

WILLARD DUMAS

May 24, 1997

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Mame Warren,

Interviewer

Warren: This is Mame Warren. Today is the twenty-fourth of May, 1997. I'm in Chicago, Illinois, with Willard Dumas. Is that how you pronounce it?

Dumas: Du-mah.

Warren: Dumas. I've heard people at W&L pronounce it several different ways, and that's why I'm asking.

All right. Why did you go to Washington and Lee in the first place? What attracted you?

Dumas: Well, I had put all the schools that I was applying to into categories, and Washington and Lee fit neatly into the Southern liberal arts college. I suppose Washington and Lee doesn't like it's description that way, but from what I knew about Washington and Lee, that's where it was going to fit into this sort of chart I had, and it came down to finances. My father had a classmate from dental school who was practicing, I think in Charlotte, and so he was pushing Davidson. He had just come to visit my parents, and I think he may even have had a daughter at Davidson. So he was just singing the praises of Davidson.

I had become acquainted with Washington and Lee, I think the summer previous. I had worked for the chief administrative officer of the city of New Orleans in an internship program, and one or two businessmen had come into the office and had

asked me where was I thinking of going to college, and they had mentioned Washington and Lee, and it was the first that I had heard of Washington and Lee. As it turned out, my father had a friend and colleague who was an orthodontist by the name of Marshall Gottsegen from New Orleans, and at the time he was my orthodontist, and he started mentioning Washington and Lee to me.

Warren: Had he gone there?

Dumas: Yeah. Dr. Gottsegen must be from the class of '58 or '60. He has two sons who attended Washington and Lee, one of which was in my class, Brad – Tom. I can't even remember. I think it's Thomas Gottsegen. I haven't seen them in a while. But anyway, so I had a relationship with Dr. Gottsegen that was professional because he was my orthodontist and, you know, somewhat friendly. He and my father were friends, and so he started singing the praises of Washington and Lee. So I sent away for the application. I think I'd maybe even received something from them. I thought it was a really nice-looking brochure.

So when it came down to everything, there was Davidson or Washington and Lee, and I applied to maybe twelve schools. So even in the mid-1980s, this was probably a good \$400 worth of applications, and there was only so much I could ask my parents to spend, so we're like either Davidson or Washington and Lee. So I flipped a quarter, and it was heads, and so it was George Washington.

Warren: That's great. [Laughter]

Dumas: And I applied to W&L, and I had sort of forgotten about Washington and Lee. I had had interviews for a number of institutions locally in New Orleans, UVA and Georgetown, Notre Dame, and Notre Dame had been the family favorite. My father had wanted to attend Notre Dame, and I think probably because of segregation and their financial situation, he couldn't go to Notre Dame. He and my mother were raised Roman Catholic, and they were very "pro" me going to Notre Dame. They had a number of family friends whose kids had been there. I'd been accepted to Notre Dame,

and the brothers who had educated me in high school, a number of them, had gone to Notre Dame. So I think it was between there and the University of Virginia.

I had pushed Washington and Lee off to the side. I got a letter saying that there would be an alumni interview, and I decided not to go, and my parents said, "Well, at least you owe them the respect to go to the interviews, since they've set up an alumni interview for you, and we've also paid fifty dollars for this," fifty or forty dollars.

So I went, and I interviewed with, I believe, James Brook or Jim Brooks, maybe the class of '74, '75, or '76, relatively, you know, sort of youngish guy. He was an investment banker, I think. And it was the interview with Mr. Brooks. I'd had interviews for Georgetown, Notre Dame, UVA. Where else? I think Boston University. I mean, it was a wide variety of schools, but the first ten or fifteen minutes it was sort of the typical interview, and then after that, I think Jim Brooks started to tell me the highlights of his four years at Washington and Lee, and he made Washington and Lee come alive, unlike anyone I had met from any of the other schools I had applied to. And so what had probably been scheduled as a forty-five-minute interview, I think, turned into three hours.

Now, I can't remember whether or not—I know I wasn't of legal age, but I think he actually offered me a glass of bourbon after all of this. I don't think it was such a completely terrible transgression, and I think I just sat and listened to him. He told me about the Honor System, and he described the beauty of the Shenandoah Valley and his experiences there. He may have been a native of Maryland, but for some reason he was able to contrast it with my life in New Orleans, and just even the physical surroundings, and it just really appealed to me. So he contacted the admissions office, and we worked it out, and I think I flew up to visit W&L a few weeks after that.

The moment I set foot on the campus, I began a relationship that has evolved over—I guess it's close to ten years now, and I had a wonderful experience, the visit.

Warren: What were your impressions that first trip?

Dumas: It was the Honor System that astounded me, the Honor System and also the physical beauty. I think I was there in the spring. That sounds right. I don't know how that works with the logistics of admissions, but I seem to recall that there was snow melting on the ground but that there was also, I think, the dogwoods were blossoming.

Warren: That's not impossible in Rockbridge.

Dumas: No. I've come to appreciate, having lived in New England now and in the Midwest, that that's quite possible. So I remember the dogwoods. I remember green. I remember snow. It hadn't snowed in New Orleans at that point since I was like three or four. So I was definitely overwhelmed by the surroundings.

I was particularly impressed with the Honor System. I remember just getting sort of the initial tour, and I remember there was a group of men playing lacrosse, which I had never seen before, and I think I remember that they had their possessions, wallets and jewelry, off to the side, and unmolested. And it was just like, "Wow. This is just amazing." Then I began to notice bikes, you know, unattended. I don't think that has changed over the last—I mean, even since I've been a student there, as society intrudes more into the university life, but that really struck me. Then I remember visiting and staying with students, and the dorm rooms being unlocked, and seeing people take their exams. I was just overwhelmed at the sense of trust that was established in the community, and I decided at that moment, I think, that I wanted to go to school in an environment like that.

I think I remember meeting Brad Root, who would be the president of the Executive Committee the following year, when I was a freshman, and I think he'd maybe just been elected president of the student body. I'm not sure, but I remember thinking, "I want to be president of the student body. I want to have something to do with this Honor System."

It was so different from the private and Catholic education that I had and one that I knew was not dissimilar from a lot of my contemporaries in New Orleans.

Cheating was very much a part of academic life, and I've since learned that from my classmates that I met in law school and even in graduate school that they were confronted with classmates who cheated. At that point in my life, it was something that had really bothered me. I think I had seen a classmate of mine who was very well respected in high school actually cheat on an exam, and I didn't do anything about it, and it had really bothered me. Other people had known this, and this had been a very successful student, a very bright student. So for me, Washington and Lee at that point became very important to me. That was the type of environment I wanted to go to school in.

Warren: And were your parents surprised when you came home and announced that?

Dumas: Yes. They were quite shocked and, I have to say, a little disappointed. My parents are very much children of the South. They actually had an acquaintance, a family friend, who had a nephew who had gone to Washington and Lee and who was black and had evidently had some problems there in the early eighties or maybe in the late seventies that were race-related, and he left. He left campus, I think, after a year there.

My father had gone to school at Howard University for dental school because he could not go to school in Louisiana to attend dental school because LSU was a segregated institution. So he had to take the train up to Washington, D.C., and he rode on the train with students who were attending Washington and Lee and University of Virginia, and so he knew what those – he saw and he told me how they treated the porters on the train and the reckless abandon at which they conducted themselves and put individuals like my father and the black porters in danger of their life at that time in the South, just whether it was fraternization or through their antics. So he had reservations, personal experience. But he also knew Marshall Gottsegen, and I think their relationship, their professional relationship, was very good. Dr. Gottsegen is a Jewish orthodontist who sent patients to my father. My father sent patients to him,

which, you know, there are not a lot of – I mean, that wasn't something that was taking place in New Orleans in the eighties. The medical community is still very segregated. So I think he knew someone like Dr. Gottsegen, who, I think, sort of tempered that view, but he had some reservations and so did my mother.

I think they had sort of thought that Notre Dame would have been much more of a nurturing environment and perhaps a better place. After all, they knew that Robert E. Lee was buried on the campus, and I think they probably had visions of it being sort of a shrine of the South, and so they were quite perplexed that I wanted to go to school there and, I think, concerned. I think that they recognized that it may not have initially appeared to have been the best environment for me.

Warren: Did you have any sense on that initial visit that you would be having problems with racial issues if you went there?

Dumas: I think I knew that there would be challenges there, because clearly I had come to realize that the culture of Washington and Lee was sort of this culture of the South. It was an Anglo Southern culture. But in some ways, and I realize this isn't how one should pick to go to school, I thought of it as being a challenge. I had been encouraged to pursue a career in law by my parents, and I can't say that I didn't have an interest in it, but I suspected my future held a legal career and probably a corporate legal career, and so I figured that this wouldn't be such a bad environment, improve my "country club sports" and sort of learn how the elite of the South, thinking I would come back to the South, played and worked.

I did know in the back of my head that I thought that there would be challenges, and I thought that they would be good, and I thought that it would be good experiences to have. Maybe that was not calculating, but I thought it was a part of an education that would perhaps be better than going to Notre Dame, where I naively thought that maybe race wouldn't be as much of an issue, I don't know, or going to a traditional predominantly black institution like my parents attended, where I know they had a

very good education, but I thought that I probably needed to experience these challenges sooner than later. Not that my high school wasn't sort of the same thing, but I knew I also needed to get out of New Orleans and the very sort of peculiar values and mentality that exist in New Orleans and in Louisiana.

Warren: Did you meet with other black students when you came for the initial visit?

Dumas: Yes, I did. I remember going to the MSA, which was the Minority Student Association, and I think that they still – it was still the Chavis House then. So I remember meeting a number of black students and other minority students, but I can't say that anyone stands out from that visit, with the exception of Mimi Elrod and, I think, Brad – Brad Root. I mean, thinking back now on it, I think those are really the only two people that I can remember meeting. Well, actually, one of my dorm counselors who's black, he was there at the time, and I remember meeting Richard.

But, you know, it was sort of the situation when I visited a lot of other schools. The perspective of the black students, the African-American students, were that, you know, "We can get a good education here, but it comes at a price, and that price is we are a minority here, and for some people we're a novelty. For other people we're invisible. For some people, we're a source of friendship. For other people we're just sort of the typical American view, you know, "We have our prejudices, and I'm not going to go out of my way to interact with you." That was the perspective that you got at a lot of institutions, and clearly these students articulated that there were opportunities to get involved and that you could do a lot.

