

# GILL HOLLAND

November 1, 1996

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Mame Warren,  
Interviewer

**Warren:** This is Mame Warren. Today is November 1st, 1996. I'm in Davidson, North Carolina with Gill Holland.

**Holland:** 1830 Davis Road.

Well, we were talking about the good old things about W&L and why I went there. The headmaster at Episcopal High School in Alexandria was a Yale man and wanted me to go up there, but no contest, my father and uncle, and also his brother, Uncle Charles, had been to W&L, driven all the way up the unpaved dirt road in the middle of Florida, averaging, they said, a flat tire about every fifty miles. [Laughter] They had moved to Miami.

So I'm going to say a little bit about my father. He had moved, as a boy, with his brother and parents from Chicago to Miami when there were 50,000 inhabitants in Miami and not a structure on Miami Beach. It must have been a great time in Florida. My grandfather thought big. Our son, he didn't go to W&L, but he thinks big, so his vision came from somewhere, I guess. When Uncle Charles and Daddy were teenagers, they went with their parents on a cruise to the Panama Canal up the Pacific Coast and over on the Canadian Pacific to Lake Louise, stayed at the big hotel.

**Warren:** Chateau Lake Louise.

**Holland:** Have you been there?

**Warren:** I was there this summer.

**Holland:** Were you, really? My family and I went camping, one of the four summers we spent in California, up in Alberta and actually walked through that old hotel. It was quite exciting. So I think I went to the right school, because I was close to the family. Then, prophetically, our daughter, Siri Lise, went from Salem Academy in Winston-Salem to join the second group of women to hit the beach.

**Warren:** What's your daughter's name?

**Holland:** S-I-R-I, second word, L-I-S-E. My wife's from Norway and that's a Norwegian name.

**Warren:** Oh, it's lovely.

**Holland:** So that's the reason, I guess, I went. What did I like about it? My goodness, we can start with the faculty. I was premed first, first off. My father was a doctor and our dream was to practice together. That wasn't to be since he died in '58. But when I decided I didn't want to devote my life to medicine and I liked to read books too much and switched to English, he was supportive. So I had good science teachers and I had good humanities teachers. Let's see, Gilreath, I can remember. I remember Wise in chemistry. I liked the chemistry lab in particular. Lots of camaraderie in chemistry lab.

**Warren:** Tell me about the chemistry lab.

**Holland:** There you get to blow up things and burn holes in your clothes together. That was great fun. Making good friends in chemistry lab. Then when I switched to English, I had already taken courses from Professor Fitzgerald Flournoy, and I took as many from him as I possibly could. He, as you probably know, had been a Rhodes scholar and come back to Washington and Lee.

One of his teachers from Oxford came through and gave a lecture once, and I had the privilege of driving him and his wife to Charlottesville the next day, and I remember he wanted to know why Dr. Flournoy had never written anything. And there was some question as to whether returning to his alma mater had been the best thing

for him, but he certainly inspired lots of students. He had great presence, and when he read Shakespeare aloud, I had the image romantics and Chaucer from him, too, but when he read Shakespeare, he had every boy's heart in class.

Apparently there were lots of stories about him, one of which was that in the summertime when he prepared his lectures, he usually was standing up in the stream, up to his waist in the stream, and writing out these marvelous lectures. I think he did that for a Shelley lecture once.

**Warren:** Did you ever see him doing that?

**Holland:** No, I didn't.

**Warren:** That's what you all who just go to school there miss, you missed the summer in Rockbridge County.

**Holland:** Yes.

**Warren:** We all do everything up to our waist or up to our necks in rivers.

**Holland:** That's right.

**Warren:** That was cool.

**Holland:** That's right. But I remember down at the Central Lunch, called the Liquid Lunch, Dr. Flournoy had liked to go down there and have a beer and talk to the locals. The students, when they would wander in there, I think he was much more interested in talking to the local people than he was talking to any of his students.

**Warren:** What locals? What kind of locals?

**Holland:** You know, the local types. You live there. Unspoiled by higher education.

**Warren:** But did you know any of those people?

**Holland:** Oh, sure. We just talked to – no, I can't think of any. We just talked to lots of the local people, but I don't remember any names. We got to know the black people who worked in the fraternity. Napoleon. You might know Napoleon. Do you know him?

**Warren:** Napoleon Borgus?

**Holland:** He still waits – he's a bartender. When I go back, it's always fun to see him.

**Warren:** Tell me about him.

**Holland:** He's a fellow with great style, and his mother also worked at our fraternity. A lovely person and very tolerant of – the fraternity house in those days, I tell this when I go back and I went back to see our daughter and meet her friends, these fraternity houses these days look like barns. I tell them that in those days we had white tablecloths and for banquets we wore black tie tux. It was very, very classy. Mrs. Wagner was our housemother. Do they have housemothers again? Have they reintroduced those? She was quite a civilizing influence on us. She was a genteel lady from Lynchburg, Virginia, who could recite entire Shakespearean plays, and she, in her own way, just her presence kept us civilized.

