

# JAMES WHITEHEAD

October 3, 1996

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Mame Warren,  
interviewer

**Warren:** This is Mame Warren. Today is the 3rd of October, 1996. I am in Lexington, Virginia with James Whitehead.

I was talking to our old friend Frank Parsons this morning, who says that you're P.T. Barnum himself.

**Whitehead:** I'm glad to think Frank thinks that highly of me.

**Warren:** Well, I'm pretty impressed by that. But I'd like to skip back to the beginning and find out why you came to Lexington in the first place. What was the attraction of Lexington?

**Whitehead:** My family and I lived in New York. I was associated with a group of fine independent colleges in the state of New York, twenty-three, I believe, liberal arts colleges, that banded together to seek funds for support from business and industry back in the mid '50s. It was a wonderful opportunity to observe the various fine small colleges in the state of New York, all the way from the city, out to the western side at Alfred, near Buffalo, and in Buffalo there were colleges. I had in my group Barnard and Sarah Lawrence and St. Lawrence and Vassar and Hamilton, Colgate and then Alfred, as I said. It was just a good group of colleges and I enjoyed working with them, but with a growing family and two small sons, I left Long Island on the Long Island Railroad every morning before daylight and I returned every evening after dark, and I only saw my children in pajamas, and I decided this was no way to raise a family.

A good friend of Washington and Lee had met me at one of the association meetings. I was with the Empire State Foundation For Liberal Arts Colleges and Lea Booth in Lynchburg and I became friends, and Lea evidently mentioned my name to the president then, Dr. Gaines, and to a member of the board of trustees who, fortunately for me, was a friend of the family.

I was interviewed in New York to see if I knew anyone that might be interested in coming to Washington and Lee. That was the way it was approached. Then I had an invitation from Dr. Gaines, the president, to come down.

I returned to New York, and I can recall it vividly, talking to Celeste and she wanted, of course, to know what I felt about it, and I said, "I think it's a wonderful, wonderful institution."

She said, "Well, what would be your job?"

I said, "I don't know."

She said, "Well, what would be your salary?"

I said, "I do not know, but if I'm offered the job I'm going no matter what it is." And I've never looked back. We've never looked back. It was the one decision in my life that was absolutely perfect. So that's it, that's why I came to Lexington.

I came down by railroad at the time, not by plane, but by a great train that came into Buena Vista. Arrived in the morning after having breakfast somewhere in the valley along the mountains, with starched white tablecloths and silver and crystal, and reaching Buena Vista and then being met by the then alumni secretary, Cy Young, that I had known previously. I came to the campus and met Dr. Gaines and Mrs. Gaines at a luncheon in their home and I felt that I had returned to certainly the nineteenth century.

The Lee House was decorated as it had been for many, many years, in a manner that was just absolutely perfect for the period. We had midday meal, which they called dinner and I called lunch at the time. It was a dinner in the dining room, with Gardner Henderson serving and Alice Ware in the kitchen cooking. It was just a superb

introduction to Lexington. Dr. Gaines never mentioned the job, nothing about it at all. I had a tour of the campus and stayed at the Robert E. Lee Hotel, and in those days it was quite a nice establishment.

The next morning I got on the train and went back to New York, or the next evening I went back to New York. So that was the beginning.

**Warren:** Did anyone ever mention the job?

**Whitehead:** Oh, no, no. Certainly, I knew it had to be in fund-raising because the gentleman that had interviewed me in New York was Christopher Chenery, the owner of Secretariat, he was on the Board of Trustees at the time. And he wanted to know if I knew someone that might be interested in the job of fund-raising at Washington and Lee, and I named a few people that were connected with the colleges that I knew, but all the time I sat there I couldn't help but wonder if this what I had been looking for, although I didn't give him my name.

Then it was shortly after that that Dr. Gaines called me. I had a very good family friend through my wife's family, Mr. Lykes, who was on the Board of Trustees, and evidently Mr. Chenery checked with him.

So we arrived in Lexington. I came down in May, and Celeste and the boys came down in June. That was in 1958, so it goes back a few years.

**Warren:** Describe what Lexington was like when you got there.

**Whitehead:** I will say this, coming out of New York City and directly into Lexington, it probably looked far grander because of the great contrast than it was at the time, because a great deal of work has happened in terms of sprucing up Lexington. The downtown area where the present restaurant, the White Columns [Willson-Walker House], that entire street was really not in a state of decay, but it would soon reach that stage. The hotel across the street that now is the inn, the Withrow House, all of those places, that would have been the slums of Lexington. That didn't seem to have any impression on me at the time.

I stayed at the Robert E. Lee Hotel, as I said, and that was a very nice experience. I don't remember much more than that, other than when I came here, I saw the green grass on the front of the campus, on the lawn in front of the Colonnade, and I felt that here was a place where the grass was greener. It really was, and it's always been that way in my mind, it's always been greener there than anyplace else. So I really can't tell you much more than that about Lexington.

The great contrast with New York came to my family when my wife and I, and my wife especially, had to transport the children to school, to the movies, to get a haircut. They were never out of our sight, and here they could walk up and down the street, they could go to a ball game, they could do most anything on their own. That was quite a contrast. So I guess that had a great deal to do with wanting to come to a small community. We'd go back, and certainly that's always nice, but never have I ever regretted the move.

The people were wonderful, the administration was quite small, and I say the administrative staff was quite small, the president, the dean of students and the treasurer, and there was a dean of the School of Law and a dean of the School of Commerce, and that was it. There was no other – that was the administrative offices at the time. They were all very kind to us.

Really, in the case of Mr. Mattingly, who was a bachelor, he more or less adopted us and looked after us when we came here, saw to it that we met people and were involved in a level of the community that would have been not possible in most places.

**Warren:** Tell me about Mr. Mattingly.

**Whitehead:** I had a feeling you wouldn't be interviewing me if you weren't interested in Mr. Mattingly. Mr. Mattingly. I'm trying to think. The first time I saw him was the day I came down to be interviewed, and Mr. Young took me into Mr. Mattingly's office. Their offices were across the hall from each other. He had on a gray suit, he was bald. At the time I had hair, but since then that's gone; I understand. He had on the finest

tailored suit. He loved to go to a tailor for his clothes to be made, rather than buying anything off the rack, the proper tie, starched shirt. He sat behind that desk and he was very, very cordial and cold. He didn't, I think, want to think that he in any way felt that I was right for the position until he was sure of it, but he was nice, but cold.

Then when I accepted the job and came down, he came to see us in the house that we were living in during the summer while we were searching for a home, and took us for a ride around Lexington and told us, I guess, the occupants of at least 75 percent of the houses of Lexington he knew who lived there. He pointed with pride at some that the university had the mortgage on, places that he had an interest in and had loaned the money for.

So when it came time for us to settle in at a place, Celeste and I found a house, it was five miles outside of Lexington, at the, I guess you'd call it, convergence of Buffalo Creek and another creek, a small house built in the 1700s that had been unoccupied for a time, that we just felt was just perfect, we would love to restore it and had all the details. I came in to see Mr. Mattingly and I told him we'd found just the place we wanted. "I will not let you take your wife into that area that far away from town with two boys," he said. "I will not approve any loan for that house." Well, that was our first, really, time to see another side of Mr. Mattingly and I felt badly about it. Then started looking further, and the longer we lived here, we knew he was absolutely right.

Five miles on Long Island when I commuted three hours every day seemed like around the corner, but to leave Celeste, and the fact that I traveled, out there in the woods really would not have been the right thing to do. Since then the house has been bought and beautifully restored by a couple here in Lexington and now is in the hands of a W&L alumnus that appreciated the beauty of that period and that old house. So that was another experience with him.

We then became great friends over the years. He never ate a meal in his little house over here. Next to the Mattingly house is a little white three-sectioned house, and

it's where he lived, and he rented two sections and he lived in the other. But he never ate at home, he was always out every night for his meals. He would go over to what we call the Co-op and have his breakfast and then walk somewhere. But at night he was usually invited to someone's home. In those days, there was more of that than there is now. People entertained in their homes; they didn't go out. Then periodically he would repay by taking his guests out sometimes to the Southern Inn – well, sometimes the Southern Inn, mainly the Virginia House, where he would order steaks for them and repay his debt that way. But I guess he was at our house at least three times a week. We remained friends, and he was a good friend.

