

## UNCG CENTENNIAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: William G. Lane

INTERVIEWER: Linda Danford

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[Begin Side A]

LD: Dr. Lane, can you tell me when you came to UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] and in what capacity?

WL: I came from Boulder, Colorado, to UNCG in January of 1969 and became head of the department on the first of February of 1969.

LD: Is that unusual to come in the middle of the year like that?

WL: It is somewhat. The reason I had to do that is that I had been on leave of absence from Colorado and had to give them back the semester that they required to make up for the leave obviously. Hence, I came here in the middle of the year.

LD: They brought you here to be the chairman of the department?

WL: The head of the department. Two terms are to be distinguished. That is, some departments, I think, have chairs and some have heads.

LD: Oh, I see.

WL: And even in English, we shifted from head to chair and back to head just recently.

LD: And what do you see as the distinction between the two?

WL: The head, when I came, was indefinite tenure. That is to say, there was no prescribed limit. Now I understand there's a five-year appointment which is renewable, but not thereafter. I was twelve and a half years as head. Mr. [Dr. Richard] Bardolph, in history as you know, was decades, and I think [Dr. Herman] Middleton in drama-speech was there for decades also. Perhaps Mr. [Dr. Eldon] Posey in math as well. So there was a striking change that was, to a large extent I think, brought about when the College of Arts and Sciences was created because that was created the same year I came.

LD: So there were administrative changes that took place as a result?

- WL: There were major administrative changes because, at worst, the headship was spoken of as fiefdoms, and the departments were very, some of them, very powerful. There were others that I think were weaker and especially the smaller ones, and so the changeover within the structure of the college itself was one of the major changes. And then the change from head to chairs and so on was a natural occurrence after that.
- LD: So you'd say that the power of the chairman or head of the department has certainly decreased since you've been here?
- WL: Oh, I think so. And it's not that there was such overt power before. It's just that there were certain major decisions and major actions that were taken, frequently without the advice even of a committee of any kind. In the Department of English, for example, we had no standing committee as we do now. Whatever they call it, the Administrative Council or something of that sort. Which is an elected body and rightly so. So that, as a matter of fact, was instituted after I had stepped aside, and [Dr. Robert] Bob Stephens became the head.
- LD: So then, decisions, for instance, of promotion and tenure were being made by the chairman?
- WL: Salary, promotion, tenure—all of these things were to a large extent centered in the person of the head. Not solely, to be sure, and it would have been a foolish head indeed who failed to get the advice of his senior members. And as a matter of fact, you speak of tenure and promotion—those matters were required to be consensus from the person senior to the candidate, I guess was the way it was worded.
- LD: So it was based on some sort of vote?
- WL: Well, any assistant professor, for example, going to associate professor would be reviewed by all the associate and full professors in the department. That would be a vote that may or may not have been reported to the dean, the actual number of votes, but the up or down, as we used to call it, the up or down was recorded, of course.
- LD: When you came, what would you say were the focuses of the department?
- WL: Largely different because the PhD [doctor of philosophy] program was quite new. And there was another major change as well, and that is that the senior people who were there had just retired. Miss Jane Summerell [1910 diploma, Class of 1923, 1978 honorary degree], who was a wonderful [English] professor, Miss May Bush [English professor]. There was a chairman named [Dr. James] Painter, I think, whom I did not know. But the immediate predecessor of mine was [Dr.] Joe Bryant, who left for another school, hence the opening, which I came to fill.
- The PhD program, as I say, was new. It still had to evolve, which meant that there were many new courses to be arranged. It meant that even the library holdings would have to be more carefully scrutinized and brought up to standard for the particular courses that we wanted to do. The other thing that we had to become accustomed to was the clientele; that is to say, those graduate students who would, in fact, work with us instead of, say, going to [University of North Carolina at] Chapel Hill, or to Wake Forest [University, Winston

Salem, North Carolina], or wherever the choice might be. For that reason, we had quite a few commuters, graduate students. We also had students who were faculty in other schools; that is, some as far away as Salisbury and Asheville [both North Carolina] and that sort of thing.

LD: Did the department see those—that type of individual as being the audience at which this PhD program was aimed?

