

John Plyler, Jr.

Interviewee: John Plyler, Jr.

Interviewer: Courtney Tollison

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Transcript

[PART ONE 00:00]

Dr. Tollison: I'm Courtney Tollison and today is August 24th and it is about 9:40 a.m.

Mr. Plyler: Just on time.

Dr. Tollison: (laughs) And I'm sitting here with Mr. John L. Plyler, Jr., son of the former president [John Laney Plyler, Sr.] of Furman. President emeritus, I believe. Is that correct?

Mr. Plyler: Well he was president also.

Dr. Tollison: I'm sorry?

Mr. Plyler: You said 'former president' and he was a 'former president.'

Dr. Tollison: Is he president emeritus?

Mr. Plyler: He was after he was president because... both of those are past tense.

Dr. Tollison: So he's former president and president emeritus. (laughs) And we're gonna finish up our conversation from our earlier meeting. So, proceed in terms of filling in anything that you would like.

00:51

Mr. Plyler: Well, we mentioned briefly the president's home and our moving into that and just several additional observations that I think would be interesting. The president's home was in no way like White Oaks. The home, as I understood it, was built in 1892 but it was just the home. All of the furnishings in the home were ours. We brought them from our previous home and so there were no furnishings for a president's home. And, really, we pretty much did all the cleaning. We kept it up. The only thing the college did is they mowed the lawn and they did repairs on the house and they painted the house.

Dr. Tollison: The college owned the house.

Mr. Plyler: The college owned the house, but none of the furniture or no support so it would be quite different than you may find in presidents' homes in many colleges today. The other thing is, is that Greenville, at that time, had International Textile Expositions every year. And this was very big in Greenville, held at Textile Hall and some other buildings that were added onto it and then, later, they built a new exposition center. And Greenville did not have sufficient hotel space for that convention which was two weeks in each year. And so our whole family for several years – particularly during the latter part of just after the Second World War – we all clustered the five of us into one bedroom and bath downstairs and, in effect, rented the upstairs to a textile company for two weeks. And I know my... we were responsible for the linens and everything. And some of these things I didn't know at the time and learned later. I think the upstairs, we had five bedrooms that we used and two baths. And I believe initially my mother had thought that – since it was for two weeks and all – that the people would come in and stay for the length of time, or stay for a week. It turned out that there was a certain textile mill that was contracting for it – I believe it was down in Georgia – but they kept turning over every several days so the linens had to be changed much more than had been planned for in advance. And you say "Well, why all of this?" Well, it was just a fact and this was something that I didn't know at the time. But I think I shared with you last time Furman's initial commitment to its new president in '39 of paying the president \$5,000 a year and letting him use the house. Actually I think this ended up being some spending money for my mother.

Dr. Tollison: Mmm hmm, I'm sure.

Mr. Plyler: And so it was just a whole different situation.

Dr. Tollison: Sure.

Mr. Plyler: The only thing I remember about it is, is we had fairly recently had gotten our first washing machine. We didn't have a dryer. We'd wash in the washing machine – and it had the old wringers on it – we would wring the water out and then hang the linen on the line to dry.

Dr. Tollison: Uh huh.

Mr. Plyler: But I just thought those thoughts. The only other things I remember are related, and in that house, to World War II. I actually remember sitting on the floor in the dark early in the morning, sitting on the floor in my parents' bedroom, listening to the radio of the D-Day landings. And, of course, I've mentioned before that we had a bombardier, a lieutenant and his wife, Dow and Marjorie Cole, from Ohio, who had a room for a period of time. And he was at the Greenville Army Air Base which later became Donaldson Air Force Base. And we also had a, later, a woman who lived upstairs who was a clerical person for the Air Forces, Army Air Forces program, in Geer Hall, and she was there and she had a room upstairs. So everyone was trying to do their part in the war effort

and with us it settled down to renting our home.

Dr. Tollison: Was the deflated salary, was this similar to the way presidents of other universities were paid?

Mr. Plyler: I don't know.

Dr. Tollison: Or do you feel it was a reflection of Furman's financial, any financial problem?

Mr. Plyler: Well, I think it was probably the outgrowth of two things: One is, particularly, the South was still caught up in the Depression. Actually I think the economics of what happened during the Second World War with all the military bases in the South and some additional building and then what happened thereafter really began to spur the economy in the South. And then, of course, in the 50s you got into the Interstate Highway Program and there were programs like that who would help the South greatly economically. But, at this time, the South was still not totally recovered from the Depression. And I do not know what any other college presidents earned, but I know Furman was tight economically and so I think that, that was just decided on. My father was so... Furman was such a part of him from his early days that he didn't think about that kind of thing.

Dr. Tollison: Sure.

Mr. Plyler: And as children, I must say, we never felt we lacked for anything and we didn't even know the economic condition. We had so much. There was a lot that was added that wasn't part of that. We went to all of Furman's athletic contests and we were able to do things. And then even in 1949 – actually Dr. Crain [J. Dean Crain] proposed it out of sort of appreciation to my parents and wanting them to do something – the university sent them on a trip to Europe for a couple of months. And that's when my mother and father went to Versailles [France], these places that they saw...

07:30

Dr. Tollison: They went to England and France?

Mr. Plyler: Oh they went all over. They went to Scandinavia, to England and France, and just a number of countries. They spent two months traveling almost.

Dr. Tollison: Oh wow. How wonderful.

Mr. Plyler: But that's where they saw and talked... That they knew then that Furman was going to be looking at doing something about a campus and so that's when they had thoughts about... I think my mother said...

Dr. Tollison: The English gardens and...

Mr. Plyler: Well my mother remembers standing at Versailles and saying to my father, you know, how nice it would be to have some fountains like this on the campus

Dr. Tollison: Uh huh.

Mr. Plyler: And so some of those ideas... And certainly the English gardens, because the first employee for this new campus was Ronald Hebblethwaite, who was an English gardener, and he was brought here. Furman's first building on this campus was a greenhouse. And so that building...

08:25

Dr. Tollison: Let's talk a little bit more about that. Where was it located?

Mr. Plyler: It was over near the golf course. And there's a little lake on the golf course and they irrigated the plantings and all that they started growing from that pond, from that small lake on the golf course.

Dr. Tollison: Okay. Is that greenhouse still there now?

Mr. Plyler: I don't think that... There might be a little part of it left but in the area of the greenhouse there are a lot of plantings and all right now. It's near a stone house also.

Dr. Tollison: And so there was the thought that they wanted to beautify... And beautifying the campus was obviously a very important...

Mr. Plyler: It was more than just buildings. They were thinking of what the total campus would look like at the time.

Dr. Tollison: So, how early was the greenhouse put out here?

Mr. Plyler: I can't tell you exactly but...

Dr. Tollison: Was it after breaking ground in '53?

09:24

Mr. Plyler: Yes. But it was '53, around '53 was probably when it was built. The other thing I would mention that I didn't mention last time was relative to the move and we spoke about the need to combine the two campuses and the condition of the buildings on the old campuses and all. But there were two other things that may have suggested a new campus as opposed to expanding the old men's campus. And I remember in July, I don't remember the month, but in 1946 there was a picture spread in Life Magazine – which was a major pictorial magazine at the time came out weekly – of Colby College in Waterville, Main. And Colby had just moved to a totally new campus. And Colby was the alma mater of Cyril Joly who

was an attorney in Waterville and he had been my father's roommate at Harvard Law School.

Dr. Tollison: Oh. Could you spell the last name? Joly?

Mr. Plyler: Joly. I think it's J-O-L-Y. Cyril Joly. And so that particularly interested my father that his roommate's alma mater there in Waterville had built a totally new campus. And it was at a time in the U.S. – just after the Second World War – that Life Magazine pictured it because it was new. The other thing that I remember his talking about at some point during the late '40s – and I have never looked to verify it but I going to assumed that he had known – that in the late '30s there was some real interest and discussion in Columbia, South Carolina, relative to moving the University of South Carolina to a campus where they would have more room. They were pretty much around what is now the Horseshoe in Columbia surrounded by government buildings and neighborhoods. And they were feeling the need, after the Second World War, to expand but this is even before that. They said "We need more campus space." And he said that the powers that be in the city of Columbia just politically stopped that and so that discussion ended. And they ended up having to spend an awful lot of money just acquiring land to expand the university.

Dr. Tollison: It's still very tight.

12:05

Mr. Plyler: So I would mention that relative. Two other things relative to state education that I had not remembered that earlier but were just presented. One is between '49 and '51, somewhere right at the end of the '40s or early '50s, the three major state universities in South Carolina were without a president: Clemson, University of South Carolina, and Winthrop were all three without a president at the same time.

Dr. Tollison: Wow.

Mr. Plyler: And I remember my father saying that – I don't know if he said this or not, but anyway, I guess it won't hurt anything – but anyway, he said "Now's the time for the state of South Carolina to set up a university system like they had done in North Carolina because it would not be very likely that all three of the major state universities would be without a president at the same time." But, of course, the politics that be in Columbia, that didn't happen.

Dr. Tollison: And what specifically do you mean by similar to the system in North Carolina? Do you mean having...

Mr. Plyler: A consolidated university system.

Dr. Tollison: Like as in [inaudible] Spartanburg?

Mr. Plyler: A consolidated board. No, they have NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, Appalachian State, but there's a state university board that operates all of those. And when the president – was President Friday [William Clyde Friday] at that time and later President Spangler [Clemmie Spangler], I can't even recall the name of the current president – when they go to the state legislature for money they go for the university system and then the board of trustees allocates the money. The other thing they do with that is they, early on, stop the unnecessary duplication of educational programs. In other words, there wouldn't be duplicate engineering programs. There's not an engineering program at UNC Chapel Hill.

Dr. Tollison: Right. I think Florida is also governed by a board of regents in terms of their higher education system.

Mr. Plyler: And I think several of these did it later, but he just thought this was the ideal time for the state of South Carolina to move into that as a better way to govern their state universities.

Dr. Tollison: But it obviously didn't work out.

Mr. Plyler: It didn't. Politics in Columbia, South Carolina, are very interesting.

Dr. Tollison: Oh yes they are. (laughs)

Mr. Plyler: But I thought that was interesting. It's not so much related to Furman but it is related to higher education in South Carolina.

Dr. Tollison: Oh sure, sure.

14:30

Mr. Plyler: The other thing that I would mention is that really the building of the new Furman campus, just the initiation of it, changed what both USC and Clemson were doing. I visited both several times and their buildings they built after the Second World War, but before Furman had announced the campus and started building, were very much the same governmental type of buildings. And both of them – once Furman started building and started the new campus – they thought about it and gave some more architectural touch and tried to do some different things. USC built a new undergraduate library. I think it was new in the, sometime in the '50s.

Dr. Tollison: Thomas Cooper? Is that...

Mr. Plyler: Yes and they put a fountain out in front of that and did several things. They brought in a noted architect from New England, I believe, or New York to do it. So it's not that everything changed but it was just noted that both of the universities started looking more at their plantings particularly around the old areas, the gardens at USC.