He loved Washington and Lee. He was very careful with Washington and Lee's money, but liberal with his own. That was just his nature. He'd come here on a scholarship after being at, I guess it was at Front Royal Military Academy, had to work every day of his life to sustain himself while he was here. Then after he finished W&L, he, at some period, I don't know when, was here as registrar and then became assistant to the treasurer and then treasurer of the university.

I knew him, I did not know him in these other capacities, but I've had many alumni tell me as I traveled around the country, first in fund-raising and then in public relations with the Reeves Center, that Mr. Mattingly had seen them through this university in one way or another. So he should be recognized as a true friend of the college.

He was a good friend to Mrs. duPont, squired her when she was in town, and that was his big social. Those were the social events of the season when she came to town.

**Warren:** I understand that you were quite good at courting the ladies, too.

**Whitehead:** Well, I learned. I don't deny that. I don't know that I would call it courting. I know I've had the good fortune of meeting some very nice ladies and I've certainly

enjoyed their company, but it's company that has included my family. I was just not out running around. Mr. Mattingly was a bachelor, he could do things that I shouldn't do.

**Warren:** That's one of the things that I've become most intrigued with, is the relationship of these ladies who have been so generous to Washington and Lee, and I figured somebody was courting them in some way.

**Whitehead:** That's right.

**Warren:** I'd like to know more about that.

**Whitehead:** Well, I call them angels. I really do. This university has been fortunate in developing over a period of time friendships with ladies, and I've had the good fortune of being a part of some of that. But if you look around this campus, you'll find that there are a number of buildings that carry the names of these ladies. Fairfax Lounge over in the Student Center, that center developed. There was a dining hall and then the building that's on the corner which was there, but that became joined and became a student union complex and that was made possible by a lady from Roanoke, Virginia, by the name of Ms. Ronald Fairfax.

I would certainly give Mr. Mattingly the credit for taking care of that particular lady over the years, although we had the good fortune of getting to meet her and being with her a number of times before she died. But she thought a lot of Mr. Mattingly. She thought a lot of men, not just Mr. Mattingly. She was always the lady that wore a tiara at the symphony ball in Roanoke, and she was always squired by a number of gentlemen, always in white tie and tails when these events would happen, and Mr. Mattingly was always a part of it. I think he died before Mrs. Fairfax.

But in any event, we went to see her shortly before she died, and she said she had to get to Washington because she wanted to change her will. We had no idea why she was doing this. But anyway, arrangements were made for an ambulance. In those days, ambulances don't look like these first-aid things now, they were just sort of limousines with some cot in them or something. But anyway, she had this limousine

pick her up at the Hotel Roanoke in Roanoke, and she was driven to Washington, where she signed and had her lawyer change her will.

I don't know that her will before she changed it, I'm sure it included Washington and Lee, there's no question about that, but I think we did benefit from the change. But she was going to give, through her will, a major bequest to one of her male friends who ran the Barter Theater in Abingdon. I don't know if you've ever heard of the Barter Theater, but it's quite an institution in the state of Virginia. And he was the director of it, and he'd been no different than Mr. Mattingly in his attention to Mrs. Fairfax, but she appreciated it.

Well, just after she became ill, she learned that he had married, and she had to get to Washington to take him out of her will, and she did. His name was Bob Porterfield. He was quite a character in the state of Virginia.

Another lady, Mrs. duPont, that you've heard about from numbers of people, all coming in at different directions. We met Mrs. duPont when she came down for a visit, and Mr. Mattingly, quite nervous always when she was in town or learning that she was coming, asked us – well, he didn't ask, it was almost a command performance, said that Mrs. duPont would be here and that the schedule was, and he told me what the schedule was, and he said that they'd have dinner at Dr. and Mrs. Gaines' home and then they were going down to what was then the Troubadour Theater. After the Troubadour Theater he thought it would be nice if they stopped by our house and had a glass of brandy after dinner. That's fine. You've heard this story from others, but anyway.

They arrived at our house, and here are our two young boys, we sent them to the top of the staircase to the second floor because this had to be so right. I had bought some proper brandy that Mr. Mattingly felt that she would like, and I forget what I bought for the Gaineses. But in any event, it had been a cold night and they arrived, and so I met them at the door of this big old house that we lived in here on Main Street, and



Mrs. duPont was, well, spectacular in her appearance at that age. I mean, she must have been in her early eighties, seventies or early eighties, and to describe her would be to say that she – all that I can remember was all the net and lace that she seemed to be enfolded in, and great big orchids and her hair high on her head and all of the pearls and everything, It really was a spectacular sight. It was obvious that she was a lady of means, there was no question about that.

Well, they came in and we ushered them into the living room. We were nervous, the boys were hanging over the banister upstairs seeing what this lady – and Mrs. duPont said to Celeste, "Mrs. Whitehead, may I retire to your" – I don't know what you call it, powder room or whatever. Well, this house had not had – well, it had plumbing put in it, I guess, in the 1910s or twenties, but anyway, it was down a long hall and these heavy walnut doors, magnificent doors, opened into this little bathroom, and it was used as a guest bathroom. I mean, that was because it was not used by anybody else.

So she goes in and closes the door while I go back up to the living room, and Celeste is up – I'm in the living room with the Gaineses and Mr. Mattingly. Celeste comes in, and Mr. Mattingly said, "Do you think everything's going all right? Do you think she's having a nice time?" Dr. and Mrs. Gaines were by this time were feeling real good, and everybody agreed that Mrs. duPont was having a great time.

Well, then I heard the door, it sounded like a banging on the door and I thought, oh, my gosh. The poor lady, in pulling the door to, it had these antique locks on it, it was awfully hard to turn, they were porcelain knobs, but the locks were quite old. She was in that room and couldn't get out.

So I got back there and I said, "Just a moment, Mrs. duPont." I turned the handle and opened the door, and there stood Mrs. duPont. Her hair now had come all the way down, all the lace and the net or whatever it was that surrounded her was drooped

down, the orchids were dangling. And I thought, my God, what in the world had happened.

It turned it out that, you may have seen these, but you're too young maybe to have seen it, that above the commode there was a five-gallon container that when you pulled the chain, water would come down and flush the commode. In this case, it didn't work and all the water came out over the top and right onto Mrs. duPont, Washington and Lee's greatest benefactress, and here we were trying to make an impression. She didn't say a word, she was just the lady that she was, walked right back to the living room, sat down with Mattingly, and I don't know that Dr. Gaines and Mrs. Gaines really saw what he saw or what we saw, they did, but it wouldn't have mattered. She had her brandy and sat there wringing wet. And that was the entrance to my fundraising at Washington and Lee. That was my first attempt. So that's Mrs. duPont, a great lady.

**Warren:** Well, now, wait a minute, let's finish up with Mrs. duPont. What then happened? I mean, we do have a duPont Hall. It couldn't have been too much of a disaster.

**Whitehead:** No, the duPont Hall was not named for Mrs. duPont. It was for another member of the duPont family, it was a duPont connection, but it was not named for Mrs. — as far as I know, Ms. Warren, it was not named for our Mrs. duPont, Mrs. Alfred I. duPont. I don't know how I could find that out. Oh, well, it can be found out. Frank should know that. But I don't think it was Mrs. Alfred I. duPont. I think it was a duPont — may have been from Mr. duPont, but it was not named for Mrs. duPont.

Evans Hall was named for Mrs. Letitia Pate Whitehead Evans. It was the Whitehead money and not the Evans money that made that building possible, Coca-Cola money. She was a great friend of Dr. Gaines, and I had the opportunity of meeting her just once over at the Hot Springs. She had a great mansion. It was a mansion. It was called the Pink House, a big colonial mansion. When she was ill, Dr. Gaines would go

over and read poetry to her. She was a great friend, so when she died, the gift came to the university, was made possible – well, its funds held in trust by others, but it's a magnificent bequest and was at the time and therefore Evans Hall was named for this lady.

She would give Dr. Gaines a gift every time he would go there, one sort of another. One time he came back and he said, "This is for my boys' tennis courts," and he would be able to build tennis courts. But he was great, he was just a – oh, what a great gentleman.

**Warren:** Let's talk about –

**Whitehead:** The ladies?

**Warren:** Well, no, let's talk about President Gaines for a minute.

**Whitehead:** All right.

**Warren:** He was still president when you came?

**Whitehead:** He was. He was president for one year, but traveled with me on a fund-raising campaign for the next couple of years, I guess.