Actually, I remember meeting Michael Webb who, I believe, that year had become secretary of the Executive Committee. I think he was the highest elected black member of the EC to date at that point. I think Michael was from New Jersey. It's coming back to me. I was actually thinking about him the other day because he had run for mayor of Newark, New Jersey, not too long after he graduated from Washington and Lee, and Newark just had an election or a primary, and it was on the news, on

National Public Radio. I remember that Michael didn't win, but I was trying to think, "I wonder where Michael is, what is he doing, what is he up to?" So I remember meeting Michael Webb, and actually, he was influential in my decision, because Michael was someone who had gotten involved in an organization that I knew that I wanted to be involved with, which was the Executive Committee.

The other students of color who I met and international students, actually, were fairly involved. They were involved in different organizations. The university doesn't like to admit it nor do a lot of other institutions, but usually, I think, your students of color and your international students tend to be involved in more organizations and participate more than the average white male fraternity guy at Washington and Lee who counts as his organizations his fraternity. So I saw all the opportunities and organizations that students were involved with, and I thought that this was a viable option. I think that what made it that was the Honor System, because I thought that it made Washington and Lee special. It made it more special than the University of Virginia. I've had animated discussions with friends who attended the University of Virginia, our Honor System versus theirs, and it's really not the same, and I hope it never will be the same, but it was the Honor System that got me to go to Washington and Lee.

Warren: So you arrive. You're a student. You're enrolled. What was your impression then? What happened when you got there?

Dumas: My parents drove me up. That was probably the longest drive I had ever taken with them. They filled me in on the drives they used to make between New Orleans and Washington, D.C., and we got off the interstate once or twice, and they showed me where they could stop and where was a safe place where they could use a restroom. It made me appreciate probably a little bit more about American history and sort of what part of the country I was going into.

I arrived there, and it was very difficult for them leaving me. My mother supposedly cried as far as Roanoke, and my father threatened to put her on a plane back to New Orleans and he would just drive back on his own.

I remember the excitement of just meeting people from all over the country, I mean predominantly the South, people from all over. I was sort of exhilarated. I enjoyed meeting people from all over. I had always found New Orleans to be painfully provincial, and it was becoming everything that I had hoped that it would be.

I guess what sticks out in my mind, there was fraternity Rush, which I had elected to participate in. I had had discussions with a few of the black male students who had elected to go through fraternity Rush, and, for me, I thought that I would make it a viable option. I knew that was something that my father and grandfather had reservations about, because they were both in Alpha Pi Alpha fraternity when they went to college, even my grandfather in the twenties. He had friends who had founded the fraternity. So I knew that was somewhat of an issue, but I also knew that a lot of the fraternities definitely were segregated, but I figured it would be a good way for me to meet people. It would be a good way for me to meet my fellow classmates outside of my dorm and to meet a lot of the upperclassmen, and I just went through thinking that whatever comes up happens. I have to say that I did avoid going to certain fraternity houses.

Warren: So it was well known which ones were segregated?

Dumas: Yeah. Yeah. I look back upon that decision, and the people who told me meant well, because I think that they had actually had bad experiences there in fraternity Rush, I mean almost like sort of an "Animal House" thing. So I took them up on their advice. They had come up with houses that had never had any black pledges, had never even, they thought, would consider it, but they had friends who were white who they thought were very open-minded, very nice guys and thought that, you know, "I think

you could actually fit in at this house. But for the issue of race, I don't think these guys would have any problem with you."

And so I went there, and I thought that it would be a good experience, having to smile, meet people. It was a part of me, I think, when I had real political ambitions, which I have no longer. And so I went through Rush, and I did meet a lot of people and it was a good experience. I can't say it wasn't without some painful experiences. Race was an issue.

Warren: Can you tell me about painful experiences with that?

Dumas: Well, I'm trying to think of something that sticks out in my mind. I remember being interested in one or two houses and being there on the night when bids were extended to my classmates. The houses technically should have not had those of us who were not receiving bids there, and I remember being there, and that was a disappointment. I now can say that happened to other students who weren't black.

Warren: You're saying you were there and the bids were not extended to you.

Dumas: Right. Right. The courteous thing would be to have only the people who were receiving bids there, and I knew that race had been an issue. I knew the houses that extended me bids. I was probably the only rushee who actually met not only every member of the fraternity, but alums who came back to assist, and for those who had reservations, they set up situations so that I could spend time with them, and we talked about everything. They were impressed that I was fifth or sixth generation of my family going to college. I had to meet their standards, more so than any of my white classmates. That's something that I've shared with a lot of my friends throughout my years, especially when I was at Washington and Lee when race was an issue.

So I never deluded myself into believing that I went through Rush the same way that anyone else went through Rush at Washington and Lee. I was offered a bid, I believe, at three fraternities, and I took a bid at Sigma Chi. I was quite pleased because there were a number of people in that fraternity who were campus leaders, and I don't

think it was so much because they were campus leaders, but I liked the qualities that they had. I thought that they were scholars and student leaders, and I was very impressed with these people. I knew that while I didn't approve of it, I knew that they were taking a chance with me, and I suppose at this point in my life I kind of resent the fact that I was proud that they were taking a chance with me. Actually, I don't think about it that much, but years later it became much more difficult with Fraternity Renaissance. I had numerous conversations with John Wilson where I would try and articulate to him the deep problems I had that the university was floating bonds and raising money to renovate fraternity houses that still were segregated and using university funds or using the tax-exempt status of the university to promote and bolster these organizations that would remain that way, and I still doubt.

Warren: What kind of reaction did you get?

Dumas: Probably one of the few cases, I think John Wilson was very sympathetic, but his constituency was not individuals like myself. Those aren't the people who contribute to Washington and Lee. He said that there's no facial discrimination in the sense that there are no laws in the bylaws anymore that say these things and that we had to go upon their word that they were not using race to discriminate against people. Although at my fraternity, I believe I had to sign a statement and swear that I was a Christian gentleman. I think in 1987 it was in the pledge contract that the national fraternity sent out. Maybe it was the old copy they had, although I think that there were Jews in our fraternity. Yeah. I always tried to articulate that to John Wilson, that I had some problems with that.

He gave a wonderful speech one day – it may have been Founders Day or Lee's birthday – reflecting upon, I think, a story that had just run in the Roanoke paper about the desegregation of cemeteries there, and he said something about what will we say fifty years from today about the world we lived in at Washington and Lee. His speech was basically how could we have maintained a society that believed in even separating

people in death? And I think that's what provoked me to go and see him about the Fraternity Renaissance. I said, "Well, look, President Wilson, actually, you know, you're funding these fraternity houses."

I had lots of friends in different fraternity houses, including those that were segregated, and it was always a difficult decision because either it was a level of friendship that caused them to reveal sort of a crisis on their own part of judgment and say, "Well, we had So-and-so go through Rush, and he's a great guy, but the house just isn't ready." People would confide these things in me over the years at Washington and Lee, individual students who realized that there were race problems.

Warren: Did you stay in Sigma Chi?

Dumas: No, I did not. I ended up depledging during Pledge Week. My grandmother died in the middle of Pledge Week, and I went home.

Warren: When you were a freshman?

Dumas: Yes, when I was a freshman, I think three days into Pledge Week, and I went home to New Orleans. I was quite close to my grandmother. I gave up all interest in Sigma Chi after that, and I chose not to complete the rest of the program. There had been problems. I had actually had some problems with the fraternity house while I was there, not from any of the brothers but from two of my pledge brothers who made racist jokes or something, and I actually ended up punching one of them, which caused a huge rift in the house because you're not supposed to do stuff like that. I think it's the only time I've been moved to physical violence in my life. But that wasn't the reason, I mean the eventual reason why I left.

After that, it became more interesting because I had developed friendships. My friendships with other people, I guess 80 percent of the males at Washington and Lee were in fraternities, so naturally I had a lot of friends who were in fraternities. By then I'd been elected to the Executive Committee, so I always had an invitation to spend time at this fraternity house or that one. There was one with a lot of guys from New Orleans,

and so basically after that I had a standing invitation to spend every big weekend at a number of fraternity houses if I so desired. I wasn't the only student that had that invitation. There were other students.

Warren: So you got onto the EC as a freshman?

Dumas: I ran for the EC freshman, the one freshman seat, and I was elected. It was a good experience. I met a lot of my classmates, and it was a good political experience, running for office.

Warren: Tell me about that. I haven't talked to anybody as young as you who still feels the juices from the politics of it all.

Dumas: It was set up to meet with groups of people, so the best way to do that was to go to fraternity houses. So someone there would say, "Well, Willard's going to come and speak at dinner." And maybe actually I didn't do that freshman year. That may have been later on. That may have been sophomore year or junior year. Maybe freshman year I went around the dorms. I can't remember now. That may have been something that came much later. But there was a time in my life when I enjoyed doing stuff like that, and I could talk politics and I could assemble shared interests that we had. I was also pledge class president from my fraternity. So I think that I made it difficult for those people who wanted to see me only as black or to see me as black first, because I went out and I got involved in things, where they had to say, "Oh, well, he's the Sigma Chi pledge class president, also." So I could relate to what 80 percent of the males were going through in the freshman class.

Warren: So then you were an independent?

Dumas: Yes. I was an independent, but I also became friends with a number of individuals who, for all the reasons people depledge fraternities, there were a number of people who had become independents or some people who had chosen never to join fraternities.

Warren: Was there a common thread among those people? Why would somebody in a place that's as – that word everybody uses – homogenous as Washington and Lee, where 80 percent of the people are in fraternities, why do people choose not to be in fraternities?

Dumas: Well, some of them, I think, wanted to be individuals and have their freedom, for the freedom. I think some just had a problem with the whole concept of pledging a fraternity. I think in some ways it was people who sort of rejected that part of Washington and Lee. I'm not sure what else to really say.

Warren: I'm intrigued by it, because I'm a child of the sixties, when nobody joined fraternities or sororities or anything like that, and so, if anything, I identify with the independents. Yet I see how life is at Washington and Lee, and I just wonder how you survive socially at Washington and Lee as an independent.

Dumas: Well, I think part of it also became interest. I think when people saw that the fraternity life was basically going to fraternity parties every weekend and spending time with this one group of people, I think that didn't appeal to them. For the best fraternities, their program is "These are your brothers. These are the people you spend most of your free time with." It was very odd. People were sort of held up and said, "Oh, he's really good friends with So-and-so in another fraternity house," and people were like, "That's sort of a model, not one that we want to emulate, but it's a model." I think that there were people who didn't like that confinement. I think that became definitely a big part of it.

