Interviewed: John Duggan
Interviewer: Courtney L. Tollison, Ph.D.
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Courtney: Today is August 30, 2004, and my name is Courtney Tollison, and I am sitting here with John Duggan, and he is a 1969 Furman Graduate and a 1972 University of South Carolina Law School graduate, and he is an attorney with Love, Thornton here in town, and during his student days at Furman was very involved with the Southern Student Organizing Committee and the student movement in particular. Why don't we just start off with anything relevant that I left out from just my brief opening description.

John: No, but Courtney I might say that Love, Thornton, Arnold, & Thomason does a great deal of work and represents the University. One of my former senior partners, Tommy Thomason, was a Furman graduate and very active with the school and a wonderful person, but given my background, some Furman people may blanch to think that I'm with a firm that is representing Furman now, since most student days I was quite an activist and we did start up some controversy while we were here. And here I am now, ironically, with the firm that represents the University, so it's interesting how times change.

Courtney: And you were involved with Furman, part of Furman's representation, when they split from the Baptist Convention?

John: That's right. Our firm was a critical player through Tommy Thomason in negotiations where Furman ultimately separated its relationship from the Baptists to my utter joy.

Courtney: I'm gonna try to remain neutral.

John: I'm not neutral and not going to try to be.

Courtney: No, I don't want you to be neutral, but I'm going to do my best to remain neutral, so I won't give you a lot of feedback. That's why.

John: That's fine.

Courtney: Okay, why don't we start off by you telling me a little bit about yourself, sort of pre-Furman.

John: Okay. I grew up in Manning, South Carolina. I was born in Atlanta, Georgia. My dad was an attorney and also had a business court reporting in Atlanta, Georgia, but I was a late child and he died when I was 7, and my mother moved back to her hometown of Manning, South Carolina, which is in Clarendon County, and moved into our home my grandfather built in 1896 where her four sisters lived. Two of those other sisters had also married and each had one son, and I was the youngest of four brothers, and so my mother and her four sisters reared the six of us in that house in Manning.

Courtney: Wow.

John: And the other two that had married, one's husband had died and the other one they had divorced. So there were the six boys reared by five women, all of whom were career women and all of whom had attended college, half of whom had been born before the turn of the century, and the other half were born up through 1911. And so my childhood was interesting. I jokingly tell people I grew up in a socialistic commune.

Courtney: You had wonderful role models, very strong.

John: Yeah, and looking back on it I feel so blessed because those women, I grew up, I have a little bit of trouble with fully absorbing and appreciating the women's movement because when you grow up with five women who are involved in politics and have a career and get in the car at night and drive an hour-and-a-half to hear an opera and who are engaging in conversation and who read and love music and the arts, you simply grow up assuming that there is no difference between men and women, and therefore, I always had difficulty with that because I just grew up in an environment with a group of pretty exceptional women and assumed that was the norm.

Courtney: Certainly, right.

John: And that there was no reason to treat people differently because of their sex that they were born with and didn't have any choice in. And so I guess my childhood in that sense was different. I would describe it then as very typically southern in that they were concerned about what other people thought, appearances were very important, and I began probably being an outspoken person as a student in high school and in that rural conservative very basically fundamentalist environment I was respected for my ability but perceived to be different and odd. And I guess during that time personally is painful because as a teenager fitting in and being accepted is very important so I was in the dilemma between being consistent and willing to speak out about my views which I knew were different, and accepting some unpopularity because of it, versus the desire like everybody else to want to fit in. I was sensitive because I knew that very painfully, and as a result I suppose I perceived myself

as being more sympathetic with people who are different because I have felt the rejection of taking unpopular views from the time I was fairly young.

I was very influenced in my life looking back by several people. I had two older brothers, one went to Davidson and then had a brief career as a reporter with the Washington Post covering the White House during the Kennedy administration, and the after Kennedy was assassinated he was hired as a deputy assistant for the economic and domestic programs in the White House under Lyndon Johnson, and was there when the civil rights bill was signed and so forth. And he, who later became president of PBS, and now runs an art institution in Palm Beach, Florida. And then my oldest brother who had a twin brother, Jim Duggan, who went to the Citadel, and then graduate school in economics at South Carolina, also had moved out of the south and was a businessman who traveled internationally with his company, and you know, their views were pro civil rights, you know, what would be characterized as liberal views at the time, and they were very influential on me when I was young and in high school.

And that influenced my political beliefs, and I recall in the 1994 [1964] election when Lyndon Johnson ran against Barry Goldwater, we had an election of the student body at the high school in Manning. And there were two students who voted for Lyndon Johnson. Me and one other student who is an attorney now in the State of Georgia, and that's really a reflection of how conservative the community was that I grew up in. And of course a lot of that was a backlash to the civil rights movement. In the low country in South Carolina where there is a much larger black population, the racism is more clear and obvious than it in the Upstate where the minority population is a much smaller part of the population.

Courtney: How far is Manning from Orangeburg?

John: It is about thirty-five miles north of Orangeburg on the Highway 301, which used to be the major road from New York to Miami. So we are very close to Orangeburg.

Courtney: 301.

John: 301 goes through Florence and up into eastern North Carolina and then on up to New York City. But it was the major thoroughfare between Miami and New York City until the interstate system was built. The schools all the way through high school that I grew up with were segregated. But aside from my brothers there were two black people who looking back on it now influenced my views a great deal and probably don't realize it. One was a black man names James King, and one of my aunts ran the town of Manning. She was the city clerk, but there was no full-time mayor, and she day to day literally ran the town. And James King was a black man in charge of the water works, and James was a very smart, very kind, but very proud man, and my aunt thought the world of James King and highly respected him and I grew up around James King and riding in the truck with him and various things like that. Because my mother had four sisters there

running our family if we had problems with the plumbing or something they called James King and he got it taken care of. Then there was another man that worked for the street superintendent in Manning, he was a black man who went by the nickname of Governor. The man who was street superintendent I am named after and I took to riding in the city's various trucks and things with Governor with whom I spent a lot of time as a kid growing up. Governor loved me without question and my race was irrelevant to him and I never ever thought about it until later when I was in high school and would see the water fountains were separate for blacks and whites and things like that and it struck me as odd because, you know, here were two men that I admired and I couldn't understand why there was that distinction, and on a very fundamentally emotional level it just struck me as unfair. Aside from any intellectual notions about civil rights and equal opportunity, it just wasn't fair that two fundamentally decent men were excluded from so much of the community because of the color of their skin which appeared to me to be utterly irrelevant to who they were. So I guess those things influenced me coming out of high school, plus because I was different in my political views I questioned the religion in our community, which was basically a fundamentalist religion and I had doubts and questions about the notions of the wrath of God and, you know, the God that so often fundamentalists view that ruled. Their perception of God is someone to fear rather than someone that is loving, and you know I couldn't accept that concept of God, and often said when I was young in these discussions we would have, if that's the way God was, then I would rebel against a God that I had to fear and that was perceived as not necessarily tyrannical but, you know, punishing God, and so, you know I grew up where my beliefs were unpopular and I had a certain level of rejection and I think it made me more sensitive. So when I came to Furman, by then I was very unhappy in my hometown. I was ready to get out, and what influenced me to come to Furman were two things. Number one was I was very active in music in high school and I was in the All-State band and Dan Ellis was the band director at Furman and he literally sought me out and recruited me to come to Furman.

Courtney: What did you play?

John: I played lower brass, various instruments, in lower brass during my time at Furman and also was the only, as they say, standup string bass player. So in all of the things where a string bass was needed I ended up being recruited until late in my days at Furman when I recruited Ray McGee, a black student from Asheville, North Carolina, who was a very good bass player and he decided to come to Furman and so we had another bass player. But, Dan was very influential in me coming to Furman. He was a passionate advocate for Furman and really went after recruiting students. And of course the academics at Furman was very good. So that sort of led me to come to Furman.

Courtney: Okay. Now let's talk a little about your student days before we get into student activism and stuff, just your memories of, at this point, was a new campus, about

three years old in terms of having everyone out here together. Let's see, Gordon Blackwell became president in '65.

John: That's correct.

Courtney: Were you here for that?

John: He just came in as president when I entered in the fall of 1965. He was brand new on campus and I think he was actually inducted maybe in the graduation exercise in either late May or June of '65 before I enrolled in the fall of '65. But I'll tell you a funny thing, because here we are in 2004, and my class is celebrating its 35th anniversary of graduating, and when I started at Furman those beautiful oak trees on the mall were about as tall as I am, about 6 feet tall, and to see them now, these towering trees, is a real reminder to me that thirty- five years has flown by. The student center was built while I was here. Of course things like the football stadium, it was J. E. Sirrine Stadium in downtown Greenville where Greenville High School now plays. I marked in many a football game in old Sirrine Stadium with the Furman band. So the campus was very, very new. The auditorium was here. Much of the women's dormitory complex was not here. There were many additions to that. There was no infirmary.

Courtney: Where did you live?

John: I was in Poteat Hall my first year. Then after that I spent the rest of the time In Geer and Manly dormitories, lived on campus all four years, which was what virtually all students did back then. And then of course later the many students lived off campus their last two years, and now back students are back on campus. So we've kind of gone full circle and I am very glad about that because one of the things that's unique to a Furman education is being immersed in the school through living on campus. So I'm a real advocate and I hope the university continues that policy. I think it is an education in itself to live in the dorms with kids from all over the United States.

Courtney: I agree with you.

John: And I hope we continue that tradition.

Courtney: Were they all over the United States at this point?

John: Not as much so, not as diverse as now. But there was a large contingent of students from the northeastern US because Furman offered, you know, a pretty darn good education back then much less than the private schools of the northeast. And so a lot of these kids came down here, some were recruited in music, some were recruited to play sports such as football, but we had a good mix of kids from the northeast and from the north and Midwest, Ohio,

Pennsylvania, and places like that.

Courtney: Harry Shucker got down here.

John: Yeah, exactly. Harry was a very good tennis player and he is married by the way to Pam Burgess Shucker who was my classmate and vice president of our class our junior year when I was president of our class. To show you how small the world is, I worked in Pam's campaign when she ran for Greenville County Council.

Courtney: Recently?

John: Several years ago.

Courtney: Yeah.

John: So, Pam is an old classmate. But anyway that's how I got to Furman and that's kind of what the campus was like. There wasn't a football stadium, there was no basketball arena. We played the basketball games downtown in old Township Auditorium.

Courtney: Township Auditorium. Pre-Memorial Auditorium?

John: No, I'm sorry, Memorial Auditorium, Greenville Memorial. And there were a few tennis courts over there that the tennis team played on but no indoor facility. That didn't exist.

Courtney: Were they the tennis courts over across North Village now?

John: There were two tennis courts over there that were used primarily by the women students.

Courtney: Okay.

John: And they were outdoor courts, and there was no soccer. It didn't exist. There was no soccer stadium. Nobody played soccer back then. There were no computers. You know, most students did not have a car because back then the typical student at Furman, they were primarily from the south, but the students did not have the financial resources that a typical Furman student today has. Many of us, including myself, much of our education was financed on loans from the Federal government known as National Defense Student Loans, which we paid back at a low interest rate over ten years when you finished your education. I do not believe that program exists today because the modem trend seems to be to make higher education more and more costly so we are pricing more and more people out of schools like Furman and that's why I hope to see the university increase its student scholarship

endowment so that economics should never play a role in a student being able to attend a school like Furman. And one of these days I hope I can leave some money to Furman for a student scholarship. But, you know, the typical student was middle class with limited financial resources and didn't have a car and a few upperclassmen had cars. So you got around on foot and going into town was a big deal because you had to find somebody with a car to go into town. A lot of dating that did occur occurred on campus.

Courtney: Where would you go?

John: The same issues that I think prevail today at Furman did back then, and that was that Furman men didn't date the Furman women that much, and that seems to be an ongoing issue for some reason at this school, which is unfortunate because, you know, it seems to me it would be logical that the students would date each other.

Courtney: Where would you date on campus? Where would you go?

