

RICHARD WEAVER

April 10, 1996

Mame Warren,
Interviewer

Warren: Today is the 10th of April 1996. I'm in Lexington, Virginia. I'm Mame Warren, and I'm with Richard Weaver.

Richard is my A number-one student, and we started off talking about fraternities. You told me this great thing the evening I spent at the fraternity, at Sigma Nu, that why people fit in at Washington and Lee, why there seems to be an homogenous group here.

Weaver: I think whenever freshmen first arrive here, up until, I guess, this coming year, freshmen men rush at the beginning of the school year, and they each find a place, or most everyone finds a place. Every house is a little bit different, and I think there's plenty of room on the campus for all kinds of people. Quite a few people do accept bids from fraternities and join them and stay with them for four years, and the people who don't accept bids or who do not receive bids tend to leave because they feel that Washington and Lee's social life is dominated by fraternities.

I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing at all. By nature of the system they are exclusive, but I feel that the range of fraternities here offer plenty of possibilities for all kinds of people, and all you have to do is put work into it, as you put work into anything that's important to you. I think that that's a good lesson to be learned by freshmen that come here, you have to work for what you achieve. You work for personal relationships and you work for lifelong friendships, and that's what fraternities are about. No matter what happens after the Friday night party or the Saturday night party or the Wednesday night party, there's always someone there to

help you and to be with you every day of the week. If you have a meal together or if you go down the road or watch a movie or something, there's always constant companionship and friendship, and that's the most lasting element of fraternities for me.

Warren: What do you mean "no matter what happens"? What happens at the parties that it might be "no matter what happens"?

Weaver: I wouldn't say necessarily at the parties. I'm just sort of saying beyond the social image of fraternities, beyond the parties themselves. Whenever you're having a bad time with something, a hard class or something's wrong with your family, your fraternity brothers are there for you and will be there to try to comfort you and to use their experience to help you and get along the way.

Whenever you're so far from home, it's like a new family, almost.

Whenever you come here, you are fraternity brothers, and that's a very accurate term, I guess, filial term, because you have someone who will look out for you and help you every step of the way. That's the ideal, of course, and that's what all fraternities, I believe, strive for here. That's, I think, the most rewarding aspect of fraternities, knowing that people care about you and that they will help you as much as you will help them.

When I was a freshman, I was told that I may not realize it right now, but I'll probably give more to the fraternity than I'll take. You'll find that it's not a compulsion to do necessarily things for other people, but you want to because they're your friends and they're people you grow very close to. So you want to help other people, and in return they're there for you.

It's your family nine months of the year, and sometimes beyond. People live together during the summertime and even after college. I know a lot of our alumni live together now and they pursue jobs and they've sort of gone on to a different

phase of their life, but they always keep that Washington and Lee fraternity experience, I think, close to their hearts.

Warren: So take me to being a freshman. What happens when you arrive here? What's your earliest memories?

Weaver: Well, when you arrive here, you have all these freshman orientation activities to do. You're tired and you've just said goodbye to your parents. At the same time, you're just a little bit excited too, because now you're finally free. There's always the rumor of the first party, where's it going to be.

Of course, you don't know any streets here. There's only three or four or something like that, but you get lost along the way. But you finally find the right house, where there's maybe a keg and 500 people, and you think this is what college is about, this is the first party. You maybe have a beer, and it's pretty exciting that you're finally here.

Then the party starts to really get started, and every night everyone seems so happy to see you and want to talk to you, and obviously they want you to join their fraternity. I think beyond that it's also people just want to kind of meet you, and it's interesting talking to people. For instance, you talk to a freshman and find out his father knew the Allman Brothers way back when or So-an-so's father was the ambassador to India or something like that. It's kind of neat what you come across, and it's in kind of a jovial atmosphere of a party. And so you're just sort of talking to people and they're really interesting, because Washington and Lee attracts very interesting, people who have a lot to them, a lot of knowledge and intelligent people who are worldly, and there's a lot to be gained by just talking to people. So you're opened up to all these people that you never met before who are interesting, and it's just amazing. You wouldn't have thought the guy sitting next to you in the orientation line had this interesting facet about him, and you sort of get into that.

Then once the rush starts itself--I remember my rush experience. The first time I went down to the fraternity houses during the day for some of the open houses, I'd locked myself out of my room and I figured, "Well, it'll take a while for my dorm counselor to get back," so I headed down to Red Square. They were having a cookout down there at Sigma Nu, which is a house I'd bid, so I tear my bid, and just felt really comfortable. The comfort level is what attracts people in the end, how much do you like the people, do you enjoy talking to them. So I think it's very personality-driven.

Parties are obviously an attraction for someone who has just gotten out of high school, but I think that even freshmen kind of see through that, and they wouldn't want to join a house solely on the basis of its parties, but on the basis of its people. If those people are social, then that's an even better bonus, too, but you want to be able to have a conversation with them the morning after or anytime of the day. Then that comfort level just continues to grow as you share more experiences together.

Warren: Is there a particular attraction about the Red Square houses? Is there a proximity?

Weaver: I think that a lot of freshmen tend not to go beyond Red Square. They don't want to walk out to Davidson Park. If they do, they tend to never go to Red Square. You sort of have two groups of people. I don't think it's anything about the fraternities themselves, other than their geographic location, that people just tend to go to Red Square for an evening or Davidson Park for an evening, but not both. It's just the walking distance. It's not terribly long, but for the lazy college student, sometimes it's a little too long. Well, on a cold night, too, you don't want to head out too far away.

Warren: But the majority of houses are at Davidson.

Weaver: So that's why the people who do go out there tend to stay out there. They don't really go back and forth, I guess, in between the two different neighborhoods. I guess my only answer would be that.

Warren: I just wonder, do the freshmen all hit the Red Square first just because it's there?

Weaver: I would say a vast majority of them do, and then they are introduced to other upperclassmen who invite you to my house over here. If they get an invitation, that's even better, other than just kind of dropping by a house, which maybe the case in Red Square that they're there, and then you get invited to go where you may not have thought of going first, which is farther away.

I don't think that it's necessarily a disadvantage for the fraternities who are away from the Hill and Red Square, but I think the first thing you do is stick to where you know. When you're a freshman, you don't know where anything is. You learn all the different names of houses. You learn the Bordello and the Penthouse and the Bat Cave and the Munster House. You hear about all these legendary party houses, and everyone has a different opinion of where it is. For instance, the Munster House is right across from the post office and the Penthouse is on Randolph Street, Randolph and Massey Street, on the corner there, and the Bat Cave is right next to the Penthouse, or right to the left of the Penthouse, I think, if I'm looking at the right way, and the Bordello is down there by Lenfest. Have you heard the story of the Bordello before?

Warren: No.

Weaver: Well, it used to be a whorehouse, and that's why they call it the Bordello. Now it's a residential home, but back in the day, that's what it was.

Warren: Where is it?

Weaver: It's right across from Gaines, right across the street there. It's a yellow house.

Warren: That's a fraternity house?

Weaver: No, it's not a fraternity house. When I say party houses, I mean that these are houses that upperclassmen have. They live there and they hold parties there. They're not the official fraternity house. For instance, at my house there are three other houses we use for parties that people live at, too, just to kind of get a different atmosphere for things.

The Bordello is usually occupied by women, but it has been occupied by men before. They call that entire area "the red light district," because that's the Bordello, and to complete the image of the red light district, they have red lights in the windows of all the houses.

Warren: Is that why they're there?

Weaver: Yes.

Warren: Oh, do tell. Continue on. Give me the tour of Lexington, the student's tour of Lexington.

Weaver: Oh, gosh. Other houses kind of come and go. Everyone names their house, so that's a really interesting thing, too, but some of the names don't really stick, except for the ones that are legendary, like the Penthouse, Munster, and Bordello. I don't know why people do. They tend to do it, and that way you know where a party is. A party at so-and-so sounds better than a party at 215 Massey Street or something like that. It just has a better thing to it. And the alumni come back and they know what the Penthouse is or the Munster House is. They kind of carry on through generations. That's kind of a test of time.

Warren: When the alumni come back, do they join right in to the parties?

Weaver: I think if they know people there, if they're young enough to still know people who were in school when they were in school, I think they will come around to parties. But I think the older alumni don't go into those houses, simply because they don't know anybody and I think they'd feel uncomfortable doing it.

Another house is Stucco. That's because it's made out of stucco on the outside. That's on Henry Street, and that's on the same street as Aqua Velva, which I don't know why it's called that, but it's just a neat name. It sticks in your head. So the party's at Aqua Velva and Stucco, whatever else now.

Warren: Would these only be your fraternity brothers who would be at these houses? Are these all Sigma Nu houses you're mentioning?

Weaver: Oh, no. These are all different fraternities. I would say that, for the most part, the dominant people at a party are in the fraternity of the owners of the house, of the renters of the house. There might be a few other people there, but it's not as open as the fraternity houses themselves are whenever they have parties, whenever they have bands and so forth. Those are still primarily dominated by the members of that fraternity, but you see more guests, I guess, there. That just depends on how much beer the house has, pretty much, or how much they really want other people around.