There were some people who, I think, realized also not only was Washington and Lee not for them, in the sense of being in a rural community in the middle of nowhere in Virginia, they began to develop other interests. My roommate sophomore year, three of us were independents. One had depledged from a fraternity. One had received bids from a number of fraternities and chose not to join any of them, and one did belong to a fraternity, but he didn't belong to the "inner sanctum" fraternities. He

belonged to Delta Tau Delta, which I believe the university has finally gotten rid of. The politics of this, I think if you probably talk to alumni, it doesn't really change. There are houses where alums contribute a lot of money, and these are influential people, and their children, grandchildren, nephews, they belong to these houses. So we did lots of other things.

Warren: I need to turn the tape over.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Warren: You did mention Fraternity Renaissance. You were there for that whole major disruption.

Dumas: Yeah.

Warren: Can you describe what it was like to have Lexington as torn up as it apparently was?

Dumas: I graduated in '91, so I don't know how much disruption we were experiencing. I mean, it was fear. There was fear because what it really meant was that things were going to become uniform, and all the worst fears about the university could be visited upon these fraternities in the sense that there was a core group of men who fused with this conservative politics and a periodical they started, and a lot of this was anti-John Wilson, anti-John Elrod, Randy Bezanson. It was that whole Midwestern sort of Mafia that came from Iowa and Michigan and brought in certain – you know, they saw Draconian egalitarian ideas, and what this meant was that the fraternity houses no longer owned – I mean, this is how my fellow students saw it.

As a representative on the Executive Committee, my feelings against Fraternity Renaissance or fraternities hadn't become that strong, but it was still my duty to listen to what my fellow classmates were saying and to try and articulate this whenever I had the opportunity to have John Wilson's ear or any trustee's ear. So I was very interested in what these men had to say, and I still read them. I read the *New York Times* last week about their banning alcohol from some fraternities now, and I read the editorials of

alums and fathers who just thought this was awful. There's a certain mentality in this country about what their sons should be allowed to do. This was a lot of what was being articulated because they knew that no one wanted their house to become Fiji. Yes, they wanted a nice house like the Fiji fraternity across the street from Dick Sessoms, but they didn't want Dick Sessoms, as nice of a guy as he is, or Farris Hotchkiss or Randall Bezanson, all those people who were neighbors of the Fijis while we were there, to have such an intimate role in their brotherhood. You know, a housemother? Oh, God. It was not the idealized fraternity experience that they had. Even my roommates and I, it was the whole "Animal House" mentality. At that time that was seen sort of as the right of passage, that you would have these crazy parties and there'd be lots of alcohol consumed and there would just be chaos and pandemonium and fun.

Fraternity Renaissance, I think, for a lot of those guys, meant that this would change and there be these standards. Everyone wanted their houses renovated, but they just didn't want the fact that the university would own the land. Because if the university owned the land, then they could turn it to Gaines Dormitory, and no one wanted to live in Gaines Dormitory.

Warren: Why?

Dumas: Well, I think that they didn't like the social engineering of it.

Warren: Tell me what you mean by that.

Dumas: Well there was a lot of reaction against—I think it was seen in John Wilson and John—not so specifically John Elrod, because most people didn't know. They knew he was Dean Elrod and vice president of academic affairs. I'm trying to think. What was it that they said about John Wilson? He brought in coeducation, and that same year they changed from Coke to Pepsi, I think, in the vending machines. I mean, this was awful! I mean, he was considered the Antichrist associated with everything he did. There was nothing that John Wilson did that a whole cadre of students and alums could like, which was really, really unfortunate.

So there was also this idea that the student body was changing, that the students were becoming "too intelligent." I sat in when I was president of the student body, on trustees' meetings, and I guess you'll probably want to edit it, but I can't remember whether it was Beau DuBose, but he was just like, "You know, I'm worried now –" I mean, his son was at Washington and Lee, but you even heard trustees voicing this opinion, "Are we radically changing the core students of Washington and Lee?" They were concerned that the SAT scores were getting too high and that their sons and daughters maybe wouldn't be getting in. Dean Hartog would say – I remember it was a wonderful trustees' meeting, he said, "You know, your SAT scores, when everything's adjusted, were actually the highest," like the class of '62, '63, '64. He said, "The university has not approached that yet." He said, "Actually we've been trying to raise them back up to that," to convince these people that the student body wasn't radically changing. There were a handful more of black students and a handful more of international students on the campus, but the campus was still overwhelmingly white and Christian and fairly affluent. Yes, I think people who were coming to grips with the reality that if you wanted to get a professional degree or you wanted to go on to graduate school, academics were becoming much, much more of a serious issue. I think there was maybe some change. There were people who didn't see, I think, fraternity life as first and foremost. Our class was picked on because I think Bernadette Kempton, the valedictorian of my class, Bernadette at the time was approaching the highest GPA in the history of Washington and Lee. Bernadette was just feared because she worked hard, and she did really well. I think she may have graduated with a 4.1 or something or maybe a 4.0-something, and there was just sort of, "This is just craziness."

So all of this was associated with John Wilson, and I'm hoping that my classmates don't remember that as – and I'm sure that they don't. They have to have forgotten the politics and the battles, but they saw it very much for the heart and soul of the Washington and Lee that they inherited, to the Washington and Lee that they had

applied to. The class of pledges that I was in were sort of looked upon both by ourselves and, I think, by later students in awe because we were the last pledge class to go through, the last all-male class. There was this constant effort to grab on to something of the old Washington and Lee, before the arrival of women and Anne Schroer-Lamont. A lot of this has to do with political correctness and stuff like that. They saw liberal orthodoxy being imposed upon Washington and Lee, and, in fact, it wasn't liberal orthodoxy.

Warren: Not really. [Laughter]

Dumas: I think John Elrod probably had been a little more liberal. I think he's come closer to appreciate the institution that he runs now, and I think that there's been sort of this dialectic where he's absorbed a lot of the institution and community, and I think he's kind of had an appreciation, he probably learned from John Wilson how best to do the things that will improve the university and make it a great institution but to try and be less controversial. I mean, in the end it wasn't that bad.

I don't know what it's like now. I don't know if alcohol isn't allowed on campus. I haven't been back; I was unable to attend my fifth-year reunion, but I'd been going back at other times, more random times. Actually, I think I went back immediately after my first year of law school. I went back October for, I think, Homecoming, and that was the last time that I went back when there was basically students there. All the other times I visited, it's been to see my friends from the faculty.

So I think that was a lot of the political culture that survived, and by the time I became president of the student body, things were becoming a lot more tense because then the whole planned Fraternity Renaissance was becoming more concrete, the idea that there were housemothers. It really became an issue that they thought that—I mean, while I was there, there was this organization called the Confidential Review Committee, and it was to deal with issues of discrimination based upon gender and

race, and it was set up, and it somewhat went outside the traditional regime set up for disputes between students that had originally been part of the student constitution.

There was a lot of secrecy associated with the organization and its procedures, and it was an attempt on the part of the university to try and address the needs of its students who were of color, who were not their traditional students, not the school's traditional constituency, and there were problems with race. I know that happened, and, unfortunately, there was a certain amount of deference, I think, shown on the part of my classmates who were black towards me because I was elected, and they sometimes hid these things from me. I'm not sure, maybe because I appeared to be an unsympathetic individual, which would really be unfortunate, or that they wanted to deal with it on their own and didn't want to make an issue and didn't feel that, as an EC representative, it was appropriate for general student discussion.

I remember learning of an incident where either a noose and a little cross or a piece of tissue with a wad of tissue inside of it was burned outside of a black student's door in Gaines, which was the place where students from all backgrounds and different classes (I mean university ranking) would come together. I remember hearing about this, and I heard about it a few months later, and I was absolutely devastated that it hadn't been shared with me. I don't know what I would have done. There were clearly people on campus who, in the administration, were very capable of handling it. I probably would have brought it up in the EC meeting, because I would have tried to expand what honor meant and to remind, and I think I did remind my classmates, reading General Lee's definition of a gentleman, how you treated someone who was different from you, even if you perceived them to be, in his day, a slave, that you treated them with respect. Now, whether or not General Lee actually did that, I don't know, but that was his rhetoric, unfortunately a rhetoric that most people in this country who subscribe and elevate him to a saint don't really like to hear.

But I think I maybe even read that one day when I was president of the student body from the EC meeting and put it in the minutes to let people know, "Look, this is what is most important. It's not lying, cheating, and stealing, it's how you conduct yourself with your fellow students, with a faculty member, with a member of the staff, with anyone in town." It was to remove this whole privilege mentality.

So I don't know, but I remember being very disappointed and kind of hurt and almost embarrassed that I found out about that incident many months after it happened. Well, maybe I'd been too consumed in the developing politics of the university that I didn't take those concerns, but I was a member of the minority students at Washington and Lee, and I should have—I don't know, I probably should have been more involved, and I would have known about that.

Not to say that I didn't have racial problems when I was there. I remember being with my girlfriend at the time from Sweet Briar, and someone from Sigma Chi had yelled a racial epithet out of the window of the fraternity house, and this was like when I was a junior or even a senior. I must have been a junior. But those aren't my predominant memories of Washington and Lee. Unfortunately, talking to the other people that I know, contemporaries of mine who've gone to school all over the country, these experiences, it's part of being an American, and it's part of being black in America. I can't say Washington and Lee was any worse or any better. I don't hold that against the institution.

There were stupid things that the university did. My most recent conversation with Washington and Lee was the photograph in the April calendar for this month. I got my calendar, like I get everything from Washington and Lee, and I just ripped through it. I want to see the pictures; I want to read the articles. I look forward to an alumni magazine. For some reason, the law school has me on their mailing list, maybe because I have a JD, and I have a number of faculty friends over at the law school, so I even read the law stuff. So I got the calendar, and the month of April, there's a picture

of Traveller's grave, which I used to pass at least once or twice a week. It had all these Confederate flags stuck in it. So I'm thinking, "There were never any of these Confederate flags when I was a student there. Why is there here in this picture?"

When I became president of the student body, they had to go to the KA House and meet with them and assure them that I was not going to take the flag down out of Lee Chapel, as if I, president of the student body, would ever have had the authority to take down those battle flags that followed and that General Lee had carried into battle with him in the Army of Northern Virginia. I mean, I thought those flags with very appropriate to be there. That was one of the things that impressed me about Washington and Lee, that there weren't Confederate flags all around the school, I mean, except for what the students had. Now, a close reading of what General Lee's words were was like the stars and bars are not supposed to hang anymore, you're not supposed to wear these Confederate uniforms.

I really need to go back through. There's a book, *Lee: the Last Years*, and I read that, I think, my first semester there which I think allowed me to get to know General Lee. Now that I'm pursuing my Ph.D. in history, I really haven't revisited to see what the historiography of the book is and whether this guy Flood is really a good historian or not or whether it's just celebratory. But I remember somewhere in that book, and I've since lent the book to a colleague of mine at my old law firm, he has the book – I guess I've given him the book now, but there was somewhere in there about the whole uniforms and the flag, and he was just like, "Put it away. The war's over. It shouldn't be there." And with the exception of his battle flags, Washington and Lee lived up to that. You know, it's not like the Citadel or any of these institutions where they have the Confederate flags paraded around.