WL: No, I don't think there was a direct connection there. I suppose it's right to say that what we had was a more traditional kind of PhD program. That is to say, we didn't at that time deliberately try to structure it in any surprisingly original fashion or any particular emphasis because, in part, what we did was simply build on the faculty who were already here and those that we brought in. And I mean by that, those schools from which our own faculty came obviously shaped the thought and the desires of our faculty program itself. So that we had people from Yale [University, New Haven, Connecticut]; we had people from Princeton [University, Princeton, New Jersey]; we had people from [University of] Texas [Austin, Texas]. There was a good diversity in that sense. And most of those people had come through traditional programs, and therefore—

LD: Can you tell me what you mean by traditional?

WL: Well, the language requirements, for example; the diversity of activity in the various fields without undue, without undue—

LD: Specialization?

WL: —specialization to anyone. That, of course, became the subject for the dissertations, specialization, finally. But until then, the fields had to be covered. There was the option, I think, of dropping maybe one or two out of the group. I've forgotten the exact number. It seems to me there were maybe six, seven, something of that sort. The writing program at that time was a factor with the PhD program because the MFA [master of fine arts], of course, was one of the first in the country, well-established students from all around. And those students would frequently be taking the courses that were not necessarily to be called PhD program courses, but nevertheless that developed within the department in part to supply that program. So that it was not just the PhD students, but the MFA students as well who participated largely in those other courses.

LD: Can you say something about your relationship with the administration during the period that you were head of the English department?

WL: Well, that has changed so radically, as you must know, as well. In those days, there were really two people on campus who seemed to run the whole thing. One was Chancellor [James S.] Ferguson and the other was Mereb Mossman, whose title when I first came—I'm not sure of whether it was dean or whether it was something more glorified than that. [Sociology and Anthropology faculty, dean of instruction, dean of the college, dean of faculty, vice chancellor for academic affairs]

LD: I think she was academic dean. Well, she certainly started out as being the dean.

WL: And then she became the vice chancellor, maybe, for academic affairs, something of this kind.

LD: That was an office that was established before she retired?

WL: She certainly changed titles, and I think if not that particular title, then she had another one. It was not just dean. The other thing—as I say, there were not a great many administrators. Now you do have to remember that keeping pace with all of this was the growth of the school itself because we must have changed from something like five thousand to ten thousand in the period that I'm speaking of and obviously the need for certain kinds of administrators. The dean of the college, for example you see, was a brand new administrator at the same time I came and there's—perhaps the best example I can give you, though it does seem to me now that with the chancellor and the vice chancellors that we have there's been a proliferation, and I think, frankly, some faculty feel too much so in that regard. Whether they're all necessary is more than I can say.

LD: Well that's a comment that I have heard before, I will tell you. Certainly the administration more than doubled?

WL: Yes. I'm sure of that.

LD: And could you tell me some more about Mereb Mossman? She's quite a colorful figure.

WL: She's a remarkable woman, really. And on top of everything else, the poor dear, I think almost at first when I arrived, she was struck by her own car which had begun to back and broke her leg, and so much of her administrative work was done from the hospital bed there at the clinic. But she took all of that in stride. She was a real trouper. She was a forceful woman, and I think knew very well how to, what shall I say, manipulate people—at any rate, to bend them to her cause. She was obviously, for that reason, both popular and, what shall I say, somewhat unpopular. She certainly had her champions and her detractors.

LD: What was her cause?

WL: Well, I mean by that, her particular emphasis for this university. She was—in those days too, remember—I've forgotten the actual date that's involved here, but in those days, the student body was mainly female, and not only that, Chapel Hill would not admit freshmen and sophomores who were female and, therefore, many of them would start here, then transfer out as juniors and go to Chapel Hill. The student body was somewhat different then. It was—I have no idea what SAT [scholastic aptitude test] scores were, if they were used at that moment, things of that kind. I couldn't possibly give you statistics of the change, but I think there was a somewhat different quality to the student at large, I should say.

LD: I presume you mean higher quality?

