

# TAYLOR COLE

December 30, 1996

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Mame Warren,  
interviewer

**Warren:** This is Mame Warren. Today is December 30, 1996. I'm in Blacksburg, Virginia, with Taylor Cole.

You arrived in Lexington in 1959.

**Cole:** That's right, in the fall of 1959. I was six years old. When we first got to Lexington, the Lee House was undergoing a renovation, and we couldn't move into the Lee House. We moved into a house that was owned, to the best of my knowledge, by Judge Davis, on, let's see, it was Jefferson Street. I think the Reids have been the most recent occupants in that house. A beautiful, beautiful house. We lived there for the better part of a year when we first got to Lexington, which was really a wonderful place. It had wonderful boxwoods and a goldfish pond in the backyard. The poor goldfish didn't make it for a year with me there, I'm afraid. [Laughter] But it was a great place.

**Warren:** So you remember your father being selected for the job of being president and what his reaction was?

**Cole:** Really, I have to say I don't. Over the years I've heard about Dad being considered for different colleges, and that he chose Washington and Lee for several reasons. My understanding was he was on the list for the University of Alabama and a few other higher-profile schools, I guess, in the South at the time. But Dad had two things that I think, again, my understanding, that made Washington and Lee was his choice. One was the fact that it had a wonderful academic record, a tremendous reputation for turning out well-qualified graduates. Then secondly, Dad really liked the

idea that Washington and Lee had dropped the subsidized athletics back in the early fifties. Some of the articles in this box refer to his feelings that subsidized athletics were a distraction from what the true mission of a university ought to be.

**Warren:** Probably the University of Alabama would not have been a good place for him.

**Cole:** Probably the University of Alabama would not have been, but, of course, you know, back in those days in the circles, that was a plum. So for Dad to bypass the University of Alabama for a 1,400-, 1,500-student school in the Valley of Virginia was a significant acknowledgment that there were a lot of very important features in Lexington that weren't available just anywhere in the South.

**Warren:** Tell me about those features. What do you think the attraction is?

**Cole:** Well, again, at Washington and Lee there's an absolute dedication to the student, and to give that individual the greatest opportunity to make the best use of his intellectual resources that can be done. That's where the priority is, and continues to be there. If it's possible to improve, I feel like it is improved. Our continuing an evolution may be a better way to put it.

Again, I think that was very much what my father believed very deeply in, that giving individuals an opportunity to bloom in an intellectual sense, as opposed to a necessarily physical sense, was of much more importance to a well-rounded and fulfilled life than prowess on a particular athletic field. But saying it was just the athletics is very much an oversimplification. Lexington, Washington and Lee, its academic reputation is second to none.

Dr. Leyburn, I believe it was, used to say Washington and Lee is the Harvard of the South. That's absolutely the case. For someone who, as my mother used to say, whose greatest aspiration was to be an academic, for someone with that orientation, Washington and Lee and Lexington was the place to go. I mean, it was the Athens, I guess, of universities where you went to really explore and give your mind license to

really bloom. I think that's, for an academic, where you want to be and the type of people you want to surround yourself with, to be thought of as having a role in helping the university to prosper and bloom in its own right. Very attractive.

**Warren:** Can you take yourself back to being that six-year-old boy, and seven and eight and nine-year old boy –

**Cole:** Oh, absolutely.

**Warren:** – growing up on campus? What was it like to be there as a child, and to be in that central position?

**Cole:** It's funny you would ask that question, because I've got to admit I was kind of particularly stuck in a traffic jam today, and I was toying with some thoughts of back then. That was such a profound influence on my life, that it's very easy for me to get down inside of it and talk about it.

My first thoughts when we got to Lexington were of Robert E. Lee. I spent my first six years in New Orleans, and Dad used to take me down to what was called Lee Circle, and there's a great huge obelisk down there with a statue of Robert E. Lee up on top of it. When I was three, four, and five years old, I mean, it was straight up, and there was this Robert E. Lee standing up there. With the rest of my family heritage, he was thought of very highly, and always as a gentleman.

When we got to Lexington, the idea of being able to live in General Lee's house was almost more than I could handle, having grown up and just being absolutely surrounded by – so it was a great thrill for me. That first year, as nice as the house on Jefferson Street was, I was chomping at the bit to get into Robert E. Lee's house. Of course, my two older brothers made up all kinds of stories to go along with the house, and secret passageways. I knew where every one of them was, too. [Laughter] I have no idea whether they're actually there or not. Someone has told me since that there was a stairway somewhere in the house that had been bricked over or something like that at one time or another. There was a place in the basement where you could go and open

up the little trap door or something, and look through and see what looked like stairs going down. So I was convinced the whole time I was there that that was the secret escape. [Laughter]

Growing up in the Lee House was a wonderful place for a little boy who was probably over-romantic anyway. It's a wonderful house, and that front porch lent itself to being a ship's bridge, with the railing that went around it. A huge big house. My friends and I, from down in what they called the Hollow – do you know where the Hollow is?

**Warren:** Tell me about the Hollow.

**Cole:** A lot of faculty lived down there. There was the Hainers [phonetic], Rob and his sister, I believe whose name was Christine, lived down there. I want to say Pat Wise – Wise. His family went back to the governor of Virginia, but I can't remember his first name. He went on to –

**Warren:** Chris Wise?

**Cole:** No, I'm not sure that that's right. But his last name's Wise, and he was a couple years older than me. Then, of course, there were all the kids from over at VMI, too. We used to have wonderful dart-gun battles in that house. You could go and hide and nobody'd ever find you. So it was great. It was great fun. In the afternoons, Mom would be in one part of the house. It was very easy for us to go out and get lost in another part of the house and have great dart-gun battles until, of course, she found us. [Laughter] So it was an awful lot of fun.

Of course, the historical importance of the place was always with you, especially in the summertime when all the tours would come to Lexington. Of course, it's not the tourist Mecca that it is now, but then there were still a large number that would come to the house. Quite often, back in those days, we really didn't lock the doors very much during the day, and it was not unusual for us to come downstairs and to find tourists wandering around in the downstairs of the house. My sister used to give me an awful

time because I would assume the role as tour guide and go ahead and finish the tour for these people, which proved to be embarrassing sometimes. My sister lived there with us for a couple of years after she graduated from college. She never has let me forget that.

It was a busy place. There was always the formal parties that Mom and Dad would put on, receptions, university parties. Of course, we had four kids in our family, too, so we would have our own functions there. My brothers would entertain, and my sister would entertain their friends there, too, which was a lot of fun. Their entertaining – of course, Gray being eight years older than me, and Fred being ten years older, Caroline fifteen years older, their entertaining was a good bit different from my dart-gun. I was at the age where it was nice for the little brother to be seen and then put someplace where he couldn't do any damage. [Laughter] I had a great little treehouse out in the back yard.

**Warren:** Really.

**Cole:** Oh, yes. The tree that the treehouse was in has long since gone.

**Warren:** I was going to say, I don't know any tree in the backyard.

**Cole:** Well, there were several trees that were back there when I was growing up that aren't there now. The hemlocks that are at the back of the back yard that form a barrier between the dorm and the back of the house were planted when we were first there, along with the sundial that is in the backyard. Actually – and this is probably one of those things that needs to be edited out – that actually was a present from my father to my mother, and one of the things they decided to leave when they left. But that was a real favorite of hers, that sundial. She had a beautiful rose garden back there, and took a lot of pride in the roses. They formed a line all along the hemlocks there. Then there were peonies in two areas on either side of the door that came out of what we called the breezeway there. We had a basketball goal set up in the breezeway. Lea Booth – you know who Lea is?