Dr. Tollison: Hmm. That's interesting.

15:49

Mr. Plyler: So, I think they all sort of take off on each other. I noticed that the president of Clemson has, just in the last few days, announced that Clemson is going to take on a new area of working with students and that they're going to really get them involved in undergraduate research. And I don't know that he picked up that idea from Furman, or not...

Dr. Tollison: Engaged learning.

Mr. Plyler: But I know with Dr. Shi [David Shi] that's been happening at Furman here for a while.

Dr. Tollison: Oh yes.

Mr. Plyler: And I think others are noticing the effects of that.

Dr. Tollison: It works.

Mr. Plyler: And so I don't know if that's the basis of his thought or not but it is interesting to me that Clemson is now taking it to heart.

Dr. Tollison: Certainly.

[PART TWO 16:32]

Dr. Tollison: Well, what else did you have written down to...?

Mr. Plyler: Well a couple of other areas. One is we were talking one time about faculty that I particularly remember and I thought about that from two perspectives. One is the faculty that was on board when we arrived. And I may have mentioned a couple of these but when I thought through it I think I've added a couple, so I'd just like to sort of go down that list.

Dr. Tollison: Sure.

Mr. Plyler: And it was Dr. Sampey [John R. Sampey] in chemistry; and Dr. and Mrs. Gilpatrick [Delbert H. and Meta Gilpatrick], Dr. Gilpatrick in history and Mrs. Gilpatrick in creative writing; Dr. Sumner Ives in biology; Dr. Odell [Alfred Taylor Odell]; Dr. Gardner [Eugene Elmore Gardner]; Dean Daniel [Robert Norman Daniel] who taught English; DuPre Rhame who was – he did everything – it was band, he started the Furman Singers, he taught voice...

Dr. Tollison: He was also in charge of scheduling concert events and such things at McAlister Auditorium?

Mr. Plyler: I'm sure he was on the committee. I don't know that he alone did it. Or he may have worked out some of the negotiations, I don't know the details of that. Dr. R.C. Blackwell [Reece Croxton Blackwell], Mr. Riddle in biology [Charles Dayton Riddle]. R.C. Blackwell was the mathematics professor. Mr. Riddle was well thought of by the medical students and if he recommended someone to medical school – the Medical University of South Carolina or something – most likely they went there. And this is again – not scientific but just from my memory – it seems to me that most of the really top students at Furman went to medical school, the top academic, certainly those in the sciences. Then I would mention in music, the Keeneys, Mr. and Mrs. Keeney [Wendell and Mona Howard Keeney]. And they taught pianists like Tommy [Eanes?] and Richard Cass who, they toured the country at one time playing and playing Carnegie Hall and various places in the country. But that was faculty that was here. And then, a couple things I would say about World War II and faculty. One is, is Furman lost some faculty through retirements and death, not due to war, but just Dr. Ives and Odell and several died in the 40s.

Dr. Tollison: Around this time.

19:14

Mr. Plyler: And because of the Second World War it had really affected the education of new PhDs. And then for all colleges and universities, with the great influx of veterans and the expanding student bodies after the Second World War and the shortage of PhDs, there was a tremendous shortage. And just in thinking about it, it looks like Furman really started to get back on board in bringing in lasting PhDs who were with the university a lot beginning again in about '49.

Dr. Tollison: So how, in terms of this period from the end of the war until – you mentioned in '49 – when there was a concerted effort. Were classes larger? How did they handle the shortage of PhDs and the influx of students?

Mr. Plyler: I really don't know. I think there were people who taught who probably in the '50s wouldn't have been employed. Maybe they... for they taught with Masters degrees. I don't mean that there weren't good students then, good education, and I'm sure it was a problem everywhere because there was just a shortage. But it was sort of almost a bidding war, I guess, for the PhDs.

Dr. Tollison: Do you remember some of the professors that served in the war?

Mr. Plyler: Well, Dr. Sampey, of course. And I really, off hand, can't recall the others who served but I think it was probably eight or ten. There were a couple in, a man by the name of – his nickname was "Shorty" Edwards [Selwyn S. Edwards] – and I actually don't remember his first name but he was in health and exercise science and Mr. Parsons [Howard L. Parsons] was in that area too. And of course the athletic group, Bob Smith who was an assistant coach and Bob King [Robert King] who was an assistant coach, they were both in the military. And I can't

recall others but when I started thinking again about those who came in and really began to form a nucleus of quite a faculty again, one who returned – who was in the war, he actually – was Carlyle Ellett [Joseph Carlyle Ellett] an economics professor. And he was at Furman before the war. He was in the war and came back. And then, I think most of the others of these came on board after the war. And it was Dr. Looper [Charles Eugene Looper] of political science. And then Harrill [Ernest “Ernie” E. Harrill] came to Furman, Dr. Harrill came to Furman in ’49. Dr. Kubler [Donald Gene Kubler] came in in chemistry. Dr. Southern [John A. Southern], who was a Furman graduate, and had been at Furman and away, came back in the ’50s. Dr. Vandiver [Edward Pickney Vandiver] came back about ’49 in English. Dr. Bonner [Francis W. Bonner] came in ’49 in English.

Dr. Tollison: Wow.

Mr. Plyler: Dr. Price [Theron D. Price] came in in religion, he came from the Baptist Seminary in Louisville. Dr. Crabtree [John Henry Crabtree] came in ’57. Dr. Hoskins [John Willard Hoskins] came in in sociology. Dr. Babb [Winston Chandler Babb] was a Furman student and graduated, he came back in the ’40s.

Dr. Tollison: In history.

Mr. Plyler: In history. Broadus Jones [Edward Broadus Jones] had been a Furman student and he came to Furman after that and, actually, I believe, he initiated the Asian Studies Program. There were two professors that came to Furman from Wofford in the early ’50s: Newton Jones in history and Jim Stewart [James T. Stewart] in English. They were both – well I know that Jim Stewart was a Vanderbilt graduate and he had taught at Wofford for a year, or something like that, and then he decided to come to Furman as did Newton Jones and I don’t know where Newton Jones was educated. Al Reid [Alfred S. Reid] came in ’55, out of graduate school, I believe. Dr. Clanton [Donald Henry Clanton] in mathematics came. Dr. Pulley [David Clarence Pulley] came in Education. And I’m sure I’m missing a number of others but these names that I have mentioned – I believe, if you looked across the time – you would find they spanned the years, 25-30 years of service to Furman, and ended up heading departments and being leading professors and well-known for a long time. And all of these came in in that group after the Second World War for the most part. So I thought I would mention that.

Dr. Tollison: Sure, definitely.

23:45

Mr. Plyler: Another interesting tidbit is that – I don’t know how I was involved but I was. It was about 1958, but before the men students had moved on this campus, so it was probably the spring of ’58 when Furman Hall was complete and the center section of the Science Hall was being finished. My father called and asked if I

could give a sort of a tour of some of the construction work and all to a group from Milliken and Company. Roger Milliken had sent over a group. He was, at that time, preparing to build what became his research center in Spartanburg. And, of course, Daniel [Daniel Construction Company] did all of his building as they had done for Furman. And, I guess, Daniel had suggested that they look at some of the construction done at Furman, the buildings, the plantings and what they were doing. So they came over and I remember taking them around to the buildings. They were particularly interested in the construction and what had been done.

Dr. Tollison: They must have had good taste.

Mr. Plyler: And I had worked for Daniel and I knew the buildings and so I took them on that tour. It was interesting, I don't know who Mr. Milliken used for his architects but he immediately selected for the landscape architect Dr. Webel [Richard K. Webel of Innocenti and Webel, landscape architects of Furman new campus].

Dr. Tollison: Ahh.

Mr. Plyler: And so he also had an appreciation for the beauty of the campus he found at Furman. And you can see that if you go to the Milliken Research Center in Spartanburg you'll see plantings of trees and all that look very much like the ones at Furman. And if you go to the Greenville-Spartanburg Airport you'll see it again because Mr. Milliken, for years, was chairman of the board of the Greenville-Spartanburg Airport Commission.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: So you see Dr. Webel's hand in several places in...

Dr. Tollison: Dr. Webel did the airport as well?

Mr. Plyler: Yes. And so architects seem to leave a signature almost like an artist signs the bottom of a painting: the trees they select and the way they plant, you can almost pick it up if you see enough of their work.

Dr. Tollison: Hmm, interesting.

26:02

Mr. Plyler: I think that covers most, except just a couple adventures from the old campus. One is the amphitheater there was along the side of an old ravine. And in front of the stage of the amphitheater was a very large pool that was cemented, it wasn't a dirt pool, filled with large goldfish-like. I don't know if you call them goldfish, maybe there's another name, at that time, and tadpoles and that kind of thing. They actually had a little island with a tree on it in one corner of the little pool and I remember, particularly, going there for a night performance and

somehow they utilized that island as an island. It was very interesting. But it was a very nice amphitheater, a natural amphitheater, on the side of a hill. The other thing is, as a very small child, I remember that University Ridge was always a cut-through. It was a way to cut from the Cleveland Park area of Greenville sort of across to head out to the textile area of Clemson or to West Greenville. And so there would be, cars used it going up at night, it cut through the middle of Furman but it was also a cut-through for other people. And when I was very young but I still can remember – and I don't know if the year was '39 or '40 – there evidently had been a meeting of the Ku Klux Klan at Cleveland Park. And following their meeting they were cutting through town, they came up University Ridge. And I remember standing out on my front porch and watching these cars – that's when cars still had running boards – and, if I remember correctly, there were about four persons to a car on the outside holding on, standing on the running boards, holding onto an open window.

Dr. Tollison: In uniform?

Mr. Plyler: In their white uniforms. I don't remember if they had masks or not. I remember they had some kinds of hats and the long white robes so even passing through the Furman campus because it was just a local cut-through was a whole caravan of the Ku Klux Klan.

Dr. Tollison: It wasn't necessarily considered a main city road but just common cut-through for people?

Mr. Plyler: Well, no it was a city road.

Dr. Tollison: Hmm. Right in the middle of campus.

Mr. Plyler: It would be just like a main street.

Dr. Tollison: So there was a very different feel on that campus than there is on this campus in terms of slightly more urban?

Mr. Plyler: Yes. I mean the city had trucks that cleaned the street. At that time it was almost exclusively by water and there actually was a hydrant in front of my house they used to load with water every day. And as a young person it was interesting to watch them fill up the tank. And they would go down – and they had spouts out of each side of the truck, pressurized, because they'd wash the streets. And they would wash our street and wash the other streets. But it was just a, basically, a city street.

29:21

Dr. Tollison: Okay. Anything else?

Mr. Plyler: No, other than just from memory – I keep saying "No," and then add something.

Just to sort of give a time perspective, my father saw the first automobile that came to Greenville. He lived in Greenville and saw it. He saw the first airplane that came to Greenville.