For the most part, things are open here, unless hundreds of people were to swarm the house at one time. I think they would say, "Get out. You've got to leave us alone. You can't have this many people here." But for the most part, I think it's pretty open. I've never been thrown out of a house, but I never have made a pest of myself, either, when I was around. You just have to kind of remember you're someone else's guest in someone else's house and behave accordingly, I guess.

Warren: So what would cause you to go to a party somewhere else? Is there a party at Sigma Nu every Wednesday and every Friday and every Saturday?

Weaver: No, not necessarily. It just depends on how much work there is that week to be done. If it's a special week, like Fancy Dress, there's obviously more regulated parties. I would say we have Wednesday night parties every two weeks, but that really is subject to change. We don't have any regular basis.

I'd say the Wednesday night parties, we mostly attract the women from the girls' colleges around here. They come over for that. All the different girls' colleges on Tuesday night, I forget what they call it at Hampden-Sydney, but a party night there, and then Wednesday night is Wednesday night parties here at W&L. And then also on Tuesday night they have what's called 'Til Tuesdays at Hollins, and they always have a band or music of some sort like in their GHQ or their pit. It's free, too, so you can go there and sort of socialize or whatever on a week night.

There's always something to do. At least that's more organized than, say, a specific party at a certain house. There's just sort of the image of a Wednesday night party somewhere in Lexington. There always is something somewhere.

Warren: When does studying fit in here?

Weaver: Well, the funny thing about studying here is that people tend to do it when nobody's looking. No one wants to have the image of always studying all the time, so people are pretty resourceful during the day.

I never studied during the day when I first got here, but then I realized I wasted so much time during the day that, if I got work done in the afternoon or before lunch, then I was free during the evening. I still do work during the evening, but it's all a matter of just managing your time. I think there's a lot of different distractions around here, but once you manage your time, then it's achievable. It's oftentimes for excess and you have to kind of watch yourself, but I think you can do it if you just sort of have a little discipline inside to make it happen.

Warren: I like this notion that people are hiding their academic endeavors. Where do they do this? If you're in the library, aren't you studying?

Weaver: In the library. Well, it's not as if it's they want to be--I think people will rarely use studying as an excuse not to go out and party. So they want to make sure they don't have to make that excuse, so they'll just study at different times. I wouldn't say they would try to shut themselves off so they wouldn't be seen by

anybody else, maybe not the exact sense of that. But they don't tend to make a big deal of how much work I have to do tonight or, "Oh, gosh, I have a paper or a test." You just kind of do it. That way you have more time to focus on other things.

That's the wonderful thing about students here is that they are motivated to do their work. There's hardly anybody that, I would say, just blows off their work completely and just enjoys the parties. Those people who do do that fall under the automatic rule pretty much. Their GPA is very low and they can't come back. So I think people here are motivated to do well and to have fun at the same time, and there's time to do it if you make yourself do it.

Warren: Are many people lost to the automatic rule? Tell me what the automatic rule is.

Weaver: The automatic rule is, it differs per year. I believe if you're a freshman, you cannot come back to school if you have less than a 1.5 your sophomore year, I think, and then it goes to a 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, or something like that. Maybe it goes up to a 1.7 next, then 1.8, then 1.9. So you have to have above a 1.9 to graduate.

Then if you don't, then you have to leave. You can reapply if you want and get back in, but if you get yourself down to that point, there's a problem, I guess, in your priorities, so you have to focus--you have to know how to focus your time, when it comes down to it. You can't just pay your tuition and go to the parties. They don't allow that here. You have to work for it.

The thing about Washington and Lee is that I have never been so busy in my life with work. At the same time, I want to get it done so I can have a lot of fun, too. A lot of people here, I guess a lot of seniors are looking back on it and go, "Wow, that was a great time, but I'm almost so tired of the pace. It's so frenetic at times. There's so much to do every weekend, that you want to do it, because you're with your friends and it's fun.

But you know you had to do your work, too, so you do it all and you're sort of like, "Wow." At the end of the time, you've just spent so much effort. But it's worth it. It's part of the whole experience, and that's working very hard for what you want, academics or parties or anything else like that.

It's a good lesson to be learned, I guess. It makes you work, and that's good for all of us, I think. I mean, I guess people have died from working too hard, but I think that you can work hard and be all right afterwards, too. I don't know if that makes any sense.

Warren: You talked about the parties at other schools and you used an expression "the road schools." Talk to me about the other schools and Washington and Lee women and how everybody's perceived.

Weaver: I guess it's always been, at least in Sigma Nu, the people in Sigma Nu, it's been our philosophy that we don't care where the women come from. As long as they're fun to be with and sociable and go to the parties, that's fine. We don't really discriminate.

This sounds horrible, but the road school women are not as intelligent as the Washington and Lee women. They just have lower academic standards. They're still great people, and some of them are really smart, too, but I guess, in general, you can say the standards here are higher than there. A lot of women look down upon the Sweet Briar girl because they think she's dumb and they think she's occupied by her horse all the time, and here she comes over to Washington and Lee to date men that could ask the Washington and Lee woman out, but she doesn't get asked out because the Sweet Briar girl is there. There's sort of competition, almost, for the men, and I think that was a bigger concern after coeducation was first instituted.

Now there's still that bit of animosity, but I think the Washington and Lee women are pretty well integrated into the social scene now. The sororities really

help because they have their own social events to invite the guys to. So I think that it's just kind of an interesting leftover of resentment.

Warren: Do they bring in men from other schools very much?

Weaver: No. You may get the occasional boyfriend from home or boyfriend from a different school that you knew way back when, but you don't ever hear of the Washington and Lee women going off to Hampden-Sydney or VMI to a party. That never happens at all.

Warren: Why is that?

Weaver: I don't know. I guess that tradition of road tripping for women was never there, and they never started it. There was never any need because the men were here; whereas the road tripping tradition started because there didn't used to be women, and it's kind of fun to go down the road. It goes back to just kind of call up your friends, you know, and you go down the road forty-five minutes, and the best times on the road trip were just sometimes on the way back, just talking about whatever when you're heading back to Lexington like two in the morning or something like that after an evening down there.

I think one of the neatest things about my college experience is that I have friends at different colleges, and I've known them since I was a freshman. I haven't necessarily dated them. I mean, some of them, but not all of them. You have real friends in different places, and you follow along in their classes, you know how they're doing and their majors. Next week I'm going to a friend from Hollins' recital, her senior thesis recital, and I'm going to the formal next weekend, too.

That's kind of fun, too, going to someone else's formal, and you get their shirt, too, that says "Hollins College." I don't know if I would wear it on campus anymore, because you do get some dirty looks from the Washington and Lee women. That used to be a badge of honor, whenever it was all male, to wear the girls school paraphernalia, because it showed you were social and you were out

there, that you knew women, and now you can know women just by being here. I still like the fact of, if you were dating someone you saw them maybe a couple times a week as opposed to every single day. It keeps kind of a mystery about a person almost, and you're not stuck with seven days a week being together. Not that that's wrong or anything, but I guess something can be said where you don't have the distraction of someone if you're trying to do your work during the week, and then you have the weekends off to socialize. The road school women will also work during the week so they have the weekends.

I'll tell you, when the weekends come at Hollins and Sweet Briar, those places empty out. There's hardly anybody there, because there's no social life there at all. It's all dependent upon the neighboring schools. And so they all come here or Hampden-Sydney, or even the Naval Academy for some reason. I don't know why. It's so far away. But they head off to that. I guess the social road school woman is the one who goes on road trips here and knows people here, and it's just fun, too. I don't know how to describe it more than that, but it's fun.

Warren: You say that the Washington and Lee women are really smart.

Weaver: Yes.

Warren: I guess you weren't here before there were women.

Weaver: No.

Warren: But is there any sense of competition in the classroom that might be more than in some other schools that's always been coed?

Weaver: I would not say competition between men and women. I would just say competition between people. I don't think people look at it on the basis of girl versus boy.

Personally, I think, in general, the girls have better academic qualifications, because their admissions processes are different from ours. The 60-40 ration must be maintained, so that pool that is being drawn from for that 40 percent, it's getting the

better arc, I guess, than the males. I don't think it's an incredibly big difference, but it's there, at least. Not to say that men can't do well here, or don't do well here, but it is kind of the image in your head that the women are smarter, too.

But the women who come here, most of them tend to be very sociable, too. The girls from Texas had their coming-out parties and the cotillions and all the things like that, too. They're not exactly the Southern belles, but they're kind of like the modern Southern woman, who's smart, beautiful, and drives a Ford Explorer and has a house here that they live in with some of their friends on the countryside, and just a very modern woman, almost.

That's kind of funny to say here, because you don't think of Washington and Lee as sort of in the modern world in the sense of male and female relations, but Washington and Lee women have just sort of become, the stereotype of them has become that they're very smart, very pretty, and very nice, and that's sort of the New South woman, I guess. I'm not sure if the people in the history department would agree with something like that, but that's something I think that you can see.

Warren: When you say "the New South woman," do the girls tend to come from the South?

Weaver: I'd say primarily from the South. I'm not sure. Maybe if you looked at the admission figures it would tell you differently, but I get the impression that even the people who are from the North here like to pretend they're from the South. You see people who have Confederate flags and the shirts and they sort of adopt the traditions around here.