**Warren:** Yes, I know who he is.

**Cole:** Lea would come by after a football game or something. I was six, seven, eight years old, and he used to tell me he was going to help me get a basketball scholarship some way. I'm six, seven years old. Man, I practiced and practiced and practiced. [Laughter] He was a wonderful – well, still is – just a wonderful man. You know, he was just inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame. There's a wonderful picture of my father and Lea Booth from back in the sixties somewhere.

**Warren:** Great. Wonderful. I'll look for that. What about the fact that you were in the middle of a college campus? Was there interaction with the students?

**Cole:** Oh, of course. Oh, of course there was. Wonderful, wonderful times. To be six, seven and eight years old, it was like having 1,400 playmates around. Whether they viewed it that way was another matter entirely. But I used to love to set up a little snow fort there just right next to the Robert E. Lee Episcopal Church, just across the sidewalk there. As they would come walking down the road – at that age, I was an awful athlete. I couldn't do anything. So my aim was pretty poor. I don't think there was ever any threat that I was going to do any damage, but I would make a snowball and throw it. You could just about count on the fact that they would pick it up and have a little snowball fight. So you could spend a nice winter afternoon down there with a lot of them. Sometimes they would have a tendency to escalate, and as some would come by, they'd start throwing at each other. I was probably somewhat of an instigator in some of that.

I used to have a red wagon that I would – it was a great deal of fun to take that thing down there near Cyrus McCormick and ride it down the hill. At six, seven years old, it's kind of hard, after doing that a couple of times, to get that thing back up. They were wonderful. I never will forget, all of them would walk by and offer to help me pull it up the hill, and they were great about that.

Later on when skateboards first came out, that was a big thing both for me and for the students, as they are now. We would start up at Washington Hall. Skateboards

weren't quite as good as they are now, and we would ride down and there was curve. They've got steps there at Lee Chapel, but back then they didn't have the steps, they just had a curve in the sidewalk and you could go all the way down to the Memorial Gate down there. All the students and I would spent lots of time out there.

**Warren:** When are we talking about now?

**Cole:** I was probably twelve then, so that would have been '66.

**Warren:** Have skateboards been around that long?

**Cole:** Oh, gosh, yes. I've still got mine, as a matter of fact. Still got mine. I am, as you can tell, a pack rat. [Laughter]

**Rouse:** I love pack rats in my line of business.

**Cole:** Right. I'm sure.

**Warren:** I depend on pack rats.

**Cole:** I'm sure. I'm sure.

**Warren:** Did you hang out at the gym?

**Cole:** I did. Sure did. Dick Miller, or Canfield –

**Warren:** Vern Canfield?

**Cole:** Vern Canfield chased me off of the gym floor many, many, many times. Dick Miller in particular, he was just one of my favorite people. He's a great guy. When I was a student at Washington and Lee, I was a history major. For some reason, I had no idea what it is, I walked in to see him. When I was little, I always kind of, whenever Dick came around, I was always trying to run the other way. I didn't do that when I was a student. I used to go in and we used to have some wonderful times sitting in there in his office.

But one day, out of the blue, I was a history major, horrible at math, couldn't do anything, and out of the blue Dick Miller gave me a book on money and banking. I wanted to be nice. I said, "Thanks." I was like, "Okay." [Laughter] Lo and behold, it turned out to be somewhat prophetic.

**Warren:** I dare say.

**Cole:** I'm not sure I've ever mentioned that to him before. I'm going to have to make a point to do that. I still have that book. I still have the book.

**Warren:** Isn't that fascinating.

**Cole:** That is. That is. It was a number of years before I got myself in line enough to kind of realize that this would be something I enjoy.

**Warren:** Well, maybe he saw something in you that you didn't know was there.

**Cole:** Really. Really. Bless his heart.

We'd spent a lot of time, of course, down in the swimming area. Sterns was the swimming coach then. But golly Moses, of course, when I was growing up there, Lee McLaughlin—Lee was a year older than me—and Jim Farrar, who was, of course, the alumni secretary now, and Marshall Washburn, all of us were fairly close in age. Lee and I were particularly close. I used to spend an awful lot of time with him while football practice was going on, playing around particularly underneath the stadium down there. Great dirt-clod battles took place underneath that stadium during practices, and sometimes during games, too. But it was an awful lot of fun. Spent a lot of time.

I guess of the destinations, as I got a little bit older, six, when I got up to be eight—well, probably ten, eleven, twelve years old, I'd spend a lot of time, watched a lot of basketball games. Interestingly enough, Roger Farber, who was a star basketball player back in the sixties, and I think was president of the student body, and was a regional president for Century Fidelity, and he has just retired this year, and I remember watching Roger play basketball in old Doremus Gym.

People talk about how Cameron indoor stadium down at Duke University is a wonderful place to go and watch a basketball game, because you feel like you're right on top of the game. Didn't have anything on old Doremus Gym. I mean, you were

literally over top of the players. They would cheer and get that old track – I don't even know if it's still in there – get that thing just rocking. It was a wonderful place to watch.

They had some awfully good basketball teams back then. I remember a guy named Mel Cartwright and Neer. I forget what his first name was.

**Warren:** He's been inducted in the Hall of Fame.

**Cole:** Yeah. But they were terrific years to watch basketball at Washington and Lee. They were one of the top teams. Of course, when we first got to Lexington, Coach McLaughlin had the football team. They were the number-one small college team in the country there for a couple of years in the sixties – '61. Bob Payne [phonetic] was playing back then, was a lineman on the football team. I went to Coach McLaughlin's camp once I was old enough to do it.

**Warren:** Maxwellton.

**Cole:** Maxwellton. Lee and I being close, I got to spend an awful lot of time out there, both when there was camp and when there wasn't. Rosa McLaughlin, in particular, was just an absolute wonderful influence on me when I was growing up. She was, and still is, has been a great, great influence. I can't say enough wonderful things. I don't know if you've had a chance to spend any time with her or not.

**Warren:** I live up Jump Mountain Road.

**Cole:** Oh, do you?

**Warren:** Yes.

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

**Warren:** I was at a place Saturday morning that you've probably been to many times, up to the graveyard –

**Cole:** Oh, absolutely. Oh, gosh, yes.

**Warren:** Some of my children friends took me up there.

**Cole:** I'd be glad to tell you stories there if you'd like to hear them.

**Warren:** But not on tape.

**Cole:** Well, I'll tell you what, one of my – and sorry to get off the subject here – but one of my proudest, proudest things I've done since reaching maturity or whatever is when they were trying to build that camp, up near Maxwellton. I had an opportunity to go and speak to the planning commission about that.

**Warren:** Thank you.

**Cole:** And also had an opportunity to do a few other things behind the scenes which I think might have helped a little bit on that.

**Warren:** Thank you.

**Cole:** That was my one opportunity to give back to Mrs. McLaughlin all that she's given me.

**Warren:** That was a really threatening thing for our neighborhood.

**Cole:** It really was. It was a shame that it ended up where it did, because that was a wonderful place, too. But I'm glad it wasn't in the back yard.

**Warren:** It would have been a little bit more tough to worry about.

**Cole:** I've climbed the mountain behind my place over in Augusta County, Deerfield. You probably know where Deerfield is.

**Warren:** No, I don't know Deerfield.

**Cole:** Well, I can climb my mountain and look over on Jump Mountain, so I still feel like I'm pretty close.

**Warren:** Well, we'll wave to each other.

**Cole:** Right. Right.

**Warren:** Jump Mountain is right out my window. I look at it every single day.

**Cole:** Yes. That's a wonderful – I tell you, I've got a picture of it at home. I've got a picture of House Mountain.

**Warren:** Let's talk about the wonderful setting of Washington and Lee. Obviously, you've probably spent lots of time at Goshen and House Mountain and places like that.