Dr. Tollison: What were those time periods' dates?

Mr. Plyler: Well, it would have been...

Dr. Tollison: '20s?

Mr. Plyler: Oh no, it would have been around early 1900s.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: I'd say 1900 to 1905.

Dr. Tollison: Oh.

Mr. Plyler: I don't know when the plane would have been. The plane would have been a little later. But the automobile probably would have been about 1905 and, I guess, in the nineteen-teens would have been the first plane.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: What with the date of the Wright Brothers was 1903 wasn't it?

Dr. Tollison: Oh, I don't know, I'd have to check.

Mr. Plyler: Wasn't Kitty Hawk 1903?

Dr. Tollison: I think so.

Mr. Plyler: I believe it was. And so if Kitty Hawk was 1903, you know, it would be probably four or five years before a plane would have come to Greenville. So that's just an estimate. It's about that time.

[PART THREE 30:26]

Mr. Plyler: Another area that we didn't discuss last time was what the environment was like for Furman in the '40s and '50s and early '60s during the time of my father's presidency. And Furman alumni dominated Greenville in many ways. The congressional seat, the 4th District congressional seat, was occupied from my first memory by Joe Bryson [Joseph R. Bryson]. And then he died in 1953 and Bob Ashmore [Robert T. Ashmore] picked it up and both of those were Furman alumni, so the 4th congressional seat was a Furman alumnus during all my father's time here. The mayor of Greenville from all of that time that I can remember was Kenneth Cass, who was a Furman alumnus. And several

members of the city council were Furman alumni. When you got into stocks and bonds and real estate, the company was The Furman Company. And it wasn't only Alester Furman Senior and Junior, but a Furman grad, Arthur McCall, headed all their stocks and bonds, all their investment division. Harold Gaddy headed the real estate division. Julius Garrison came in later in that division. So the heads of the key divisions of The Furman Company were all Furman grads. In the legal area, The Haynsworth Firm, they were Furman graduates. Jim Perry [James M. "Miss Jim" Perry], who was a woman and a graduate of the Greenville Woman's College – I think she was the first woman president of the South Carolina bar and several particular honors – she was a member. The firm at one time was Haynsworth, Perry, Bryant [Haynsworth, Perry, Bryant, Marion & Johnstone], Bryant [Eugene Bryant] also was a Furman grad. There was the Rainey, Fant, Horton Firm. They were all – Rainey [F. Dean Rainey] and Fant [Patrick Cleburne Fant] were graduates of the Furman Law School. And Dean Rainey was, the Rainey's were great friends with my parents because my father taught him in law school. And Dean Rainey was the chief outside council for South Carolina National Bank which later merged into with Wachovia.

Dr. Tollison: You're calling him "Dean" Rainey?

Mr. Plyler: Yes.

Dr. Tollison: What was he dean of? Where was he dean?

Mr. Plyler: That's his first name.

Dr. Tollison: Oh, his first name is Dean. Okay. (laughs) Clarification.

Mr. Plyler: Well, his second name. Really it was F. Dean Rainey.

Dr. Tollison: F. Dean Rainey. Okay

Mr. Plyler: And Fant also was a graduate of Furman's law school and he was a great real estate lawyer with Rainey. Rainey also was the chief council for the Southern Railway in South Carolina and that was a major position. And Horton, Wright Horton, who joined him was a Furman grad and then a Harvard Law School grad. Textile Hall was operated by a man who also had an insurance company but was another graduate of Furman's law school, Jim Woodside [James H. Woodside]. I don't remember the exact numbers now, but when Furman first started a campaign and they were trying to show the community Furman's impact on the community – and this was in the early '50s – somewhere from a fifth to a quarter of the doctors and maybe a greater percentage than that of dentists in Greenville, were Furman alumni. In education, when I finished high school at Greenville High, the principal, assistant principal, the head coach and many of the teachers were all Furman alumni. And the next year they started the Greenville School District, which consolidated all the districts in Greenville County. And that same person, M.T. Anderson, was then the first

superintendent of education for Greenville County schools. And so Furman had a real role in that area as well as they had alumni who served as members and chair of the school board. So Furman people – if you went to stores, businesses – Furman had a number of people who were textile group executives, headed textile mills. College presidents. Furman grads at this time, or during this period, were president of the Woman’s College of the University of North Carolina, and then Florida State...

Dr. Tollison: Friends with Gordon Blackwell?

Mr. Plyler: Yes, but Coker College and Randolph-Macon in Virginia; Emory University in Atlanta – and that same person later was the vice chancellor of the University of Georgia system – Shorter College in Rome, Georgia; Augusta State now, which then was, I don’t remember the old name for it; Avery College in Danville, Virginia; and then, of course, North Greenville College and Anderson College; and the first president of Charleston Southern; and there were several other Furman alumni who were college presidents.

Dr. Tollison: Do you remember the names of some of those people that led those universities?

Mr. Plyler: Yes. There was a Robert [Joseph C. Robert] who was president of Coker and, later, of Randolph-Macon. And then a Buddy Barry [John A. Barry], who was a Furman graduate, and a professor at Furman for a while, was later a president of Coker. And two people... George Christenberry was president of Shorter College.

Dr. Tollison: After he left here, right?

Mr. Plyler: Well, actually, he was at Furman as a professor. He went to Shorter as president, came back to Furman as administrative director, and then left Furman and went to Augusta State.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: And then before George Christenberry, Charles Burts, who was a professor of psychology at Furman, was president of Shorter College. I cannot recall the name now of the man who was president of Avery College in Virginia, in Danville. North Greenville College, a Dr. Donnan [Murphree C. Donnan] was there for a long time. And there were couple of others that were Furman that I can’t recall...

Dr. Tollison: Do you know if Lloyd Batson ever served as president of North Greenville?

Mr. Plyler: No, I don’t. I don’t remember that he did.

Dr. Tollison: I’ll have to check on that.

Mr. Plyler: Then Anderson College, Dr. Haight [Elmer Francis Haight] was there at one time. The long-term person that was there was also a Furman alumni and I can't recall that name. Well, I tell you who else was there, was the... I'm trying to recall the name now. He's still living because he also was president of the Baptist school in Tennessee.

Dr. Tollison: Carson-Newman [University]?

Mr. Plyler: Yes. He was long-term president there. He played football and graduated from Furman in '54. Maddox [Jesse Cordell Maddox].

Dr. Tollison: Maddox.

Mr. Plyler: Cordell Maddox.

Dr. Tollison: Uh huh

Mr. Plyler: And Cordell Maddox...

Dr. Tollison: "Grubby."

Mr. Plyler: Yes. "Grubby" Maddox from his days on the football field. Well, he was president of Anderson at one time, I believe, too.

Dr. Tollison: My mother worked for him here.

Mr. Plyler: Okay. In the, when he was doing public, not public relations, but sort of the fund raising and that type of...

Dr. Tollison: Umm hmm.

Mr. Plyler: I think he did alumni affairs.

Dr. Tollison: Here at Furman.

Mr. Plyler: He did several different things.

Dr. Tollison: Uh huh.

Mr. Plyler: So she knew him as "Grubby" too.

Dr. Tollison: Oh yes

Mr. Plyler: And a Furman alumni in insurance. Of course, The Liberty [Corporation] was the Hipp family and Francis and Herman and Calhoun were all Furman graduates. And the Canal Insurance Company with the Timmons [William R. and Charles M. Timmons]. And then, of course, the South Carolina Baptist Convention, the long-

term executive director was Horace Hammond. And then Dr. Jones, Dr. S.H. Jones, was the long-term editor of the Baptist Courier, the newspaper for the state and had many Furman people in responsible positions. In publishing, Roger Peace, who was sort of the senior person publisher of the Greenville News Piedmont. And then Wayne Freeman was the editor of the Greenville News. Then the other Peaces, Charlie and B.H. and those, were Furman people. Harry Coggins [inaudible] sports editor was a Furman alumni. And that's just mentioning in several areas but...

Dr. Tollison: Sure.

Mr. Plyler: In businesses the Stones, Odus and Fletcher Stone, had Stone Brothers Store [Stone Brothers Men's Clothing] and – boy, I'm embarrassed now – one of them is Barbara Brock's [Block] father. Dr. Brock's [John M. Block] wife's father is one of the Stones, and I think it's Fletcher but I'm not positive, it could be Odus. [It is Fletcher.]

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: But they were Furman people.

Dr. Tollison: Now this is... The Stones that you're referring to are separate from the Stone family that's Stone Manufacturing.

Mr. Plyler: That was Stone Manufacturing.

Dr. Tollison: Right.

Mr. Plyler: This was Stone Brothers, a men's clothing store, a very fine men's clothing store.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: And, of course, another one was Heyward Mahon Company. Those were the two.

Dr. Tollison: Where were those stores located? On Main Street?

Mr. Plyler: On Main Street, yes.

Dr. Tollison: Wow, well that certainly gives us an impression on what the...

Mr. Plyler: Well, I guess what I was trying to convey is... Greenville, of course, was much smaller at the time and when every way that you would turn there would be people that were Furman alumni or had a strong relationship. Another that I didn't remember in the colleges, when I was speaking, was Clyde DeVane [William C. DeVane]. And Clyde was a Furman alumnus and he had attended Furman before the First World War. After the war he finished his studies at Yale

[University], he actually was a Yale graduate. But he became dean of Yale. And there's a special article in Time Magazine – it was done related to him in the early 1960s – because for 25 years he was dean of Yale College [University] and was noted as being the dean of deans of all colleges and universities in the country for his work in starting new programs and the strength of the faculty he developed at Yale University. He was a native Greenvilleian and a, not a graduate, but a Furman alumnus. And then I also didn't mention some of the people out of Greenville in banking, like the Gambrells, both Bill and Charlie [William Henry and Charles Glenn Gambrell], in New York.

Dr. Tollison: In New York State?

Mr. Plyler: And, in fact, Bill Gambrell was a very good friend of the attorney who was the executor for the estate that provided the money for McAlister Auditorium.

Dr. Tollison: Oh, the Upshurs? [Amelie McAlister Upshur]

Mr. Plyler: Yes.

Dr. Tollison: Is that how that came about?

Mr. Plyler: Yes. Bill Gambrell was the key. In fact, Bill was on the stage and – it escapes me now, I could have said it yesterday – but the name of the attorney was here and recognized on the stage of McAlister Auditorium for their parts in the securing of those moneys which were the base moneys and naming moneys for McAlister Auditorium.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: So, just to say that Furman's had some good alumni.

Dr. Tollison: Oh, sure.

Mr. Plyler: And this doesn't even get into those in education. Furman at one time had the chairs of the Physics Department at Johns Hopkins and University of Iowa and several other universities. Of course, Charles Townes was provost of MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], the Physics Department at Columbia [University], and the Physics Department at Cal Berkeley [University of California, Berkeley]. And there were a number of physicians. One in particular, a cardiologist – I can't recall his name right now, I remember it starts with an "H." But he moved. He was in Iowa, I believe, and then moved to Tennessee to head up the cardiology, cardiovascular programs in the medical school there [University of Tennessee College of Medicine].

