

GERALD L COOPER

# On Scholarship

*From An  
Empty  
Room At  
Princeton*





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Editorial: Alfred P. Scott

Graphic Design: Jack Amos

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This is dedicated to the one I love:  
Prior Meade Cooper  
I never thought I'd marry a May Queen.

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## Foreword

### *Pursuits of my own choice ...*

*I would be indulged ... with the blessings of domestic society, and pursuits of my own choice ...*

Thomas Jefferson to his daughter, Martha, 1807

As I approached age sixty-five in the year 2000, several of my male contemporaries told me how they were resisting retirement to the last possible moment. Unlike them, I was ready to retire. I knew that retirement would give me the opportunity to concentrate on two activities I had wanted to pursue more deeply for most of my life: broad-based reading and reflective writing. I began to concentrate on those interests as soon as I completed my final assignment, with the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation in June 2000.

Writing this book has given me much pleasure—and occasional pain. The pain has been the result of my decision to look honestly into situations where I could see that I did not

accomplish all that I might have, and to examine the reasons that I fell short of my goals. In several instances the problems that arose were the result of my personal leadership style—or personality type—and I saw how I might have avoided certain missteps. I also experienced pain when I thought about how others failed to meet my expectations. Overall, however, the painful errors were mostly mine.

My greatest pleasure in this endeavor occurred when I reflected on my experiences with people and places that have enriched my life. I hope that what I have written has done justice to the people who made significant contributions, both to society and to me.

Finally, some of my fondest moments in writing these pages have been the result of reading, researching and meditating about two subjects that have special interest for me: Thomas Jefferson and the University of Virginia, which he created.

As Jefferson contemplated finishing his second term as President and returning to his family at Monticello, he wrote to his daughter, Martha Randolph, “I long to be among you where I know nothing but love and delight, and where ... I would be indulged as others are with the blessings of domestic society, and pursuits of my own choice.” He was ready to retire from politics and to dedicate himself with renewed energy to “family, books and farms.” He also planned to fulfill his long-delayed dream of establishing a secular university in Virginia that would serve not just the Commonwealth, but also the nation and the world.

I have written at length about the University of Virginia in the chapter, “Leading to Diversity.” As a graduate student in



the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia in 1967, I read a text in counselor education by Gilbert Wrenn, who coined the phrase, “What we are, we are always becoming.” I have found that description applicable in my life and work over the ensuing forty-plus years, and I believe this concept of gradual maturing also applies to institutions as much as to individuals.

The University of Virginia has continued to evolve over nearly two hundred years, steadily rising toward the heights that its founder envisioned it might reach one day. I believe Jefferson *dreamed* of what the University would become, for I consider dreams to be a means for gaining access to universal wisdom. Jefferson demonstrated that he had a good deal of that wisdom—he first employed it as a young man by helping to establish the American republic, most notably in his role as author of the *Declaration of Independence*. Then, in his autumn years, he almost single-handedly planned and began to build the University of Virginia. Both of these institutions have shown uncommon purpose and durability, demonstrating the farsightedness of Jefferson’s vision.

My personal version of the American experience began in 1935 in Lancaster County, just sixty miles north of Jamestown and three-and-a-quarter centuries after John Smith explored Virginia’s eastern rivers. Starting there I describe a number of people, places and events that helped me to establish my foothold on the Northern Neck peninsula in Tidewater’s river country. Later, a year after our marriage in 1962, my wife Prior and I migrated to the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia for two assignments that totaled fifteen years. Then we spent ten

years in Piedmont North Carolina, and eventually came back to Tidewater ... back to river country.

I have recorded in this book the “pursuits of my own choice,” similar to what Thomas Jefferson meant when he contemplated the close of his public life. I learned at Mr. Jefferson’s University that the mind is free to pursue many options, even after one’s calling in life is completed. At the University I had heard discussions of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s description of the American scholar as “man thinking.” In recent years I have pursued that kind of scholarship.

Early in my career in private schools I began to realize that the scholarly pursuits required to be a first-rate teacher would take second place for me. Beginning in 1961, administration became my primary concentration. I made a promise to myself at that time, however, that someday I would revisit the life of the scholar. Thus, in 2002 I began to rekindle my scholarly pursuits, and at that point I began to write this book.

No one is able to live his life over; however, I believe that by telling about my life—honestly, warts and all—I too may serve a purpose in the grand scheme of American history. If nothing else, readers may say of my examples, “I can do better than that; I can see the solution that Gerry Cooper missed; I’ve listened and I have my own answer.”

I also believe that the successful mentors and motivators I describe, such as Peggy and Garland Pollard from my youth, and John Casteen, now retiring as president of the University of Virginia (1990-2010), are believable to my audience. Role models are helpful in guiding our thinking; however, eventually

we must see that the answers come from within ourselves. Our biggest challenge often is to take the time to listen, to hear—and then to act on what our inner voice tells us. I hope that these stories, especially the ones about of my mentors, will help readers on their journey.

*Bon Voyage!*

## Chapter 1

### My Early Years

“From his mother’s womb untimely ripped ...”

Macbeth, Act IV, scene 1.

Some believe that the time and place of a person’s birth are predetermined; others are convinced that these details are purely a matter of chance. I arrived as a member of that smaller cadre of *Homo sapiens* who are brought into the world by means of a Caesarian-section; the place and date were St. Luke’s Hospital in Richmond on August 20, 1935. This location was both predetermined and extraordinary, for in those days most babies were born at home in Lancaster County, Virginia, where I was to spend the early years of my life.

In those days the Caesarian-sections were considered major surgery and required a hospital; the



Gerry Cooper, age 5, in Kilmarnock, 1940

nearest such facility was seventy miles away in Virginia's capital city. I don't know the medical reasons for my mother's having this procedure, but it made things a little different for me from the day I was born. For example, I often felt almost dishonest, over the years, when I was asked to indicate my place of birth; somehow *Richmond* sounded untruthful—I wasn't really from there, but that was where I was born.

Back in Lancaster, our regular family physician was Dr. Chichester T. Peirce, who cared for most families, black and white, in the upper end of Lancaster County for over half a century. He was my doctor for at least my first fifteen years. In that respect I was a typical Lancaster native, and proud to be part of the crowd.

"From his mother's womb untimely ripped" is a phrase I probably would not have heard until I got to college, had I not attended high school at Christchurch School. In fact, I doubt if I would have been able to enter college at all, without the help of that modest, Episcopal church-sponsored school for boys. Without Christchurch I may never have gotten out of Lancaster County and into the pursuit of higher education and a more ambitious way of life. Many of my eighth grade classmates did not make it to college, and those who did had greater hurdles to clear than I did—often involving a tour in the military service as a means to gain access to college.

Studying college-preparatory English at Christchurch in my fourth and final year, I learned why Shakespeare created a character who was "untimely ripped from his mother's womb." Shakespeare enabled Macduff to become figuratively "a man not born of woman" to fulfill the witches' ironic prophesy, "*... for none of woman born shall harm Macbeth.*"



*Front row: Duane Dillin, Nancy C. Hubbard. Standing: Lyn and Celeste Cooper (my parents), Archie Beane, Mae Moomaw Beane, Carl Dillin, Lucy Cooper Dillin, Rebekah Beane Hubbard, Vernon Hawthorne, Charlie Hubbard.*

I too needed a special means of delivery in order to pursue a different path in life.