**Cole:** Well, you know, when I was growing up, again, Washington and Lee and Lexington was a wonderful place for a kid. I mean, I haven't gotten over it yet. Look, I'm here at Blacksburg, and this is too big for me. [Laughter] I haven't gotten over it.

When I was growing up, I used to spend an awful lot of time back over behind the Wilson field, back up in all that property where the cross-country track was. Down at the river, as you would go through the cross-country area and down, there was an old, I guess it was a C&O lock down there. Used to spend an awful lot of time. We'd go down there with some of my student friends. A fellow that comes to mind is Bill Brown, who was from Midland, Texas. I heard from Bill not too long ago. I think he's in Charlotte now with somebody. But that was great fun.

There's that little Woods Creek that, back before they had any of the apartments or the library or anything down there, for a kid like myself, and I really did enjoy being outside, again, I guess, part of our family heritage was growing up in farm country, and I just really enjoyed it. But I would go down there and catch crawfish and bring them back into the Lee House and ask whoever was around to cook them for me. [Laughter] I'm not sure that I'd want to eat any crawfish that came out of Woods Creek now.

**Warren:** Not anymore you wouldn't.

**Cole:** I don't think so. But back then, and there was that tunnel. You know there's a tunnel underneath the old cement footbridge, world's longest non-suspension cement footbridge. There's a tunnel down there. Again, for a kid that age, what a great place. I had a bow and arrow, the old-fashioned bow and arrow, and we'd go down there and shoot at trees. So that was an awful lot of fun.

Not long after we got there, my father found us a retreat out in Bath County, on the Cow Pasture Railroad. The place I have now is not too – I'm on the little Calf Pasture. So again, I haven't gotten it out of my system yet. We would spend our weekends out there. Dad loved to go out into the river and fish, cigarette in hand, would just spend hours out there. I'd ask Mom, "Mom, what's he doing out there?"

And he'd never catch a fish. [Laughter] Mom said, "He's thinking." Dad was quite a thinker. He would put in an awful lot of time out there just running things through his head.

I never will forget, we had a little rowboat out there. When I was very young, I got in a rowboat and got caught in the rapids, and Dad had to come and "rescue me" one night in all of his clothes. Even back then, when Dad put on his suit, I had a great deal of respect for him. Dad was a very debonair dresser, and really cut a fine figure. He looked every bit the role that a university president should.

Dad, of course, grew up—I don't know if you want to get into his history, but he grew up on a huge cattle ranch in Texas, and, of course, horses were a fact of life for them. He worked very hard growing up. The five uncles that I had, four of them—all five of them were very successful in their careers. The youngest one picked up the farm after my grandfather died. But the other four boys, my Uncle Taylor, who I was named for, is provost at Duke and Medal of Freedom winner. Had an Uncle Tommy was a doctor, and Uncle Estes was [unclear]. But they all grew up working on this farm. They all sworn the reason they became successful is because they didn't want to have to go back and work on the farm. [Laughter]

Dad one time asked me to saddle up. We had a horse out there. I saddled up that horse, which was a real honor for me to saddle my dad's horse. I saddled that thing up and the horse had blown up on me. I was about nine and I didn't know what. Dad took off and was every bit as distinguished riding that horse as he was when he was walking down the sidewalk at Washington and Lee. Got down about a quarter of a mile and I was watching, and all of a sudden, saddle and Dad. Oh, gosh, that was a traumatic experience for me. [Laughter]

**Warren:** And for him, too, I suspect.

**Cole:** He was laughing.

**Warren:** I'm real interested that you talked about how debonair he was, because one of the things that I know started to happen in his time period, in his administration, was the beginning of the end of conventional dress.

**Cole:** Yes. Yes. You'll find an article in here that discusses his opposition to deterioration of that standard.

**Warren:** What was your experience of it? You were there; you saw it happening. What did you see?

**Cole:** Quite frankly, we left in '67. I never will forget the first Beatles haircut that came to Washington and Lee. As a matter of fact, Dad gave the first one a ride to Lexington. He had been to a trip up northern Virginia, and somehow or another linked up with this guy and gave him a ride down to Lexington. It was the topic of discussion throughout the entire campus. This was like '65, '66, somewhere in there. But quite frankly, while I was there, things were still pretty much as they had always been. It was probably more of a function of my growing older and being more sensitive to the fact that these weren't playmates anymore, that these were young men who had parties and such. But it seemed like to me that just before we left, things were getting a little more — the decorum was not as great as it had been when we first got there.

We went to high school for four years when we left Lexington. When I came back — and quite frankly, while I was there, Dean Gilliam sent me a copy of the *Calyx* when I was in high school, and I was shocked, going through some of the pages of the *Calyx*, to see fraternity pictures. In the fraternity pictures, some of the guys' ties were askew and weren't dressed as I had remembered them being.

And, of course, when I came back in '71, it was a totally different place. All the traditional dress mandates were gone at that point. People still did it more as a lark, I think, than out of tradition. The peer pressure at that point was to — in the early seventies, people looked pretty rough relative to the way they looked when we first came to Lexington, and, quite frankly, relatively the way it looked now. That was a

rough time. There was a lot of turmoil in the late sixties and early seventies, as I'm sure you know about.

Dad wouldn't—you had to pry to get his opinions on such things, and my father's statements were generally very short, very to the point, and, in a strange way, kind of very bottom-line-oriented. He didn't react as, "Oh, the world's going to hell in a handbasket." His was, "Well, it's probably not in their best interest," meaning the students. Or some other something would happen and he would say, "Well, that's unfortunate for the university." Those were more his reactions to those types of things.

Of course, again, the Beatles haircut, everybody else in town was talking about it, and Dad, even though he had given this guy a ride, his only comments, to my recollection, was that he'd given the person a ride down. [Laughter] So he had spent some time and he had seen it.

**Warren:** Can you remember who that was?

**Cole:** I cannot. For the life of me, I can't. It seemed like to me that year there were two on campus at the same time. It was really quite the thing. This was probably '65, maybe, '64 or '65, somewhere in there. Quite a thing for Lexington, in fact, at that point.

**Warren:** Quite the thing for anywhere.

**Cole:** Yes.

**Warren:** One of the other major things that was going on in that time period was the whole issue of integration throughout the United States, particularly in the South, and at Washington and Lee. What do you know? I know you were young, but what do you know about that?

**Cole:** A traumatic time, of course. My father took a very brave stance relative to that. He took it not only as far as Washington and Lee was concerned, but also as far as on a national level with Prince Edward School situation. Dad was very committed to equal opportunity, and regardless of probably convention, he was going to see to it as much as it was within his ability to have an impact, that was going to be something that was

going to be part of his legacy to Washington and Lee, as it turned out to be. Of course, we're all extraordinarily proud of that, what he did.

**Warren:** Well, you should be. It's a story that, I think, it's a difficult one certainly to deal with, but it's one I'm not at all hesitant to include. I think it's very important. And clearly, what I'm finding as I do my research is that there was a lot of resistance from the Board of Trustees.

**Cole:** Huge. Huge.

**Warren:** Can you talk about that?

**Cole:** Not with any authority. Again, at my age I wasn't party to the heavier discussions. I do know that there was a heavy temporary price to be paid in terms of some of the benefactors of the university. But that was symptomatic of the times. Dad took what at the time was a very brave and bold stance, and it was the right thing to do. That was my father's bottom line. I think anytime you're in a position like that, there's going to be a price. He paid that, I guess, to a certain extent, on a short-term level to the university, paid it, and was willing to pay it, and it's a stronger institution now for doing that when he did it.