John: A lot of the times you would either go over and hang out in the dorm, but there was not open dorms. Boys were not allowed in women's rooms and vice versa, until maybe my last year at Furman, because they were adding on to the women's dorm, and renovating, Manly Hall became a women's dorm for one year, and so there was a lot of contact between the women in Manly and the men in the other three dorms that year, which was kind of unusual back then at Furman. I tell you, talking about this reminds me of one story I want to share with you. The dean of women at Furman was a marvelous woman named Marguerite Chiles, who has remained my friend for a long time since Furman. And Marguerite was very much a women's rights person. While I was at Furman I was struck, and of course from a household with five career confident women, I was struck by the fact that the women were far better students at Furman than the men were, and yet the men had no dorm hours and no restrictions and no house moms and all of this in the dorms, and the women had all of these restrictions, you know, what time they had to be in on weeknights and on weekends, I think it was 11:00 or midnight.

Courtney: This was back when women couldn't wear shorts on campus, right?

John: I think initially when I was here they couldn't but that quickly changed because times in this country as well as in Furman changed dramatically over the four years I was here, but among other things our student activist group did was push for doing away with so many of the restrictions on women at Furman as being unnecessary and, in fact, I proposed that if there was any group of students at Furman that needed restrictions it was the male students who were much worse students generally than the females were so if anyone needed dorm hours and study hall and all of that it was us and not the women. Of course Marguerite Chiles thought that was just great. But for political

reasons with the conservative Furman community she did not speak out her views as was true with Gordon Blackwell. I knew a side of Gordon Blackwell most people didn't, and it's because given the support for Furman and its constituents that could support the school financially he could not afford to speak out very much. But that was generally true with the faculty at Furman anyway. They were much more liberal than the constituents that supported the university. So there was a side to all of the activism that we really pushed for a change in women's rights at Furman when we were here. That might seem quaint now but at the time we viewed it as something that was important for female students.

Courtney: Ernie Harrill was dean of students when you were here?

John: Yes. He was chairman of the political science department and was the dean of students. Ernie Harrill, in the tradition of so much of the Furman faculty, and I think about Dan Ellis and so many of the others when I was at Furman, these were people that were more than good teachers. They were so committed to students and they treated us almost in a way like their own children, cared very much about us, and I had what I think was a very special relationship with Ernie Harrill because the administration made it a point with the student activists to keep a dialogue going with us and so...

Courtney: Gordon Blackwell specifically?

John: Gordon Blackwell and Ernie Harrill specifically, and we'll get into some of the stories later but this is in direct contrast to Dr. Frank Bonner who was a Chaucer Scholar and taught English here and was the vice president and provost. Frank Bonner was an exceedingly conservative man who disapproved of us and actually booted a group of us out of school after our junior year and we were reinstated by Dr. Blackwell and I returned to the University to graduate, thought I was going to end up having to go somewhere else.

Courtney: Was that regarding chapel?

John: That's regarding compulsory chapel and I served, at Ernie Harrill's request. We pushed for reforms for student rights at Furman, and one of the things that we pushed for was for the students to have a voice with the board of trustees. And Dr. Blackwell thought that was a good idea and he and Dr. Harrill formed the student committee to meet with the board of trustees. I cannot remember whether this was my junior or senior year that this occurred, and Ernie Harrill asked me to serve on that committee and I believe it was our first meeting with a committee of the board of trustees, and I was going to advocate at that meeting that the university sever its relationship with the Southern Baptist and South Carolina Baptist Conventions because I perceived that the Baptists' direction and the university's direction were about a hundred and eighty degrees apart and that the primary influence that the Baptist Convention was having on

Furman was by and large negative. So, at that meeting I had done research on the history of the university and its relationship with the Baptists, and we were sitting around the trustee board room up in the administration building, and Dr. Bonner and Dr. Blackwell were seated against the wall off the table, they were not seated up at the table, directly behind me. And as we went around where each student was speaking up and it came my turn I launched into this history of the relationship between the Baptists and the university and then cited all of that as a basis for the fact that it was time for the university to part ways with the Baptists. As soon as I did that Dr. Bonner stood up and said, sort of interrupted and said, that the board of trustees, the committee of the board meeting with us, should ignore what I say, that I was radical student and that my views were not the views of the typical Furman student. And Dr. Blackwell, who was a consummate southern gentleman and was a very soft-spoken man but if you knew him well he was in touch with his fire and he could get mad. And Dr. Blackwell stood up and told Dr. Bonner this was the students meeting with the board of trustees and in essence he was to sit down and shut up. And there was this sort of quiet that descended over the meeting because that was not the character that most people, you know, knew of Dr. Blackwell as this gentleman and very humble, a man of enormous talents and intellect but who was very humble and gentlemanly, and then suddenly he comes on very strong, but he made it very clear to Dr. Bonner that he was to be quiet. What I remember about that meeting that was very interesting is there was a new member of the board who was an attorney who had been to Wake Forest, and he was familiar with the history of Wake Forest breaking with the Baptists, severing their ties with the Baptists, of course long before we did, and I don't know if he had been a student during that time or was simply aware of it from his experience as a student at Wake Forest. He then launched in a series of questions with me and a discussion with me about this issue. He was keenly interested in it. I wish I could remember who it was. That must have been, it had to be either my junior year, which was '67-68, or my senior year which was '68-69, and I do remember he was a new board member.

Courtney: We could find out.

John: So it would be interesting to go back and see who that was and his views of what later happened when we finally broke with the Baptists because the conservatives had taken over the convention and were loading the board of trustees and were getting ready to take the school on a very different history from what it is today. So that was kind of an interesting thing that occurred with Dr. Ernie Harrill. And I want to tell a funny story about Ernie Harrill and I because to this day Dr. Harrill swears that I am responsible for at least his first heart attack if not his first two.

Courtney: Oh my goodness!

John: And the story about that which ought to be recorded in Furman's history is, and even this is a funny story, but I ran for president of our class for our junior year and that election took place in the spring of my sophomore year, which would have been April or May of 1967. And the primary student that, there were a number of students who ran against me, but the leading opposition was David Stanford. David's brother, Dick Stanford, was a long-time economics professor here. I'm not sure if he is still teaching here or not.

Courtney: He is.

John: David, who went on to have a career as a minister, and I think he still is a Baptist minister, was a fine person but, you know, we were polar opposites politically. David was, to me, the stereotypical conservative Baptist student and I was anything but that. So in the initial race no one had a clear majority and David Stanford and I ended up in a runoff election. The day of the election I was at East Carolina University where I was vice president of the Regional Model Student United Nations, and that United Nations, which was all the universities in the southeast, was being held at East Carolina and I was vice president and I had to be there. And so the morning of the election I left East Carolina and it was about an eight-hour drive after the last plenary session of the Student United Nations ended that night and drove back through the night. As I was coming out Highway 25 to the entrance to Furman, there was a classmate of mine hitch-hiking trying to get back to campus and he was a transfer student from Washington and Lee. And he had been in town all night partying it up and he was still fairly intoxicated, walking along the side of the roadway and no one would pick him up hitch-hiking. I think it was about 8:00 in the morning and the polls were opening for the student election and he was so grateful that I picked him up that he asked me if there was anything he could do for me and I said, well yes, would you mind stopping by on the way to the dorm, I will take you to the dorm, and voting, I am running for president of our class and I would greatly appreciate if you stop with me and vote. So at 8:00 when the polls opened this fellow intoxicated student and I voted. And I took him back to the dorm and helped him, you know, make sure he got to his room, and at the end of the day I won the election by one vote over David Sanford.

Courtney: Wow!

John: And I'm sure that to this day no one knows that I actually won that election by someone who was so intoxicated he probably didn't know what he did, and doesn't know who I was. But anyway that's how I got elected. But, back to Ernie Harrill. Because after I was elected president we had the chore of raising the money to put on the junior/senior the next spring, in the spring of '68, for the senior class. And so we needed to raise money. So I called up and got the rights for concessions at spring weekend, which must have been around the first of May, shortly after I was elected president, and a wonderful supporter of

Furman who recently died, Mr. Tom Hartness, owned the Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company...

Courtney: Tom Hartness recently died?

John: I thought he had died recently.

Courtney: I know his wife did, Edna.

John: Maybe it's Mrs. Hartness that had died.

Courtney: I curious, I'm supposed to interview him.

John: Well, Tom Hartness is someone who is in the rich tradition of very special people at Furman like Gordon Blackwell, he was a person of enormous ability and exceedingly bright, but a very humble person and very generous with his time and money in support of the school and other community things, and you know really someone that I admired very much. So I called the Pepsi-Cola folks, and of course at Furman we do not drink Coke, we drink only Pepsi, and arranged for the Pepsi machine to be delivered, you know, with the large cans of Pepsi for the little fountain thing, and Mr. DuPre Rhame, who was the conductor of the Furman choir and an institution at Furman, and a very, a terrific man but you know he was a very particular person, and he was in charge of the auditorium building as well as his responsibility with the faculty, and the Sunday of spring weekend Dr. Rhame was having the spring opera performance he was in charge of. And the auditorium lobby of McAlister he had had repainted so that for the opera the auditorium was going to be in top notch shape. And I was to meet the Pepsi-Cola deliveryman at 4:00 Friday afternoon to show him where to set up the Pepsi fountain on the side porch, which at that time as you faced the front door was on the right because the music building didn't exist. The Homozel Mickel Daniel Building was not there. And so there was an open porch on the right side of the auditorium and we were to set up out there because we were not to have any soft drinks and food in the auditorium and Mr. Rhame was very strict about that. Well that night Ernie Harrill was going to be, of course, there as dean of students and he had a commitment for Furman in town until 10:00 at night. When I arrived at the auditorium at 4:00 in the afternoon, the Pepsi man wanting to get off work early had showed up early, the police had unlocked the lobby door, and he had set up the fountain directly underneath the spiral stair that leads to the second floor on the right end of the lobby. And when I arrived there he was gone and the fountain was set up and so I thought there's nothing we can do about this and we've got to pay Pepsi for this Pepsi so by gosh we're going to sell the soft drinks. So that night there were several rock groups playing, I think the Shirelles and one other group was here. And Betty Alverson who ran the student center and was good friend of mine at the time, came over in Ernie's place until he could arrive at 10:00 as sort of the university chaperone to make

sure everything went okay. So I told Betty what had happened and she said, well John, just be careful, don't spill things and sell your soft drinks. So we did. And Ernie arrived at about 10:00 or 10:30, Dr. Harrill, and saw that machine and he said, "John the final dress rehearsal of the opera is tomorrow and the opera is Sunday and if we don't get that machine out of here DuPre Rhame is going to kill me, you, Betty Alverson, and anybody else he finds that was involved in this." And I explained it wasn't out fault, the Pepsi guy had come early. So anyway he said we had to move this thing and it was these huge cans of Pepsi under pressure with hoses leading up to the fountains, and, you know, I didn't know anything other than how to operate it and I said, "Well Dr. Harrill, I am afraid to move these 'cause they're under pressure and I don't know how to do this, and we certainly don't know how to unhook them so we would have to move this whole thing at one time," and he said "I will go in and get some of the football players out of the auditorium and we'll get those guys and here and we'll put this thing up on a rug and we'll drag it out the door so that DuPre doesn't see this." So Dr. Harrill goes in the auditorium and comes out with a few of the guys on the football team and we sort of lifted it an inch off the floor and all the cans and get a rug under it, and we proceed to start pulling it across the lobby. We hadn't gotten several feet before the large cans of Pepsi, the safety values, pressure valves, blew off, and because the Pepsi was under pressure it was spewing through the holes in the top of the cans where the safety valves had blown off under pressure like a fire hose would, only a smaller stream of Pepsi than you would out of a fire hose, and it was going up and splashing off of the chandelier at the top of the stair and flowing down the lovely green carpet and spewing onto the newly painted walls that had just been finished that week with the opera coming up with Dr. Rhame. Well, at this point in time Dr. Harrill began speaking in tongues. He no longer was coherent. It reminded of the descriptions of people who got the spirit in holy roller type churches, what we called glossolalia, because we couldn't understand a thing that was coming out of Dr. Harrill. As he was pacing back and forth Betty Alverson was walking along with him patting him on the back and trying to calm him down and telling him that he it was going to be okay. Well just after the Pepsi flowed down the stairs and across the lobby about two or three inches deep, the concert ended, and the lights in the lobby had been turned down so it was just very dimly lit, and of course the students, there were about fifteen hundred students in McAlister Auditorium, and it is just before the women are due in at the dorm under their curfew and the students burst out of the auditorium and tracked this approximately ankle deep Pepsi Cola throughout the lobby and out the front door and down the steps. And most of them didn't even know that they were walking in it because the lobby was so dimly lit. And so once they left you can imagine what a mess the lobby was. So Dr. Harrill and Betty Alverson and me and the several other classmates of mine put our heads together and we decided that the only hope to save ourselves from Dr. Rhame was to go over to the women's dorm and get all of the female students, because at this time at night you wouldn't find very many male students in the dorm, they would all be at the Rainbow getting a half and half hamburger, or

