was a scholarship that changed their lives, and I did it. I think we got seven of them. They are permanent alumni.

**Dr. Tollison:** Would you care to name any of the names?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, I know that Ron McKinney was one of them.

**Dr. Tollison:** He was student body president.

**Dr. Crabtree:** He was student body president. I'm afraid I don't...I'm afraid to...I think my memory is not accurate, so I'd rather not.

**Dr. Tollison:** Okay, that's fine. If you remember later we can add it to the...

**Dr. Crabtree:** But the result of that was an even greater involvement in student recruitment. He also...he called me to his office one day and said, "You know, I've been thinking. Wouldn't it be a good idea if we could identify bright kids in their junior year in high school, and get them on this campus in the summer, and give them an academic experience that would excite them? Then we could get them to apply to Furman, and we'd know whether they're going to be really very good or not, and we can hand over the scholarship." So we developed what he called The College Preparatory Program for High School Juniors. The first year Professor Bill Lavery of the history department and I were the administrators and faculty of the program, and I watched...We brought, I think that first year we brought either fifteen or twenty kids to the campus. We created courses for them. We made...we created a wonderfully exciting experience. That program ran for years...

**Dr. Tollison:** Is this different from the honors program in other colleges?

**Dr. Crabtree:** College Teaching Honors Program was another thing that he suggested. He planted the idea with me and he said, "See what you can do with it." And the College Teaching Honors Program, oh, good heavens, Jim Edwards was in that program. You probably don't remember James Bell, he was professor of math, he was in that program. That program was enormously successful, and all the time he was going...one of his jobs was to prepare the annual report to the Duke Endowment.

**Dr. Tollison:** Dr. Bonner's.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, and his reports were classic, and...but he used that opportunity to establish a relationship with the Duke Endowment that increased their...the money that they gave as scholarships, their support of programs and...so he...I used to tell him, "Frank, I know you're unhappy about these things, but it's your fault." If he didn't hire people like Professor So-and-So, people with minds of their own...

**Dr. Tollison:** So really his commitment to having a diverse...

**Dr. Crabtree:** The commitment was to making Furman a paramount liberal arts college.

**Dr. Tollison:** Even at his expense.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Absolutely.

**Dr. Tollison:** That's wonderful. What was his training? Where did he come from?

**Dr. Crabtree:** He was at Chapel Hill. Well, I think he was [at] the University of Alabama, and then he did his graduate work at Chapel Hill. For a while there was a feeling that we were bringing in too many people from Chapel Hill. There were a lot of people on the faculty from Chapel Hill. Ernie Harrell had a graduate degree from Chapel Hill. I took my graduate degree at Chapel Hill, and we had a number of people, mainly professors in the English department. That was before you came so you wouldn't know them. [Editor's Note: Dr. Francis (Frank) Bonner graduated with honors from the University of Alabama in 1939 with an English; he also went on to earn his master's degree from the University of Alabama. Later, after serving in the United States Air Force during World War II, he received his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1949, the same year he joined Furman's staff as an associate professor of English.]

**Dr. Tollison:** Bonner was English?

**Dr. Crabtree:** He was English. [He had a] PhD in English. Chaucerian.

**Dr. Tollison:** What was the general... Well, there's probably multiple factions. How did most of the faculty respond to Bonner?

**Dr. Crabtree:** With great respect. With great respect. They knew what he was doing. Well, they thought, "Why's he doing this way or that way, why doesn't he leave kids alone about the way they dress..."

**Dr. Tollison:** Was he somewhat controversial at times?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I don't think controversial would be the right word.

**Dr. Tollison:** What word would you use?

**Dr. Crabtree:** There were those in the faculty who felt that he was somewhat autocratic.

**Dr. Tollison:** Very dominant.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes.

**Dr. Tollison:** And they resented that a bit.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes. But, I'm quite serious about... Frank Bonner, as you will discover talking to people, was enormously respected, and I... Shortly after I came here, the practice of having some kind of Fourth of July celebration, it was really nothing but a

small faculty picnic...and I went to the first of those that I attended wearing Bermuda shorts, and it was very clear that Bonner did not approve of it. In fact, he said something about it. He made some reference, in my hearing, to "Professor Crabtree seems to have forgot his trousers."

**Dr. Tollison:** In your hearing...?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes! He wanted me to hear it. He didn't want me to come to any more faculty functions wearing Bermuda shorts.

**Dr. Tollison:** This was not when you were in administration? You were a faculty member?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I think so. I'm not quite sure. I was one of the few faculty members...the only other one that I really knew was Winston Bass, the professor of history.

**Dr. Tollison:** And Dr. Babb had been here for several decades before...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Babb was one of his closest friends. Now Ernie Harrell called him by his first name. He called him Francis. I called him Frank. I remember the first time I ever did it in public. It was at an English department meeting at my house, so it was in the first or second or third year that I was here because I can see that room right now. We moved out of that house, and I called him Frank, and I thought Mrs. Kilpatrick was going to faint at my outrageous lack of respect. There was a lot of that kind of formality.

**Dr. Tollison:** Untouchable. Some people considered him to be untouchable.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, some did, some did. He was a very nice man and, I mea, I tried to work with him a great deal, and [I] got along with him very well. But I knew what his principles of propriety were, and I didn't wear Bermuda shorts to any more picnics for years. As a matter of fact I didn't wear them again to any more faculty picnics until he arrived one day wearing them.

**Dr. Tollison:** Wow. Oh, goodness. Okay, so you became Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes.

**Dr. Tollison:** And how long did that last? What were the dates of that?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I was in that office, I think fifteen years, from, if I'm right...or maybe it was fifteen years of Academic Dean and then Vice President. I became Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean when Frank Bonner retired, so... I can 't remember the exact dates. [Editor's Note: Dr. Frank Bonner retired from the office of Vice President and Provost in 1982, though he remained on staff as an English professor until 1987.]

**Dr. Tollison:** You were hired in the eighties?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes.

**Dr. Tollison:** And you retired in 1993.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Right.

**Dr. Tollison:** Okay. Let's get into some of the specifics now that we have your official title down. Why don't we start off talking about the hiring process in the late fifties? Did you get the sense that it was important to... first of all, was there a committee? You mentioned before that it was...I got the impression that your hiring was mainly a result of Dr. Bonner, but was there a feeling that your fate was important to them, or that you were...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Most of the hiring in the fifties, I'm sure, even though I came in the late fifties...most of the hiring in the late fifties and well into the sixties was really done by the Chief Academic Officer.

**Dr. Tollison:** The department didn't really have that much...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, the department didn't have that much involvement. The department had, depending upon who that person was, was somewhat involved, and to what extent he or she involved the department...well, I'm sure it varied. Well, for example, I said to you earlier that I met Bonner by accident at Chapel Hill. What happened is, I went to class one morning, and a guy came in and sat down behind me. He tapped me on the shoulder and he said, "How'd your interview with Dean Bonner go?" and I said, "I don't have an interview with Dean Bonner," and he said, "Yes, you do." I said, "No, I don't. I'm not ready to take a job. I'm going to stay here and finish my dissertation." He said, "Well, okay, but I saw your name on his appointment sheet, and I advised you with it." So I went...after class I went to Professor Hudson's office. Professor Hudson handled these arrangements, and I asked him: "Did you make an appointment for me to see the dean from Furman?" "Well, yes, I did." I said, "But you didn't tell me." And I went downstairs and waited outside the interview room about ten minutes, and he came out and I introduced myself and told him that I would like to apologize for not having shown up for the appointment, but I didn't know I had the appointment, and he said, "Well, why don't you come in and talk to me anyway?" And I told him, "Well, I'm not looking for a job." "Well, come talk anyway." The reason for my mentioning it...he had a member of the English department faculty with him, so you see, he wasn't doing it totally alone, but I'm sure that when he got back to the campus, it was he who made the decision to offer me the job. He might have asked Al Reid: "Do you see any reason not to?"

**Dr. Tollison:** Al Reid was the chair of the department?

**Dr. Crabtree:** No, he wasn't. I don't remember who was, but he wasn't. Actually Frank Bonner was. That's right, Frank Bonner was chair of the department as well as Dean of the men's college. I came down...when I did come, I met the faculty, and I'm sure that they had some input into the decision to offer me the job, but I also know that... I know that Frank never let a department chair make a decision that he didn't like. In other words, if the department wanted you and he wanted so-and-so, he might not get so-and-so, but they're not going to get you. They'll get somebody else, and there was a good deal at that time of...how shall I put it? Some faculty were hired without any input from the faculty. In other words, an opportunity came to the dean to hire so-and-so, and he made the decision and hired, and told the faculty, "I hired so-and-so for next year."

**Dr. Tollison:** Was that, at the time, within the bounds of his position or was that seen as...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh yes, that was within the bounds of his position. The situation that we have today was developing.

**Dr. Tollison:** Okay, whereas that would not happen...

**Dr. Crabtree:** There was an occasion when I was dean, he told me to hire an individual, and I told him I would not. I said, "I will not hire him because the English faculty made it clear they did not want him." And he said, "Well suppose I ordered you to?" And I said, "Well, it would take me about ten minutes to write my letter of resignation." That was the end of that. That never happened again...as Dean I wouldn't, as Vice President of Academic Affairs I would never have hired anybody... I mean, a dean frequently has an opportunity that if some alumnus, for example, who's become very well known, he comes and says, "I'd really like to come back to my alma mater, and I'd love to be... I'd love to come teach at Furman"... and I had that situation. So I went to the department involved and I saw immediately that they didn't want this at all, so I had to call John and tell him, "It won't work," and it made him very unhappy with me, but that's the way it was. When did you... if you put your ear the right places around today you will hear those of the English faculty complaining that they had nothing to do with the decision to bring Marshall Frady here and so...