**Warren:** Do you remember the controversy about the invitation to Martin Luther King [Jr.]?

**Cole:** You know, I don't. I don't. There is an article in there referencing that, and you've probably seen most of what I have here.

**Warren:** No, I probably haven't, so I'm real interested to look through.

**Cole:** There is one in there.

**Warren:** Good. Another thing that—I'm not quite sure, I should have sat down with the *Calyxes* and figured out exactly what had happened, but another thing that's starting to happen was the death of Fancy Dress. Had that died by the time—I think it was still going [unclear].

**Cole:** It was still going when we got there. That was a big thing. Again, for me at my age, I wasn't party to the heavier discussions relative to some of these things that were going on, but oh, man, for me, that was a wonderful time. The whole university was excited, and certainly our household was. It was taking place right across the street. Back in those days, some of the students – we actually had dates that would stay at our house. That was one of the things that was still in effect, to a large degree, when I first got to Lexington. A lot of the girls' schools were in the area. You had to say where you were going to be saying, and, by God, you'd better be there. [Laughter]

**Warren:** Especially if it was at President Cole's house.

**Cole:** We had several. I remember, distinctly, students coming to pick up their dates at our house. Does the name Rob Vaughn [phonetic] mean anything? Rob was quite a student leader and is at Charlottesville, and is – forgive me, I cannot for the life of me remember the name of the organization that Rob is in charge of now – humanities, associated with the university, I forget.

**Warren:** In Charlottesville?

**Cole:** In Charlottesville.

**Warren:** Is it the Virginia Humanities Council? I know they're in Charlottesville.

**Cole:** I don't know. But Rob, I remember when he was a student coming to pick up his date. A young man by the name of T. K. Oates used to keep dates at our house. Mom and Dad just loved it. I mean, they just thought that was great, watching these guys come in all their regalia to pick up their dates. Particularly, I remember one in particular, it was a Civil War theme and, of course, all of the students were dressed in their Confederate uniforms and all the dates were dressed in their hooped skirts and everything. Of course, that was at a point that I was still just enthralled with the fact that I was living in Robert E. Lee's house, and here were these real honest-to-goodness Confederates coming to our door. [Laughter]

**Warren:** That's great. Let me flip the tape over.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

**Warren:** You said that the Fancy Dress Ball was happening across the street, so was it in the dining hall at that point?

**Cole:** Oh, yeah. Well, the ones I remember were.

**Warren:** Sometimes it was at Doremus, and sometimes it was at the dining hall.

**Cole:** The Confederate one was the one I remember most clearly, and that was very much at the dining hall.

**Warren:** So would you actually sneak into the Fancy Dress?

**Cole:** I'd snuck into just about everything that was sneakable. [Laughter]

**Warren:** Well, tell me what it was like from that perspective.

**Cole:** I actually even had, up until recently, a tape. My brother had given me a little tape recorder about that big, and I snuck into Doremus Gym when the Four Tops were playing there, and recorded the Four Tops. I had that thing up until not too long ago.

**Warren:** Tell me about that.

**Cole:** It was, golly Moses, the little thing. I don't know how much you want to get into it, but you find ways to get in. I had wonderful friends throughout that entire university. It was a great place to grow up. I never will forget the people who were important to me. Most of them I can't even remember their full names. There was a guy named Mr. Bryant [phonetic], who was on the buildings and grounds crew. Oh, a guy named Fred, and it kills me I can't remember Fred's name. I think they've got a little marker with Fred down at the stadium, who took care of the football field down there. Always called me "Colesy."

**Warren:** Colesy.

**Cole:** Yes, Colesy. But he was a real nice guy. Let's see. I'm trying to remember the fellow that lives out on 39 across from the horse center.

**Warren:** Dr. Ju?

**Cole:** No, no. This was a buildings – he was in charge of the crew. I'll remember eventually. Just wonderful people. Well, I got to know those people, and particularly in the gym. So back doors would be open, and "Can I go up and take a look?"

"Yeah, go on and take a look." [Laughter] So I'd run up and I could get underneath the bandstand. Of course, everybody'd be out there dancing and I'd be under there with my little tape recorder.

**Warren:** So who else do you remember besides the Four Tops?

**Cole:** Four Tops was the one I remember the most. It was the most hoopla about the Four Tops coming to town. The Mock Conventions. That was an easy – I went to all the Mock Conventions while I was there.

**Warren:** Can you remember important people who came to that?

**Cole:** Well, of course I remember when Truman came.

**Warren:** Tell me about that.

**Cole:** Oh, gosh, that was a big event. I was six then. That was quite a memorable experience, because I was in first grade, and they came, and I was asked to march in the parade for them. I would just as soon this not go in, because this is kind of corny, but I had a little Confederate uniform that I'd gotten when I was in New Orleans. There was another little boy in Lexington that had a Confederate uniform, so they wanted us to march with a sign, carrying a sign. And it was a long parade. I mean, it started up at the high school and went all the way down Main Street. You know the way they are.

Well, about halfway through, being six years old, carrying this sign, my tongue was just hanging out. Of course, right behind us was the ROTC unit trying to – yeah. There was the head of ROTC, "Come on, kids, move along." We were just running down the street. I was so tired by the time we finally got to where my mother and father and the Trumans were, that I could barely stand up.

But I do remember meeting him. As a matter of fact, my mother had a guest book. This was very soon after we'd moved in to the Lee House. It was a brand-new

guest book, and the very first name on that guest book was Harry Truman. And we still have that. My mother thought it was so cute. Everybody had been very reverential of Harry Truman's – not signing directly below – they dropped down a line or two before they started sign, and apparently somewhere along the line, one of my nieces, when she was just able to write, found the guest book and saw everybody's name in there and signed right underneath Truman, in good old six- or seven-year-old script. [Laughter] Mom loves that.

**Warren:** That's a real family treasure.

**Cole:** It really is. It really is.

**Warren:** So what was Mock Convention like?

**Cole:** It was every bit as much fun and as wild and crazy as it is right now. I think probably they were a lot more into the true spirit of the convention itself. I recorded on my VCR – this one was on C-SPAN, and I recorded it. I've got to admit, I thoroughly enjoyed every bit that I recorded, particularly given the fact that it seemed like all the speakers really kind of – with the exception of Dan Quayle, understood what they were there for. [Laughter] So that was a hoot and a holler. I think back then, they applauded and paraded and did everything the way that it was designed to be, and there probably wasn't quite as much of, during the speech, interrupting the speech, and that kind of stuff.

**Warren:** And back then, it was less clear who the nominee was going to be. Right?

**Cole:** That's right. Absolutely. Absolutely. That's very much the case.

**Warren:** So did you have more of a sense of back-room stuff?

**Cole:** Well, I think the thrill of being able to make what was obviously a very significant decision was tremendous. I mean, all of my student friends were just absolutely taken into this thing. I mean, they didn't have time for anything. They were making a decision, in their mind. It was not just an exercise. I was chairman of one of the delegations when I was a student – Utah delegation, and we still had to make a

decision back in 1972, in the spring of '72. Kennedy was the nominee. But it was not just a foregone conclusion, as I think it was certainly this year with Bob Dole. Jimmy Carter was the keynote speaker. Jimmy came to give a serious speech. [Laughter] That was, I think, an awakening for him.