You could be from Massachusetts, but once you get here, you admire Lee and you start to do all the things here. You go to the Foxfield races. It's a very Southern thing to get in your car with your tie and your date and the flowered dress and the straw hat and you go to the horse races, which is not at all a typically Northern thing to do, but you kind of take it on, almost. I don't know if it's necessarily posing, but

whenever you get here it's a different mind-set and it becomes natural to do these things. It feels normal, and it is normal. It's just our way of life here. Once you come here, it just becomes a part of you, I think, no matter where you came from.

The South has a certain charm a lot of people admire, and I think students here sort of catch on to that. It's not premeditated or anything. You just get used to it, assimilated, almost, into the Washington and Lee way of life, and that's, like I said before, working hard and having a good time and enjoying the things that are here, traditions and other things that we like very much.

Warren: What are the traditions that speak most to you?

Weaver: The Honor System is the most important tradition here. I think people hold that in very high regard, and that's why it continues on. I did a show about this. The Honor System is shaped by the prevalent opinions of the student body, and that changes with each election of different EC officers to decide what is honorable and what is not honorable.

I think that even though there may have been slight changes over the years, the core of "you will not lie, cheat, and steal" is still there. That remains our central tenets, and that has applications today as much as it did in the last century. I think that is our most endearing legacy, is that those ideals are very relevant today. No matter where we go, no matter where we're headed, coed or two thousand people or who knows what, Washington and Lee will always have that base there. So I think honor is very important.

I think fraternities are very important, too. Because Washington and Lee now is coed, I don't think that changes their importance at all. I think that the women should be given the opportunity to have a very strong sorority system, too. I think some women here feel that they have been denied the opportunity to have the closeness that the men have because they don't have a very strong sorority

system yet, and that's merely a fact of it hasn't been around that long and they don't have houses.

One of my female friends said that just the way the guys bond is amazing here, but just the way the atmosphere is set. Women just don't get that chance, because after their freshman year they don't live together. They live out in the community, with each other and their own sorority types and so forth. And so there's not that one sophomore year where you live in the house and you eat there that the guys get, and that's the closeness that I think that they maybe wish they had, and maybe they'll get, too. So I'm in favor of those organizations here as being very important.

Warren: How was the Honor System introduced to you?

Weaver: They have a orientation in Lee Chapel during freshman orientation where you watch a video, I think. I don't know exactly. But you watch a video and the president of the EC speaks and it's in the materials you read in the catalog. You know about it beforehand, too. You've read about it, at least.

Before the first exam period for freshmen there's another orientation meeting to explain how exams work, the whole system here of how you can't discuss them, you can take them anytime you want and sign the envelope pledge and so forth. So I think that's the most practical application of the Honor System is when it comes to academics, and then you yourself derive in your own life those tenets of honor and follow those outside of the classroom.

I think that just becomes sort of second nature, almost. You're just expected to behave in a certain way, no matter what you do, and that applies to everything you do, not just the book or not plagiarizing something. It's just sort of a way of dealing with people. You don't take people's things out of their rooms, you don't mistreat people, you don't lie about anything, because there's no need. It destroys that communal feeling, that comfort feeling that we all have of being here. And so

anything that strikes against that comfort, I guess--which I'm not sure is the best word, but I'll use it anyway for now. I think anything that strikes against the comfort is frowned upon and looked down upon, and that's why the Honor System extends into the social life, because you don't want to have to worry about things anymore.

Warren: Do you truly assume at all times that everyone is telling you the truth?

Weaver: I would say the majority of the time, yes. Unless it's some extenuating circumstance involving the individual who may be telling me something, and that would just be dependent on if I knew this person or not, then I would assume what a student would be telling me would be the truth. Not saying that the Honor System creates a 100 percent honorable environment, but I trust people when they tell me something. I just trust people when they say how things are.

I'll leave my book in Newcomb Hall sometimes or in the library, I go talk to somebody, and it's still there. It's not disturbed. Nobody's messed with it or anything. I don't even think about it anymore. I don't worry about it. I certainly wouldn't do that in a big city, but then again I know that our community does not extend beyond into the big city that's here.

And that's what is so rewarding, I think, to the alumni when they come back is that that atmosphere is still around. I don't think you find alumni stealing anything or lying, either. You drop all pretense when you're here and you're just yourself. You are what you are when you're here, and you don't try to be something else.

I think that that maybe sticks with you later on in life. Even though you don't have to, you try to be as open as possible and as truthful as possible to yourself and to other people. I think that is a lasting legacy of the Honor System there, is that you drop pretense.

Warren: Do they make any attempt in admissions to sort out people who will or will not go along with the Honor System?

Weaver: I don't think that there's anything in the application process that could determine if someone was honorable or not, so I don't think that that's possible. If you do apply for an honor scholarship, you have to write an essay. I think it has something to do with what is your idea of honor. But I don't think that that could be used in any way to screen people whenever they're applying.

Warren: But is it in what you get as an applicant? Is it stressed there?

Weaver: Yes. The Honor System is stressed there. Well, it's stressed more in a historical sense rather than its practical application, and then once you get here you realize what the practical application is academically, and then that extends into aspects of life here, too, just by, I guess, the atmosphere and the practice of things here. I don't know if they tell you a great deal of what the Honor System means practically whenever you're an applicant here, but you learn it once you do come here. It's just something they tell you at least to expect, you know, that's something that's important to us, and then once you get here you realize how important it is and you realize the implications involved because you see its everyday use. I think that's the best teacher.

Warren: I know you've had more dealings, probably, than most students with alumni.

Weaver: Yes.

Warren: Have you a sense from them that the Honor System has continued to mean a lot to them?

Weaver: Yes.

Warren: I wonder if that's why the old-boy network of W&L is so strong, because people assume that anybody that comes out of here is a trustworthy person.

Weaver: I think that's very true.

Warren: I never thought about it that way before.

Weaver: That's why whenever you call people and you mention Washington and Lee, they're immediately open to you and very friendly and offering you things, because they realize you're from that community that they came from and that atmosphere, and this sort of sticks with you no matter where you go. So I think that fondness is still there, and that's why people are very open to Washington and Lee.

Warren: Let's talk about that connection you have to the alumni. Tell me about Kathekon.

Weaver: Kathekon is a group that we help the Alumni Office with various events, like homecoming and with reunion weekend, and we also do occasional cocktail parties. It's not a really hard thing to do, but it's kind of fun because you get invited to go and just sort of talk to people. The alumni will always want to know are things still the way they used to be about this or that, and you tell them if Professor So-and-so is still around. They'll maybe tell you a funny story about something that you hadn't heard before.

They really, I guess, want to see in the Kathekon members that the Washington and Lee that they knew is still there, and so I think whenever they select people from the Kathekon, they want people who are representative of the student body and who represent, I guess, the mainstream of what people are here. I don't think people differ too much, but they want someone who's sociable and who will talk and sort of has interest in other people.

I'm personally interested in hearing stories. I heard once that, I was driving a van of alumni somewhere. We were driving past VMI, and they said, "That's where the cavalry used to be, before they got rid of the cavalry in the army." They used to train them in that. It's right across--you know where you go over that bridge that goes over 11 there?

Warren: Yes.

Weaver: The building on the right right before that. I think it's like basketball courts or something now. That's where the cavalry used to be. I thought, "Wow, that's pretty neat."

Then John Warner, I had him on my show once and he told a story that the VMI cadets, they weren't allowed to leave the barracks at nighttime, so what they would do, they couldn't lie about their whereabouts if someone asked them where they were, but they would go and they'd pay Washington and Lee students to sneak over and get in their beds and put a blanket over them. If they were found out, they would of course have to admit to what was done wrong, but they didn't have to if no one caught them. So Washington and Lee students used to go over there and lie in the hay. That's what they had over there as bedding. That would be a way for the VMI students to head out, go see a girl or something or just get a little bit of freedom there, too.

I like those kind of stories and just sort of the way things used to be socially, I guess. A lot of people have stories about Leyburn or Gaines and people like that that I don't really know too much about, and that personally doesn't interest me that much. I'd rather know what life was about here, fraternity-wise and parties and things and Fancy Dress. That interests me the most, I think. They love to talk about it, too, because it's very memorable good times here. I think that's what you remember most, is the people you meet here and the good times you had with them. So that's what they like to talk about, and I like to hear it, too. It gives me good stories to tell to my friends.

Warren: Are you invited to join Kathekon?

Weaver: Yes. You apply. I believe this year there were ninety applicants for fifteen slots. I applied my sophomore year and I did not get in. My junior year, I did get in. It's for until you graduate. It could be for two years or for one year.

We just elected new members now, and they will take the seniors' places. We're all in it right now, but once we're gone, the group will shrink down to maybe about twenty-five or thirty, something like that. I'm not sure exactly the number, but it will be a smaller number. Right now I think they have more people because alumni weekend is a big job to get done.