William G. Beane was my grandfather and first known ancestor in Lancaster County. He was born in 1845 and had enlisted at age eighteen in the Confederate army. Records show that he participated in major battles around Richmond, survived without injury, and after Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, he walked home, covering a distance of close to one hundred miles in two days, according to family legend. In the post-Civil War era Grandfather Beane was employed primarily as a farmer and timberman, initially in Northumberland County. Near the beginning of the twentieth century, he purchased the Lancaster Hotel, a plain building that

stands to this day in the town of Lancaster, a stone's throw from the courthouse. He moved his family from a farm near Beanes' Corner in Northumberland County to Lancaster Court House, a distance of less than ten miles, and there he began to carve out a place for his family to live and work, and for me eventually to be born and raised.

Grandfather Beane seems to have thrived in Lancaster. He was listed as a member of the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors from 1895 to 1897 and again from 1899 to 1911, according to a *Rappahannock Record* background story about former county supervisors that was published on August 31, 1995. County boards of supervisors were the locus of political power in Virginia's rural counties, from colonial days up to the present.

My grandmother was the former Mary Annie Robertson, who grew up on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, in Wicomico County. Grandmother and Grandfather Beane, with the help of several of their children who lived at home, operated the hotel and its dining room in Lancaster for several years. On a visit back home in 1999 I learned more of the history of the hotel from Dorothy Norris Cowling, who became a teacher and the most highly educated African-American person born in Lancaster County before 1945. Dr. Cowling told me that she worked alongside the Beane daughters, including my mother, Celeste Beane, at the Lancaster Hotel in the 1920s.

Dorothy Norris Cowling and I had our conversation at a meeting of the board of the Mary Ball Washington Museum and Library. She gave me her first-hand recollections of those early days at the hotel, saying she remembered my grandmother and mother quite well.

“The Beane daughters and I worked at the hotel whenever Mrs. Beane needed us; we were all saving money for college. I helped serve tables the night that I graduated from high school, because we had to be available when there were customers at the hotel. Nothing got in the way.”

I was honored to learn that this outstanding citizen of Lancaster County had an affiliation with my family early in her life. My mother and Irene Davenport both spoke admiringly of Dr. Cowling as I was growing up. They often mentioned that “Dorothy Norris earned her doctorate” when they told success stories about Lancaster people. Thus it was a special moment for me, fifty years later, to sit with Dr. Cowling and hear her talk about those early days when she worked at the Lancaster Hotel with my family.

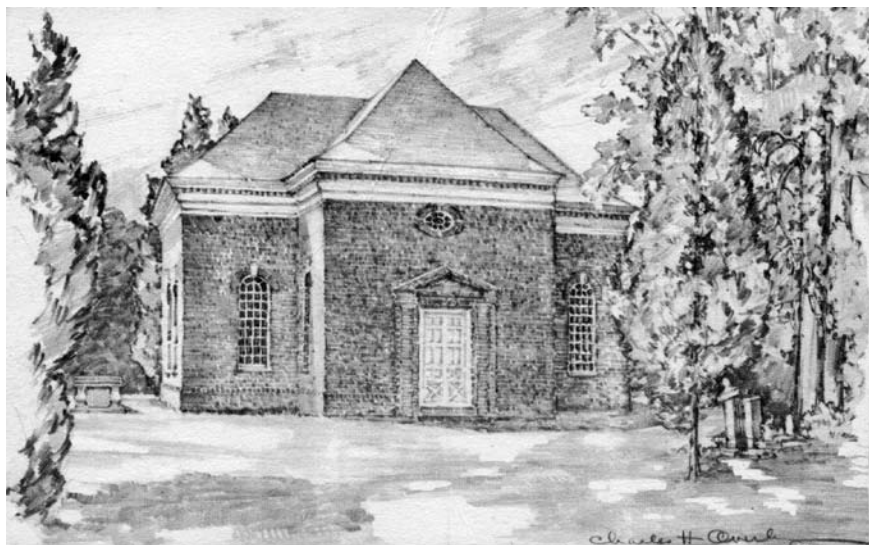
The house in which I grew up had been a Methodist parsonage, located about five houses east of the old Clerk’s Office, on the north side of state route 3. My grandfather purchased this residence sometime after he moved his family to the Lancaster Hotel. Everyone called the town Lancaster—or *Lanc’sta*—the familiar name, then and now, for the county seat. Sessions of the court attracted people to town on a monthly basis for court days and other functions of local government. This county structure prevailed in the English-American colonies until they declared their independence in 1776. Rural government did not change markedly in the new United States at the grass-roots level.

After my grandfather’s death in 1922, my grandmother continued to live in the family home until her death in 1940. My mother also lived in the former parsonage, and she and my father made their home there after they were married in 1932. I arrived



on the scene in 1935. The most memorable event that I recall from early childhood was my grandmother's death, when I was five years old. She lay in an open casket in the dining room, the largest room in our house, separated by French doors that opened into the living room. My uncle, Archie Robertson Beane, was the oldest sibling of the Beane family. He lived next door with his wife, Berta May, who was a member of the Moomaw family of Roanoke. I recall that Archie was the most visibly upset member of the family when his mother died. This was the only time I ever saw him cry in the thirty years that I knew him. He was in tears as he lifted me up so that I could see my deceased grandmother lying in the casket—an image I'll never forget. Her skin and hair looked perfect, and she seemed at peace; I wondered if people always became so peaceful when they died.

My father, Lyn Evan Cooper, and his identical twin brother,



*Christ Church near Irvington, where Mom and I were confirmed in 1948.*

Leo George Cooper, came into this Northern Neck area of eastern Virginia from their home in Neola, a town near Council Bluffs, Iowa. Their parents had died within days of each other in 1918, apparently as victims of the notorious influenza epidemic. Their older sister, Lucy, had married Carl Dillin, whose family also had emigrated from Iowa, and had settled at Monaskon Farm in Lancaster County on the Rappahannock River side of the Corrotoman peninsula. Corrotoman was derived from “Cuttatawoman,” the name of one of the Native American tribes that had populated this area, long before English settlers began to migrate north from Jamestown in the 1620s.

The fact that my father and his brother immigrated to Lancaster County was somewhat unusual in the 1920s, for people seldom came back east to Virginia from the Midwest in those days. Thirty years later, in the post-war 1950s, there began a great influx of people into rural Tidewater Virginia. This new wave of immigrants, whom the long-time residents called “come-heres,” brought financial assets and a hunger to acquire property that had not occurred in Lancaster County since the area was officially designated a separate county, split off from Northumberland, around 1651.

Back in 1653 Captain Henry Fleete had acquired 13,000 acres. Then in the early 1700s Robert “King” Carter began to accumulate the 300,000 acres that would earn for him the mythical title of king. Carter acquired lands—and certain other holdings, especially slaves—that he would bequeath to his family when he died in 1732. Though he wasn’t a king, he had gained royal favor to acquire land grants, and he used that preferment and the slave trade to build a personal empire unsurpassed in Colonial Virginia. Those who



*Cornwell's General Store—owned by my dad for five months.*

proudly claim kinship to “King” Carter today should be aware that they are exalting one of the American colony’s leading promoters and users of slave labor and largest merchandisers of fellow human beings for profit. Not an admirable foundation on which to base a heritage, at least not from a humanitarian point of view.

