Ted De Laney

July 31, 1996

Mame Warren, interviewer

Warren: This is Mame Warren. Today is the thirty-first of July 1996. I'm in Lexington, Virginia, with Ted De Laney, who probably has worn as many hats at Washington and Lee as pretty much anybody. Did you grow up in Lexington?

De Laney: Yes.

Warren: So asking you what your earliest memory of Washington and Lee is probably goes back pretty far.

De Laney: Yes, it goes back to when I was a small boy. I can remember Sunday afternoons when we were children. One of the real high times was going to Lee Chapel to look at Traveller's skeleton, which was on display in the basement of the chapel. So, yeah, it's a long time ago.

Warren: Was it really carved up and had initials in it?

De Laney: No, not that I recall. In fact, the skeleton was in a glass case. I'm sure there are confusions, because there used to be a fully assembled camel skeleton in the biology department that did have initials on it and, in spite of the hump, there used to be people who thought it was Traveller, but it wasn't. In fact, the biology department used to have quite a collection of mammalian skeletons that were fully articulated or, that is, assembled. Now and then, there were people who didn't realize that horses couldn't possibly be shaped like that. They would think this camel was a horse. [Laughter]

Warren: What do you mean they "used to have"? What happened to all of them?

De Laney: I don't know what happened to the camel. I know it was still there when I worked in the biology department, but things like that became a storage problem. But Traveller, of course, was after the chapel was renovated, I guess it was President Huntley at the time, perhaps it was President Cole, I can't recall, but whichever, didn't think that the renovated chapel was the appropriate place for a horse skeleton, and I agree. For a while, Traveller was stored under a dormitory, and the *Richmond Times Dispatch* got hold of that and there was some controversy about Traveller being in a place of dishonor.

The university asked the biology department to take Traveller, and the head of the department at the time, an older man named Kenneth Porter Stevens, decided that he didn't want Traveller in the biology department, because every little old lady from the Confederacy would be traipsing around the biology department complaining that Traveller didn't have a place of honor there. So the university ultimately buried Traveller on the campus. I think the grave is somewhere near the chapel, although I'm not sure. But in any case, that's what happened to that skeleton.

But the other large skeletons that were at the campus, I guess at one time they were on display somewhere that the public used to see. I don't recall. But I don't know what the biology department did to dispose of them, but certainly they were occupying space that the department needed for other things.

Warren: I've seen pictures of them and I was curious about what happened to all of them. It will remain a mystery.

All right. You're this little boy going to see Traveller. What else do you remember? Was it a playground? Was the campus a playground for you?

De Laney: No. The campus was not a playground and, in fact, I don't know, I think the campus was—well, I'm not sure what I think of the campus from that part of my life. My family was pretty restrictive on us as far as our whereabouts were concerned when we were children. Maybe on Sunday afternoon we might do something like that. But

generally, we would not have been permitted to be across town on the W&L campus. But I grew up not far from the campus. In fact, I was born and most of my childhood was spent just around the corner from where the Visitors Center is now. In fact, our family house, which looks pretty bad at this point, which was rented, I guess, to students, the address was 7 Tucker Street. It's right behind presently where Dr. Crew's office is.

So the other memory of Washington and Lee are the fraternities that were there, that were close by our house, the Pi Phi House, the SAE House. Of course, growing up close to fraternities was a little fun, because where our parents might have been unhappy with the music keeping them awake, I can remember, as teenagers, we weren't unhappy at all. It was great fun to lay in bed at night and listen to rock bands.

But nonetheless, there was also the reality that Washington and Lee was a segregated campus, and even though it was close by, and even though the fraternities were our neighbors, there was that invisible line there that was not crossed in the fifties when I was growing up, or even in the early sixties. I finished high school in 1961, and the idea of getting a degree from Washington and Lee in 1961 is an impossibility for a black kid in Lexington. There also was the reality that as close as the vestiges of Washington and Lee were, Washington and Lee was many, many, many miles away in a different sense.

Warren: So did your family have any economic ties with Washington and Lee?

De Laney: Not exactly. At one point in my mother's life, in a very, very short period in my mother's life, she had been a maid at a fraternity house. I'm not so sure that she did that more than a year, and I'm not really so sure why. My mother's family was sort of unusual. My mother was one of six girls, and even though my grandmother was college-educated, she didn't work, and my grandfather was a barber. He taught all of his daughters how to be barbers, so my mother, most of her life, worked as a barber cutting men's hair. My father worked in Natural Bridge, and later in Roanoke. There

were no direct economic links to Washington and Lee, except that brief period that my mother worked in a fraternity.

Warren: Were you aware of what was going on in that period when Washington and Lee was first trying to get black students to attend?

De Laney: Well, I started working here in 1963, and the first black student doesn't arrive until 1967. So I worked here for four years on a segregated college campus.

Warren: Let's start there, then. Let's talk about that.

De Laney: Okay. I came to work here in August 1963. There were a lot of things that had happened in my own life that sort of pushed me into working here. One is that my parents had not been able to afford to send me to college, and I had been unable to, even though I had been out of high school a year, I had not been able to obtain work. I finished high school when I was seventeen, in 1961. I had a United Negro Fund Scholarship to Morehouse College, and my mother didn't want me to go there because of the sit-in strikes, and this fear that she would worry about me for four years sitting at lunch counters. Nonetheless, my family didn't have money to send me to college.

At seventeen years old, in Lexington, a black kid, seventeen years old, finding a job was virtually impossible. It was probably one of the worst years of my life, 1961-62, not having anything to do. At the end of that year, my parents permitted me to do something that they had vetoed before, and that was at one point I had been interested in the priesthood, and I was permitted, at that point, to try this, since there was this frustration about me not doing anything.

So in the summer of 1962, I went to Garrison, New York, and entered the monastery of Graymoor Friars. I was there, I guess about seven months, long enough to discover that that was not what God was calling me to do. I came home, and then, once again, there was the same situation, no job.

At some point during the year, 1963, I got a waiting job. I was waiting tables and not making a great deal of money. Then I sort of reluctantly did what seemed to be the

history of black people in Lexington, ended up going to Buildings and Grounds here at Washington and Lee, looking for a job. So at nineteen years old, I came here to work. In August 1963, I came here to work as a janitor in the biology department.

To some extent, it was sort of a lucky situation to be in, because the biology department was having growing pains, and Dr. Stevens was in his last years as the department head. They brought in this new man from North Carolina, a man whose name was Henry S. Roberts, more popularly called Pat Roberts. He wanted to hire a laboratory technician for the department. Certainly, I'm sure his preference would have been one who had a degree, but there was not that kind of money budgeted for something like that. So he decided that the next best thing was a bright high school graduate. So I was in the right place at the right time. The idea was the department will teach me everything they needed me to know. So I went from pushing a broom to doing something very different.

I can remember, at the time, the salary raise was very impressive to me, but certainly, in retrospect, it's not impressive at all over a year's time, because my job description changed. I got a $1,000 raise, but I think when I started working here, I started for something like $3,600 a year or something. So there was a completely different dimension to my job after that.

I was there in the biology department until 1983, at which time I quit my job and became a full-time student. I had, beginning in 1979, taken courses part time. There's a little-known benefit that the university has, where a full-time employee can take a course a semester free, as long as you can arrange it with your job supervisor, for credit. I had racked up, I guess, about thirty-eight credits. Bill Watt said to me one day—he was the dean—"You know, if you ever get serious about a degree, you have to be full time two years." So in 1983 I quit my job and became a full-time student. But, in essence, I was in the biology department from 1963 to 1983, so that's twenty years of my life there.

Warren: Did you develop an interest in biology?

De Laney: Yes and no. I certainly enjoyed what I was doing in the biology department. Most of the stuff that I was doing—well, I shouldn't say most of the stuff—it probably was the craziest job description in the world, and if you talk to John Hufnagel, he could probably verify this, because one of the things that I found in the biology department was that I had to work for about six different bosses. Even though I've the greatest affection for those people, one of the things that certainly is a part of being in a situation like that is everybody's needs are the most important needs in the world. So oftentimes it was a matter of juggling things with regard to who you're helping at any given moment. That's not to say there weren't a lot of times that were dull, a lot of times that were down, and certainly it was not a job in which I was doing frantic-paced work, because I was not. But my responsibilities covered a multitude of things, many of which were interesting, some less interesting.

One of the things that I did was I did laboratory preparations. With regard to the introductory labs, that was probably primary responsibility. General biology, for instance, I spent a great deal of time preparing solutions, and either assembling equipment or setting equipment up for laboratories that were of a biochemical nature, that taught me the principles of biology. With courses like general zoology, that ended up being probably a more interesting development than even doing the things with general biology.