So I get to April, and I'm just like, "I can't believe this." So this month or last month, April, April was up in my room, and it just irritated me, and I've just been so busy this first year of graduate school that I hadn't done anything about it. Well, I've

now received two, three letters from the development people about my annual fund contribution, along with three or four letters from Boston College Law School. So I was just like, "Look, I have such a tight budget. I'm not going to be able to give both to BC and to Washington and Lee, and I'm so exercised by these Confederate flags." I mean, if you look at it, there's no purpose that the flags are there. I mean, it's sort of this little glorification. I mean, you see the flags first, then you see Traveller's grave. So after receiving my final – another letter in June that I had not made my contribution yet – that's why I asked you for John's e-mail address and also for Patrick's, and I figured that I really hadn't spoken to the Elrods recently except to exchange Christmas cards, and it would be unfair of me to burden him with that.

So I contacted Patrick, and Patrick got back to me the next day. He'd been out of town, and so I explained to him, and he said, "Well, the flags were there, and I thought it would just be a good shot." He said, "Part of the decision was mine, it was probably Brian's," and he mentioned someone else, and, "You're right. We should have been more sensitive." As to your contribution to the annual fund, it sounds like – Patrick probably doesn't want this in, but he was just like I was going to give it to the indigent criminal defense program that I had participated in at BC, and they really need the money because they get clothes and stuff for the indigent defendants they represent in Dorchester Criminal Court, district court, and we were always short on funds. So he agreed. He said, "You know, the university's not going to be made or broken over your fifty dollars, and I don't think you're going to get any type of apology for it or anything." So he said, "It's probably better if you give it to BC this year."

I said, "Yeah, I'm going to do that."

He conceded that they should have been perhaps more sensitive. So then he said, "Well, I should tell you that they're restoring the battle flags and there are new flags up in the chapel that are brighter."

I said, "Patrick, I don't have a problem with the flags there. I don't even have a problem with reproductions there," I said, "because they're appropriate." I said, "What I have a problem with is that, whether you all did it or someone else did it, stuck these other Confederate flags in Traveller's grave. They were never there. There's no point in them being there." And I said, "It's just everything surrounding it." I said, "It's not like the governor of Virginia right now hasn't just made this National Confederate History Month." I said, "This is a typical Washington and Lee reaction where you kind of do something so clumsy and belligerent against the backdrop of other people doing something clumsy and belligerent."

Warren: Patrick shared that conversation with me, and I was really glad he did. I was really glad you made the phone call, because I'd looked at that picture, and I hadn't seen what you saw. I just saw Traveller's grave with something colorful on it. Now that you've pointed it out, I'll never look at it again without seeing them there. I wanted to ask your opinion about a photograph that I'm thinking about using in the book, which I've shown to several of the first black graduates of Washington and Lee, but I haven't shown it to anyone your age or younger. It's a picture of the minstrel shows they used to have back in the fifties.

Dumas: Oh, God.

Warren: What's your reaction as a black alum and your reaction as a historian to the potential of seeing that in the official history of Washington and Lee?

Dumas: Well, I should begin with describing my scholarship and my intended academic field. I intend to become a Latin Americanist. So my exposure to American history is a Holt Merchant class and David Parker's survey class was on American history. I have been exposed to lots of colonial images, images of how the "Other" in the definition of Edward Said [phonetic] is portrayed. So, yes, I do know enough about American history, about minstrels. You know, it's how it's used. You know, if the purpose of it is to get alums from the fifties to be nostalgic for that and to give more

money – I remember when I was in law school, I went to the Boston "On the Shoulders of Giants" capital campaign, and Tom Wolfe, who I can say is a good acquaintance, I mean he remembered me after my experience on the board with him and actually chatted with me quite a deal, much to, I think, the shock of the Boston Brahman alumni crowd, like, "Who are you?" My date at the evening – it was really nice, but her reaction – I'm trying to think where she had gone to undergraduate. I think she'd gone to Columbia. She's like, "There are no women in these pictures." Do you realize that the capital campaign film has no women? It's like all these men."

So I had to say, "Well they're trying to raise money, and these are the people who give them money, and I guess that's what they want to reflect."

Will I be offended by the minstrels? I don't know. I didn't know that the university had minstrel shows. I didn't think about that. Maybe that's part of what my father objected to about riding the train, riding – was it the City of New Orleans or the Crescent up to Washington, D.C., with Washington and Lee and UVA students?

Warren: Well, apparently it was a big social event of the year. What I have, and what my plan is, I have an interview that I did with the person who for several years was the head guy in black face, and I had an interview with him. I didn't even mention the minstrel show, although it was on my list of things to mention. He brought it up, and he started talking about it, and what he said was, "I understand now that we shouldn't have done that."

Dumas: That's good.

Warren: And to me, from my perspective, using that photograph of him there and his reflection on it today, together, from my perspective, will be very powerful, especially for those who haven't gotten to where he is yet. But I want to know when you open that book, will you even read what it says on the page or will you be so offended by seeing that picture? And I'm not trying to put you in a corner. I'm asking your opinion as someone who saw something in that picture of Traveller's grave that I didn't see.

Dumas: I will read what it says. I mean, I'm not going to be so offended that I won't read it. Unfortunately, what I'm doing now, you have to read the most offensive things. I mean, in some ways it's worse than my brief career as a lawyer because then you were reading usually people's personal intimate experiences that they never expected would be published in a law firm, printed, and then taken out into court. I'm reading stuff that governments and government agents and other historians wrote that were the most base, racist, chauvinistic things. I mean, that's what the historiography is, thirty, forty years ago was, I mean, a lot of it was. So that's a difference.

My reaction as someone of color is, well, why is he saying that? Is he saying it because he runs a company today and he thinks it's inappropriate to have those types of images, that they should have done it, or does he see really that that was wrong? I guess my cynical reaction would be, well, why do you think you shouldn't have done it in that day? I don't know how I'm going to react when I see it, and I'm sure I'm going to be sort of shocked, and, well, maybe not. I don't know. I'm not saying not to use it. I think it could serve—I mean, I really don't know what the point of the book is. I don't know if this is a tool to use money or whatever, I mean, the purpose of it.

Warren: It's a celebration of Washington and Lee and its 250 years, and my goal in putting it together is to have people recognize themselves, recognize their time period, recognize the tradition that they had heard about and the things that they've heard about have happened since they were there.

Dumas: Well, that was a tradition that wasn't shared with me. I didn't get a pristine picture of Washington and Lee.

Warren: Well, I must say, Willard, if I hadn't found that photograph, I would never know about it, that's for sure. Although, no, that's not true, because he and another person brought it up in their interviews, people from that time period, which makes it very clear to me that it was a perfectly normal part of their lives that they didn't question, and let's face it, that was the fifties, and that was Washington and Lee, and

that is what happened, but what I'm pleased with is they're now questioning whether they should have done it, and I'm also pleased that I didn't have to say, "Aren't you questioning having done that?" It's coming from them, that they're saying, "Maybe we shouldn't have done this," or, "We shouldn't have done this."

Dumas: It could be quite embarrassing as a picture, depending on what they do, to have that show up today in today's world. I mean, if someone was a director of Phillip Morris and they did that even forty years ago, I think if I was an African-American employee of the company, I would have to be like, "Okay. I'm not shocked. I'm just shocked that you were stupid enough to let someone take a picture of you doing it."

Warren: But nobody would have thought twice about it then, because it was a big social event. It would have been like going to Fancy Dress.

Dumas: Yeah. Fancy Dress. There were themes of Fancy Dress that—I boycotted Fancy Dress one year because—

Warren: Tell me about that.

Dumas: I can't remember what the theme was. It may have been—

Warren: THE DARK CONTINENT or THE RECONCILIATION BALL?

Dumas: It was THE RECONCILIATION BALL, but it was THE DARK CONTINENT that contributed to it because it had been not just black students but students who were sensitive to how black students felt who said, "Look. We just went through this with THE DARK CONTINENT." RECONCILIATION BALL wouldn't have been so bad except the props they had set up like the Old South. They were going to have cotton, not burnt cotton fields, but cotton and a huge Confederate flag. I don't think that it would have been the concept of reconciliation. I think it was the presentation. That's a problem for Americans. What was more egregious? Was it that it was at Washington and Lee with fine scholars like Holt Merchant and other people there, and these people should know that that wasn't what happened initially, but people are selective in what they want to believe in and what they want to rally around in.

Warren: And yet it's my understanding that the faculty would not get involved in Fancy Dress issues.

Dumas: They didn't. They didn't. There were faculty members who ended up not going, who understood what black students at the university felt, and there were lots of students who were white who chose not to go that year. I mean, surely not enough that caused there to be a financial problem. It wasn't horribly noticed, but we didn't go. You know, that was just an example.

There was a picture, I think that year of a faculty member taken with – one of the pictures submitted by a fraternity house with a lawn statue of a black jockey. You know, these things. The faculty member apologized profusely, and taken individually, you could always make these excuses, but you know, they're continuing to happen. This is the stuff that I would bring up to John Wilson during Fraternity Renaissance, like, "Look what these people are doing," and there were great things that the days when I'd been a lawyer in law school, we would have been laughed at for not connecting these issues. That's my perspective of being someone black in this society. I don't have the luxury to say these are all isolated incidents, but they're not a conspiracy. This is just the mentality that persists in the country. I don't think it's something that people think about.

I'm sure there were people in that photograph that thought that either we're going to take the picture right here because this is in it, and I think someone actually was maybe touching it, too, may have had an elbow on it or something, and they probably thought it was something stupid and funny. I can't get into the psychology, whether they felt they were really making a racist statement.

Warren: Did it make it into the yearbook?

Dumas: Oh, yeah. I mean, that's how it came out, all the 6,000 copies or 7,000 copies had been printed, and it's there.

Warren: I need to clarify, because I've just been working on the Fancy Dress chapter, and the person who wrote the chapter implies that peace was found in the controversy over the Reconciliation Ball and that everybody, once they understood what the ball was about, everybody backed down, and everybody was happy and everybody went. You're saying that's not the case.

Dumas: No. I definitely did not go, and I thought that there were faculty members who did not go that year. I know there were other black students who did not go.

Warren: It seemed a little tidy, the way he described what happened. So I'll talk to some other people and make sure that we have an accurate picture here.

Dumas: I want to say that I thought I remembered the Elrods didn't go.