**Warren:** Really?

**Whitehead:** Yes.

**Warren:** After he had retired?

**Whitehead:** After he had retired. He went around to alumni meetings and spoke.

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

**Whitehead:** I heard the same speech maybe forty times, and I can honestly say that there was not a time that I heard it that it just didn't – it lifted me out of my chair every time I heard him. He was so good. He was an orator. He could make you cry one minute and you'd be laughing the next. He was so – he was just an orator of the old school. You don't find – I don't know any now quite like Dr. Gaines, but he was something else.

He made friendships with people across this nation and mainly a great number of them during World War II when he was assisting in the selling of war bonds across the country. But he could inspire people to do most anything he wanted them to do. He was not well when I came here, and that did not improve. He had cirrhosis of the liver and that had probably been brought on by an excess of alumni meetings and social events where he was a member of the party.

But anyway, he made a great contribution and some of the success, I truly believe, of what we've seen in subsequent development drives can be tied back to Dr. Gaines. You can do a lot of fund-raising, but it does not necessarily come to fruition while the campaign is going on, and there are people that are fund-raising that don't even know that they're fund-raising, that are responsible for gifts down the road. So I like to give credit back to people that have made a contribution, and he certainly did, to this institution.

**Warren:** It's certainly coming out in the interviews.

**Whitehead:** Is that right? You feel that?

**Warren:** Oh, yes. People talk about him and they nod their heads when they say his name.

**Warren:** That's right? He had a summer place out in the country called Penn Robin, and that's where Mrs. Gaines grew these magnificent gladiolas. A car would pull up at the house, Gardener, the chauffeur who had been the waiter at their home and also the butler, a man that seldom left Dr. Gaines, would bring in these beautiful bouquets of flowers.

He and Mrs. Gaines knew the names of all the children of the faculty members. They were just phenomenal when it came to making it a family, giving you a sense of family as it related to the university. Some people don't believe in that, and it's not possible as you get larger and grow, but there can be an attempt at it. You don't have to just not do something because you become large. That's not a reflection on anybody

here or any one person, but I think there is a tendency to think that the larger you get, that you don't have to do some of those things. It means a lot to the people that work there.

Salaries were not great, but there were other benefits that offset that, that money could not necessarily buy.

**Warren:** What kind of benefits?

**Whitehead:** The feeling of belonging, the feeling of knowing that there was somebody that cared enough for you that if anything happened, they would be right at your side.

I'll tell you something that I've learned of my own situation. I never would bring this into the conversation, but it relates to what your question has led me down the road to whatever. My son was a W&L graduate, Jim, and was a Navy pilot and then became a banker in Texas, and seven years ago he had a massive stroke that left him in a coma for over three years, but completely paralyzed, he can only use two fingers. He knows what's going on, we know it, but he cannot communicate because it was a head injury and there was brain damage. Okay. He worked for a small bank in Texas that he helped get established and he worked for these people. When Jim had the stroke seven years ago, this group of people that he worked with, including the man with the major portion of the funds that were in the bank, really acted as though he was one of their own members of their own family. From that day to – where was I, in Washington over the weekend, from that day to this, there has never been a quarter, in terms of time, that there's not been contact between that bank and our son in some way, some form. They come to see him, they send various people up, they'll send a computer if they think it will help Jim.

This is what I'm talking about, the family. They're small and they're remaining small, but he is still a part of it. They've named a room in their new headquarters building that's an exact replica of Monticello. In fact, Dan Jourden [phonetic], who is the director of Monticello, is speaking there today.

But that's the way it was with Washington and Lee, and that's what I meant by a feeling of family. I see Washington and Lee now because I am at the nursing home and there are some W&L people there or connected with the nursing home. There is a sense of family. There's an outpouring, I think, at Washington and Lee when tragedy strikes or when someone becomes ill in one way or another, but that begins to decrease in time and suddenly you'll have a professor at Washington and Lee that was highly regarded sitting in the nursing home and nobody coming to see him, unless it happens to be an alumnus that thought a lot of him and they'll come over.

That's true in families. Families tend to forget the parents or grandparents. I don't mean totally forget them, they'll send them a card or they'll come by to see them and bring them a flower now and then, but how it decreases. That was what Washington and Lee was when I came here in '58. I truly – don't get me wrong, I can't believe it could continue because I was treasurer here, I served in several capacities and I know in my own case I think back to what I could have done that I did not do for some of these people that had one sort of tragedy or another, but it was not that way when Gaines was here.

Dr. Cole, who followed him, was another personality. Dr. Cole was a very reserved, private person, so you didn't see that same thing, although they tried awful hard to – I don't know if they did or not, I mean, I don't know that they understood that either, what it had been like. But I do think that –

**Warren:** They, the Coles?

**Whitehead:** Yes. But I do think it was such a shock to the alumni and to the Washington and Lee family that knew, and were part of the Gaines' period, that they just didn't quite understand President Cole. Yet I don't think we've ever had a better president. He was just absolutely – he was a scholar, he was a gentleman, and a man I respected for his talent. I really did. Not in the same category that I admired Dr. Gaines, but I certainly admired this man. I thought he was excellent.

**Warren:** Well, I've wondered about that. Just looking at the number of years, it seems like to most people Dr. Gaines must have been here forever.

**Whitehead:** That's right.

**Warren:** Then it seems like those shoes must have been awfully big to fill.

**Whitehead:** They were. They'd be awfully hard. [Laughter] Mr. Mattingly was the first one to—I don't mean suffer the change, but to sense the change. Dr. Gaines was here for thirty some-odd years and just like a father or brother, depending on your age. Dr. Cole comes in, and, as I say, a very private person, and coming here from a large institution, Tulane, living in an atmosphere totally different than Lexington, Virginia. If there was a comparison, I guess, New York would be one place and New Orleans would be another that would be poles apart from Lexington.

Well, Mr. Mattingly was the first one to become close to the Coles, because he had to work with Mrs. Cole, as well as Dr. Cole, and he was not accustomed to this kind of thing. The house that the Gaines lived in, the Lee House, it would be in terms of, as I remember, as close to being something that Faulkner would have written about. If you had walked into it, you were definitely in the Deep South. There were fringe on all of the lamps and there was never highly lighted. It was a genteel poverty. That's a cliché, but it really was. I mean, everything was fine, but it was getting old and worn out and nobody cared.

Also when Mrs. Cole, from New Orleans, comes with her decorator, this was a shock to Mr. Mattingly because all of a sudden they were putting drapes up that cost as much as the Gaines had spent probably for furnishings in their entire tenure at Washington and Lee. Then she wanted to make some structural changes. She is the lady that had the dining room where Lee died, the alcove where Lee died, opened so it gave flow that you could escape. Because these parties and alumni weekends, you got into the dining room and living room and you were just like being at Grand Central at rush hour. So she had that done.

Well, all of this, to Mattingly, was just sinful. It was just sinful. They had the first air-conditioned car, and it was a Lincoln, and this was another thing that bothered Mr. Mattingly. Here he was at General Lee's institution, but Dr. Cole had been with the Ford Foundation, had done work for them, and so they had probably gave the car to Dr. Cole. I don't know. But anyway, it caused Mr. Mattingly some concern.

Yet it was Dr. Cole, the association with the Ford Motor Company people, that brought about the restoration of Lee Chapel in the early 1960s. So that first restoration of the chapel can be attributed to Dr. Cole's connections. Of course, there were other people that worked on it, too. I worked on it.

**Warren:** I was about to say, you must have gotten involved.

**Whitehead:** Benson Ford, one of the Ford brothers, happened to be a friend of mine, and he came down for the dedication. So it didn't hurt to have these contacts. I had met him when I was working with the National Conference of Christians and Jews in New York, when I first went to New York, and he led a national campaign along with his brother, Henry. I worked in Detroit every week for two years. But Dr. Cole had truly brought it about.

**Warren:** Let me ask you about that. I've seen a photograph of the work done on Lee Chapel then, and the roof is gone.

**Whitehead:** They took it apart, yes. It was absolutely gutted.

**Warren:** What did they do? Describe what was done.

**Whitehead:** Well, I can't do it as well as Pat Brady, who was the superintendent of buildings at the time, but it was not safe to be in there, in that chapel, and the balconies all had to be rebuilt and support beams of steel put in so it would be safe and air-conditioning, and all the mechanical things had to be done. But do that they had to take the roof off, shore up all of the brickwork. The crypt, as such, was not changed, but the greatest improvement in that area was the fact that they put marble slabs over all of the vacant slots so when you walk in you just didn't see these places waiting for someone to



be placed. Now we take them out and then put someone in, but at first those were all open slots and you'd count and you'd say, well, they'll be able to take ten more, or thirteen more or something like that. But it was, it really was.