Certainly, it intensified my interest, because I was working with a guy named Jim Starling, who was in the department for many years. He was a premedical advisor. He was in his declining years, declining years inasmuch as he'd had heart surgery a few times, his health wasn't the greatest, and as a part of heart surgery, oftentimes his memory wasn't particularly great. I would find very tiny parasitic organisms under the microscope to have on display for students to see in a given lab. I would also help him set up the laboratory examinations. So I ended up being probably somebody that he

came to depend upon more and more within. That probably is the one lab that I probably was most needed in, mostly because of his health and the level of dependence he went through.

The younger people in the department didn't need me quite as much, and some of the stuff that they were doing was so sophisticated, that they had to work hand in hand with me, and my mathematical abilities have always been very slight. So when you come to mixing up some of these really sophisticated things, where you're going to have to do some real mathematics with the formula to make sure that you're doing it right, then they had to be with me.

Other responsibilities included the greenhouse, the care of the animal run. I did the photographic stuff for the department, and that tended mostly to be making slides to illustrate people's lectures. I supervised five work-study students, usually, a year, for the department. We had a departmental library which the secretary and I together essentially ran. I'm sure I'm forgetting a lot, but there were a lot of things that I did, and developed some incredibly, incredibly good friendships with students during those years.

Warren: I wanted to ask you about that. What was your relationship with students, and did it change through the years as people's understanding of blacks at Washington and Lee changed?

De Laney: Well, one of the things that's really interesting about the relationships that I had with students over the years is really a part of understanding the South, and what the South was like. It seems to me that elite Southerners always had a polite relationship with people of color. The hostilities between the races were oftentimes hostilities that were between people of lower income brackets, and so you have situation where Washington and Lee was essentially a rich white boys' college, and most of the students in those days were Southerners.

My relationship with the Southern students was very good from day one. In fact, one of the things that I've never forgotten, there was a Northern student one time who got to be very friendly with me in the lab. I don't remember his name, but he proceeded to tell me one day, much to my surprise, and I was really annoyed by this, that should I see him on campus and he didn't speak, it was because he was with his white Southern friends, and that when in Rome you do as Romans do, etc., etc. I pretty much didn't respond to that, but one of the things that was very interesting is that very quickly thereafter, he learned an incredibly important lesson and learned just how polite Southerners were. He saw me on the campus and he was with two Southern students, and both of those Southern students greeted me immediately, and I greeted them. I deliberately did not greet him, but I looked at him. I think the point was gotten across that his assessment of the South is entirely incorrect. It might have been correct if the students had belonged to a different social class.

But one of the things that I think that C. van Woodward and other scholars of the New South have certainly argued is that white and black Southerners have lived together and have known each other, and there has been a certain gentility with regard to the way they treated each other, in spite of segregation. My experience always was that the very worst of the relationships that were experienced with white Southerners were with those who were low income and not those who could afford to go to a college like Washington and Lee. That is certainly not to say that students in the sixties were clamoring for this place to be desegregated, because certainly there was also the reality that white Southerners of all social classes wanted to preserve the status quo. And certainly the students here wanted to preserve the status quo just as much as any other segment of Southern society.

Maybe I've rambled and veered away from what you were asking.

Warren: Oh, no, you're exactly where I want you to be. So what did you see happen and how did the transition happen?

De Laney: Well, there was a lot of stuff that happened here that I didn't like. The students that I was friendliest with, and the students who were friendliest with me, were the Jewish students, and certainly that is because there was their own little struggle in a society like this as well.

I've give you an example. During the 1960s, still, and I'm not sure when this changed, but the charters of national fraternities read, "white Christians." So those national fraternities not only were racially segregated, they were religiously segregated. There were two fraternity houses on the campus to which the Jewish students could belong, and those were the Zeta Beta Tau and the Phi Epsilon Pi houses, which were across from the entrance to the hospital. Those boys faced certainly some levels of anti-Semitism on the campus, and I can remember some of those guys that I was friends with used to be almost paranoid about the anti-Semitism that existed on campus. Very, very strong friendships developed with Jewish students.

It was no unusual to hear students put down students who were Jewish in my presence, which also said a lot to me about where they were with regard to people outside of their own ethnic or racial groups. Washington and Lee was very slow to change in that regard. In fact, I can recall that in the late sixties and early seventies, when these barriers disappeared with the fraternities, some of the Jewish students were very unhappy when very attractive Jewish freshmen pledged other houses. It essentially killed the two Jewish houses on campus, which functioned as car pools to temple in Lynchburg, and the Passover Seder every year at the ZBT house, etc.

But the changes don't happen at Washington and Lee until the late sixties, when Washington and Lee is desegregated. I can remember the discussions about desegregation among the students, and in spite of their gentility that I mentioned earlier, I can remember hearing some of the same arguments being voiced against desegregation that VMI has used to keep women out. I heard some of those same arguments here again ten years ago, when W&L was getting ready to coeducate.

One of the big questions that I used to hear all the time was, "Well, where will they go to the bathroom?" Well, of course, there was the reality of Southern society that restaurants were segregated. I mean, there was a Leggett's Department Store, for instance, downtown, that had two sets of bathrooms, and on one set there was the word "colored." So students who were living in a society where these signs still existed many places in the 1960s, had a great deal of difficulty understanding that even though these students who would come to Washington and Lee in the late sixties were their same gender, they couldn't possibly go to the bathroom with them, or couldn't possibly use the same bathrooms. All of the same sorts of hangups.

I met a guy on Saturday. It was really interesting. There was a band club on Saturday in the dining hall, where the kids who were here in the Futures Program, and the Futures Program, I guess, is ninety percent black, and serves as something of a recruiting tool for the college. But one of the fathers that I met on Saturday had come here in the sixties. There was some weekend sort of seminar kinds of things that happened with Hampton Institute, which is the historically black college on the other side of the state. So they brought these students and faculty members up from Hampton in the sixties to talk about desegregation. This guy told me—it was really funny to run into—because I remember the program happening, but I never attended any of those meetings or anything, but this guy told me that one of the things that he can remember so vividly is the student making the argument that black students could not possibly be educated to the level for the Washington and Lee education.

So there are these arguments about silly things like bathroom, but also more fundamental and deep-seated things like intellectual abilities and the inability of a black student to aspire to the level of excellence that Washington and Lee demanded.

Warren: Where was that coming from, from faculty or from students?

De Laney: From students. From students. In fact, the one faculty member that he remembered that was involved in these talks, who certainly would never let something

like that go unchallenged, was Lou Hodges. Lou Hodges is one of the most decent people I've ever met in my life. Of course, Lou was on the scene and was very much a vocal part of the community during those years, as Washington and Lee moved toward desegregation.

The one thing that I guess is a part of [unclear], is that by the late sixties, when Washington and Lee was moving in this direction, I had no aspirations at all at that point about a college education myself. I was just sort of locked into my job, and enjoyed the contacts that I had with students, enjoyed my job, and was just sort of floating by. But I think the student body was probably very, very slow to change, and I'm not so sure they're completely changed today.

I also have a sense of chronological order, and we can talk about where students are today later on in the interview, but I'll let you ask another question.

Warren: You mentioned when the first black students arrived, and my understanding is that Washington and Lee had to really go out and find people, because no one was applying here.

De Laney: Well, they still do. I may be wrong with my date, but it's either '66 or '67. I think it's '67. The first black student was a local kid named Dennis Haston , and there was a disastrous situation, so this part of it you certainly have to be careful with with regard to your writing. Dennis was like a kid in a fishbowl. He was right out of Lexington High School. He was the only black student on the campus, and certainly not a desirable situation to be in. Dennis lived at home with his family, and was one of six brothers. He has brothers who work on this campus, I think, at least one brother who works on this campus as a janitor right now. But Dennis did not survive a year academically, and he ended up transferring to a historically black college where he was completely successful, and went on with his life, and is a fine guy, and a very successful person today.

The next two black students were, once again, local students, but their experiences were very different from Dennis. I'm not sure why. Perhaps Dennis had made people more comfortable with the idea of a black student being here. Dennis was a pretty low-key, very nice kid.

The next two kids were kids named Linwood Smothers, and Linwood's mother worked in the snack bar for many, many years. Her name is Famie, and his Aunt Marie still works over there. The other kid was a kid named Walter Blake. Those two boys were very, very different from Dennis in many ways. Linwood Smothers is a very quiet, determined kind of kid. As I recall, he was a physics engineering major, and we had some sort of program at the time where—I guess it was a six-year program. You did four years here and two years at Columbia, and you got a master's degree in engineering. He was entirely successful. He was a good student. He did well here.

Walter Blake was a politics major, and Walter also did well here, but Walter had an experience that was very different from Linwood's, and that is that Walter pledged a fraternity, there again one of the Jewish houses. He was a member of the ZBT fraternity.

This past year I had a student who did an honors thesis on the desegregation of Washington and Lee, which has some problems—the thesis does. But he did send out questionnaires to black alumni that he didn't follow up on, and one of the two who responded was Walter Blake. So that honors thesis is in Special Collections. So Walter Blake still has, I think, important ideas to share about his experiences during the period. But those two guys were successful. They went through Washington and Lee, there was no major problem the whole time they were here. They sort of continued what Dennis had started. They were nice kids who showed that the school wasn't going to crumble because they were here.