Dr. Tollison: Very impressive.

Mr. Plyler: Okay.

42:47

Dr. Tollison: Anything else that you'd like to go over?

Mr. Plyler: Well, if we didn't talk about it, just sort of the men's student body size.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: And just looking at it I had totaled it up, because I remember Furman as being not a real large school.

Dr. Tollison: Much smaller than it is today.

Mr. Plyler: Yes. And this is just looking at men who graduated because Furman was all men until '33. But this is, again, looking at men that were graduates. But until 1947 graduation Furman had only graduated as many as 100 men in a year three times. And that was 103 men in 1928, 110 men in 1929, 110 men in 1938. And there were an even 100 men that graduated in '41. And again in '47 there were 102 men. And it didn't cross the 200 mark until 1949 when a lot of these veterans were graduating. They had 241 in '49 and then dropped back to 207 in 1950. And I haven't totaled other than those classes but it dropped down to, during the Second World War, in 1945 they had 38 men graduate and 44, 47. So you can see the impact of the war. But even the other years there were '70s, '80s and '90s. And the size of the student body during the 1950s, the men's student body ranged in size from 671 to 830. And the average during these early '50s – and that's up until they moved to the new campus – was 765 men students.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: And half of those, just about exactly, were boarding, and half were day students.

Dr. Tollison: What was the percentage breakdown in terms of male to female? Was there a lower ratio?

Mr. Plyler: There were more men than women and I do not remember how many women and I don't have that count.

Dr. Tollison: So certainly the student body rarely went over 1,500. Is that a safe thing to say?

Mr. Plyler: Oh, it didn't go to that.

Dr. Tollison: Maybe 1,200, 1,300?

Mr. Plyler: The spring of '57 when they were getting ready to move out here it was less than 1,300.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: And I think that maybe the year they moved it was 1,320 or something like that. So it was probably a student body of between 1,000 and 1,200 after the war. Except maybe it spiked a little bit more with the veterans but I don't think it got too high then.

Dr. Tollison: But heavily male.

Mr. Plyler: At least two to one.

[PART FOUR 45:32]

Mr. Plyler: As I said, 50% were boarding, between 80 and 85 percent each year were from South Carolina, and 42% were from Greenville County, of the total student body. So very heavy... But this had been true through the years and that's why so many distinguished Furman alumni were natives of Greenville and why they stayed here too. The housing on the campus: Of course the major housing was at Geer Hall which housed 225; Montague held 60 men, or women when they moved from there; North Hall – which came in after the Second World War – held 40.

Dr. Tollison: Was that government?

Mr. Plyler: Yes, not a very good government building. (laughs) McGee Hall held 25. And then in various sort of university-owned houses around the campus, they could hold about 25 to 30.

46:35

Dr. Tollison: Let's stop and talk specifically about what we mean by a government building.

Mr. Plyler: It was a pre-fab building that had been used on an Army base by the military during the Second World War.

Dr. Tollison: Okay, and it was transported to the Furman campus.

Mr. Plyler: They sort of disassembled it. It was in parts and they brought it in and reassembled it.

Dr. Tollison: Now why would the government... Did the government do this because of part of the men that were training on the Furman campus during the war?

Mr. Plyler: No, these buildings came after the war.

Dr. Tollison: Okay. So why would the government...?

Mr. Plyler: They didn't need them anymore for their military bases and I don't know through what program they were made available to universities. Because it wasn't just that on the old men's campus. It also was West Hall, which was used as a classroom building. And then there were the pre-fabs that were used for married student housing which grew because all the veterans came back and many of them were married or were married as soon as they returned.

Dr. Tollison: And professors too.

Mr. Plyler: And professors coming back from the military or just out of school and living in it, this housing. And actually for students there were a group of about 15 or 20 trailers that were pulled in and set up also.

Dr. Tollison: So it's your reflection that they, instead of looking at – clearly they needed more buildings and more space – as opposed to building the new buildings, they took advantage of this government program.

Mr. Plyler: Well, they didn't have the money to build the buildings. It was just to sort of get going. They put a pre-fab type of annex on addition to the library.

Dr. Tollison: Do you think there was, also, a thinking that they didn't want to build permanent structures in the sense that they were thinking that hopefully they'd move some day?

Mr. Plyler: Well, in the fall of 1945, if you'll check the minutes of the board, I believe you'll find the board of trustees voted to begin construction of the new Bradshaw Library in the spring of '46.

Dr. Tollison: Because Dr. Bradshaw [Sidney Ernest Bradshaw] had left...

Mr. Plyler: He'd left that money and the Furman's budget was now balanced and they wanted to do that. They had the gift of Dr. Bradshaw which had collected some interest during the time.

Dr. Tollison: And the gift was \$100,000 originally, is that correct?

Mr. Plyler: Yes, or maybe a little bit more than that – basically a hundred. But I think it had grown, by the time they used it, to maybe \$150,000 or so. But, in any event, to plan and to begin that construction. And that was the way they were thinking in the fall of '45.

Dr. Tollison: Now when did that?

Mr. Plyler: They didn't start the Bradshaw Library.

Dr. Tollison: Right.

Mr. Plyler: And they really pushed in '49 and got approval from the South Carolina Baptist Convention in the fall of '49 to – they had to do it for all schools – so they got the South Carolina Baptist Convention to commit seven million dollars to higher education needs among its Baptist institutions. And three million, six hundred and some odd thousand dollars was designated for Furman.

Dr. Tollison: Pretty substantial portion of that.

Mr. Plyler: It was very substantial. And that was a tremendous amount of money at that time in considering what buildings cost at the time.

49:59

Dr. Tollison: Can we take a second and go through – the *Furman Faces the Future* booklet that you brought had some of the figures in terms of what some of the buildings on the new campus were supposed to cost. Could we maybe take a quick look at those figures?

Mr. Plyler: Alright. This is the first brochure put out for fund raising and I believe it's dated – October the twelfth, 1953 is the included letter. And the cost is listed, at that time, to build a new campus.

Dr. Tollison: This is the projections.

Mr. Plyler: Projections. And they had some outside drawings but no detail drawings. The men's dormitories were planned to cost \$1,200,000 total. The auditorium, which became McAlister, was to cost \$1,000,000. The library was to cost \$1,000,000. The field house, which would include the gyms and the swimming pool, was to cost \$1,000,000. The natural and physical sciences building, which is now Plyler Science Hall, was to cost \$1,000,000. The women's dormitories were projected to cost \$900,000 and the reason it was a little less than the men's is that there were fewer women, so they were looking at a smaller women's student body. They called it the refectory then because that's what it had been called on the old campus – the dining hall was projected to cost \$800,000. They had for humanities and social sciences \$700,000 and I guess that would be Johns Hall today. The chapel was projected to cost \$500,000. The student union, \$500,000. Business administration, \$400,000. They were talking in terms of a central heating plant then and it was to cost \$350,000. A separate gymnasium for women, \$300,000. Administration building, \$200,000. And then other general costs – like water and sewer, landscaping and campus roads, an infirmary for \$100,000 – all of that together probably cost another \$250,000.

Dr. Tollison: Okay. And do we have figures in terms of what it actually cost?

Mr. Plyler: We do. Let's see if I can find something on that. I think it's what some of the early ones cost if I can locate that old *Furman Magazine*.

Dr. Tollison: Let me take a quick second to check the tape and make sure it's cooperating.

Mr. Plyler: Okay. This is a *Furman University Magazine* published in the spring of 1964 at the end of Dr. Plyler's [John Laney Plyler, Sr.] term showing what had actually been spent on buildings completed on the new campus.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: And the administration building cost \$616,184 and, if I remember correctly, this was totally furnished. This was all – like in the dining hall – total equipment and furnishings and all too. The dining hall cost \$1,215,681. The James C. Furman Classroom Building cost \$1,328,778. Four men's dormitories – the one dormitory in that group that was not built initially was Blackwell Hall – the four men's dormitories cost \$2,177,813. The five women's dorms that were connected, or placed together, cost \$2,546,353. The James B. Duke Library cost \$2,052,160. The gymnasium – and this refers to the gymnasium that found the Alley Gym. It was named for Coach Alley [Lyles Alley] and it was built in sort of a temporary or long-term intramural gym initially but because they needed some gym space on this campus. That building cost \$283,520. It was not originally planned but it was necessary because they hadn't been able to complete the campus when they first moved. The maintenance building cost \$157,270. McAlister Auditorium cost \$1,536,130. Montague Village – which was built originally as married student apartments – cost \$248,328. And the center section only of the science hall cost \$847,564. In addition to these, before my father retired, they had completed the planning of the student center and broken ground there.

Dr. Tollison: Oh, okay.

Mr. Plyler: And they also had completed the planning for the balance of the science building. And the Furman family had committed the funds and they had planned, made all the plans including for the bells of the Bell Tower. And Dr. Blackwell [Gordon Williams Blackwell] graciously – because of his involvement in it and he knew the people from whom the funds had been given in each – had my father make the remarks at both the dedication of the student union and of the Bell Tower. And during the year before my father's death, which was the year after he had retired.

Dr. Tollison: '65?

Mr. Plyler: Yes.

Dr. Tollison: Your father passed away?

Mr. Plyler: No. He died in '66, April, '66.

Dr. Tollison: I knew that.

Mr. Plyler: But the year we're talking about was '65. The board of trustees made the decision to name the science building – which was underway of the final two weeks adding to the center section – to name that for him [John L. Plyler Hall of Science]. And he was very pleased, but he was not alive when it was completed.

Dr. Tollison: Okay. So the Plyler Hall was not built in halves. I was under the impression it was built in halves. It was built as a central section of it and then the two wings were added on later.

Mr. Plyler: Correct. And the reason... The central section, at least initially, was all laboratories except for three small classrooms because they knew, in moving, they had to have laboratories for chemistry and biology so they built those. And that most of the classroom and office space was to follow with the completion of the science hall.

57:30

Dr. Tollison: Okay. Gotcha. Anything else?

Mr. Plyler: One other point relative to the new campus that I forgot. I think I spoke earlier about using this for a tank course out here for the ROTC as long as Furman had the Army military unit. But something else they did in 1953 is Furman had a bakery on the old campus and they baked the best bread. In fact, often I'd be sent up to the dining hall to buy a loaf of bread to bring home. We needed bread.

Dr. Tollison: So you could purchase just bread from the refectory?

Mr. Plyler: Well, we did. I don't know how general that was but it was not expensive. It was either fifteen cents or maybe it became twenty cents for a long loaf. Of course they were baked and then they wouldn't slice it until you said you wanted it and then they'd slice the bread. But in order to take advantage of the land out here which had been farm land – and this is before the land was, the topography was changed by grading – Furman planted a wheat crop out here, planted about 50 acres in wheat and grew enough wheat to supply both campuses downtown with all the flour they needed for the next year or so. I'm not sure whether it went one or two years. So the only two uses that I remember of this land by Furman prior to actually grading it and starting construction, were for an ROTC course and for growing wheat for baked goods on it.