**Warren:** Probably a good preparation for what was to come four years later.

**Cole:** We went – my year, I mean, it was way up in the early morning before we ever came to a final decision. It was still serious at that point. There was so much riding on the decisions of the day and who would lead us and who wouldn't back then, and I think the campus then was very much a Democratic campus. Everybody was anti-war and anti-establishment and very much a reflection of what other campuses were going through. It was taken, I think, with a good bit of seriousness back then.

**Warren:** So you arrived back after the unrest in May of 1970.

**Cole:** Yes. Yes.

**Warren:** You came immediately after.

**Cole:** '71. Right.

**Warren:** So you weren't there to witness any of that.

**Cole:** No, but interestingly enough, and it's kind of interesting, there were a couple of my student friends, when I was still in Lexington as a young kid, who were very much involved in this protest. It was interesting to me, because I didn't see that side of them.

Everybody, the whole tone of a college campus changed back then, and it was easy to feel it when I came back, that it was just a different place. The traditions that were so much a part of Washington and Lee when I was growing up there weren't nearly as important to the students that were there when I got there. That was sad in a way, but at the same time, the things that people were taking so seriously, they weren't taking tradition or Robert E. Lee as the gentleman, as seriously as they were taking the fact that we were fighting a war that was just horrific, and that there was an

establishment that was not seeing what the plague of the age was. Everybody was rebelling against that in one way or another.

I've got to admit, for me, my dad – Dad told me one time, he said, "You're not going" – when I got some grades that he didn't really appreciate, he said, "You didn't go back to Lexington to go to school, you went back to go home and to be back at Washington and Lee." He was very perceptive. I really loved growing up there, and to a degree, that's why I was going back. It took me a little while to adjust to the fact that there really was a reason for me to be there, and that I needed to get a handle on that later on. I probably matured a little bit late. [Laughter]

**Warren:** Well, a lot of us matured a little late in those days. It was a time of prolonged adolescence.

**Cole:** Well, it was, and God knows, I just think back to the people that were still the Washington and Lee that I remember, people like Dean Gilliam and those folks. It must have been terribly distressing to them to see how the mind-set of that generation changed, and changed so quickly. But again, it's certainly not the fault of that generation. It was society and a reflection of what was going on on a much broader level. Interesting transition for me there.

**Warren:** I'll bet. So when you came back, this guy you had probably known real well, named Bob Huntley, was now president.

**Cole:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Warren:** How had you known him before, and what was it like having him be the president?

**Cole:** I knew him before as someone who my dad just had highest regard for. He would come and have dinner with us at the house.

**Warren:** Sizing the place up?

**Cole:** They were talking at one level, and I was more concerned with whether I had to eat the beets or not. But certainly knew Dr. Huntley before we left. I knew his

daughters, who also had gone to Camp Maxwellton, or Camp Laughlin [phonetic], the girls' part of that. Being one of Lee's good friends, I got to stick around after boys' camp was over and to help out at the girls' camps. I knew Martha probably best of all the daughters.

Really, once I got to Lexington, didn't see Dr. Huntley that much. I do remember, as I think I mentioned to you, him coming to – he was a Delt at Washington, Delta Tau Delta, and came to the initiation ceremony that we had. He was there; Jim Farrar, who was also a Delta Tau Delta, was there, and John McDaniel and all of them came for that. We'd, of course, see him on campus and such, but didn't spend an awful lot of time with him, which I regret now. Particularly having had this recent dinner with him and hearing all the things that were going on, I would have liked to have been a little bit closer to it.

That was an interesting age for me, because I guess a lot of people – as low a profile as I could maintain was nice for me at that particular time. You grow out of these things, and – knock on wood – I have.

**Warren:** What were you involved with as a student? You were a Delt.

**Cole:** I was, and probably not one of the better Deltas. Matter of fact, I dropped out, which is interesting, considering the fact when I came back to Virginia in '87, somehow or another, and I'm still not sure exactly how that happened, I ended up being president of the corporation and was involved in all the Delta Tau Delta travails for the last few years, and that's why I'm going back to Lexington next week to finally settle on the assets of what remains of Delta Tau Delta. Kind of a sad thing, sad because as a fraternity it meant so much to so many people for so many years. We tried everything we could to try and salvage it, but just ran into all of the challenges that are facing fraternities at any school these days, but certainly at Lexington.

Did that. Played football until had some cartilage taken out of my knee, so that was the end of that. Played lacrosse. Tried to play varsity lacrosse, but back in those

days, you really had to be a good lacrosse player if you were going to play for Washington and Lee. So I played JV, again, until my knee got hurt. Was the first president of the Washington and Lee Polo Club, which is probably not one of those things that Dr. Huntley would like to be reminded of. [Laughter] Nor Ferris Hotchkiss.

**Warren:** I've seen pictures of that and it must have been pretty short-lived.

**Cole:** It was probably not short enough. [Laughter]

**Warren:** What happened?

**Cole:** It was a great deal of fun, and we had some horses donated to us. I left and I graduated, myself and a couple of other key people, when we left, the horses did not receive what was deemed the appropriate attention. They had been left in the care of some people who became distracted, so the horses ended up going somewhere else. They were given away. They were donations of people to the university. We actually had a fairly good club going, and played a schedule, played out at the Blue Ridge Riders Rink. You know where that is, out on Kerrs Creek, played out there. We also played at Glen-Maury Park. We had a wonderful United Way event there. This was all my senior year, and it was quite successful while we were there. We made several trips up to Charlottesville and played. Some crazy reason, I still have kept all the mementos of that. But like I say, I can't throw anything away, even the stationery we came up with that we used to ask for contribution. But like a lot of clubs, if you don't have a strong group following you who want to pick it up and run with it, it's hard to keep it going.

**Warren:** You say you dropped out of the fraternity.

**Cole:** Yes.

**Warren:** Was that about the time when the housemothers started to disappear?

**Cole:** Our housemother was a lady named Mrs. Cee [phonetic]. She was there my first and second year. It was tough. That was tough for her, I think. She moved out and moved up on Providence Hill not too far from Marshall Street, somewhere up there. My

freshman year, freshman, sophomore, it was rough in the fraternity houses. I don't know.

**Warren:** Talk to me about that.

**Cole:** Decorum was gone. One of my jobs at the fraternity house, I like to work with wood, and I was the official furniture repairman for the house, because it was broken all the time. I don't want to cast aspersions on individuals, but I think it was symptomatic of the times. At all the fraternity houses, they were all just how wild can parties get. I think that was very much to the university's credit that things got out of hand, and when the [Fraternity] Renaissance came along, it was none too soon. But it was a no-holds-barred type of atmosphere at fraternity parties.

Again, going back to when I was growing up, Delta Tau Delta in particular had been pretty important to me, because I had a lot of friends who were there, and I can run down a list of them. I sat on the hill when the old Delta Tau Delta burned down. Mr. Reid Colbert [phonetic]—I don't know if that name rings a bell to you—Mr. Reid had been at our house. He was a black gentleman, had been at our house for many years, had then gone to work for the Gaineses when the Gaineses retired, and then came out of retirement to come back to the Delt House and work. When that thing burned down, Mr. Reid was just standing out in front of it, just crying. He cared so much for that fraternity, so much for the guys who'd gone through that house. From the time that I left and actually went to high school and came back, Mr. Reid was—it was really tough on him to see how people were treating the house, with no respect, no recognition of the heritage of the people who had gone before. That was very tough on him. It was tough on the alums who would come back and see the shape of the houses. The furniture was in just horrendous condition, and generally broken. We had a piano that was playing when I first got there, and Lord knows what happened to it. It was gone by the time I dropped out.

Again, not casting aspersions on individuals, that was symptomatic of what was going on not only at Washington and Lee, but elsewhere. That was the attitude of the times – things, tradition, what can we do now to be the loudest and the craziest. Kind of sad, quite frankly.