- WL: Yes. And then after Chapel Hill started admitting female students as freshmen, you could see something of the change that came about. Then, of course, there is the minority problem and the emphasis on attracting, rightly so, the different students, black and others. And that has been, of course—the number of men increased tremendously. And one of the sharper memories I have is when the first male ran for student body president and the outcry over that event because the women were surrendering their power and potential and so forth.
- LD: There probably hasn't been a female student body president since.
- WL: Since then. As I say, I've forgotten what date that is, but all of that was involved.
- LD: Did you have some sense of her vision for the—
- WL: Oh, to come back to Mereb. There was a rather quaint custom in those days. I guess that's one way of putting it. One of the first impressions I had when I came was the incredibly large number of committees college-wide here. I don't know why there were so many, but it seemed to me—
- LD: More than today?
- WL: Oh, I think so. I think so because there's been some combining, probably. But that was the first thing that struck me—just the sheer number of committees that were everywhere, it seemed to me. The other thing, the quaint thing that I was referring to, is that at the very beginning of each academic year, Mereb Mossman, with the chancellor present as an invited guest, would have all of the heads and chairs for an all-day session, and we would have lunch together, and various people would speak, and Mereb would sort of block out the vision stuff as President [George H.W.] Bush [41<sup>st</sup> president of the United States] might call it now. And she would give us some idea of what we could look forward to. This would, of course, include the budget. This would include any construction plans that were involved. This would include the possibility of adding faculty. I don't think we ever lost faculty during those days; that is, from the budget crunch or anything of that sort. There may have been a year or two when we did have a budget freeze. I've forgotten what year that was. Sometime in the earlier '70s, I think there was a period in which there was no pay increase at all. So that sort of thing is what took place. That was dropped eventually. Why, I'm not sure.
- LD: Size of the faculty, perhaps?
- WL: I would dare say. And I still think it's something of a quaint, a quaint notion.
- LD: Do you think it was useful?
- WL: No, I don't think it made any real difference. It was useful in the sense that somebody new could meet his fellow colleagues and get better acquainted that way. It at least put the faculty members from the departments with the administration, so that there was an easy chance to ask questions and have clarifications. Yes, I guess it was useful in that sense. But I don't remember any striking occasion—that there was any particular occasion when

something so important was done or said or discussed that it made a big difference during that year.

LD: If she was such a forceful administrator, what were these committees doing? Were they advising her, or was she—was that to give people the illusion that they were participating in decisions?

WL: Well, I'm not quite sure which is the right answer for that. Certainly it was more than an illusion that they participating because there was a lot of committee work that went on and a lot of reports. Unfortunately, the person who could best have informed you about all of this because it was she who helped rewrite the governance document, is Amy Charles [professor English literature], who died some years ago. And Amy, I think, made a personal campaign to see that these committees functioned as they were supposed to, that their reports were accurate and full and turned in on time, and that sort of thing. But as—I served on the graduate committee; and I served, of course, on the heads association, whatever we called it then; the library committee. I think these were the three that I had the most to do with personally. And all of the others were, to a large extent, a matter of faculty governance and participation in the running of the University.

LD: How about James Ferguson?

WL: The word that is always used about James Ferguson is gentle. He was a gentleman, a southern gentleman. He was a dear fellow. He was not, I think, a forceful, strong leader, if you will think of it in terms of that. For example, if you think in terms of someone like [John] Silber [American academician and candidate for public office] at Boston University [president and chancellor] now, you have as about as far a different character from James Ferguson as you could ever come up with.

LD: Well, Silber is outright controversial.

WL: Yes. Yes. But I just mean, as an obvious extreme, there's the other kind. Ferguson, I think, stood in very good stead with the [General] Administration [of the North Carolina University System] in Chapel Hill, and I think he therefore was quite successful as a chancellor on this campus. I don't know how hard he pushed for certain kinds of things; construction, for example, development of certain kinds of programs, things of this kind. The Department of English, as I say, had already been through its changeover when I came, and we were developing our own new interest, the PhD program and things of that sort, so that we didn't have ourselves with the administration any kind of contest or difficulty. The meetings that he held, which were in, by the way, in the basement of this building down in the Jarrell Lecture Hall to give you some idea again of size of faculty and change. They were sort of, for the most part, good-natured things. There would be some discussion along the way of new programs, such as the Residential College [first living-learning community on campus], things of that sort. Ferguson didn't take strong positions himself, but he worked mainly through consensus. And this was my understanding of the faculty council also, which, of course, I was on.