Dr. Tollison: So they would drive the tanks from the – they were kept on the downtown campus.

Mr. Plyler: Oh they kept them out here. I'm sure once they started the course out here they were used out here.

Dr. Tollison: They remained here.

Mr. Plyler: They wouldn't haul them back and forth. That wouldn't be good for the roads.
(laughs)

[PART FIVE 59:30]

Mr. Plyler: Now I have really rambled but those were just several sort of catch up items that I thought would be interesting.

Dr. Tollison: I have just a few notes of some things I want to go back and talk about.

Mr. Plyler: Alright.

59:41

Dr. Tollison: Can you tell me a little bit about the railroad that was built out here? The train that... Let me change this over. The railroad tracks?

Mr. Plyler: Yes.

Dr. Tollison: Closer to the back gate? And there was a train that went through?

Mr. Plyler: There was a train. It was a freight train and, basically, as I understand it that railroad was built to handle Renfrew Mills up in Travelers Rest. So it came from the downtown area of Greenville and provided supplies to that plant.

Dr. Tollison: So primarily transporting goods from downtown Greenville to Renfrew Mill.

Mr. Plyler: Yes and vice versa

Dr. Tollison: Is that its primary purpose?

Mr. Plyler: That was how it got started. And then there were several other little businesses that located on the line to utilize that service. But it was of particular assistance to Furman when Furman started construction because I remember the train cars coming in. The brick on this campus were all handmade Virginia brick and they were shipped by rail and arrived on the train. And they'd push off onto a siding down there until they could unload them. Some of the heavy equipment came in by rail. So Furman utilized that rail siding and the track to bring in supplies for the initial construction of the campus.

Dr. Tollison: Do the tracks actually go through the property?

Mr. Plyler: Yes.

Dr. Tollison: Mmm, that's perfect.

Mr. Plyler: It crosses near the maintenance building.

Dr. Tollison: The what building?

Mr. Plyler: The current maintenance building at Furman. And it crosses on, it's between the golf course and the main campus, the other side of the lake. And it goes across Roe Ford Road on the curve behind the campus close to a location that had been designated at one time for a retirement center.

Dr. Tollison: I've seen photographs of students riding the train maybe in the '60s?

Mr. Plyler: Yes. The train had picked up a name – they called it The Swamp Rabbit – and I don't know where they got that name. But they were open type of cars that trains had used for touring and all at one time and the track was still functional. And so, I guess Furman prevailed on the railroad and all and they would have a time each year, for several years, that students and others, family and faculty families and all, could ride this train.

Dr. Tollison: But it wasn't used, really, for students coming to Furman from other cities or anything. It wasn't used for those purposes.

Mr. Plyler: Oh no. It's greatest benefit to Furman was bringing in by rail some of the heavy materials for construction.

Dr. Tollison: Okay. That's interesting.

Mr. Plyler: Steel also.

1:02:56

Dr. Tollison: You mentioned the central heating system for the university and your mother had mentioned to me that the fountains actually serve a purpose for – I think a few years ago Furman changed the system that we rely on – but that the fountains actually cooled some of the adjacent buildings. Do you know much about that?

Mr. Plyler: Yes. The fountains at Furman were built with dual purpose – probably to justify their cost – that when you're air conditioning buildings that you need to spray and aerate the water as part of the air conditioning system. And that can be done in sort of closed tanks but it also can be done in fountains. And they determined that the cost of doing it one way or the other were approximating each other. So the circular fountain at the main entrance to Furman was done to cool the water for the system that cools McAlister Auditorium and the women's dorms.

Dr. Tollison: Okay. But not the administration building.

Mr. Plyler: No. It was to aerate the water for those two. And, in truth, the heating and cooling for McAlister came initially – and certainly the heating – came from the

women's dorms. And Furman's initial plan in building the campus that they wanted to do it right, so one of the key points of moving here, one of the positives, was the fact that two of the main water mains going to the city of Greenville from its reservoirs passed through this campus, through this property. And Furman connected to both of them. In case something ever happened to one line they would have the other line so they were connected to both major water lines going to Greenville and that was looked on as a plus. The other thing they wanted to do is, initially, put all wiring and everything underground. They also initially thought it would be most economical to have a central heating plant for the entire campus and they just did not have funds for the central heating plant so they couldn't do that. They started doing buildings together and McAlister Auditorium and the women's dorms were being built at approximately the same time. McAlister was ahead of the dorms in construction. And I remember the first major concert in McAlister Auditorium was Risè Stevens of the Metropolitan Opera. And it was a packed house – everyone was there in formal wear – and the heat that night for that auditorium was to come from the heating setup that was included in the women's dorms. It had not been completed. So Bob Jones University was very adept at buying surplus government equipment and they had a portable boiler. And on the side of McAlister Auditorium was a borrowed portable boiler from Bob Jones University that was used to heat McAlister Auditorium until the boilers were completed and connected from the women's dorms.

Dr. Tollison: Now what about the fountains that are named after your mother [Beatrice Plyler] and Mrs. Blackwell [Elizabeth Blackwell]?

Mr. Plyler: Okay. The fountain in front of the library was the cooling system for the library. The fountain in front... The next fountain who's named for my mother...

Dr. Tollison: Closer to the mall...

Mr. Plyler: Was the cooling system for the science building.

Dr. Tollison: Okay. How was Furman Hall cooled?

Mr. Plyler: Furman Hall – number one – all of Furman's buildings were planned to be air conditioned. They did not initially have the funds to air condition every building up front, although the systems installed were supposed to be able to cool the buildings once the chilling system was established. But in the early time Furman Hall was not air conditioned. The library was air conditioned initially, Plyler Hall was air conditioned initially, the dining hall was air conditioned initially, the women's dorms were air conditioned initially – and the women's dorms are now what's Lakeside Housing – air conditioned from the beginning. Men's housing, or now – I don't remember what the new title is.

Dr. Tollison: Oh, South.

Mr. Plyler: South Housing was not air conditioned initially. And so the buildings that had the separate fountains were also those that were initially air conditioned. And the others were awaiting air conditioning and air conditioning those was at a later time. And, of course, Furman now has a central chilling facility.

Dr. Tollison: And that's fairly recent, isn't it?

Mr. Plyler: Yes. It's during Dr. Shi's [David Shi] term as president.

Dr. Tollison: I think maybe in the last five or six years or so.

Mr. Plyler: Yes.

1:08:55

Dr. Tollison: You mentioned that the figures you just quoted me in terms of the completion of some those buildings included the chairs and the furniture and the decorations, etcetera. What role did your mother [Beatrice Plyler] have in terms of the furnishings and the selections for the fabrics or in the design of any of these places?

Mr. Plyler: Well, I think she had a great deal to do with it in that – not just with Furman – but it was just sort of natural with my mother. She has – I guess it would be usual to speak this way – she has a unique and special talent in colors, and what works and what doesn't, and what goes, and she knows quality. And I know that my parents and, I believe, the Bonners [Francis W. and Nilaouise Bonner] and others would visit various places like the Henry [inaudible] outlets. All this would be arranged. They would actually go to the furniture manufacturing places. As far as selections, they wanted to make the initial décor in the library very special and I know that she had a major part in that. The parlors in the new women's dorms were special because parlors had been important on the old women's campus.

Dr. Tollison: In terms of being used for studying and when men came over.

Mr. Plyler: Well, it was when men and women met. It was a social, it was really the social living room. And you've got to consider, at this time, women dressed a lot, they dressed up. They still wore hats and gloves and were dressed even to go downtown but certainly would dress for dates and the guys would wear coats and ties and it was just a more formal environment. And so all of the parlors and all were done that way. I remember a football game at Sistine Stadium the first year the women's dorms opened – I guess that would be the fall of '61 – and just was, I don't know by chance, I just talked to people and this man started speaking with me and he had just brought his daughter to be enrolled in Furman as a freshman. She was at the game and, as a parent, he had come to the game too. But it just turned out that he was so impressed with the décor and all he'd found in the parlors and in the women's dorms. But he also was an interior

decorator from Florida. But I would just say my mother – nor my mother, nor my father would take individual credit for anything. There were many people involved, there was a team approach and so it's not taking credit. But I'll just say she has excellent taste and it was here too, in many ways, looking at what they were trying to achieve at the time. And she also was the... You know she... My father made the decisions and he also had ideas and sketched out things. Like, I believe, I understand he sketched out a little bridge that they used on the route around the lake. And he just sort of did it and it was in line with some of the bridges he's seen in Scotland when they were traveling.

1:12:22

Dr. Tollison: The bridges in the Japanese Garden?

Mr. Plyler: Well, I think that the Japanese Garden was actually maybe a thought of my mother's – because it was sort of a swampy area at the upper end of the lake – and thought they might try a Japanese garden there. I believe the Rose Garden was a thought of my father's because – I believe I mentioned it the last time – even back to when we lived on Pine Forest Drive, he liked roses and he grew roses. And what I don't know – and you probably could check the records at Furman and find out – I don't know where the money for the Rose Garden, from where it came. But he... Maybe we can talk about this a little bit later because this may have been mentioned by the article from the architects. There were two things. One is, is even what he knew he wouldn't finish in building, he wanted to set a standard and a level of building and planning that would encourage any successors to go the same route. So, he tried to do some things that may not – they may not have had the money for it – but he just sort of found the money to make it happen. As an example: I remember speaking with the construction foreman on McAlister Auditorium and finding out that – at least in the initial bid – they had planned for the orchestra, and the orchestra to have an elevator at some time. But initially it was a fixed platform for the orchestra, not a hydraulic up-and-down. And I asked about that. And it had just been left out because they didn't think they had the money and couldn't include it in the bid. I don't know where the money came from. I just asked him [inaudible] my father. But I said something to the effect of "If you don't do it now it may never be done." And not that I had... I didn't have anything to do with it but somewhere he considered it important enough he found the money and they added an add-on to that initial bid and they put the hydraulic lift in the auditorium.

Dr. Tollison: So he had a vision for how he wanted things to be.

Mr. Plyler: And then the Rose Garden would be that way. Something else that you see at least around this part and I think at one time it went further. They'd visited the Cotswolds and other places in England where they have cut granite curbing – and I think they have that at Duke University too – so they had cut granite curbs put in, not poured concrete. And I don't know if they have proved unsuccessful

and all, I know the curbing we're adding now is more or less just the poured concrete. But around the initial central part of the campus...

Dr. Tollison: The older part?

Mr. Plyler: They've kept for the most part the cut granite curbing. And I think he would have probably thought that that would go all the way but there were reasons to change too. Everything doesn't remain the same just as the heating and the lighting systems changed. The lighting initially here looked so bright compared to what we were leaving on the old campus. But then after years it looks dingy compared to new methods of lighting. So there are constant changes and so we recognize that those kind of things happen.