**Dr. Tollison:** A very similar situation, from what I understand.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah. I know that Marshall approached David. He didn't approach the chairman of the department. He went to David and said, "I want to come back." And I'm not saying it wasn't a good idea, but what is not a good idea in a situation like this is for an administrator to say to the faculty, "Hey, I've got you a new colleague."

**Dr. Tollison:** Well, they're over it now. It worked itself out, I guess, despite very poor judgment to that...

**Dr. Crabtree:** But as time went by the hiring process became quite clear. The dean and the chair determined there was need. They determined that very sensibly. Professor A resigned, you've got to find a replacement, so you can get somebody. Sometimes you add. You sit around with the faculty and discuss what they want, what they feel they need, and you tell the chair to advertise, and the chair and the faculty interview the candidates. They bring them by to visit with the dean, and they make the decision.

**Dr. Tollison:** Were you ever asked about do you attend church, where do you attend church, things like that?

**Dr. Crabtree:** They didn't have any real problem about that because I did.

**Dr. Tollison:** You're a Baptist?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I wasn't. I was brought up a Methodist, and when I was fifteen I left the Methodist church that my parents attended and became a member of the Disciples of

Christ church in Raleigh. They had a superb music program, and I was very interested in it. So I joined that choir, and I joined that church. And then I became a Baptist when I married a Baptist, and I was employed by the church before I ever became a Baptist and...

**Dr. Tollison:** In the music department, or in the...

**Dr. Crabtree:** I was the minister of music.

**Dr. Tollison:** At a church in Raleigh?

**Dr. Crabtree:** In Chapel Hill. University Baptist Church. Yeah, it helped put me through graduate school, and then when we came to Greenville, we attended a Baptist church. But I moved...I became the tenor soloist at Christ Church, and then at First Baptist, and by then my kids were grown and my wife and I joined First Baptist. It didn't bother me to become a Presbyterian, but she didn't like it at all, so we joined First Baptist.

**Dr. Tollison:** So now you attend First Baptist.

**Dr. Crabtree:** I've always been highly ecumenical and I...the church has always been a very important part of my life, so the question of church membership never involved me personally. It's a question that I never asked a prospective faculty member, but I know it was a question that was asked.

**Dr. Tollison:** Even in the 1950s?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, and, you know, we got to the Phi Beta Kappa thing, that proves your point.

**Dr. Tollison:** In terms of if the...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, Phi Beta Kappa, in terms of a clause in the contract that said that you would say nothing and teach nothing that, in effect, violated principles of the Baptist church.

**Dr. Tollison:** And Blackwell and Bonner got rid of that clause.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Right.

**Dr. Tollison:** Do you remember the time frame?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I remember everything about it. Do you want me to tell you about it now?

**Dr. Tollison:** Sure. We can jump back to...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Okay. Well, it was like this: we said earlier the effort to get a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at Furman was an effort that had been ongoing for 25 years, and Al Reid in his *History of Furman* outlined some of the reasons we failed at the Triennial Council Meeting.

**Dr. Tollison:** Home economics and secretarial science?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah... you see, one of the first things Frank Bonner did when we moved out here was to get rid of Secretarial Science, Home Economics... He just wiped them out. He didn't do it by calling a faculty committee and saying, "What do you think?" He just did it in his way.

**Dr. Tollison:** He dismissed those faculty members...

**Dr. Crabtree:** And we had a problem one year that they felt that Furman was investing too much money in athletics, and we had a problem one year that Furman students SATs were not where they should be, and so forth and so on. Finally, in the triune of '71 through '73, we... the committee... we had a visiting committee. You see, you apply, and sometimes on the basis of your application and the material you submit, they won't even send a committee. Okay. They had earlier, in another instance, invited us to go beyond the application, but then we failed.

**Dr. Tollison:** Do you remember what year that was?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I don't. I'm sorry.

**Dr. Tollison:** So, beginning in 1924 the applications began, and you applied every three years.

**Dr. Crabtree:** I think that's the case. If not, a conscious decision was made not to apply. An effort was made to apply, and a conscious decision was made not to apply. I really don't know that. But finally in 1973, August 1973, we had had a visiting committee, we had gotten a favorable report, and we were recommended for a chapter, and the Piedmont Association had elected me president because they felt this was going to happen, and that would enable me to go to the council meeting representing the Piedmont Association. Furman could not have a representative there.

**Dr. Tollison:** So who... the Piedmont Association, is that just...

**Dr. Crabtree:** The Piedmont Association is made up of the Phi Beta Kappa members of the faculties of the colleges that don't have a chapter.

**Dr. Tollison:** Okay.

**Dr. Crabtree:** And at that time, only USC and Wofford had chapters in South Carolina. So I remember when Dan told me, "We're going to elect you President so you can go..."

**Dr. Tollison:** Dan ...

**Dr. Crabtree:** He was the...I'm trying to remember his last name. He was the Dean of Students at Wofford, and Wofford was the home of the Piedmont Association because it was the only college in the Piedmont that had Phi Beta Kappa. At any rate, I went to the council meeting in Nashville at Vanderbilt and I've never been more distraught when in the...what was to be a surely routine meeting, the colleges that were recommended were recommended and it was just to be routine, a man rose and objected to Furman University.



**Dr. Tollison:** On what basis?

**Dr. Crabtree:** On the basis that faculty members were denied complete freedom of religious [inaudible], and he cited this passage in the contract.

**Dr. Tollison:** The new faculty contract?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, and he was joined by several other people who got up, and suddenly I realized we had a break and the thing... instead of having... The break was not a cooling off period; it was a heating up period, and things were getting very bad. I knew we were going to be humiliated, denied our chapter, and I tell you... you know, how shall I put it? There's this kind of an ingrained snobbishness in college faculties, and it's particularly apparent in young college faculties. They love looking down their noses at other people, so there were people there from places that had chapters, you see, who 'd love looking down their noses at this upstart Baptist college, even though Howard Smith, professor of English, was the most distinguished professor of English in the United States [at] UCLA, and chaired the committee. He stood up and spoke. Benjamin Mayes stood up and spoke on behalf of Furman, but...so I called Frank and I said, "It's going down the drain, Frank. We aren't going to get it," and I told him the circumstances. He told me to just stay where I was and he'd call me back. He called me back within a few minutes and said, "You may inform the council that passage has been deleted from all contracts, and that there are no religious requirements made of the faculty at Furman University."

**Dr. Tollison:** Within minutes.

**Dr. Crabtree:** The trouble was [that] I wasn't allowed to speak as a member of the Furman faculty. I could address them only as Piedmont Association. Well, there was an interesting drama going on on the stage anyway. I'm sorry, I tried to find his name, and it could have been Carl Anderson, but I'm not sure that was the name. The man who for years had been Mr. Phi Beta Kappa, meaning he was the Executive Secretary, he was the professional...head of the professional staff, was in his dotage. The president of Phi Beta Kappa, the President of the Triennial Council, was a woman, and she was presiding. I don't, I haven't really been able to sort this out completely, but somehow or other she was informed that there was a member of the Furman faculty in the audience as the delegate from the Piedmont Association of Phi Beta Kappa, but she was reminded publicly, on the stage, by Mr. Phi Beta Kappa: "He cannot speak to this matter, Madam Chairman." And suddenly she ruled that, "I'm going to adjourn the meeting. This matter will be carried." They had a vote, by the way, I've left that out. They had a vote and we lost.

**Dr. Tollison:** A vote to admit Furman?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, and we lost.

**Dr. Tollison:** But why didn't the matter die?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Because they found out there was somebody there. She said, "We will, tomorrow morning, I will allow the member of the faculty from Furman to speak to this

issue, and we will have a second vote. " And Mr. Phi Beta Kappa says, "You can't do that." And she turned to him and she said, "I'm sorry, Carl, I not only can, but I have."

**Dr. Tollison:** She had the authority to...

**Dr. Crabtree:** She did have the authority. I mean, she proved she had it, and so the next morning they allowed me to speak.

**Dr. Tollison:** But was this a clear suspension of the rules?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, and they took a vote, and they adjourned. We didn't know what the vote was. Benjamin Mays came up to me in the airplane and said, "I stayed as long as I could, and they still were not ready to announce the count. We will have to wait 'til morning." And the next morning was Saturday and Frank Bonner called me in a voice full of tears and read me the telegram. It was a very dramatic thing. So he set about then setting up the installation.

**Dr. Tollison:** Let's go back...I want to make sure that some of the ... I'm not quite sure on some of the details. Friday was when you all adjourned, Friday afternoon?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I think it was Friday. I could be wrong there. I'd have to go back and look at the calendar. I remember... because suddenly I'm thinking, no, Friday was the day of the . . . I think it was. I think we met on Thursday and I think that's when the controversy arose, and I think it was on Friday morning that they took the second vote and allowed me to speak. They took the second vote ... and I think that is right.

**Dr. Tollison:** And Benjamin Mays talked to you on the plane Friday?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes.

**Dr. Tollison:** After the vote.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, it was after the vote. After the vote they adjourned the meeting. It took several hours to count the vote. It was all done by secret ballot vote, and I had a plane, I mean, you know, to catch, and I couldn't change anything anyway, so...

**Dr. Tollison:** So you all voted and then you got on the plane to go back to your respective...back to Atlanta I guess, and you came back here, and then the next day Dr. Bonner received a telegram that said that the vote had been...was affirmative. Very exciting.