- LD: I've heard some faculty have commented that they think that UNCG over the years has operated in a shadow of Chapel Hill. And do you feel that the University—?
- WL: Well I think that's an inevitable opinion if you go around talking about Chapel Hill as the flagship campus, you see. This—that means everybody else is in the wake of Chapel Hill and, of course, in the old days the tripartite arrangement. It was Chapel Hill, [North Carolina] State [University, Raleigh, North Carolina], and this school, which was the Woman's College [of the University of North Carolina], and that gave us the status before my time. That, of course, is different now, quite different. The difference, too, is in sheer size, twice the student body there than there is here. That also has the added business of the medical school and the law school and all this kind of thing, so that even Chapel Hill as a place—tends to attract and have certain advantages that this campus doesn't. But as far as the actual academic programs are concerned, I should say, and especially an undergraduate could in some ways get a better education here than he or she would at Chapel Hill. I say this partly because my own son went to Chapel Hill, and I remember with horror the fact that in his math class he had a Chinese student, a graduate student, as his instructor. They complained to the head of the department, and the department head said because they had a budget problem, this was the only staff they had and they could either drop the course or stay with this student.
- LD: And the problem was communication?
- WL: And she couldn't communicate at all. My son, I think, made a D in the course. This was his first semester, and that was sort of hard to take because after that his performance was perfectly satisfactory. He went on to get a master's in Asian Studies at another university. So the fault was not solely his.
- LD: So you think it was not a fault of weak leadership at UNCG that accounted for this second-rate status.
- WL: Oh, I don't think that at all. And I don't know exactly which group you are quoting now. There are enough snobs at Chapel Hill so that they would think of it that way, but then I think they would think of all the other fifteen schools in the system as being also-rans compared to them. If you think in terms of the diversity of the student body and things of that sort, then, you see, there's no real comparison. But just on an academic basis, even such things you see as athletics with their football and their basketball and this, that and the other, there's obviously going to be a different tone to the campus or a different feel about it and therefore a different way, I suppose, in which the students themselves would talk about it. But I think, so far as I know, that the faculty here would not easily go along with that evaluation, that we were simply—
- LD: Well, I wouldn't say that I've heard the opinion expressed that we were second rate, but simply that we may have been treated in terms of budget allotments somewhat less favorably than we might have if we'd had a stronger voice representing us in Chapel Hill
- WL: That's possible, of course. And—

LD: If we were, for instance, one of three universities that were at the top, so to speak, and then when the University [System] expanded to sixteen campuses, there's the feeling that UNCG, State and Chapel Hill remained where they were in status, but we dropped to the level of the lowest of the other sixteen. In other words, we all sort of started at ground zero and—

WL: But remember that because of the doctoral programs here the FTE [full-time equivalent] ratio; that is, student to faculty, was always to our advantage compared to those other schools than State and Chapel Hill. I don't know whether ours was exactly the equivalent of theirs, but it was certainly close enough so that we were in that—and there's where the real priority lay, I think.

LD: I think that's still true because there's still a faculty on campus [unclear].

WL: But I think you're right that no one ever pounded a table with his shoe in asking for things for UNCG. Whether that would have been smart at the time, I don't know. The few times—when I was on the graduate council and we met in Chapel Hill, I saw inaction. People from those other schools and people like the administrators of the university system, they would not be an easy crew to topple over, I can tell you that. I think you would have had to have a great deal of persuasive power, however strongly and loudly you might speak, in order to bend them. I think in that sense, if we are thinking again in terms of James Ferguson, I think James, by definition such a gentleman and a quiet man, would not have fit that bill at all, you see, and he couldn't have pounded the table. He just wasn't cut out of that cloth. But they had respect for him. I suppose it's partly the sort of thing that still goes on—the contest for fair share, if you want to think of it that way. The other thing that was involved, I happened to remember and it looms large. I've forgotten exactly the dates of it again, but that's East Carolina's [University, Greenville, North Carolina] rise, especially with its medical school. And that was a sore debating point for several years, and I think, to a certain extent, a reason why the other schools other than State and Chapel Hill, suffered from the budget crunch because there was the strong leader. He was a master politician.

LD: Who?

WL: What was his name?

LD: I didn't mean to put you on the spot.

WL: Jenkins, wasn't that his name? [Editor's note: Dr. Leo Jenkins]

LD: I don't know.