Dr. Tollison: Sure, sure.

Mr. Plyler: But all of the planning that took place. Just wanting to get it... Knowing with trees you had to get them started. You know, trees don't grow in five, six years. It takes a long time. So he just got out as many of those and shrubs as he could. And I think – particularly David Shi – he has added so much in plantings and adding the trees. I believe one of our professors had a nursery and supplied some of the trees that were used for extending the planting on Duncan Chapel Road and also around the athletic complexes, additionally. I believe it was maybe Dr. Roberts [Ray C. Roberts, Jr.]. It was someone in the economics and business administration. He retired and had a business of a nursery in the mountains.

Dr. Tollison: Hmm, that's interesting.

[PART SIX 1:16:49]

Dr. Tollison: Let's talk about – well I wanted to mention really quickly – I was reading through some of the papers that you gave me, specifically your father's interview with a representative from the Duke Endowment. And I realized that your grandparents attended Furman and the Greenville – I guess, at that time, it was the Greenville Female College [Greenville Woman's College].

Mr. Plyler: Yes.

Dr. Tollison: And were married by Dr. James C. Furman.

Mr. Plyler: That's correct.

Dr. Tollison: Can you tell me any – you probably were very young when your grandparents were around – but can you tell me any...

Mr. Plyler: I didn't know, personally, either of my grandparents. They were both deceased when I was born.

Dr. Tollison: Okay. Have you heard anything about any memories that have been passed down through your family in terms of being married by Dr. Furman?

Mr. Plyler: No, but I have still my grandmother's scrapbook. My grandmother was born in 1856 and she had a scrapbook that includes a lot about Furman in it and about her graduation from the Greenville Woman's College. Also included in that – I've got to find out who wrote it – I have the valedictory address from Furman University, probably was from an uncle, but I don't know who that belongs to.

Dr. Tollison: I believe you showed that to me one time.

Mr. Plyler: Yes. But one thing I remember – and this was also, I believe, it's in the parlors in the women's dorms now noted – is my grandmother's piano. But my grandmother and grandfather lived in Travelers Rest for a little while. They lived first down in the Tradesville area of South Carolina where my grandfather had gone back to teach. And two things I'd mention: One is my father was very precise – I guess this was his legal training – and he never would misstate or overstate something. And I think of the interview to which you are referring, he said something like "And your father graduated from Furman in such and such year." And he said "No, he did not graduate."

Dr. Tollison: Right.

Mr. Plyler: Because this school from which he had completed his studies – and actually stayed on to teach several years after finishing high school before he came to Furman – needed a teacher again. So they called him back, I believe, to head the school and he left during his senior year at Furman to go back.

Dr. Tollison: Without taking the final exams?

Mr. Plyler: Without – and I don't know if it was just exams or he didn't finish a few courses, but he did not actually graduate from Furman but he was in the class of, I believe, 1884.

Dr. Tollison: And your grandmother was...

Mr. Plyler: Was much earlier.

Dr. Tollison: Was a bit older. She...

Mr. Plyler: Well, no. Well, part of that is the fact that my grandfather taught in this school...

Dr. Tollison: Before he came to college.

Mr. Plyler: Before he even came to college. And the fact that my grandmother went to Furman at an early age and I think she completed her studies at Furman in one or two years.

Dr. Tollison: At Greenville Female College [Greenville Woman's College]?

Mr. Plyler: At the Greenville Female College.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: One thing we have to think about in time – and this was [inaudible] – when my father finished school, in high school, in 1909...

Dr. Tollison: At Greenville?

Mr. Plyler: At Greenville High School – or Central High School, I think it was called at the time – there were only ten grades in the public schools. And the eleventh grade was added after that, but the twelfth grade in South Carolina wasn't added on a permanent basis until 1947. So people finished school at an earlier time. My father had finished Furman with four years here and was age 19, which is, most freshman by the end of their freshman year are 19.

Dr. Tollison: Sure.

Mr. Plyler: But, from what I know – and I would challenge any student today, at least in the basics – to know what he had learned in those years. Because, it seemed to me, that early education in this country much more focused on the basics but they really learned it well. I mean he studied Latin for six years, French for four years, German for two years, in addition to physics and the other, he had English for four years. So he could spell any word. No one could ever ask him to spell a word he couldn't spell or define.

Dr. Tollison: Impressive.

Mr. Plyler: But I'm sure that was true from the study of Latin and English.

Dr. Tollison: Sure, sure.

1:21:33

Dr. Tollison: Let's talk about some of your father's greatest achievements. I mentioned this last time, that we would like to just touch on some of the highlights. One in particular that I'm thinking of is that Furman began to use the SAT, the Scholastic Aptitude Test, as sort of a standardized exam about which they required all students to take for entrance. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Mr. Plyler: I could talk about that and several of the items – and these you recognize are my opinion.

Dr. Tollison: Sure.

Mr. Plyler: But I certainly would say that was one. He initially started either in the late '40s or early '50s to try to get the University of South Carolina and Clemson and other schools to join with Furman in setting up a standardized testing program, so that it would be used by the students across South Carolina, that had some basis for evaluating the students. And I don't know their reasoning or anything but the University of South Carolina would not go along with it.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: So that was not done. And so then at some point – I don't remember the exact year, but it had to have been in the '50s – Furman began using the educational testing service, Princeton's educational testing service.

Dr. Tollison: Their SAT.

Mr. Plyler: Their SAT for their basis for entrance. And I think it was very important to develop some more methods for evaluating prospective students beyond just having their high school transcripts. And that was one of the items.

Dr. Tollison: Do you see the several years difference in between your father's attempts to create – disagreement between Clemson and the University of South Carolina and Furman – and several years later when he began using a national and standardized exam. Do you see any reflection there in terms of the differences of Furman's student body, where they're coming from or an attempt to become more, maybe perhaps, saying more national – that might be a little bit of an overstatement – but less localized?

Mr. Plyler: Well, I think at Furman, he started with two things initially. I guess you start with everything, but two basically: And the one was to get a quality campus with quality facilities. The other thing was, is to really strengthen the faculty. And we mentioned today earlier, some of the people who came on board. And there are a number of others and I always hesitate to do that because I know I missed some people from the music department and I know I missed others. But this was something to build up. You have to build a stronger faculty – not that there weren't good people – but that needed to be strengthened. If you will look in there – and this was not just true of Furman – you would wonder why it was so low if you looked at today's world both at Furman and other institutions – the percentage of faculty that were PhDs. But they really began to grow in number then and by his retirement I think there were 60 to 65 percent or so – which was a big jump from where it had been.

Dr. Tollison: Sure.

Mr. Plyler: And so it was to strengthen that faculty with better prepared faculty and with good teachers. And he also wanted people who would be good teachers, not just with their degrees.

Dr. Tollison: Right.

Mr. Plyler: And so I would say those two. Of course, the whole idea of having a standard test was to be able to better evaluate students. Furman was always open to students from everywhere. I know my parents in several of their travels to South America and to Europe made contacts that lead to students from countries they visited ending up coming to Furman for a while. So they always had a few international students and they were interested in that. And they broadened the way in which information about Furman was sent out. I know when they were opening this campus they, in particular, had people like the *Atlanta Journal* to come up and they invited the *Charlotte Observer* and other places from out of South Carolina were bringing in. And I remember somebody telling my father – and I don't remember who it was in Atlanta, it may have been the superintendent of schools or someone major there – suggesting that if Furman wanted to it could fill its student body with students from Atlanta. This was sometime in the early '60s probably. But the Atlanta paper was just always more open. It seems that – and it's still true – it seems to me that the papers in South Carolina are more provincial. And Charleston papers write about the Citadel and College of Charleston and everything local. And the state talks about South Carolina and, as it must, maybe mentions Clemson but really doesn't mention that. But you have to go to the *Atlanta Journal* or the *Charlotte Observer* or some papers that open up a little bit more. And Furman began to get some advertising – not advertising so much – but some recognition in these. There was a program in *Time Magazine* in the late '50s when – or maybe it was the '60s but some time in there – when they were offering a free one-page advertisement to universities and they started to run an ad about Furman. This may have even when Dr. Blackwell [Gordon Williams Blackwell] was here but it was sometime soon after they had moved to this campus there was a page in there.

Dr. Tollison: I know it was after '64 because Charles Townes was featured in it after having won the Nobel Prize.

Mr. Plyler: Okay, so then it would have to be after '64. But this was one of those kinds of things. So there were efforts but, in truth, the level of student recruiting now, what admissions did was more receiving applications and accepting.

Dr. Tollison: As opposed to seeking them.

Mr. Plyler: Right. But I do remember, as I'm sure Dr. Shi [David E. Shi] and others have faced since – I mean I could recite the names but won't do it now. But a very wealthy person who had, even after his family made very nice contributions to Furman, that his business used properties that were owned by Furman, he very much wanted his son to come to Furman and my father had to be the one that communicated with him that he just wasn't prepared to do work at Furman. So even before everything happened there was some selectivity among Furman students. They just didn't take everyone who applied.

Dr. Tollison: Oh sure, sure.

Mr. Plyler: But having students from New York and New Jersey, they're more often than not athletes than anything else. What Furman recruited from away – like the basketball players from Kentucky, or the football players from Pennsylvania or New Jersey or New York – were recruited as athletes, not as students. And if anyone else came as a student there were different stories to tell; maybe they had a relative that had been at Furman; people that learned about Furman first through Frank Selvy's exploits on the basketball floor. So there were different ways they learned but Furman didn't have recruiters like they do now going out and looking for students.

Dr. Tollison: Gotcha.

Mr. Plyler: I don't know if that answers...

Dr. Tollison: It does.

Mr. Plyler: Maybe it's too long.

Dr. Tollison: No, absolutely.

1:29:22

Dr. Tollison: So what would you consider some of his other achievements?

Mr. Plyler: Well I just sort of jotted a few notes on it because I wanted to think through it; and these are not in order of importance.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: But having worked in a business where the board of trustees are very important to what occurs in institutions, whether they be hospitals or universities or whatever, the administration cannot do anything without the support and approval of the board. And he had, really, the strong support and approval of the Furman board. It would support him in what his ideas and plans were. I mean they were supportive. They believed in him and they supported him.

Dr. Tollison: Do you think that derived to an extent, at least early on, from the fact that he had been a trustee?

Mr. Plyler: I just think that because a number of trustees knew. But beyond that he had general support of the South Carolina Baptists and that was important because Furman depended on the Baptists for funds and he had their support. And so he spoke at a number of churches. They would have a "Christian Education Sunday" or something and he would speak in the pulpit. He was actually selected by the State Baptists, he served as president of the Convention, I think, in '47 and most

of the time has been a minister. But he was elected to serve as president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Dr. Tollison: That's very interesting, becoming so involved in...