**Dr. Crabtree:** And he wanted to have John Hope Franklin to come to Furman and install the chapter. John Hope Franklin was the president of Phi Beta Kappa, and he called John Hope Franklin and asked him if he would come. He very graciously explained that he really could not accept the invitation because he couldn't go to all of the new chapters and install them, and Frank Bonner had an ace to play, and he said, in effect he said, "Sir, I know that. I knew it when I called, but you are the John Mackey's Mandley professor at the University of Chicago, and Professor Mandley was on the

faculty at Furman." And John Hope Franklin said, "Of course I'll come" and he came." And I missed it! I was in England teaching when ...

**Dr. Tollison:** Oh, no! What did you hear about it?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, I don't remember that it was a great event, and it was done with... Furman has always had the gift for ceremony. Furman does ceremonial things superbly, and it was a wonderful moment. I wasn't willing to give up teaching in England to attend .

**Dr. Tollison:** That was the summer of '73, the installation.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Actually the installation was in December.

**Dr. Tollison:** December of '73. Okay, and you all found out in late August.

**Dr. Crabtree:** No, it was early August.

**Dr. Tollison:** You mentioned that Furman would have been humiliated. If Furman started applying in '24, and applied, we can assume perhaps not every three years, if they skipped a few of the application processes, you know, several times at an absolute minimum. What was special about this one particular? Had it gotten further than it had ever gotten before? Why would Furman have been humiliated?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Because nobody had ever reached that level and then finally been voted no.

**Dr. Tollison:** Nobody, no university or college had ever been to that level...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Not that we knew of. I mean, it was simply a routine matter. I went to be there when this wonderful thing happened.

**Dr. Tollison:** So when you all received the invitation, when you knew that Furman was going to be up for a vote, at that point it was a done deal?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, that was it. It was sort of like going to a wedding and suddenly the groom says no, or the bride says no, you know. It was totally unexpected.

**Dr. Tollison:** So the vote was just a ceremony?

**Dr. Crabtree:** It was a ritual. We had been approved by the committee, we had been recommended to the Senate, we had been approved, and suddenly there was this...

**Dr. Tollison:** The man that stood up and read part of the clause, do you know any motivation for that?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I don't know. Oh, I could probably guess. He probably felt that Furman was in violation of the faculty's academic freedom.

**Dr. Tollison:** Was that enforced, or was it just a clause that was still in the book?

**Dr. Crabtree:** In my opinion, at that point, it had become a clause that was just still in the books. There had been a time, I don't remember the exact year, but it was in the early, late fifties or early sixties. We had a very popular and much admired young professor of philosophy named Kenneth Webb. His father was a very prominent Baptist minister, I believe, a very prominent [person] in Baptist affairs. One day Kenneth went home and his wife had left him and the children and that was that, but Furman had a policy of no divorce. So when she divorced him he was asked to resign, and he did. Now this was the case of a man's wife abandoning him and his children as far as anybody could tell, and it was interesting because I don't remember how many years later it was that we had two faculty members involved in divorces. We had two male faculty who were involved in divorces because one had been having an affair with the other's wife, and not only did their spouses divorce them, but then after the divorce they married and... Well, there were lots of eyebrows lifted, but nobody was fired, nobody was asked to resign.

**Dr. Tollison:** Was there a great controversy when Webb was asked to leave? Is that why the two...

**Dr. Crabtree:** There really... I would have to plead, I think, being too new to...

**Dr. Tollison:** Have a contact...

**Dr. Crabtree:** I just remember how we felt it was so unfair, and I do remember that my dear friend Jim Stewart, with reference to the later case said, "They should fire them both!"

**Dr. Tollison:** I just want to clarify: This is not the Jim Stewart that's now editor of the Furman magazine.

**Dr. Crabtree:** It was his father.

**Dr. Tollison:** It was his dad.

**Dr. Crabtree:** His dad was chairman of the English department for years.

**Dr. Tollison:** Okay, and what did he say?

**Dr. Crabtree:** He just said they should fire them both!

**Dr. Tollison:** Oh, goodness. Did Blackwell... Blackwell and Bonner, did you ever get the feeling that they consulted the convention on when they... well, there probably wasn't enough time. They just did it. Was there a backlash?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I'm not sure I know what you're...

**Dr. Tollison:** Was there a backlash when Bonner and Blackwell eliminated the clause that faculty cannot teach...

**Dr. Crabtree:** No, they didn't consult anybody. They made a decision within five minutes.

**Dr. Tollison:** And what about, how did the convention respond?

**Dr. Crabtree:** There were people who didn't like it.

**Dr. Tollison:** I'm just, why do you think... Do you think that they had avoided doing that prior to the Phi Beta Kappa meeting because they wanted to avoid controversy?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, I think... this is purely what I think. I think that they thought it was not a matter of any importance. It had not given... I mean, we had passed all the exams, and I frankly felt at the time it happened that it was not a violation of anybody's academic freedom. I really thought that Phi Beta Kappa was wrong, and I think Phi Beta Kappa took, finally, the position that they were wrong. I mean, Benjamin Mays is not going to stand up and publicly defend an institution that's been accused of denying religious freedom to a faculty. He didn't believe it either.

**Dr. Tollison:** We're familiar with Furman...

**Dr. Crabtree:** The phrase was really, I don't remember exactly. Basically, it didn't say you have to be a Baptist. It didn't say you have to be a Christian. It basically said you are not to teach doctrine contrary to Baptist opinion, or something of that sort. Of course, if you know anything about Baptists, you know they don't have any official opinions. There isn't any such thing.

**Dr. Tollison:** So it really wasn't...

**Dr. Crabtree:** There really isn't any such thing. I mean, it's like saying, well, I mean, the convention meets and says all kinds of things, but none of these things are binding on churches.

**Dr. Tollison:** Social issues?

**Dr. Crabtree:** When we integrated, for example, the convention said, "Don't do that," and the answer was, "We will. We are. We have." There was no way the convention could say, "You can't do it." All they could say was, "If you do it, we'll take your money away," and they didn't do that. I mean, nowhere is there a Baptist document that says, "This is what you must believe in order to be a Baptist," and the priesthood of all believers is a central concept in, whatever you want to call it, that we call Baptists, but there were people, there were... Every year, it's "What will the convention do next?" They abolished fraternities, and...

**Dr. Tollison:** That was in the mid-sixties?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, and I think the general feeling among the powers that be, the administrative officers and the trustees and, to a great extent, the faculty was: fraternities aren't worth what we would lose if we defy the convention on this.

**Dr. Tollison:** That wasn't the issue that they wanted to...

**Dr. Crabtree:** No. If we're going down, we don't want to go down on...

**Dr. Tollison:** On fraternities.

**Dr. Crabtree:** On fraternities.

**Dr. Tollison:** Right. But there was something in the air that made some people feel that we might go down.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, yes. There was something in the air and... but, Bonner, Plyler... I include Plyler because I just feel that way. I never really knew Dr. Plyler very well.

**Dr. Tollison:** John Plyler told me, his son, oldest son, told me yesterday that he... his father died in '66... He told me that he once asked his father if they would ever, if Furman would ever be separate from the Baptist Convention, which tells me that there was that kind of thinking going on pre-'66.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, yes. Of course, the thinking became so strong as the years went by that what had happened, we couldn't believe it. It happened, we couldn't believe it. You know, Furman didn't change that much.

**Dr. Tollison:** Has it now? In the past ten years?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, but I can... we were already, in affect, in control of our destiny is what I'm really trying to say. Nobody, no member of the faculty said, "Oh, we're not Baptists anymore so I'm going to change my whole syllabus and this stuff, anything like that. It was, "Okay, we're out from under this organization that embarrasses us every year by passing these idiotic resolutions and..."

**Dr. Tollison:** Creates a stressful situation.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Creating stressful situations and so forth, and...

**Dr. Tollison:** I can see why with it would affect the administrators. I can see, obviously it was monumental, had a monumental effect on governance issues and trustees, and I can understand the effect it had on students in terms of, now they can have fraternities and various other issues. Did it really have that much of an effect on faculty?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I want to say this very carefully. I think the faculty felt that there was something essentially hypocritical in our allowing ourselves to be, to continue to be guided by this organization. There was something essentially hypocritical by our, in our efforts to deal with the prohibitions which the convention would put upon us, and which we would dodge in one way or another. There was something essentially, perhaps, hypocritical in our simply not saying, "We are an educational institution, and if you can't accept us as such... Our business is educating. Our business is not proselytizing, converting, brainwashing, Sunday school teaching, or any of those things. Our business is education, and we don't intend to allow a bunch of essentially uneducated people to dictate to us." And we didn't make... we cut that position, but faculty like for you to stand and make speeches about it, you know.

**Dr. Tollison:** So it was more... it didn't have an effect on the day-to-day life?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, no it... not a great deal.

**Dr. Tollison:** Not in terms of faculty.

**Dr. Crabtree:** No. That much had already changed. When I came to Furman, when I turned... they had what they called a biographical data sheet which every new faculty member was asked to fill out, and there was a question on there, "Do you drink, or do you use alcoholic beverages?" Now I can write no, because at that time in my life I did not, and...but I knew a faculty member who came the same time that I did, who wrote "occasionally," and he got called up. As he put it, "I got called into Dean Bonner's office, saying, 'Here, take another form and fill it out and when you get to that put no. I don't care what you do, just put no.'" And, you know, I don't know that that was true or not. I do remember when the first time I ever went to a faculty member's home for dinner and wine was served. I do remember that those changes began to occur, just like the changes in the dress code for women students, which I abolished when I was Dean of Students.