WL: Well, you must get this detail, and I'm embarrassed but I'm pretty sure that was his name. He was chancellor there and through his influence in the legislature, they voted them a new medical school at East Carolina. Well, that did it.

LD: Let me go back to your department for a second. Did the development of a PhD program have an effect, either adverse or negative or positive, on the MFA program? Did those



programs compete in any way?

WL: I don't think the influence was adverse at all. I think the students in the MFA program benefited because the PhD program was there and vice-versa. The students in the MFA program, I think, keep getting—well, I started to say they keep getting better. I don't know that's a fair evaluation because they've always been good students; some more interested in academic work, obviously, than others who are too self-centered, I'd say, in their writing itself. So rather than an adverse effect, I think that in a sense I'm trying to say is that both programs had to accommodate the other. That is, each had to accommodate the other, and that includes the particular interests of the students as well as the curriculum. But I would say it's a symbiotic relationship; that they both profit from the others' presence.

LD: You were also for a time, the chairman, were you not, of the classics department after [Dr.] [Francis] Frank Laine died?

WL: That was after Frank Laine died. First there was [Dr. Richard] Bardolph [history professor], and then there was [Dr.] Ann Saab from history and then I took it for a couple of years and then I think Dean [Robert] Miller asked me to stay another two, and so I did. It affected such a small department that it was easy enough to accommodate the request. But there again would be a fairly good example of the small department with even an acting head or an acting chair who had quite a bit of influence in such matters as tenure, promotion, and salary increments, that kind of thing. Well, you had three or four people only in a department. It's not easy to have a committee and that, so you don't have many who are senior to the others, as it were. And so, in that sense, more responsibility, I suppose, would fall on the acting chair or acting head. But I enjoyed it thoroughly. There were wonderful people in that department. [Dr. J. Douglas] Doug Minyard, of course, was a great loss to us. And [Dr.] Susan [Shelmerdine] and [Dr. Jeffrey] Soles and the others are just fine people, I think, and I enjoyed them entirely. The other thing that was interesting at the time, was the— what did they call them?—those self-evaluations or something that the departments had to put out. Sorry, I've forgotten the name of that, even, at the moment. But we wrote the document together, and that's how I got to know them even better than I suppose I otherwise would because we would sit around a table and try to hash out what the department was doing and had done and stood for and wanted to do and all of that kind of thing. And as I remember, each of them would write a piece of it, and I may have written one or two paragraphs, I don't know. But that was interesting, certainly, and a chance to learn something more about them and how they function.

LD: Could you reminisce a little bit about Frank Laine?

WL: Frank's main difficulties occurred before we came here. And I mean by that whatever it was that occasioned some physical discomfort for him and some difficulties of one sort or another. Frank and my wife always got along wonderfully well. She would invite him to any parties that we had, and his behavior was exemplary. He was just marvelous. He seemed to appreciate being included. We would frequently take rides together and go off on a picnic somewhere or something of that sort—Jugtown, to the pottery places, or something of that kind. I think Frank was a very bright person, and my guess is he was a very good teacher. I

never did hear him lecture us, now that I think about it. I'm not sure why. I don't know that he ever gave a public lecture that I might have attended, but my guess is that he would have let somebody sit in on one of his classes if we had asked, something of that kind. He had very high standards, and I think people knew that. One of the difficulties for him seemed to be finding the right people to bring to his department who would fit in with everything here and then be kept, so that there was rather considerable turnover at first. But these were somewhat lean days for Latin instruction.

LD: It was a one-man department for quite a long time.

WL: Yes. Yes. And again, to be personal about it, my son's experience at Smith High School [Greensboro, North Carolina], where we practically had to beg them to put in a Latin course or keep a second-year Latin course or something of that sort because there was just no demand for such students. And there again, it would be a student frequently, who was teaching, rather than a real, fully-qualified person. That turned for the better and that is—in the school system that got better, and I think Frank was able to do something there as well. Then he brought in succession the people I mentioned a moment ago. Minyard and Soles and Susan. Then the real die was cast because the right people had been found, and they were contributing in a good way. [pause] I don't know. It would be hard to evaluate Frank any more than I've done. I don't know that he ever published anything as a scholar, and so there's no record there that would bear it out. But I do know of his own high standards and his respect for intelligence and for scholarship and education.