She had a room on the first floor, I remember, and in those days, the school rule was no dates above the first floor during the school year. The finals, which took place after final exam, dates were, all of them on the roof, and everywhere, but that rule was not violated, and I think in part because of respect.

Here's one story. I don't know whether you want to use it or not, but I was upstairs in a room above her room and some of my friends were swearing in rather unusual ways, and all of a sudden Mrs. Wagner appeared at the door, that was unheard of, that she would go up the steps, and she said, "I don't mind a good lusty 'goddamn' now and then, but this is too much." [Laughter] So here's a salute to Mrs. Wagner.

I'm just kind of rambling. I know you asked me about local people, but –

**Warren:** I want you to ramble.

**Holland:** Yeah, that's what you want me to do. I hadn't thought of Mrs. Wagner in a long time. But other professors, there was Dr. Shillington and I mentioned Dr. Wise and –

**Warren:** No, you didn't mention Dr. Wise. Who is Dr. Wise?

**Holland:** In chemistry. He's still there. The math professor who would serve – oh, what was his name? He served tomato juice on the Monday after the big party weekends. I had him for an 8:30 class in calculus. He was wonderful. What's his name? I can't quite remember.

**Warren:** He served tomato juice?

**Holland:** [Laughter] In class, that's right. The name will come to me eventually. But I remember Dr. Nelson in English. Dr. Leyburn, of course, inspired lots of people. I had sociology and also classics with him. One story I can remember, I remember seeing his handwriting, very precise, his italic script in the margins on papers which you got back quite promptly.

In the classics course, every year in studying Thucydides there was a point at which he would read from Thucydides in Greek and when the Greeks saw the sea, they shouted – I can't remember the Greek word – "The sea, the sea," and his eyes would fill with tears, apparently, annually, quite genuine, genuinely and annually. [Laughter] He gave a concert once, he sang and played Gilbert and Sullivan. He was a one-man show. He got a big kick out of that.

I remember Marshall Fishwick in freshmen history gave lots of little tests. He was a very entertaining teacher, but I remember he didn't care for the fact that I crammed and closed my book only when the test went up. I remember he walked back, but he didn't grab that book but once or slam that book. I liked Dr. Fishwick. I have one of his books that I've wanted to have him sign, but never have.

A couple of things I don't want to forget to tell you. One's a short piece on Arnold Toynbee's visit and then a longer piece on Faulkner's visit. Arnold Toynbee came, and all I remember was that, I guess, perhaps Dr. Jenks moderated. In any case, we went in Lee Chapel and there was a panel. What impressed me about Toynbee was he was such a good listener and every two minutes – well, he would be looking very

intently at whoever was speaking on the panel, and every two minutes he would say, "Yes. Yes." Unconsciously, "Yes."

But the story I do want you to have is the side of William Faulkner that came out when he spoke in Lee Chapel. I guess he was living in Charlottesville when his daughter was there, and he came over. I was sitting on the second row, I think with John Hollister in Atlanta. Did you talk to John? Well, John later went on and had a Fulbright, he was some of Dr. Jenks' students, had a Fulbright to Vienna.

In any case, Faulkner was introduced and he was to read for thirty minutes and then answer questions. So he stood up, he was a very dapper dresser, the real picture of the dandiacle [phonetic] and he stood up and he mumbled, he read and he mumbled, it was so embarrassing, for that thirty minutes or so. He was reading from his work, and we fidgeted around, we were on the second row, couldn't make out anything. Couldn't make out anything. Then he just stopped and he just looked at us, and it must have been a good two minutes he just looked at us. It was dead silent. Finally someone remembered, he's waiting for questions. So someone stood up and asked him a question, and Faulkner approached the microphone and in full control, full voice, boomed out these answers. He'd been playing with us the whole time.

He did that, if you know up at the military, at West Point, was a famous interview, I think in *Life* magazine, in which if you read that, you'll see that he played with that interviewer the whole time, just made him look – and the fellow didn't even realize it.

But this is sort of a spirit, a man from, I believe Hollings, a teacher, asked him, stood up and said, "Mr. Faulkner, how do you create character?" A very earnest, serious question. Faulkner paused and said, "Well, I start the characters out walking down the road and then I run along behind them writing down what they do." This fellow got red and sat down. So they were two rather memorable visits, in particular the Faulkner visit. You can check with John Hollister on that. I hope to see him next

weekend. He and I were co-captains of the – we were on the wrestling team for a number of years. He was one of the West Virginia boys that furnished the team with some mighty good wrestlers.