Warren: Good. I'll talk to them.

Dumas: I could be completely wrong. I could be completely wrong. It became a discussion, I remember, because my faculty advisor whom I was taking the survey of American history course from, David Parker, took great pains to explain to the class, since we were studying America 1965 to the present, what was wrong with – actually, what he did was, he had us explain to him what was wrong with the Fancy Dress, not as a conception, the reconciliation title. That was wonderful, but what was wrong with it as presented. In a class of maybe twenty students, I thought he did a good job, but I don't remember exactly what happened. I know I did not attend.

Warren: A while ago, you alluded to that you were the last class who was in touch with the last all-male class. So in your time at Washington and Lee, coeducation, I assume, was a real factor. You were aware of its newness.

Dumas: Oh, yeah. I had the utmost respect for that first class of women because I suspect what they went through was terribly difficult. I remember being at Jim Brooks' house in New Orleans after I'd just been accepted, and my father came with me, and we went to his house for a reception from Washington and Lee, and the students who

accepted. An older alumnus, very, very big man, came up to me and said, "Son, there's some things that just shouldn't change about Washington and Lee."

I was just like, "Oh, my God. I can't believe this is happening. I've just arrived here!"

He turned around, and he said, "See that little woman over there? Sweet Briar class of '56."

I was like, "Okay." And I was like, "Oh, that's coeducation." I figured that out.

I was friends with some of the women in that class. I was particularly friends or good acquaintances with Austin Parker, Austin Page Parker. Did you ever get to interview Austin?

Warren: No.

Dumas: I don't know if she's living in this country anymore, but Austin was from Babosta [phonetic], Georgia. She was in that class, and they just represented so much of what Washington and Lee was, and much like the minority students, those women were, in some ways, overachievers. They were involved in two and three organizations. A lot of what they did was always interpreted by so many men as a challenge to the status quo and to the system, but it wasn't. They were just trying to get an education and enjoy the same things that they were. There was animosity sometimes between the women from the women's colleges and those women in those early classes and even in our class, I don't think there were too many great friendships ever developed. But I had a lot of respect for them.

I remember the women below us—I think I was in Gilliam dorm, they ended up putting potted plants in the men's urinals still in their bathroom. I thought it was creative.

Warren: I need to pop in another tape.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

Warren: This is Mame Warren. Today is the twenty-fourth of May, 1997. I'm in Chicago with Willard Dumas.

Do you want to say some more about the women? How about the friendships in your class? By the time you came along, women had been in for a while. It sounds like you still had a sense of those first women being pioneers. Were the women in your class perceived as being pioneers still?

Dumas: No. I don't think so anymore. No. I don't think they were seen as pioneers. I mentioned Austin Parker because she was the first woman elected to the Executive Committee. So in a political and sociological fashion, Austin and I sometimes – and I don't mean to be cliché, the one white woman and the one black guy, we ended up having a lot of similar views on stuff that we saw as students, members of the Executive Committee. I had a lot of respect for her and just the other people in our class.

As for the women in my class, I think by then they had become accepted and integrated very much in the minds of students. Clearly they weren't equal. There were problems with sports teams and what was available to them. Yes, they were still being elected to positions here and there, but there wasn't the animosity that had existed with the other students. There were men who refused to date women from Washington and Lee. They thought that they were somehow holding on to a tradition and being honorable holding onto a cause and all of that. I can't believe there would be men in my class who really felt that way.

Probably one of my closest friends from Washington and Lee student is Pat Lopes, Patricia Lopes, and some of our experiences were fused together because we were non-traditional Washington and Lee students, but she had been editor of the newspaper the year I think I was president of the student body. She's a very good reporter, and we just became friends. We saw things similarly and enjoyed each other's company. There were lots of other people in my class who came from different backgrounds, different parts of the country, women students who I was good friends

with and older students – Mary Hanson [phonetic] and Mary Alice McMarrow [phonetic], Jenny Bray.

Warren: I've interviewed Pat Lopes. I really enjoyed meeting her, and she told me a bit about the background of your election. Can we talk about that now?

Dumas: Sure.

Warren: What happened, from your point of view?

Dumas: The gentleman who had been elected president before me withdrew from the school, and there was a question regarding his honor when he withdrew from school, and once things were looked at, it became apparent that there were a lot of factors involved in that. There may have been an attempt by some students to manufacture an accusation of dishonorable conduct against a student, I really can't remember. I may be bound not to ever discuss this anymore. You should probably ask the current EC president what I can say. But I'd been elected vice president of the student body, much to the shock of not only myself but a lot of other students.

Warren: Is that a student body-wide election?

Dumas: Yeah. It includes the law school and all the academic classes. The individual who'd been elected president was also Jewish, and I think that there was a dichotomy. I think we were seen as the non-traditional candidates. I don't know. There may have been someone Jewish who had been president of the student body before then. Clearly, there'd been no one black who was elected vice president, and it shocked the individuals who were my opponents, two individuals who I think are very decent individuals, one of which I became friends with and had to work very closely with that following year, Chris Giblin, and it was horrible, because this young man was a good friend of mine and I would say he still is, except I've kind of lost touch with him. He's practicing law in Arkansas and has a wonderful family, and he's had to put whatever mistakes he may have made or may have not made behind him and move on. For him,

he'd gone to Washington and Lee as an undergraduate and a law school student, and the university had been very important to him.

I came to realize after being there, that there were lots of people who made mistakes at the university, and there were few people without blemishes on their honor as students there. I think I began to lose a lot of the idealized images I had of not only the Honor System but about people in general. So it was a very difficult experience for me because he was a good friend of mine.

But to speed up to what exactly happened, I had been elected vice president, and I believe the law school had already left campus, their term had ended, when this whole situation developed, and there was a movement by the students who had lost the election and their backers, and it became one of—I was cast as the anti-fraternity candidate, and perhaps maybe that's not unrealistic because of the things that I've said, although I don't think I ever said anything against the fraternities publicly. I think my conversations were with John Wilson and other administrators and occasionally with other students, that I raised issues with them, but I also knew that fraternities provided the life blood of entertainment at the school. I had also been on the Student Activities Board and taken part in planning Fancy Dress and their activities for the year, and so we knew that we had to work around fraternity schedules because they provided entertainment for students. I was not a fool. I didn't want to destroy fraternities at Washington and Lee. I still don't. I think it's a good way for them to raise money and do everything they do. I just don't think they're perfect.

So that happened, and a decision had to be reached as to what would happen next year. Would I succeed and become president or would there be a new election? It was no secret that there was a question of honor, and actually, this probably shouldn't be put into the tape. I think it would be inappropriate. Has anyone discussed the huge cheating scandal in '54?

Warren: Oh, yes. Oh, Lord, yes. It was a turning point in our history.

Dumas: Okay. Well then, since there was a question of honor involved with the student's withdrawal from school, there were issues as to what would happen to the future of the Honor System. Would this be like the event in '54? How could we repair the damage to student confidence?

Warren: Was it taken to that level because he was the president-elect? Because there were people who were asked to leave on a regular basis.

Dumas: Right. It was particularly because he was the president-elect.

Warren: So at the time it was seen as a parallel to the scandal of '54?

Dumas: I don't think a lot of students knew about the history of the scandal of '54. Those of us on the EC did. I think that there were students who knew the school history, that they knew that there had been this major scandal. I think those people who were curious why we had gone from Division I to Division III, they knew. Clearly the reporters – I mean, this wasn't a shock to Pat nor to faculty members, and I think that was probably disseminated to the student body. So there ended up being a meeting. It really broke down along political lines, political in the sense that conservative tradition. A lot of people came out – fraternity-house driven, fraternity males, a handful of fraternities that I would lump together as also being segregated, and they wanted a new election immediately. They wanted one without the law school.

I had carried the law school along with the student because he had been a law school student. Dean – was it Kirgis or Henneman? I can't remember – said that, okay, if they wanted to have student body elections without the law school, he would start classes next year without allowing the EC to conduct sort of honor instruction to the students and that he would not apply the Honor System to his law school students anymore if it came down to that. He was very disappointed that there would be a new election without the law school participating, without them having the influence of electing the president of the student body next year.

So there were a series of meetings that week that were ugly. We had to get EC members who were law school students who had left town already, who had gone on clerkships for the summer, to come back and help sort of deliberate and figure out what we were going to do. My opponent who had run against me for vice president, he had left the country. He was in England, I think, with Professor Hughes or Evans, whichever one of them used to go to London, and ironically, he had belonged to one of these conservative fraternities. He was a member of KA, which I ended up carrying a lot of members of the fraternity house because they weren't particularly crazy about this individual anyway. And so out of those conservative fraternities, actually, I had a lot of support among the brothers of KA, although these same people two weeks later wanted reassurances from me that I wasn't going to take the flags down in the chapel. It just seems so ridiculous to even think about any of this stuff anymore.

So there were these three forums where the little EC room in the University Center—I don't know if it's there anymore, which can probably comfortably accommodate thirty people sitting and then eleven or twelve of the members of the Executive Committee in this little horseshoe, but it was probably filled that night with maybe forty or fifty fraternity members, and those were the only people that showed up, those individuals and Pat Lopes, and they pressured the EC into taking a vote that there maybe should be another election, and I abstained from voting. Those people who had been supporters of our opponents actually voted and individuals who would benefit if there was another election, and I felt that I had a conflict of interest and shouldn't vote, and I think the motion passed by one vote.

Pat had been a reporter in that audience, I recall, for the *Phi*, and I think what she shared with me is that she has never heard anything more racist before in her life. I don't know if she said that that night, but she was sitting way in the back, and the references to me and the references to the recently withdrawn president-elect of the student body, they were anti-Semitic and very derogatory and abrasive, and I think

whatever fears or weaknesses she knew that members of the student body possessed, she had seen them manifest that night, and she, I think, was pretty sick. I don't even remember if she said she got sick after that. I don't know. She didn't share that with me until, I think, maybe a week or two later. I was oblivious.

This young man who withdrew had truly been a very good friend of mine and was so years after that. Word got out to the student body, and then this coalition of all sorts of students were just outraged, and law students actually came back to town, and there was another meeting, and another vote was taken. That decision was reversed, and everyone said, "Look, we elected Willard vice president, that in the event if anything happened he would be president. He had specific duties as vice president." I was responsible for, I think, a lot of all the administrative stuff when it came to like actual honor hearings and dealing – and there were specific things. So they said that they had faith in me. So I "succeeded" and became president of the student body.