It's a lot of fun, because I think last year on the front lawn they had a dinner and they had a bar and everything else and beer and everything else, and you stood there and you talked to people. You went over and said hello, introduced yourself, and you have your name tag and the year. It's friendly, talking. I don't have a prescribed thing they tell me to say. There's no scripts. There's nothing like that. It's just be yourself and tell them what's going on. That's why I enjoy it a lot.

Warren: Do they interview you or do you feel like you're a part of it? Are you being quizzed by the alumni?

Weaver: Not in particular. It's sort of cocktail party talk, I guess. It's not too hard. They'll ask you questions, but you don't feel like you're being really interviewed too hard. It's just sort of friendly, I guess.

They want affirmation, I think, that things are still the same. I wouldn't tell them otherwise that things weren't the same, but I think that's what they're looking for. They're like, "Well, is Fancy Dress still the biggest time of the year?" You say, "Yes," and you tell them what Fancy Dress was like this year, the decorations and the band or something like that.

I don't think they ask you if those damn women have torn this place apart yet. They don't say something like that. At least I've never come across that. But they just want to know that the place they left is still the same. They see a lot of times in you themselves, almost, at the time and just sort of getting ready to embark upon life after coming out of here. It's just that fondness that they have. They kind of transfer it almost to you, because they think you'll be going out soon and wonder

what it'll be like for you. I think it's sort of a reflection of themselves whenever they look at us, and I think that's very comforting, too, to sort of see that circle that just continues on there.

Warren: I've been listening to some of these talks that have been given on alumni weekend, and the theme, as the people are being introduced, is that the alumni envy the students. Do you pick that up?

Weaver: Oh, yes, definitely. I definitely see that. It's the best four years of your life, some people say. It's a very unique four years, at the very least, and you always have those memories to look back on no matter what you go on to later in life.

Roger Mudd, in his speech at Lee Chapel, which I think the media center has a tape of, talked about coming back and tapping the source and you sort of renew yourself when you come back to Washington and Lee. You remember all the things you learned here, and it sort of, I guess, brings a bit of closure, I guess, whenever you come back and you see that what you started out with is still there. The tenets you learned here and still very important and they still are training a new generation of people every year who go out, a new class every year who go out and do a lot of great things.

Our alumni are very successful, and I think that a lot has to do with just the fact they came from here. This very unique environment, I think, really helps people. It makes them very sociable and very hard-working and ready to take on new adventures and new things. You find yourself very open at graduation for going out there and really doing something. You have higher aspirations, and then you have the skills to achieve those aspirations, too, I think.

Warren: I think there's an interesting dynamic here that I don't think is true in that many places, this interaction between the alumni and the current student body. It's like you're constantly being bombarded with role models.

Weaver: Definitely.

Warren: Does that ring true for you?

Weaver: Well, the Alumni Office does a really good job. If you call them up and tell them you're looking for an internship or for a job, they'll print off for you a list of alumni who are in that profession, their addresses, home phone numbers, everything, that if you want to write them a letter.

Actually, something I did in the fall for the Career Office, I hosted a video for them about alumni-sponsored internships. That's a new program being developed by the Career Office and the Alumni Office is to arrange for the alumni to offer internships solely for W&L students so they can go to Wall Street or go and do this or that and get sort of person-to-person tutelage, almost, sort of one generation to the other Washington and Lee students, sort of training them and getting them ready there. It's been going on, I think, for maybe two years now. I think they're just now getting a lot of alumni chapters involved in setting these internships up.

On the show, we had Jim Farrer and a broker from New York (I don't remember his name), and we had a junior named Scott Schroeder on, too. He had done one of these internships, and he was talking about what the experience meant to him, why it was better than just any internship because it was a Washington and Lee-sponsored internship. Then one thing we touched upon, Jim and I touched upon, was how you could have a monetary gift, but this is a gift of your time, which can be even more viable in some cases, and it's very special that our alumni want to make that gift of time, not just writing a check. There's that issue of involvement there that you want to stay active, you want to be a part of things.

I'm sure that the Career Office would give you a copy of this if you were interested in it, but that kind of explains what the whole process is like. The alumni relationship has a very practical application to getting jobs and internships and everything else. It's a very well-developed network, I feel, now of things, and the Career Office here does a great job of that, too, of helping you getting matched up

with alumni, just sort of sending a cold letter saying, "I'm here. If you know anything, let me know," or, "Within your company, can you recommend something?" I haven't done too much of that just because my individual major is not really conducive to that, but I wouldn't have any worries about doing that, sending a letter off to someone, because I know it would be received favorably.

This is something, too. I applied for a fellowship from the journalism school in the fall. It's called the Todd Smith Fellowship, and it's offered every year for a student to go overseas and do a story, and this fund pays for that trip and all your expenses. What I wanted to do was to go to Hong Kong and to do a print story on the last days before the Chinese took over and what people were feeling and their anxieties and hopes and all that kind of thing.

What I did is, I called the Alumni Office and I got a list of all the Hong Kong alumni and I wrote them all letters, and I got an e-mail back from someone in Hong Kong who had never heard of me on the other side of the world, but the Washington and Lee connection made a difference. He was willing to help me find a place to live and help with my travel arrangements, all kinds of things. He was there for me. He had never met me, and the connection is still there across the world. I thought it was pretty neat. I didn't get the fellowship, but if I had I'm sure that would have helped me out a lot if I had gotten that. That was neat.

Warren: That's a nice story. Fancy Dress, you mentioned that several times.

Weaver: Fancy Dress is fun. It's just a time when you can put all your words aside, put all your work aside, too, and have wonderful parties and everybody's around having a good time. It's just sort of a magical time, almost, of the year. Very special.

Warren: Why?

Weaver: Everyone's together, everyone's having fun, everyone looks nice, and you have all these things to do, fun things to do, a dance, a band, and a concert. It's the best aspects of college with academia sort of taken away for a few days. With that

reality taken away, you can just have a lot of fun, and I think it's kind of an escape for people, almost.

Warren: Why is Fancy Dress more than the prom? What makes Fancy Dress extraordinary?

Weaver: I think the sheer size of it, the glorious excess of it, an \$80,000 party for one night, and then it's all gone after that. I think that's just something very neat. Some people say it's wasteful, but a lot of things can be wasteful, I guess. But this is just a lot of fun, and there's sort of--I can't really put it in words, but there's sort of a sense of this is our time, almost, this is a chance for us to just enjoy being together, everyone being together in the whole school in a social sense.

Warren: Who's everyone?

Weaver: All the friends you knew in your hall that you don't see too much. If you're not in the same classes with them, this is the chance, when everyone is together, people you haven't seen in a couple months or a year and they're all having a good time together. It's not practical to have gatherings like that all the time, just because of the size of the student body. It's just a neat time. There's not really any hostility that people have if people don't like each other. It's not really there anymore. It's sort of a redemption time, almost.

In the article that Betty Munger wrote that I printed in the *Playbill*, there was something that she said, the very image I think is very true. I can't remember exactly, I don't know if I can or not, but something about, "We know these times will never be the same again, so we're going to cherish them while we have them and then they'll always be with us. No matter how we change and how people move off after graduation, we'll always have this one memory of this one fantastic time." Whether it would be a *Une Soiree Parisienne* or Mad Hatter's Tea Party or whenever else, it's just something there to remind you.

I personally love pictures of things. You know that. I keep everything there. That helps me remember the good times. I still look at those pictures all the time. Every week or so I take them out and look at them and think of, "What was I doing at that point?" and who this girl is or that girl is and what my friends were doing.

It's almost inexpressible how much I like it, and I couldn't imagine missing a Fancy Dress while we're here. I don't want to shame people who don't go. It's a big chunk of money, but you know it's coming every year so you sort of stow away here and there some money you have left over from books or something like that your parents send you, because you know this is where you want to spend it. It's fun. So that's why I like it a lot.

Warren: How big a chunk of money?

Weaver: Well, figure Fancy Dress for the tickets and the merchandise is \$80 to \$85 a year, and then your tux rental, if you don't have a tuxedo, is about \$50 there. And then dinner on Saturday night of Fancy Dress weekend figure about \$50 there. Then concert tickets may be \$20 for the Thursday night. Plus, if you're in a fraternity, you put some money together for the parties there, so that's another about \$40 or \$50: So what is that, \$300-and-something there. I lost track, but it's a big bunch of money.

Warren: It adds up. I'm going to flip the tape over.

Weaver: Okay.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Weaver: One thing I do regret this year is that I saw Mr. and Mrs. Elrod were there. I guess it was in the beginning of the ball, and you wonder where were those photographers when you want one to have your picture taken, because I wanted to have my picture taken with them. And I saw one of my advisers there, Bob de Maria, in the journalism department. He and his wife were there.

That's pretty neat, too, that you drop the label of student and you drop the label of faculty member and you're just there for the party. You're there for the

orchestra and the big dance. You look out across the entire ballroom and you see everyone in their black tie and dress, and they're just having a great time and no worries and there's no sense of kids who are maybe doing something they shouldn't be doing, you know, they had a little too much to drink. They're just having a good time at a good party. There's no looking down upon that. I don't know if that sounds right, but you don't feel embarrassed that the professors are there too, because there's not that judgmental aspect of it. There's just people having a good time, not in the typical environment of the classroom or the lecture hall, but it's just with the orchestra and music.