the Carolina where they did the same, the two sort of Greek places that the guys hung out, and, you know, they didn't have a curfew like the women did. So we went over and the house mothers at the time went through the dorm and got all of the women and had them remove the sheets from all of their beds and come over to the auditorium and we literally cleaned the auditorium through the night. Finally when we had finished all of the women and the house mothers went back to the women's dorm and I went in the upstairs men's bathroom which was right off the lobby in between the two stairs that go up to the upper balcony area in McAlister, and the lighting in the bathroom is individual lights that have a metal frame around them held into the ceiling by four screws at each comer. And I had mops that I was going to clean out in the sink, you know, with the residue of all of the sticky Pepsi Cola. And unbeknownst to me, two of the screws had come out of one of the frames and it was the last thing on my mind at 6:00 in the morning after what we had been through to worry about looking up and I walked directly into the frame of that light and cut my head open. So at 6:30 a.m. Dr. Ernie Harrill, Jim Windham my classmate who the next year was president of the student body and he now practices law in his hometown of Gastonia, North Carolina, and me were sitting in the emergency room at old Greenville General Hospital waiting on me to get my head sewed up that night. And the end of the story was that since we had blown up all of the Pepsi, I had to pay the Pepsi Cola Bottling Company for the Pepsi that we had used, which means that my class would have lost money for having the concessions for spring weekend to raise money for the junior/senior, and so I called Mr. Tom Hartness at his office and identified myself and what the circumstance was, and that is the hardest I ever heard Tom Hartness laugh, and when he regained his composure he said, "John do not worry. I will get the bill and our company will write off the cost for the Pepsi and you do not have to pay us and you keep all the money from the concessions for spring weekend." So I would say that over my career I got to know Dr. Harrill maybe better than he and I ever wanted to know. Ernie Harrill was a wonderful person as everyone of us in the Furman community know. I took his diplomacy course and thoroughly enjoyed it, and my junior or senior year, because of my political activism, the FBI came to Furman, and was questioning people about me and Jack Sullivan, my fellow political activist ring leader, and several other students. And Dr. Harrill called me to extend me the courtesy of telling me the FBI had been in his office questioning him about me. I often think about making a Freedom of Information act request and getting my FBI dossier which I would wear with pride, but you know, I've just never done that, but I am aware of the fact that the FBI did come to Furman and do some type of investigation of me and other student activists. So that's a long story about Dr. Ernie Harrill but it is one that ought to be in the rich tradition of Furman folklore.

Courtney: My goodness,that'sgreat! Tell me more about Betty Alverson.

John: Well, you know, again Betty was one of those people I just thought the world of. Betty was someone that was devoted to students. She really ran

that student center. It was a new building and she was very proud of it.
She treated it like her own. She didn't cotton to students abusing it. Betty didn't mince words with you. She was a very straightforward honest woman, but she was completed devoted to Furman and to the student body, and she, during the time I was at Furman, a small group of us formed a Collegiate Educational Service Corp, which maybe if I had any legacy at Furman the most important one may be being a participant and one of the first volunteers for CESC, which leads me to another interesting story. My first volunteer work was to become the legal proxy for an older black woman who was housebound and could not go and obtain her food stamps and things. So I handled all of the work to get her food stamps and she did not have enough money to buy them all at one time and I was able to arrange with the food stamp office that she could buy half at the first of the month and half at the middle of the month and I was appointed legal proxy to be able to go get them for her. She lived on Calhoun Street, just off of Academy Street in downtown in a very rundown black neighborhood. She had very bad cataracts so she could not read or watch television. She had no family. She had an old beat up refrigerator but I don't even think she had a stove. Her life was a basic as, you know, life can be, and she was happier than I was, because this was a very troubling time for me. The civil rights movement was going on. Martin Luther King had been shot. Robert Kennedy had been killed. The Vietnam War was going on. And for people who were politically engaged these were profoundly troubling times. Our friends were being wounded and dying in Vietnam, and it was a troubling time. And so it was not a happy time in many ways for a lot of us who felt the weight of all of these things and took them very seriously. And this woman had a joy about her despite her obvious limitations in her life financially and in health and so on. And I learned a lot from her because she taught me about appreciating every day of life. Every day of life is a gift, don't waste it, don't let the little things get you down, and no matter what, you know, you are facing or how troubled you are by politics or anything else, it is important to find the capacity to enjoy life and it to me transcends everything else. It just doesn't matter what you achieve or how smart you are or how wealthy or powerful you are, if you are not enjoying your life and have personal gratification. And to this day I have never forgotten her because she taught me that lesson in spades.
And the first day that I got her food stamps for her I said I'm going to take you to the grocery store. And so we went to the grocery store and it was an enormously happy day for her, and she kept asking me what she could buy for me. And here's someone who had so little in comparison with my blessed life, even though I didn't have a lot, it was certainly far, far more than she had, and I realized about half-way through shopping that it was important to her that she do something for me. And that it was in a way disrespectful and demeaning not to accept that, because she appreciated what I was doing for her. And when I realized that I said, I tell you what I want you to do. I don't get home cooking, and what I want you to do for me is I want you to pick out something that you would ordinarily not buy for yourself that you think

is special and is a food you really love and I want you to cook it for me. And she said, I know what that is, it's chicken livers. And so we went back to the meat counter and bought chicken livers and she had me over to dinner a couple of nights later and those chicken livers were darn good. But that is a woman who taught me a lot about how to live life, and that came right out of Betty Alverson and the formation of CESC, which a handful of us did during that time at Furman.

Courtney: That was 1965-66ish that you all founded...

John: I want to say it was about a year later, maybe my sophomore year. I don't think it was during my freshman year that we started CESC, I think it was a little bit later.

Courtney: And was this an intentional concerted effort or was it a group of you all that started volunteering?

John: No, I think it was a concerted effort, you know, a lot of us felt that there was isolation between Furman and the town of Greenville and that, you know, here we were in an ivory tower out here while there were people that were in need of help and that we were in a position to be able to do something to help with that. And so, you know, out of that and, of course, Betty is the type of person who could grab hold of things and get things done and I think, you know, out of that grew the commitment to form the organization for students to be able to volunteer, which of course has become a very significant thing in the Furman community today that I'm very proud of our students for.

Courtney: Do you remember Laura Ebaugh, sociology professor?

John: I do not.

Courtney: She was Betty Alverson's mentor when Betty Alverson was a student in the 50s.

John: I don't remember her.

Courtney: Have you heard about her?

John: No.

Courtney: She evidently in the 30s and 40s had Furman students volunteering in the Greenville community and taught Betty Alverson, with Betty Alverson as a sociology major and, supposedly how the Betty Alverson's idea for this and the students' idea for this grew out of Betty Alverson's training with Laura Ebaugh.

John: Well it would have never happened without Betty Alverson because students are pulled in different directions and I was involved in music, political activities and academics and you know a group of us who financially had to pay a lot of our way through school, and was true of many students. I played as many musical gigs as I could. We had a dance orchestra and we played at the country clubs and we would hit the road and play Alberton, Georgia one night, and somewhere else the next, to pick up $50 or $75 for our school expenses. And so, you know, it would take someone like Betty who had her motivation who was here full time and who had the kind of moxie and organization to get it done, and I think it would be fair to say Betty was a hub in the middle of the wheel of the initiation of CESC. And I would come back on campus and go to the student center and visit with Betty and of course she adopted a child and I always kept up with her with her son and that sort of thing long after I finished at Furman because of the genuine affection so many of us felt for Betty Alverson.

Courtney: Let's get into some of the student activism, which you sort of laid a foundation for the fact that your interest in politics and international affairs, social issues developed in high school, or you became more vocal in high school, and continued that here, freshman year even?

John: Freshman year was not a year where, this emerged our sophomore year primarily, because your freshmen year we were getting to know each other as students and you have to find out those people that you have things in common with. My first cousin, whom I grew up with, was in my class and Jack Sullivan, who became a key leader in the student movement, had come from Clemson, his dad was a math professor at Clemson and Jack played music. He was a piano student and was a very fine flamenco guitarist and so all of us music people kind of connected that way. And a number of people in the student activist movement were musicians. Dennis Calhoun who was ahead of me is now the principal oboist for the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. And so, you know, a number of us kids got to know each other first through music our freshman year. But the student activist movement rally began to get in full swing my sophomore year, as well as student activism toward reforming things here at Furman as an institution, things that we didn't agree with and wanted to see the university change. And so we formalized the organization and you've got to understand '65-66 is before we're a year-and-a-half at least or more from the killings of Dr. King and Robert Kennedy. Gene McCarthy at this point hadn't launched his campaign against, in the democratic primary, against Lyndon Johnson for the race for the presidency in 1968. The anti-Vietnam war movement was in its infancy at this point. So, it was later in our sophomore year when student activism toward the civil rights movement, toward the Vietnam War, and toward the ideas of reforming some of the things in the institution at Furman, some of the rules and the way Furman governed itself, became an issue for us emerging in our sophomore year.

Courtney: Okay.

John: All of the events both external to the university and internal to the university that were beginning to galvanize the student movement really came to fruition in our sophomore year, and by then we'd gotten to know each other, we had identified the fellow students who, at that time, were most sympathetic with our views about the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, as well as their concerns that Furman was too paternalistic and that we had concerns about, you know, students having no voice in the governing of the university at all, and things like this. And then the Vietnam War was escalating step by step, month by month, as the war got bigger and bigger. More students at Furman were beginning to be drafted or were graduating through ROTC and ending up in the army as officers. One of those, Tom Kukowski, who was a year ahead of me died in Vietnam. Every time I go to Washington I always visit the Vietnam Memorial and hunt up Tom's name. He was a (?) captain, a really fine young man, died needlessly in Vietnam. And so all of these things really came to fruition our sophomore year, and that's when the Southern Student Organizing Committee was formed, and as you probably can tell from my interview, I guess beginning with my high school days when I sort of had to go it alone because my views were so different from most of my fellow students and people that lived in my home town, I developed a reticence about institutions, and I was very active in SSOC and was viewed as one of the leaders but just never officially joined, I never was a card carrying member of SSOC, and that is a part of my antipathy for institutions. It is the balance between what we have to do to be a civilized community and yet retain our individualism is a delicate balance but it has always been by perception that our culture and our institutions tend to force people to be conformists, to look alike, dress alike, think alike, be alike, and go along to get along, or whatever that saying is that I can't remember at the minute, and so I had this interesting relationship that I was very active in and one of the ringleaders of the SSOC but never joined. I never joined a fraternity other than the professional music fraternity for the very same reason. And I think all of this goes back to something that marks me and, I think, a lot of my fellow student activists, and that is I abhor institutions that are exclusive, that exclude people from membership on some arbitrary way, whether it's pledging a fraternity, or some institution rejects people because of their race or their religion or their sex, or the way they look, or something, I just don't like it. I fundamentally am an inclusive person who wants to embrace people of all kinds and include them as a participant in what we do. Ultimately, as you and I talked before we began taping this session, this led me to exit the new left political movement in my senior year at Furman because it, too, became an organization that would only tolerate its own narrow view and demeaned others who disagreed and was becoming more and more closed off into itself. And there's an interesting phenomenon that occurs with any group that becomes very incestuous, if you will, and I think about extreme groups whether it's the Reverend Jim Jones and the group that all took their lives when they left this country and went to South America and had this little cult going, or any group

like that that because they do not have any diversity of points of view they increasingly become more, they lose their balance and become more and more extreme to their point of view, and this is why I have lived personally through the experience that makes me value the institution of democracy so much. Diversity of opinion is critical to keeping balance and gives us the best opportunity to find truth, but it requires a fundamental respect for others and those who disagree with you that is very much a challenge. And what I found that began to happen in the student movement as we became more judgmental of others and we assigned to us the moral high ground and that others who didn't share our point of view were less than, and I grew increasingly uncomfortable with it and so I kind of quietly became less active later in my senior year at Furman. Because I grew to have increasing discomfort with that and it is because my view is that institutions carry the very dangerous possibility that it will narrow one's point of view and it becomes exclusive of others, and I think that is very bad, it is why I think there is great wisdom in the diversity of this country and it is why I have always hoped and pushed for Furman to become a more diverse university because I think there is enormous strength in that and it is educational in and of itself to spend time with people who have had vastly different experiences than I have or that you have had or that others at Furman have had. And it is why I hope we will continue to walk down the path as a university community that encourages and reaches out for diversity. Anyway, we got started in the student activist movement really my sophomore year, and it took on two fundamental directions. One of those was political activism primarily toward the civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement, and internally to the university there were actions taken to attempt to reform things here at Furman that we thought were not appropriate.