It was quite a shock. It was nothing that I had expected to happen that way. I expected that I'd be vice president – well, I hoped that I'd be vice president and after I would run for president and be president my senior year. Actually, the young man who defeated me the following year when I ran for president, he had been in the group that had come out publicly in support of me becoming president, and he had belonged to one of these conservative fraternities and had expressed his outrage at the behavior of his fellow brothers. So there were lots of people who, I think, would have conceded that it was a disappointing reaction on the parts of students.

The only other time that I saw worse than that was John Wilson, I think, expelled or suspended two fraternity students from, again, one of these conservative fraternities that had thrown, I think, bricks or bottles into the window of the housemother and could have injured her, I mean, could have seriously hurt her, but she wasn't hurt. I think he did what I think he had never done before, was to have the students come to his office and called their parents and said, "You must leave." I don't think any

university president relishes doing that, and there was outrage and pandemonium among the students, and eventually the administration had to get a meeting together in Lee Chapel, and for all of these people who worshipped the ground that General Lee walked on, there was such disrespectful behavior. I think they refused to take off their baseball caps that night, and it was just awful. I think they shouted at Wilson. I would guess that if he recalls it, it would have to be one of the low points when he was president. I was so shocked. I had never seen such behavior. So I would say those two incidents are linked in my mind.

I remember walking back from that meeting in Lee Chapel, and President Wilson, I think, was visibly upset, and I remember talking to him, trying to change the subject and talk about the trees. At first I think he thought that I was crazy, because Buildings and Grounds had been pruning the trees, and they just didn't look healthy. So I started talking about the trees, and then he caught on to what I was talking about, because I was embarrassed for him. I mean, there was no other way. Students who were there later said that the conduct of the students who were assembled was wholly inappropriate, but that's [unclear] John Wilson [unclear].

But yeah, I became president of the student body, and I worked my best to heal and repair the Honor System and the reason why I came to Washington and Lee, and I think that we were reasonably successful.

Warren: How did you do that?

Dumas: I think we tried to do it in our actions and our words and trying to show that we were committed to the ideals of the system and committed to an inclusive student body. I'm trying to think of something specific that we did. Eventually, when it came time to the whole patronage time and appointing people to run organizations, I think that we actually had open application procedures. No longer were certain organizations the purview of this fraternity or that fraternity. A lot of non-traditional people got into positions, and it caused all sorts of problems. Because when you got there one of the

things at fraternity Rush, they would sell the houses. "Oh, well, we have the editor of the newspaper, or this, or that, and we run Student Activities Board," and so I changed some of that, I mean, not me by myself. There were other people, I think, who had thought that.

Warren: So how did you go about changing? This is very interesting to me because I know how it used to be and I know it changed, but I didn't know when it changed. So this is very interesting.

Dumas: I shouldn't say that it was done on my own. The guy who'd been president before me, Christopher De Movellan, also an independent—I think that was the trend. It was Brad Root, I think Christopher De Movellan and myself, and I think we were sort of like those awful liberal years where we had been members of the Executive Committee, and we had seen sort of this old-boy network work, and we were like, "It's going to be different when we're there." So Christopher had started it, and I think it was something that I committed myself to. I think it was one of the things that I campaigned on when I ran for vice president.

With Hugh Finkelstein running for president and with him being a law school student, the whole idea was that there was going to be more equity. The whole allocation process for the law school was always viewed as, to use a Texas euphemism, "a redheaded stepchild." I mean, they were always treated second-class. It was not uncommon that Fancy Dress could be scheduled while law school was in exams or something awful. I think it really irritated law school students because they paid the \$140 in activities fees, and they're there not to be like students with the rest of us, but they want to get their money's worth and that's what they're paying this huge activity fee for, or what seemed like a large activity fee. So that was part of our program that we campaigned for.

We were going to shake things up and change things from the way they used to be, and I think in part of that, I think that was an impression that could be also —

actually, I would say maybe almost for the Honor System, but I have to say even when I was a freshman or sophomore member of the EC, I think that honor investigations were conducted with honor and integrity, and I don't think that someone was ever found guilty or had to leave school because he or she was not popular or anything like that. I do think that other people were given the benefit of the doubt, but in general, the administration of the Honor System was always topnotch. But that was one of the things we did. So we tried to make things a little more egalitarian. You can't have visions that there are all of these brown and black and yellow people who are going to be running, because they're not there. This was just opening up the process truly to other students who may have not been from these particular fraternities, and not that those other students were excluded. They weren't. And hell, I mean, I can remember sitting in these EC meetings, and these fraternity brothers would say, "Look, that guy is a moron. He's an idiot. He doesn't do anything. We can't put him in charge." That would happen, but they walked in with this presumption that they could get these positions because they had done the walk under the person before them.

And it had its repercussions. I think by my last trustees' meeting, the wife of a trustee and the mother of a student said, "Well, we're very happy to hear about this opening up of the student body and positions, but my daughter didn't get on to this organization, and do you think that maybe you're opening them up a little bit too much?" So I knew that I had done more than enough there and that my time was limited.

Warren: What was it like for you that senior year? I presume when you lost the election to be president, you were no longer on the EC?

Dumas: Well, actually my classmates returned me to the seat that I'd had since a freshman with, I think, the highest majority that they ever had. I think that there was a recognition, even on the part of "reactionary" students that I had been very dedicated to the Executive Committee. Even against our own candidates, I won without any

problem. It was something ridiculous like, I don't know, 75 percent to 25 percent. So I was happy with that.

It was difficult, because I have to say that I had enjoyed being president. I thought that I had good ideas. So I ended up focusing much needed time and energy on improving the chances for me getting into law school. I went to Costa Rica that year to present a paper that I had written. I appreciated more the friends that I had and less of the political struggle that had consumed so much of the time, got involved with the Outing Club a lot more and spent a lot of time with Kirk Follo [phonetic] and a few other classmates, hiking up House Mountain. Did a lot of canoeing that summer. I'm a terrible – well, I'm not a terrible – I'm not very coordinated, and most of my athletic prowess is spent running and playing ultimate frisbee. Late that term of my senior year or early that spring, I ended up tearing the ligaments, or spraining the ligaments in my right leg and my right ankle. So I ended up having to like use a cane for four months – not four months, like six weeks or something, and had been injured. So what did I do? I took up the canoeing, probably which wasn't the brightest thing, but Kirk Follo and Dick Miller – I'd gone through the canoeing classes and I learned how to canoe and handle myself, and so whatever free time I had, my car ended up always having a canoe on top of it. I was one of the people that you could always count on for getting a canoe to go canoeing with them almost any day of the year. Kirk Follo was generous enough to let me have the canoe. I always had it on my car. I mean, I was always willing to take anyone canoeing.

So I spent a lot of time canoeing and visited Bob and Gretta Youngblood who had a house on the Maury River, a second home, and I used to always go up there, and they'd just give me the keys and I could set out my canoe from there, hang out there. I think my friendships with not only my student friends, but my faculty friends really became much deeper.

Warren: Tell me about that.

Dumas: Well, I can't remember, it must not have been my junior year. It must have been my senior year. My advisor, David Parker, had what I think they – I think they just call it a stroke, but something more technical than a stroke, and he was paralyzed for a while, and they didn't know what was wrong with Dave. His condition was so unknown, undiagnosable, that they thought maybe we'd actually picked up something up in Costa Rica when we were in the rain forest, but eventually they figured out at UVA, I guess, that he'd had something that appeared to be a stroke. So myself and about three or four other very loyal students of David and good friends of his and Phyllis took to helping out a lot at the house, whether it was supervising the kids to get their baths done, to helping cook meals, to going over homework, because Phyllis was down in Roanoke, and other faculty members and friends of theirs were doing their best to help out with them because they had three children who must have been – the oldest one, Anson, must have been maybe a freshman in high school if not that. Because Anson just started college last year. So they were very young, and their youngest daughter was maybe five, four or five.

I remember sitting at the hospital with Phyllis some nights in Roanoke waiting for David's condition to improve. So that was one way that my relationship with David and Phyllis Parker grew even more than what it had been over those three or four years when I think they had been very nurturing to me. And so had the Elrods. They had these dinner parties, and I had become a fixture, I think, at the dinner parties long before I was president of the student body, and my relationship with Mimi Elrod definitely began with the interview when I met her on campus, and they were just very nice and kind. I remember after the dinner parties, Kirk Follo and I would stay and help them wash dishes with the dean at the time, and we would drink scotch or bourbon. It was, I guess, somewhat in contradiction to the orders that had gone out that students no longer, even if they were of age, could be served alcohol anymore at members of the faculty's home, and they were good conversations because it exposed me to things that

my academic course work hadn't, other parts of philosophy. We discussed things. That, I think, was good for my intellectual development. So that was something that was regular, I mean usually once or twice a month, and that continued even after, when I was a senior, that I was a part of this dinner group. I mean, not always there, but I was there a lot, and I've gone back two or three times. The Elrods have put together a little dinner and for whoever is there and I could join them.

The Youngbloods, Robert Youngblood, had been my German professor, German literature professor, while I was there, and I loved German, but I was a horrible German student and I'm hoping that I beat this Portuguese and my Spanish, but things have changed, and I'll take a new approach, but I struggled to get through German. Ironically, two of my good friendships were with Kirk Follo and Robert Youngblood, two German professors, and I think they at least appreciated that I loved German literature. So I became really good friends with Robert Youngblood and his wife, Greta – no, not Greta. God, I can't think of her name now. But they had us over to dinner a lot. It was always informal.

Warren: I'm struck that we've talked a great deal about politics and about your social relationships, but we haven't talked about your classroom experiences at all.

Dumas: Well, you can probably figure out because I spent so much time, I was not a stellar student at Washington and Lee. I did very well in history, excellent in politics, but I wasn't a great student. I became a better student during my junior year and my senior year. My grades shot up, and I think I made the Dean's List every time after that, but freshman and sophomore years were not good years, and needless to say, my parents were not thrilled to hear that I'd become president of the student body. They wanted me to come home. I did pretty bad my freshman year. Clearly, I think it had been the freedom, and I hadn't been disciplined enough, not like my parents had kept on me when I was living at home and I was in high school.

But David Parker turned me on to Latin American history. His parents had been Baptist missionaries in Chile, and it was his experience that just real really took me on the path of liking Latin American history. I had conversations that I wanted to be a professor of history, but I had been discouraged of that by my parents. They felt that being a black male, an African-American male in this society, I needed a career that would give me financial stability, position, power to buffer myself against racism in this society and that I could be more in control of my life if I was an attorney or a doctor like my father, as opposed to being a faculty member. I don't think they really appreciated how lawyers who make money in this country, pretty much you have to work for a big firm or you become sort of a Melvin Belli or a – I can't think of the guy from North Dakota. My parents had my best interests out for me, and they were not sure that Washington and Lee, that it was commensurate with those interests, and thought that I was misguided in my selection of Washington and Lee and my staying there.