**Dr. Tollison:** What kind of dress codes had been in place?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Women were not allowed to appear on the front campus...

**Dr. Tollison:** Front campus? What is considered the front campus?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Everything from the lake forward

**Dr. Tollison:** Which is everything.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah. They were not allowed to appear on the front campus in any outfit other than skirts and blouses, or dresses. They were not allowed to wear slacks, they were not allowed to wear shorts, they were not allowed to sunbathe except on the roofs of the dormitories, and you know that's all changed, and you know we had girls who had to go to the gym to take phys ed. On a hot day, they had to wear a raincoat over their gym shorts. So I got together with Miss Chiles, Marguerite Chiles, who was the Dean of Women, and I said, "Marguerite, this is stupid." So she called representative, called a meeting of representative female student leaders. I've never gone back to check, but I've always wondered if Sarah Weaver, Susan Shi, and [inaudible] that group, and we had a meeting down in the dining hall, in what is now the faculty dining room. Much to my astonishment there were female student leaders who said, "No, we don't want this changed."

**Dr. Tollison:** Why?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I never knew. I mean, they told us, you know, "We like the tradition of the Furman lady" is what they ... but we changed it, and I remember very vividly the first social event on the campus to which female students could wear pants, pants suits. I think half of the female student body had gone out and spent a lot of money on pants suits. It was a concert in McAlister, and there they were, all of these girls in pants suits, and of course Jacqueline Kennedy was wearing pants suits to the Metropolitan Opera, and it was ridiculous.

**Dr. Tollison:** So there was a definite...this was not in keeping with normal social customs, or mainstream social customs at the time, it just was...

**Dr. Crabtree:** But you know, we got a lot of complaints from female graduates of Furman that we were going too far and abandoning certain traditions. As a matter of fact, I was young and brash enough to do it without consulting the president. Amazingly, I mean, I've never forgotten it, the next budget committee meeting... Dr. Blackwell always had his budget committee meetings in his office. We each made a report, and he said, "Yes, this was a major decision you made without consulting me" and I simply said, "Dr. Blackwell, I felt that that decision was wholly within my provenance. It never occurred to me that I had to consult with you on such a matter." "Well, it's too late to do anything about it now. I could have let you answer the telephone when all these moms have called that think we shouldn't have done it." It took years, years had to go by before girls sunbathe on campus, and of course I've never forgotten attending an alumni meeting. It was one of the first really posh alumni meetings, I think, because everybody was kind of very posh... Cherokee Club in Atlanta, and it was very nice, it was beautiful and a woman walked up to me and chattered, she was so glad to see me, and as soon as she said to me, "Dr. Crabtree, do you remember the day you suspended me?" I said, "No, I don't." She said, "You suspended me for going in a boys apartment in Montague Village." I said, "Well, if you went in there I surely did suspend you." And, you know, we had a lot of rules that were stupid. The one rule that we had at Furman that I have never thought was stupid ... I felt it had, one could make it totally a very strong, irrefutable academic defense, was the no-drinking rule on campus.

**Dr. Tollison:** It's still in place.

**Dr. Crabtree:** You cannot study under the influence of alcohol, not even if you're young. You can't go to the student center after supper and have two beers and go to the library and study efficiently. I've always felt that alcohol was an enemy of study, but I've always felt that, you know, any further prohibition is slightly ridiculous.

**Dr. Tollison:** Do you think Furman will always be a dry campus?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I really don't. You know, I've come to the conclusion that if you look at events, if you look at situations which involve people agitating for the overthrow of something, it is going to get overthrown. It'll happen. Whether it's segregation in the schools, women's right to vote, it's going to happen, and you can't... but I don't know how it'll come, but it will come. I know that, and as a professor and as a parent and as a grandparent I hope it doesn't happen. I mean, I have a grandson who left Clemson after his second year in great part because he was drinking excessively and smoking pot, and now he's in counseling.

**Dr. Tollison:** Did you get the feeling when you were Dean of Students that that was something that was really important to them? I'm asking this because as a former student here, I bring this up...

**Dr. Crabtree:** You know, yeah, they... I don't know. The thing that happened about a year, I think it was, before I became Dean of Students, it happened in Ernie's, and you



talk to him about it, was the decision to let Furman students dance. Prior to that decision you would have thought that dancing, it's just awful not to be able to dance on the campus. We have all these facilities. This is terrible. This is just ruining our lives, and you'd think, well, good heavens, if we change the rule, they're going to be dancing, dancing, dancing. Well, that's great. We changed the rule and had a few dances, and then they decided they still prefer to have their dances off campus. But the big deal was their right to do it, and it was a ridiculous rule. I will always remember Dr. Stewart saying, when they were building the campus, he said, "Have you been in that new dining hall? They're building a ballroom down there." But it's so, you know, I don't know how important drinking really is to the students. I suspect it's not all that important because I suspect, indeed I know, from my own experience as Dean of Students, if you want to drink on this campus all you've got to do is go buy it and take it to your room and drink it. I mean, I used to, when I was Dean we had room inspections. The Dean of Men inspected all men's rooms once a week or so, and if he found alcohol, he took it. So the alcohol has always been here. What I don't like is the... and I don't really think it would happen. I guess I have a belief in the intelligence and discretion of Furman students that makes me believe that if we suddenly had a wet campus they'd deal with it, but there would be some kids that can't. There would be some kids that can't.

**Dr. Tollison:** Let's talk about the curriculum reform.

**Dr. Crabtree:** The curriculum reforms of the sixties came about primarily as a result of the efforts of Bonner. We were living in a time when change became the hallmark of excellence in an academic institution. If you didn't change something drastically you couldn't be any good. We lived at a time of educational reform throughout the nation, and Bonner had a feeling [that] we have to join this movement, and it was a faculty effect. The Furman faculty had never experienced anything quite like it. We were organized, the whole faculty was organized into a great number of committees to look at this and look at that, and you had policy committees, and suddenly the faculty felt an energy and a power that they had never felt before. We can actually change things, and as the work went forward the basic idea was to create a curriculum that provided ample opportunity for innovation, curricular innovation: off-campus study, foreign study, experimental courses. We had a phrase for it, and that phrase has escaped me for a moment, but it was a phrase we threw around, we even joke about it, we were always talking about it, and...

**Dr. Tollison:** Similar to engaged learning?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah. So everybody got deeply involved and excitingly involved in an opportunity to develop something new in every department. Well, as this effort went forward we realized we had, in order to achieve what we were trying to achieve, we had to change the calendar also.

**Dr. Tollison:** What about the calendar?

**Dr. Crabtree:** We wanted a two-semester calendar.

**Dr. Tollison:** Classes meet Monday and Wednesday and...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Classes met... well, at the beginning, classes met Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Then that was changed so that you didn't have Saturday classes, so that classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays lasted a long enough time to so that you had an equal number of minutes. The... if I remember correctly, the idea was to create a calendar that would provide an opportunity to teach traditional courses in basically traditional circumstances but would also provide an opportunity for experimental courses and off-campus courses and foreign study courses. So we created that middle term, that winter term, that short term. Wofford did the same thing, except Wofford had a one-month term in the middle. We came up with the wing terms, fall and spring wing terms, which would allow the teaching of traditional courses in traditional ways, and actually it provided more time in class than the semester curriculum did. The classes would meet five days a week, which classes met every day, you didn't have that break up, you had, we felt, continuity...felt it provided the best kind of educational situation. It also resulted in something of a real reduction in the faculty teaching load, because in the semester system faculty taught six courses a semester, you see. Eighteen hours was the normal faculty teaching load. Now if you bring that down to fifteen hours, you're still going to teach five courses, okay? Well, we came up with the so-called new curriculum involving a lot of new courses and a lot of experimental courses. Every year the faculty would meet in the various departments and come up with offerings of winter term courses that were new and exciting and experimental. Quite frankly, I thought it worked wonderfully. Now, nobody complained about "the curriculum," and the curriculum is still changing constantly and highly innovative, but the... I don't know how long it was before people began to complain about the calendar. They hated the winter term. Loathed the winter term, and they said, you know, "None of the foreign study courses at that time are going off in the winter. They go in the fall and they go in the spring." Then we did develop some winter term foreign study courses, and many of the experimental courses are going into the curriculum in the fall and spring, we don't need this winter term, and so many efforts had been made over the past forty years to change the calendar. It hasn't happened. I'll be interested to see if it happens this time. Do you know why it doesn't change? [Editor's Note: Beginning in the 2008-2009 school calendar year, Furman made the switch to the semester system. Under this system, students enroll in the tradition Monday, Wednesday, Friday classes or the longer Tuesday, Thursday courses. Each course is four credits; thus, students typically enroll in four courses a semester.]

**Dr. Tollison:** Why not?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Faculty teaching load and student load. Three-two-three...you can't beat that for students. You focus on three courses. [If] you go to a semester you're going to have five courses at a time. [If] you go to a quarter, you're going to have at least four. It's just...I remember one day in the mail room saying to Don Easley, I said, "Well, if this, if we go to a semester system, Don, are you ready to teach eighteen hours?" "What do you mean?" I said, "You...six courses." "Nobody ever taught six courses." I said, "Oh, come on, Don. What do you think I taught when I first came here?" "Six courses a semester?" And I said, "As an undergraduate at Chapel Hill, I went to Saturday classes. I remember now sitting in the classroom watching people on the way to the football game, and wondering if any decent seats would be left in the student section when I got out of class.