One thing I wanted to talk about too is how much I think music is very important here. Maybe I'm just the only one that thinks that, but I associate the good times with music. I love Motown. I think people here love Motown.

There's one group called Doug Clark and the Hot Nuts. I don't know if you've heard of them before. They've been around for thirty years. It's an old soul band, and they were kind of big in the sixties. At one point, Ike and Tina Turner was their opening act. They were doing a big stadium tour. They're not as big as they used to be. They had some records way back when, but they didn't go anywhere. They now just do fraternity parties, they do weddings and socials, and they do their whole litany of R&B classics--you know, the Temptations and the Jacksons and everything else like that, good dance music.

But their signature thing is they do dirty limericks. They have about thirty of these. You wouldn't want your mother to hear what they're saying at all. But everyone knows the words to these limericks, you know, and they sort of fashion it according to the audience, who's there. There's a saying, what's the difference between a Hollins girl and toilet paper? The answer is, you only use toilet paper once. The people know the answer though. He'll hold the mike around different places, and his whole routine is, "Nuts, hot nuts, get them from the peanut man.

Nuts, hot nuts," and so forth. And then another verse comes, and what is this or what is that. Some of it is pretty lewd, but that's just kind of a unique thing to them.

Getting back to the whole idea of music, I think people like music that reminds them of a certain time and sort of captures that timeless essence. So whenever I hear a certain song, I associate it with a certain time. That may be just very unique to me, but you think of like the bands here, like Dave Matthews Band. It has a certain sound, almost, that sort of captures and reminds you of an afternoon you spent, you know, at Zollman's or something. There was a band going on there and it was a beautiful day and your friends were all there and it was just a lot of fun. It just reminds you of things and sort of eases a little bit.

I'm always more comfortable with music around me. That sort of eases everyone's tension. I think that people here love concerts and love bands and they love certain groups that go around, and that kind of sticks with you. I have a huge CD collection now that I didn't use to have, just because I always have my stereo on. I'm not sure if that's unique to Washington and Lee, but at least I feel that's important to me to just remember certain things like that.

Warren: Well, if we're talking about music, we ought to talk about "The Swing."

Weaver: Oh, of course, "The Swing."

Warren: I know you have a unique relationship with "The Swing."

Weaver: Yes, I do.

Warren: Is it still sung?

Weaver: At football games they'll play it after a touchdown or something like that. People will kind of sing along to it. Every single, I think, concert here, the chorale concert or orchestra concert, it always closes with the hymn first and then "The Swing." That's how every single concert closes. The last times the hymn go through, then all of a sudden the piano raises up and you know what's coming after that. Everyone starts clapping and standing up. It happens every single time.

Everyone knows at what point to clap, at what point to stand up and at what point to whirl their hand and what point to say "Sweet Briar" or "Yahoo," depending on what your choice preference is. It's kind of neat. That's where "The Swing" comes into life most practically, I guess. At every concert, it's there, and everyone knows it, too. It's our song, a very special song. It's a good song, too.

Warren: Yeah, it's great. You mentioned Zollman's. Take me to Zollman's.

Weaver: I never would have thought--it's the most illogical place to have a party. It's so far out there.

Warren: Out where? Take me literally.

Weaver: It's heading towards Collierstown, I think. I know it's on 11 or off of 11. I don't even know the roads. It's kind of like the houses in town. Whenever you first get here, you don't know exactly where everything is. You know at this turn you turn right. It's sort of the legend. You see a confused pack of girls from Hollins, "Does anybody know where Zollman's is?" and you know they'd never find it if you tell them the street names. You're like, "You go around this corner and you go about a mile from there, about a mile, take a left." It's sort of Oz, almost. You have to find it.

It's a big shack. It's not a barn. But it has a stage there, and it's really kind of rundown. It's not at all there for being aesthetically beautiful. It's right by this big field, and people get their cars, and you usually get a truck with a keg in it, and you kind of congregate around that. People kind of walk around the cars, and they'll head into the music sometimes. The music also just kind of filters out into the fields. People kind of spread out. During the spring, especially, usually during a beautiful day, it's just nice to be out at nighttime. The evenings are very clear and you see the stars. You feel very safe out there. You're just sort of off in the middle of nowhere.

It's kind of odd. I don't know why we do; we just sort of do. It's fun, though. The only bad thing is getting a ride back. You have to make sure someone's sober to take you, and you also have to have a seat in their car, too. Another thing happens, too. At the very end when people are heading out, everyone kind of piles in different cars. "So-and-so, do you have a place for me?" Everyone kind of piles back in and heads back to school. I don't think anybody's ever really left there, but you just have to kind of wonder, "How am I getting home?" But everyone seems to get home after a while.

There's a river going by there, too. People kind of like skip rocks on the river or just kind of maybe stick their toe in or something like that. It's just a comfortable place to have a party. I like it there.

Warren: Are they always daytime parties?

Weaver: No, they're nighttime parties, too. For instance, there's the Buffalo Creek Music Festival, which is the weekend after Shipwreck, so put it on your calendar. That's a Friday night, all of Saturday, and Saturday night, just sort of one continuous thing. They have, I think, seven or eight bands out there just sort of in a row.

For the most part, parties are at nighttime, I'd say. I know alumni weekend there's a party out there during the day, and they have Pete's Barbecue out there, too, and serve dinner. They have a soul band that's going to be playing. So that will be fun there, too. But most of the time it's nighttime.

The best thing about Zollman's is that it's really cheap to rent and you don't have to clean it up, as opposed to like the fraternity house where you have to make sure it's spotless before the maids get there, because the maids, you think they'd be there to clean, but they're there to fine you if it's really dirty. So you have to kind of moderate how much mess you make during the week and make sure you don't make a really huge mess; otherwise, the university clamps down. They want you to

keep those houses nice, and so you have to. At Zollman's, you don't have to worry about it at all, because the guy who owns it cleans it up.

Warren: You mentioned there's a party at Zollman's alumni weekend, so is that a student and alumni party?

Weaver: I think it's for alumni, but I think students would be welcome, but not a lot of students would head out to hang out with the class of '71 or anything like that.

Warren: What's wrong with the class of '71? [Laughter]

Weaver: I think they would be welcome if they wanted to go, but I don't think many students will head out there for that. I'm looking forward to that. They're having the Drifters, the Coasters, and the Marvelettes out at the pavilion on Saturday evening of alumni weekend, so I'm headed out right there. I'm scheming now to try to have my photo taken with all of them. Sometime I'll show you my room. I have, I call it my wall of fame. It's just sort of famous people I've encountered or worked with or something, and I have pictures and posters and things like that.

Warren: The world comes to Richard Weaver.

Weaver: Exactly. [Laughter] I have a picture of myself and Coolio. You know who Coolio is, right?

Warren: Yeah.

Weaver: Well, he's got a marijuana cigarette in his mouth, which is just really strange. I'm there, and not just my skin, but like everything about me, I'm just incredibly white. He's from the ghetto, he says. He's a gangster rapper. And here I'm wearing something like this. I'm just smiling. The two of us together. I just love the picture because it's just so funny to look at the differences between the two of us. But he was interesting. He was a good concert, too.

Warren: Did he really pray for his audience to have soul or to have rhythm or whatever it was? That was a great caption.

Weaver: I have a good story to tell you, too, about George Clinton. You've heard of Parliament/Funkadelic and the Mothership and all that. He was here for Fancy Dress concert last year, the Thursday night concert, and I did a phone interview with him for the paper about two or three weeks before he was supposed to come here. It was a pretty good interview. He was talking about music and his inspirations and so forth, and he was very friendly on the phone.

At the end, I said, "There's this place in town that we like to go eat. Would you like to have dinner with me before the concert?"

He said, "Sure."

So at the appointed hour, I showed up at the Ramada Inn out that side of town and knocked on the right door. You know the P-Funk All Stars. You know what they're dressed like. They're very wild-looking people with feathers and beads and multicolored everything. They look very psychedelic, I guess is what you would call them. I knock on the door, and one of the P-Funk All Stars, the backup singers, opens the door. I told him who I was, and they let me in, and there was George Clinton. You know what he looks like, at least. He was lying face down on the bed, and all across the room were just handfuls of marbles, like children's marbles, just all over the place. Really strange. I didn't ask what they were there for.

This guy kind of motioned for him to get up, and he kind of got up and looked at me. Remember, we're going to go to dinner. He shook my hand and said hello, and he went into the bathroom and he put on this red jumpsuit, and it had "Parliament" emblazoned right here. And then he has waist-length braids, with like ribbons and things tied in them, and he tied all his braids together in like a big braid and put it on top of his head and then put a turban around it. So he was looking very strange, and plus the P-Funk All Stars were just multicolored dressed and very splashy looking.