Two hundred years later, my father and his twin brother came to Lancaster County with limited funds and few connections. Medical expenses from their parents’ illnesses had consumed most of the assets of their father’s successful general store, George Cooper & Sons, of Neola, Iowa. My cousin, Dixie Campbell Cooper, inherited a letter addressed to her father, Leo, from the elder Coopers—our grandparents—on stationery from one of the healing hotels or

spas located at Battle Creek, Michigan. This would have been an expensive place for two people to seek medical attention in 1918. Sadly, the healing treatment apparently was unsuccessful.

The Cooper brothers had enough money to attend Virginia Tech—then called VPI or Virginia Polytechnic Institute—in 1923-25. Thereafter, when their funds were depleted, they moved permanently to Lancaster County and operated Stoneham's Store in Mollusk. Uncle Leo married Garland, one of five Stoneham daughters in a prosperous family that lived in a three-and-a-half story white frame house across the road and a short distance from the general store. The Stoneham homeplace stands well preserved today, a quarter mile east of the Mollusk post office, on state route 354. The old store was torn down in the 1960s. A sign in front of the former Stoneham home place identifies it now as headquarters for a hunting and fishing club from Maryland.

Mr. Lewson Stoneham, head of the family, was a successful businessman and large landowner in the Corrotoman area at the turn of the century. He and Mrs. Stoneham had five children: a son, Claybrook, and four daughters, Annie, Lillian, Garland and Helen. The "Stoneham Girls," as they were known, all attended college and became public school teachers—in Lancaster, Norfolk, and Portsmouth.

My father drove his 1936 Chevrolet about seven miles from Lancaster to work at Stoneham's Store each day. The store also housed the U.S. post office serving the rural community surrounding Mollusk (pronounced locally *mow-lusk*). A state historic marker near the intersection of routes 354 and 201 describes the site of Queenstown, the first official port in Lancaster County, that



*Gerry at his home in Lancaster, 1946* George Washington.

was created nearby on the Rappahannock River in 1692 by act of the Virginia General Assembly. Also close by is St. Mary's White Chapel, an Episcopal church founded in 1669 and still in use today. Three miles north is the town of Lively, sitting astride state route 3, officially designated Historyland Highway. A mile or so west of Lively is Epping Forest, home of Mary Ball, the mother of

In 1922 my mother completed teacher training at Fredericksburg and became a public schoolteacher, as were most of her friends, especially the Stoneham sisters. I have a copy of my mom's first contract to teach in Lancaster County, dated 1922. Most aspiring teachers in the Northern Neck attended the state teachers college in Fredericksburg, which later became known as Mary Washington College. (In 2006 it was renamed the University of Mary Washington.) My mother taught in the public schools for thirteen years before electing to stay at home after I was born in 1935.

Early in the first decade of my life, America entered World War II, and that became the most significant experience for everyone living in that era. I remember sitting near the radio in our living room when President Franklin Roosevelt announced that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

All citizens, young and old, were involved in some aspect of the war effort. School children collected scrap metal to be recycled and used to manufacture war equipment—just one example of how all Americans pitched in. My father was born in 1903 and was too old in 1941 to be drafted for active duty. Instead, he became a member of a home guard unit, and he and other men his age drilled on weekends on the grounds in front of Lively High School. No one knew how long the war would last, and it was assumed that the home guard and other reserves might be called to active duty, before the conflicts in Europe and Asia were resolved.

I started school at this same Lively High School—the all-white public school for the western end of the county. The school included elementary grades one through eight, plus four years of high school. Lively High School served about one-third of the county's white population—a typical configuration for Virginia's rural public schools of that era. My Aunt Garland and her sister, Lillian, both taught at Lively. "Miss Lil" held a graduate degree in library science from Columbia University. Though short of stature at five feet, she was quite capable of handling any big high school farm boy who misbehaved in her library. She'd take the culprit by the ear and march him to the principal's office, on the rare occasions when one dared to upset her. One graduate many years later described her fondly to me as a "regular banty hen," a country term for aggressive fighting chickens.

At home in Mollusk Miss Lil was fond of quoting John Foster Dulles, who she said was a friend of her mentors, "Dr. and Mrs. Lashley," at Columbia University. I remember her elation when Harry Truman defeated Thomas Dewey to be President in 1948.

She was the first true intellectual (*one who enjoys serious mental effort*) whom I knew close up, and perhaps the first liberal (*one who is tolerant of different views and standards in others*), too. Her main emphasis to us young people in her family and to students at Lively High School was, “Read, Read, Read.” Certainly not a partisan message.

I entered the first grade when I was seven years old. My mother held me back a year, based on what she had learned to be good practice in education classes at Fredericksburg. I remember hearing Mom and Miss Lil describe John Dewey as an important new mentor for teachers. Dewey was of course the founder of the progressive movement in U.S. education. Many years later I was proud to tell my mother that my history of philosophy professor at the University of Virginia, Dr. Albert Balz, spoke of having studied under Professor John Dewey—at Columbia University, as I recall.

Soon after the war ended the Stoneham sisters got the idea to build an authentic log cabin as a summer getaway place on property they inherited, overlooking the upper end of the Western Branch of the Corrotoman River. They jointly owned several parcels of land in the Corrotoman area that their father had bequeathed to them. The cabin idea probably had roots in their friendship with Dr. Alf Mapp, Sr. of Portsmouth, who owned a log cabin, circa 1930s, at “Ben Roe,” across the fork of the Western Branch from the Stoneham sisters’ property. Dr. Mapp was superintendent of schools in Portsmouth, and a good friend of the Stoneham family. One of the sisters, Helen, taught in the Portsmouth public schools, and Annie was a math teacher at Maury High School in Norfolk. They lived with family friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan, on Redgate



*My front yard, next to my Uncle Archie Beane's house.*

Avenue, who also had a summer place on the Corrotoman. The Sullivans were parents of Norfolk's first big-name Broadway actress, Margaret Sullivan, who was star of "The Voice of the Turtle," (with 1557 performances, 1943-48) and of other Broadway hits between 1926-56.

The Stoneham log cabin was completed in 1946. Mr. Jim Leach, an expert in log construction who had come to the area from Texas, supervised felling, skinning and treating pine trees to be used in building the cabin. He had built several log structures in the Corrotoman area, including "The Cow Shed," a popular entertainment establishment in the Slabtown community near the mouth of the Corrotoman River. The Cow Shed offered a netted-in swimming area that enabled young people like my cousins and me to avoid most of the stinging nettles that abounded in Tidewater rivers in July and August. Netted areas also existed at a few other public locations, such as White Stone Beach, until the late 1940s,



when the more affluent emigrants began to build swimming pools in the lower Northern Neck. The Tides Inn, a resort hotel founded by Ennolls A. Stephens Sr. in Irvington, circa 1949, introduced a pool that pumped and filtered saltwater from Carter's Creek. I spent the summer of 1950 swimming at "The Inn," thanks to *carte blanche* access granted to my mother and me by Cousin Steve.