**Warren:** Well, I want to get to wrestling. But Toynbee was there for a long time.

**Holland:** I think he was there for a half a year or something, a semester, perhaps. Well, Dr. Jenks, I remember, invited a number of people over to his house for dinner, and I remember shaking his hand there.

**Warren:** Was he a presence on campus?

**Holland:** Well, I was not a history major and so I think he probably was for the history. So you'll have to check. You could call John Hollister and ask him about that.

**Warren:** Okay.

**Holland:** Then, let's see, what other speakers? I can't off-hand think of any.

**Warren:** Were you there when Katherine Ann Porter was there?

**Holland:** No, I wasn't. No, that was a little later, I believe.

**Warren:** She was there for a week, I think. What other English teachers were impressive? Because from what I understand, you're a pretty impressive English professor yourself.

**Holland:** No. If I could be half the teacher that Flournoy was, I'd be lucky. I just missed Sid Coulling. He came while I was there, but it was at the very end and I missed out on having a class with him. But I liked Professor Nelson and Professor Foster, in particular. I got into English as a major late, so I didn't have as many courses, probably, as some of the others. I was an English major sort of by default when I got out of premed. What I've told you about Flournoy is about all I'm going to tell you about him, I think. There are some other stories, but I don't think they'd bear repeating.

**Warren:** Do you think you've modeled yourself as a teacher after the style of teaching from Washington and Lee?

**Holland:** No, I don't. I gave up lecturing very shortly after I began. I think I do a much better job leading discussions. Now in the last few years, every class we sit in a circle, so I only lecture – everybody in the department lectures to the seniors once a year and that's my only lecture. So primarily, except for Dr. Borden, Ross Borden, I remember seminars with him, we sat and talked. He had a seminar in contemporary literature and we read Kafka and things like that. So he was only quite interesting. Do you know if he's still alive?

**Warren:** I don't know.

**Holland:** Down in Florida? Someone said he –

**Warren:** I don't know.

**Holland:** He was a romantic sort of figure because he was said to have parachuted in behind enemy lines in World War II. So that was quite glamorous. Dr. Foster's stint in Hollywood – I guess you've talked to Tom Wolfe about that. I guess you will probably.

**Warren:** Yes, I talked to him about it.

**Holland:** He graduated in '54, so I came that fall.

**Warren:** But no crossover?

**Holland:** No. He had a niece and a nephew who graduated from Davidson and so I had the honor of introducing him at an assembly down here and he gave the keynote address. Oh, here's a story on him. [Laughter] After the address, of course, he was dressed in white, but he had, it was either, maybe it was blue silk socks. But anyway, his mother was there, she came over from Lorenburg [phonetic], and she said, "Tom, do you have those socks on?" And he pulled up his trouser leg, and sure enough. But he was a very witty – I used one of his books in Victorian literature and I have the letter I'd written him and asked him what he thought about my smuggling one of his books into Victorian literature. I have this very nice letter on the wall in my office in his calligraphic hand, saying he thought that would be a very nice idea. Good idea. Good idea to do that.



Now, let's see. Some of the more interesting people in town, now, you asked about local people. The landladies and landlords of, you know, in those days there was only a freshmen dorm, and so everyone lived out in town. My father said under no circumstances was I allowed to live in the fraternity house. [Laughter] My wise parent. So I lived with, my junior year, Harry Heinitsh and I, Harry was a transfer from Davidson. Harry was a great athlete, he could run up House Mountain nonstop. But we lived with some others in Buella Hutton's house. Buella was a blind lady in her seventies and she had owned a department store downtown.

**Warren:** Adair Hutton.

**Holland:** She claimed that she had been swindled out of the ownership of it. I don't want to use that. There might be somebody alive that would resent that. But she was a gracious and lovely person. She liked attention, as who doesn't, so we'd go in and tiptoe in and say, "Buella, this is Vic." Her favorite student of all times was Vic Milner from Danville, and she would have loved to have had a visit from Vic, and she'd say, "No, you're not Vic."

I don't know whether you want to use this story or not either, but we would use her kitchen for snacks late at night and make peanut butter sandwiches and everything. She had a severe waterbug problem. Of course, when we went in to make peanut butter sandwiches, we'd turn on the light and the waterbugs would disappear. But when she went in to make peanut butter sandwiches, needless to say, she didn't turn the light on, and so sometimes her peanut butter sandwiches were on the crunchy side. [Laughter]

Then Ma and – is it Pa Gehring? They were down, too. This was on the other side street from the fraternity house. Ma Gehring, she kept – no, a couple of friends roomed, and she also kept dates. When the girls would come down, they had a curfew, either eleven or twelve they would have to be in these different houses. Pa Gehring – I guess it was Pa – he was a one-legged man and he always sat in bed, he wouldn't sit in a wheelchair, and smoked these long cigars. They were great company.