Courtney: Let me ask you a quick question, why SSOC and why not Corp or any of the other groups, why SSOC?

John: I would say that, and it would be interesting to ask Jack Sullivan, but my recollection is that we felt the need to have an organization where we could speak out on issues we felt very passionately about at the time, because these were very troubling times. I think about right now today our country is in the middle of the Iraq war, we are still sorting out what to do with the extremism of terrorists, a lot of which is driven by religious fanaticism. We are in a very rapidly changing economy where we are competing internationally. We have not figured out how to level the playing field in international trade and insist that our trading partners comply with the same fundamental requirements we have for companies in the United States, so it's not a level playing field and we are losing ground in critical industries to other parts of the world that don't respect the environment and don't care about occupational safety and health that we insist on in this country, and we've got to change that and that's very much a part of the next challenges this country is going to face. And those are troubling for young people today. The civil rights movement and the Vietnam war were profoundly troubling for the students in my day. I mean, we were facing

being drafted which young people today aren't experiencing. But, you know, most young people were faced with either being drafted or having their boyfriend be drafted, and it was very personal. People were very troubled by the civil rights movement and, you know, the violence that was going on there. As a result of that we wanted to have an organized way to speak out on these issues but none of us were radicals in the sense that we believed in violence as an acceptable option to achieve our political goals. And so some of the more radical student organizations that were advocating or willing to consider violence, such as the SDS and some of the black power SSNC and some of the other black power organizations, we were not comfortable with that, and the Southern Student Organizing Committee we viewed as a more responsible voice for the new left political activism. So a conscious choice was made to associate with SSOC. Jack Sullivan went, I think he went to Nashville where the headquarters were, and met with leaders in SSOC and we formally formed a chapter here at Furman, and some of them came to Furman periodically either to speak or to attend meetings and to bring literature and things we could distribute to students here at Furman.

Courtney: So, it started out as a core group of about how many people?

John: I would say thirty to fifty.

Courtney: That big?

John: Initially were involved and, you know, it grew to several hundred students, I don't know exactly how many over the next two years as a combination of things were occurring. The situation was worsening in the civil rights movement. You had the inner-city riots, the assassinations I mentioned of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, you had the Vietnam war escalating in February of 1968, the Tet Offensive where all of the generals and politicians were talking about how great the war was going and suddenly in February of 1968 the Tet Offensive demonstrated that in fact we were not doing well in Vietnam and it ended in the contention by the defenders of the war that the Vietnam war was going well. In February of 1968 the students were shot at SC State at the same time, so a series of external events were troubling more and more students at Furman. In addition, as we were growing to become upperclassmen during this same time Furman was accepting students who, more and more of them, beginning in high school, were become politicized to these issues, so a number of underclassmen joined us because I think they came from a high school where they were beginning to get politically active and a logical extension of that was to become active at Furman and the voice for that was the Southern Student Organizing Committee. So, through my time at Furman SSOC continued to grow and we attempted to address some mainstream issues, you know, specific to Furman that a majority of the student body identified with as well. So while some of the students wouldn't agree with us in our views about civil rights movement or Vietnam, they shared our views on some of the campus issues that we raised as well.

Courtney: Do you attribute that to the high number of membership... the opposition to chapel, the speaker ban, things like that?

John: No.

Courtney: Was that more attractive to your typical Furman student as opposed to challenging the Vietnam War?

John: Yes. A lot of students, and you know Richard Nixon coined the phrase "the real majority," and I think at Furman the real majority of students were very troubled by what was going on and violence in the civil rights movement but were fundamentally sympathetic with it, and were troubled by the Vietnam war but were not comfortable to come out and protest. Because one of the things on the few occasions when I've talked about my experience in the past is when you walk down the path of unpopular protest, the rejection that you experience is real and it is palpable, and there aren't a whole lot of people who are willing to put up with that guff, and they just don't want to be the one to get threatened and spit on and, you know, have personal criticism and rejection, and I think that's very true. I noted recently there was a poll that showed that a majority of Americans now view that going into Iraq was a mistake, but you don't see the majority of those same people in the streets protesting our presence in Iraq today. But they now are increasingly troubled by it just like occurred with the Vietnam war. Ironically, I think history is going to demonstrate that there was more justification for the Vietnam war than there is for the Iraq war. And the reason for that is that in the 40s after the second world war George Keenan came up with the concept of the policy of containment of communism by meeting it as it attempted to expand around the globe. And we had seen communism sweep through the Soviet Union and Central Europe and then China in 1949, and then the issue in Korea in the early 50s, and a conscious decision was made to draw the line at Vietnam as one of the places to contain the further spread of communism. And what we know now with the end of the cold war and the communist powers largely becoming history because it was an economic political system that was oppressive and would not last, what we now know is that drawing the line in Vietnam was a strategic error. But the intellectual justification for the Vietnam war in my mind was much greater following the Keenan policy of containment of communism just choosing the wrong place to do it, than is the Iraq war today. But it's interesting to watch the similarities and the discontent of Americans that is growing with the Iraq war just like it did with Vietnam, which influenced the growth of our political movement at Furman. Which, according to Gregg Michel, the historian at the University of Texas at San Antonio who has done his Ph.D. on the new left movement, the SSOC chapter at Furman ended up being the largest student activist chapter of the SSOC in the south. And the other thing that amazed Gregg, and I never really thought about it, is we applied for student funds

under the, you know every student at Furman pays a student activities fee, and we applied for money from that and were given it. And Greg Michel is just mystified that Furman University would actually give a budget of money out of a student activities fees to SSOC. And looking back on it we just never thought anything about it. We applied for it, had a budget, had speakers we were willing to bring to campus and all of that, and pay their travel expenses, and we were given the money. And yet now looking back on it, it really was a peculiar thing for Furman to actually financially partially support this student activist group, you know, through the activities fees that we got a part of. So, you know, I think that gives a perspective about the initiation of SSOC and then its growth and some of the explanations about why.

Courtney: Okay.

John: And during this time students I think felt increasingly alienated from the institutions we had grown up to respect, and to assume were good, our government, and here we are being drafted and made to fight in a war that increasingly people thought was wrong and were opposed to, and we perceived government at that point in time to be oppressive and wrong and unresponsive to the growing disenchantment that we felt. And the same thing was true toward university institutions. That is when the movement began to reform universities for students to have a voice in the university community which up until that point we did not have.

Courtney: What about the church as an institution, since you've grown up in the church believing in the church?

John: Well, with few exception, I think it would be fair to characterize the student activists at Furman with me as rebellious from the church. Because the church was a prime mover in the continuation of segregation and racism in the south. Numerous private schools were formed in churches for the sole purpose of keeping their darling children in lily-white schools, not for the quality of the education, because not going to school with black children was far more important than getting a quality education in a better school that was better funded by public dollars. And that still holds true today in a lot of the south including two private schools in my hometown that are there for one reason, and that is to continue the segregated schools for their children. Racism is still endemic in a lot of the southeast and, for that matter, the rest of the country. That fight for equal rights is not over. And I'll tell you an interesting thing, which is a part of what happened when I was here. A student named June Manning, whose father Dr. Manning was president of Claflin College [Claflin University], came to Furman. And I think June was a freshman my junior year. And June was an exceptional student, and I think Furman was very fortunate to have her come to Furman. And June became immediately active in SSOC and became secretary of SSOC from which she later resigned as secretary. Jack Sullivan still has her letter of resignation with her explanations for why. But June had friends at

South Carolina State and I wish I could remember the name of the black student from SC State who often came to visit and, of course, he was male so he had to stay in the men's dorm and there was only one black student initially, and that was Joe Vaughn, and so he stayed quite often either in my room or Jack Sullivan's room and we became very good friends, and he later obtained his Ph.D. and the last I heard was an English professor at Vassar. But he was a very small person and I bet he didn't weigh 140 pounds wringing wet. He was really a physically small man. And somehow he got invited because he was a student activist at SC State to speak at some Greek Debate Society or something as Erskine College in Due West, and he had no car and so he asked if I would drive him over there and Jack Sullivan, the two of us, agreed to accompany him over there. Back then, of course, one of the things was the Black Power rap, you know, blacks were becoming increasingly vocal and outspoken and Stokely Carmichael and others were raising their fists and talking about black power and being very angry, and I don't blame them, I'd be pretty angry too if I were them. So this particular student had a pretty good intense black rap and when we went over there to Erskine and he started into that with them, these kids got really angry and it turned violent. And it was just literally me and Jack Sullivan and this guy and all of these male students at Erskine and we literally fled out the door of that place and left. And it was a dicey situation and was again a reflection of a time in the south when the south was in transition and there was enormous mixed feelings about civil rights. Most white kids had grown up in segregated environments and in segregated schools and, you know, had little contact with blacks on an equal basis as colleagues and fellow students, and so you know change doesn't come easy for a lot of people and there was a lot of mixed feelings back during that time and I think that a lot of the problems we experienced were during that transition time when people were confused and uncertain and trying to adjust to new and different times that were coming pretty fast back in those days, and so that tells you a little bit about a couple of the key students at Furman and of course the other one was Joe Vaughn. Joe had enrolled in the spring before my freshman year, and I got to know him my freshman year. He became active in SSOC. He was a year ahead of me. He was an English major and went on the University of Georgia and got his masters degree and was a career teacher. Joe, my second year, lived just down the hall from me in the dormitory and we spent time together almost every evening in his dorm room. And I don't know how Joe came to Furman, but if the university were looking for the right person to integrate Furman they couldn't have picked a better one than Joe Vaughn, and the reason why is that Joe was smart and could cut it academically. But he also had a personality that nobody could help but just love the guy. I mean he was a completely outgoing, fun-loving, gregarious, loveable human being, and the student body at Furman literally fell in love with Joe Vaughn. He was elected head cheerleader. He stood upon on the head cheerleader's platform and did these hilarious cheers and he would drag formal Dr. Gordon Blackwell in his suit down on the platform to lead the student body in all these cheers and things, and he simply lifted the student body up. So, you know, Joe was perceived as a wonderful person and people forgot his race, it just didn't matter. And so he was

just a terrific person to be the one to lead the way for the integration of Furman because what you discovered very quickly was that white folks didn't have the exclusive rights to being really good people, and that Joe Vaughn at his essence was just a wonderful and delightful person. I was blessed to be very, very close to Joe through a lot of his life, until he died too young. The last time I saw him was in the parking lot when Furman played South Carolina State in the national championship playoffs at Furman. It was a cold day in November, and I looked across the parking lot and there was Joe, and I yelled out and typical of Joe he ran all the way across the big parking lot over by the stadium to hug me and lift me off the ground, which was his way with everyone. He was just a very friendly outgoing marvelous person.

Courtney: Did he struggle here?