Meanwhile, new activities had been stirring in my family. In the summer of 1945 my father purchased a business of his own—Cornwell's Store, located across the street and three houses up from where we lived in the town of Lancaster Court House. Here my father could run his own business and walk to work, thus cutting down on the long hours that he had kept while operating the store with his brother in Mollusk. I turned ten that August, old enough to remember some of the details of Dad's buying the store and getting it reactivated. Mr. Jim Cornwell had operated the store successfully for many years and had nurtured a loyal clientele. My father began

*Dixie, Babe and Gerry—first cousins at the Stoneham homeplace.*



to build on this base—he was an experienced general store operator who was married to a local Lanc’sta girl. Thus his prospects for success seemed quite good.

Mr. and Mrs. Cornwell lived in a comfortable, two-story white frame house next to the store. They had raised three daughters, all of whom attended Mary Washington College and entered the teaching profession. My mother was a mentor for each of the Cornwell girls. Our families were close friends, almost “kissin’ kin,” and I enjoyed an occasional hug from the daughters, all older than I. Mrs. Cornwell—Vernon—usually called me when she was making a big pot of her famous navy-bean soup, and I’d visit her kitchen at lunch time to enjoy her specialty. The Cornwell’s former home is today known as Lancaster House, and is headquarters for the Mary Ball Washington Museum and Library. I served on the board of “The Mary Ball” for several years in the late 1990s, and I enjoyed the memories that surfaced for me while meeting in the house and visiting my former village.

Throughout my boyhood Jim Cornwell kept a 20-foot, dead-rise inboard fishing boat on John’s Creek near the landing for the Merry Point free ferry that crossed the Corrotoman to Ottoman. (A two-car ferry continues to operate in good weather today—still free despite ultra-tight state budgets.) Mr. Cornwell would often stop in front of my house and invite me to come along on his fishing trips, which he pursued several times a week in spring and summer. I’d position myself in our front yard so he’d be sure to see me, and he’d stop—unless he had a fishing party of grownups planned for that day. In that case he’d wave from his green Chevy pickup, and then he’d yell, “Next time, Gerry.” I wouldn’t be extremely disappointed,

knowing that the adult trips usually lasted much too long for my youthful attention span for fishing. It was nice to be included, however, especially after certain of the following events occurred.

My father soon got the store operating smoothly, and my mother set up a space to handle the bookkeeping. Thus the business was well underway in late summer of 1945. I remember going with my dad to the Bank of Lancaster in Kilmarnock, where he opened an account and got a big business checkbook with the name “L.E. Cooper & Son” printed on the checks. He was proud of the new company, and I was delighted to be included in the name of the business. The future seemed bright and promising for my family and me, just as it did for the whole country, that fall, as life got back to normal in the post-war era. My father’s store was within sight of our home, he was working shorter hours, and he took pride in owning his business. Here were all the elements of the new American dream.

I had begun to spend a good deal of time with my father. I would join him in the store each afternoon when I came home from school. He took monthly trips to buy merchandise in Richmond. On one occasion he brought me a brand new Roadmaster bicycle for my birthday, the first new bike I had ever owned. Such luxury items had not been available while there was a war going on. On another trip he returned with a pair of football shoulder pads, and I became probably the only kid in Lancaster County who owned such equipment, since the local public schools had no football teams in 1945. Years later I found a couple of snapshots of my dad and Uncle Leo in football practice uniforms at VPI in 1922. My guess is that they were on a freshman team—somehow they just didn’t look like big-time recruits out of the corn fields of Iowa.



*Virginia and Jim Davenport and their three children*

Suddenly, on December 23, 1945, calamity struck our family. My father suffered a heart attack, and on Christmas Eve he had a second attack. He died early on December 25, at the age of 42. Coronary thrombosis is the term I remember hearing for the condition that caused his death. My mother and I, together with all of our immediate family and friends, were tremendously upset and heartbroken by his death. It was all the more devastating that he had died on Christmas Day. I recall feeling that a great void had been created in my life, and that things would never be the same again.

What were the options for a ten-year-old boy in rural Tidewater Virginia in 1945, when the mainstay of support for his life is suddenly “untimely ripped” away? The obvious answer in those times was, “Turn to family and friends for support, and learn to survive.” The people who lived in my small hometown—perhaps a population of thirty or so—had just come through many crises and sacrifices in the world war, including the death of spouses and other loved ones. As a result, they knew how to reach out to those in need. Typical of a small community, everyone knew each other. In daily life the gas station operator and the clerk of the court were on an equal footing. If anyone was especially venerated, it was teachers and medical professionals. Making money had not yet come to measure social success in rural Tidewater in 1945. There were far fewer barriers to communication than exist today. I never felt alone in the years after my father’s death and the fall of 1949, when I went away to boarding school.

My mother was a person of strong faith whose spiritual activity was of the “walk it, don’t talk it” variety. She had grown up in a big family on a farm in the early 1900s, and she had learned how to overcome hardships and to get the most from limited resources. She firmly believed that education could provide the solution to most of life’s challenges. Her favorite statement was, “Get an education—it’s the one thing that no one can take away from you.” Over time I became a total convert to that creed.

Mother read daily from the *King James Bible* and *The Upper Room* (a publication of the Methodist Church), both of which sat within easy reach on her bedside table. She had been a lifelong member of the Methodist Church, as had her entire family. Her

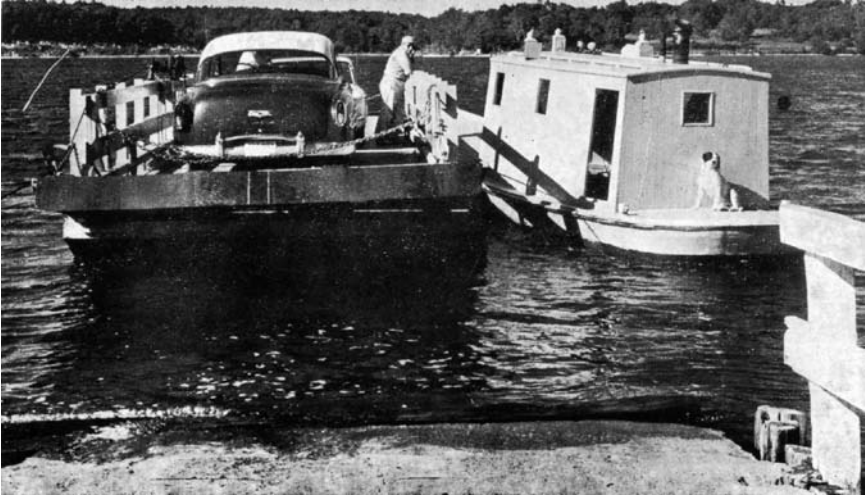
father was an active lay leader, especially in Edgely Methodist Church, that became defunct in the 1930s when families like the Beanes moved from farm to town. The Edgely Church graveyard survives, located north of Lively, where my grandparents and other Beane relatives are buried. (My dad was buried in the cemetery at Bethel Methodist Church, near Mollusk, the home church of the Stoneham family; my mother, along with Leo and Garland Cooper, is also buried there.)

In 1948 my mother and I joined the Episcopal Church together, partially in preparation for me to attend Christchurch School, and also for her to be a member of Trinity Episcopal Church, less than a block down the street from our home. She joined the Episcopal Church for her own reasons, and I'm sure she had discussed the decision with her friend Irene, a Trinity stalwart for many years.