There was a fire there, I'll never forget, during the restoration, and if that had really gotten out of control, there would have been – there was paint cans that had been stored in the basement while they were working, and I don't if it was a spark or what caused it, but it caught on fire. The fire department was able to extinguish it without causing the building any damage. But that's while it was still pretty much under construction.

**Warren:** I've never heard that.

**Whitehead:** Yeah, there was a fire in there.

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

**Whitehead:** Okay.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

**Warren:** I'm intrigued about Dr. Cole. I was here when Bob Huntley was president, so I have a pretty good sense –

**Whitehead:** A good friend of Dr. Cole's, too.

**Warren:** I've interviewed him, so I have a pretty good sense of that administration, and Dr. Gaines is just legendary, but it's almost, I don't want to say a black hole, but it sort of a brown hole, the Cole administration, and the more you can tell me about that, the better educated I'll be.

**Whitehead:** I don't know if you've heard about any of the personal characteristics of Dr. Cole. Well, he's the only man that I've ever seen smoking three cigarettes at one time. You'd walk into that office where part of his office was until Dr. Wilson moved, and you could hardly see across the room. I was a smoker, so I was not as concerned about that when I was smoking as I would be today or anyone else. Well, you wouldn't go in the room, it was just – but he would have one in his mouth, one in his hand, and

one in an ashtray. It was just like a constant cigarette, he never let up. Poor man died, I'm sure, of complications because of it. So that was a personal characteristic.

Beautifully groomed, always the finest suits and looked fine. One-to-one, he could be very personable, but in a group he was very uncomfortable, and that's the why the alumni never really took to Dr. Cole, because he was just not comfortable. He would have Frank write his speeches. I guess Frank would. I'm sure Frank wrote some of them. He just was not a public figure, but he could stand and – he's the one, I think, brought us out of the Dark Ages in terms of faculty and salaries and recognizing what the university needed in terms of upgrading its faculty, upgrading salaries. He was excellent at that kind of thing. He can certainly be given credit for it. He had a vision.

I'll tell you this, I don't know that it was written down anywhere. I walked into his office one day and he was looking – I'm trying to acclimate you – but Washington Hall is there, his office was on the back of Washington Hall, overlooking the ravine to where now the law school is. One time he visualized, I recall, C\_\_\_\_\_ College for Women there. It could be a part of Washington and Lee University, but would be a separate college for women before we went co-ed. So he really had that vision of us eventually becoming a co-ed institution, I'm positive of that. Or at least I felt that in what he said to me.

We traveled together. He was a good friend. He was just private, he was not a public figure. Mrs. Cole worked so hard on anything that she did, and that Lee House had to be absolutely perfect, and she worked so hard to achieve it that by the time it occurred, she was a nervous wreck. Poor thing. She's still alive. She came by here a few months ago and stopped over in the Reeves Center because she had known, she had met Mr. and Mrs. Reeves once. I was anxious to hear her comments about that.

**Warren:** Was it during the Cole administration that President Truman came?

**Whitehead:** President Truman. It would have to be during Cole's administration, because Dr. Gaines was only here for a year, and I don't think it occurred when Dr.

Gaines was here. Arnold Toynbee came when Dr. Gaines was still in office. But President Truman spoke at a Mock Convention, everyone was disappointed because it was such a mild talk compared to what they thought it was going to be. I can't tell you. It must have been during that, and I'm thinking, could it have been during the period of Dr. Pusey's interim acting presidency that he was here. But I know that Mr. Nixon came during Pusey's administration, that short period in between Cole and Huntley.

**Warren:** He was here in '68. I have a number of pictures.

**Whitehead:** Well, that would be —

**Warren:** So what was it like having that level of — of course, we had so many interesting people come to campus. Were you involved in hosting any of those people?

**Whitehead:** Certainly neither Nixon or Truman. I can remember being involved with Goldwater when he came, but, no, I was not involved in that area of the university at all at that point. Most of that was done by students, and that was really a student affair. If you were invited to something, you certainly went to it and those kind of things. But nothing to do with the arrangements or anything like that, that was all the students.

**Warren:** Were you here when Toynbee was here?

**Whitehead:** Yes, I was here only for his last public appearance in the chapel and then the Gaines had a reception in their home after that affair. It seems to me that it was covered by a national magazine here, or the staff from a national magazine was covering Toynbee, but I don't recall which one it was. All of a sudden *National Geographic* comes to my mind, but I don't think it was *National Geographic*. It was another one. But I've heard so much about Toynbee. But that last lecture he gave was not a sold-out event, where some of them, of course, when he first came, getting a ticket to hear Toynbee was [unclear]. But there again, Frank was the one that was involved, I believe, as anyone on this campus at the time.

But going back to women — let me do that.

**Warren:** Please do.

**Whitehead:** Mrs. Evans, a lovely lady, an heir to the part of the Coca-Cola fortune through her marriage to Mr. Whitehead, and then she later married Mr. Evans. That's where we got Evans Hall.

Doremus Gymnasium, funds for that came before I arrived here, but it came through both Mr. and Mrs. Doremus, so she was very much a part of that gift. That story has been told and retold so many times now. That was before I came. I'm just trying to think of women and names on the campus.

Newcomb Hall, Mrs. Newcomb from, I guess, New Orleans, gave the funds in honor of her husband and Newcomb Hall. Sophie Newcomb, the college Sophie Newcomb in New Orleans, is the name of the lady who gave us really the money for Newcomb Hall. That's another lady.

Lewis. That's Frances and Sidney Lewis, but there again there's this lady that was very close to the university.

But there's some others. Of course, the ones that I'm most familiar with would be the Reeveses, Mrs. Reeves, who was the ultimate donor of the Reeves Collection. Mrs. Watson of the Watson Pavilion. A great lady. There's more ladies. I'm forgetting some of these angels. Anyway, one time I made a list of all these people. It seems to me it's something to do with—those are the ones who are recognized that have been large contributors to the university in one way or another.

**Warren:** Miss Parmly.

**Whitehead:** Parmly, that's the lady. She was great.

**Warren:** Tell me about Miss Parmly.

**Whitehead:** You've heard this from everybody, but she was, she was just absolutely super. I may be the only person that ever spent the night with Miss Parmly, but not in her room, but in her apartment. I had a meeting in New York and I came up, and I couldn't get a room at any hotel. Ms. Parmly had asked me to help her with getting, sometimes, some transportation, things that you could get in Lexington, it's

unbelievable, but in New York she couldn't get it because just the throngs of people that were trying to get things. I can do some things for her, which I did.

I had to go to New York. I called her and I said, "Miss Parmly, I'm having a very difficult time getting a place to stay. Do you have any suggestions?"

"You stay right here," she says, "there's a guest room here in 825 Fifth Avenue." Well, the guest room really was what had been the maid's room for one of the people and it could be used. So I stayed until about midnight in that room. It had no window, and I got up and walked on over to the Plaza about midnight. And there was no bath. I asked them at the Plaza if they had a room, and they did, and I checked in there because it was only a couple of blocks from where I was. Anyway, I spent part of a night with Miss Parmly.

We had a party for Miss Parmly at our house. Bob Keith's favorite story. Here again, it was sort of like Miss duPont, and Miss Parmly was coming, and this is when Bob Huntley was president, and he and Miss Parmly got along fine. He'd get along fine with anybody. But she was coming, so we were going to have a dinner party for her at this old house of ours. There certainly wouldn't have been over fourteen, because that's all we could seat at the table, and so everybody kept telling me everything we should do. So I loaded up on everything conceivable, the brandy, and I thought, well, she would like scotch. I had everything right.

So here I am. Miss Parmly arrives. I don't believe I'd seen Miss Parmly at this particular time, never seen her before. She arrived at the house and came in. That's when we had drinks in the library then. Miss Parmly came in and everybody else had been there for sometime before she arrived and I'd already given them something to drink. And I said, "Ms. Parmly, may I fix you a drink?"

She said, "That would be nice."

I said, "What would you like?"

She said, "I'd like a bottle of beer." I didn't have a cold bottle of beer in the house. I went back and threw a can in the freezer and wrapped ice around it and did everything else. But Bob Keith likes to kid me about that one of giving Miss Parmly — then after we became friends, a very wealthy lady living with her mother most of her life and not doing anything that I could figure out would be fun, I'm sure she did many things that she enjoyed doing like hiking and saving islands off of Georgia and developing beaver dams in Vermont and New Hampshire, but she'd never had an opportunity to attend some of the things in New York she liked to do. So Bob Huntley, when he'd go, he would ask her where she'd like to go to have dinner or something and she'd tell him.