So we got into my friend's car. I didn't have a car at that point. I told my friend I was going to have George Clinton autograph his seat, but I didn't. Anyway, we get in his car, and we go to the Lee-Hi truckstop. So we walk into Lee-Hi, and everyone turned around, the entire place turned around. I'm dressed pretty much like this, I had a jacket on, and then there was George Clinton. For some reason, there were students there that were having dinner, and they turned around and said, "Oh, shit. It's George Clinton." They came over to the table and like had him autograph placemats and things, the Virginia map placemat, George Clinton, P-Funk. So he signed that for a while, and then we ordered our food. He had a big thing of cottage cheese, because he was on a diet. Then he started talking about Japan. I wouldn't tell you, this is kind of graphic, but things about women that he liked, Japanese women in particular. It was just kind of odd. Wherever he would be talking and no matter what the subject was, he'd talk and then he'd break into rap all of a sudden, and the two singers would join in, the backup singers. He would be like, "And I was telling you this," and then he would start rapping, and you're like, "Whoa." They would join in with this whole little song. Then he would stop as soon as they began, and he would finish the sentence. It was the strangest thing I've ever seen before. He was just telling me stories of like fans and crazy people and stuff like that.

By that time, it was time for us to go, and so we got back in the car and he popped in a tape of some new single he was working on, and they were like singing the song that they had on the tape. It was just so weird having it right there. I just thought it was very--we were passing by Lee Chapel, rapping about this "Jack and His Beanstalk," was the name of the song.

We get to the pavilion and we get to that back area there, and he goes into his dressing room. That's the point where I met our cameraman from Channel 2. I was going to do a TV interview. Five minutes later, I knocked on his door and opened

the door, and there's just this naked man sitting there. So we kind of go around him, and there's a real smell of something in the air, probably pot in the air. I've never used marijuana, so I don't know. I'm just guessing that's what it was. George Clinton's sitting back in his chair kind of like this, and he motions. He says, "Come here," like this.

So we come over, and he said a bunch of obscenities, answering our questions. I don't think he was trying to make us angry or anything. But one that he did say was just really funny. We said, "Mr. Clinton, how should we prepare ourselves for your arrival here at Washington and Lee?"

He said, "Well, son, you better be getting yourselves some condoms, because when I'm finished with you, you're going to be feeling sexual."

And then we followed him on stage as he began to sing, and it was a fantastic concert. Man, it was just amazing. It was so loud, too. I wrote about it. It was in the paper, too, so a lot of people know about it. But it was really a very strange experience, because you had the blackest man in the world here in Lexington, and he was fascinating.

Warren: What an interesting experience. So is it the Lee-Hi truckstop where you take Tom Wolfe?

Weaver: Exactly. I haven't told him this, but I've taken the whitest man in the world to Lee-Hi. I've also taken the blackest man in the world, George Clinton.

Warren: Does the Lee-Hi balk when they see you coming?

Weaver: Oh, no. They like me. All the waitresses know me. It's my heart, I guess. I go there and have some coffee at nighttime. They all know who I am, or at least they know my face, at least. I don't know why, this one cashier she just really likes me.

Warren: I

Warren: It's about the only place you can go late at night around here.

Weaver: Yeah, that's true. One cashier just calls me "Baby." She's like, "How're you doing?" She's very friendly. When I came back one summer, they were like, "We missed you. Where have you been?"

Warren: That is a fabulous story. That is truly a classic. I don't think anybody else will tell me that story.

Weaver: It was funny, whenever the alumni magazine came out with the article about me about "The Swing," it was on one page, and right directly opposite page was this gigantic picture of George Clinton. So I have both of them on my wall, just the way it was in the magazine. That was a bit of irony there that that's how it came out.

Warren: I'm interested in the timing of your stay here at Washington and Lee, because you ended with mock convention. How important has the mock convention been through all four years, or is it really a one-year event?

Weaver: They started planning my sophomore year, and I honestly had about zero interest in it. I thought it was kind of neat spectacle, and I had no interest in it. I'm not a very typical person to ask about that. A lot of people got excited about it, who did work on it, and I just had other things to do. I guess I'm not a good person to really talk about mock con.

When it was here, when I saw it, I was really impressed by it, but as for its preparation, I really just had no interest. I don't know why.

Warren: That's interesting. I would think as a journalism student you would be caught up in it.

Weaver: Well, I was interested in the journalism sense of actually doing the coverage for it, but that was only when it was actually going on. But the planning for it, drawing up the platform and doing the political maneuvering and research and all that kind of stuff, I didn't want anything to do with that. I just was busy with other things.

Warren: Let's talk about the spectacle of it.

Weaver: I think what really made it was the speakers there. I think that just by the fact that how they voted on things showed that it was they were pretending to have a convention, and maybe it's been more valid in previous years or been more regulated in previous years, and I'm sure they did a lot of work for it. Everyone did a lot of work for it.

But when the actual convention came, it was all centered around who could speak when, and I think that's fine, too. The speakers were the best part. Newt Gingrich was really a fantastic speaker, I thought. Bill Bennett was a fantastic speaker. That's what I will remember is the speeches themselves, and just the fact they were here, too, in little tiny Lexington. I think that makes it the best. We had all the trappings of red, white, and blue and the balloons and the signs and everything else, too, but the star of the mock convention were the speakers, I think. That's what I thought was exciting, just to see them here in our town.

Warren: Were you a delegate?

Weaver: No, I was not a delegate. I worked a little bit on the TV coverage of it, and then there's a video coming out, I think this month, which there's a company that was hired to edit it all together, but the students assisted with the taping of the entire thing in preparation for this video. So that was the extent of my participation, which I would say is very minimal.

Warren: One of the things that I picked up with mock convention that I haven't picked up before or since is it's some big deal about Texas around here.

Weaver: Oh, yeah, people booing Texas.

Warren: What was the Texas story?

Weaver: I just think people just sort of generally rib Texas for just about anything. I don't think it had anything to do with mock con.

Warren: Are there a lot of Texas people here?

Weaver: There are, but I wouldn't say it's too serious animosity. People just kind of gently rib people, just as you might rib somebody from West Virginia just because they might say they're backwoods or something like that. It's along the same lines of just kind of making fun of people, so I don't think it's too particularly important.

Warren: Okay, because that's the only time I've had a sense of it. It sort of kept building to a crescendo, and I wondered if I'd missed something.

Okay, let's talk about the speaking tradition.

Weaver: That's interesting. Lamar Cecil, maybe he can tell you, or Rob Mish could tell you that the speaking tradition was there and it kind of died maybe in the late sixties, and it was Kathekon, primarily, who focused their energies on kind of bringing more attention to it. And so the speaking tradition, only in the past couple of years, has gained priority, I guess, in terms of little cards that are printed out saying, "Speak." It has a picture of Lee and of Washington on it, and it has the words "The Swing," and it's just sort of things we give out to freshmen.

So it's almost artificial how it's been brought back, and may be one of those traditions that's just in a different form now than it used to be. But for a while there, I don't think anybody really tried to enforce it. I think the students stopped paying the fines in the late sixties if they were fined for not saying hello. They just stopped doing it altogether. The university or the students just stopped trying to collect the fines, and so it just kind of died out for a while.

That was part of Kathekon's mission was to revive that, and so the speaking tradition, a lot of people speak about it as if it's been continuous from here back until Lee, but that isn't true. I'm not the best person to ask about that, but Rob Mish could tell you that full story there and whenever he came here, what it was like. He was a graduate of '76, and then I think he came back here in '84, or maybe even later than that. I'm not even sure when he came back. But he could tell you more about

how the speaking tradition came back again and how people are trying to emphasize it now.

Warren: That's certainly my experience, because it's new to me, and I think it's wonderful.

Weaver: Yeah. I speak, anyway. You get in the habit of just saying hello and just looking people in the eye, and a friendly look is sometimes even better than a hello. That's that comfort level that we talked about before. It feels good to be here. It feels good to like not have someone glare at you when you walk by. That adds to it, I think.

Warren: Getting back to the Honor System, how does the Honor System coexist with the blatant breaking of laws?

Weaver: That's another thing we discussed on my show. I should get you a tape of that and you can see. That was all the EC members talking about their impressions of honor and what they're planning for this year, interpretations and so forth.

One thing that Marcus Rayner--he's, I think, the secretary of the EC--says that the Honor System does not want to get involved in issues of legality, because you cannot measure degrees of legality, like would it be an honor violation to break the speed limit, or what about drinking under age or cigarettes under age or something like that? Whenever you get into those degrees of legality, it's very difficult. So the Honor System sticks to other areas that the majority of the student body feels it should.

The thing with the Honor System is it evolves, and it could evolve to involve underage drinking, but I don't think it will. I think it will stick to a general area, the general consensus of the student body. The unique thing about the Honor System is that it's not prescribed by the administration. It's not prescribed by anyone else but the students. They decide what is honorable and what is not honorable, and all students have to abide by those decisions.

Warren: So it really doesn't have anything to do with the law of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Weaver: No. Let's say that, if I was eighteen and I had a case of beer in my hand and the policeman said, "How old are you?" If I said twenty-one, that would be a lie, and then I could be thrown out of school for that. But if I said I was eighteen, all he could do was take it from me and cite me, and the Honor System would not apply there. It's only when you disguise what you're doing, when you try to lie, that's when it becomes a question of honor. That's where the Honor System is involved.

That's why you can't have fake I.D.s here, because you're lying about your identity, or you may say, "I'm twenty-one," when you're really eighteen or you're underage. So that's the application when it comes to alcohol, I think, and that's the majority opinion of people right there, I think, of students. That's its most practical application, for underage drinking.