LD: Can you say something about your general impressions of UNCG over the years? What sorts of things have been rewarding to you and perhaps what—where there any disappointments?

WL: Well, it was a wonderful group of people that I worked with, and some I had the pleasure of helping to bring here. We lost very few, really. As I mentioned, those who had retired just before I came, so that suddenly I was the oldest person in the department which was all right too. But it meant that a lot of very promising young people were coming in. Jim Applewhite, the [American] poet [professor emeritus of creative writing at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina], was here. He had come from Duke with [Fred] Chappell [creative writing professor and North Carolina poet laureate] and the others. Jim Wimsatt [author, English professor], the Tulsa scholar, who left us to go to Texas because he wanted a larger pond, frankly, to operate in. But except for one or two things like that, those who came very much wanted to stay here, and they contributed very well. It's again, as I mentioned earlier, a well—the universities of the country are well represented. They blend well.

If you remember the '60s—oh, you're too young to, but at any rate, 1968, as you remember, was quite a volatile year. It all started at [University of California at] Berkeley, of course, and spread. I happened to be in London [England] in May of that year, and that's when Danny the Red [Daniel Cohn-Bendit, student leader of unrest] at the Sorbonne [University of Paris] pulled his tricks. They pulled up the cobblestones and threw at [unclear]. Factionalism was strong in the department at [University of] Colorado [Boulder, Colorado] to be frank about it.

And when I came here, it seemed remarkably unified and consensual. It's not that we

didn't disagree on certain matters, but everybody was so very civil and decent about any sort of disagreement. There were no power structures to worry about and things of that sort, so that the department was harmonious in that regard. The changing and expanding curriculum was something that gave them also a chance, I think, to make contributions. Add a course that somebody had particularly wanted to teach for a long time and hadn't had a chance to, something of that sort. It became somewhat immediately necessary to make sure that the women in the department were fairly treated as far as, of course, courses were concerned and the increments.

The old publish or perish bugaboo, of course, is always to be found in a university. I don't know whether you've had occasion to see it or not, but the Modern Language Association [MLA] is now circulating a questionnaire, and three or four of the questions have to do exactly with this. This is the first time in eighteen years that the Modern Language Association has polled its membership, which, as you know, is huge. Ten thousand go to the conventions. One of the questions is to publish or perish. "Is too much attention given to research and publishing and not enough to teaching? Do you agree strongly, or do you not agree?" Or this, that, and the other. It'll never be resolved, I think. Here the undergraduate teaching has always been emphasized. It was re-emphasized by Dean Miller when the college was created, and that's why I think it's fair to say that an undergraduate could probably get a better education than he or she could at Chapel Hill because more attention would be paid and more opportunities to work with senior professors. This has always been a point. That is, even in English some of them would teach composition, that sort of thing.

What else about the department? The sociability, it seemed to me, was something that was in nice balance. That is to say, there were not only not factions, but there were not cliques and things of that sort. They were all friends. Some you'd see more often than others socially and that kind of thing, but still no difficulty there. The pleasure of working with students, both graduate and undergraduate, is something that I would cherish and look forward to again in the spring semester—just the chance to talk a little theory with these students. And I miss the colleagues, the association with them. I've seen the school grow. The campus, of course, has changed as radically as everything else around here. We're sitting in what was the library; the tower, of course, was added later. And you can imagine what a change that was all at once. The Mossman Building is new. The Graham Building is new. The new [Weatherspoon Art] Museum is only the latest of several things. That's obviously transformed the school, and I think all of that's important because somehow the physical plant itself helps set the tone inevitably. Now with the change to athletics to [National Collegiate Athletic Association] Division I, I don't know whether that's going to be a good or a bad change, but it will certainly affect us all. And you notice, if nothing else, it's going to increase the amount of scholarships. I think already they've got a hundred thousand dollars or something of that sort for student athletes. So that will be of interest.

LD: So you think [Chancellor William] Moran has pursued a proper course in expanding the size of the physical plant?

WL: Well, even that was somewhat controversial because of the land grabs that got involved. I do think that planning, the major plan, overall plan, whatever it's called, is essentially right in defining the boundaries of the University. That is, you do simply have to have Oakland

[Avenue] and Aycock [Street] and [West] Market [Street] and these other because they are the natural boundaries of the campus. Whether the right buildings are in the right place within all of that is something else again. I wouldn't argue. And whether they are all attractive buildings is something else again too. But they were all sorely needed. There was no doubt of that. And I trust the alumni will remain faithful and devoted and continue to contribute because, the athletics aside, that's where the scholarships are still needed badly and the funding which has to come.