So I was going up one time and I said, "Miss Parmly, where would you like to have lunch?"

She said, "I'd like to go to 21." So it's pouring rain. Oh, it's just raining, and I'm staying at some hotel and I get a cab to go over to 825, and when I got out of the cab to go in to usher her out, I stepped in water that came up halfway up to my knee. I mean, it was running by the curb. Well, that didn't matter.

I go in, and here's Miss Parmly. She's got a ski cap on pulled way down over, she's got her rubber boots and an old coat, and here I am taking her to 21 thinking that, oh, Lord.

So when I walked in, I had made a reservation through Ross Millhiser, who had friends there. The people weren't as shocked as I was. But anyway, this couple, wringing wet, had come in and they took us to the best seat in the house and next to us placed Van Johnson, who was — you probably don't remember Van Johnson. Van Johnson the movie star. She was so thrilled, I don't think she could eat, being in this place that she had always wanted to and then sitting next to a movie star, one like Van Johnson, who was so nice to her. We were seated on a long whatever it is along the

wall, and he was right next to her and he started a conversation with her. Oh, what a wonderful lady. What a wonderful lady. What a wonderful lady.

**Warren:** I have some pictures of her here and she just looks so delightful.

**Whitehead:** Isn't she nice?

**Warren:** She has this angelic smile. She looks like a cherub.

**Whitehead:** She does. She told me the two things that she had enjoyed most was her association with Washington and Lee, which came late in life, and this island off of Georgia that she had helped save, preserve. Those are the two things that came from her life. It was through an alumnus of ours that she became generous to Washington and Lee, who was, I guess, counseling her on her estate to be and so forth, and mentioned Washington and Lee. She had heard about Washington and Lee through her father talking about Mr. and Miss Doremus and what they had done for this school, and she loved General Lee, as well.

So no one person is ever responsible for a gift. I mean, it takes a lot of people working together. It's the total group that brings about happy situations. All of us would love to think that we were totally responsible for it, but that's not true. Not true.

There's another lady that I liked. Miss Gottwald. Miss Gottwald is an angel. It was her money that made possible the Reeves Center. So she was —

**Warren:** I don't know Gottwald. Who is she?

**Whitehead:** Mrs. Floyd D. Gottwald is the wife of Floyd D. Gottwald, Jr., who was president and chairman of the Ethyl Corporation. He was a VMI alumnus on the board of directors or the board of governors. But they had two sons that came to Washington and Lee. The family's tradition was VMI, but their two sons came here.

Once when they were here for Parents Weekend, Celeste and I were at the same table with them over in Evans Hall in the private dining room over there, and I mentioned this collection of ceramics that had been given to the university, and they both indicated they would love to see it.

So it was in a basement at that time, and I took them down in the basement and they opened some of the cartons that the stuff was in. We became friends. Then when I found the paintings that Louise Herreshoff had painted, she saw those and both of them then were very excited and she said they'd be happy to give her a show at their home in Richmond, where they had a gallery almost. Well, it was a nice place. We didn't do that because we were able to have a one-woman show at the Corcoran.

But I always said we had a collection in search of a home, and that's what it was. I had talked to them several times and they'd ask me what was going to become of this, and I thought, well, the way things are going, we had so many needs at Washington and Lee that certainly a place to house dishes was unheard of. So one day they had been asked to give to the new library – I mean, to the Commerce School, to the Law School, and they did not have any interests.

So I talked to Bob Huntley one day and I said, "I know you've never given me permission to ask for funds from anyone that was a prospect for all of our other needs here," but I said, "would you permit me to talk to the Gottwalds?"

He said, "You won't get a damn penny from them."

And I said, "Well, let me try."

So Celeste and I make an appointment to see them. They were at their beach home in Virginia Beach, and we drove over. I showed them a little model that I'd had made up, and they gave us the money to restore the building for that purpose, without letting us put their name on it. I mean, they're that kind of people. So that was a gift of almost a half a million to do that.

Then down the road they made a gift of, I think it was 750,000 to endow the directorship, which was my position, and that was their second gift. And then after that, I think when I retired, I never knew the amount, but I think it was enough to bring that probably up to a million dollars, maybe a little more. And then at another point they gave another major gift. So they were very good to the Reeves Center. Mrs. Floyd D.



Gottwald, Libby. She's still alive. She is one of the few ladies that, along with Frances Lewis, is alive. So that was that one.

Then Miss Watson, after we got the collection, she and her husband came over and had lunch at Bill Pusey's house. He was acting president, I think, at the time. I showed them the basement where all the porcelain was stored and, by that time, the paintings, and she and her husband who had lived in the Orient, they invited us to come over to Lynchburg to see theirs. Then over a period of years she became friends and would travel with us. That was the key to the support of the Reeves Center.

The Gottwalds traveled with the students every spring when we'd take them to some special place. We had another couple in South Carolina, the Carters [phonetic], that financed it, and Miss Watson traveled with us. They saw what happened to these young people when their eyes would open to art and these different great collections that we tried to expose them to. So Mrs. Watson's gift was a major gift to the university, probably around three million, I would imagine. The Bill Lindon [phonetic] Endowment and the professorship begins to add up.

**Warren:** Help me to understand that the porcelain that's in the Watson Center is part of the Reeves Collection?

**Whitehead:** Some of it is. Well, we'd hoped, and I hope that it will continue, that the Watson Pavilion would be an extension of the Reeves Center to the extent that it would take us back in time in the history of ceramics to the Neolithic period. That's where we wanted to start, and that's the big jug that you see over there that Celeste and somebody else, I had to have somebody help me because I couldn't have done it by myself. We bought that, because that's where it really begins and then comes forward up to the 17th and 18th century.

But part of it in that building belonged to Mrs. Watson, some of it belonged to the Reeves Collection, and then other additions have come from the McBrides that lived

in Blacksburg, of all places, but now in Florida. Tom was very active in getting that collection on display there by the time the building opened.

**Warren:** Tom Litzenburg?

**Whitehead:** Tom Litzenburg, right. And he's more acquainted with the McBrides. They met me once when they came up here to see the Reeves Collection, I let them in and showed them around. But Tom really worked more closely with them and continues to do so.

**Warren:** You mentioned the building that the Reeves Center is in. You mentioned the building. What was that building originally?

**Whitehead:** It was built in 1842 [sic 1840] as a faculty house and remained a faculty residence until, oh, it really was a faculty residence when I came here. One professor, Dr. Howe, that Howe Hall is named for, lived in the house for fifty-five years. It was built in 1842 for \$3,500, those four houses, two on each side of the Colonnade.

**Warren:** Each one was built for \$3,500, or all four?

**Whitehead:** The building was built for \$3,500 in 1842. My figures, I may be off one, but I think that's about right. 1842. They served in that capacity really up until the only one now that's a faculty home is Howisons. It was usually seniority in terms of faculty that were able to live in the houses. But before we restored the Reeves Center, it was an extension of the Law School, there was some law school offices in it, as well as religion and some other departments. So it served for a while as a classroom or faculty offices, mainly.

**Warren:** Which house did Leyburn live in?

**Whitehead:** He was in the Reeves Center.

**Warren:** He was in that house?

**Whitehead:** He was in that house, and he was the last faculty occupant of the house. It was just falling down.

**Warren:** So after law school—

**Whitehead:** After Leyburn, faculty offices, including one time the archaeology group was in there and then there was some in there from religion department, and then I think mainly law school offices were there as the law school began to expand and before they moved into their new building. So it was a faculty. It's the only one that was used for that purpose of the four.

Now, the one that Howison is in, the dean of students, the Lee-Jackson House, has always remained that.

I didn't get on Miss Morris, but anyway Mrs Morris, she another name, surely don't want to forget her. That house was a faculty home until it was restored for a guest house. She and her husband were from Houston. Mrs. Morris loves history and preservation and restoration. She and her husband always entertained whenever they had these national meetings that their particular company held. They own Stewart Title Company, which is a mortgage insurance company, and they have offices in over 2,000—she wrote to the president, who was then Wilson, to said that she would like to bring a group of guests to Lexington. Am I right about this? No, it was before Wilson. That was before Wilson, I guess, maybe Bob Huntley—for entertainment and would like for them to be able to see Lee Chapel. So he turned the letter over to Captain Penniston, and he turned it over to me, and I thought, well, there's no reason not to try to accommodate these people.