But when you... with the faculty members, this ability to focus on just two courses." If you tell faculty from many other schools..."Well, I never teach more than two courses at a time." "What do you mean?" So the calendar has persisted. The calendar has persisted. Now all of this excitement, all of this energy did generate a great deal of intellectual fervor on the campus and excitement, and the curriculum, I think... the introduction of Black Studies courses, the introduction of Asian Studies, all kinds of things began to happen. The foreign study program was, and I have to say this emphatically, this was Frank Bonner's dream, and he did it.

**Dr. Tollison:** How long had he had the position for foreign studies?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, he evidently had it as early as '63...'62 or '63. I didn't know it. I didn't know what he was doing. I didn't know what was going on. I found out later. I knew he took a couple of trips abroad. I didn't know that he actually had Ed Jones go with him at one point, and so forth, but anyway he went abroad. At any rate, my first involvement with foreign study at Furman came in 1964. In the spring of 1964 on a March morning, I got a call from the Dean's office: "Dr. Crabtree, can you come up and see Dr. Bonner for a few minutes?" "Yes, I'll be up." I came up and I walked into Frank Bonner's office, and he said, "Could you and Mrs. Crabtree go abroad this summer if the funding is made available to you to pay your expenses?" I said, "I don't know, but I sure do hope so." I went back to my office and I called my wife, and I told her, and she says, "You know we can't. We have four children." By then, one of those was only eighteen months old, but her parents, mainly it was her mother, said, "Yes, they are going." So my wife and I went to Europe in the summer of '64. It was five weeks and it cost, you know, the money they gave us didn't pay all of the expenses, but that's because we added to it. I got to go because Jim Stewart turned it down. Frank told me, he said, "I offered it to Dr. Stewart and his wife, and he said no, he didn't want it, so you are the next runners-up. Scott Lane in the department so..."

**Dr. Tollison:** You and Jim were the two recipients? The first two recipients of the faculty?

**Dr. Crabtree:** No, this was faculty travel. All we did. . .the only requirement was [that] I had to take my wife. It was the Quadra centennial of Shakespeare's birth and that's why I was chosen. We went to England, Scotland, France, Italy, Switzerland.. .so that was a lot of travel. What happened was that each year beginning in '64, funds were given to two faculty members and their spouses to travel abroad. Now while this was going on, Frank Bonner was working to develop a foreign study program.

**Dr. Tollison:** So they were thinking that this would be preparation...

**Dr. Crabtree:** This was preparation. Take our faculty, get our faculty abroad, travel, get them educated in the world, and we're going to move into foreign study. The first foreign study offered here was in England in 1969, and Ed Jones took... and his wife went to London with a group of students. They had two courses, I guess, there. They used Birkbeck College and the University of London. My wife and I...

**Dr. Tollison:** Is that near Russell Square?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, and my wife and I flew over in November. They were on travel that turned it into, but not independent travel as it turned out, as it became in later years, and my wife and I went to... We met the students and the Jones' at the airport when they came back in, and we got on the bus and we went to Windsor, stayed overnight at Windsor, and went to Stratford. I had the students at Stratford for approximately a month, and my wife and I and all of those students came home totally different people. Absolutely different people. I didn't go the next year. The next year, Bonner did a very crucial thing. He appointed, he sent Willard Pate, and Willard Pate did both London and Stratford, and when she came back she told Bonner, "I can't do that anymore." She had been enormously successful, and it was clear that Furman had latched on to somebody who could do foreign study like nobody could do foreign study. She said, "I can do London, but I can't do both. I'm not a Shakespearean." So in 1971 Frank asked me if we could go, and again there was a problem with children, and my parents would not cooperate again. They shouldn't, I mean they really shouldn't have... so our oldest son and his wife had married in August, and they said, "Oh, well, we'll move into your house and take care." And so Ann went with me and stayed three weeks and then she flew home. Then in '72 we knew that we were either going to lose this thing... and, you see, what was building here was remarkable. I was making friends in Stratford, I was getting to know shopkeepers, bookstore people, theater people. We just had this incredible program. So we took our own, we took, by then one son was married and one son, his... the next one was at Furman, and so we took our daughter and our youngest son with us. Our youngest son went with us for six years. The schools cooperated, let their mother teach them, and they always came back about four weeks ahead of the rest of the class, and we had friends from Stratford visiting us here and staying in our home and...

**Dr. Tollison:** What was going on with other...

**Dr. Crabtree:** By then, in '69 we also had a program in Spain, and then we added France. For several years it was Spain, France, and England. Then we added Germany, and we added Russia, Scandinavia. The program in England changed so that there were people going who would not go to Stratford, but would go mainly to Brussels. For many years they went to Brussels after London, but there was a year when they went to Italy, and now we go everywhere. China, Japan, and during all of this, Frank Bonner began working with the Japanese...

**Dr. Tollison:** Was Furman ahead of the national curve on this?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Furman was way ahead of the national curve. I also think Furman had ... it was simply, there were wonderful programs, and with the new curriculum you could create the kind of courses you needed to suit the environments in which you were...and I mean, that in Stratford, those kids worked. Now there would be days of the week when we would go on excursions, but otherwise we started class at nine o'clock and stopped at four thirty; walked home in the dark. In November it's dark. Then the next day we'd meet, we'd go to Worcestershire, and Westminster Abbey and places like that, then the next day would be another nine and a... I've never forgotten the highest compliment paid me as a teacher was when my class in Stratford one year said, "It would please us very much if you would have class on Saturday. This last Saturday we want to do The Tempest." I thought, "What more can a teacher ask?" What more can a teacher ask?

Furman's foreign study programs owe everything to Frank Bonner, and they owe a great deal to Willard Pate, because Willard even was involved in the organization, ultimately, of the programs in Europe. She just did an awful lot of work.

**Dr. Tollison:** Did she have an official position as the Director of International Programs or...?

**Dr. Crabtree:** No, we didn't have that. The person to hold that position, I believe, is Dr. Lavery.

**Dr. Tollison:** Bill Lavery. When you went on the GE College Bowl, weren't you on a team that competed against.. ..

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, we got the idea that we wanted to see if we could get on the GE College Bowl and, yeah, I was...so we did. We developed a team. The team was coached by Dr. Pate. They were very smart and we did indeed have one or more mock runs when that team competed against the faculty team, and I was on the faculty team. Then off they went to New York. Oh, it was so exciting. It was so exciting. So what happens? There we are, listening, here's Furman neck-and-neck with, I don 't know what school, something like the University of Virginia or something... and the power goes off.

**Dr. Tollison:** On campus?

**Dr. Crabtree:** All around! And there was a freshman on the team. He got the last question and we won. It was so exciting, and then they went back the next week and... It was an excellent example of what I've always felt of the way Furman can work together as a community, faculty, and students.

**Dr. Tollison:** People just joined energies, joined forces?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, they just do things. They like, they tend to like each other. The faculty is superb. They care about students; they care about education. The students are so bright. I mean, I don't think you all appreciate how really bright you are. I've got a granddaughter coming to Furman. I am so excited for her. I think she will love it here.

**Dr. Tollison:** A good example, the GE College Bowl, of Furman to be recognized on a national stage. Is that why it was so exciting, because this was a good example of, you know, Furman's [being] on national television?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, I mean, it was all a part of this push. I used to, I guess one of the things that I wanted so badly when I was Dean, when I was Vice President and Dean... I wanted, before I retired, to get Furman's faculty salaries up to a par with Davidson's faculty salaries, and I had resisted the temptation to go to the library and ask for a copy of the manual that contains all that information. I mean, it's available.

**Dr. Tollison:** You can get it online.

**Dr. Crabtree:** To see if we're close. I hope we are. I think we are.

**Dr. Tollison:** The most recent comparison, I hope I'm correct in saying this, but Davidson, WNL, and Sewanee...

**Dr. Crabtree:** That's right. That was always the quintessence, and there were, you know, there were many, many things. In the early sixties we had...and again, I want to give credit where it's due. Frank Bonner said to me, I was Assistant Dean, or Associate Dean, Frank Bonner said to me, "John, make it a part of your job. Find us a Rhodes Scholar." We had a football player, had some ... excellent student, quarterback, named Bob Stillwell. I asked Bob to come by my office for a brief chat. I asked him if he would like to be a Rhodes Scholar. He said yes, and I said, "Well, let's see if we can get you there." And we did. So every year I'd look for a Rhodes Scholar, and sometimes we found somebody we thought ought to make it, but we had one, then we discovered we had two because one of our students had got it in the twenties. Then George Ligler... I worked with George to get... by then I was using Willard Pate's talents and then, as the years went by... When I became Vice President and Dean, Judith Bainbridge did superb work every year in trying to identify the students who could win these competitions and Matt got, he got his... and of course this was a part of this ongoing effort. We had Rhodes Scholars, Truman Scholars, Fulbright Scholars, Goldwater Scholars. We're going to fill the walls with their pictures. But look how long it's taken for us to proclaim to all the visiting world how proud, I mean, you know, when we...they had a great banquet here on the... we've always talked about it, but you know, get it on the wall, get these pictures of Rhodes Scholars on the wall.

**Dr. Tollison:** What was that like at Furman when Charles Townes won...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Again, I'm going to plead first on... that I'm not fully aware. I'd wanted it, you know, and as I say, there was a great banquet here in his honor and a lot of distinguished people were invited. I'm sure Frank Bonner was saying "Yes, we got a Nobel Prize winner and we're going to proclaim it..."

**Dr. Tollison:** Let me ask you a few final questions, which are open-ended and broad. What would you say was the most important issue facing you when you were academic dean? What were they, and the most important during your tenure as Dean of Students?