Belonging to a church to be socially correct would never have been a motivation for Celeste Beane Cooper. She sacrificed financially to enable me to attend Christchurch School, on scholarship, for four years of high school, primarily because she believed that I would receive a balanced academic and spiritual



*Gerry, age 12, attended Camp Orapax, in New Kent County.*



*The Merry Point Ferry in 1946—still operates free today.*

emphasis at Christchurch for my future education and life. She also recognized that I needed reliable male influences to balance out the women in my life.

Having acquired teachers' credentials in college, and success in the classroom, my mother was able to get back to work quickly following my dad's sudden death. She sold the store and returned to high school teaching for two years. Undoubtedly seeking more income, she then became a bookkeeper in one of the businesses owned by Thomas D. McGinnes—Kilmarnock Motor Sales. Tom and Aliene McGinnes were long-time friends of our family who had lived for many years at "Greenvale," near Bertrand, at the end of state route 354 on the Corrotoman peninsula. I learned to swim in the McGinnes's creek and to ride an aquaplane behind their cabin cruiser. Around 1950 they purchased Kendall Hall, on Carter's Creek in Irvington, to be closer to Kilmarnock, the business center of Lancaster County.

Kendall Hall was a Spanish hacienda-style, post-bellum estate—a rarity in colonial-based Lancaster County. Charles Levy, a wealthy businessman from New York, had built this modern enclave on Carter's Creek in the 1930s. Amenities included a freshwater swimming pool—perhaps the first in Lancaster County—and a three-hole, chip-and-putt golf course. I spent several summers enjoying these facilities with my friends. The McGinnesses gave me the run of the place and treated me like a member of the family. Their own son, Frank, and daughter, Virginia Dix, were five to ten years older than I and were away at college or work. In the years 1949-51 I fanaticized that I was one of *The Hardy Boys*, whose adventures I pretended to re-enact on the grounds of Kendall Hall. Here and at other places where I hung out with friends—including Blakemore's Mill Pond between Lively and St. Mary's White Chapel Church—a love for the outdoors helped to fill the void that my father's death had created.

I believe that the seeds of preparation for my life's work were being sown as part of these early experiences of my early life. In my career in the administration of schools and colleges, I enjoyed applying the analysis required in long-range planning and institutional problem solving. From about age eleven I was always making plans and adjustments in my own life—often compensating for my father's absence and my lack of funds—and that style later became part of my professional life.

In 1945 my mom's closest friend was Irene Davenport, herself a widow who had raised two sons, Jack and Jim, both ten to fifteen years older than I. The Davenport home was two houses down the street from ours in Lancaster, across from Trinity Episcopal Church. That



location is important, because it enabled Irene to give counsel and support to a series of Episcopal rectors who came to the parish. She offered practical insights into the spiritual needs at Trinity Church when asked, and she set a table of the best food for the physical body on all occasions. Irene was technically a come-here, though she betrayed little trace of an accent from her upstate Pennsylvania origins. Her enunciation of the English language always sounded flawless to me. Both she and my mother kept a close watch over my English usage, taking turns chiding me gently about the proper use of nominative, objective, and even the possessive case pronouns.

After my dad's death, Mom and Irene became even closer. The two of them frequently fixed supper together, called to check on each other first thing every morning, and motored to Witt's Diner, just west of Lively, almost every Friday evening to "enjoy someone else's cooking." They'd also catch up on the news from the upper end of Lancaster County. Irene had held several important positions, including state welfare agent for the county, then clerk of the Selective Service Board, and finally as postmaster for Lancaster Court House and the surrounding area. From these experiences, Irene knew the county's population of both races better than most natives. Her only peer was Celeste Beane Cooper—mother, teacher and bookkeeper.

Irene was for me a trusted counselor throughout my high school and college years, and into my adult life. She survived my mom by several years, and I often sought her counsel, especially after my mother's death in May 1969. That's the way it was in Lanc'sta in the days of my youth: extended families would bear one another's burdens, share their needs and blessings, and live in a quiet, supportive community.

Our relationship with the Davenports far exceeded ordinary kinship—Irene was my second mother and her son Jim was the big brother I needed urgently after my father’s death. When Jim came back from World War II in 1945, after serving as a forward artillery observer in the U. S. Army in Germany, he brought me a fine sampling of American and Nazi mementos—his medals, a German bayonet of the finest steel, and a U. S. Army helmet liner are items I still recall. He also offered a new way of looking at life—a positive viewpoint laced with confidence and optimism. I listened to Jim’s every word about wartime events and absorbed his eyewitness accounts into my long-term memory bank. He and Jim Cornwell, a World War I veteran, engaged in friendly one-upmanship sessions about war experiences throughout my pre-teen years. I savored every word they spoke.

Often Jim and I took to the woods and streams surrounding Lancaster Court House to hunt and fish. On these expeditions I followed his commands, both audible and hand-signals. He seemed at times to be back on the front lines, and I loved every minute of those drills. Once, as we walked through a cornfield behind the old Lancaster Hotel building, Jim suddenly yelled,

*“Hit the dirt, Gerry!”*

I sprawled face down in the cultivated soil, and he rose above me to fire a harmless round into a trash pile on the edge of the woods, fifty yards away.

“That was to keep you alert and test your reactions,” Jim explained, “You’ll make a good soldier.”

This training delighted me—it was a lot more realistic than the standard cowboys and Indians that I had played with kids around

the village. The drills with Jim seemed close to the real thing. Ten years later in Navy boot camp, I was selected sergeant at arms of my training company, meaning that I was in charge of marching the company everywhere we went, to my great pleasure. I also made high scores as a marksman with firearms. I had a distinct advantage over other recruits in the company, thanks to my early training under Jim, my personal drill sergeant. I learned for myself that a kid from Lanc'sta Court House could compete with guys from the Bronx and Philly.

Jim's explanation of his support and guidance back then went like this:

*"Ah, Gerry, you know that's how we do things in Lanc'sta Court House."*

That covered the matter, as far as Jim was concerned. Certainly, losing my father was a huge challenge for me; however, the entire community stepped forward to help me get on with my life, especially my immediate family, along with Irene and Jim. As I worked through that pain and loss over time, I was well supported by caring people. Through Jim and several of his contemporaries, I became aware of the uniqueness of America's young men who came of age while serving in the armed forces of World War II. I agree with Tom Brokaw's description of these Americans as The Greatest Generation.

I saw in Jim an unfaltering spirit ready to face the challenges of life: never boisterous, just a quiet confidence in one's ability to persevere and succeed, regardless of roadblocks along the way. When I was moonlighting at his life insurance agency in Norfolk in 1961, I again observed him close-up, as he encouraged young agents:

always positive, never critical. Jim brought the “can-do” attitude from the U. S. military to his work in the private sector. Over a forty-year career he was quite successful in the business of planning peoples’ estates with life insurance, and he was a pillar of strength in his Newport News community as well. More recently Jim has showed remarkable love and indomitable dedication, caring for his beloved wife, Virginia, who is afflicted with Alzheimer’s Disease. She receives excellent professional care, and Jim is there with her every day.