Bob Murray, who was a – what a wonderful man, Bob and I were bemoaning what had happened to the Delta House, because it was the newest house on campus at the time, the one house that was really built to be a modern fraternity house. Bob was just shaking his head, "It's a shame to see what you guys – " There was no need for him to be thinking of me in those – because I'd grown up with Bob, with that chaw in the side of his mouth. I'd grown up with him. I swear to God, they had buckets in the gym – of course, everybody used to spit in, but Bob used them as his own personal spittoon for all his tobacco juice. But he said it's a shame to see what they've done to that house in that short a period of time.

It was built back in '63, I think, and this was '71. I swear to God, it was a forty-year-old house when you'd walk inside. It was painted in all of the colors of the day. You know, one of the rooms upstairs had a – it was actually pretty neat – had an American flag painted across the whole side of one room, you know, no lights in the fixtures. But again, that's not – all of those guys have gone on to be extraordinarily responsible and successful people. It just was symptomatic of times. It was an unfortunate time to go through.

**Warren:** I think it's important to get that story, though, because we have to understand why it was so bad that the Renaissance was needed.

**Cole:** Yes.

**Warren:** If you don't understand how bad it was, then the whole idea of Fraternity Renaissance seems like an extravagance.

**Cole:** I think John Wilson – and I’m sure if you haven’t talked to John you will talk to John – he will tell you frankly what the need was. John lives here in Blacksburg, comes down, and we’ve had some interesting conversations.

**Warren:** I’ll bet you have. I’d like to be a fly on the wall.

**Cole:** When the Delts, just prior to our renovation, I don’t know how much history of individual fraternities you’re aware of, but we went through a rather traumatic time there when the university was trying to make a point that it was not going to stand for what had gone before.

At Christmastime, right before the renovation of the Delta House – this was ‘91, I believe – was supposed to start, the guys in the house decided they didn’t see any reason not to go ahead and trash what was left, so they knocked some holes in the walls and broke up some furniture and everything. My role as corporation president, I came in on a Sunday coming back from my place in Augusta County, saw that, and I had told them specifically that I didn’t want to see that, because it had gone on in some of the other houses just prior to renovation, and they had done it anyway. So I reported them. They ended up on a year-and-a-half suspension. It was an interesting time. The original suspension had been for five years, which essentially would have shut down the house.

In my role as corporation president, I had been able to muster all those alumni to the Delta House and still meant an awful lot going back. Some of the letters I got, and I’ve still got them, from alumni back in the thirties and stuff, that was home for them. I mean, there was one where the guy’s parents [unclear], and those were his brothers. Well, all those letters were sent to John Wilson, and the suspension was reduced from five years to eighteen months. During that eighteen months they agreed to go ahead and renovate the house.

**Warren:** This is the house on Lee Avenue?

**Cole:** Yes. Right. As a matter of fact, the people who live next door to us also live out in your community.

**Warren:** Yes, they're my next-door neighbors.

**Cole:** Those people, I mean, they were wonderful. As wonderful a place as Washington and Lee was for me when I was growing up, came back in the seventies, went through all that mess, then came back to Virginia again ready to get involved as an alumnus at Washington and Lee. Somehow I ended up as president of a corporation of this house that's going down the tubes. [Laughter] And I'm looking forward to – and I tell Buddy Atkins this, and I tell David Howison this, that one of these days I'm going to find something in Washington and Lee that I'm really going to be able to get in there and have a positive role.

**Warren:** Oh, I'm sure they're just delighted to hear you say that.

**Cole:** But that was an interesting time. Of course, after the suspension, with all the fraternities there, it was very difficult to restart the fraternity. So I'm going up there next week, I think, to have a final distribution of some type or other of what's left of the kitchens. When we did it back again, we really did it right. I mean, we gave them every opportunity to make something of it, but at that point it was too far gone, just couldn't do it again.

**Warren:** There's one aspect that we haven't talked about. You did come back as a student. Don't you think we ought to talk about academics a little bit, your experience in the classes?

**Cole:** Yes, I'd be glad to. Don't quote anything I said to any of my professors.

[Laughter] I came back, I was a history major. When I walked in the door, I was going to be a history major. My dad was a history major, my brother was a history major. I loved it. It had been a part of my world for as long as I can remember.

I had my classes with Dr. Moger and Dr. Jenks. Dr. Jenks' French Revolution, took all those classes, loved every one of them. Took the New South from Dr. Moger. Read his *Burb to Burbanism* [phonetic]. Had a wonderful experience with Dr. Moger. He honored me greatly – honored my father, actually, whom he had a huge amount of

respect for. My father was a historian, and was the first editor of the *Journal of Southern History*, for which he was known primarily for by the historians at Washington and Lee. Dr. Moger, knowing that my father and a gentleman, a fellow historian by the name of C. Van Woodward [phonetic], were very close and worked on various projects together, Dr. Moger had a copy of C. Van Woodward's book, *The Origin of the New South*, and he presented that to me in honor of his regard for my father. This was his own version of it, which I thought was wonderful, and actually was rather motivating for me at the time, too, because it came at one of those sessions where Dr. Moger was reminding me that I needed to pay some more attention to my studies.

But history – gosh, Dr. Machado.

**Warren:** Barry Machado.

**Cole:** Took a couple of courses from him, which I enjoyed very much. Let's see. Those are the ones that jump out but loved in other areas. Sev Duvall's English courses were wonderful, and just absolutely adored sitting through his classes. Outside of the real academic hard-core English and history, probably my favorite was taking courses from Sam Kozak. I love geology. Again, I liked being outside. His course was called "Rocks," and fellow classmates and I would spend hours out walking around the fields in Lexington, picking up rocks and hitting them with little chisels to see what – I loved that. I still am able to identify some of that.

But it's been great, although – and I'm sure most of them would say that I was not the best student. I made up for it later when I decided that I needed to earn a living, and went back and got a business degree at Duke. I was a much better student at that stage of my life than I was earlier. But despite that, I still have all my books from Washington and Lee. I still read frequently. I will pick them up and go through them, and feel absolutely and totally embarrassed when I get asked a question that I should know the answer to about one of my history courses that I don't know the answer to,

and I will rush home. I know where every one of them is, will pull it out, and can go to where the answer is and come up with it.

Dr. Jenks' classes, he was a wonderful professor. I'm sure you've heard other people say that before. And Dr. Moger – oh, gosh, you've got to mention Charlie Turner, probably one of the most enjoyable classes you could sit through. His classes were infamous at Washington and Lee for the color that he would bring to the class and would really get into his lectures in front of us and would act out the roles of the various people, including Jeb Stuart and Lee's farewell address. It was very touching. Dr. Turner had a study room downstairs in duPont Hall, and he had little desks down there, and we would all go down and spend time studying with Dr. Turner sitting at his desk. I took several courses from him.

duPont Hall was interesting. I took a couple of architecture courses when I was there. I took a drafting course from Henry Ravenhorst, which I also thoroughly enjoyed, and have used on this place I have up in Augusta County. I've designed all of the renovations I've been doing utilizing what I learned in his course, which I'm sure would absolutely shock him, because I really wasn't very good, particularly in the math part of it.

I really enjoyed, also, the – you mentioned Pamela Simpson and her course. I took a course from – the name is slipping. A gentleman. Not Dr. Ju. But it was a course that we studied European architecture, particularly cathedrals, which fit in very nicely with my history, which I enjoyed.