So I called this lady in Houston and told her, yes, that we could arrange for it, could she give me some details about the dates and her organization, and she said yes. She said, "We'd like to bring them over and I'd like for them to have lunch in the Lee House where General Lee died."

I said, "Well, that's not possible. That's a private residence for our president." I'm sure it was then Bob Huntley, because they moved out and used it only for entertainment. I said, "That won't be possible."

She said, "Well, I'd certainly like to do it."

I said, "Mrs. Morris, that won't be possible."

So then she went on to the next thing of what she wanted to do, and I said, "Why don't you come up here? You've never been to Lexington, and just see what it's like."

Well, I went to the airport to meet this lady, and she got off the plane and she was this tall, strawberry blonde, big lady, graceful though big, with this high-pitched voice. Everyone thought, "You're dealing with a real dizzy blonde." Well, what had happened, she had an operation on her throat that causes her to do this. Smart as a whip, I found out.

Well, anyway, she got off, we came over here, and the more I was with her, the more I liked what she had in mind, but I said, "That's not possible."

"Jim, do you think..." Anyway, she had a certain way about her.

Well, the way it turned out, her guest list at the Homestead included 125 people that she had buses sent, they had the big buses bring them to Lexington, they arrived. They both loved carriages and horses, and they had friends in Virginia that had these big carriages and so forth come into Lexington, and we had a parade downtown and the horn blower that they brought up from Texas.

They arrived at about 11:30, and we had lunch at the Lee House. We had it. Sat them on the porch and all around, and these people from all over the country had never been anyplace like this. Then after lunch, Pam Simpson gave them a tour of the campus and historic buildings, and they went through the Reeves Center – no, we didn't even have the Reeves Center then, it was just before we opened. Then they took them downtown and I had the mayor give them a proclamation in Lee Chapel, and got the city to put up the flags, and we called it Stewart Title Day, and they were very impressed, and we became friends.

Later, they came up shortly after that to the dedication of the Reeves Center, and I took Stewart around. I could tell he was a very sensitive-type man. I'd talk about Lee and Washington, and every now and then he'd have to wipe a tear. Well, then he asked

me if I would speak to their organization or a similar organization in Boston, the Gardner Museum, and I said yes. He said, "Well, I'll pick you in our plane." He was flying his own jets at the time, so he and Joella — her name was Joella — picked Celeste and me up in Roanoke and flew us to Boston. And as we were making our approach to Boston, we were at about 30,000 feet, I think. "Stewart, I've had something on my mind," I said, "Washington and Lee needs an official guest house. Would you think about restoring one of those historic houses that you saw when you were up there, exactly like the Reeves Center, as a guest house in honor of Joella?" And the plane almost did a nosedive.

But anyway, we landed, and I didn't hear a word from him. Then they came to a meeting where I was speaking in Natchez, Mississippi, and he said, "Have breakfast with us tomorrow morning."

When I got there, he had a folded piece out of a yellow tablet and it said, "Dear Jim Whitehead, I give you \$250,000 to restore the Morris House." So that's where that got restored.

So I do think in that case I did have a little something to do with it, but the rest of it took a lot of people working hard.

**Warren:** You had them more than over a barrel, you had them over a planet.

**Whitehead:** I really did. But they're such nice people. Great people. He was at Washington with me this past weekend, and we dedicated a new sixteen-sided barn at Mt. Vernon. That's been my outlet has been Mt. Vernon, in a volunteer capacity, and it's a great institution.

**Warren:** I read about that.

**Whitehead:** Oh, you did. I have not seen a thing about it, because I haven't seen any papers.

**Warren:** It was written up in the *Post*. It was quite a write-up.

**Whitehead:** I'll have to look upstairs, because it would have been — although I knew the news media was there, but I had no idea.

**Warren:** It might have been last —

**Whitehead:** Well, it was dedicated last Friday, so it had to be in Saturday or Sunday's paper.

**Warren:** Or it might have been in the "Home" section last week, in the tabloid section.

**Whitehead:** Oh, yeah, right.

**Warren:** I think it might have been that. My husband was reading all about it and kept reading out loud to me. He was very excited about it.

**Whitehead:** Oh, they did such a beautiful job. They had someone, though, who has done things here for us who acts as Washington and thinks he is Washington, he looks like Washington. See, Washington's great love was farming, that was number one. They had maybe 500 schoolchildren in different colored T-shirts sitting on bales of hay in front of the barn, and as they came around they had them, each giving them a little stack of wheat to take in to put in the barn before the horses went in and so forth.

Roger Mudd, our Roger Mudd, who is on the advisory committee up there with me, was the master of ceremonies, and, oh, what a beautiful occasion. Then they had the children, each with one of their animals, a pig or a lamb and then there were sheep and so forth, walk up with these and tell George Washington why they were so important to farming and so on. I think if they'd have passed a plate, we could have raised — we've got to raise \$60 million annually.

Kellogg provided the funds for this. They gave us the money to do the barn. Fortunately, there had been an old photograph that had been saved by somebody that showed what the barn looked like as it was deteriorating.

I'll have to look up in the library here and see in the paper.

**Warren:** It was in the *Post*. I know it was written up. I just took things to the recycling center or I'd bring it to you.

**Whitehead:** That's all right. You've had enough for one day.

**Warren:** Are you done?

**Whitehead:** No, I'm all right. I have to go to the hospital to be with my son around four o'clock.

**Warren:** Okay, I know that, but I would love to have just a few minutes, and it's probably a much longer story than that, but let's get the essence of the Reeves story. I've got to tell you, whenever I have visitors come to see me, the highlight of the tour is to take them to the Reeves Center. It is my favorite thing on this campus. I love those paintings.

**Whitehead:** Right. Oh, gosh.

**Mullan:** Porcelain is one thing, but the paintings just tear me up.

**Whitehead:** That's right. Porcelain is a known factor, you can research it and it's been around for a long time, since 900 A.D., and it's all chronicled, but to find somebody that was an artist like that.

**Warren:** Tell me about that.

**Whitehead:** I've told you this story –

**Warren:** No, you have not told it to me.

**Whitehead:** Okay.

**Warren:** Please.

**Whitehead:** Well, you can't tell the story unless you start at the beginning. A postal card, a penny postal card, arrived at this university, I think in the alumni office. But anyway, Dr. Cole was president, and I'm assistant to the president. I'm not treasurer at the time, I'm assistant to the president. My major job as assistant to the president was to keep peace between the Office of the President and the treasurer, if you really want to know the truth. That was a major job, because Mr. Mattingly could never accept what was happening at the university. Although it was all good, it was still impossible for him to go beyond the Gaines years in terms of his ways of thinking.

Okay. This postal card arrives and it says, as best as I can remember, "Some day I may wish to give a work of art to the university. Are you interested?" signed, "Euch Reeves, class '27, law." That's all it said. Well, that card went around from office to office and finally came into my hands, and I thought, well, when you say "gift," that caused me to give it a little more attention.

President Cole and I were going to be in New York for a meeting with our advisor at U.S. Trust Company, Henry Grady. So I called Mr. Reeves, this man that wrote the card in Providence, and said, "Mr. Reeves, I'm going to be in New York with Dr. Cole in early February. Would it be possible to come by to see you?"

"I'd love to have you come," he said. Southern accent. He was from South Carolina.

So the date was set, and I called, and he said try to arrive in time for lunch. So I thought, well, on the map Providence looked like it was a suburb of New York, and it was not. I went over to Grand Central and picked up a ticket and got on, and it took until about noon to get there, to Providence. But in any event, it was cold, ice cold and was just terrible, snow everywhere. I get in a cab and tell him I wanted to go to 89 Benevolent Street, and the cab driver, obviously a very talented driver, got started up, I think it's called College Hill, past all these magnificent Federal houses. It was just like going into another century. Magnificent mansions, as well as some of the houses that were built at the time of the Revolution there, Benefit Street and Waterman and Hope Street, all those kinds of things. So he started climbing that hill, and I just kept looking and I thought, gosh, I wonder what in the world he has to give us? Because my only connection with art, I had no knowledge of art whatsoever. Of course, the university had a Peale portrait of George Washington and a Waliston of Martha's family. I thought, "I wonder if he has a Copley or a Peale or something like that."

Well, he drives up by these mansions and turns the corner and pulls up on Benevolent Street in front of this little house. You've seen the picture of it, and that's a



wonderful picture of the house. That day it looked far worse. But anyway, it was a little one-room-wide, two-and-a-half-story, wood-shingled, little house. I said to the driver, "Is this 89 Benevolent Street?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "I don't think so."