John: An interesting part of the story of Joe Vaughn that few knew that I think now that Joe is dead I don't think he would care, is Joe was gay. And for a long time that was a carefully kept secret. I don't think that the administration at Furan ever had a clue that Joe was gay. It turns out that another student at Furman, and I've lost contact with him, but just for his own personal confidentiality, I won't disclose who it was, but he was Joe's lover, and he was also a very fine student. He was younger than Joe and I often wonder what has happened to him. I suspect he went on to graduate school and maybe teaching somewhere.

Courtney: I think he did.

John: The fact of the matter is that hardly anyone knew that part of Joe Vaughn's story and to Joe's credit I think the weight of being the student to integrate Furman was on Joe's shoulders but he handled it with grace and never complained about it and because of his gregarious personality you would never suspect it, but he felt the weight some. But, because I think Joe loved Furman and was grateful for his opportunity here, he would never have disclosed that and embarrassed the university, because of his respect for this institution, and I give him a lot of credit for having that part of his personal life and keeping it confidential not just for himself but because of his knowledge of the impact it might have on the university because all of those who were Furman community people but opposed to the integration of the university, if that ever came out they could use that as ammunition to say "I told you so, you should never have done that." And Joe had enough sense to never let that happen. And so that part of the story of Joe Vaughn was never told until really late in his life.

Courtney: He abused alcohol when he was here?

John: Yes. I went to J.M. Fields Department Store early in my career at Furman and invested $9.99 in a blender, and I couldn't tell you the countless drinks that we made with my $9 blender in Joe Vaughn's room over the rest of his career at Furman. At the time I had never been around an alcoholic and I never identified at that time that Joe had a drinking problem. After Joe graduated and his life went by I came to realize that Joe, yes, had an alcohol problem. But he was superficially such a happy-go-lucky guy that you never thought

about the dark side. He just didn't ever go there and he never, you know, acted out or talked in a way that made you realize that there were some aspects of Joe's life that were very difficult for him and that he handled himself largely alone a lot of the time.

Courtney: Are you comfortable talking about...

John: I'll tell you this, early in my time at Furman when I got to know Joe, I can remember to this day sharing the first cup with him, because it was the first time I had ever drunk from the same cup with a black person, growing up in a white community, and I remember that, when we passed the cup one night in his room. And I can say that aside from being fellow student activists and all of that, I loved Joe Vaughn as a human being, I loved him dearly, because he was a wonderful person and he carried some genuine burdens with real grace in part for this institution. And that should be known in the long-time history of this university...

Courtney: Certainly.

John: Because it was a special sacrifice.

Courtney: Are you comfortable talking about how he passed away?

John: Well, you know, Joe ended up contracting AIDS, probably from unprotected sex before the AIDS epidemic, before we knew about AIDS as a disease and what we needed to protect ourselves.

Courtney: 1980s?

John: I would say so, and of course, like many other communities there were other people in this community that took their lives, you know, late in suffering with AIDS who developed it before we knew it was and what you needed to do to protect yourself. I think of Lake Williams, the wonderful director of The Little Theatre who ultimately took his life and just typical of so many people in that community, Lake left a note telling the EMS personnel that he was HIV positive and to be careful handling his blood, so that when they got to where he was they would be protected from potentially being exposed. And, you know, I think about the loss of people like Joe Vaughn too early. Joe died too young, and I think about when people like that, had he lived, because of who he was, the impact he would have on a community. He served as president of the South Carolina Educational Association at the end of his career. That doesn't surprise me because he was the type of person if you put twenty people in a room Joe would emerge because of his personality and abilities. He was quick of mind, he was funny, and all of those things simply drew people to him.

Courtney: Did he stay involved with Furman?

John: I don't know, because my contact with him was not as great, I went to law school then when I came back I had two daughters early on and devoted a lot of my time to them, and then I played in the Greenville Symphony and was active in some community things, so I had less contact with Joe, and of course he was starting his career as a teacher and went on graduate school at the University of Georgia before that so, you know, life took us apart so that we had less contact. But our fondness for each other remained a constant. When we saw each other we had the same feeling that we had when we saw each other every day. He was that kind of person who knew how to sustain a friendship.

Courtney: And you said you saw him at a Furman football game, so that's involvement with Furman.

John: Oh yeah, yeah. But how much I don't know. Others in the Furman community would know that.

Courtney: What about some of the other African-American students that were here early on?

John: Well, June Manning of course was a person you wouldn't forget. June was so bright and she was a person with very strong feelings about the civil rights movement and outspoken about it. And so we remember her although she transferred after one or two years at Furman. I've had recent contact with her, as you probably know, Courtney, she is a sociology professor at Michigan State, and has published a number of books and has a family and I think her husband is a professor as well, and we had a nice visit on the phone. It was good to have some contact with June again.

Courtney: The reason that she resigned from SSOC was because of the way her friend had been treated, is that specifically why she resigned?

John: Well, I think June reached the point to where, and I hope you have contact with Jack Sullivan and ask him to fax you a copy of June's letter, but as I recall it June was in a situation where she got more and more uncomfortable having white students active in the black movement. Another one was Tyrone Haynes. Tyrone was probably two years behind me and he was very bright. He was a sociology major. I've lost contact with Tyrone after Furman days and I don't know if he has any involvement in the community now. Those are the ones who stand out to me that were students here, but then we had, you know, some other people we were involved with who were in the Greenville community that were black, probably the notable one was Moses Dillard. Moses was a successful rock musician, rhythm and blues musician, who had some success on the pop charts and Moses later became a minister and he died unexpectedly a year or two ago of a heart attack and he was a minister, I think, of a huge church in Nashville, somewhere in Tennessee, but I believe Nashville, at the time of his untimely

death a couple of years ago. But the black community had a club on I-85 that a black doctor owned, Dr. Kirkland, called the Ghana, and the Ghana was really the happening place in Greenville. I mean Moses Dillard played there when he was not on tour, and there were great black musicians playing there and I was a musician and a lot of us in the student activist movement went to the Ghana often and a lot of times Joe Vaughn would go with us. I recall one evening when we had some black folks come over to the table and were very threatening and intimidating and Joe Vaughn spoke up and said these people are my dear friends and you're out of line and you back off, and they respected Joe and did, but it was, you know, kind of an uncomfortable situation for us for a while, but Joe stood them down and Moses Dillard put in a word with them too and said these are our friends and they are welcome here and if you got a problem with it you're the one going out the door. But we really had a good time together out at the Ghana, and when the kids were shot at SC State we had a demonstration at the Federal Building downtown on Washington Street and June Manning and Moses Dillard, a few people from the community, but mostly students and mostly those of use that were student activists, Jack Sullivan and a number of others, had a demonstration at the Federal Building where we asked that the president appoint US Marshalls to take over security of the SC State Campus because the National Guard and highway patrol had opened fire and killed several students and wounded others, when in fact the students were up on a hill a long distance away from them protesting that they could not bowl at a local bowling alley, the owner would not integrate the bowling alley, and they were holding a bonfire protest up on a hill on campus, and somebody pulled the trigger, one of the law enforcement people, and you know with that a number of kids were shot and there was never any indication that any student had done anything to precipitate the violence. I remember it vividly because we were there in the late afternoon and at rush hour and I remember people driving by stopping at the light at the intersection of Church and Washington in front of the Federal Building, cursing us, spitting on us, calling us nigger lovers, and we were very careful to not react to that and to be nonviolent, but you know you don't forget things like that. And the interesting thing is that in April of last year 2003, my wife and I marched along with the other people, including I'm very proud of, Furman students, in protest of Greenville County Council not honoring Dr. King with a holiday. And we left the Greenville County Courthouse and we walked in front of the Courthouse and turned onto Church Street and walked to the intersection of Church and Washington where I had been in a march thirty-five years, almost to the day, before that, and I turned to my wife and said as we marched back, if anyone had told me that I would still be marching in civil rights demonstrations thirty-five years later I wouldn't have believed it. I was such an optimist I thought that we would win people's hearts and we would get beyond judging people on their skin color. So exactly thirty-five years and two months later I passed the same comer in another civil rights march.

Courtney: How did Gordon Blackwell react to your involvement?

John: Gordon Blackwell, I will tell you this and I believe the historian who went to Furman who, I think he's at Chapel Hill now, George Tindel, he was an elderly gentleman at the Citadel symposium last year. I don't know if you met him, he walked with a cane, he's in his 80s.

Courtney: Yes.

John: Very prominent southern historian now, but he sought me out, I think because he found out that I taught at the Citadel, that we had gone to Furman, and we got to talking about Gordon Blackwell and he said, Gordon Blackwell was editor of the student newspaper in the 1930s, the year before me. I was the next student editor, and very few people remember that Gordon Blackwell was an outspoken socialist. And people who really know the history of Gordon Blackwell know that throughout his career he understood how to be a diplomat, but I do not think that Gordon Blackwell changed his personal views very much. He was a very liberal man personally. Privately Dr. Blackwell was very sympathetic with our group and I am convinced that Dr. Blackwell was trying his best to shield us, the student activists, from a large segment of the Furman greater community who were opposed to us and our political views. And Dr. Blackwell was astute at walking the tightrope between keeping them happy and not allowing them to squelch student activism on this campus and in the Greenville community. And I'll tell you an interesting story that is a measure of the man. When I marched in the demonstration when the kids were shot at SC State in February of 1968 I was a student body officer at the time, and I have no idea how the media got my name but somehow they did and unbeknownst to me we made regional news, not just in Greenville or in South Carolina, but apparently this ran in other areas of the south, and my uncle, my mother's only brother, she had four sisters, lived a block down the street from me in Manning and a bigger racist and bigot never walked on the face of the earth than my uncle. He saw me on the evening news and a few days after that I got a letter from my uncle, and I wish I had saved that letter, I just remember the first sentence was, "Dear John, I see where you and a few other niggers were demonstrating in downtown Greenville," and it went downhill from there. It was very vitriolic, you know, pronounced that he was disowning me which I considered a compliment, and simultaneously with that we had a family doctor in my hometown, Dr. Bizzard, I will use his name now because he's dead and gone, but Dr. Bizzard had made a three-year significant pledge of money to Furman. I did not know that at the time. And Dr. Bizzard was so disturbed by my involvement in student activism at Furman that he contacted Dr. Blackwell, I think he telephoned him, and told Dr. Blackwell that if the university didn't do something to put an end to this that he was going to withdraw his pledge to the university. And Dr. Blackwell called me in and when he told me about this I was quite upset because this university changed my life. I came out of a very poor high school. I didn't know how to read or write well for my high school education, and the faculty administration at this school took a person with raw ability and taught me how to be a student and

taught me a great deal about life and about how I needed to express myself in writing and reading and every other way, and this university changed my life for which I will be grateful until I take my last breath. And so when Dr. Blackwell told me this I was very upset because I would not want to do anything to harm an institution that had meant so much to me. And when I told him that and I said, "Dr. Blackwell as much as I believe in these things if me not being involved would matter I'm prepared to do that." And Dr. Blackwell in his very low key way said, "John, I will speak with Dr. Bizzard and I called you in here to learn as much about him as you know, but you have a right to do what you are doing and I will defend your right to do that and I do not want you to change the expression of your deeply held views." He told me as he did often that he personally shared those views but could not go public with that, and that frankly if Dr. Bizzard saw it that way the university didn't need and wouldn't seek out the support of people who held those views and that he would deal with it. And he was very supportive of me at that point in our meeting. And I remember it very well and it was just one of many examples of what a terrific person Gordon Blackwell was. How he was able to balance all of these different things going on in the university community with enormous skill. Dr. Blackwell changed the direction of this university. He got the Ford Foundation grant. He raised this university up academically and everything in ways that the university had not known before. He laid the groundwork for the modem Furman we know today and began us down that path. Before then we were a pretty good state and maybe regional university, but Furman was not anything like it is today, and it is directly the result of Gordon Blackwell. Many people know that he left Florida State as president because of a disagreement with the state legislature who banned the teaching of Marxism in the classroom and he viewed that as an unreasonable intrusion into the university community and resigned in protest. Now there's a man willing to give up his career and risk his future career for his personal convictions. That's the kind of man he was, and yet he was kind and stately and gentle and humble and, you know, all of the things I would love to emulate personally.