Then they recruited another bunch who, I guess, the first class that had any significant number of black students in it, I think, was the class of '74. I'm not really

sure. But it certainly was the class that Bill Hill was in, and I don't know whether you got a chance to meet him last week. But one of the things that's very, very interesting, is that Holt Merchant had a student, a black student, who studied desegregation of Washington and Lee a few years ago, in an independent study, and he talked to these guys, and they had nothing but good recollections of their four years at W&L. The thing that just blew Holt's mind and it blew mine as well, is that we remembered when they were here and how unhappy they were. So I think the years have sort of tempered their recollection of what the experience was really like.

Warren: What do you remember?

De Laney: Well, I remember students who—and to some extent this still happens—I remember students who came in who were eager, who were absolutely willing to do their best, who found that doors were closed to them socially, and that at least the academic door was open there, but the social doors that were closed made it very difficult to be a student here.

One of the things that you have to think about is that, first of all, it was an all-male environment. One of the things is that human nature being what human nature is, in an all-male environment, there was a need for a female element, and there were even fewer black female students at the neighboring colleges, but the black students did not have the access to the female colleges that the other students had. The other students had automobiles, the other students had the fraternities as a vehicle for bringing, for attracting women to the campus for social events. So the black students didn't have that. They weren't in the fraternities. They couldn't get in the fraternities. So there was some frustration because the social outlets weren't there.

One of the things that I was very slow to learn about the black experience at Washington and Lee, and I was slow to learn because I wasn't in the quagmire that these students were in, was what their day-to-day experiences oftentimes were like with white students. I understand that a lot better today. I understand it from completely

different experiences, and with some of the experiences that I've had with black students more recently.

But one of the things that, in spite of the gentility that was always there, in spite of the civility that I always experienced, there was also an element that these students experienced that was not civil. I was very slow to come to understand that, and very slow to come to believe that that non-civil element was there. So the experiences that I had with students were very different from the experiences that some of these guys were having as students.

I suspect, however, one of the reasons that their recollections are more moderate today than the experiences, I think, actually were, is because of the doors that a Washington and Lee degree opens. When I finally got mine, I was really surprised to discover how receptive potential employers were to you when you said the college you went to, or how receptive potential graduate schools were when they found out where you had gone to school.

So I think that those guys, at least as I understand it today, had some really horrendous experiences that were mostly experiences between them and other students. Some of them got to the attention of the student body as a whole, others didn't.

One of the things that I can remember from those years is there was a white student who was dating a local black girl, and there was some controversy on the campus because of this. Certainly people were more expressive of their feelings about crossing this boundary that was a taboo in the South than anything. Even as late as the 1980s, when I was a student myself, I can remember Holt Merchant saying—he had a seminar—well, it wasn't a seminar, it was a directed independent study, and I guess there were about four or five guys in it, and the topic was civil rights. They said that they really wanted the experience of talking to someone who had experienced

segregation, who had gone to a black high school, etc., because they didn't understand what segregation was.

Holt came and asked me if I would mind coming to his class to speak to these guys, and I said, "Sure, I'll do it."

I went in and I sort of turned tables on them. I said, "You know, I don't believe you don't know what segregation is." And they sort of looked at me a little strange. I said, "How many black students are in your fraternities?"

Then they began to explain to me why there were no black students in the fraternities, and they blamed it on the alumni and their parents. My response was, "The alumni and your parents are not here. You are here."

"But our parents will give us hell if we do this."

"Well, your parents are back home, and you know full well what segregation is, because you are perpetrating it."

At that particular point, there were two of them who were sitting there, and I knew what fraternity house that they had come from. An interracial incident had happened in their fraternity house just a couple of weeks before I was talking to these guys, and some guy in their fraternity had showed up at a fraternity party with a black date, and the fraternity squared off against each other because of this. I said, "Yeah, I went to a segregated high school, and I grew up in a segregated system, but you guys know full well what segregation is, too, because look at what goes on in your midst."

So the only other thing that I can only say with regard to that is, I look at the students that I see who have come in, fairly conservative black students who've been radicalized by the system. One of them is a young black kid, he just finished, John Branham, who I'm not sure had really identified himself as black until he came here. His mother is white, his father is black, John is very fair-complected. John grew up in the Mormon Church, a fairly conservative Western kid, and John's argument to me was that the college completely radicalized him, that he had never thought about race as an

issue before he became a student here. So his senior year, he was president of the Minority Student Association. He went to the Million Man March. He was a kid who, by himself, brought Cornell West to the campus. So I'm not really so sure that the campus has changed very much since the 1960s with regard to students.

Warren: I need to turn the tape over.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Warren: This is really good. This is really what I'm looking for.

One thing you've mentioned that I'm really curious about is where have the Jewish students gone?

De Laney: Well, some of them are still here. I don't know the numbers that are here, but it's really funny, there used to be a professor here named Keith Shillington, who's dead now. He was a chemistry professor, and Shillington was one of the first Catholics who was hired on this campus. Shillington used to tell stories about his interview here. His religion came up in the interview, and somebody finally said, "Oh, well, you can't do much damage, you're just going to be teaching chemistry."

But Shillington used to tell me, and he came here in the fifties, and I knew Shillington ever since I was a kid, because I'm Catholic and Shillington played the organ at our church, etc. Shillington used to tell me that the school used to take a total—and I don't now whether this is true, but this would be what he would say—the school will take a total of thirty Catholics and Jews a year, and sometimes it might be twenty-nine Jews and one Catholic, and the next year it might be opposite. Or some years it might be fifteen Catholics and fifteen Jews.

In any regard, during the sixties there were these two fraternities, and I don't know how many boys were at either house at the time. I'm sure the university—you can look at *Calyx*es and you can count numbers. It was the ZBT house and the PEP House, as it was called. What I suspect that you probably would find today is that a lot of the Jewish students have sort of disappeared into—or sort of assimilated, I guess,

would be a better word, but Richard Marks sort of heads up a Hilel for the campus, so there is a Jewish organization on the campus. How many students are in that organization, I don't know, but I think they have an annual Passover Seder, even, so there are some Jewish students still here. They just simply may not be as obvious as they used to be.

There certainly are a lot more Catholics now, I think. I'm not really sure of this, but I think that when you look by denominations rather than religious groups, the largest denomination, I think, is Roman Catholic, with the Episcopal Church coming next, and Presbyterians, etc. So those kinds of things have changed, but then times have changed very much, too, and just think of the kinds of suits that you'd have if there was religious discrimination, to say the least. The admissions director is also Catholic. [Laughter]

Washington and Lee used to recruit primarily in the South, and one of the Jewish students that I continue to have contact with, who is a good friend, is an attorney in Spartanburg, South Carolina, which is where he's from, a guy named Gary Poliakoff, who was in the class of '73. Gary was one of those first students who didn't belong to one of the Jewish fraternities. In fact, he belonged to the Pi Ka House, which is right across from the First Baptist Church. But I think the Jewish students are certainly still around.

Warren: I don't have a strong sense of them, whereas people do talk about these Jewish fraternities, and that it was a presence before, and I don't have the sense of a presence of them here.

De Laney: No, I think you'd probably have to talk to Richard Marks and get some feel for what Hilel is all about today. I think that's the only Jewish organization that's around. And certainly there aren't many adult Jews in the community, in fact. Two years ago, we used to have a friend who lived here, who has since moved to Oregon, but she used to have parties at her house to celebrate Jewish feast days. Even though

we were Catholics, we were close friends with her and we'd get invited to these things. We also, in those days, had some sense for who the Jewish members of the community were, but anymore, when you go beyond Molly Pellicciaro and the Grunewalds, I still have to scratch my head and try to think who they might be.

Warren: So gradually the numbers of minority students began to grow?

De Laney: Well, can we really say that the minority numbers have ever grown? One of the things is, yeah, Washington and Lee has a hard time recruiting, and certainly there are reasons for Washington and Lee having a hard time recruiting.

Warren: Why do you think that is?

De Laney: Well, one is certainly the image of the Confederacy. One of the things that black people have tended to be repulsed by this whole romanticism of the Confederacy and the lost cause, because there's no reason for black people to romanticize the lost cause. My God, they were slaves during that "glorious lost cause."

On the other hand, this silly argument that goes on about the Confederate flag, I mean, one of the things that our students love to do is to display the Confederate flag. Certainly you have recruits on campus, and they see Confederate flags being used as curtains in dormitory windows, etc., that's a real turnoff. And why is that a turnoff? Well, the Southern student is going to argue that the Confederate flag is only a symbol of or an artifact of the war. Well, that's nonsense. The Ku Klux Klan appropriated the Confederate flag years ago and the Confederate flag became a symbol of racial hatred and violence. To try to say at this point in time that the flag means anything different is absurd. So one of the things is that whole controversy that surrounds Confederate image and this campus means that it's going to be difficult to recruit black students, for one reason.