Growing up in rural Virginia, I was spared the loneliness that thousands of less fortunate young people experience. As a result, I have been able to relate more easily to the plight of less fortunate people who lacked the kind of help that I received from a caring community. In my career I had numerous opportunities to offer support to others of the kind that I had received—from my mom, from Irene and Jim, from the Pollards, and from Christchurch School in my high-school years. In my years of working in schools I often had the privilege of providing support to others.

I usually thought of Jim’s phrase, “*That’s how we do things in Lanc’sta Court House.*” That was sufficient motivation for me. Lancaster was just a humble village when I grew up there—with a small population that cared for one another. I wish that such places and support were more available to the young Americans of today. Knowing that someone cares means so much.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Getting an Education, Not the Confederacy**

From the front porch of my home in Lancaster Court House, I could see the Confederate monument, located a hundred yards west, just across state route 3. I did not spend time gazing at the monument, but I knew it was there, and eventually I developed an understanding of what it stood for, along with some idea of what it didn't represent—at least in our household.

My mother was active in the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and she had the responsibility for placing Confederate flags around the monument on Memorial Day or Decoration Day, or whatever it was called in the 1940s. She had a box of Confederate flags, each of which measured about 15 x 15 inches and were mounted on two-foot wooden staffs. She would display the flags on each side of the monument by pushing the staffs into the ground. More than once in my preteen years I “borrowed” a flag from the storage closet to play with outside, was caught and punished for it. “The flags aren’t expensive,” my mom said, “but they are not playthings, and they belong to the UDC, not to us.”

The Ladies Memorial Association of Lancaster County had



*Confederate monument in Lancaster Court House*

raised funds to build the Confederate monument in 1872 to honor the men of Lancaster who had died for the Southern cause. The names of the local men who gave their lives in the army of the Confederate States of America (CSA) are engraved in the white marble that forms the upper section of the obelisk. They are the primary honorees of the monument. In a modern pictorial history, *Virginia's Historic Courthouses*, I learned that Lancaster was the

first county in Virginia to erect a Confederate monument, and was also the last county to build a new courthouse, in 1861, before the Civil War.

Not long after the monument was completed, bronze plaques were added on three sides of the base to display the names of one hundred or so Lancaster County men who served in the Civil War and survived. They were designated “Survivors of the War of 1861-1865” on the plaques. This language conformed to the prevailing notion in the South that the term *Civil War* was unacceptable in describing the conflict. The so-called Lost Cause movement, engendered by white Southerners to make the South’s bitter defeat more palatable, reached its zenith in the 1870s. Lost cause devotees used such words as *noble*, *righteous*, and *chivalrous* to describe aspects of the Confederacy in the hope of overcoming the pain of defeat and the ignominy of Reconstruction.

I learned to ride a bicycle along the path beside the monument, starting out with the support of the picket fence near the general store. By this time my mother had pointed out where I could find my grandfather’s name, William G. Beane, on one of the bronze plaques. After I begged her for several years, she also surrendered to me the LeMat revolver that my grandfather brought home from the war, and which is displayed today on a bookshelf just over my right shoulder in my studio.

The LeMat revolver includes both an unusual under-barrel and a standard, nine-chamber firing cylinder. The under-barrel was capable of firing either an 18-gauge ball or a charge of scatter shot. This formidable sidearm measures fourteen inches from barrel tip to grip-end, and weighs about five pounds. *American Handgunner*



*Painting of Gerry's home in Lancaster, from photo circa 1970*

magazine of July 2002 states, "... with a shotgun under-barrel and a nine-shot cylinder, the LeMat revolver was the most devastating Cavalry pistol of the Civil War period. ... Most of the pistols were destined for the Confederate States and were used by a number of



high-profile officers.”

Our “Willie” Beane clearly was not an “officer of high-profile,” and I therefore wonder if he actually carried the LeMat on the field of battle. Perhaps it was a relic that he brought home after witnessing the surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

My grandfather enlisted at age eighteen and was almost twenty years old when he served in the 24th Regiment of Virginia Cavalry, near the end of the war under the command of Major General Fitzhugh Lee, nephew of Robert E. Lee. It is recorded that “Fitzhugh Lee himself led the last charge of the Confederates on April 9 (1865) at Farmville, Virginia.”

Records also indicate that Grandfather Beane was among the troops who crossed a bridge over the James River to evacuate Richmond,

“... fighting each day after crossing until the surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. He started for home on Sunday morning and reached there the next Sunday. William George Beane was a member of Lawson-Ball Camp No. 52, United Confederate Veterans of Lancaster County, Va.”

I estimate that on his walk home he covered a distance of about one hundred-seventy miles, from Appomattox Court House to the Beanes’ Corner area in Northumberland County. Thus ended two years of battles that included the Battle of Yellow Tavern on May 11, 1864, best known for the mortal wounding of legendary Confederate cavalry commander Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart. William George Beane “was one of the few who never received a wound.”

He was born May 18, 1845 and died of natural causes November 22, 1922.

In today's town of Lancaster, the historic old Clerk's Office stands about forty paces from the Confederate monument. The Lancaster County court authorized construction of this office, which was completed in 1797. Today its north side is parallel to—and only a few feet from—the edge of route 3. It is close enough for an errant vehicle to glance off its ancient brick wall. Here visitors may explore an early eighteenth century public office building that's in mint condition. After a larger court house was completed in 1861, the Clerk's Office became a meeting place for the Lancaster Women's Club and other civic groups. I remember being present when my mother served as secretary of one such organization, where she clearly



*My first home, across from Confederate monument, at the time of the 350th Anniversary of Lancaster County.*

followed the lead of the president, Mrs. Chichester T. Peirce. This lady, known to all as “Miss Bessie,” was the founder of several good-cause organizations, including the Mary Ball Washington Museum and Library, now headquartered in Lancaster House, located just behind the old Clerk’s Office. I had the pleasure of serving on the board of “the Mary Ball,” as the Museum and Library are known, between 2001-04, along with my contemporary and friend, Page Henley, Miss Bessie’s grandson.

Much has been preserved around Lancaster Court House over the three hundred and fifty-some years since “the General Assembly, meeting in Jamestown, created Lancaster County as the twelfth-oldest political subdivision in the Commonwealth,” in 1661. The state has officially designated route 3 as Historyland Highway to recognize that it connects so many historic sites. In my teenage years, route 3 became my main link to the outside world, until I left for college in the fall of 1953.

As I reflect upon growing up in Lancaster, and consider the symbolism of the Confederate monument, I am grateful that my mother didn’t give me lectures about how the lost cause should influence my future life. Instead, she set an example for me, first as a teacher in the public schools of Lancaster County, and later as a respected business administrator at Kilmarnock Motor Sales. Over the years, many of her former students have told me how she helped them prepare for life. Further, her fellow workers and numerous customers at the Buick and John Deere dealership in Kilmarnock have gone out of their way to sing her praises to me. These commentators included the dealership’s manager, Lawrence “Sonny” Ball; a key salesman, Burdette Cockrell; and the team of



*Celeste Beane Cooper (1899-1969), Gerry's mother*

Jake Cox and Johnny Christopher, who traveled around several counties in Tidewater to keep farmers' tractors and combines up and running when they were needed most.

Thus when I got the opportunity to become a teacher and administrator, those positions had special meaning for me, based on what I learned from my mother as a role model, and I was much less self-conscious about my father's absence by the time I reached my high school years, as a result of my mother's success among her peers.