Courtney: I want to say that I've a story where a student, might have been Jack, called him out in front of a group of other students, maybe some trustees, challenged him to go public, and why are you playing the diplomatic game, why don't you go more public if this is really how you feel. Do you remember any incidents where that happened?

John: I don't. I really don't remember that, and Dr. Blackwell could have been as fine a diplomat in the diplomatic corp as there ever was because although he sympathized with us personally and he wanted to protect our right to express ourselves and had a lot of personal sympathy with it, he understood the other forces at play in the at-large university community. And that he had to find ways to balance that, and so he was very skillful at doing that. Up to a point, and I want to share this story with you about Dr. Blackwell as well, because it needs to be a part of the Furman history. When I ran for office one of the

things, I played in a rock band. And one night right after dinner we went up and set up on the back porch of the women's dorm, the band, and we played a rock concert and got all of the women students to come out of the dorm and then I gave a political speech on why they should vote for me. Because, you know, a lot of the students didn't really know me or they knew me only by this one part of me which was a student activist. And so I used this as a gimmick to get the women out there so I could politically campaign. And one of the things in my platform was that I was going to hold a dance on campus, and because of the Baptists, dancing on this campus was an absolute no-no. And Dr. Blackwell called me in, actually, now that I think about it what happened was, when I was elected I went to Dr. Blackwell's office and I said, "Dr. Blackwell I've been elected and one of my platforms was I'm going to hold a dance on campus, and I've got a rock band, and I'm going to raise the money and I'm going to hire another band and we're going to have a dance on campus and I'm going to tell you that up front." And Dr. Blackwell said "John, it's time for us to have dancing on this campus but I've got the southern Baptists to contend with and I want to ask you a favor. We're going to have a vote on accepting a federal grant of two million dollars for the construction of the science building. The federal grant precludes religious services and things in the laboratories and so forth, and I'm in a delicate situation trying to convince the convention that that would be okay, that we have chapels and other places we hold our worship services and that we desperately need this money" because Furman had virtually no endowment and that two million dollar grant was big bucks for Furman back then. And he said the vote in is November at the convention. This is in the spring of 1967 when I've just been elected and the meeting was that fall, and Dr. Blackwell was literally campaigning with the delegates to the convention for months just like a political campaign with the ministers in the state and all of these delegates. I bet Tom Hartness was involved in that and trying to get the votes together to accept the federal grant. Dr. Blackwell went to the convention convinced that he was going to get the vote. And it was rejected two to one. They voted down the acceptance of the federal grant two to one. And the next week when he was back in his office I was on his doorstep and I said "Dr. Blackwell, I've honored your request. I'm here, I'm going to have my dance and, you know, you're going to have to deal with it, and if you kick me off the campus that's fine but I'm going to come back on with this band and play this concert and we're going to dance in the street." And so Dr. Blackwell said "Well John I'll give it some thought but I think it's time for us to make the change" and he was floored by the vote at the Baptist convention and talked with me about it at length and he was shocked at how he had misread how conservative the Baptists were. But it was only one of a long line of things that showed that Furman was on a different path than the Baptists. But anyway, I hired The Monzas. I raised the money, paid them a thousand bucks to come, they were a pretty well-known rock band, to play for a dance at Furman, on a Friday night, and Gordon Blackwell hired a country bluegrass band and on Thursday night he held the first dance on campus, the night before my dance, in the dining room.

He had to move the tables and chairs out, and he wore overalls, and he and Mrs. Blackwell danced in the first dance, and that's how we started dancing on Furman University campus.

Courtney: Were you all in cahoots about that? Him holding the dance right before yours?

John: Nope. He came up with that because he didn't want to be confronted with a circumstance that made it look like he wasn't in charge, because he was one very smart man.

Courtney: Did you resent that?

John: Oh no, I thought it was great! But the bottom line was that Dr. Blackwell perceived that he needed to stay out in front of the students and that rather than it look like the university is out of control and he can't handle it, he decided he was going to lead it. And so he just beat me to the punch and had his dance first, which suited me just fine. The bottom line was kids didn't have cars, we were all isolated out here, and for goodness sake this is the 1960s, it's time for kids to shag on the Furman campus. So that's an interesting story about Gordon Blackwell as well that a lot of people probably don't know.

Courtney: So where was your dance?

John: Our dance, I think we ended up having it at the student center. I think Dr. Harrill may have been there and other university people and the dance went great. People were happy and with that the university went on and I don't know if Dr. Blackwell had much protest from the Baptist community or not but that's the story about dancing on campus.

Courtney: Wow. Alright, you told me about student reaction to Orangeburg, let's talk about student reaction to Dr. King's assassination.

John: You know, again, this was a very troubling time in our country's history and young people who were personally feeling the draft and the pressure from the Vietnam War were troubled by the civil rights movement. It was on the news every night, you know, there was violence and civil rights activists were being attacked in their marches and things, and even for the silent majority of Furman students I would have to say I think they were troubled by it. They just weren't willing to get out and march and be spit on which is certainly a sensible position. I just felt personally the need that we needed to stand up with people and be shoulder to shoulder and let everyone know that this wasn't right and we were prepared to stand up and be counted, and I would say that people were disturbed but not enough to do anything about it, and that you know for the few of us who went to Atlanta for Dr. King's funeral we felt it more personally. Others were distressed by it and thought it was an awful thing, but you know, they did not personally connect with it the way the student activists here did.

Courtney: Who went with you?

John: I remember Jack Sullivan and Joe Vaughn being there, but I can't remember who else.

Courtney: And you drove down there, and I've heard this story, you slept, where did you sleep?

John: Gosh, I think it was in a black church.

Courtney: Yeah, on the floor or one of the pews maybe.

John: I remember several of us getting up in a tree to be able to see as the funeral procession went by, and I remember that I believe Robert Kennedy was assassinated a couple of months after that. This was April of '68 and he was shot in June of '68. And of course Dr. King's assassination set off riots in the inner cities of a number of cities and these were extraordinarily emotional times for people who were engaged with the anti-Vietnam war, civil rights movement, and all of that. And it was just a profoundly emotional experience. I'm going to tell you, you know, I got to hear Dr. King speak one time and Dr. King had the gift, he understood he was a great speech giver. Because, I mean, he could move the heart of a stone, and he had ability to use his voice and he understood some speaking techniques probably just instinctively, not through learning it through speech classes in college but, for example, there's something about threes, setting up things in threes. "He was followed, he was stalked, he was hunted." It has a momentum to it that is effective and it's often used by people who give speeches or poets and people in language, and there's something about that and if you go back and analyze for example his great speech at the Lincoln Memorial where he starts "I have a dream" and he lifts his voice, "I have a dream" and it's a third time, "I have a dream" and literally his voice lifted you, and you know you just would have to be soulless not to feel something when Dr. King spoke. And he simply, he had the kind of personality I've described earlier about Joe Vaughn in that this is why he led the civil rights movement, is he lifted the movement, and he simply presented a compelling moral argument for equal opportunity for everyone. And he talked in terms of we will all be brothers and sisters, there was never anger, hatred, separation based on race like you get today with some of the black movements that go on and people like Farrakhan and that sort of thing. If you actually play to race rather than attempt to unify us and transcend the trivia of race. And I'll tell you, I now had people stay in my home from most places on earth, China, Japan, Russia, Central Europe, Western Europe, and what I think about the longer I live is when George Wallace ran for president as an independent his campaign slogan was "There's not a dime's worth of difference between the republicans and democrats, I'm the only meaningful option, I'm the only one that's really different." And of course this was an appeal surely to the "Bull" Connor racist crowd. But I think there is a truth in what George Wallace said in one way, and that is no matter where we are from, no matter what our race, our sex, our religion, what is extraordinary about people is how much we are alike. We are 99% alike and 1% different. And what drives us to perceive our

differences with such magnitude is the insecurity we feel when we're around someone who dresses differently or wears different clothing and that is driven from a deep seeded insecurity. It's a fear of something different that we're not familiar with. And what I believe Dr. King had a capacity to do is to transcend that aspect of most of us Americans at the time. He had the ability to appeal to our sense of what is morally right. And he didn't engage in violence and arrogance and all of the things that others who have abused good causes have done or good religions have done with their religious faith. And I think that's one of the things that was moving to us about Martin Luther King, is that he moved us. He appealed to that which was light and bright and right. And we felt it very personally.

Courtney: What about the reaction to RFK, or were you here?

John: We were here, but I believe it was in June after school had let out, so we didn't share that as a common group of students together as a student body like when John Kennedy was assassinated in November of '63 and school was in, and students shared that as a common experience together as a student body and that didn't occur with Robert Kennedy's assassination. I'll tell you an interesting story. My brother worked in the Johnson White House, and the night President Johnson signed the civil rights bill he commonly gathered staff together late at night and would tell, he was a great story teller. Lyndon Johnson was a different person one-on-one with people than he was before cameras where he as uncomfortable and insecure. With people he was an extraordinary person. And late that night he gathered together a lot of the White House staff who were working late, including my brother, and among the things he said that night, they were asking him about the civil rights movement which was a major victory for Lyndon Johnson, and it was a fight that began in 1948 in Congress. And Lyndon Johnson said "today the democratic party lost the south politically for a generation." He knew that the racist white community of the south would turn republican and not long after that Strom Thurmond switched to the republican party and the southern white strategy of the national republican party was formed. And Richard Nixon relied upon it in '68-72. It has been the card the republican party has played ever since, and if anyone thinks that the republican party is not based on an unspoken policy of racism, they aren't living in the real world. It was formed on racism, it has given them their position as a majority party in this country currently, and they still play to it and look at the confederate flag issue and where the state legislature stood on that issue. And it is not an accident that David Beasley was defeated when he ran again for governorship after supporting taking the confederate flag off the state capital building. It is still with us today. And the people who carry the residue of racial resentment vote republican today. And it sprung straight out of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The only part of Lyndon Johnson's prediction that didn't come true was it has lasted two generations. I hope I live long enough for us to lay this one to rest and get on with better things in our lives but it's still here and thirty-five years later I was still marching at the corner of Church and Washington.

Courtney: Let's move on, let's talk about Vietnam and your experience in ROTC.

John: Yes, well, like so many of us at the time I was opposed to the Vietnam war but I was not a pacifist. I do believe in the just war concept, I do believe there are genuinely evil people and we have to be vigilant to keep our guard up against those people and you don't have to read much history to figure that out. And so I was caught, and I want to tell an interesting personal part of this story. Because of my very poor vision I was classified in the US Army as non-combat classified, meaning I could not be in a combat branch because my vision was so poor. The professor of military science at Furman my last year, whose name escapes me, was so angry at me for being involved in the anti-Vietnam war movement that he arranged somehow with the Pentagon to have me reclassified combat qualified and assigned to infantry to ensure that I would go to Vietnam. And, you know this is a part of my personal story at Furman that is not known by many people other than my very close friends. My senior year at Furman I was faced with the choice because I was an officer being sworn in into the United States Army if I did not go in the army I would not be able to just desert to Canada, I would be in violation of my obligation to the US military which is a crime, for which I could be court-martialed as an officer and placed in prison. And so I was faced with either going to prison in the United States or leaving this country for Canada most likely, and when I told my family that I was looking at these options, my family told me that if I did this that they would disown me. So I was getting rejection from a lot of places and this is an example of the terrible choices many people in my generation were put to. Those who were drafted, those like me who believed in national defense and serving our country, we were faced with the dilemma of, you know, maybe having to go to jail or desert out country. So, I became deeply depressed faced with this choice. You know in Japan they have an ancient honored tradition called seppuku, and when a person is faced with making a choice between two moral imperatives in their life, the honorable thing to do is not to choose but to take one's own life, because to choose one of the other would be an act in violation of one of your deeply held principles. And those are the times when great literature and operas and all come to mind where people are placed in these ultimate dilemmas of choice between very deeply held moral values, and I found myself there in the spring of 1969, and the choices, none were good, and so I really hit a very deep depression, and late in the spring I had been accepted into law school and applied for a delay of going on active duty and very late in the academic year I received a delay of my orders into the United States Army Infantry and I would have gone to Vietnam for sure, or to jail because I wouldn't have gone to Vietnam, I received a delay to go to law school and by the time I finished law school in the spring of 1972 the war was ending, and I ended up serving in the United States Army and training at Fort Benning and then was in the active reserves until I was honorably discharged. So I ultimately got relieved of that difficult choice that I was facing the spring of my senior year.

which was not unlike most of the male students, one way or the other in my generation. It marked our generation, those who went to Vietnam and those who didn't. Look at John Kerry and the current political campaign.