When Ken Sadler graduated and he left his dog, Sam, they adopted Sam, this boxer. Are you going to talk to Ken Sadler?

**Warren:** I don't know Ken Sadler.

**Holland:** Wow. Anyway, the first thing they did was have a portrait painted of Sam, which hung in the entranceway. Pa Gehring would occasionally say – forgive me – he'd say, "Shit" and Ma would say, "You're going to have to forgive him, but that's his favorite word." [Laughter] You probably don't want to put that in. Better not put that in. But in any case, it was fun knowing some of those local people like that.

**Warren:** How far afield did you go? Where were these houses?

**Holland:** Across the street on Washington Street. My sophomore year, I lived with Ken Sadler and John Tucker. Don't know whether you've been in touch with John, who has retired in Savannah. Do you know John Tucker?

**Warren:** No, no.

**Holland:** We lived at Col Alto.

**Warren:** You did?

**Holland:** In the servants' quarters. That was wonderful. The lady that lived there was way up in years, but we would go in, and she was a wonderful lady, and we would talk about the old times. She had a picture. She had been a very beautiful young woman. I can't quite remember her name now. But I noticed they were working on it, they were doing something to it, the last time I was up there. They were changing the road or something. But we would park in the back where, I guess, Mr. Junkin had lived with his studio back there. I think that he had retired, perhaps. Unfortunately, I didn't take any art courses, although I did sit in on – I think Fishwick had an art course that I sat in on.

All right, let's see now. The Fancy Dress, the most memorable Fancy Dress was when Louie Armstrong was there.

**Warren:** You were there that year?

**Holland:** Yeah, I was there.

**Warren:** Oh, tell me about that.

**Holland:** Well, it was just great music and I remember him blowing his horn in Doremus Gymnasium, and that throat would swell out like that. What a sound. It was another world.

**Warren:** Could you dance to Louie Armstrong?

**Holland:** Sure, we danced. Yeah, we danced. Yeah, we danced. Also right in Doremus Gymnasium, that must have been where he played, although it seems small. In my mind it seems like the space that he played in was much, much bigger. You know how your mind makes some rooms bigger and some rooms – and right in that same room was where Alben Barkley died. I remember he gave that wonderful speech, Handmaiden in the Tents of the Lord, and we all cheered and we looked up and he wasn't there. He was right there. He wasn't there when we looked back. Someone ran upstairs with a camera and on that track above and took a picture down over him, and they confiscated his camera immediately.

**Warren:** Oh, my gosh. Were you a delegate at the Mock Convention?

**Holland:** I was there, I suppose I was. Another very memorable thing, this won't go in your book, but U.C. Burling [phonetic], the great Swedish tenor, one of the great, maybe the greatest since Caruso, came and sang in Roanoke and I went with Whit Jack, a friend, and my parents to hear him sing. I don't remember taking music, but I remember that when I was a freshman, my father bought me a cheap record player and twenty-five dollars worth of dollar classical records and said, "It's a cheap experiment. Maybe it will take," and I fell in love with classical music and went to hear him. But I can't connect up with anything really in the school in classical music.

But I remember in the freshmen dormitory there was a fair amount of interest, believe it or not, in classical music. Because this fellow Whit Jack and his roommate from New Orleans, they lived next door. His roommate from New Orleans kept an MG

behind the gym. Of course, it was illegal. He had his MG parked over there. He didn't stay. Lots of the students left after a year or a semester, you know.

**Warren:** Really?

**Holland:** I might be exaggerating, but the party scene was pretty compelling, and so a number of students didn't stay.

**Warren:** Was it for academic reasons?

**Holland:** Yeah. One thing that I think is really interesting that I tell my students here, you know class attendance is thin before and after vacations here, and perhaps at W&L now, but in those days, if you were absent from a class the day before or after a holiday, your relations with the university were severed. It was very effective. Lots of friends went to the Bahamas for spring vacation. I never went, but occasionally someone would just stay on and then reapply for admission. But people came back. And, of course, the Honor System was quite strict, too.

**Warren:** Tell me about that.

**Holland:** Well, I was on the honor court, I guess my last year, and if someone happened to be convicted, he was taken to a motel and not allowed even to go back to his room. His friends packed up for him and he was out of town. At Davidson you have a chance to come back, but at W&L you simply transferred somewhere else. We had a very good Honor System at Davidson, too, and I think that's very important.

**Warren:** Do you remember how you first learned about the Honor System?

**Holland:** Well, we had an Honor System at Episcopal High, too, that was also very effective. So it was just second nature that you simply did your work. As a teacher, it certainly makes all the difference when you don't have to proctor a test, just simply leave the room, and have take-home tests, take-home papers, things like that. I think that's very important and that's one of the impressive things, I think, about the university.