LD: I assume that they settled their current—

WL: Yes. That's unfortunate, and I'm not completely aware of the details, so I can't discuss it sensibly. I wouldn't try to. I simply understand the basic problem. I don't know what the answer to that one is.

LD: What is your impression of student interests over the past twenty years? Have they changed a great deal? Was there any activity on campus in the late '60s, early '70s of a political nature?

WL: That is one thing that I think you have to give James Ferguson full credit for, he and [Reverend James H.] Allen, his vice chancellor or whatever he was, dean of students, something at the time [campus minister, dean of students, vice chancellor of student affairs]. Students from Chapel Hill and State and elsewhere would come on to this campus and try to revolutionize. And this was largely a girls' school still, you see, at that time, and they didn't succeed. And one of the main reasons they didn't succeed, I'm convinced and everybody else agrees I think, is that James Ferguson and Allen immediately started holding open discussions in Aycock Auditorium, and anybody who wanted to say anything could and did. And the girls and the few men who were here at the time simply refused to be radicalized. And so we didn't have—try to shut down the University or this kind of thing or occupy one of the buildings as they did at Colorado. They got rid of the graduate dean there by simply occupying his building and not letting him in. And that's what I meant earlier by referring to the sort of factions and the disturbances to come from that here and then see the different way in which it was handled here. Now maybe the fact that it was so much smaller was an advantage, and maybe the fact that they caught it early or that the radicalization didn't actually start on this campus itself, but was trying to come in.

All of that helped them, but I give Ferguson full credit for that. His openness and his willingness to meet with anybody anytime, and, if you remember, he lived on campus and so it was not unusual for people to knock on his door at 4 am and disturb him. So much so, that when, as a matter of fact, the change was to be made, the first recommendation I made, because I was on the committee that chose the new chancellor, and the first recommendation that I made was that the chancellor's home become the Faculty Club, and that another home be provided for the chancellor because that's what had happened at Colorado also. The president's home was unbearable in the '60s, and so they had to move him and turn that into a faculty club. And I still think it's in many ways unfortunate that that couldn't be done. That is one of the—speaking of buildings and so on—that, I think, is one of the things that would benefit this University a great deal, and that is to have a faculty club, where you could have more of the amenities and more chance to be together and to have meals and to have guests,

and things of that sort. What we have instead is this kind of thing, farmed out in two or three different places. But that was a wonderful chance. And I couldn't convince enough people.

LD: That's interesting. I've heard the Morans discuss the pros and cons of living on campus. I think Barbara Moran [his wife] would just as soon not be here.

WL: Not be here. I'm sure.

LD: Much as she is involved in things, activities on campus and the life of the University.

WL: Well it must have been very hard for the children too.

LD: I think that's what she mainly meant. But, of course, you don't often get a chancellor with young children as the Morans had.

WL: But it was a wonderful opportunity that they got missed. That was the sad thing as far as I was concerned.

LD: It sounds like a wonderful thing idea to me too. I am surprised and disappointed that they didn't—I want to turn my tape over, if you don't mind.

[End Side A—Begin Side B]

LD: Do you feel that there's less intimacy among the faculty considerably now than there was when you first came? And is that a big defect or is it not?

WL: I'm a little hesitant to answer since I'm now retired and therefore am not with my former colleagues the way I once was. I do think—

LD: I mean outside the department. I don't mean within the department. I think there still is a fair amount of—

WL: Yes. Yes. It would be safe for me to say that that was declining certainly over the time that I was here. And after ten years, the school had grown, let's say, to a much larger size; new faculty coming in all the time. We simply didn't meet; we didn't know each other. And frequently, literally, you could see somebody and not even know who he was or what department he or she might be in, this kind of thing. I don't think there's quite that cohesiveness that was there at one time. I don't know to what extent that relates to Schools and College. I don't think there's any built-in animosity or anything of that sort among the groups. I don't think they—well, they do compete, of course, for certain advantages or certain elements such as budget and this kind of thing, position and the rest of it. But I don't think that's, in any sense, overt, crippling to the University. Just—some of it is just good healthy competition. But I don't see any evidence of a great of intercourse among the faculty like that now. I think it was stronger at one point.