He says, "There is no North Benevolent, or no South Benevolent, no East Benevolent or West Benevolent. This is the only Benevolent Street."

I said, "Okay. Well, keep the motor running I'm going to the door to find out if we're at the wrong place. I may be wrong about the address."

I knocked on this door and it was flush with the front sidewalk, it was right on the sidewalk. The sidewalk was right at the house, and there was a Christmas wreath on there – this now is February – and it was dried and had reached the point of decay. I knocked on the door, and finally the door opened and this real dark-eyed and dark-haired man opened the door. I thought, "Is that Mr. Reeves? I know now that I'm at the wrong house."

And then I heard a voice say, "Is that you, Jim Whitehead? I hope you've come to stay two weeks." And that was Mr. Reeves.

I walked into a vestibule that was only four feet wide, and there was a table there, and here was Mr. Reeves with his handyman, Whitehead, and a barking dog, and the dog was a little toy Boston bull terrier. The dog was so excited, he was jumping vertically. It was unbelievable. But three grown men and a dog, plus a table. I couldn't see where I was because I'd just come out of the ice and here I am in a dark house. He said, "I hope you've come to stay two weeks. Joe has readied the guest room."

I thought, "Oh, my God, if I stay more than two minutes, it's longer than I want to."

So I walked in from the vestibule. He guides me, and I've got on a coat that I held like this to keep from knocking things off. He sat me down in the chair and he had

to move some porcelain and magazines out of the chair, and when I sat in it, I almost went on the floor. I don't know that anybody'd been in that chair in years other than the stuff he'd piled there. He sat on a little daybed right across from me.

So he talked about Washington and Lee and how he loved it and so forth, and that's when our relationship began.

**Warren:** What was he like?

**Whitehead:** Well, he really seemed to be completely out of place in those surroundings. He was dressed in a very nice pinstripe, he had on a white starched shirt, and he had a silk tie with a diamond stickpin, and all around was this old faded wallpaper that was peeling off the walls, no item that had been touched to clean or to dust in years, and so crowded that you could not move. Yet he spoke with a very soft Southern accent he'd never lost, but continually talked about his wonderful years at Washington and Lee.

In fact, Mr. Mattingly and Mr. Gilliam, who was the dean then, both said to me, "Jim, you're on a wild goose chase. Euchlin Reeves will never do anything worthwhile for Washington and Lee." They remembered him as a student in the law school, and he didn't have a dime when he was here. He was a college Joe if there was ever was one. But that day he was a scholar.

**Warren:** Let me switch tapes quickly.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

**Warren:** This is Mame Warren, and I'm continuing with James Whitehead on the 3rd of October.

**Whitehead:** And she's worn out from all this talk.

**Warren:** No, I'm not, I'm getting more excited.

**Whitehead:** Anyway, so I sat there and listened to him, and then he started talking about all of this porcelain. I didn't know what Chinese export meant, I didn't know what [unclear] meant, I didn't know what — oh, I may have known what Mycin was, but all of these other names were as foreign to me as if I were in another world. And

suddenly, and finally my eyes adjusted to the surroundings, and I was in a room – really, this is pretty close to the size of the room, it was not quite this wide. I'm in this chair and he's on a daybed over there. There's a grand piano between the foot of his daybed, with the keyboard pushed against the front window, nobody could get to it to play, and there was an old black-and-white television set sitting on it and a telephone, and those were the only two things in the room that indicated that he was in the twentieth century. There was a light bulb hanging from a wire in the center of the room and there was one little table lamp, and there I was sitting with this man I'd never seen before. There was a desk next to me, a fold top – what are those things? At an angle that you open up.

But anyway, and there was a chest of drawers. But by his bed was the telephone, and then the bookcase/secretary that's over in the Morris House. I could see in the next little room was what had been a dining room was a hospital bed all piled with books and so forth and a dining room table with medicines and open cereal box, and that's all I could see.

But as he talked on about Washington and Lee he said, "I made reservations for lunch at Carr's [phonetic]." Well, that didn't mean anything to me, but I was so happy to think that we were going to get out of there and I said, "Fine."

So we go outside, and parked at the sidewalk where the cab had been, it was this long black Cadillac sedan, almost like a limousine. Joe, the handyman, had opened the doors for us. We got in and he put a lap robe on us. This was the only sign of affluence that I had seen. We get in there, got in the car, and he said, "I've invited Anita Hinkley to have lunch with us."

He, in the meantime, had told me that Miss Reeves was sorry that she couldn't join us because she had not been well and was in a nursing home, but he expected her home any day.

So I said, "I'm sorry she can't be there, too."

So we get in this car, drive back to one of these great streets and turn in an alley, and there we're in the back of one of these mansions, and coming out of the back door of this mansion was Mrs. Hinkley. She was tall, had to be six feet tall, all in black with a cape all the way to the ground and a walking stick, a lady now in her eighties.

Joe, the handyman, goes and meets her and brings her out to the car, and we're introduced and she says, "Oh, I love Washington and Lee." Said, "My daughter was there for your Fancy Dress Ball once and we stayed at the" – she remembered every detail of Fancy Dress Ball. That made it easier, made you feel so good.

We go to Carr's Tea Room and they talk about porcelain and art. She was a [unclear]. I listened to them and I knew nothing about what they were saying. It was a little lady's lunch, it was little tiny serving, and I was hungry.

But anyway, what was so great, when this car pulled in in the back and Joe gets out of the car and goes over and picks her up and brings her back, and she gets in the car and the three of us are sitting in the back seat, all of sudden, without even starting the car, the car makes a 180 degree turn. I'd wondered how we were ever going to get out of that crowded back lot. It was on a turntable, and I found out just recently, within the last month, that those were used for carriages back when people had carriages and horses, that was the way they turned the carriages around. But I thought, my Lord, what kind of place is this to have that? I was more impressed with that than I was impressed with any porcelain.

So after lunch, we go back to her house and she shows me through these great rooms. Her family had been in the house for three generations, and it was a mixture of all the periods from Queen Anne, Chippendale, Federal, right on up to the present day. But it was great. So it was enjoyable meeting her.

Then we go back, get in the car, and it turns again on this thing; I'm so excited about that. Go back and the car pulls up in front of the house next door to Mr. Reeves', which is a brick house, the one you've seen in pictures. And that's when he said,

"Would you like to see our little museum?" And he opens that door, and it was so dark and so cold, there was no light, heat, or anything in that building. They had lived in it when they first married and then filled it up and had to move next door, and then he kept putting stuff in it, or they kept putting stuff in it.

There was not an aisle. I had to step over pieces of ceramics on the floor and around furniture. He kept talking about all these things that I didn't know what he was talking about. It was so dark in there, he carried a little flashlight. He takes an Oriental, what would it have been, a hanging off the wall, and behind that wall was a steel door like you'd find in a bank, and he evidently had to use a combination to open it up, and here when he opened it up, we were standing right there, out rushes this pent-up, I don't know what it would have been called, atmosphere of something that has been cold and damp for fifteen years, just suddenly rushes out, you know, so happy to escape being in that vault. It was a vault, and the vault was about again, the half of it that we looked into was about half of the size of this room. Then there was another steel door that went into that room.

But the first steel door he opened made this groaning, terrible noise, and it was just like it was in great pain. Then behind that were two more little steel doors, metal doors, that he had to open. He put his flashlight in there and here was this table stacked high with dishes. He said, "That's a plate that belonged to George Washington, that's the set that belonged to Paul Revere," and he kept doing that. He said, "Don't you want to go in and see them?"

And I thought, "I've never seen this man until today. All he has to do is for me to get in there and slam that door and nobody will ever know what ever became of Jim Whitehead." [Laughter] So I said, "Oh, thank you," and I put one foot inside the vault and then kept my hand on the steel lock on the outside, and he explained, then closed it up and left.

But that house had not been touched in eighteen years except to add to it. So that was an experience.

Going into the room, I noticed on the wall a painting of an old lady, and I thought that was Mrs. Reeves because Joe had whispered to me, "I don't think she's coming home. She's an old woman." And I thought, "Well, that must be a picture of Mrs. Reeves." Then there was another one just like it in the little dining room in that house. But it turned out to be Aunt Lizzy.

Well, I went back and had dinner with him in this little dining room in his house, and he pushed all of these open cereal boxes and medicine containers to one side, he put two Willowware plates, like you get at the dime store – this is no exaggeration, I had a jelly glass, he had a jelly glass, and he said, "Jim, Joe has prepared us some supper," and he said, "Would you like a drink before dinner?"