Another reason that it's going to be extremely difficult to recruit black students to a campus like this, and there are some publications that I've seen that indicate this, in fact, I was reading an article not long ago, is that good black students follow black

faculty. Certainly, black students, and, even more particularly, black parents, are hopeful that there are going to be good black role models in place. I had hoped when I came back here last year to join Jarvis Hall, who was an assistant professor of politics who had been here for four or five years. I get back last summer to find that Jarvis has resigned, and that I'm going to be the only one in the college. Of course, there's Steven Hobbs in the law school. But certainly you're not going to easily attract enthusiastic and good black students where you don't have good black role models in place. Black students want to see black professors in a classroom. So that's a problem also.

Warren: So why do you think we don't attract black faculty?

De Laney: Well, for some of the same reasons that we don't get students, some of which that I haven't mentioned. One is the town. Black professionals like to be in communities where there are going to be a lot of other people like themselves. For instance, young black doctors are more likely to gravitate to cities because they're going to be able to find a professional community of their peers. They're going to be able to find other people who have the same experiences, not necessarily that they want to make their friends along racial lines, but oftentimes racial lines provide some of the same experiences and means of sharing some of the same frustrations, etc.

As far as the black professional community in Lexington is concerned, I mean, this is a touchy issue with black folks in town, and rightfully so, because they don't want to put themselves down, but the black professional community in Lexington is largely a retired community of schoolteachers, people who once taught in a public school system here, and have since gone home to spend the rest of their lives living on their own time and enjoy life the way they want.

So if you're after a young black PhD to come to Washington and Lee to teach, then it's like, well, what's the social life going to be like for me after I get there? Is the social life going to be such that it sustains the person's enthusiasm about the

community? That's a real problem with the college. There are no black faculty members at VMI. There essentially are none here.

I mean, the only reason I'm here—I shouldn't say the only reason I'm here, but one of the main reasons I'm here is because this is my home town, and I wanted to come back. I also wanted to come back because this is a better job than the one that I had in New York. I do have a real bond being with this university. I like, to some extent, living in a small town. Steven Hobbs is here because he likes a small town and thinks it's an ideal place to raise children, and is originally from a small town himself. But there is some frustration. I miss Jarvis Hall tremendously. We overlapped when I was here on a teaching fellowship. Washington and Lee oftentimes cites the reason for no black faculty as the reason I've just expressed, the difficulty of attracting people to a community like this.

The same is true with students. In fact, there are a lot of white students who aren't going to come to Lexington because they want a social life beyond the campus, and a small town isn't going to offer the social life beyond the campus. So there's a lot of stuff that's just sort of is self-perpetuating.

Another thing with the recruitment of students that's a tremendous problem for us, and I'm sure the admissions office is very sensitive to this, is the kind of black students that Washington and Lee certainly deserves and certainly would like to have, they have to compete with fairly prestigious places to get those students. When the name of the game is competing with places, say, like an Ivy, for a black student who is really good, and that black student also looking at prestige and saying, "Well, Washington and Lee is a good school, but what's a degree from Princeton going to do for me?" Washington and Lee has a very, very difficult time in a situation like that. But I'm also critical of the college because I think that the college sometimes I feel is a little too content with those answers.

Warren: They come very quickly.

De Laney: They come very quickly, and the other thing that I saw is what we did when we decided to be coeducational. I mean, there was a very concentrated effort, even before coeducation, to recruit female faculty. I don't think that the effort to recruit black faculty compares with the effort to recruit female faculty. I don't think that the effort to recruit black students compares with the effort to recruit female students. I'm delighted that I have women colleagues. Some of my favorite colleagues are the women who are on this campus. I am delighted that I have female students. But I'm also troubled that we just celebrated the tenth anniversary of coeducation, and the thirtieth anniversary of the arrival of black students passed unnoticed. When I left here, I was here on this graduate fellowship, which is a way the college attempts to bring blacks to the campus as well. I was here for two years on an ABD fellowship, and during the two years that I was here, we had fifty-three black students. I come back this year, we have thirty-five black students. So I think that there's a real problem with recruitment. I think that oftentimes, also—I'm a little troubled sometimes about the ABD program as well.

Warren: I don't know what the ABD program is.

De Laney: Well, several years ago, the college decided that one of the ways that they could attract black faculty was to create this program by which you brought advanced graduate students to the campus to teach part time while they wrote their dissertations. These people have taken their PhD comps, and the only thing they have to do is to write their dissertations. Washington and Lee gives them a fairly modest salary for a year's work, and it's renewable for one year. When I did it, a $2,000 travel grant to do research, a lot of study in here. I mean, you taught one class a semester for two semesters and you had a third one off. Ideally, it's a good way to be able to do a little teaching while you're working on your dissertation.

The problem, however, that—well, there's several problems with it. One is that I think that it also stigmatizes the people who are in this situation. It stigmatizes them because the students do not know that a great many of their esteemed professors who

have PhDs, who are white, came here as ABDs many years ago, when it wasn't important to have a PhD when you started. So all of a sudden, the only people that you have that are new on the campus were teaching classes without a PhD, are these black folks who are in a special program. And I worry about the stigmatization of black professionals—"Well, you've got to give them this break in the ABD program in order for them to finish, and there are no white ABDs on the campus, so this is a black thing." It becomes an affirmative action thing, for sure. Now, certainly, there are good things about the ABD program as well.

The other thing that bothers me is that I think that oftentimes the ABD program serves as a means of pacifying the need to really actively recruit black professionals. These ABD candidates, there's no tremendous investment in them. They're not on tenure track, they're here for a year, they can be renewed for a year. If they finish their PhDs, then it's possible that the department might consider to offer them a job, but it's also possible that they won't be offered a job.

So this year we're going to have two on campus, one in geology and one in politics. Hopefully, they will get their writing done, but I don't know.

I'm putting you to sleep.

Warren: No, not at all. No, I'm very, very interested in this.

De Laney: It cannot be an excuse for recruiting people who've finished and people who will become a permanent part of the university.

Warren: I've been curious about you as a role model in that you went here. We have a lot of black graduates of Washington and Lee now, who know exactly what Lexington is, who've gone out and, I presume, some of them have pursued advanced degrees. Why aren't those people being looked at, or are they being looked at?

De Laney: Well, I think one of the problems is what kind of advanced degrees. One of the things that any black PhD can tell you is that if you look at the graduate schools across the United States, that certainly you find black people in graduate schools, but

the ones who are in PhD programs, there are very few. What people who are talented do is they go for the money, which is something blacks couldn't do thirty years ago. The vocations that were opened to black people thirty years ago were limited—or forty years ago. But if you go to the graduate schools anymore, you'll find that most of your blacks are going to be in the law school, or they might be working on MBAs, or they might be in medical school. But to find people who are going to teach at the college level, nobody's—

Warren: Are you that unique?

De Laney: I don't think that I'm unique, but I don't know of any other black Washington and Lee graduate who has gone for a PhD. I know of lots of black Washington—I shouldn't say lots, because there are not lots of us—but I know of other black Washington and Lee graduates who have gotten law degrees. I even know of two who went to medical school. I would be really very, very surprised if there was another black W&L PhD out there.

Warren: So I'm fantasizing about something that doesn't exist.

De Laney: Yes. In fact, I think that the number of Washington and Lee graduates, period, who go to work on PhDs is probably much smaller, in spite of racial lines, is much smaller than people who go to professional school. I think most of our people are probably headed for places like medical school, business school, and law school, and not to end up on the limited incomes that college professors have. So I think that there's no role model with regard to other black Washington and Lee alumni, because my experience certainly at William and Mary was that talented black students did not want to teach. Of course, my experience at both William and Mary and at the State University of New York was that talented white students didn't want to teach. I mean, they have this idea of making money, and you don't get rich teaching. So, anyway.

Warren: That's discouraging and enlightening.

De Laney: It's very sad to me. It's very sad.

Warren: You're a wonderful witness. I'm really glad to be talking with you. Another thing that I know has happened in recent years here was there was some controversy about some of the themes of Fancy Dress.

De Laney: I remember one of them, although I wasn't here when it happened. I read about one of the in the alumni magazine. I guess one of the themes was Reconciliation Ball. I suppose it was another way of glorifying the lost cause within the context of Fancy Dress.

But I think one of the things that probably is more basic is the cultural differences that have emerged during the last twenty-five to thirty years that weren't there before. For instance, one of the things that sort of echoes the beginning of this interview is I talked about how wonderful it was growing up close by with fraternities, listening to the music. When I look at the late sixties, and even the early seventies, the music that the students enjoyed on this campus was largely black music. I mean, one of the sweethearts of the campus was Dionne Warwick, who the students brought here time and time again. I can remember some friends of mine who, after a concert, invited the Four Tops to their apartment, got them to autograph their living room wall. Okay? So there were people like the Temptations who were coming to Washington and Lee's campus.