Let's see. President Gaines' marvelous Ciceronian orations stand out. I'm sure you've heard that before.

**Warren:** Oh, but do tell.

**Holland:** He gave those, again, in Doremus Gymnasium. That will be nice because you know the gift of the Doremus family and the gymnasium. So in that gym we've had Louis Armstrong, Barkley's death, and President Gaines' orations. Wonderful words. In this political year, you know, we've lost this sort of nineteenth century rhetoric, the biblical rhetoric. When he spoke, it was authentic, it was the real thing. It was very stirring. The place of oratory and the body politic was impressed on me.

Let's see now. One thing that I remember with pleasure was auditing courses. I tried to audit a lot of courses, as well as take courses. For example, Harvey Wheeler's political science course. Ken Sadler was, I think, one of his students and I would go with Ken and just listen to the – it took a little pressure off. You didn't have to take the test, but you learned. I remember auditing philosophy of religion, or did I take that?

Here's another. Dr. Pusey was, I thought, quite an inspiring man in his own understated quiet way. When I first got to W&L, I was in upper-level French courses, and I can't remember, but anyway, as a junior I started German with Dr. Pusey. Actually, the first teacher was – what's the Spanish teacher's name, Barrett, is that right? I can't remember who stood in as substitute. But in any case, I had Dr. Pusey for second-year German, and German has meant a lot to me. I went to Salzburg for the summer, studied German and read German, and I think studying French and German helped to prepare me for the academic life since. I had had Latin, too, in high school. Let's see now.

**Warren:** You mentioned the women's colleges surrounding. Was that an important part of your social life?

**Holland:** Oh, yeah, it was wonderful. If someone would be dating a fraternity brother, you had lots of friends in those women's colleges. It was a good atmosphere because

you double-dated. I think that the curfews and so on took a lot of pressure off. You didn't have to stay up all night in some sort of endurance contest. Carloads would go to all the schools around there, and had lots of blind dates, and you'd go down for the nice parties in the Hotel Roanoke and the big dances.

Randolph-Macon, as you might know, has in its lobby of the main building where you met your date, a wonderful art collection. Now they have a separate building for their art collection. So it was civilizing for us. And the architecture of those schools, of course, the architecture of the front campus at W&L, but also the distinctive architecture of Sweet Briar, Randolph-Macon, Hollins, and Mary Baldwin, I thought that was all part of the genteel atmosphere that you don't realize is such a privilege until you leave it. Now, Davidson is a beautiful campus, but to be surrounded by beautiful buildings as well as the beautiful mountains is quite a privilege for young people, I think.

**Warren:** Did you go out into the countryside much?

**Holland:** Oh, yes, we went out lots into the countryside. Up on the river, near where your farm is.

**Warren:** Up to Goshen.

**Holland:** Up to Goshen. Groups of people would go up there. I don't remember any drownings while I was there. Unfortunately, there were a number of deaths in automobile wrecks. Terrible. So that was the downside, the dark side, of getting in the car and going to visit women's schools and going to Goshen. I had a good friend who was killed coming back from Goshen, Jacques Dubois. He was from Mexico City, he was on the wrestling team. Bill Lynn [phonetic] got killed, he was a friend from Lynchburg. I was a pallbearer in his funeral. Of course, at that time we had no understanding of the losses the parents of these young people felt.

I remember Dean Gilliam. I have to talk about Dean Gilliam. He said that was the hardest, calling Jacques's father in Mexico City. It was the hardest telephone call he'd

ever made. I went back to see Dean Gilliam in his wonderful home, my mother and I did, before he died. The Gilliams were a Lynchburg family, my home town, and I grew up next door to Dean Gilliam's brother. And Tommy Gilliam, also an SAE, a couple of years younger, and I grew up together. He lives in Charlottesville with his family. Fontaine Gilliam, his son, I have met at the W&L-Davidson football game a couple of times. We've had really wonderful chats. Do you know him?

**Warren:** I know him.

**Holland:** He lives in Spartanburg, I believe, Grable. So Dean Gilliam was a noble figure. He and his wife had been teaching missionaries of a sort, in, I believe the Belgian Congo, and his wife's health had sent them back to the States. Is that right?

**Warren:** I didn't know that.

**Holland:** I believe so. Also it was my understanding that he never took a drink. He never said anything, but there was a lot of drinking. He was sort of – well, he was sort of an ideal, like Leyburn, those two men in particular, self-control. I wouldn't want you to put that in there to give any indication that I think Flournoy was not a person to be respected. I wouldn't put him in that category, but don't say anything about that, at least not from me about his drinking.