Warren: That's very clearly said. Obviously, nobody has any problems with supplying alcohol to underage people. That's just plain not an issue here.

Weaver: No.

Warren: I think it's an interesting distinction that's made, but it's obviously the tradition.

What about hazing? Let's talk about hazing.

Weaver: It's there, and that's not what the administration will want to hear. I don't know how truthful they would want it portrayed, but it's still there.

It's based on the belief that people should work for what they get, and you have to work at a friendship, you have to work at building trust with somebody in order to receive the trust of other people, and you have to prove yourself. Pledgeship is a time of proving yourself, and so that's when the hazing takes place. It's to prove how dedicated freshmen are to certain ideas and to certain things and to each other, to test the unity of a group to make sure that in times of trouble and

times of stress, will you still be there for your friends, for your fraternity brothers. If you fail that test, then that indicates on you that it's not for you, that you could not be completely with the group.

I guess that has sort of a psychological twist to it there. I'm sure it does. But I think hazing, according to the law, is telling someone to do anything, pretty much, sort of compelling them to do something. There's a difference between violence and there's a difference between just kind of petty things, like cleaning up or running an errand here or there. I don't think that's particularly harmful, and I don't really disagree with that. But we don't hit people, we don't attack people. That's where the problem is, when you have physical violence. I think that's crossing the line.

It's hard to say, yeah, I want to be a hazer or I want hazing here, but hazing is what you can call any compulsion for freshmen to do anything. The administration is very strange on that. They'll say no hazing, but what is hazing exactly? If you try to define hazing, then you get into all kinds of areas of, "Well, what time of day was it that you asked them to do this?" or "How far was that place that you asked them to go to?"

I think the administration should just butt out of it completely. As long as there's not violence, as long as people aren't being hurt, then stay out of it. That's part of student autonomy right there. The students should decide what is appropriate and what is not appropriate in the realm of it not being harmful. If there was violence, then the president and the administration I think would have the prerogative to say, "Stop it, and we're going to make you stop it." But if it's not, then I think it's not their business.

That's why I think there's a lot of student resentment right now is changing the rush rules to winter rush. People hate that, and people really hate the administration for doing that, too. I've never seen people so angry ever about it.

The administration may trot out some student who says, "Well, I agree with winter rush," but that's not the predominant opinion at all, and I sharply disagree with it. I think that's going to lead to a great number of problems.

It all evolves into what I think--students have the grand conspiracy theory. I'm sure you've heard of it, or you may have heard parts of it. The theory is that the university wants to become more like liberal arts colleges and sort of rise in the rankings of *U.S. News and World Report*, other indications of what makes a good school, and part of that is not having a stronger system, having more centralized social activities, having more women and more liberal topics and so forth, and that goes against the character of Washington and Lee. A lot of people feel that the administration is sacrificing the identity of the school in the name of higher rankings on some chart, and some people are angry about that. They feel you're misplacing a priority, and a lot of people see an administration heavy-handedness when it comes to this kind of thing.

I don't believe the conspiracy theory is true, that they're trying to get rid of some fraternities in order to have sorority houses and then maybe have theme housing after that and then kind of break it down completely. I think that part of the theory is not true because of the incredible investment of money that the school has put into those houses. They're not going to abandon them.

But I think fraternities, it's important to keep them. They serve a real purpose. Fraternities, when the freshmen get here, including this year, not including next year because of winter rush, they have big brothers, almost, to tell them, "This is what you need to do. You need to take this class or not take that class. You need to stop staying up all night and drinking. You've got to do your work. You've got to focus on what's important here."

I think that fraternities guide freshmen. Professors will often, if a freshman is having trouble in class, they'll call up some upperclassman, Sigma Nu, for example,

and say, "So-and-so, one of your freshmen, is not doing well. I want you to tutor him. I want you to make sure he does well." And so you'll go and you'll help the freshman. It's sort of like a protection system, almost. It's part of that new family. This is a funny term, but I call it kind of fraternal paternalism, almost. The best you can hope for is fraternities looking out for freshmen. I think they genuinely do, and I think whenever the administration tries to control fraternities, they hamper their abilities. Not every fraternity lives up to its ideals, but I think for the most part they do, or they try to. And so I think that every single interruption you make in fraternities is detrimental and it's very harmful. You makes you very angry, too, that people would interrupt like that.

Warren: What's the argument in the other direction? What's the argument for winter rush?

Weaver: This is a funny thing, too. The faculty are the people who decide when rush is going to be, and I've never understood why the faculty is empowered with that decision. It's not academic at all, but it's just there. But the faculty feel that the freshmen would focus more on their grades or on their classes if they weren't distracted by fraternities and rush and so forth in the first semester.

Also, the school says that they want to promote class unity, and this is a concept that I feel is impractical. You can't have 1,600 close people, and people naturally go into little groups. I think that's just human nature, and you can't prevent that.

The question you run into is, how are you going to entertain these people for the first semester? This is a town where there's not much to do, and if the freshmen males can't go to parties because of rush rules, you're going to have a bunch of bored people, and you're going to have to entertain them somehow and establish alternate social activities for them. Then you're taking away focus from the fraternity system. You're decreasing interest in the fraternity system, so less

people join. Well, less people join, you have less money go back to the school to pay for the houses. So they're hurting themselves, I think, by this process.

The same thing with the idea of the sophomore housing requirement. They are requiring sophomores to live in university housing this year, and they say it's for two reasons. They say it's because financial to recoup some of the money spent on the housing, and it's for class unity. Well, no one believes it's for class unity. It's financial. They want their money back on Gaines Hall and on Woods Creek and the other houses around there.

What I think is really silly is now they're talking about building sorority houses. I'm in favor of sorority houses. I think the sorority girls should have that, because the fraternity guys have that. But what you're going to have again is all these empty rooms in Gaines and Woods Creek, because the sorority girls who live there now are going to live in the houses. So you're going to end up with more debt, more buildings, and just a deeper problem because they have upset the balance of what used to be here, where people lived in the town after their sophomore year or in fraternity houses. It was fine that way there, too. The town depends upon the students. That's a very important part of the economy, not to say that the renting is the only part of the student involvement there, but I think that it's important to keep that in mind, at least, town relations. It looks very arrogant of the university to simply withdraw a major part of their market. People depend upon the university for the livelihood, and I think that that's arrogant of the university to do that; and plus, they're digging themselves in a really big financial hole by doing this, I think. I've never heard anybody counter that argument at all. I actually did a show about this, too. I brought up this idea of this is going to big money drain in the very end and it's going to defeat the purpose of which they started out doing. I feel that the reasons why they're doing a lot of these changes are wrong, just for the wrong reasons, and they're going to create bigger problems. That's just my personal

opinion, but I think a lot of students agree with that now, looking back on it, and I have never ever heard any of the administration counter any of those arguments at all legitimately. So perhaps that would be something to bring up to other people to see what they think of that.

But that is known as the conspiracy theory, I guess, around campus. It's what I call it. Basically, it's sort of the grand master plan. I don't think it's as devious as that. I just think it's a series of bad mistakes that's going to come back to haunt this place, and I don't want that to happen. This university should be strong, and I'm just afraid they're making mistakes now that are going to have real repercussions later on along the way.

That was a real pontification, wasn't it?

Warren: Yes. Is it comfortable up there on that soapbox?

You made a reference to the big investment the university has made into the houses. How aware are the fraternity members of the concept of Fraternity Renaissance? What does that mean to you?

Weaver: Oh, everyone knows that the houses were rebuilt. The university said, "Either you will refurbish these houses up to code or we're going to call the health inspectors and everybody else in on you. Or you can turn the deeds over to us. We'll do it. We'll let you live there if you live by a certain standard, certain rules of the housemother and cleaning service and so forth."

I was a very smart move by John Wilson, because fraternities are very important to alumni. The fraternities have always been important, and to maintain the fraternities maintains interest by the alumni in coming back here to see that things are still well, things are still good when they come back to the houses for the parties and the cocktail parties and everything else.

Everyone's aware of the huge investment. I think it was \$13 million, maybe \$12 million for the sixteen houses. I'm not sure exactly. I believe that was financed

by either a bond offering or I'm not sure what. But every single fraternity member pays \$400 a year in what they call the Greek tax, and the Greek tax goes toward paying that debt of the \$12 million or whatever it was that they had to borrow. I think some of it they just outright spent, and the rest was financed. The Greek tax goes to pay for that.

Everyone's aware that they are paying for this probably for a very long time, and so that's what they see as the leftover fraternity renaissance. I think it was a good investment. I don't mind paying it. I think it was right for the university to do.

Warren: Fraternity houses are in much better shape than they were twenty years ago.

Weaver: Oh, yeah.

Warren: What's the sense of responsibility that brothers have for maintaining them?

Weaver: Well, if we don't we're fined, so it's immediately a financial idea. But it's also a sense of pride. It's I don't want to live in a dirty house, I don't want things broken in my house. It's nice now, and I like it being nice. So if someone's roughhousing with the furniture, we're real careful about that, because it's really expensive and I don't want broken things in my house. I have a real pride in the actual house itself. I think a lot of people do. So it's kind of, if you give people something nice, they'll keep it nice, if you give it to them, and in some sense they have given this to us.