Something happened during the psychedelic era where the music that was enjoyed by the two races veered in opposite directions, and I think that this has been more of a problem than Fancy Dress themes, what you can do with regard to music, first of all, that is going to be acceptable to both races of students. What I see now is that it's even worse. I don't like my son's music, period, and I'm usually thankful that he's not a rap fan, because I don't think that's music at all. I think that my generation of young blacks would have found it an abomination. I mean, compare Iced Tea, for instance, to the Four Tops. I mean, there's no comparison at all. I don't know. I think the music veering apart is worse than the themes for Fancy Dress. The only theme that

I remember that was controversial is the Reconciliation Ball. The other themes, I mean, I can remember one time it was New York. How could that be controversial? Black students didn't choose New York as a theme, there are not enough of them to matter, with regard to selection of a theme. One time, I think it was ancient Egypt. I mean, that's not going to offend black students.

But I remember vividly black students being unhappy about the music. One time the university was even permitting sort of a parallel ball, where there would be this annual Black Ball, which would be the way of appeasing the black students, because then the black students were able to have the kind of music that they wanted for the Black Ball. But I think the cultural divide that has occurred is worse than anything. I'm not sure how to explain that. Of course, when I was a student, it really didn't matter, because I was married, had a child, was president of the PTA, etc., and so I wasn't doing the kinds of things that students half my age—

Warren: So you wouldn't have gone to the Black Ball.

De Laney: No. In the first place, I don't dance. I went to Fancy Dress once, and it was enough for me, and I never wanted to go again. That was before I became a student, and my wife and I went. Because I don't dance, and never have been talented as far as dancing is concerned, I don't feel comfortable at stuff like that. I've heard other people say that they don't like to go to Fancy Dress because they don't like to be around drunks. I can't say that, because the time that I was there I didn't notice anybody who was drunk, but the other thing is that I just don't want to be there, period. I enjoy music, and if I can sit there and listen, fine. But if I've got to sit there and watch people dance, and feel like an oddball because I'm not, then I don't think that's a lot of fun.

I think that students oftentimes blow things like that out of proportion, and when alumni sometimes get involved in those debates, I think it's inappropriate. I think alumni ought to keep their mouths shut and let the students attempt to work things like that out with the guidance of the appropriate people on the campus, in both the

administration and the faculty. I can remember that there were alumni who felt very strongly that there should be a Reconciliation Ball, but I don't know. I'm not sure I think it's much of an issue.

Warren: All right. So you've come back, and you're a full-fledged member of faculty. What's it like now?

De Laney: Well, it's interesting in many different respects. One of the things that I've really enjoyed is being welcomed back in by people who were both my mentors when I was a student, people who've been my friends for a number of years, and the students themselves. The students have been really nice to me, and unlike other black alumni, I don't have the bad experiences of students up close, and I need to explain how I learned later, how I learned about bad experiences that black students did have.

I wonder, however, if after I finish this I can excuse myself long enough to tell my son that I'm not going to take lunch at twelve, unless you want to take lunch at twelve or something.

Warren: Do you want to take a pause now?

De Laney: Yes, if I could. [Tape recorder turned off.]

Warren: All right. So you were saying how you knew there were problems.

De Laney: I thought we were on what it's like being here—

Warren: Now.

De Laney: Oh, okay.

Warren: You seemed to sort of be going two ways, and I'm not sure which way you were going.

De Laney: One of the ways that I was going was what it was like to be back on the faculty, but I was also saying that later in the interview I need to reflect on how I knew that there were problems among the students.

One of the things about being back here on the faculty is that I really love teaching. My wife used to tell me during the early years of our marriage that I would

probably be very good at teaching, and it was my wife who pushed me to finally become a full-time student. That was something we didn't talk about either, was what it was like to be an adult student at Washington and Lee.

Warren: I've got a note there that I want to get back to that.

De Laney: But one of the things that I really enjoy is my teaching here. Now, the acceptance by the faculty has been overwhelming. For instance, I got nominated for a couple of faculty committees this year, and the first one I got nominated for was the Faculty Executive Committee. I think I'd gotten something like thirty-five votes or something, and somebody told me after the meeting that I had been elected by more votes than any faculty member had been elected to a meeting in years. Thirty-five is maybe half of the faculty. Well, apparently this thirty-five votes meant there was just extraordinary enthusiasm for me being on the Faculty Executive Committee. So I was sort of flattered with the things people were saying. Then I guess it was at the next meeting I got elected to the Student Affairs Committee, and the vote for the Student Affairs Committee was fifty-five, and there was this warm applause by the faculty. So I certainly am humbled by, and feel very grateful by, the vote of confidence from the faculty. Many of these people have known me for years, and a lot of the new people are just getting to know me, and I'm just getting to know them.

So certainly there's that side of it. The other side of it is that it's kind of fun at my age to have a new challenge. I had an alumnus that I got pretty angry with, and I used to get angry with him when he was a student. He said to me, "I heard what you've done, but aren't you awfully old to be an assistant professor?" I mean, that's the other side of what happened the other day in the health food store. In any case, I was awfully old to be an undergraduate, too.

But what I find is that I'm thrust into a situation where the stakes are higher than they were for many of my colleagues, for instance. I'm expected to publish as a part of getting tenure, and that was not true twenty years ago when many of my friends came

to Washington and Lee to teach. I'm also, because of that, forced to spend my summers doing research and scholarly activity rather than planning my courses for the fall, or rather than teaching in summer programs, or rather than gardening.

I'm having a good time with it. One of the things that's incredibly fun to me is that my PhD has 1995 on it, and already I've got a contract with the University Press of Kentucky to publish the dissertation. So I'm fifty-two years old, and I'm doing things that I probably would have enjoyed doing thirty years ago, but thirty years ago was not the time it was meant for me to do those things.

I love my students. Generally, the feedback I get from my students is positive. I look at the evaluations that my students fill out and I find myself both humbled and flattered by the evaluations. I also find myself both humbled and flattered by the summer communications by the students. For instance, one of my students is Sandy Hooper, who will be the president of the student body this year. Sandy is up at Middlebury. I've had E-mail from Sandy, from Middlebury College.

I had good experiences in New York with my students, even though many of the bad experiences in New York sort of stand out in my head, because students were not particularly well mannered and not always well behaved in class up there, which is very different from Washington and Lee.

But the one thing is that being back here is very important to me. One of the things that troubles me, probably, is that I don't have much of an impact on black students, and I think that's partly because of where I am in space and time and where some of them are in space and time. One of the things is that I don't get a lot of black students in my classes. I'm not sure why.

Warren: Are they taking history?

De Laney: Yes, some of them are. When I was here before, I had a black student to tell me that the reason he hadn't taken any of my classes was because they were too much work, which was sort of a sad revelation. I will never cut down on the amount of work

that I assign in order to attract students, no matter what their race may be. The other thing is that I had a black student to say to me this year, and I was really troubled by this, that he had found my introductory U.S. history class completely demoralizing. When I asked him he why, and he said his great talent was when he was discussing issues of race, and I said, "Well, this is introductory United States history. It's not a class in race inequity—ethnic relations. It's the wrong class if you think that every class is going to be a forum on racial matters, because it can't be. You've got to cover a whole range of things from such and such a date to such and such a date."

The thing that also distressed me about the criticism was that we had two paperbacks in my class for that particular semester work, W.E.B. DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, and a wonderful little paperback—last name of the author is Miles, but the name of it's *Lunch at the Five and Ten*. It was about desegregation of lunch counters in Queensboro, North Carolina. I vividly remember—and I keep careful records—that he had cut that class when we were discussing *Lunch at the Five and Ten*. There was his opportunity to talk about race, and it wasn't my fault that he didn't get that opportunity, it was his own.

So I guess at this point in my life, I sort of think that one of the things that black students have got to do is that they've also got to be very realistic. A course in United States history is not a course about race. Certainly race is going to be one of many factors, as well as gender, but there are lots of other things that I have to do in a course in introductory United States history, too.

I'm teaching for the first time in Washington and Lee's—it's not exactly the first time in Washington—Holt Merchant has taught a spring-term course that has been called a Seminar in African-American History. I'm teaching a two-semester course this year in African-American history at the 300 level, certainly the first time African-American history has been taught at the upper level. There are eight students preregistered for that class at this date, which has space for twenty-five, and to my

knowledge, not a single one of those students is black. I'd love to have black students in there. I would love to have black students study with me, but I'm not going to assign less material, in the case of the one student who told me that my classes entailed too much work, in order to attract anyone.

The other thing that I'm not going to do is that I'm not going pander to bad scholarship. The one thing that I think that is true of a lot of the Afrocentric scholarship, a lot of it's good and very important, but a lot of it is bad. A lot of it is not scholarly at all, and I'm not going to do that. So I realize that there are going to be black students, also, who are going to view me as a conservative sell-out because I'm not going to participate in scholarship that I do not think is quality scholarship in many of the Afrocentric claims, there's no evidence to prove, and I'm not going to do that. So I don't know what the situations are, but if students want to come, they're free to exchange ideas, and I'm never ever going to grade anybody down because their opinions differ from mine, but the one thing that I am going to require is that all students, no matter what their race is, work hard and do the very best job that's possible.