I did mention Dr. Futch. Dr. Futch, who is still a favorite professor, but a favorite person, too, he was probably – this thing with the fraternity house the last six years, this corporation, it was really a pretty tough time, and he was probably one of the most supportive of the individuals there in Lexington, and would come by, and was always encouraging, and I really, really appreciated his support.

I took two courses from Dr. Futch, both of which stand out, because – well, I took several courses from him, but two of them in particular stand out. One was the history of Venice, and the other was the history of Rome, of the papacy. Just absolutely enjoyed it, because he would involve the music of the age, and part of the requirement was that you go to the Music Listening Room that we had in the McCormick Library at the time, and sit there and listen to Vivaldi. I love Vivaldi as a result of that, and the art and everything that was Venice. One of my great aspirations – and I’m not a traveler, I don’t travel well, but I have this one great aspiration. I want to go to Venice in the worst kind of way, as a result of that class. It was so thorough. But he painted this mental picture of Venice. It was as though you were there. There were slides and everything. There are parts of Venice that I – I’ve never been there before. If somebody would show me a picture or a slide, and I know exactly where it is as a result of that.

One of the things we had to do as a requirement for the Venetian history course, we had to memorize the names of all the doges, who was the chief executive of Venice, going back 2,000 years, which was one of the games that people would play in order to remember these names. Nobody could do it from absolute memory, because –

**Warren:** Except Futch.

**Cole:** Except Dr. Futch. I still remember Doge Fos Cary [phonetic]. I probably will never forget Doge Fos Cary. But everybody would go through the games, I forget what they were called, where you would set up the games for yourself, with the first letters, then you would draw the line of first letters, and that was supposed to help you to remember what the name – that was tough enough, but then you got into papal history where you also had to go back to, I guess it was Paul, and remember all the Popes.

Those were taught because so many of them were Leo V, Leo VIII. [Laughter]

Those were both spring courses, and this would be the last week in May when Lexington is absolutely the most beautiful place in the world, with the spring smells. I would study up on the old Colonnade in the old classrooms, where you could open up

the windows on both sides. Absolute torture to try to study up there in May, because down at Red Square, of course, they've got a party going on down there, and the smells of all the – the spring smells are coming in, and invariably somebody's down there between Lee Chapel and Washington Hall with a frisbee, playing, and you're sitting up there trying to memorize the names of all these Popes over 2,000 years. It was torture. It was absolute torture.

**Warren:** We're at the end of this tape. I'll pop in another one.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

**Warren:** This is Mame Warren. It's tape two with Taylor Cole on December 30, 1996, in Blacksburg, Virginia.

We're talking about Dave Futch.

**Cole:** Yes.

**Warren:** And you're saying that he came because of your father.

**Cole:** Well, yes. When Dad first came to Lexington, I think it was generally acknowledged that one of the things that were distinguishing were the very distinguished faculty that came during his tenure there, of whom Dr. Futch was one of them. Dr. Futch, bless his heart, never fails to remember my father whenever we meet. That's always fun. I appreciate him doing that.

**Warren:** He's very happy to be at Washington and Lee. You couldn't ask for a faculty member who's more devoted.

**Cole:** You know, there's the story about Dr. Futch. I don't know whether it's true or not, but he was not known for the neatest of desks, and that somewhere at one point he had cleared off a few inches of papers, and there was an unopened letter there offering him the chairmanship of some history department somewhere that was dated a year previously. [Laughter]

Back in the early seventies, and I'm sure you've heard this, Dr. Futch has requirements that you do not come to his class without a tie, and if you are a woman,

you come in a skirt. He was adamant. I mean, you did not come into the classroom. Many students would bring a lady guest with them, and if they had on a skirt, they could stay. But as far as ties were concerned, you didn't dare come into his classroom without a tie. Well, back in the early seventies, fashion was just whatever struck your fancy on that particular day. Dr. Futch kept several ties, all of the two-inch variety, back in his office. If you came in in a T-shirt, you went back there and got one of those ties, and you wore it.

**Warren:** With the T-shirt.

**Cole:** With the T-shirt. [Laughter] He was an important fixture at Washington and Lee, certainly while I was there.

**Warren:** One of the more important traditions that we haven't mentioned at all, the Honor System.

**Cole:** I hope it is as strong now as it always has been. I know that there have been a lot of pressures on honor systems throughout the country. I think they've compromised the honor system at UVA, which was the model for so many around the country also. I know that when I was at Duke in the business school, there was no honor system there. Myself and another very, very fine woman, named Edie Deitz [phonetic]—I forget what her last name is now; she's married—and I drew up an Honor System that was modeled on Washington and Lee's, and it was very important to us down there.

You can't go to Washington and Lee, at least growing up there as I did and being a student there, without that being one of the things that you always carry with you. At least I hope most of the people do. I know I certainly do. I'm very proud of a lot of the decisions I've made since graduating that were influenced by that, and probably helped me a lot in accomplishing what little I have accomplished. I'm very proud of growing up in a tradition like that.

My freshman year, a fraternity brother of mine, a pledge at the Delt House, was accused of an honor violation in a paper he wrote. It was a plagiarism case. In a lot of

people's minds it was a fairly minor plagiarism case. It went the full course, and right down to the trial with the law students. He was expelled, whatever the terminology is. I think that had a huge impact. I know it did on the people in our house.

I think it can be safely said that as traumatic as that era was in so many different ways, of the things that remained intact, it was the adherence to the Honor Code there. Free exams was never in question while we were there, which was something that I was always amazed about, and still am. I assume it still is; they have open exams. But gosh, what a wonderful tribute to that institution that they are able to maintain that type of self-imposed, student-imposed expectation. I mean, that, in my mind, is one of the greatest hallmarks of Washington and Lee, to this day, mighty important.

**Warren:** Well, it sure seems to be. Then my last question is the other big change, coeducation. What was your stand then and what's your stand now?

**Cole:** That's interesting. I can answer that by relaying a story to you. 1986, I was in North Carolina at the time. I had a young lady indicate she was interested in going to Washington and Lee – this was a year after coeducation – and had absolutely fantastic credentials. She was at the North Carolina School of Science and Math, top student, was a star tennis player, family was very well connected and prominent. Every expectation that this was going to be a topnotch candidate. I did what you do when you sponsor somebody like that. I wrote all the appropriate letters and set up the interview, and Van Pate, who was just a wonderful friend of mine, was in the admissions office then, which is a whole other story.

She came up for the interview, got the tour, came back said, "Oh, man," she loved it, thought it was great. Her mother comes in to see me later, really kind of flushed, because they had put everything on this woman going to Washington and Lee. She got wait-listed. I mean, straight As. North Carolina School of Science and Math, which is the – I mean, I didn't know what to say. I didn't think there was any question. Had that

woman been a man applying when I went to Washington and Lee, I mean, no question. Absolutely no question whatsoever. She was hitting on all cylinders.

So I called Van Pate. I said, "Van, there's been an awful mistake. This young lady didn't get in. She got wait-listed."

Van said, "Yes, she did. She looked good. She's a good wait-list candidate."

"Whoa. What has happened?"

He said, "That's the way it is right now." He said, "It has gotten that tough."

I say that in answer to your question about coeducation, because I think like so many people, tradition, yes, that was – hated to see all the tradition that is associated with being an all-male institution not continue. Then I heard that the university had become so much stronger academically by going coed, that its graduates were being seen as being so much stronger, that I couldn't get beyond that.

My dad and I talked about it, because he was still alive at the time. I was very happy that I didn't get hung up in the tradition, and that I was able to go to, "This is really in the best interest of the university, and by golly damn, here's proof," which was very much the way he would have looked on it, I think.