Of course, visiting Dean and Mrs. Gilliam's home was always very special. They had a Tudor home that you've perhaps been in. I don't know how many students saw the inside of that house, but it was quite an honor to pay a call on them.

**Warren:** Was there a lot of that kind of student socializing with the faculty or administration?

**Holland:** Not nearly as much as there used to be at Davidson. When I first came to Davidson, every Sunday night certain homes were open because vespers was required, and so the students would come around and see us. We had nothing regular like that at W&L. It's not the same at Davidson anymore. No, we were not as close, I think, as the students at Davidson used to be to the teachers.

**Warren:** I need to turn the tape over.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

**Warren:** I'm really excited to talk to you, because you're my first wrestler. I want to hear all about wrestling.

**Holland:** Well, you could pick a lot better. I saw the lights in the ceiling more than once. [Laughter] Dick Miller was the coach, and he began as a track coach and then was the wrestling coach. Great camaraderie. The trips that we would take, I mentioned the West Virginia – Don Fowler who lives, who is a surgeon in Staunton, do you know his name?

**Warren:** No.

**Holland:** He was on the wrestling team, and John Hollister, they were two West Virginia boys, they were really tough. It was fun. One nice thing was that wrestling had the longest training season of any sport, and so that kept us out of the parties for a good chunk of the year, which was a good idea, because we did keep training rules.

**Warren:** Tell me about that. What kind of training rules?

**Holland:** No Cokes, no drinking, not even Coca-Colas.

**Warren:** Really?

**Holland:** Yeah. I didn't like to run very much. He made us run a lot, but it was fun to try to be in good shape. I never was in as good shape as – well, who is? We had some great wrestlers. I guess Gibby McSpadden from Memphis was probably the greatest wrestler when I was there. His picture is in the gym. Do you know his name?

**Warren:** No. McSpadden?

**Holland:** McSpadden. Gibby McSpadden. I remember going up to wrestle West Virginia in the wintertime and pulling ourselves up those icy hills by the rail. I remember going down to wrestle the Citadel when it was cold in Lexington and you'd go down to Charleston, and people would be cutting the grass and the girls would be in light spring dresses and it was – palm trees. One of the best trips we made was up to



Lancaster [Pennsylvania]. We wrestled Millersville and – what’s the other school up there? I can’t think of it. You know the one I’m talking about? Well, in any case, seeing the Amish going to the big –

**Warren:** In Lancaster?

**Holland:** Yeah. The big farmer’s market and seeing the men in hats, they’d meet and embrace and the women would shake hands, and you had all of this wonderful produce, and walking around seeing that, I’d never seen anything like that. Franklin and Marshall. We’d go up and wrestle those two teams. Then we wrestled University of Virginia. I remember whoever lost at 77, John Hollis and I often would have wrestle-offs, we’d have eliminations, whoever lost would have to wrestle heavyweight because we didn’t have a heavyweight.

I remember wrestling – oh, I’ll think of his name. But there was one fellow from Duke, a big football player, that week I lost, so I guess John probably wrestled in 77. It was a big football player, he didn’t have any teeth. And in those days you could stall. They didn’t call it stalling. Now if you don’t try to escape if you’re on the bottom, or try to turn over your man if you’re on the top, you get a warning and then points are given to your opponent. Well, in those days, the matches were nine minutes, they were longer than they are now, and so I was pretty good at stalling. I’d run out of gas.

I remember putting an elbow in this fellow’s toothless mouth and he couldn’t turn me over. Boy, he beat the tar out of me, but he couldn’t turn me over, so a certain amount of satisfaction in that.

**Warren:** I have a photograph of a wrestling match that I just love because everybody’s standing on the sidelines in coats and ties and there’s this one girl there, and she’s straightening up her glasses, and I just have the feeling that her glasses must be all steamed up.

**Holland:** Yeah, that's right. I remember wrestling Henry Jordan. He later went on to play professional football. He was at UVA. He was a splendid wrestler. He could turn you over and pin you in the gentlest solid fashion.

**Warren:** So did you used to like, or do you still like to watch wrestling?

**Holland:** Oh, sure. Oh, yeah, I always go up. I watch the team, support the team here, too. I wear my W&L tie, but I cheer for Davidson. That's how I resolve that. But I go up for the W&L tournament, for the dual meet. My wife says within about an hour of Lexington, I begin to giggle and laugh, begin to laugh.

**Warren:** Why did you pick wrestling over other sports?

**Holland:** Well, I'd wrestled. At Episcopal High you have to go out for three sports. Everybody has to. So I played football and wrestled and tried to play tennis. So I kept up the – they de-emphasized football just before I got to W&L. They had a cheating scandal.