Warren: Let me change tapes.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

Warren: This is Mame Warren. It's tape two with Ted De Laney on July 31, 1996, in Lexington, Virginia.

I read this article in the alumni magazine, it was written at the time you were a student, and one of the things I was impressed by in that, and I'd really like to talk about that whole process of being an adult student, but one of the things was you were in a class, and I think something about desegregation was being talked about, and you said, "Wait a minute. I was there," and you brought a perspective into that class that wouldn't have been there any other way.

De Laney: Well, as I recall, that was a faculty quote, and that didn't come from me in that article. So I don't know what that person was talking about. Certainly, I've never been one who held back my opinions. The discussion-based classes that I recall being a part of when I was here were Harlan Beckley's and Holt Merchant's, and Harlan Beckley's were—I don't ever recall us doing race in his classes. I took theology from Harlan, contemporary Christian theology, and I took ethics from him. I did have two courses in Judaism that were pretty much the same format, from Richard Marks. I had a couple of seminars with Holt Merchant which would have dealt with race, and I think one of them was on the Civil Rights Movement or something. I certainly probably would have been explicit, and that sounds like a Holt Merchant quote, anyway.

But the one thing is that Holt, from my perspective in 1996, is not a very objective person when it comes to comments about me. Holt is a good friend, and sometimes I think that his praise of me is a little excessive. There was a Roanoke *Times* article that was done by a W&L alumnus in 1993, in June, I think, that, much to my embarrassment, made front page. It was full of Holt Merchant and Taylor Sanders quotes. Holt's quotes are extremely glowing, and I appreciate his friendship, and he's one of the best people I know, but I think he gives me far more credit than I deserve.

The one thing that was really interesting about that process is that here's something else that Washington and Lee has not been interested in involving itself in with regard to diversity, and that is the nontraditional student. Certainly we don't have evening classes, and I personally don't want to see W&L move to evening classes, because I don't want to teach in the evening. I function much better in the morning, and would prefer to function in the morning. Most adult students need evening classes in order to participate.

But one of the things that was extremely interesting, and there have been some women adult students here since me, one of the things that is extremely interesting is that Washington & Lee was probably less prepared for adult students than they were

for black students. Chris Bowring and the Harrison guy whose first name slips me right now, whose son was in the grade with my son, Chris Bowring and that fellow and myself, we sort of created a problem for them. Number one, they had this P.E. requirement—still do. You have to have five credits in P.E., five classes in P.E., to get a W&L degree. So there's this thing about taking P.E. courses with people who are, in my case, twenty years younger than I was. Fortunately, the P.E. offerings are fairly diverse, so you can pick skills that you think that maybe you can manage, because I know the first one I did was skills in horsemanship. So that was horseback riding with kids.

I can tell you a funny story about that. The gender issue that came with the horseback riding was so funny. It was just absolutely the funniest thing in the world. I guess, as an adult, I was the only one there who was really conscious of the precious irony in all of this. The horseback instructor was a woman named Margaret Brundage. Her husband, in fact, not her husband, I'm sorry, her younger brother is a fairly eloquent historian, with a Harvard PhD. But Margaret Brundage taught us horseback, and we used to have to go out to Brownsburg to the stable to ride horses. So here I am out there with these college kids, riding horses, and I don't think any of us had any previous horse experience. It was ground zero for Margaret to teach us all how to ride horses. She said the only way that she could strengthen those thigh muscles sufficiently to stay on the horse was through these calisthenics that you had to do on horseback. With the horse slowly moving, both hands behind your head, with stirrups across the saddle, you're doing situps. It's really scary, and the ground is really far down.

The interesting thing about this was, then she wanted us to do toe touching, and still the stirrups are across the saddle, and you'd have to take both your hands and go down on either side of the saddle to touch your toes. Well, these are English saddles. Well, the guys whose horses were closest to me were all complaining about how it hurt to do this toe touching, because essentially this toe touching was not pleasant to the male anatomy with regard to the shape of the saddle. But nobody had the courage to

tell Margaret Brundage, the instructor, who was a pretty—almost like a hippie—pretty loose kind of person, and that's not to say anything about her character, that this was just not very pleasant on the groin. I thought this was just priceless. This is an all-male school, and we've got a female horseback instructor who's making us do this, and every guy out there is complaining about how unpleasant this is because of their anatomy. But anyhow, that certainly was a digression.

But the other course that I took, and because I had advanced sophomore status when I started, I didn't have to take the two courses, the other one I took was skills in bicycling. We went on these long bicycle trips every week, doing things like Natural Bridge and back, or Fairfield and back. But I managed to keep up with the students fairly well, but I was 157 pounds and a lot better shape than I am now. But the interesting thing about this is that a year or two after I'd finished W&L, I was walking toward the post office one day, and I was talking to Bill McHenry, who was the athletic director. Bill was reminiscing on having these adult students take P.E. He said, "You know, you guys were so great." He said, "We waived the P.E. requirement, and all three of you took P.E. anyway." Well, the thing is, nobody ever told us that the P.E. requirement had been waived. They may have waived it, but I don't think that I would have taken P.E. had I known that it had been waived. But nonetheless, when I look back at it, the P.E. was one of the more enjoyable experiences that I had here. I was forced to do things with students that I probably would not have done.

I also think that in some other ways that I was less rigid than many people who are half my age. For instance, I took four courses in sculpture. When I was eighteen years old, I used to have dreams of being an artist. I think that art is something that probably ought to be cultivated when you're very young rather than when you're older. But one of the things that I didn't want to do was leave Washington and Lee without having some art training. I had four courses in sculpture from Larry Stene. Well, Larry Stene is a wonderful sculptor. One of the things I can remember him saying very early

on was that—we had seen slides of his work, and Larry has done in the past, things that were realism. But he let us know up front that, at this point in his life, he was interested in abstract sculpture. He wasn't particularly enthusiastic about seeing realism developed in his classes. The next thing I knew, I was doing stuff that was welded, welded scrap metal. I was doing stuff that was plaster forms, and mixing plaster, and water color, and metal, and all sorts of abstract forms.

One day Larry said to me, he said, "You know, when you first enrolled in this class I was a little concerned, because I had this idea that you were going to have your own fixed idea about what art was, and there wasn't going to be anything I could tell you." Perhaps the greatest compliment that he paid me in that conversation was that he found that I was much more open to trying and exploring things in the sculpture lab than the kids were. I shouldn't call them kids, but the people who were much, much younger than I.

I think that my approach to being a student was that way. It was something that I'd missed twenty years before, I certainly was going to have my mind open, and open to all sorts of new ideas. At times it was frustrating. At times it was very frustrating, because one of the things is that the first year I discovered that there were students who had a great deal of regard for me with respect for my academic abilities, and I was being invited to be in study groups, etc. People were borrowing my notebook to Xerox and this kind of thing. But one of the things that used to be frustrating is that you'd join one of these study groups, and you'd spend a couple of hours studying with them, and then at the end of the study group, they would all make plans to go out for beer, and then you weren't included. It took a little while to realize, well, hey, wait a minute, wait a minute, remember you're forty years old. When you were twenty, you didn't want to take a forty-year-old guy out for beer either, and to remember that divide.

Now, the next year, I got really—the second year I became very competitive, competitive because I think I was a little frustrated inasmuch as I needed to finish it

quickly. I also had developed the confidence the second year that I didn't have the first year, because I really had this great fear that I was going to fall on my face, and I was going to fall on my face in front of all of these faculty members who'd known me for years. The second year, when I realized that with hard work I'd make good grades, and it wasn't any big thing, I decided—and it was probably a really bad decision, but it probably helped me keep my sanity the second year, because I also did overloads, because I wanted to finish as quickly as possible—I decided that I was going to finish magna cum laude. It was a horrible egotistic thing that I didn't tell anybody about until after the year was over, and I told my wife. She said, "Well, so that's what happened to our family life."

Essentially what I did was I started really sort of competing with myself. It was like, you got this thing to prove, you're this older guy who's doing this, you don't have a prep school background, it's been many, many years since you've been in school, etc., etc. To come out with the very highest grade point average that was possible, and so it was like there was this drive there that sort of kept me going the second year. Then magna cum laude was 3.4, and I finished with a 3.375. So it was a little bit of a disappointment. I told my wife, and she really chewed into me, and rightly so, because it was sort of a silly thing to do.