My mother never ignored the fact that her father was a Confederate veteran, but she gave more emphasis to the fact that he had worked hard to send several of his children to college—at Mary Washington, Blackstone College (now closed) and

Randolph-Macon College in Ashland. I got the message that providing education for his children was my grandfather's greatest accomplishment. This he did while pursuing several occupations, including farmer, hotel operator, and timber man. He had a large family to feed, clothe, and educate—a significant challenge in rural Virginia, less than fifty years after the economic devastation of the Civil War. Clearly, William G. Beane did not make a practice of looking backward in challenging times.

His daughter, Celeste Beane Cooper, believed that getting as much education as one could absorb was a privilege, and also carried with it a good deal of responsibility. Those who attained higher education, she often said, had a duty to help others, especially to those who lacked finances. She believed she could help to bring new opportunities to students in rural counties, and she saw it as her duty to motivate them to take full advantage of what they were offered.

Mother had acquired several practical notions at teachers' college. She believed everyone should learn how to swim—especially in the Tidewater region, where crewmen on workboats continued to fall overboard and drown as late as the 1950s. Also, she hoped everyone, black and white, would learn to read, write, and do arithmetic—so that customers in my father's general store would know how to figure what to pay and what to expect as change. She thought that if grown persons had to depend on someone else to count their money, they were in a form of bondage—a modern form of slavery.

Mrs. Cooper taught her students—including her son—to treat others' beliefs with respect—whether we agreed with them or

not. She had little time, however, for rationalization about what happened in the war of 1861-65. She believed it was unwise to permit attitudes left over from the Civil War to stir up conflict among people, a hundred years after the war was over. She became even more committed to equality after World War II, a conflict in which people from both races in Lancaster County had fought side by side for America's freedom. She believed that all who fought deserved to benefit from the freedom for which they had risked their lives. For her, Hampton Waddy, a black man who went to fight in Europe, was just as much entitled to freedom and equality as was her nephew, Joe Beane, who served in Asia.

My mother took me to visit Jamestown when I was twelve years old, soon after I finished a two-week stint at Camp Orapax in New Kent County. She let me know that Jamestown was America's starting place, and that ordinary people, just like us, had secured their freedom by facing huge challenges and making great sacrifices there. Those early struggles were poignant to her, even 340 years after the first settlement. I acquired from her the habit of visiting our historic places, that are so numerous in Tidewater Virginia, especially when I needed inspiration and hope for the future.

She taught me to respect the past, but not to dwell there. Rather, she encouraged me to look ahead in my search for opportunities. I see now that my mother passed on to me what she had learned from her father—chiefly that looking back was not an option. She enabled me to move beyond the Confederate monument's representation of a lost cause and to look instead for a new perspective on the world and my place in it. Thus she prepared me for the opportunity to see life in a new light.

## **Chapter 3**

### **A Log Cabin on the Corrotoman**

The story is told in Lancaster County, Virginia, of four schoolteacher sisters—members of the Stoneham family—who decided to build a log cabin on the Corrotoman River at the end of World War II. They wanted to preserve some of the lore of the past, and at the same time create something that would be useful



and enjoyable in the future. It turned out to be a locals' version of a summer place. It also demonstrated what well-educated women—even country women—could accomplish in a man's world, long before women's liberation gained traction as a movement.

My aunt, Garland Stoneham Cooper, together with her husband Leo, and her three unmarried schoolteacher sisters—Annie, Lillian and Helen Stoneham—commissioned the building of this log cabin. They inherited the site from their father, Lucian Stoneham, who had run the general store at Mollusk for as long as anyone could remember. The Stoneham Girls had also started a peach orchard on open land west of the river. That venture failed when warm air from the river failed to ward off the late frosts that wreaked havoc upon the budding peach trees.

The log cabin sits on a bank overlooking a ninety-degree bend in the Western Branch of the Corrotoman River. Here Little







*Gerry with his cousins: Stoneham “Babe” Kessler and Dixie Cooper Robbins who inherited the cabin from the Stoneham girls who built it.*

Branch flows in from the west, bringing the waters that come over the dam on Blakemore’s Millpond to the west, now barely visible from Route 201.

The cabin site affords water views in three directions. The log structure was built in 1946 from Virginia pines cut on the building site—just as settlers did in colonial times. The logs were trimmed and notched to fit a rough design in the builder’s head—no blueprints, no site studies, and no contract. Instead, there was a vision, practical experience, and a handshake of agreement.

The cabin’s earth tones blend in with the surrounding pines, tulip poplars, and assorted undergrowth, including sassafras, cedar, and maple. The log walls and cedar porch posts meld with the trees,

and the roof is the color of the sky on a cloudy day. Coming up the river by boat, you have to search for the cabin to spot it. Passing boaters a few hundred feet out in the channel have no idea that it's a log cabin—they just see the sloping roof and porch, and never notice the natural log walls.

A screened porch wraps around the cabin's front and north sides. Inside there's a living area that extends the full width of the front, headed by a stone fireplace big enough to accommodate four-foot logs. A shiny, shellacked-log stairway leads up to a full-length sleeping loft over the bedrooms and bath below. From the rafters above the living room hang two oil lamps with shades three-feet wide. These heirlooms were preserved from Stoneham's Store and later converted to electricity. This 1900s style of lighting appears in other rooms and on the porch, where blue Dietz oil lanterns have been converted to electricity, now hang from the ceiling and are connected to switches imbedded in the log door-jambs.

Downstairs are two small bedrooms and a narrow bathroom between. This area has the feel of the traditional oyster buy-boats that plied the Chesapeake Bay throughout much of the twentieth century. There's a small "head" with ornery, 1946 plumbing and a shower in a metal stall. One bedroom has windows on two walls and a view down the river; the other has two small windows that face the woods. On the north end of the cabin there's a combination pantry-porch and a cooking area—tight and compact with room for one-and-a-half adults at most. No wonder most of the cooking is done outside on charcoal grills or an open pit for roasting oysters.

On the north end of the porch is a wooden picnic table that seats six on a side and one or two on each end at wooden

benches that match the table. This heavy wooden table, built by a country craftsman, and replaced the first table that came from Mrs. Stoneham's house in Mollusk. The original table and chairs wore out at the Cabin between 1946 and 1980, ending a useful life of eighty years—as strong as any Chippendale that would have cost ten times as much.

From the porch you can see down the river toward Merry Point, where there was a customs house in the 1700s. Today there's still a free, state-maintained, two-car ferry that crosses the Corrotoman



*Recent photo of Evan and Prior at his MusicToday office in Crozet, Va.*

in good weather. Flowing to the north beyond the cabin, the river narrows to a stream, passes under a bridge at State Route 3, and winds its way east behind the county seat—the town of Lancaster Court House, where I grew up.

Aunt Garland's two daughters, Dixie and Stoneham, have owned the cabin since the 1980s, when their parents and aunts had all died. They have maintained it in good working condition for the use of their extended family. Fortunately that extension has included Prior and me, along with our two sons and their families. Over the years the Gerald Coopers have been privileged to gather at the cabin with our family once or twice per summer.