**Warren:** Was that talked about much when you were there?

**Holland:** No, not much, but there was no secret. I remember a coach came around to the fraternity house once to find people to suit up to play Fork Union, I think, a high school, so we played – Hollister played in that, too. He's an athletic guy. So we suited up and played, I guess Fork Union or whatever. That was the only football game I played in. So now they have a good football team and they have spoiled the Davidson homecomings more than once.

**Warren:** Well, they've had their homecomings spoiled some years.

**Holland:** Yes, we've spoiled theirs, too. Yeah. The lacrosse team was prominent and we had a number of all-American lacrosse players, a lot of those Baltimore boys. They went to England in the summers to play exhibition games in England. So Al Mead was on that team. Do you know that name? Baltimore. Lots of Baltimore. That's another nice thing about W&L, we met young men from all over. I mentioned Jacques Dubois from Mexico, and in the States – well, Philippe Labro was there when I was there, the French,

the well-known French, whose novel, I think, is really a distortion and ridiculous. Actually, we were in Dean Leyburn's sociology and anthropology course together.

Then it was fun to get to know the Texas and the Deep South men and women, Mississippi and Alabama and Texas. We had a number from the North that were good friends. The SAE House at the time, it had very few people from Virginia in it. They were from other parts.

**Warren:** How did you choose your fraternity?

**Holland:** Oh, they had this archaic rushing system where you chose the first week you were there. It was kind—the black ball system. I don't know what they do now. I'm not sure it was a great method, but we made some very good friends, but I had plenty of friends, particularly the athletes in other fraternities. How does it run? Do they do it the same way?

**Warren:** No, it's the first year they're doing a delayed rush and then they're not going to do rush until January, I think. There's all kinds of fallout. There's been a shakedown period now. One of the consequences was that there was only one float in the homecoming parade, because apparently they usually have the pledges do all the work on the float. Kind of a pathetic homecoming parade.

**Holland:** I think the fraternities have a much bigger say up there than they do at Davidson. I think perhaps they used to at Davidson.

John McLin was a Rhodes scholar, he was a couple years behind me. He was from, I think, Arkansas. Did you get that far?

**Warren:** No, I haven't driven that far. I talked to several of the Rhodes scholars, pretty impressive people.

Let's talk about the whole issue of coeducation.

**Holland:** Okay. I don't think that's as fascinating a subject as a lot of people, because I don't really see any difference in the classroom, but as far as the social side goes, see, I think we had a good arrangement. I'm delighted that our daughter went to W&L, but I

think that some of the arguments are specious, but I'm all for it. But I think that in saying – for example, at Davidson they said it will improve the academics of the school. That's nonsense. They did it simply to go along with everybody. I think that single-sex schools have a real place, but I think that W&L, as far as the admissions picture across the country was going, probably was forced to do that because the quality of the applicants had slipped, it's my understanding. But I don't think that it improves academics. I think those women's colleges were very strong and it didn't help them any. So I think that if they had recruited, been better recruiting, they need not have done it, but the times are for coeducation and that's the way it is, but I do think there's a real place for single-sex schools. I like the idea of choice. I don't think every school has to be the same, run the same way.

**Warren:** Can you put yourself back eleven or twelve years ago when it was under discussion? Did you talk with your fellow alumni about the issues?

**Holland:** Yeah.

**Warren:** Did you already know how you felt and –

**Holland:** No, I didn't buy the argument that the admissions people – it was my understanding that the admissions people said "we have to do it," and I did not buy that argument. I thought if for other reasons coeducation was smart, fine, but I don't think – at Davidson also I think that the reasons they gave were sort of PR reasons. I don't think it was necessary.

For example, and I don't suppose you want to put this in, but our son graduated from Episcopal. Don't put this in because it looks like I'm bragging. He got a Moorehead to Chapel Hill. Do you know that they didn't even not only recruit him, they didn't even get in touch with him.

**Warren:** "They," Washington and Lee?

**Holland:** Yeah. A legacy who was terrific, co-captain of the soccer team at Episcopal High, senior monitor, got a Moorehead. So it seems to me, and I told John Wilson that,

that says it all. You can't say that you're really doing a good job recruiting if you didn't even give him a letter. When you deal with these institutions, as you know, you have to cut through a lot of stuff, window-dressing. There's a lot of phoniness in all these schools. It's human condition. So I really didn't buy that argument.

**Warren:** Was there a lot of discussion among the alumni?

**Holland:** Well, I'm kind of isolated down here. I don't get into Charlotte unless I have to, and so I don't go to the chapter meetings usually. There are no W&L people on the faculty here, and so there's nobody to talk to about it. But I talked to a couple people who agreed, who said exactly the same thing I was saying. If they had mounted a vigorous campaign to attract better students, they wouldn't have needed to go coeducational.