Mr. Plyler: And see, this was so important because it was in '49 that the Baptists agreed to [inaudible]. The other thing that he did – and he did it to the benefit of all the Baptist institutions including a hospital in Columbia at the time and the North Greenville and Anderson College – but he secured more funding than they had been giving by far just for yearly operational needs. So what he did is, as soon as he could – and I think it would have happened much sooner without the Second World War – but he cleared the balance of debt. And he enhanced the support of the Baptists both annually and then in a capital pledge once that was needed.

PART SEVEN 1:31:55

Dr. Tollison: Do you think, for instance, I think I'm fairly accurate when I say that when Furman split from the Baptist Convention in '92, the percentage of the annual operating budget that the Baptist Convention, their portion that they contributed was less, I think it was about three percent, two to three percent, I'm pretty sure it was certainly less than five percent. Do you know at what point in the late '40s, early '50s, do you have a sense of what percentage of the annual operating budget the Baptists contributed?

Mr. Plyler: I really don't. You know, of course, we could compute that. We could find out what the Baptists gave and what Furman's total budget but I honestly don't know that percentage.

Dr. Tollison: Did you get the feeling that it was substantial?

Mr. Plyler: Well, it wasn't enough.

Dr. Tollison: Right.

Mr. Plyler: And, I don't know if I mentioned this on the camera or not, but I think I should say this because as I did say earlier I asked my father a lot of things. During the late '50s and early '60s when the Baptists were again on the fraternity issue and other things about Furman, not in a major way, but they'd get on one issue like that and Furman would get publicity that I didn't think was good and I don't think others did either. They'd say "Will Furman ever separate from the Baptists, do you see that happening?" And he said he didn't know but he thought that it might occur gradually and he thought that the basis for that separation would be the fact that the Baptists couldn't adequately support their institutions, all of them. And they had recently started what was the Baptist College of Charleston, that later became Charleston Southern University. They still had North Greenville and Anderson to support. This is when hospitals still needed outside support – it was before hospitals started doing so well – and so the Baptist

hospitals needed support. So looking at the institutions that needed support, he didn't think they had that. He was both proud and concerned there that, he was pleased with the additional support he was getting from South Carolina Baptists. He still didn't think the South Carolina Baptists were doing enough but he felt that the Baptists were giving Furman more than the Methodists were giving Wofford or the Presbyterians were giving PC [Presbyterian College]. In other words, related to other church colleges he felt he was doing pretty well and that they were doing much better than they were doing but were not doing what they needed to do for Furman.

Dr. Tollison: Okay.

Mr. Plyler: And he felt that over time they would be less likely to be able to meet that. But, if you remember, Furman's separation from the Baptists was not initially planned. Dr. Johns [John E. Johns] did all he could to make it possible for Furman to continue with a formal relation with the South Carolina Baptists. The only thing that they couldn't do is they would not have control over naming the trustees, the Furman board would say whom the trustees were going to be. The South Carolina Baptists could endorse them, there were even different proposed ways that those trustees could be done. But it did not start out with a proposal to separate, only to change the trustee selection so that Furman would not end up with a board of trustees made up of people from a totally different perspective than what had been the case at Furman. And when they refused – meaning they the Baptist Convention – refused to accept Furman's alternatives, that's when they agreed to the break but it didn't start out that way.

Dr. Tollison: Certainly.

Mr. Plyler: But I still think it could have evolved, although you don't know what would have happened.

Dr. Tollison: Right.

Mr. Plyler: But Baptist control definitely was going to stop with what Dr. Johns had initiated.

Dr. Tollison: Since we're on the topic, tell me... from what I understand, Charleston Southern, or the Baptist College of Charleston, is that what initially it was named? Discussions for this began around '63 or perhaps it opened in '63?

Mr. Plyler: I think discussions started much earlier than that.

Dr. Tollison: Okay, perhaps it opened in '63.

Mr. Plyler: And the Baptists thought they ought to have something in Charleston. And I think these talks were led by Dr. John Hamrick who was pastor of a church in Charleston, First Baptist Church I believe. He was a Furman graduate and a

Furman trustee. But if you look at geographically at the area the Baptist educational institutions were all in the Upstate and he thought with all the Baptists in and around Charleston there ought to be one there. And he was the leader in getting the Baptists to move that direction and establish Charleston – well, wanted to establish a school there. Now I can't remember all of the details but it seems to me that at one time there was talk of that school being a part of Furman. And what they were looking at is Furman sort of helping finance it and Furman, up front, said we're not going to dilute the small endowment we have and our moneys to finance this school. They talked about it in terms of immediate accreditation. In other words, if it started as a part of Furman, at that time it could have from early on received accreditation. Whereas if it started out and became a new school it would have to go through the time and the process to earn its own accreditation. But I think – and this is an opinion – that Dr. Hamrick really sort of wanted to have a school of his own that they would have local control. And so they were interested in going in that direction and Furman, I don't believe, was ever interested in running a "branch" Furman in Charleston. But either in the trustee minutes or from someone else you'll have to find the details of that out, I don't know.

Dr. Tollison: Sure. I've been given the impression, or my understanding of this is that there were people in the Convention that were upset with Furman, they viewed Furman as sort of a rebellious, a rebellious sect or "child" of the Convention, if you could put it in those terms, and wanted to develop a Baptist institution where they had more control over the specifics of how the institution was run.

Mr. Plyler: I don't see – I mean there may have been people who felt that way – but the leadership in getting it done was Dr. Hamrick and several others down there, I can't recall the other names off hand. And they wanted it because they wanted a Baptist educational institution there. He was a Furman trustee. He wasn't fighting Furman, he was trying to get a Baptist institution in Charleston

Dr. Tollison: Perhaps that evolved later. I think a lot of it came up during desegregation.

Mr. Plyler: See, that's thirty years later. Now, it did change. I've spoken to – you'd mentioned you talked to Dr. Clemons [Hardy S. Clemons] – and I've sort of asked him what it was like today. Thought maybe he shared that with you so anything I say would repeat what he would have said. But in any event, that's all sort of looking at it from the other side, the other end of the decision.

1:39:52

Dr. Tollison: Sure, sure. Let's get back to some of your, the other achievements.

Mr. Plyler: Okay. Well I have something here that I'd like to share with you and you can copy if you like. At the time of my father's retirement he was recognized by many groups, but one was a faculty meeting.

Dr. Tollison: Mmm, hmm.

Mr. Plyler: And Dr. R.C. Blackwell presided at the faculty meeting and he mentions his time at Furman and my father's retirement, but he particularly wanted to point out two things that had happened for the faculty during my father's term here and I think those are probably very important, and maybe a third, that he established the retirement system at Furman.

Dr. Tollison: Your father.

Mr. Plyler: Yes, and the TIAFF-CREFF. And not only established the system for retirement by faculty putting into it, but the university put into it and even contributed what Dr. Blackwell [Gordon Williams Blackwell] suggested was a very significant and appreciated amount. So that whole system of retirement for faculty was important. He also mentioned tenure and setting up a system of tenure for faculty. And then he mentioned the establishment or beginning of sabbaticals. And those were three items that were mentioned by the chair of the faculty at the faculty dinner in the year of my father's retirement as he was recounting and they were recognizing my parents at that time. So I would agree with those from what I know and I certainly think it's good that the chair of the faculty at the time spoke those words at the banquet.

Dr. Tollison: Certainly, certainly.

Mr. Plyler: And I certainly would say that combining the men and women on one campus was a great achievement. We've already talked about a lot of sides of that and I wouldn't elaborate more. We also have talked about the other – and maybe I've mentioned it – that I feel that he established high standards for the buildings and for the beauty of this campus. And some of those things that he particularly wanted – and you can say "Without money, why would you do it?" – but he did it up front so it would be here – it was sort of set for any successors – something to follow. And that was building a lake, getting a golf course – why would you go out and build a golf course when you didn't have money – but he just felt that would be important. The rose garden; the fountains; the general landscaping, the trees and all; the Japanese garden I mentioned earlier; the elevator lift at McAlister [auditorium]; the cut-granite curbs. He set the campus back a little bit when they couldn't get the property they needed without, you know, too much being asked by the Hawkins who owned the front entrance. He set it back a little bit and had land there and he worked it out with the Highway Department to build the road that passes in front of the campus now. So he set all that up. He sort of sketched some and had the front gate built. And the front gate isn't something you would start out building but he wanted a nice entranceway to the campus and built that. The whole idea of having a residential area, Stratford Forest, for faculty and for others. And it started out several faculty initially built in there: the Stewarts built in there, the Crabtrees [John Henry and Anne], Houston Patterson in physics, Mr. Razor [Charles Lewis Razor], the Bonners [Francis W. and Nilaouise Bonner] – and I know I'm missing some people –

Crabtree, but a number of faculty built in that area as well as others. There was to be a nice residential area. And I think – as I mentioned also earlier – that he sort of set, for college development and quality of buildings and all, sort of a new standard for schools in South Carolina, for South Carolina and Clemson and other schools. I think something that was important that he broke the ice on – and I'm sure others were involved later and it didn't occur until about a year after his retirement – but he really obtained the board approval and established a board policy for integration of Furman. And we also talked earlier about establishing a standard entrance exam for college board.

[PART EIGHT 1:44:45]

Mr. Plyler: My father – and we were talking earlier about recognition for Furman and where it stood – and he always thought that Furman deserved and should have a chapter Phi Beta Kappa. And he... Just from people who were in school with me and others, Furman was looked on as the best educational institution, at least undergraduate, in South Carolina from the '50s and from when I can remember. But there were two chapters of Phi Beta Kappa in South Carolina. One was at the University of South Carolina and the other was at Wofford. And Furman was looked on as being a better school but didn't have those chapters and – I shouldn't have said that. But my father said "Well, they didn't often throw them off campus, it was just how you were when you got them." So I do remember in – I believe the late '50s – that Furman made quite a good complete application to Phi Beta Kappa and based on at least having the men here – I don't know if the women were on this campus yet when that was approved – but they had a survey or whatever Phi Beta Kappa does and Furman did not receive a chapter. And I would say that was a disappointment for him. Why didn't they get it? And I remember two to three things that he told specifically. And what he did, is he did something about those so that next time there would be an application that would be accepted. The first concern was about financing football. Furman was spending the money for football, was not collecting gate revenues, didn't have a Paladin Club that was giving a lot of money. So the university, not able to pay its faculty and to do everything it needed to do to the level it needed to, was paying too much to football. So what he did is he put football scholarships on a needs only basis. I believe that's beginning in 1960 and that meant that it was a need only, it was not an automatic full scholarship for anything, it was a need based scholarship for football. Then one of the other complaints – and these were coming from Furman's 1930s consolidation with the Greenville Woman's College but were still carrying over – is they offered a program in home economics, they offered a program in secretarial science. And I remember particularly their talking about the home economics program. And it was popular because at that time the opportunities for young women beyond college were not that significant. I mean, many of them, they were wonderful mothers and housewives. There were opportunities professionally for teaching. And other than that there just for the most part...