- LD: Well I agree that a faculty center, somewhat more elaborate than the one that we currently have, would be a big help.
- WL: Well that's it, you see. Then you wouldn't have to use the Dogwood Room [in Elliott University Center] solely, or you wouldn't have the little faculty center, and you could have a different—it would attract—in other words, you see, if the ambience was there. It could attract people and with a guest or whatever. It's a great—it was a great chance missed. I was proud of that suggestion, but they didn't take it. [laughs]
- LD: Well, I'm glad you got it on the tape. Maybe that will remind someone at some later date. What was your personal—your own field? What are you going to be teaching in the spring?
- WL: Victorian literature at the 500 level. The nineteenth-century British is my special interest with, I suppose, [John] Keats, the favorite of the Romantics and perhaps [Thomas] Hardy now, if I can claim him as a Victorian. He is a special interest to me at the moment, especially because of some new work I've seen on Hardy that's being done. Poetry, in particular, as distinct, say, from the novel and the essayist. You can't divorce any of these from the field itself. The critical theory, the new thing, I have nothing to do with, and I'm in many ways grateful that I don't have to have anything to do with it.
- LD: You mean deconstruction, that sort of thing?
- WL: Yes. Because I think it's—well, an even more still critical theory, you see, the whole business of textuality I think has become—at its worst, it's absurd. It's absolutely absurd. And it requires a jargon that certainly is foreign to idiomatic English itself, and I think the practitioners are making it impossible except for certain freewheeling students to participate in it. It seems to me something that's going to correct itself very, very quickly. It very much has to. And there again, I mentioned the MLA questionnaire. This is the kind of question, again, that is on there; too much attention to theory, too much this, that, and the other, as distinct from the more conventional academic approach; cultural studies instead of history, you see, is another way of thinking of this. And opening up the cannon, so that you have to have, as it were, a quota of somebody. You have to have different literatures and things. This is unfortunate, I think, because it's not based on the scholarship, as such, but instead it seems to me, to introduce other factors that are there. Not that such things couldn't be taught, but that is a substitute for—
- LD: Or as a criterion.
- WL: Yes. As a criterion—just won't work.
- LD: Do you think that will pass?
- WL: I think it's got to because it can't survive. Some of it will drop of its own weight. It—simply a dead fruit on the tree.

LD: Have you been following the controversy at Duke?

WL: That is wild. I taught at Duke in early—'52 to '56, and so I knew the other faculty. Many of them were there. Now many of them retired, of course, a few dead even. And this is a new breed altogether. And I've seen several write-ups of the kind of thing they do. It's amusing and amazing.

LD: And somewhat undignified.

WL: Well, it's hysterical rather than historical is a part of the trouble. And I'm told that Stanford [University, Palo Alto, California] is, to a large extent, suffering the same woes. I wasn't sure of that, but—

LD: Of course, that's in California. [laughs] Would you like to add anything?

WL: Well, I'm missing a good opportunity to tell you something, but I'm not exactly sure what it is I should be telling. If you ask me have I enjoyed my twenty-two years here, certainly I have. They've been very rewarding and very fine, and I've met and become friends with a lot of wonderful people. The University has been good to me, and I want to try to give them back something, so for that reason what we did was establish a scholarship in the history department in my son's name, and that is now funded adequately, so that the Richard Lane Scholar is appointed every semester, and we are delighted with what's developed there. And then I'd also wanted on my retirement, though I had to delay it because of my son's scholarship, to found, to establish, one in the English department. And we've done that now, so that the first William and Kate Hodge Lane [his wife] fellow will be appointed in the spring semester for 1990-91 academic year. And that is satisfying and pleasant to think about.

LD: I'm sure it is. It's a wonderful idea.

WL: Well, it, as I say, I wanted to give back something. But, if nothing else, it's a counterweight to the athletic scholarships, you see. [they laugh] Not in the amount necessary, but at least it's a start—that sort of thing.

LD: Very good idea. Well, I appreciate your time, and I've enjoyed the interview.

WL: Certainly. Thank you.

[End of Interview]