**Dr. Crabtree:** The most important issue I felt facing me when I was Academic Dean was providing the faculty adequate compensation, and I say compensation because I'm including salaries, fringe benefits, the whole paramount of opportunities, money to support research, everything. When I left I was proud of what we had accomplished, particularly in the area of supporting research and professional development, supporting... I had a faculty member say the other day, "Well, you remember that. You gave me the money to attend that meeting." It was some meeting in some foreign country somewhere, and I said, "Yeah, now that you speak of it, I do remember," but I just felt... we can attract excellent faculty and keep them by making this place too good to leave. When David Shaner was offered a job at Harvard, I got him to stay at Furman.

**Dr. Tollison:** How did you do that?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Money, support for his research. He was most respected in the faculty in terms of scholarship. I couldn't pay him what Harvard could, but I could pay him enough so that he felt I respected him. I went to John Johns, I had to do the...you know, I went to him and I said, "What do I do?" And I've never forgotten, John just looked at me and said, "Keep him."

**Dr. Tollison:** How much did you provide research as opposed to energy focused on teaching? What was the balance there? What's the balance historically and what is it now?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, I remember when the dean told me that I did not qualify for a named chair in the English department, because I did not have the record of research that he thought was demanded.

**Dr. Tollison:** That was in the seventies?

**Dr. Crabtree:** That was in the late seventies and I said to him, "Okay." I've always felt that Furman's primary responsibility was teaching students. I've always agreed that good teaching should be supported by research, by keeping up, by being active in your profession. If you can do that and produce good books and articles in your field, more power to you, and more reward to you, but I have never particularly felt that the crown ought to be put on your head because you've written a book and your teaching is not good and not many people are going to read the book. I mean, for me, the great professors at Furman, many of them are people who never "produce."

**Dr. Tollison:** Who, in your opinion, are some of the great professors that you worked with?

**Dr. Crabtree:** D. H. Gilpatrick, Carlisle Ellich, Winston Babb, Al Sanders, James Stewart, Alfred Reid, A. V. Huff, Bill Lavery, Jim Edwards, David Shaner, Doug McDonald, Charlotte Smith, and of course I'm leaving out lots of people because I just, you know, am not...Willard Pate. I think one of the great tragedies of my experience at Furman is that Willard Pate never won the Meritorious Teaching Award. I know for a fact that when I was Vice President and Dean she came within a hair of winning it four times.

**Dr. Tollison:** She might still.

**Dr. Crabtree:** I don't know, and I'm sure you know, I don't know...Tony Arrington, Haywood Porter, and of course Charles Brewer. I had my oldest son say to me, "Charles Brewer is the greatest teacher I ever had."

**Dr. Tollison:** What's the common link? Is it the dedication to teaching, to Furman, to...

**Dr. Crabtree:** It is. Dedication to teaching, and the fact that Furman... Furman did, I think, and can boast about having done, provides an incredible environment for teaching and learning to take place.

**Dr. Tollison:** What it is about this place?

**Dr. Crabtree:** We care about each other as human individuals.

**Dr. Tollison:** Is that unique?

**Dr. Crabtree:** No, but it's rare. I've often wondered what I might have done if I hadn't come to Furman. I loved Chapel Hill, but I didn't know any of my professors. I never had any real social relationship with my professors. I had a brilliant young student who, years after he had graduated from Furman, came and said to me, "One of the most important nights I guess maybe in my educational life was the night you had us install the rug in the living room of your house listening to a recording of *Death of a Salesman*. I never heard anything like that in my life." And, you know, one of these programs, I'm sure you've run into them, that Furman developed over the years, under the aegis of L. D. Johnson and Betty Alverson, all these programs, these dialogue programs and so forth, that brought students together with faculty members ...

**Dr. Tollison:** And administrators.

**Dr. Crabtree:** And administrators. You know, I really think it's been terribly important. I know it was important that I never stopped teaching. One of the real miracles of my educational life was [when] that after I became dean of students, Gordon Blackwell and Frank Bonner still let me go to England to teach. They let the Dean of Students leave the campus for a whole month in November.

**Dr. Tollison:** A reflection of their desire for you to stay in contact, to continue your commitment to teaching? That hands on...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Right. I mean, you know, if they valued me. They didn't know it, but I wouldn't leave an institution like that for anything. No indeed. But even after I became Vice President and Dean they let me go.

**Dr. Tollison:** What are some of the highlights, if you will, historical highlights of your tenure as dean of students? Controversy... issues that you had to handle.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Probably the most dramatic event during my tenure as Dean of Students was the massacre at Kent State. It just so happens that I was in Texas when that happened. I wasn't on the campus, so I was not here for the drama of our students' reaction: the candlelight vigils and the protests and so forth. Actually, the protests, student protests at Furman were always so mild that we...if we look back on them, and when I say "we" I mean those who were students and participated in them, they kind of laugh, you know, about it.

**Dr. Tollison:** What students would those be?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, there was a young man here, and he is generally thought of as the leader of student rebellion, the most radical of radical students. His name was Jack Sullivan. Have you heard that name before?

**Dr. Tollison:** I've heard that name before. I know Jack.



**Dr. Crabtree:** But Jack's one of my favorite people, and, I mean, Jack visits me. Jack and I... Jack turned to me one day in my office, he was so frustrated and he was so angry. He had come in and he was ready to lay it on the table--"Either get your troops out of Iraq by tomorrow or we're going to behead these two guys, you know, that's what I think." Then all of a sudden he stopped and he said, "Damn it, Dr. Crabtree, you make me so mad I don't know what to do. You're so nice about everything." Jack was always one of my favorite students, and I think I was always one of his favorite professors. I taught him in freshman English and elsewhere. He was a brilliant student, and he was just so idealistic. They developed an underground newspaper that hit the campus with great sensation because they used the "f" word in it one day.

**Dr. Tollison:** Was the title of it El Burro?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, El Burro. Well, I was Dean of Students, what am I going to do? Well, here it is. Not only the "f" word but another "f" word, you know, there it is. What am I going to do with it?

**Dr. Tollison:** And the majority of students are aware that this is an underground newspaper?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, yeah. Well, see, everybody at Furman was waiting. What's Crabtree going to do? I called the students into my office.

**Dr. Tollison:** You knew who they were?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, yeah, I knew who they were. I knew them. I taught them. I had them in England, and one of them, I think two of them, but one of them was from Pickens. She was from a very conservative and religious family...

**Dr. Tollison:** Do you want to share her name?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I didn't know, but...

**Dr. Tollison:** Do you want to share her name?

**Dr. Crabtree:** One was named Mary Beth Hair. One was named Suzanne Pinckney, then there was Jack Sullivan, and I've forgotten ...

**Dr. Tollison:** John Duggan, was he involved?

**Dr. Crabtree:** John Duggan was certainly involved. Now whether he was one of those that I brought in or not... but at any rate, it was, say Thursday. It wasn't Thursday; it was Friday. Of course they hit me immediately [with] their right to freedom of speech and stuff like that, and besides, obscenity is in the mind of the beholder. They didn't know that, but when they said that, a light went on. So we talked about it, and I told them I did not approve of it. I felt it was absolutely unnecessary.

**Dr. Tollison:** The use of the word or the newspaper?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, the use of the word. I didn't object to the newspaper, and I...so I told them. I said, "I'm going to suspend you. You're suspended as of the end of your last class on Friday until Monday morning. You are to go home and you are to tell your parents that you have been suspended, and you are to tell them why and they are to call me." And I looked at Mary Beth, and I said, "Mary Beth, when you tell your mother why and say the word, I don't think it's going to taste very good in your mouth." And they went home. Their parents called me. Of course their parents were shocked and so forth. I mean, looking back on it, I realize...but they were back in class on Monday, that was... Years later, Mary Beth Hair wrote Dr. Reid and told him that, what work she was in, and that she was trying to get financial support for some graduate work or something, and asked him if he could, if he would be willing to write on her behalf. She wrote Reid because she liked Reid, and if there were anyone of the faculty who the students would look to for leadership, it was Reid. Reid had died, and the letter came into my hands. I don't know whether his wife sent it to me or exactly what, and I wrote Mary Beth and told her, and reacted to the work she was doing and told her that, if she would like, I would be very happy to write in support of her application. She wrote me a lovely thank you note. But of course as I say, Sullivan and I are just good friends. We always have been good friends. I mean, Jack... when he finds out I've been to New York he says, "You should have called me. I would just love to...I've got his books, and Duggan... Duggan's a good friend, and...you know, basically the kids were right. Basically they were right, and they were young and they were angry. Radical politics did not bother me one whit. I found it rather exciting as a matter of fact. I just urged them, "Don't say things in anger to the President in public--that puts him in a position of having to do something he doesn't want to do."

**Dr. Tollison:** How did Blackwell respond?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Blackwell responded very well. The result of the movement was students were given a representative to visit the board, students were put on faculty committees, students got most of what it was that they were trying to get. The speaker ban thing was, of course, one of the experiences that took a lot of my time.

**Dr. Tollison:** Didn't they protect the outsider's insurance?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes.

**Dr. Tollison:** Outside the room. Outside the administration building?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, they came in and protested, too. We had a big meeting in the trustees' room one night with students in there.

**Dr. Tollison:** Did they talk to you?

**Dr. Crabtree:** No, we knew it was...I don't recall that much. I got worried. I don't know whether they were out here and Blackwell said, " Well, come on up here and we'll talk." I got upset because I saw Jack developing a finger-shaking attitude , and I didn't want that to happen, and of course I've never forgotten what Jack said to Gordon Blackwell.