Courtney: Tell me about Al Reid.

John: A1 Reid was one along with a group of others of this small, maybe twenty or twenty-five faculty at Furman at the time that were just very outstanding people. And A1 Reid was pretty outspoken, he was exceedingly bright, he loved good students and he loved people who would think and be challenging, he loved to be challenged, but he also didn't, he's a Charles Brewer, he didn't put up with nonsense from students either. He expected you to take care of business, do your work, do well in school, as well, and he would tell you when you weren't, in a heartbeat. But he was a compelling man and just incredibly smart, and I'll tell you one of my favorite stories about A1 Reid is a group of us who wanted to get outside the box of regular old education, and I'll say this about me, I'm smart but I'm not a scholar and I'm not interested in scholarship, detail bores me, I'm interested in why, and the moral issues and all of that, and the details about things don't particular interest me, and we decided we wanted to form a reading group outside of the academics in which we would read a book and discuss it, and we met in the student center, the conference room, and A1 Reid was the faculty member who volunteered to be with us at Jack Sullivan's request, Jack being one of his most gifted English students. So A1 sort of led us in a discussion of a different book every month, and sometimes we would read a couple of books in a month, and it had nothing to do with academics, it was just a group of us who wanted to explore other things. And we read one of Ayn Rand's books, "Atlas Shrugged," or one of them, and I remember I got to the student center early and A1 was already down there and went over and said "Dr. Reid how are you and why are you here early?," and he said, "To tell you the truth, I am agitated by this book I just had to get down here early so that I could get prepared to jump in there and unload on Ayn Rand," and this was the kind of guy he was, he was just full of intenseness about life, he rode his bike to school every day which, I mean, cycling was unheard of in the 60s, and here is A1 Reid riding his bike to school every day, and he was just an engaging person and he loved students and he was outspoken politically. He was very liberal and he was anti-the war and pro civil rights and he was an activist on the faculty, which was not the typical. We had a few that were but a lot were not.

Courtney: Who were some of the others that were?

John: Well, Bill Leverette in the history department was sort of an intellectual supporter of ours. I'll tell you another wonderful story because one of the great characters in Furman history is Dr. D.H. Gilpatrick who taught history at Furman, I guess for four years and his wife taught English, and Dr. Gilly, as he was known, I took his last class, which was European History from I

think around 1900 to 1945. Actually it was a two-semester court, so it must have started in the late 1800s and gone up till after the second world war. And Dr. Gilpatrick was outspoken politically. And I remember he used to bring, the columnist in the Greenville News, even today James Kilpatrick, he loathed James Kilpatrick and his conservative political views, and most days would come in with the editorial page under his arm and launch into attack of James Kilpatrick's latest conservative diatribe on the editorial page of the Greenville News, and that was usually the first five minutes of our lecture. But Dr. Gilpatrick, when we circulated the petition against the Vietnam war, we went to his office, I think Jack Sullivan was with me, and told him we had his anti-war petition and would like for him to sign it, and he snatched it from us and signed it in large letters across the page and said like, "Was it Arthur Middleton who said he wanted to sign the Constitution of the US in letters, or the Declaration of Independence in letters large enough that King George could read it." You're a history student, I believe it was Arthur Middleton from South Carolina who said "I shall sign it with letters large enough that King George can read my name." And Gilpatrick grabbed it, put it on his desk, and signed it in huge letters saying "I want everyone to know that I, D.H. Gilpatrick, have signed this petition." Well this caused some consternation with the administration because Dr. Gilly had taught at Furman for so long everyone had had him as a student and if it got out in the greater Furman community that Dr. Gilly was signing the anti-Vietnam war petition, a lot of people in the Furman community and the administration were very worried about it so Dr. Gilly later contacted us and said he was very concerned and that people had come to him and said it would hurt Furman and all of that, and would we please not wave it around too much, and so I told Dr. Gilly that there was no one we held in greater esteem and would not make any big deal over it, so I don't think it ever got out in the greater Furman community widespread that Dr. Gilpatrick was one of the first people to sign the petition. But he was very special to us and he retired at the end of our sophomore year, I believe, maybe junior year. Another one that comes to mind who really opposed us but respected us greatly was Jay Walters in the political science department. Jay was an intellectual conservative, went to the University of Chicago to graduate school in political science and was very much in the University of Chicago intellectual conservative political science way of thinking. But Jay, Jack Sullivan and I took his two-semester course on political thought, which was one of the truly stunningly fine academic courses at Furman and one of the best academic experiences I've ever had in my life, including anything in law school. Jay Walters could flat teach and challenge your mind and make you think. And he often engaged Jack and I in debates about our political views. My senior year I took a course called Christianity and Literature Under Feron Price, and the only reason why is because I used to spend a lot of time in the religion department arguing with the guys in the religion department, David Smith and Dr. Crapps, and Feron Price, I mean Furman had a phenomenally fine religion department back then. And you know I was so upset with the church and was in there how in the world can you people be involved in institutions that are standing for what they are, and

you know we had a lot of debates about theology and Christianity and the role of the church and everything, and of course, they, too, were very disturbed with the role of the church in things like the civil rights movement and, in fact, Feron Price had come to Furman from being president of one of the southern Baptist seminaries because he was unpopular because of his liberal views, and he brought a bunch of the faculty with him to Furman. So, you know, he had a lot of respect among people in academics not just undergraduate schools, but he was respected because he was a first-rate theologian. Feron Price was about 6'8" tall and he was built like a bear. And I took his course to rage against Christianity and everything, and Feron Price loved every minute of having me in this course, and it was one of the best academic experiences I ever had. We read Camus's "The Fall," we read "Shantung Compound" by Langdon Gilkey, whose father was the famous chaplain at the University of Chicago, and Gilkey was in China, he had become disenchanted with religion and he was in China and the Japanese invaded and he ended up in a compound with several hundred people including a number of Catholic priests and nuns. And he had this marvelous experience where he found that the most selfless people under the most difficult circumstances where they were barely having enough to eat and were starving to death, these Catholic and deeply religious people in in the compound were selfless and would give up their food for the sick and things like this. Feron Price used to come over to me 'cause he had a real affection for me and, you know, here I was attacking the church and the Christian faith and everything else and he was eating up every minute of it, and Feron used to put his enormous big bear of an arm around me and as he towered over me and said, "John," in a very quiet fatherly voice, "You're one of the most religious people I've ever known," and it used to just eat me up. I would snarl at him. We had a marvelous relationship and a great sense of mutual respect and affection. As I grew older I came to understand exactly what Feron Price understood about me. And while I was at Furman one of the student activist things we did was oppose compulsory worship services. Furman had a few students from the Orient who were Buddhists and Taoists and things, and we had some Jewish students, and here we were everything Thursday morning making the entire student body go to McAlister Auditorium and engage in a southern Baptist Christian religious service with prayer and so forth. And this just struck me as profoundly anti-liberal arts education, anti-Christian beliefs because I could not imagine Jesus Christ impelling people to engage in a worship service with him, and it just struck me as being the antipathy of what Furman should be about. And so we drafted a petition which we circulated in the student body and a vast majority of the students signed it opposing compulsory worship services at Furman. And a number of faculty signed it. And so a group of us, I want to say maybe twenty or thirty of us, announced publicly in the student newspaper I believe and in other ways that we would no longer attend compulsory worship service on Thursday. You were allowed to miss two a semester. And so we just didn't go anymore. And we actually, at times, held an alternative function I think outside the auditorium or somewhere else, you know, kind of as our

protest. And at the end of the year Dr. Frank Bonner sent us a letter saying because you do not share the values of Furman and you have not complied with your requirements as a student, you are hereby booted out of the university. So, you know, all of us were making plans to attend school somewhere else our senior years and apparently Dr. Blackwell did not know about Dr. Bonner doing this and he found out about it somehow and called my mother and re-instituted us at Furman, so I was kicked out of Furman and re-instated over the summer of 1968, which was again, Dr. Bonner's conservatism coming out, and showing how the interesting sort of hidden rivalry that I believe occurred between Dr. Bonner and Dr. Blackwell. This is interesting in part because Dr. Bonner served as interim president of Furman before Dr. Blackwell became president. I believe Dr. Bonner thought he was going to become president and I believe that he resented the fact that he had not been selected to be the next president of Furman and I commend the board of trustees for not selecting Frank Bonner because he did not have the personality, he was a good Furman man and did many fine things for this university, but to be president of the diverse elements in the Furman community at that time, in a difficult time in our country and with student activism, Dr. Bonner would not have handled it well, just like the few instances I've described tonight. On the other hand, Dr. Bonner had a marvelous sense of wit and a keen mind and was totally devoted to this university. So, while I had differences with Dr. Bonner, I respected him greatly. He was a first-rate Chaucer Scholar and a darn good teacher, and he was important to the Furman Community and the history of the school but we certainly didn't gee-haw politically.

Courtney: How did L.D. Johnson react to...

John: The story of L.D. Johnson is very interesting in that Dr. Johnson was a wonderful man. His son was a classmate of mine who went on to divinity school at Duke, and I considered his son a friend of mine. When we circulated this petition Dr. Johnson was very opposed to it and we started a debate in the student newspaper, the Paladin, on this issue, where we wrote in and said why morally and for other reasons we were opposed to compulsory worship services. Dr. Johnson wrote an article supporting compulsory worship services and then others started writing in, students, and I can't remember, I think Dr. David Peacock who was the only classics professor at Furman at the time and later became an Episcopal priest, maybe wrote in about this issue as well. But it really got a debate going in the student newspaper. And our senior year at the university we still had compulsory worship services and the group of us who had expressed our view just never went. I think what occurred is Dr. Blackwell told Dr. Bonner, leave these students alone, and we're just not going to take any action. Probably if the truth be known I think Dr. Blackwell probably agreed with us and didn't want to lose us as students over an issue like this that he didn't feel particularly good about himself. The interesting thing that happened is Dr. Johnson changed his mind. And you know we excoriate politicians today when they change their

minds but anybody who lives life long enough to experience much of life knows that you learn from living if you keep your ears open and you grow and you change. And it is the mark of a person if they have the capacity to grow and learn and change their views. And I grew to have a real admiration for L.D. Johnson because he searched in his own soul and decided that it was wrong to make anyone come and worship, you know, to one point of view if they did not share that faith or didn't want to, that faith should be a matter of personal choice not being made to do it. And he realized that after the university had made its stance that they were going to continue compulsory worship services. He changed so the university abandoned compulsory worship services right at the time I graduated in the spring of '69 and beginning it the fall of 1969 there was no longer a compulsory worship service. And were it not for L.D. Johnson's own soul searching that wouldn't have happened. And I'll tell you a funny story. A few years later in the spring I was out here on the Furman campus for something and, whatever the function was because I was active with fundraising for the university and I was on the Paladin Club Board for a while and different things, and I took a walk around the campus when I finished whatever meeting I was out here for, and I heard someone call to me in the distance from over by the student center down by the lake, and I couldn't make out who it was and I could see them gesturing for me to come over there and so I walked closer and then realized it was L.D. Johnson, and this had to be maybe mid 70s or later, and Dr. A1 Reed's book, The History of Furman, had already been published, whenever that was, not long before this happened. And L.D. Johnson, I walked up and shook his hand, and he said, "John I saw you and would you come into the office and visit with me for a while. I'm just so glad to see you," and I asked him about his son who was in divinity school, I believe at Duke, still at the time, and we went into his office and got out A1 Reed's book and he started reading the section on the student activism in the 60s and I had heard about it but hadn't read it at that time, and had told L.D. that, and when we got through reading it he looked at me and he said, "John those were wonderful times at Furman when we were really grappling with the issues and debating these issues and all searching out souls," and he said, "I cannot tell you how much I miss it now because all we do is have vesper services down here in the student center and pray for lost souls and it is so boring." And after that every time I came over to Furman I would try to look him up and we grew to where we had a genuine affection for each other and sort of this understanding between us because L.D. Johnson cared about the big issues and he cared about searching his own sense of faith and growing and understanding and, you know, that's a really special person who knows that they don't have all the answers and are always trying to reach out and consider other points of views and growing. And I'll tell you one thing that hurt me, is during the debate that was going on my junior year about compulsory worship services, I recall someone writing an article in the Paladin that made belittling personal remarks about L.D., and I remember at the time being offended and I remember seeking him out to tell him that I oppose you on this issue but I embrace you as a wonderful person. But, you know, I reject anyone who

engages in personal assassination, which, of course, we have much of in politics today, rather than focus on issues and how we stand on issues and why, we engage in attacks of people personally, and it's frankly disgusting and it was then, I remember that one thing happening and it hurt Dr. Johnson. He actually came into the dorm to seek us out and said do people really feel this way about me. And I said, Dr. Johnson that person doesn't speak for us, all of us have a wonderful affection for you. We don't agree with you that students should be made to worship under compulsory circumstances, but other than that you are highly regarded among all of us, and we don't agree with that. And I remember that evening in the dorms when he came very upset.