I had had so much support from her and from her father, because one of the things that happened, in 1983, her mother had just died. We had a house and a mortgage. Her dad went away to live for a few years. He worked for Federal Aviation Administration, and he accepted a transfer to Long Island. So he went up there to work for a couple of years, and before he left, he said, "Why don't you guys sell your house, you can live in my house while I'm gone, and you don't have to worry about a mortgage and this kind of thing." So it was like a rent-free environment for two years, thanks to my father-in-law. So that was a real great boon. Then Pat working. The only thing that I had to worry about from time to time was providing child care, because it

was important somebody was working. Child care wasn't such a problem, because he was in school. So it was just those days that he might be sick or something. At first it was the Yellow Brick Road, and then he really was in school.

But the guys that I came to know during those two years were just wonderful kids, and I think that my experience was very different from Chris Bowring's. I looked at some of the things in that article that were quotes from Chris, and it seems to me I remember one of those quotes being something like having the right or the obligation to question what you were learning, and I never was of that mind. I was here to enjoy what I was learning, and I don't think that students should set the agenda, and I never tried to do that.

It was certainly a high time, but it was also a time that meant my life was going to change in a very, very dramatic way, and one of the things that happened near the end of that year was probably one of the biggest racially traumatic things to happen on the campus in a long time. President Wilson fired John White, who had been the director of minority affairs, and that firing of John White was the culmination of something that John White should not have done. There was an honor trial that involved a black student. It was a public trial, because the student had demanded a public trial. During one of the intermissions, one of the kids had made a racially-charged remark. John White, who was the defense attorney for the student involved, because John was also a part-time law student, grabbed this white student by the collar and threw him on the floor. So you had someone in the capacity of dean, who had manhandled a student, so there wasn't much else the president could do.

In addition, there were a lot of other things that came out at the time. John had been operating sort of as a Robin Hood, using his cash drawer to bail black students out who were in financial difficulties.

In any case, a lot of faculty members who were—I shouldn't say a lot—but faculty members who were on the search committee for a new director of minority

affairs urged me to apply for that job. So there in the end of my last year as a student, I'm simultaneously applying for this job and realizing that I ought not to be doing this. I had also applied for jobs to teach in the independent school world, and my wife was so fearful that I was going to take the job here, that she didn't know what do to. She felt that it was going to be nothing but a nightmare, and she certainly was right.

I went through the same interview process that all the candidates from outside had gone through, and one of the people who was the greatest advocate for me in this interview process, was a guy named Mike Capetto, who was the associate dean of students, and he was the director of the Student Center. He has since left Washington and Lee. But in any case, there was this full day of interviewing one faculty member after another. A group of black students were supposed to take me to lunch, and when I showed up at the minority affairs house and John White was there, I knew that this was not going to be a pleasant time. The lunch was extremely unpleasant. I was supposed to, I think, have lunch with two or three black students. As it turned out, it was about six of them.

At one point during the lunch, one of them said to me, "If a black student was guilty of an honor violation and you knew that he was, to what extent would you go to cover it up?"

I said, "Not even if was my own son." I said, "How dare you even ask me that." I said, "This is one of the very reasons that Dean White lost his job, and he has a wife, because he was busy covering up for you guys. The way I feel is if you can't learn how to be honest, how to behave when you're a student, you never will. What's more, I not only have a wife, but I have a child, and I will be darned if I'm going to put the security of my family on the line to cover up for anybody who's behaving wrongly." Well, I knew full well how that response was going to go over. I knew exactly that that was not what these guys wanted to hear.

Later that afternoon, Mike Pleva, who was interviewing me—and Mike Pleva was interviewing me at the Alumni House—during his interview, the telephone rang, and it was the dean's secretary, who was a good friend. She said, "Pat needs you to call her."

I got scared to death and I thought, "What has happened that Pat would interrupt an interview?" I was frantic as I called her office or wherever I finally reached her, and was just astonished at what she had to say to me on the phone. It was essentially that, "I just got off the phone with Jack Tyrer, the headmaster at the Asheville School, who called to see if you could arrange to meet him in Lynchburg next week for an interview." Well, that wasn't so urgent that I needed to be interrupted during an interview, but the message was certainly strong. "I want to call back to tell him what you're going to do," she said.

I said, "Well, tell him okay, and we'll talk about details later."

I was sort of rattled by that, that I knew she didn't want me to take the job, and certainly after what had happened at lunchtime, I knew full well she was absolutely correct.

Later that afternoon, David Parker, who was also on the search committee, said, "You know, these kids really are upset with you."

I said, "I know."

He says, "Well, you know, they'll be graduating and going on. As soon as they all finish, you won't have any problem." [Laughter] It was typical David, though.

I went off to interview with the headmaster at Asheville School, and the airport interview in Lynchburg demanded an immediate—or was followed up with an immediate on-campus interview, and at the end of the interview at Asheville, he offered me a job and gave me a figure, and I said, "I need about a week to think about it."

I came back home, and the next morning in town I ran into Mike Capetto, and he said, "How'd the interview go?"

I told him, and he said, "Wait a minute. Don't say yes, because I have to get the committee together so we can make a counteroffer real quick."

I said, "No, Mike. There's not going to be a counteroffer. I'm going to take the job in Asheville."

I was really glad that I was leaving, because one of the allegations these kids had even made at lunchtime was that the only reason I wanted the job was because my wife having a position in town, and needing to have a job in town so that I could be here with her.

Essentially what happened was, and I didn't know at the time, is that they had narrowed the search to three candidates, and I was one of the three. I guess, to the best of the knowledge that I have of the other two people, for whatever reason, backed out, and they had to start the search all over again.

But, I never regretted not having taken that job. Certainly it took me far afield from the college. When I finished here, I went to Asheville, North Carolina, and I taught for three years in a boarding school, and that's where I learned what the black students at Washington and Lee were going through. The three years at Asheville School were an extraordinary experience for me, and certainly an experience that was very valuable in my professional formation. But one of the things was that that was like Washington and Lee in miniature. It was like Washington and Lee at the high school level. It's a very small, exclusive school, that at the time was billed as the best high school in the South. It was predominantly male, 350 wooded acres, 200 students, 43 faculty members. The boarders, when I arrived there, I think, were paying $11,000 a year, and the day students were $6,000 a year. It was an altogether new world to me, a world of prep school life, and what parents were willing to pay for in order to make sure their kids had a good start.

Out of 200 students, there were 10 black kids. Some of the black kids were from well-to-do families, some were not. Some were there on a program called A Better

Chance, the ABC program. Schools that participated in ABC just wrote off the tuition. But Asheville School also had white kids from poor backgrounds who they were writing off the tuition for as well.

One of the things that I learned, that a lot of the rules of etiquette had certainly changed from when I was a teenager, and that some of the things that I began to discover that went on between kids across racial lines, kids who were elite white and kids who were black, had not gone on in my experience of growing up in Virginia. One of the things that brought it home to me really quickly was that in a boarding school situation where you were also a dormitory parent, living with kids in a closer situation than you ever expect to live with your students, you know everything there is to know about them.

One evening I was on duty and I had papers to grade. There was this office that was off of the common room in one of the buildings that I was sitting in, grading papers. You learn really quickly. When I started there, all of our boarders were male. We had female day students, but no female boarders. The one thing that you learn really quickly is that when you've got male students, every time you hear a noise, you don't jump up, because there's horseplay constantly. You jump up when you hear stuff that you know is really bad.

So I was sitting there grading papers and I heard what seemed to be a wrestling match in the common room, and I just continued to grade papers. Then I heard the words, "You black shit," at which point I decided, "You'd better get out there."

When I went into the common room, there was this white kid who was on top of this black kid, and these boys are usually seen around the campus in each other's company. The black kid was the son of a dentist, and was from a fairly affluent family. He was also pretty much of an introvert. The one thing that you also learn is you talk to them separately and not together. I called the white kid into the office first and I talked to him. I said, "Why did you call him a 'black shit'?"

"Oh, he doesn't mind being called that."

I said, "What do you mean he doesn't mind being called that?"

"We call him that all the time," he said. "He doesn't mind. He doesn't say anything about it."

I said, "He's one of ten black students on the campus. What do you think he can do about it, being called a 'black shit'?"

He says, "You don't understand. He does not mind being called that, and I don't see anything wrong with it."

I said, "Well, look, obviously we aren't going to agree on this, but know this, if I ever hear you say this again, I'm going straight to the headmaster's office, and I'm telling him that I'm resigning, because I will not teach in a school where students treat one another like this."

I dismissed him and I called the black student in to talk to him. He denied being called a "black shit." At first I didn't understand what was going on, and the longer I talked to this boy, the more he denied it. The other kid's name was Christian. I said, "Christian admitted to calling you this."

He persisted in his denial. I had heard it anyway. It didn't matter what either of them said. So in my frustration, I sought out the only other black teacher on the campus, and left his house, left his apartment, even more frustrated, because there used to be some rock show that used to come on television every Saturday night, I forget what it was. There'd be some different groups on the show. I got to his apartment; he was too caught up in that to really care one way or the other about what I was excited about, except to look at me as if to say, "I told you so."