Dr. Tollison: Some in nursing.

Mr. Plyler: Nursing, some. But there was just an occasional woman – I earlier mentioned Jim Perry, Miss Perry [James M. “Miss Jim” Perry]

Dr. Tollison: The attorney.

Mr. Plyler: Who earned her degree, an attorney. And I remember a woman who became a physician, I think out of the class of '37 or '38, who recently left her total estate to Furman. She was a dermatologist and professor at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Dr. Tollison: Do you remember her name?

Mr. Plyler: Yes, but I can't think of it now so I don't remember. I'll think of it again, it's on the tip of my...

Dr. Tollison: We'll fill it in later.

Mr. Plyler: But anyway, for the most part they weren't there. So the home economic courses were there and the big home economics school in the state was at Winthrop. It was tremendous in home economics. And, of course, Clemson was mostly male, or all male and military for a good part of that. And then secretarial science; there were tremendous secretaries. My father's secretary was a Furman graduate, I don't know their majors, but at least that course in typing and shorthand was available. And that's something you really saw in business schools, something like that, just sort of secretarial training schools, not necessarily in universities.

Dr. Tollison: Right.

Mr. Plyler: So, if you look, the home economics program never made it to this campus although the initial Furman Hall was built to be the practice lab for home economics.

Dr. Tollison: The central part of it

Mr. Plyler: The center part, the downstairs.

Dr. Tollison: Right.

Mr. Plyler: And so they were thinking of it even in the '50s, they hadn't done away with it, but after this survey they said we're going to get ready. So they really took care of the educational programs that were not of the standard that is accepted by Phi Beta Kappa and they also took care of football financing. So the next time around...

Dr. Tollison: Those problems were eliminated.

Mr. Plyler: Those problems and if there were some other less problems, I'm sure they were worked on too. Dr. Blackwell, on his coming to Furman, of course went through all this again, looking at it and even perfecting it further than the appeal requested. I think that the way it happens is Phi Beta Kappas who were already on campus as members of the faculty request that a chapter be established on campus and I think that's the way the chapters are actually formed.

Dr. Tollison: Yeah, there was a Phi Beta, they called themselves the Piedmont chapter, and it was all the members of Phi Beta Kappa that had been inducted at other institutions, graduate schools or undergraduate institutions and who were living in this area but were working at a university that didn't have a chapter. So it was the people, professors from Clemson and Furman who belonged to the Piedmont chapter who started to request, I believe, that Furman apply.

Mr. Plyler: Well of course Dr. Bonner [Francis W. Bonner] was Phi Beta Kappa.

Dr. Tollison: Right, and Dr. Blackwell [Gordon Williams Blackwell]

Mr. Plyler: But before that...

Dr. Tollison: Crabtree [John Henry Crabtree, Jr.].

Mr. Plyler: Hill [Phillip George Hill]. Crabtree. So there were a number of faculty who were already Phi Beta Kappa but from their education in other institutions that had Phi Beta Kappa.

Dr. Tollison: Right.

1:51:13

Mr. Plyler: Anyway, he did that initial work. He had the support and he gained the support of individuals who made a difference for Furman, and I'd say people like Roger Peace. And Roger Peace had been a Furman person but he really had to... Roger Peace was one of those people that could be a student there, that could not afford Furman. And it was before the days of scholarships to the level Furman has now. And my father could call Roger Peace and Roger Peace would somehow... the money would be provided for that student to attend Furman. And I actually know a person, or persons, by name who that occurred for. The same was true of Charlie Daniel – and I mentioned the other day but I don't think I ever got to it on there – how they first met. My father was coaching the basketball and baseball teams at Greenville High after his graduation from Furman. And at that time even between close towns teams traveled to away games on the train. So the Greenville High team traveled from Greenville to Anderson for a baseball game and the manager of the Anderson team was Charlie Daniel and he met the team at the train station.

Dr. Tollison: Hah!

Mr. Plyler: And I believe that was their first meeting.

Dr. Tollison: Okay, interesting.

Mr. Plyler: And later times when they met and when Charlie Daniel... Charlie Daniel actually got his big start in the Second World War when Greenville Army Air Base was to be developed. And he obtained a cost-plus building contract to build that. So you automatically had a major project and since it was cost-plus you automatically were going to get your profit margin which was whatever was the regional profit margin. And that really was his kick-off to this whole building empire. Tom Perkins with the Duke Endowment. Now Furman has always had relationships with the Duke Endowment. But my father with Tom Perkins, who was the chairman of the Duke Endowment, I think had a unique relationship that probably related to some additional moneys but – although they couldn't end up giving more than they did to Davidson – but some additional moneys from the endowment, but some real support and I wanted to mention something about that. And then the support of Bill and Charlie Gambrell of New York. Every time Furman wanted to have a meeting and invite some possible contributors in New York, he would call – probably Charlie would arrange most of them. And Charlie had gone to the Harvard Business School after my father had been to Harvard Law School. I think they had these dinner meetings a lot at the Harvard Club in New York and they would help in setting up meetings. But, I mentioned earlier, Bill Gambrell's assistance in getting the Upsher grant to fund McAlister auditorium. Bob Small [Robert S. Small] who was here in the Greenville area was a banker and then a textile man and one time he was president of Dan River Mills would help Furman in its campaigns and all, he was a graduate of the College of Charleston. And there are a number of other people like Mr. [McKeachen?] with South Carolina National Bank and others who were Furman supporters. Tom Hartness. He got Furman... Tom Hartness was on Furman's board and he... Tom Hartness – both Hartnesses – became interested in Furman through basketball and Frank Selvy and that. So, it was people like this that he interested in Furman and gained their support. I think it just strengthened the faculty and the people that he brought in after the Second World War. And, of course, a lot of this was not just with him but with Dean Tibbs [Albert Elias Tibbs] and later with Dean Bonner [Francis W. Bonner] and others all working together. I think that the reputation of Furman was enhanced. I think in 1950 Furman was accepted in the Southern University Conference. And this was a select group. Not every school was in that. And to be accepted in that was considered very good, that was a good group. And during the 50s they selected my father to be the president of the Southern University group. So he was elected by his peers in that group. In the early 50s football had gone absolutely crazy. One incident that I recorded – here again I don't know it for fact, I only know it from hearsay. In about 1943 I remember going to Sistine Stadium to a high school football game between Ashville High and Greenville High. And the star for Ashville High was a running back named Charlie Justice and he ran all over the field and through and around Greenville High. And Greenville High had what everybody thought was a pretty good team and I think Ashville won by fifty points. And so he ended up going in the service – Furman

didn't have a football team, program then. When the war ended and Furman was going to start football back, Bill Bailey, a Furman player from before the war, returning, was from Ashville also and he had known Charlie Justice. So he brought Charlie down to look at Furman and talk with them about maybe coming to play for Furman, to begin his college education after the war. And I don't know who or why, but something came around and somehow somebody said that Furman could pay him \$10,000 if he could come play for Furman. Now this is amateur sports. This is what I heard anyway. And he sort of laughed and said "Well they've already offered me \$25,000 at the University of South Carolina." And he ended up playing for the University of North Carolina. So I don't know if the bid was higher or if it was just he didn't study. But this was... College football you could say was in that. So the NCAA formed a national committee of college presidents to get their arms around some control of college football. And the NCAA named my father to that commission. Actually the president of that commission was from Michigan State. And I remember my father coming back from committees and saying it definitely – he was on it sort of representing smaller schools – but it was definitely influenced by the Michigan States, I guess, and the Big Ten type schools. But they still, they did some things and made recommendations to the NCAA that were adopted and cut out some of this that was going on in college football.

Dr. Tollison: Corruption.

Mr. Plyler: But he was also recognized though as the president from Furman on this NCAA committee. He was very interested in the library. And not only in building the new facility, but early on they started a much increased university contribution to the purchase of books and all every year. And that would probably look small by today's standards but it was a significant enhancement at that time. And, in fact, I believe they started using Duke University funds for that as one of the specified uses for the yearly donation. And I'd just say overall it was the way Furman was. There are no faculty members currently on Furman's faculty who were on the faculty when my father was president. There are several who came at the end of his term, maybe began in the fall of '64, and that would be Dr. Arrington [C.A. "Tony" Arrington] in chemistry and Dr. Aiesi [Donald P. Aiesi] in political science, Dr. Whisnant [Norman Everett Whisnant] I believe in German. There were several that came at that time.

PART NINE 1:59:34

Mr. Plyler: These professors particularly, I believe Dr. Aiesi had mentioned to me one time what a family type environment Furman was and I mean family between administration and faculty and the students and the whole relationship in the Furman family. And things that were just sort of done for individuals and between individuals, I think there was a very strong comfortable family feeling. And so I think this was good. And naturally as the student body expands, as the faculty expands, and as you have a lot of turnover, you lose some of those things. But it was a special environment that I think was important to Furman at that time.

Dr. Tollison: And is that largely a result of because a lot of the faculty were living together?

Mr. Plyler: I think that, I think it was just a good positive relationship. I mean they were not separated. We lived on campus, faculty lived on one side of us, faculty lived on the other. There is an article I have here written by Dr. Haight [Elmer Francis Haight] who was a religion professor that lived down the street; the notes that I have passed on to you by Dr. R.C. Blackwell [Reece Croxton Blackwell], he lived down the street. And so they sort of recount the sort of the personal relationships between family of the president and the dean and the professor and so it was just a close group.

Dr. Tollison: Mmm hmm. Gotcha.

2:01:18

Dr. Tollison: Any other major accomplishments that you'd like to mention?

Mr. Plyler: Well I think I've probably covered too much but there's several things I'd sort of like to enter in if I may.

Dr. Tollison: Sure. I'm going to have to change this tape out in about a minute.

Mr. Plyler: Well you may do with this what you like. These are the remarks by Dr. R.C. Blackwell at the faculty meeting recognizing my parents at the faculty banquet in March the fifth, 1964, and rather than read that, if you want to have a copy of that.

Dr. Tollison: I'll have a copy of that made, yes, thank you.

Mr. Plyler: And this is more of a general letter. It doesn't really mention a thing but this is a letter from Walter Byers, who was a long-term executive director of the NCAA, to my mother remembering my father when he died. This is interesting because the South Carolina Association of Colleges when my father was retiring did a "Whereas" type of proclamation for him, but the note at the bottom is written by really one of his good friends in that group who was Dr. George Grice that was president of the College of Charleston. And so this one actually came from Dr. Grice and has a little note by him at the bottom so if you would like to have that to look at.

Dr. Tollison: I will make a copy of this.

Mr. Plyler: And would note also at the time of his retirement the recognition that they received, not only from the faculty, but from the students and this is shown in the Greenville News and here's a picture with another and here's actually the article on the front page of the Greenville paper when the president of the student body was presenting them with a silver...