Courtney: What about Jim Pitts, how did he react?

John: Jim Pitts was very young at the time, and I had the perception at the time, Jim supported L.D. of course, as assistant Chaplain, and I think Jim was more conservative in his views than L.D. was, and this is my speculation, but it was from what interaction we had and so forth. Later I believe that Jim Pitts changed a lot. I think, you know, as his life went by and he grew and was here serving with L.D. and saw Dr. Johnson change, I think all of these things influenced Jim so that later in his life I think Jim's views were quite different and, you know, he and I talked about things like at the time the separation from the Baptist Convention that we had to do it, and there was no question in Jim Pitts mind we had to do it. And I think that was a shift for him from where he was when he came here as a young assistant Chaplain. But he was not out front on the issue like Dr. Johnson was with respect to compulsory chapel. You had asked me to comment on a few other faculty; I was a history major, and we had a tremendous history department back then. Winston Babb was chairman of the department. I had a wonderful American History course under him. Dr. Sanders was here, fine historian. Both the Joneses, it was Ed Jones and Newton Jones, but while I was here early in my career there was a third Jones, Allen Jones, who came from Auburn. Allen Jones stayed maybe two years. He was very unhappy at Furman, it was too conservative an environment for him, and he left. But he was a very outspoken guy and was very supportive of the student activist group and had a very acerbic tongue. I had an afternoon history class my sophomore year with A1 Jones and Joe Vaughn was in there. And Joe was a night owl and he would stay up late at night and then we would go have lunch and then we would go straight to this class on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, it was like two hours at a time, and in the spring it would get hot and we didn't have air conditioning in the classroom buildings, so the windows would be open and on hot days a lot of the students would fall asleep in A1 Jones' class, and quite often it was Joe Vaughn, and Joe sat on the row nearest the windows. One day, he sat about four or five seats back from the front of the row, and one day Joe fell very soundly asleep and Allen Jones, without changing his voice, started walking around from the lectern and worked his way around to that side of the classroom and then down the aisle and signaled to us not to say

anything and just reached down and picked up Joe Vaughn's shoes that Joe had taken off and went over the window, it was second story window, and threw Joe's shoes out of the window into the hedge row below, and went right on with his lecture and finished the lecture and the bell rang and Joe woke up and Allen Jones took his lecture materials and left the classroom with the rest of us, and we all, of course, went out and were peering in through the window, and Joe is hunting his shoes all over the place and does not have a clue that his shoes are long since been thrown out of the window by Dr. Jones, but we had a marvelous faculty there. Early in my career I had introductory political science with Gene Miller who was another Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and a colleague of Jay Walters. Gene left and went to the University of Georgia to teach down there in the graduate program. All of them were really exceptional teachers.

Courtney: Let's talk about the speaker ban.

John: Yeah, we started this SSOC using some of our student activities fees that we were given, started bring speakers to campus. And one of the speakers, let me just say this, one of the speakers was Carl Oglesby. Carl was a new left poet and I believe somebody told me that he is still on the faculty at Antioch, you know, the very liberal college in Ohio, and I think he went to Antioch, but he came here and spent a week and we sponsored a talk by Carl Oglesby, and then he gave several other smaller talks and just stayed in the dorms and hung out with us, very, very interesting man. He had the little granny spectacles and he was very intellectual, and he spoke on the new left movement and opposition in the war and so forth. And he was quite interesting. But the one that really precipitated the speaker ban was George Ware. George Ware was this, I remember him as being physically a fairly large man, around 6'2", and he had a very powerful voice. And he wore an army fatigue jacket and he was the national campus coordinator for SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee], which was Stokely Carmichael's black power group, which were, you know, very controversial and advocated that if blacks were not accepted into mainstream America that it was okay to use violence and things like this, very outspoken. George Ware gave a really powerful talk, and there were a lot of students, it was down in the student center, but I remember there being a lot of students come to hear this thing, a number of them who certainly didn't agree with George Ware, and I remember, you know, people began to get agitated and speak out while George Ware was up there, and I remember he had probably a couple of black body guards with him, too. And I just thought it was good, and a lot of it he was really taunting conservative whites in the group, I mean, it was no question about that. And it was very much an in-your-face talk that we demand the rights that we are entitled to, we are not asking you, we demand it and if you don't give it to us then we're going to war. It was very powerful stuff, and I think the Greenville News covered his talk. And it really caused an outcry among the conservative people in the Furman community that supported the school and so forth. And so that motivated the university to come up with the speaker ban policy which required us to submit

each speaker we wanted to have to a committee to determine if they were going to advocate violence or things like that that would be opposed to what the university stood for. And as a result of that, I recall, and I want to say I believe it was Bernadette Devlin, she was a very radical member of SDS who advocated violence and things like that, and I believe she was one of the speakers that we proposed having and the speaker ban committee rejected it. I am not sure. Jack Sullivan would remember better than I, but I believe that we had another speaker we proposed having that the committee rejected. So then we circulated a petition among the students and faculty opposing the administration's speaker ban policy. And in the spring of my senior year that led to a demonstration on the lawn directly in front of the administration building where speakers spoke opposing the speaker ban policy. I recall Bill Lavery, I believe was one of the speakers, I remember Ron McKinney who was the newly elected incoming president of the student body the next year who is now the Greenville City Attorney employed as the in-house attorney with the City of Greenville, and Ron later practiced law with me for fifteen years before he joined the City of Greenville in 1995. He practiced law with me for quite some time prior to that, but Ron was one of the speakers, and of course this got a lot of press and as a result the University, trying to control the response, wrote an article in the Furman magazine, Marguerite Hayes did, in which they addressed the issues of student rights on campus, the speaker ban policy, and specifically she did an article on the "radical students on campus" in which Marguerite interviewed me and Jack Sullivan and I think some other students. That ran in the Furman magazine which goes to all Furman alumni and other Furman community people. And it was designed to explain to that community who we were, what was going on on campus, but to present it in a light that this wasn't threatening the institution and we were all people who were peace-loving and so forth. And it was in part designed to educate, you know, the Furman community at large and to make them realize that we weren't people advocating violence so that the administration would not have problems with the support for the university. So it was done in part to educate people but in part for good political reasons; Dr. Blackwell being a very good politician when he had to be. So, anyway, the student body overwhelmingly supported doing away with the speaker ban policy and sometime later the university abandoned the speaker ban policy.

Courtney: Okay.

John: And that ended it. And of course Furman is not nearly the closed community it was when I was there, so those things might seem quaint by today's standards but they were certainly very important to us, and I think for the university, that we needed to get beyond being a university that didn't think on grand terms and perceived ourselves as great enough and secure enough to have speakers of all kinds come to the university campus including people who were out of the mainstream and who don't advocate things that most of us at Furman would believe or share. But, you know, that's part of an education. A lot about living

is weeding out things not to do or believe, and the way you do that is by hearing these varying points of view, including idiots with whom you find out later, you know, that what they advocate is nonsense, and the way you figure that out is by hearing these diverse points of view. I jokingly say that you can't appreciate Chateau Rothschild if you don't drink a little Ripple wine every once in a while, and, you know, it's true for the university too, we need to have a university that's open to people of a lot of different persuasions, including ones we wouldn't necessarily agree with, and it is educational.

Courtney: Were drugs a problem when you were here?

John: I'll tell you, I was so naive about drugs that I was completely unaware of drug use at Furman when I was here. Now I know that, I can remember going by rooms particularly at night in the dorm, and smelling what I assumed was cigarette smoke and now know was marijuana. But there was as far as I knew precious little drug use at Furman. Alcohol was the drug of choice for Furman students, you know, like it was really everywhere back in the 60s. Because drugs didn't really come in until the veterans came home from Vietnam, and there they had widespread exposure to marijuana. They brought that experience back with them and then you had the experimentation in places like Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco with psychedelic drugs. But there were very, very few students at Furman using drugs back then. I recall one particular student whose brother was a faculty member. He was a younger student than me and involved in SSOC, and he, you know, I knew he used drugs. And then there was another student who really wasn't involved in the student activist movement, was just a friend, again he was younger than me, he used some recreational drugs. But it tended to be the students younger than we were who were getting exposed through veterans coming back at an earlier age. My group of students at Furman, I think there was very, very little drug use among us and it really go to be much worse after we graduated.

Courtney: Do you remember Susan Thompson?

John: Well, you know, Susan was well behind me...

Courtney: Two years?

John: Two or three years I believe behind me, and she wasn't involved in student activism at the time, probably sympathetic. Susan was a serious student and had other interests other than political activism, which probably was at its zenith during the time when we were at Furman and then began to wane after we left. And certainly with the end of the Vietnam war and the civil rights movement began to settle down as well, and so things in the country quieted down and students began to lose interest in political activism. Then we had a real age of apathy, I think, you know, because the issues seemed distant to students in the 70s and 80s. For us it was up front and personal.

Courtney: What about Harry Shucker?

John: Well Harry, you know, was probably pinned to Pam Burgess Shucker, my classmate, and vice president of my class the year I was president, our junior year, you know, for several years and of course they married and Pam has been active in the Furman community as well. But Harry was not a political activist and he played tennis, he was one of the officers, high-ranking officers in ROTC, Harry was a year or two ahead of me and I don't recall him being involved in political activism at all. I don't think that was his thing.

Courtney: He graduated in '66, so might not have been many outlets....

John: That's right, the political activism movement at Furman was really getting going in '66-67, after Harry graduated.

Courtney: Anything else that you'd like to add, anything that we omitted, any thoughts that you have that you might, any more stories, you have some great stories?

John: I can't think of any other ones right now, Courtney, the only thing I would say is that I think I had an extraordinary experience at Furman in an extraordinary time. It was a time of turmoil and a lot of troubling times and a lot of the students at Furman, I perceived back then, as apathetic. I don't think they were apathetic now looking back on it, I think they simply were troubled but weren't willing to be activists. They weren't willing to be the point man. But I think they couldn't help but be troubled by what was going on at the time. But I think it was a really exceptional time at Furman.

Courtney: Sounds like it.

John: And, you know, what I hope we do at Furman is imbue students with the commitment to serve others and not just themselves with the privilege and the blessing of the special education you get at Furman now. The mindless pursuit of wealth in one's own career, without consideration of service of others, is, in my view, a very hollow life. And the happiest people I generally have known in my life, and I'm now 57, will be 58 in January, are people who give of themselves for others. And they generally really enjoy their lives. So I believe that people who give of themselves to serve others end up having a better life themselves anyway. And what you may give up and a little bit less in terms of what you earn and achieve materially, is well worth what you gain in other ways in your life. And I think Furman does a better job of that than most schools. But I hope we always give our students the values to take that with them when they leave this institution and will be a part of their character for the rest of their lives. I think that's everything I've got to say.

Courtney: Sounds great to me. Thank you very much for coming and talking to me today,

I really do appreciate it.

John: Sure.