I could hardly talk because the dust from that other place was so great. I said, "Yes, I certainly would." Well, he brings out a bottle of Manhattan mix cocktail, that syrupy sweet stuff. He didn't put anything in it.

He had a problem at some time in his life, probably when he was at W&L, with alcohol. But that's all he had. To him, that was having a drink. He poured some in my glass, and then we had little pieces of sliced country ham that he had left over from Christmas, some biscuits that Joe made, and some beans, and here we were surrounded by silver, porcelain, art, and we were eating off of dime-store plates and drinking from jelly glasses. But that didn't bother him in the least, he was oblivious to anything around him. They never let anybody clean, because they were afraid they'd break things, and they would have.

So then I call a cab and I go back to the station, and all the way back to New York all I did was write down phonetically what I had remembered he'd talked about that day. Then I asked an alumnus of ours, Jim Martin, and his wife, Teen Martin, who was on board of trustees, Jim had been a classmate, if they were ever going to be in that part

of the country and they said, well, they were going up for their goddaughter's wedding in June. I said, "Would you go by and tell me if what I've seen has any merit or value?" I said, "I think it's a treasure."

They go up and visit with him, they send me a telegram saying it is a treasure, and it was. They recognized what they were looking at.

So then we started working with him. The original thought would be that it was going to be at Col Alto, you know, Col Alto, the big house here. They had an architect here at the university, Henry Ravenhorst, draw up plans, and I sent those plans to him, and for almost three years he worked with placing every object where he thought it would go. It added years to his life, there's no question in my mind about that.

Then one day I got a call from his lawyer, saying Mr. Reeves was in the hospital, he had a stroke, and then a few hours later he'd died. He said, "Mrs. Reeves would like to have you come to the funeral," and we went up and we met her then after three years for the first time.

**Warren:** That was the first time you met her?

**Whitehead:** First time.

**Warren:** This was three years later.

**Whitehead:** Three years later at Ruth's Nursing Home on East 4th Street in East Providence, Rhode Island. We go in and here's this old lady, she's just sobbing and crying and kept saying, "Why did he have to go first?" It was then later after a lot of digging and the story that I found, that they'd been married in 1941 when he was thirty-eight and she was sixty-six, and they lived to celebrate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.

She, the lady that she was, there was only one – in those days, nursing homes, maybe they still are, were in private homes, more so than institutions as we know them today. People would develop these in residential areas, these houses, and nurses would care for these elderly people. She was in a room with, I think, one or two others. There

was only one chair in the room, and she said, "Mr. Whitehead, won't you be seated?" She said, "Boy," – she called him Boy – "loved Washington and Lee and he told me about your visits. I'm so sorry that I could not be there to greet you."

Of course, we found out why he'd never let us meet her was he was afraid she would want to give the collection to Brown University, because she was the great-great granddaughter of John Brown and John Brown and his brothers, Brown University was named for.

The Herreshoff side was that a man from Prussia came to this country in the late 1700s and married John Brown's daughter. He was Herr Herreshoff, and that became Herreshoff later, but he married John Brown's daughter, Sara. It was from that union that they had a son, and from that union there was nine children born, and they were the great boatbuilders of Providence. Her father, Mrs. Reeves' father, was a talented chemist, founded the American Chemical Society, wealthy.

**Warren:** Did you ever talk to her about the paintings?

**Whitehead:** Never. I did not even know they existed. What happened was the day that I went up and signed the papers for the porcelain that was being packed, she was going to give it to us in her will and then she changed her mind and said that she was going to give it to us right then, because she thought vandals – and this was at the height of the student unrest on college campuses and especially at Brown and Rhode Island School of Design, it was pretty big. She was afraid they would break in and just destroy it, so she said, "I'm going to give it in my will."

So when I went up to sign the papers, there was this van that literally stretched from in front of the two houses. The mover, Mr. Lands, said, "Mr. Whitehead, there are some old frames in the attic, do you want them?"

I said, "Well, if there's any room in the van after you put the porcelain in." She said we could have anything that his family did not want in terms of the art. I didn't know, I just thought they were maybe just worthless frames. He put them in boxes.



That was in April now of 1967, and they come to the university, they go into Col Alto, all of the furniture and these boxes, then the porcelain cartons went into the Student Union Building in the basement.

I got a call right after we'd gotten it down here from the lawyer saying, "Mrs. Reeves would like to have the sauce book that belonged to her great-great grandmother given to the Rhode Island School of Design."

I said, "Oh, my God. Please ask Mrs. Reeves what room it was in." Fortunately, every carton had said what room it had come from, but did not say the contents of it. Well, he tells me, and it was in the little pantry. Well, in the third carton that I opened out of two hundred, we found the sauce book.

Then I'm walking across the campus, and I've never unpacked now those paintings. Never. They're all in those boxes. Walking across the campus, and this lady speaks to me, she and her husband, I assumed it was her husband, said, "Mr. Whitehead, you don't know who we are." And I hate people who say, "You don't know my name, do you? You don't remember me."

I said, "I just have to ask you."

She said, "I'm Mrs. Reeves' nurse."

And I said, "Yes, you're Mrs. —" whatever her name was. And I said, "How's Mrs. Reeves?"

She said, "Well, she's fine. We took her to the cemetery in Boston where he is buried, and she was able to be taken out of the car and she put six roses and six stones on his grave."

I said, "Well, I'm sure glad."

They said, "How is the collection doing?"

I said, "We've just finished displaying a case in Lee Chapel. Would you like to see it?"

I went down and it was not Pat Hineley, but somebody took pictures for me that could be – well, they were Polaroids, and I said, "Would you take these back to show to Mrs. Reeves?" Because we'd promised her we'd put the most important items on view, and that's what we did in Lee Chapel because we had no other place to do it.

So they go back. That was on Friday, at least they got back up there on Friday, they show her the pictures on Saturday, and she dies on Sunday. Now, that's May, and not once did I ever know she was an artist. I talked to her about porcelain the whole time, everything was about porcelain, that's all she talked about. The only clue to the fact that she was an artist was at the nursing home when I'd go out to see her after he died and I'd be up there with the lawyers and so forth, Bob Huntley drew up all the legal papers and so on, he was still in law school, she had a charm bracelet and on that charm bracelet was an Eiffel Tower, a little Eiffel Tower. I said, "Mrs. Reeves," and by this time I was calling her "Doll." I asked her if I could call her Doll and she said, "Please." Everybody else called her Doll. I said, "Doll, tell me about the Eiffel Tower."

She said, "Frances gave me that." Frances was Mr. Reeves' niece, who was teaching in Europe at one of the American schools, and she had brought that Eiffel Tower charm bracelet back, and she was still wearing it. She was paralyzed on one side. But that was the only clue until the obituary came out and it said that she'd studied with Raphael Coline [phonetic] and John Paul Arenz [phonetic], who were just – if you told me she studied with Mr. Hostetter and Mr. whoever, it would have meant as much to me.

But then one day I was over to the place, and I opened one of those boxes and pulled out this frame. There was glass on the frame, and literally there had to be a quarter-inch of dirt and dust on that frame over the glass. I thought I'd see a steel engraved – I didn't know what I was going to see. I wiped with an old green towel. I'd wish I'd kept the green towel. I wiped it across that glass, and here was poppies and I couldn't believe my eyes. I've used the term years ago, it sounded a little silly, but it

was, it was like an explosion of color that came out of what I thought was just going to be absolutely nothing in terms of color. The name on it meant nothing to me, it said Eaton, I think it said, [unclear]. Then I picked up another one and it was totally different from that one. So I didn't know what we had.

I asked Marion Junkin, who was head of our art department, if he'd go over there and take a look with me, and he did. He said, "Who did these?"

I said, "I don't know. I know where they were, but I don't know who did them." But eventually working with him, I was able to determine that she had done them all and that she had been married for a short period, three months only, in 1910, left the man after three months, but his name was Eaton. She didn't like him, but she liked his name. He was a fourth cousin, I think.

I thought, oh, boy, now I know how to date. Anything with an E or Eaton on it has to come up to 1911, when she had been married to him, but that didn't work. She had gone back and put Eaton on things she'd done when she was a teenager. So that's that.

**Warren:** Oh, we have got to continue this story.

**Whitehead:** No, that's it.

**Warren:** I have questions. No, another time.

**Whitehead:** Okay.

**Warren:** Another time. Thank you.

[End of interview]