**Dr. Tollison:** Which was..?

**Dr. Crabtree:** He said, "Dr. Blackwell, I don't understand you . I know for a fact that you are one of the most liberal sociologists in the southern United States, and that your whole political life has been in support of liberal ideas, and I don't understand that for this apparent conservatism." It hurt Blackwell; he didn't see it as apparent conservatism. Blackwell saw this kind of behavior as unnecessarily ungentlemanly...

**Dr. Tollison:** I'm struck by the frankness and the open communication that's going on between the President and the group of students here. The fact that a student would say, I mean, was that considered very audacious?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes. Yes, but...

**Dr. Tollison:** But he did it.

**Dr. Crabtree:** But he did it, and there was always a...well, you know the first student protest that we had on this campus was led by Marshall Frady.

**Dr. Tollison:** That was the dining hall?

**Dr. Crabtree:** That was the dining hall thing.

**Dr. Tollison:** The quality of the food or something?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Marshall got a group of students to make posters and they stood in front of the dining hall urging students not to eat there.

**Dr. Tollison:** Because the food was bad?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Because the food was not up to, they felt, appropriate standards, and Al Reid in his history says it wasn't. I don't remember whether it was or not, but there they were protesting, telling students not to eat in the dining hall and so forth. Frank Bonner, as a result of that activity... he was outraged by it... called the financial aid committee, faculty committee and financial aid together and pointed out to them that the catalog said in order to keep a scholarship at Furman you had to be a student of model behavior, something of that sort. They had violated this principle, and therefore they should lose their financial aid. I don 't know how many people know this, but I know this because I was on that committee; so they took their scholarships away from them, and somehow or other the word reached Frank Bonner that Marshall had packed his bags and was leaving because he didn't have the money to stay. Frank's reaction was a basic: "Oh, my lord, I didn't mean for that to happen." He called us back together and we gave them their scholarships back!

**Dr. Tollison:** All the students?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah .

**Dr. Tollison:** Was Marshall Frady, even as a student, I mean, I know he had some students write some editorials, but... .

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, he wrote some marvelous editorials, but Marshall... there was an element of respectfulness in all of Marshall's work. Marshall could write about the stupidity that had characterized certain actions by the Baptist Convention, but somehow or other you knew from what he said and the tone that he wasn't saying you're all stupid. His father, after all, was a Baptist minister, and...but he had a respect for authority. He had a respect for religion, and he read his Bible and biography of Billy Graham. I mean he has an absolutely devastating portrait of the great evangelist, who, from Marshall's perspective, sold out to the rich and the powerful. But Marshall Frady is so imbued with southern Protestantism, he knows all the heroes, he knows all the things that go... he can quote the Bible as easily as Billy Graham can. It was really quite amazing, but there was this general feeling, I'm sure it's strong in Dr. Kline. It was strong in Frank, not so strong in Gordon, and by the time Johns came so much had changed anyway. Although if you were ever disrespectful to John Johns, you'd live to regret it your whole life. I mean, John just didn't take anybody being disrespectful.

**Dr. Tollison:** He was a very personable...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Very personable.

**Dr. Tollison:** But you understood that it was a quality that came a certain way, as well.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Absolutely. At least I did.

**Dr. Tollison:** How do you compare...

**Dr. Crabtree:** As John Johns used to say, "If you're going to try to kill the king, you'd better get him." I remember an episode early in John's tenure when a cartoon appeared in *The Paladin* that showed Johns as a short, overweight guy strutting down the sidewalk with a big cigar in his mouth, and I don't know what it had to say except something about something, and Johns found out it had been approved by the chairman of the art department. The chairman of the art department was not in the presidential graces for a long, long, long time. I've lost my train of thought...

**Dr. Tollison:** We were talking about Dean of Students, your role as Dean of Students. We were talking about some of the student activists. You started talking about. ..

**Dr. Crabtree:** Drugs were a problem... drugs were a great problem for me. Drugs were something I had had no experience with, and I guess I felt generally that we didn't have drugs at Furman, and then I began to discover that we did.

**Dr. Tollison:** In the dorms?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah.

**Dr. Tollison:** And what were you talking, what was considered a moderate drug at that point, if there is such a thing.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, we're talking mainly about pot, I guess, and amphetamines, maybe, I don't know. I remember a very unpleasant situation on which I had to suspend a student for selling drugs.

**Dr. Tollison:** On campus?

**Dr. Crabtree:** On campus, and...

**Dr. Tollison:** First offense?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, yes. It didn't help that he was the brother of a member of the faculty, but I had another...that just was wrenching for me. I had a situation in which I...and it was a learning situation, I never did that again. I thought I could talk a boy into changing his ways, and I thought I could gather the support from his father in doing it, and the father turned on me like a snake in the middle of it and...he just told me off and grabbed his son and they left. I realized I that didn't really know. I didn't know the subject well enough, and so I began to look for help .

**Dr. Tollison:** And who did you turn to?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I got a psychiatrist for a while. He volunteered. He was a new psychiatrist with the Greenville Hospital. It was just lucky--he called me one day and he said, "I'd like very much to give a day to Furman..."

**Dr. Tollison:** Who was this?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I can 't remember his name.

**Dr. Tollison:** And you said our main problem...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, he came out and talked and I... and then the chaplain's office was doing a lot of good work and... We didn't have a... I got interviewed by the newspaper at some point in there, and I said that we did not have a drug problem at Furman, that we probably did have some students who took drugs, but we didn't have a drug problem. By analogy, I said, "It would probably, in a given year may have a girl who gets pregnant, but we didn't have a childbirth out of wedlock problem on the campus. " And the newspaper article, front-page article, comes out with: DEAN SAYS DRUGS LIKE UNWED PREGNANCY. I thought, keep your business; don't ever talk to a reporter again, about anything. Probably it was not a... I just, I'll just be honest with you. I didn't know how to handle...fortunately, as I say, it was not a big problem. I imagine that it's a worse problem today, but today we have the...

**Dr. Tollison:** I never saw it. My entire four years here I never saw pot. I never saw anything.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, that's good.

**Dr. Tollison:** What about a few other things. Mandatory chapel?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, well I was always in favor of getting rid of mandatory chapel.

**Dr. Tollison:** And was that an SSOC? Were they behind that? [Editor's Note: SSOC is the Southern Student Organizing Committee]

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, yes they were behind it, but all kinds of students were behind it. All kinds of student groups were behind it. They just said, "We don't want mandatory chapel, and the university slowly came around to that point of view. Of course some of the same argument has been used to destroy the CLP program, but it won't work.

**Dr. Tollison:** Oh, I hope not.

**Dr. Crabtree:** It won't work and I think ninety percent of the students by the time they're graduating...you know, in all the polls we took, said no, keep it, by all means keep it there. There were all kinds of things I would never have been exposed to if you hadn't made me go to that, but mandatory chapel was a different matter.

**Dr. Tollison:** Housing problems? Shortage?

**Dr. Crabtree:** You know, I don't remember that. I do remember that we did have some shortage. We had too many students...

**Dr. Tollison:** I understand you asked some faculty to keep some students and you got three mobile homes.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, but it was just...as far as I was concerned, it was a good problem to have. It meant you had more students than you thought you were going to have.

**Dr. Tollison:** Was this during the time, I mean, when I was here North Village was still being built. So was this a time when there was, when you all were transitioning into... student body size, but the campus couldn't handle it? It was becoming too large?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah, in part. During the last five or ten years before I retired, all kinds of plans were made to build new housing on the campus. All of these plans created monetary problems, but all of these plans brought up the question of "how are you going to make students live in them?" And I remember one set of drawings, you know, where they were going to be located, but they were all built of this expensive brick and everything. I think Dr. Johns just decided, I'll meet that problem the next term. The reason I say that is that you'd come up with these plans and somebody would say, you know it costs money to produce plans and then nothing would happen, and another Vice President for Business Affairs was appointed to build them, and then...

**Dr. Tollison:** Not Don Lineback...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, no. Wayne Weaver. Lineback was the Vice President for Development. I'm talking about finance. I don't even know who the vice president of finance is now, but it was a woman.

**Dr. Tollison:** It was Wendy Livingston?

**Dr. Crabtree:** It was Wendy Livingston, but she's gone. I told any number of people that David Shi has done many wonderful things, but the best thing he has ever done is build the North Village. I said, "How he managed to get the money and build it and then make the students live in it, and then make them like it!" I don't know; it's amazing.

**Dr. Tollison:** It's a great place to live.

**Dr. Crabtree:** I mean, it just worked. My oldest son was involved in some of the planning because he builds hotels and he was called in as a consultant. He said, "Father, this is going to be very nice. Students are going to love it. It's going to be great." But it was... he's undertaken all of these building programs that are just incredible.

**Dr. Tollison:** Those North apartments are nicer than the Court Ridge or the Furman Place or anything that you're going to get out the back gate.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Absolutely, and it's...

**Dr. Tollison:** I think that's part of the draw.

**Dr. Crabtree:** It's much more pleasant to live over there. I mean, you've got all kinds of security that you didn't have at those other places and, no, it's...but you're right. I had forgotten that. We did have mobile homes, we did have... Cary Crampton had five girls living with him in his house, and a lot of people...and we just talked about it. We said the irony of all this is that we have a rule against students living off campus, and yet we're making arrangements for them to live in faculty homes. Of course we undermined our position so that Furman students said, "Look, this won't work. You can't tell me I can't live in Court Ridge, and then come to me and say, 'Would you move out of the dorm into Professor So-and-so's house?'" So we finally really sort of gave up on it, and we grew, and... but I'm glad to see that the cap on enrollment has pretty much remained above what we have determined it ought to be. I think Furman can continue to grow some, but I would ... if Furman grows... if they decided, for example, to increase the student body by 500, all kinds of things are going to happen. Your academic record is going down because you can't get that many more students under these demands. I mean, good grief, I remember when we were dreaming of an SAT average class of 1200. Good heavens.