They came up for both Parents' Weekends. The first one was a little traumatic for them. I remember that I was so happy that I was pledging Sigma Chi, and they were apprehensive about going there, and then they explained to me why. They said, "Well, these students, their parents, they belong to the class of people who were very anti-us, very pro-segregation. These are the people who may have not been out in the streets, but these are the people who represent the power structure. So it's a little difficult for us to want to spend a few hours in a fraternity house, which has always been an elitist institution, a white fraternity house, and be chummy with these people." And that opened my eyes again, which I think had gone into sort of this haze.

I don't know why I went back to that. So they wanted me to come home to New Orleans and finish school in New Orleans, but I stayed and thought that I could accept this challenge as president of the student body and that things would change, and actually things did change academically. I did well my junior and senior year.

Warren: Were there any particular teachers who made the difference for you in the classroom?

Dumas: David Parker.

Warren: Why?

Dumas: His teaching style was much more different than the other professors. He, I think, really tried to convince us to question historiography and question materials, to really think about what a historian did and that it wasn't so much of "this is the story" and they're spoonfeeding us. I just had a course like that I took with undergraduates at the University of Iowa in my graduate program, although the professor was at pains to show them, "Well, the books that you were studying, these books, they're all biased. They have a certain point of view." So do the liberal ones. I think that a lot of times some of the other history courses I took hadn't made that distinction.

Barry Machado, I only took, I think, one course, maybe two courses, with him, but he was very challenging professor and very good. I think maybe some of these people revealed their liberal politics, but they liked me. They liked, I think, what I was doing on campus. For those whose classes I was in that I'm mentioning, I actually did very well.

John Handelman in the Politics Department, in some ways he and his wife are two of my closest faculty friends and in general friends. I went to visit them down at their house in Florida last summer. The major decisions I've made in my life the last three or four years, those are some of the people that I talk with, John and Gwen Handelman. I guess they started to make me really critically think about things. She was a law professor, and so she was someone I talked to throughout law school and whose counsel and advice and friendship I value a lot. I'm trying to think who else.

Warren: Let me turn the tape over.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

Warren: A long time ago you mentioned Lexington as an isolated place. Tell me what you mean by that.

Dumas: Well, there is Lexington physically, its surroundings, what part of the country. It is in southwestern Virginia. I remember reading somewhere that it took General Lee and one of his daughters by horseback after the Civil War something like twelve days to get to it from Richmond. Before there was the highway and the interstate, it was difficult to get there. So its physical surroundings – I remember before the airport was built, there was no terminal. It was just a building. We'd deplane like the President of the United States.

More specifically, the university was isolated because of, I think, its institutions, the Honor System, and probably because of the way town-gown relationships developed, and the composition of the student body, being rather privileged students throughout the – well, probably since the century, its students, I think it always put the town at a distance, and I have a feeling that these students were always viewed as privileged, and they were always, I think, distant and separate from Lexington.

What was good about that is, I think, it reinforced the institutions like the Honor System. I attended maybe two or three Honor System conferences on behalf of Washington and Lee around the country throughout my tenure, my four years on the Executive Committee, and one of the questions that was eventually posed towards us at Washington and Lee, because it was usually the consensus that, in the entire country, our Honor System was the strongest, it was stronger than the military academies, stronger than the University of Virginia or any of the other schools in the South, it was usually posed to us, "Do you think this can be replicated?" from people who were looking, trying to replicate it, and my answer was usually no, because I think that it developed in a unique situation, and I think a lot of it had to do with history of the university, how, I think, almost being in Lexington, it was almost sort of forgotten in this little valley, and the rest of the world didn't intrude in.

Washington and Lee integrated, what, in 1970, '71, '72? It went coed in 1985. The world didn't go in. I'm not saying that those factors that went in were bad or the fact that they kept out individuals, that those people were good for doing that, but in that environment, the Honor System had flourished. I think things started to change with the rest of the outside world, and Washington and Lee, whether it was that there were women on campus now, I think issues of safety of the female students heightened the awareness of the safety of students in general, and I think that contributed to the locking of the doors. That's something that was happening, I think, nationally. I think there was a recognition on the part of students, whether they were in Hanover, New Hampshire, at Dartmouth, or Haverford College, or you name it, the ivory tower of academia and the repose of privileged students or middle-class students no longer existed from the crime in the United States.

So in that way, Washington and Lee had been exempt. The stories about the Honor System – Professor Stephenson, who had been my first German professor, Buford Stephenson, he told a story of someone leaving a dollar on the ledge in the bathroom and that over the course of a month it had turned into different forms of change. It had gone from a silver dollar to quarters to nickels to dimes, but it was like this communal source where some people would take from it and add to it. Now, whether or not that really happened, there's no reason for me to doubt what Professor Stevenson said, but, you know, that's changed. There was shock on the part of my parents and other people when I described to them that we took our exams alone.

Things are just really competitive now, and not that they weren't before, but I think it's getting more difficult. President Elrod can probably elaborate or disagree, but I think that it's probably become more difficult to convince new faculty members of the efficacy – not the efficacy, but the success of the Honor System. I would have to imagine, with the heightened competition to get into graduate schools and people with grades, I can't believe that Washington and Lee is immune from charges of grade

inflation and all sorts of other things, but somehow it had been kept out of all of that. I think the realities now of life in America are creeping in, and before they had been out.

Warren: Did you feel isolated socially there?

Dumas: Yeah, in some ways I felt isolated from friends of mine who had gone off the school around the country. We weren't getting the big bands and people coming to — because it was Lexington, Virginia. We could drive an hour and twenty minutes to University of Virginia, and then you could see like big bands, and you could do more of what was going on at other colleges across the country, but I don't think that was that important to people. So that was that type of isolation.

I had a rich social life there. I dated women from the women's colleges and women in my class and women who were younger than me. So there was, I think, a lot to do. I didn't feel isolated socially, but I had classmates who were white who did feel isolated socially. The way I went about picking a college was not good, but so many people do that. They have to go with what their parents suggest and hope that their parents really know something. Although I have to say one of my highlights was giving student tours. I enjoyed talking about Washington and Lee. That's why I felt a little better when I talked to Patrick about the flags, because I could give the history of the university, and people enjoyed — at least said they enjoyed my tours. I threw so much history into it, and I talked about how the banister in the Morris House was warped because the Union officer took a saber and chopped it up because he wasn't allowed to burn the campus.

For me, it was a history that could be honorable about the school. The fact that Robert E. Lee was president hadn't been a problem for me, and I didn't let that be a problem for me socially. There were others, I think there was a problem for them, and that's maybe white and black, but for me, I had reconciled and made peace with Robert E. Lee. Not that he was someone I had to really make peace with, but I found after reading what I read about him that I could be comfortable about talking about

Washington and Lee. My appreciation for Washington and Lee has grown since I've left the institution.

Warren: Tell me about that.

Dumas: There's a lot of stuff that now in retrospect I would have liked to have taken advantage of and done more of, definitely language-wise and in other classes, but it's in sharing my experiences with other friends from law school or even from graduate school, although I do it a lot less now, which is probably healthy, just talking about who these friends are. I say, "John and Gwen Handelman."

"How do you know these people?"

I said, "Oh, well, he was one of my politics professor."

And people are like, "And you're still seeing these people?"

I say, "Well, actually yes. We're friends." They encouraged me to go back to school when I was miserable trying to be a lawyer and not too successful at it.

I called John Elrod up one day in Texas, while I was in Texas working for this law firm, and I said, "I'm absolutely miserable." He was president, but I got through to Mrs. — oh, the secretary, not Harrison. I can't think.

Warren: She's gone now. I can see her, but I can't think of her name.

Dumas: And she's like, "Oh, he's busy, but Willard, I know he'll want to talk to you. I'll put him through." He ended up giving me like forty, fifty minutes during his day, which he probably didn't have, and he probably began to realize that I was not going to ever be one of these alums who could come close to matching a tenth of the gift of Sydney and Frances Lewis, but he cared enough about me to listen to the disappointment with my attempt at a legal career, and saying, "You know, we had a conversation almost nine years ago that I remember, and you said you wanted to be a professor of history but that there were other factors in your life that discouraged you from doing that. Well, now, go ahead and do it. What do you have to lose?" There were

other logistic things like, "Well, when you come out of your Ph.D. program, I think the job market's actually going to improve in academia."

So who did I speak to that day? I think that day I spoke to John Elrod and then I spoke to David Parker and John Handelman and then to Gwen Handelman. Those are the people who I spoke to, and eventually I spoke to my parents, but those are the people who said yes. They were the people who supported me the most, with the exception of my partner, and then my other classmates. Then I spoke to Pat Lopes and I spoke to Bret Huttspeth [phonetic], and they were like, "This is what you always wanted to do." I'm fortunate enough that I'm able to go back and do it. So that's how they've been influential.

And even Dick Haynes who I briefly worked for at his law firm. He knew that in the conversations that we would have occasionally when I was at his law firm what my passions were about. Occasionally I could make it about something that I was working on, but our passions both met with Washington and Lee and his interest in history and mine and our interest in art, and there were other things. He knew. He could understand that.

Warren: He's very fond of you. He mentioned you when I saw him.

Dumas: He's another example of an alum—I don't think Mr. Haynes actually ever graduated from Washington and Lee. I'm not sure.

Warren: He's so interesting. He went his freshman year and then his last year of law school, first and seventh years. What an interesting career.

Dumas: He's someone who the university, like Jim Brooks, means so much, and I think it's after talking with those individuals. When I was at Boston, I did some alumni interviewing, and I hope that I was able to share some of my stories. There were more good stories in some of the stuff we've talked about this afternoon.

Warren: Do you recruit for Washington and Lee?

Dumas: Do I regret?

Warren: Recruit.

Dumas: Recruit. Not now in Iowa. The only person from Washington and Lee in Iowa is a former dean, Randy Bezanson, and I had lunch with him a few months ago. I'd like to see him more, but I've been so busy that I haven't. I'd like to do more here in Chicago, and I've actually run into a few classmates that are here. I've actually met an alumnus who's a few years older than me, whose fiancée clerked with a friend of mine from law school, and I just like met them at a large dinner party. So the two of us ended up talking. Unfortunately since I'm only here on the weekends, I haven't gotten together with him or one or two of my classmates that are here. But if I'm at the University of Chicago next year, I can't say that I'll have time, but I will at least try and get into the alumni activities here, and if I can recruit, then I will. I'll put myself down, but I don't know what exactly time commitments I'll be able to make for it. But I did in law school, my last year of law school, I conducted, I think three or four interviews out of Boston College law school, and it was convenient for the students because they lived in Wellesley or Newton, and it was actually easier than their going downtown to meet any of the guys who were downtown.