Then I began to listen more carefully to the student conversations, and there was just a delightful young man there, who I discovered, much to my chagrin, all the students referred to as "nigger." So I started engaging some of the students in conversation about this. "Why did you call him that?"

"But he doesn't mind."

I said, "What do you think he can do about it?"

Then I engaged the boy in conversation about it, this kid, I just dearly loved, and he was so embarrassed that I knew. He was just so embarrassed that it was incredible. Then I realized that a lot of these kids, in order to survive in situations like this, take extraordinary garbage. And some of them, like this kid, would never, ever lash out and defend themselves. On the other hand, there was a kid there, very large black kid, who was a basketball player and a fairly good student. He didn't take stuff off of anybody, and they were scared of him. I found that he was the best person in the world to talk to any of this stuff about, because he was very, very thoughtful with regard to the situation.

That year, one of the older faculty members came to me to talk to me about a very, very bright, young black student who was not going to come back the following year. It was his first year at Asheville School, and then he had grades nine through twelve. The school was very fearful of losing this kid. He was extremely talented. He said, "Will you at least talk to him to figure out why he's not going to come back?"

This boy said to me, he said, "You know Yeats." Well, Yeats was a good old North Carolina boy who wasn't very bright but had a lot of money. He says, "I'm so sick of him, I don't know what to do. He always starts conversations with me, 'You're not like other black people. I don't mind being around you, but I don't want to be around anybody else who's black, etc., etc., etc.'" He said, "I can't put up with that anymore. I figure the best thing for me to do is leave."

I said to him, "Are you going to let him beat you?" I said, "Public school is not what you need. You're being challenged here in a way that you're never going to be challenged in the public school, and your parents can afford to send you here. So you're going to let some jerk be the reason that you leave." I said, "You will be more

successful here than he ever will be, but you're going to let him defeat you. I think it's really tragic." The kid stayed on and finished.

Then I began to think back to all of the anger that I saw in the early seventies on the part of black students here, and began to understand the anger, realizing that there's a lot of behind-the-scenes stuff that people who are associated with the faculty or the administration in any way weren't seeing. By the time I left there, it had gotten so troubling to me, even though it was not widespread, and I loved the school, and I loved the kids.

But my hall was interesting. I had the most diverse dormitory hall on the campus, and I figured that it was probably because of the two dorm parents' race and ethnic background. These were huge dormitories, and there were two faculty apartments for each floor. One hall would accommodate thirty boys. This was a lot of kids. The bachelor apartment at the other end of the hall accommodated an Indian guy named Ajai Sirohi. It was really unique. He and I were the only two non-Anglo Saxon dormitory masters in the school, because the other black guy had left by my second year, to take a job at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. We had a German on the hall, we had an African on the hall, we had two or three black students on the hall. I mean, it seemed like the school's diversity seemed to come to our hall.

The German kid on a hall, wonderful kid, just a delightful kid. One day I saw him verbally abused by a senior who went so far as to say, "And what's more, my grandfather risked his life fighting Nazis like you, and I don't even want you on the hall."

Well, I just went ballistic. I went in there and I said, "How dare you call that kid a Nazi?" Of course, <u>he</u> was behaving like a Nazi, not the German kid.

One time one of the kids in the hall was in a fistfight with an African student. As I tried to figured out what happened, and talk to the two individually, the African

student told me that this kid had called him a "nigger." The other kid said, "But he called me a redneck."

Well, I said to him, I said, "Wait a minute." Because the foreign students oftentimes had real problems with the lingo. I said, "This kid's first language is French. So where do you think he got the term 'redneck'?"

"I don't know."

I said, "Ever sit down and listen to how you guys talk to each other?" I said, "You're calling each other redneck all the time. So you've got a kid from the Ivory Coast who speaks French, and he picks up the term 'redneck,' and because his skin is black, and he uses it, the rules suddenly become very different. So you have to retaliate with 'nigger.'"

So it was a real education for me. So when I come back to the campus on the ABD fellowship, after then spending three years at William and Mary, and begin to listen—

Warren: What year did you come back here?

De Laney: I came back here in '91. I left Asheville School in August '88, and I went to William and Mary. I took my PhD comps in April 1991, and came here to teach on the ABD fellowship that fall of '91.

So when I began to listen to the black students at that point, then I had an education that I hadn't had before, and was more sensitive to the complaints that they had than I had been previously.

Warren: Were you here during the Will Dumas—

De Laney: No, I was not, but I met Will Dumas, and I know about the incident, and heard an absolutely horrendous lecture last year that recanted it in terms that just horrified me, a young black female alumnus who recanted it in a speech last fall to freshmen parents, and aside from me thinking that it was an inappropriate venue, her remarks about him just really bothered me to a large extent.

I don't suppose there was any kid who tried any harder to be fully assimilated into the student community here than Will Dumas. He was from New Orleans, as I recall. I had a few brief conversations with him in the past, a very handsome guy, about the complexion of my son, but he had straight hair. He was also—interesting for this campus—he was Republican, so he fit into the student Republican atmosphere very well. He was probably more anxious to give the place a chance and to be as fully assimilated into the student body as possible. I think that what happened in his situation, I think, is just an extraordinary irony, and harkens back to what I said about John Branham earlier, where you have a kid like that to come here and then they have those experiences.

I don't think that Willard Dumas was radicalized, though. I think that his conservative leanings as a black Republican were too strongly in place that the experiences he had here with the controversy about whether he could be the president of the student body or not, I don't think that that changed his views or his ideals in any tremendous way, but then it would be wrong, also, for me to put words into his mouth, because, as I say, I've only had a few very brief conversations in the past.

Warren: I'm going to go and talk with him and get the story from him, but I just wondered whether you were a witness to that.

De Laney: Well, I tell you one student who liked him a very great deal, and a student who meant a great deal to me. One of my Asheville School boys—

Warren: I should turn the tape over.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

De Laney: One of my Asheville School boys, who was on my dormitory hall, who was a kid that just—when God made him, he threw away the pattern. My wife just loved this kid, too, a kid named John Thorsen. John came to Washington and Lee because of me. John's a white kid. John's from Wilmington, North Carolina. John was wait-listed at both Washington and Lee and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. John

could have been a powerhouse on any college campus or any school campus, except I think John was a little bit on the lazy side, but he certainly was sufficiently bright.

I felt really sorry for this kid when here he's caught with no certainty about where he was going to school, and I called him in and I said, "How would you like to go to Washington and Lee?"

"I'd really rather go to Chapel Hill."

I said, "No, John, I need a commitment to Washington and Lee, because I'm willing to make a phone call up there about you, but you've got to be committed to it if I do that."

I called Danny Murphy, and I said, "Danny, here's a kid who's really good, and he's wait-listed. I think that Washington and Lee really needs a kid like this. He will contribute a lot to the student body." He had a letter of acceptance within three days. I've never had that kind of clout with the admissions office before or afterwards, but in any case, John came here. He is presently one of the admissions officers at Darlington School in Rome, Georgia.

But John was a good friend of Willard Dumas, as I recall, and the first time that I ever heard anything about the controversy, I heard it from John Thorsen. I think that John Thorsen may, in fact, have been the person who introduced me to Willard Dumas. But if you wanted to get some sense of what that was like, I mean, John might provide a perspective for you as well. I guess my experience with that is only through what I've heard about it.

Warren: I guess we ought to wrap this up. We've gone on a long time. Is there anything more you'd like to talk about, with your historical perspective now? Any way you'd like to wrap this up?

De Laney: Well, one of these days, I guess—and a few people in the history department had suggested that I do this, you don't have time to do things like this, as a rule—one of these days I probably ought to sit down if time provides at my computer

and sort of write some reminiscences that at some point could become a part of the files in the Special Collections office.

But one of the things that I think is that I've certainly seen Washington and Lee evolve, and I think it's a much better place in 1996 than it was in 1993. I think that it's got a ways to go yet. I'm fearful that what's happening to the declining number of black students is happening all over the United States, and is not unique to Washington and Lee. I'd like to see Washington and Lee try even harder. Affirmative action, which I think is pretty much of a non-issue anyway, it's blown way out of proportion, affirmative action is probably going to be dead in the next few years. I'm very fearful that by that time campuses like Washington and Lee, but also campuses like Northwestern, at one point was thirty-five percent black, because they really recruited very heavily, I'm afraid that those campuses are going to be lily white, and I think the trend is already there.

I think that it behooves Washington and Lee to work overtime to recruit, because it's a moral and a just thing to do. That's not a historical perspective, but that's just sort of a moral perspective from my vantage point. And no matter how hard they recruit or how many black students they bring, I still may see very few of them in my classes. That's fine. They don't have to be in my classes because they're here. But they need to be here, because students learn lots of stuff from other students. They learn more from other students than they learn from us. So I think they would be a very, very valuable component to this university.

Warren: Thank you, Ted. This has been a pleasure, and I hope you will be a resource for me as I continue, that I can ask you questions.

De Laney: Thank you.

[End of interview]