**Dr. Tollison:** In summary, could you briefly hit some highlights of the presidents that you have served under and observed? What they brought to the table?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Dr. Plyler brought great...Dr. Plyler brought the new campus, and he obviously stoked the fires of Frank Bonner's dream. He did more, he contributed more to what was the ultimate separation from the convention than anybody really in that age. He brought great dignity to all public ceremony and ritual. He was not known, really, by faculty or students except as a very official man. [Editor's Note: President Plyler has a juris doctorate, not a Ph.D.; thus, his official title is President Plyler.]

**Dr. Tollison:** Was he behind the mace and the medallions that were created for Gordon Blackwell's library? Was Bonner behind that?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes.

**Dr. Tollison:** I don't think anyone knows that.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Dr. Plyler also contributed to the support of the faculty in travel and so forth. That began on his watch. As a matter of fact, my wife and I were traveling in

England and checked into a hotel in Cambridge and I picked up some mail and there was a letter from President Plyler. I thought, *What in the world?* He just simply said, "Dear Professor Crabtree, I thought that you would want to know that President Gordon Blackwell has accepted the presidency of Furman." Because when we left they hadn't, they didn't have a president. So Dr. Blackwell brought. . .Dr. Blackwell's very presence as president enhanced Furman's reputation academically. He was a professor. He was a scholar. He was a well-known sociologist, and he had been Chief Executive Officer of two very large colleges. He had the highest honors that you could give a professor at Chapel Hill. He was a keynote professor. So his very presence...actually, it was amazing. There was simply rejoicing on the campus when we found out who our new president was going to be. We felt we were going somewhere. Now almost immediately, or within the first two years, he got this huge grant, in those days huge... [Editor's Note: Dr. Blackwell, a native South Carolinian, received his B.A. from Furman University in 1932, his M.A. from the university of North Carolina, and his Ph.D. from Harvard. Before he became president of his Alma Mater, Furman University, he was Chancellor of the Woman's College at the University of North Carolina and then later, he served as the President of Florida State University from 1960 to 1965.]

**Dr. Tollison:** Ford Foundation?

**Dr. Crabtree:** From the Ford Foundation. The grant, the projects which the grants supported, said to us: "We're on our way." He supported the new calendar, the new curriculum. . .He supported faculty participation in governance. He brought in a new management program that everybody scoffed [at], but it changed this college in an amazing way.

**Dr. Tollison:** Management by objectives?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, management by objectives is what we did not want to call it, but management which required all department heads and their departments to develop long-range objectives and goals. [Have] everything put in print. We had annual faculty retreats at which we discovered all of these planning strategies. Everything that is now taken for granted began there. He changed all of that.

**Dr. Tollison:** He got people thinking about what they wanted to be.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Right, and he had a wonderful rapport with students, and so did his dear wife. He began the practice of inviting the seniors and juniors following Junior-Senior to come to his house for breakfast. Breakfast was served by the administrative officers of the institution. He opened the door for faculty and student participation in governance at Furman. John Johns' greatest accomplishment might be the separation from the Convention, but at the same time, John Johns allowed the faculty to participate in planning, decision-making, and governance in a truly remarkable way. He, I think, inspired a considerable increase in the support we got from the Duke Endowment. He got us all to working, by the way, to get money, and he supported the faculty's professional growth and development. He supported the faculty, effort to raise faculty salaries and every one of us who has retired are grateful for what John Johns did to



improve our retirement program. I'm sure once I get home I'll wish I'd thought of something else, but that's it.

**Dr. Tollison:** What about President Shi??

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, of course, poor David was brought in here to take my job, and he lasted only a year. No, I walked into President Johns' office one day, and they were looking at president of the trustees and so forth.

**Dr. Tollison:** For a new president?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah. For a new president...no, a Dean to replace me. I said to Dr. Johns, "I'm sorry to say that I would not recommend anybody currently on the faculty. I think it would be good for Furman for the first time in several decades to have a Chief Academic Officer from the outside, and I have racked my brain, and I have come up with one name, and he has no experience as an academic administrator." John Johns says, "But he teaches history at Davidson."

**Dr. Tollison:** How did that happen?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I don't know. He and I, he knew exactly what I was thinking, and I said, "Yeah."

**Dr. Tollison:** David Shi really had maintained a presence or else was in the minds of the administrators here for a while...

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yeah.

**Dr. Tollison:** Why was that? What that one of his accomplishments? Was that why?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, I don't know that I can answer that. I said David because I have always felt that the best academic administrators come from faculties. I deplore the current practice of people going to graduate school and taking PhD 's in how to become a dean. They're, all they 're doing is becoming bureaucrats. So I look for a certain kind of personality. I look for an ability to deal with people. I look for a kind of integrity. I look for smart, and I knew David had all of it, and I knew David could succeed.

**Dr. Tollison:** From ... you knew him from when he was a student here.

**Dr. Crabtree:** I taught him. No, I didn't 't, I never taught him, but I knew him. And I stayed in touch with him all the years. It wasn't unusual for Furman faculty to visit Davidson. I was a Danforth Associate, and we had a good friend at Davidson, their Danforth Associate, and we used to, I would go up there and spend the weekend with them. We'd meet David and Susan, and I also knew that David had an enormous asset in his wife, but I'll be honest with you, I didn't think of David as president. I thought of him as Chief Academic Officer, and I became aware within months of his coming into the Vice President Dean 's office that people were talking president, and I was fearful. I wondered, "Is he ready for it?," and obviously he was. He really was.

**Dr. Tollison:** John Johns had started putting out feelers, started telling people that he was thinking about retiring soon after David Shi got here?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Yes, and Edna Hartness and Tom Hartness decided, you know, they were good friends of ours, and they... I don't know what, it was some sort of social occasion, and suddenly she just sort of dropped this thing: we don't have to keep going around looking for a president. We've got him right there on the campus. And I thought, "But if he's not ready..." But he was ready.

**Dr. Tollison:** Was there a national search?

**Dr. Crabtree:** I don't know in all honesty. I would say yes, there probably was. They would have certainly gone through the formality, but I think they chose well.

**Dr. Tollison:** What do you think are the, aside from North Village, which you already mentioned, what are the other accomplishments?

**Dr. Crabtree:** Well, the long-projected renovation of the library, the much-needed renovation of the student center and to the university center, the commitment that he has made to the Greenville community which has enhanced Furman's role in the Greenville community, and I don't know... I just know he has played a major role in this concept of engaged learning, whatever you want to call it. Unfortunately we do have to call things things, so we make up names for them. We always use, in the academic world we always start making fun of the name, that 's just academians for you. I think that's a major accomplishment, I really do. Also, he has a.... he has clearly established Furman in certain academic circles. We might have been there with a foot in the door sometimes, but now we're in there.

**Dr. Tollison:** Can you draw a parallel between he and another president? I'm thinking of somebody, but I want to hear who you would draw a parallel with David Shi in terms of increasing Furman's visibility on a national level, that kind of stuff.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Compare him with another president?

**Dr. Tollison:** Yes.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Another Furman president?

**Dr. Tollison:** Yes.

**Dr. Crabtree:** Oh, I think it would have to be Gordon Blackwell, yeah.

**Dr. Tollison:** That's what I was thinking.

**Dr. Crabtree:** I mean, these guys have an aura. I've often said Furman has had remarkably good fortune where presidents are concerned. It got the man it needed at the time it got him. I really feel that. I think that Plyler and Blackwell and Johns... Johns was what we needed. We needed somebody less formal than Blackwell when Johns came in. We needed somebody who would call the faculty's bluffs at the same time that he was doing everything he could to spoil them. We needed somebody like... One of Johns'

great gifts was that if he appointed you Vice President and Academic Dean, he expected you to do the job. I did the job and I learned, and David ... David's the man Furman needed.

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### Summary

In this interview, Dr. Crabtree begins by describing how he was hired by Furman as an assistant professor of English in 1957. He was working on his PhD at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill when he met Frank Bonner and was offered a position at Furman. He describes the 1950s and 1960s on campus and his positions as Assistant Academic Dean, Dean of Students and Chair of the English Department throughout his tenure. He also explains his close relationship with Frank Bonner and the faculty's conflicting opinions and attitudes about Bonner. Crabtree goes on to describe the creation of scholarships and the emphasis on Furman admissions recruitment under Bonner with programs such as the The College Preparatory Program for High School Juniors and the College Teaching Honors Program.

The pressures of religion and the Southern Baptist Convention are clear in Crabtree's accounts of Fillman, and he claims that Furman was almost refused its own Phi Beta Kappa chapter on account of a religious clause in the faculty contract. He explains the tensions between the students and faculty and the Southern Baptist Convention beginning in the 1960s. Crabtree also describes the origins of foreign study at the university. Furman's first foreign study program was a trip to London and Stratford-upon-Avon to study Shakespeare, and Crabtree describes how Frank Bonner and Willard Pate were critical in the innovative foreign study programs they began creating in the 1960s. Crabtree also details the issues he faced as Dean of Students--dress codes, student protests, housing shortages, drugs and alcohol. Furman had its own GE College Bowl team and celebrated the Nobel Prize winner Charles Townes during Crabtree's tenure--testaments to the increasingly strong reputation of the university. Finally, Crabtree gives an analysis of the different presidents of Furman during his tenure--Plyler, Blackwell, Johns, and Shi and the ways they helped to grow and shape the Furman we know today.