But as I said, I couldn't have been happier than when our daughter was up there. I mean, really, and she loved it. She loved it. She was an English major and she's a writer and an editor now. She really liked Sid Coulling and Dabney Stuart, and of course, Dabney went to Davidson. It was a great place for her. She loved the ratio. [Laughter] She didn't marry a W&L man, but she sure enjoyed it and learned a lot. Went on the French Semester, whatever it was. They worked with her so that – well, she went to France with one of the French teachers, but she was able to go to China in '89 with my wife and me and live with us over there, although she came back before the demonstrations started.

So I think she got a good education and it was also – I think there's more education abroad. The students there now are more likely to study abroad. I don't remember many people studying abroad when I was there, so I think that's a good change. That's a good change.

**Warren:** So when your daughter was there, were a lot of those first women students daughters of alumni?

**Holland:** You'd have to check the numbers, but it seems to me –

**Warren:** Well, when you went to Parents Weekend –

**Holland:** Yeah, we always had a big picture in front of what used to be the library, always, seems to me we did at least once, fathers and sons and daughters. I like the idea of legacies going to the same school. I don't think it weakens the school. You don't want all of them, of course, but I like that sort of family loyalty. I think that's a good idea, and that's one of the things that I think W&L should continue to stay strong. Bring in other people, but also – that's a little off the subject, I guess.

**Warren:** No, not at all.

**Holland:** Let's see, what haven't we touched on that I wanted to be really sure –

**Warren:** Let's talk about what you want to talk about. I know you need to go.

**Holland:** There's one of the students whose father is here from London and I met him this morning, but I said I would be in the library between 4:00 and 5:00. Let's see, I mentioned – my goodness, I guess I've mentioned the dramatic moments, Faulkner, Toynebee, Armstrong, Barkley. The sadder side, the automobile wrecks. Sports, academics, fraternities, Honor System, the beauty of that part of the world. You make the camaraderie. I mentioned Gaines and Gilliam and Leyburn. Sprunt was a very noble presence.

**Warren:** Dave Sprunt.

**Holland:** He's a Davidson graduate.

**Warren:** There seems to be a lot of relationships between Davidson and –

**Holland:** Well, I think that the Presbyterians, they say, tried to take over W&L when they started. They didn't succeed. But, of course, the Presbyterians founded Davidson. There's a French teacher who's a Davidson graduate. Dabney Stuart's a Davidson graduate. Jimmy Williams in Spanish, he's Davidson.

**Warren:** Several people from Washington and Lee came here to study what you all had done when you coeducated.

**Holland:** Yeah, that's a group that came down. I had lunch with them. Right, yes, they did. I can't remember who besides – maybe Bill Washburn.

**Warren:** Pam Simpson, she talked about coming down here to find out what you all had done.

**Holland:** Well, I think that they must have done a very good job up there, once they made the decision. Our daughter certainly – she lived with a bunch of girls over in that big house, I know you've seen it on one of those streets just up behind McCampbell Inn, about two or three streets up over there. I'm sure you've found a great deal of loyalty to the school. Not many people disliked it, that I recall. I'm sure some people transferred out.

I can remember one fellow who – let's see now, what are some other things? So I don't know how much tie, I'm not sure of the ties between Davidson and W&L are that strong. There are certainly similarities and we play each other in some sports now, which that's good.

**Warren:** Well, we've made it through my list. Is there anything you'd like to –

**Holland:** Well, I looked for some letters, but it was hopeless. I looked in the furnace and my wife said, "Look in the furnace room." Hopeless.

**Warren:** Not in the furnace, I hope.

**Holland:** No. I'm not sure we have them. But I will definitely edge my way around the house and see if I can come up – what's your deadline on this?

**Warren:** I'd need to have that kind of thing by early next year.

**Holland:** Well, I'm not making any promises I can't keep.

**Warren:** Well, I'd love to see anything that you have.

**Holland:** Because I did write a lot. I mean, I like to write letters, and so I'm sure I wrote a lot of letters.

**Warren:** As you know, letters are a real window.

**Holland:** Yeah. I like to type, and I remember I would type all those letters to – it was fun taking friends, to date, at Randolph-Macon and then go to our house in Lynchburg for dinner. That was a great treat. My parents liked that. That was quite special, so they knew a lot of my friends.

I guess you didn't talk to Richard Wilburn, he's from Meridian, Mississippi. His aunt lived in Lynchburg. She was actually down for the wedding a week and a half ago, our daughter's wedding. She's about ninety now.

**Warren:** Very strong relationship between Lynchburg and Washington and Lee.

**Holland:** Yeah, real strong.

**Warren:** Very impressive.

**Holland:** Real, real strong. I tell you, Mame, I've kind of run –

**Warren:** Well, let's cut it off. I think we've done a good job here.

[End of interview]