I think that's what fraternity members feel is they want to keep it nice, because what can be better than these beautiful homes, wood floors and beautiful furniture and plants and a fireplace, and why would you want to destroy that? So we're real defensive about it.

Warren: Okay, back at the beginning. Let's go full circle here and finish off. Get me through joining a fraternity. What are the steps?

Weaver: Well, it differs per year, but in general I'll tell you. I believe this year you had, when you first got here Saturday evening--that's when freshmen get here. Saturday they get here. Parties start ten days--I mean, for ten nights after that there's a party every single night by every single fraternity. You want to get to know freshmen and attract them to come around to your house. That's the unofficial part of rush, and then rush officially starts some date after classes have started.

At that point, there are certain open contact periods where freshmen can come down to the houses for a cookout. There's no alcohol there, so there's no big parties there for the open contact parts of it. They can come down and play volleyball or watch TV or something like that. Supposedly, they'll come down to your house if they met you during all the parties and if they liked you, so that's when you first introduce yourself. If they like you, then they'll come to your open contact times.

Then you have what's called the rush dates, and that's where all the freshmen go to every single fraternity house in little tiny groups, and it's about maybe half an hour or forty-five minutes, where you wear a coat and tie and you have, I guess, conversations, but they're in the fraternity house and it's a tie on and, "Where are you from?" and so forth, a little bit more formal than the other open contact periods. By this time, it's hoped that you'll have some of the freshmen then, that you'll like them and you'll be aiming for certain people.

After the freshmen have gone to all the sixteen houses or whatever the number of houses there are, then they narrow it down. They have what are called rush dates. There are four rush dates, where you pick your top four houses and you turn that list in, and the fraternities will write a list of the people they want. If lists match, then you have a rush date. So if Sigma Nu chooses Bob and Bob chooses

Sigma Nu, then he has a rush date with us. Now, if we don't choose Bob, he doesn't have a rush date with us. Most houses--I know it's the case in my house. If one person doesn't like a freshman, he's gone. One person can dislike you, and you have no chance at all of joining. So whenever you're invited for a rush date, you know that people really want you right there if you're invited back.

So you come for a rush date, and that's rush date one and two right there, the first two of them. If they like the freshman they say--actually, they say it to all of them, "We'd like you to come back for rush date number five." It's assumed at rush date number five that you receive your bid to join. So at rush date one and two, after they have dinner, a nice dinner at the house, you take them upstairs and you talk a little bit about the house and say, "We'd like you to come back for rush date number five." They say yes or no, and you write their name down and so forth.

Then after one, two, three, and four, rush dates one, two, three, and four are done, then everyone has a meeting to talk about the freshman. It's at that point that, if someone doesn't like you, they can get rid of you right there. We all vote to extend a bid after we talk about the attributes or the negative qualities of all the different freshmen we're considering. And then if we've invited someone to number five who just got killed in the process, we call them up and say, "Never mind. Sorry. You can use the time for something else."

If they don't hear from us, they come back for five, and then after dinner, there's another nice dinner at five, they are offered a bid. Supposedly, they can be offered bids at rush dates five, six, seven, and eight, but most of the time it works where they're offered bids at five and six. Then they're invited back to dinner for seven and eight just to come back for dinner again. That is on a Thursday, I think. That's a Wednesday, Thursday, and then they come down and tear their bids on a Friday night at a party.

You see those photos right there of the big mass of people. That's the tradition, at least in my house, where at the first band break everyone goes out into the well and all the women have their beers and pour beer and water and things all over all the guys. They rip off the shirts of the freshmen, you give them a new fraternity shirt, and that means they have torn their bid there, and that's how they join. That's the beginning right there. That's all within the first two or three weeks when the freshmen get here.

Warren: So a freshman can receive bids from numerous houses?

Weaver: Yes, and then he chooses which one he wants.

Warren: Is it typical to get bids from several houses?

Weaver: I'd say two or three. Not beyond that, though.

Warren: Is that because the freshman has concentrated on those two or three houses?

Weaver: You have to have made an impression. In order to be given a bid, they have to know who you are and have socialized with you and liked your personality in the discussions they have had with you. We don't say, "He's been over that so-and-so house. We're just going to forget him, anyway." There's genuine competition between the houses for people, and then the freshman decides.

Warren: There are hundreds of people. How can you really get to know hundreds of people?

Weaver: You just try, I guess. You figure about 250 men there. You just try.

Warren: Obviously you're a big proponent of the system. It seems to work.

Weaver: Absolutely. I see no problem with it at all.

Warren: How many people fall through the cracks? How many people don't get invited who want to?

Weaver: I'd say ten to fifteen, maybe, don't join the fraternity system. Either they weren't invited or they didn't rush. There are some people who are independents

here who seem to be happy with it, and that's fine. I mean, more power to them. But most of the people are very unhappy about not being in fraternities or they get very bitter about the power of fraternities and the predominance in the social scene and then they leave because they don't want to be in that environment anymore.

That gets us back to what we initially talked about, is that there are very few people who are not like other people, because they tend to leave if they're not accepted into the forum, into like the traditions. And that's the problem with winter rush, is that if you have a couple months' period where people don't join fraternities, then you have probably fewer people who will join them, more people who don't, and they may be more disaffected and they may want to be entertained in different ways and feel they're owed entertainment and owed something to do. So then you've got the idea of maybe having a theme house for them or having activities for them.

But the problem with that that people feel is that everyone pays a student activity fee, and then people pay their fraternity dues on top of that. I pay fraternity dues for things I do with the fraternity, and that's what you get for your dues. You get certain activities with your student activities fee, but I feel that my student activity fee should not be used for the entertainment of other people in their own little groups. They should be willing to put the extra money out, like I do for my fraternity dues. They should be willing to put out the money for their entertainment. I shouldn't be paying for another person. That's why people resent independents sometimes, because some of them feel as if they're owed something because they didn't get into the fraternity system or they didn't want to. So there's resentment on that level, too.

Warren: There's certainly a lot of things to do on this campus that don't really have to do with--from my perspective, I look at the calendar, and there's a lot of

interesting things to do here, maybe not social things, but interesting things when you get to be an old fart like me.

Weaver: Yeah. But for the young folks, though, everyone wants to have friends.

Warren: But what I want to say is that a lot of the things that I attend, I'm amazed at how few students are there. A lot of the things that happen and Lenfest Center doesn't seem to attract students. Is that because they're involved in things at the fraternities or are things that are offered not of interest to students?

Weaver: I think that some things that are offered are just not of interest to students, and I think that has nothing to do with fraternities at all. I don't know, I'm not always interested in walking to Lenfest on a Tuesday night if I have homework to do, too. It just really depends. And that's why some things are attended more than others. It's really not dependent upon anything like that, I don't feel.

Warren: Well, the house fills up even without you, but it's interesting to me to look around and know that this is a university and how few students I see there.

I have very little tape left, but am I right in my perception? Did four women just get elected to the presidents of each class? I saw the list of people who were elected to class offices.

Weaver: It could be. I don't know.

Warren: That isn't anything that anybody pays any attention to? I thought it was kind of remarkable, it looked to me. I guess as a senior you don't care that much.

Weaver: If it was maybe the second year of coeducation it would be remarkable, but I don't feel that women--I don't feel it's unique for women to be in leadership positions here anymore, because they've been around long enough and they've worked hard enough. I don't think people make that distinction, "Oh, a woman president," as opposed to a man president at all. I just don't feel that's there anymore. And maybe that's a good thing. Perhaps we've sort of gone beyond the blinders of, you know, they're dead and coed, I guess.

Warren: Well, anything you want to get in here that we haven't yakked about?

Weaver: I don't think so. We can do this again sometime. If I think of something new, I'll tell you, I guess.

Warren: If you have any more exciting trips to Lee-Hi that you want to get on tape. That was a great story. I'll have fun playing that one to people. You know, something I never heard you mention is sports. Are athletics of importance to you?

Weaver: Athletics are very important--not to me personally. I don't like sports. People who play them, I respect them, but I could care less about sports, honestly.

Warren: But when a football game happens, is there a big crowd out there?

Weaver: No, and I would say that, even for people who like sports, the reason they show up is for the tailgate parties which are in the parking lots. People go to lacrosse games, I think, more than anything else, because the lacrosse team wins a lot. The football team doesn't win a lot, and people will only go--there's an old joke that the only time you ever see a football game is if you were talking to somebody at a cocktail party who had their back turned to field. You might look over their shoulder and see there's a game going on there, but you wouldn't want to focus on it. People go to homecoming and go to maybe parents' weekend, but that's it. I've never sat through an entire football game, never had any interest in doing it. That's just not because I'm not a sports fan. It's just because no one does it. I feel sorry for the team because there's no one out there, but it's just the way we are.

Warren: It looks that way to me. I usually don't hear people talking about it.

Weaver: I'd agree.

Warren: All right. Well, my little light is flashing, so I guess we've used up our hour and a half.

Weaver: Out of tape.

Warren: It's been fun.

[End of Interview]