Warren: I sure would like to see more minorities of all kinds at Washington and Lee. Did they have Senior Night when you were there? Do you remember that little ritual? I think it's a fairly new thing. I'm not sure.

Dumas: Well, I know there was something put together by the alumni office.

Warren: Yes. And the fellow who spoke, I don't think he was even here when you were there, George Bent, he's in art history, very cool guy, and he gave the most wonderful talk, and one thing he said, "I think you've gotten a wonderful education at Washington and Lee, but I think there are certain things that you're unlikely to learn here." He said, "What are you going to do when you're in your first job and you go to a social occasion with the people you work with and your boss shows up and she's with a date you don't expect? She may not be white. In fact, she may not even be a Republican."

Dumas: And she may not be a woman. I mean, she may not be a man.

Warren: That's the point. That's the point. And he said, "We're in a very homophobic place where everything about this place is very narrow, and I, for one, as a member of this faculty, worry about you as seniors going out into this world because I don't know that we've prepared you for the real world very well." So I'd like to see more and different people coming onto the campus, not only because it'll give me more interesting people to talk to, but because I think that's part of an education, is to be exposed to a lot of different kinds of people.

Dumas: The reaction of the woman who was my date for the "On the Shoulders of Giants" capital campaign, it's like that. I meet a lot of friends there. This isn't a terribly diverse place, and they may be white themselves saying that. They may be seeing a lot of people who look and dress – and I see it at the University of Iowa. We graduate students have put ourselves on this pedestal, and we're like, "They're mindless drones, and they all look alike, they all dress alike. They wear the same clothes. They do this, they do that."

I know that I am in that unfortunate class of individuals – I don't believe unfortunate. I mean, I'm nowhere near as successful as what Dick Haynes has made of his life at this point in my life and probably won't have the financial success, but I think I am at that place when it comes to love of the institution or of the Lewises. I had the privilege of spending time with the Lewises, actually recruiting, trying to help them recruit their grandson to go to Washington and Lee, and he ended up not going. But Farris Hotchkiss was quite pleased with my performance and another student's performance of trying to sell the school.

But the reaction I get is that other people who know me, like my partner, he's met John and Gwen, and he hasn't figured out this Washington and Lee thing. He's just like, "This is something that you have to deal with." He's met Pat and a number of other classmates, and he's become very good friends with them. We did do one trip down to

Lexington, and it was a rather difficult trip, because I came out to John and Mimi, and they were actually the last people that I wanted to know at Washington and Lee that I'm gay, and that was difficult for both of us, but the Parkers and the Elrods and Kirk Follo and a number of other people know.

I do have a special relationship with the university, and I'm grateful. I've been fortunate by the experience that I had, and I think that in general of people who went to college, because I took something out of there, I think, more than just an education, and maybe I should have taken more of my education out. I don't know. But I've taken a lot of friendships.

Warren: There's a – they call themselves G&L, the gay and lesbian group that's becoming active now.

Dumas: I've thought about it, but I haven't tried to make contact with them. I know that the university's not thrilled about them, but I probably would like to get information on them. Actually, I really haven't had a good conversation with John and Mimi since I came out to them, and Mimi was very supportive. The president was very pleasant, and it was difficult for me, because I'd wanted to tell them a little bit earlier, but there never seemed to be the opportunity. So I wanted to actually sit down and talk with them.

Warren: It's very important to me to have this book be as inclusive as possible, and one of the things I did at Alumni Weekend was – you know Ted DeLaney?

Dumas: Yes.

Warren: Do you know he's back? He's on the faculty now.

Dumas: In the history department, right?

Warren: Yes.

Dumas: I should say I don't know Ted DeLaney well, but I know of him well, because he briefly taught at the Asheville School, and he was friends with a very good friend of mine from my class, a guy by the name of John Thorsen.

Warren: Yes. He talked about him in his interview.

Dumas: John and I are really very good friends.

Warren: He admires him a great deal.

Dumas: So I know of Ted. I've met him before, but I know of him more by reputation from either Washington and Lee students or faculty members.

Warren: He's one of my best friends on the faculty. Ted and I have really bonded in the last year, and at Alumni Weekend we were having lunch together, and he said, "Okay, you've been real interested in gay alumni. That's the table over there." So I went over and sat down, and I said, "All right, you guys. We need to strategize here, because I really want to have you in this book. I want to have your presence there." Obviously, every single person who's ever gone to Washington and Lee is not going to be in this book, but I want everybody to recognize themselves in somebody in this book. I also understand that I can't be in-your-face about it, to 99 percent of the people who went to Washington and Lee, but it's really important to me that everybody recognize him or herself in some way, and the way I see to do that is through photographs so that people who know will recognize other people who know. And so, in particular, do you have any photographs that you'd like to see in the book, of yourself as a student?

Dumas: As a student.

Warren: I suppose Patrick could probably pull up something.

Dumas: Yeah, that's—

Warren: I'm not talking about outing anybody. That's not at all what I'm talking about.

Dumas: Oh, well, I didn't come out until I was finishing law school.

Warren: But that's not what I'm talking about. Do you understand what I'm saying trying to do?

Dumas: No, I'm not sure if I do.

Warren: From what I understand, there's sort of a gay community within Washington and Lee alumni who know each other.

Dumas: I don't know. I know only of one other student who's at the University of Texas who's gay, and we've only talked once. I really don't know any of the other gay alums. People used to share rumors with me about classmates of mine, but now since I'm gay, my friends have become much more sensitive and I don't think they engage – I mean, they don't handle the issue of sexual orientation that way, I mean those people in my class who I'm out to. And it's a shock for a lot of people. It's a shock for my parents have not gotten over, and I'm not out to Mr. Haynes, and that's been something that I have struggled with, how I'd like to come out to him, but unfortunately I've kind of just pushed that off of the burner. I can't worry about it anymore, and I think that he – I don't know, he may know because I think by then the rest of the law firm knew by the time I left that I was gay, so he may have eventually found out. I don't know. He's never brought it up with me. So when you say –

Warren: I'm just saying just including photographs, making sure that I have photographs of people in the book who are now out, whether they were out as students or not. Some of them were out as students even though, practically, their roommates would say they've never known anybody gay in their entire life, but just making sure that there – in fact, there's one person who lives in the Rockbridge County community who has agreed to come in and look at photographs with me, because he apparently is somebody people come and stay at his place when they're in town, so he knows a lot of people, apparently. So he's going to come and look through my photographs with me and help pinpoint pictures, "Oh, yeah. You might want to include that one. You might want to include that one. You might want to include that one." And the captions will be completely innocuous, saying nothing, but just so that people will be recognized when people –

Dumas: Well, I'll have to –

Warren: It seems like a low-key way, to me, to be inclusive.

Dumas: I'll think about that. I don't have anything offhand. I have a picture of my partner with me and my dog but –

Warren: It needs to be at W&L.

Dumas: Right. Well, actually, I was at W&L in June, and I think that John and Mimi took pictures of the three of us together. That's actually one of the things I wanted to ask them about, if they had a picture. There's a picture with John and I, and I think a picture with Mimi and I. So that could be there. That's probably the most recent photo of me at Washington and Lee. There are photos of me with friends from Washington and Lee, but I'm the only gay one in there.

Warren: As far as you know.

Dumas: Well, no. I mean, these are people that I still see every day. I just saw one a month ago out in California.

Warren: Are you comfortable with this being on the record? We've had the tape recorder going all this time.

Dumas: Yes. If I have a change of heart, I'll call you Monday.

Warren: All this is sitting in my office for a long time before it goes into Special Collections, but if you have any concerns or any hesitations about it, this section of the tape can be off the record.

Dumas: There's not much to say about it. I had a very active social life and I dated lots of women, but I didn't confront that part of my life, that I was gay. What was good out of it was that my relationships with individuals like the Parkers and the Handelmans and to some extent my relationships with the Elrods, I think, helped me face my parents and other things. The experiences that I had and their philosophical sort of views and approach to life made me feel confident, and I think that's something that I gained in spite of the opposition of a homophobic nature of the university. So that's one of the reasons I probably feel grateful. I could have just been in another environment where that may not have happened, but talking to my friends from other schools, they just

didn't have the experience that I had in making friends with individuals who were also on the faculty, and I think that gave me an opportunity to look at people who had life experiences that I was prepared to deal with. No one ever listens to their parents when their parents say, "I've done this. I've been here. Don't do this." I see it happen with all my friends. That's something that we're coming to realize and something that happens in the maturing process. You don't take the advice probably from your parents that you're supposed to take, you go ahead and do something stupid or something that you think is the right decision for you. I think it was those relationships that I had with those individuals that helped me when I needed it the most, and that's something that I think they know, that I've expressed to them that they know that I'm grateful to them for.

Warren: I know the Elrods are extremely fond of you. I know that. And I know Dick Haynes is. I didn't even know that you'd been down there, and as I was leaving, he said, "Have you talked to Willard Dumas? You really should."

I said, "He's on my list. He's on my list."

He said, "He worked here, and we just thought the world of him." And he just couldn't say enough wonderful things. In fact, it was when I came back from seeing him that I really started bugging you. "Okay. All right. All right. I've got to see this guy," and I'm really, really glad I have. Is there anything—I mean, I feel like I've taken up your whole day. Is there anything you'd like to talk about that we haven't touched on here?

Dumas: No. I do need to say that it was a very good growing experience, and despite the homogeneity on the surface, I looked and I found people who didn't fit into that sort of stereotypical Washington and Lee mold, and those are some of the people who are still very good friends of mine. I don't always get to see them a lot, but we communicate either by telephone or E-mail or something. I can pretty much tell you where a number of people are right now and that I've spoken to them within the last

month or two months, and things that are important in their lives I know about and they know the same thing in mine, and so I think that Washington and Lee has a lot to do with that.

Warren: Will you be pleased to know that I would say you're within five minutes of being as long an interview as John Wilson?

Dumas: Oh, God, long-winded. Not that he's long-winded.

Warren: No, not at all. Like I said, I'd play you back if you got off the track. You've been on the track the whole time, but I must say, this has been one of the longer interviews, but it's partly because I'm so interested.

Dumas: I'll definitely be curious to see what you get out of this. So I really don't mean to emphasize all the race stuff that much. It can't be denied that there were issues, but that's not what I take back now. I really do take with me the friendships that were made and the exposure to different ideas – some academic things, a rich knowledge of books and other things.

Warren: Thank you, Willard.

Dumas: Thank you.

Warren: It's been a real pleasure.

[End of interview]