**Warren:** What did he say when you talked to him about it?

**Cole:** My recollection is discussing the merits of going coed, what will happen to the university if it goes. We didn't spend an awful lot of time on tradition. Can the university afford it? I remember having that discussion with him. Of course, I was right out of business school and was in banking then. How would the alumni – as if I wasn't a part of it – how are the alumni going to react to this?

I've got to be careful about saying this, but I think relative to the decisions that he had to make, yes, it was a big decision, but this one was so clearly the right decision to make for all the bottom-line reasons, that I think he looked on it that way. I think Dad's biggest concern about the whole thing was whether the university could afford it. Obviously, it's –

**Warren:** Obviously.

**Cole:** –been able to do that, and had a very successful capital campaign. It took somebody like John Wilson to do that, and I admire him for being able to do it, because he was really – that’s not something that had the national attention, I guess. Well, it did. I take it back, but it wasn’t a national cause the way that the integration thing was.

Again, I have to be very careful, because that is not my place to draw those conclusions. I was far and away separated from both of those decisions. So for me, these are just my reflections on it.

**Warren:** That’s what I’m after.

**Cole:** I’m very uncomfortable. I’ve got to say this. I’m very uncomfortable in making comparisons between the difficulty of a decision that one man make and another man –

**Warren:** I understand. We won’t make that comparison.

**Cole:** Okay.

**Warren:** But you brought that issue up. I’d like to finish up by going back to the end of your father’s administration. Why did he leave?

**Cole:** Washington and Lee – and, again, there are people in Lexington who can give you a heck of a lot better actual history of what the university was like at that time and what the challenges that my father faced. Frank Parsons obviously jumps – because he was there, and everything that was done Frank was a party to, an influence and confidant and everything else. Dad valued Frank’s input tremendously, as he did Frank Gilliam’s, and Dean Pusey, and Leyburn, and all of them. That was an extraordinary group of people that were there during my father’s time – extraordinary talent. I’m sure every administration says that about their own time. Some of those people were legends, Dean Gilliam in particular. Lee McLaughlin in the athletic area. I mean, Dr. Leyburn, gosh, Dr. Leyburn. And Jim Whitehead.

Oh, Lord, didn’t even mention Mattingly. I’m sure his name has popped up a time or two during your – what a fascinating gentleman he was. I was quite young

when he passed away. He cut a wide swath, I remember. [Laughter] When Mr. Mattingly's around, you are on your best behavior. But a very nice man.

Washington and Lee, of course, went through the integration thing and it was coming into – there are those that would say that Dad helped Washington and Lee take the steps that were so important for a university from an academic sense to what it is today. I guess each president has their particular role and their particular set of challenges. Dad's, it seems, he's been judged as the one who did the most for the faculty, the most for the faculty's standard of living, did the most to improve the faculty, to bring in really topnotch talent, the things that you would expect someone who had been the academic dean at Tulane to do, the dean of the college. So when Dad got to Lexington, that was his mandate.

You run an institution like Washington and Lee, with the pressures that come from making momentous decisions, from having to do the obligatory fund-raising, to meet the expectations of alumni, many of whom still hadn't forgiven the university for dropping subsidized athletics, much less the other momentous things that had come along. He did all that, then he undertook a fairly in-depth self-study program that is mentioned. Frank can certainly tell you more about this. He was very involved in that.

I remember Dad, during the last couple of years he was there, bringing home manuals. And that was really tough. I mean, you're trying to reshape an institution which is very much tied into tradition in an old-fashioned kind of sense. They got through it, and all the changes were made, and I think he made it possible for the next agenda items, which were so important to Dr. Huntley saw to and his capital campaign, and then with John Wilson and coeducation, then he had a significant capital campaign.

I remember going to one of the Founders Day – not Founders Day – I think it was alumni address that John Wilson gave at Lee Chapel, and at the beginning of his address he mentioned those who had laid the foundation. He mentioned specifically my father as having laid that foundation.

I think anytime you do these things, it takes a lot out of you. Dad's health probably was not quite as good back in the late sixties. You alluded to the fact that no one ever saw him without a cigarette, and that took a real toll on him. His years in Washington, he was sick a good bit of the time, and then in Chapel Hill the same thing, although they had some wonderful years in Chapel Hill. They loved it down there. But I don't smoke. All those things, I think, had a role in it. They say that university presidents, if you can last five or six years, you've done well, and Dad was there eight years. So that was pretty good. John Wilson, I think he was, what, ten?

**Warren:** Yes.

**Cole:** Ten. Dr. Huntley started in 1968, so he made twelve years.

**Warren:** '68 to '83.

**Cole:** Oh, was it? Okay. So I think it was all of that. Plus, Dad also – as my mother says, Dad's greatest desire in life was to be an academic. Administration was a little bit of a far cry from that. He loved teaching. I think Bob Huntley continued to carry a teaching load while he was president. I think Dad would have liked to have done that, but the administration was such a large piece of it. So that was kind of a far cry from what he, I think, really wanted to do. Dad was always very scholarly, which was, for somebody whose grammar wasn't particular good, it was kind of tough growing up.

Apparently, growing up, their mother and father had been pretty strict on them about that. All of my uncles have said that. My Uncle Taylor, the first paper I wrote for business school, he wanted to see it. Whew, boy, that was a mistake. [Laughter] All of the numbers were there on my business paper, but, boy, he sure didn't like the way I put the words together.

But Dad had other interests. Working on improving libraries was significant to him. It's interesting that you're here in Blacksburg, because over here at the Corporate Research Center, there is a company called VTLS, which stands for Virginia Tech Library Systems, and they have computer programs which have essentially made the

Dewey Decimal System obsolete. You're probably more aware of this than I am. When Dad left Washington and Lee in '67, that's what he went to work on through the Council on Library Resources. What we have over there is a direct result of the work that Dad started doing through—

**Warren:** That's interesting.

**Cole:** Of course, Ms. Brown at the university was an associate of my father's at the Council on Library Resources.

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

**Cole:** Yes. Yes. They were doing some very significant work in libraries, which Dad found tremendously rewarding and was, I think, how he wanted to end his career.

**Warren:** That's an interesting way to come full circle. Well, I've come to the end of my questions. Do you have anything you'd like to say or summarize or anything I didn't ask about that I should have?

**Cole:** No, the only thing I would say is that for me and my family, Lexington and the people in Lexington, all of them, Washington and Lee and others, had the most profound influence on our lives. I look on it and say it's absolutely the best thing that ever happened to us, and to me in particular. I can't get away from it. I look for every opportunity that I can to get—

**Warren:** Including opportunities you don't really have. [Laughter]

**Cole:** Well, yeah. If anybody ever asked me to get re-involved with a fraternity, I'll probably turn them down. That was—

**Warren:** I'm talking about today, heading for Lexington [unclear].

**Cole:** Yes. There are worst things than having to drive up and down the valley on a pretty springlike day at the end of Indian summer.

**Warren:** That's true. I felt that way as I got in the car in Lexington.

**Cole:** Yes. But no, actually, this is a real thrill for me. Anytime I can talk about Lexington and Lexington people, I will jump at the opportunity to do it.

**Warren:** I'm real glad Frank sent me down here. He said I'd have a good time, and he was right.

**Cole:** Well, I hope I've given you what you needed. Now I understand that I need to get you some pictures of —

**Warren:** I want family pictures. I want to see more personal stuff. I like what I see here, but I want some of that [unclear].

**Cole:** Yes, those are all the formal things. I don't think you're going to find too much different in there, but the articles, I think you will.

**Warren:** Yes, I'm looking forward to going through them. Thank you, Taylor.

[End of interview]