On a September morning the Western Branch of the Corrotoman River is often as calm as a lake. The gulls—terns, really—glide and splash, sit and float; their catch is limited this late in the year. They circle and swoop, but their calls of “hiee, hiee” are less frequent now. They seem restless—thinking of going south, but loath to depart, much like us humans.

When settlers ventured north from Jamestown in the 17th century, they found the Corrotoman to be “One of the most safe and commodious harbours in the country.” This was later recorded in “A Petition to the General Assembly of Virginia,” dated October 1784:

“...the River Corotoman, that makes out of Rapahanock about twelve miles above the mouth, and forms one of the most safe and commodious harbours in the country....The River is navigable for several miles up so that the largest merchantmen can go in and come out loaded....The banks in general are high and there is a very narrow passage at the mouth, where a fortress may be constructed at a



*Gerry, Prior and Charlie Cooper, circa 1995*

small expense so as to defend vessels from the insults and depredations of an enemy with much greater advantage than at any other harbour on the Rapahanock.”

Downriver inhabitants of the Northern Neck had been dissatisfied with the General Assembly’s selection of Hobbs Hole—soon to be called Tappahannock—as Virginia’s official port on the Rappahannock River. The petitioners wondered if the legislators

may not have had all the facts when they selected Hobbs Hole. The Lancaster delegation believed that the entrance to the Corrotoman would offer a better location for a port. Sailing and boating enthusiasts of the twenty-first century would agree that the mouth of the Corrotoman is far more accessible to the open waters of the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean than is Tappahannock. The latter is situated thirty miles to the west of the proposed Corrotoman port site, on wide, shallow flats that restrict navigation on the upper Rappahannock.



A rough map of the Corrotoman River was attached to the petition, believed to be *The 1784 Map of the Corrotoman River*. This map was later published for the Mary Ball Washington Museum and Library, based on the original that is preserved in the archives of the Virginia State Library.

Whether or not one believes that a port near the mouth of the Corrotoman was a better location for eighteenth century commerce than Tappahannock is a relatively moot point today. It would now



*Gerry at the Log Cabin, late fall 1985*

seem more fortunate that the Corrotoman did not become the site of a major commercial town or “cittee,” as Tappahannock has become. While a fair number of great blue herons and other waterfowl may still survive on Hoskins Creek and the Rappahannock around Tappahannock, it is a greater asset today that the water and lands of the Corrotoman remain off the path of heavy weekend traffic. Thus Corrotoman neck is a safe haven for wildlife and a retreat for humans who seek to escape urban life.

To accomplish real conservation, new organizations have appeared. The Northern Neck Land Conservancy was formed in 1990 with this mission: *To preserve the rural heritage of the Northern Neck by conserving its lands, waters, economies and culture for future generations.* See the Land Conservancy’s web site <http://www.nnconserve.org/conservation.htm> offers encouraging information

about conservation opportunities, both for Northern Neck natives and for residents who have come here in more recent times. Such shared goals, projects and partnerships are the best hope for keeping safe and commodious harbours available for future generations. The quietness and independence that took root on the Corrotoman in 1784 will need continued care and nurture for the future.

As we drive away from the cabin, up the lane beneath the arch of pines and poplars, we often see the great blue heron—a caretaker who swoops from a pine beside the river and we hear her pronounce an edict over her ancestral jurisdiction: “Skewaak, skewaak, skewaak.”

Robert Frost’s poem, “Directive,” provides a translation:

Here are your waters and your watering place...

Drink and be whole again beyond confusion.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Seeing Life in a New Light**

Learning to look to the future, beyond my immediate surroundings, was the most important lesson in my life, as I became a teenager. My mother knew that I needed to add other experiences and people to the steadying influence that she had provided. I needed to conceive a new vision of the world and to visualize my place in it.

To see life in a new light I needed to devour books and thereby accelerate my acquisition of knowledge. Bear in mind that printed books and magazines were still the primary sources of ideas for learning and living in the 1950s, before the mass media—not to mention multimedia—eventually became the unrivaled fountain of all forms of information for the general population.

As I was introduced to people and places outside of my immediate family, I began to be interested in the way others lived, beyond the confines of Lancaster County and the Northern Neck. I became aware, perhaps subconsciously at first, that Mr. and Mrs. John Garland Pollard Jr. led a different kind of life from what I had experienced—one that I might desire for myself. These two people

were not only the parents of my good friends John, Mary Lloyd and Albert; they also became significant role models for my future plans and worldview. In my pre-high school years, I perceived the senior Pollards to be enjoying a life that centered upon books and learning—the product of their liberal education. That life included reading good books, engaging in lively conversations about authors and writing, and pursuing those activities with acquaintances who held a variety of viewpoints and came from many walks of life.

The Pollards—whom I came to call Peggy and Garland after thirty years—regularly volunteered in causes related to education and self-improvement. They seemed to have one cardinal rule: they steadfastly avoided drawing attention to themselves and their contributions. They rarely mentioned social position or worldly wealth. Their primary focus seemed to be upon fostering good experiences for others. As I internalized many of their attitudes, I became open to the possibility of spending my life working in some type of service organization, instead of becoming a doctor, lawyer or banker—the more typical paths for navigating one’s way out of humble, rural origins. At that point I began to see life in a new light.

Certainly I was subject to the usual teenage foibles, and like my friends I often put the emphasis on having a good time. At the same time I was fortunate to share cultural opportunities with the Pollard family. Peggy as the mother of teenaged children often instigated happy adventures for them, and she frequently included her children’s friends in the fun. She occasionally enlisted my mother to help her chaperone these excursions. As an early example, she took a group of us to see a play that the touring Barter Theatre of

Virginia presented in the high school auditorium at White Stone. She described such events as “delicious,” a term I hadn’t heard used about anything other than food.

Peggy was by nature both inclusive and enthusiastic. She treated everyone positively, regardless of age, race, or economic situation. She interacted daily with domestic workers, farmers, watermen, and teenaged boys and girls. In their home, Bel Air, overlooking the Rappahannock, she and Garland entertained ordinary local folks without ceremony or ostentation. They also hosted governors and legislators, along with the heads of organizations such as the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, and Colonial Williamsburg. Garland served on the boards of these nonprofit organizations, and Peggy entertained their leaders, hoping to make the work more enjoyable and effective. She also held her share of board positions in her own right.

“He’s currently serving on ten boards, all non-paying,” she would let slip occasionally, when Garland’s absences to attend meetings had been overly prolonged. Never daunted, she drew on her abundant gifts of hospitality and ingenuity to entertain all visitors with equal grace. The Pollards did not waste money on lavish parties, nor did they draw from trustee expense accounts in those post-war days, when American frugality was still in practice, and budgets were tight, particularly in the nonprofit sector. The cost of the fundraising events that have come into vogue in recent years would cause the Pollards concern.

Peggy and Garland treated their children’s guests and acquaintances with interest and affirmation. They encouraged

young people to think independently, both their own children and other young relatives and friends, like me. As we grew older, it was a special treat to sit at dinner with the Pollards and take part in conversations that ranged from politics to poetry and from gardening to government. Peggy usually mentioned the latest books she was reading, and she encouraged us to talk about our own favorites. This table talk was neither a competition nor a command performance.

If the discussion got too serious, Garland would slip in a lighten-up comment like, “What’s Pap Towles charging you boys for beer these days?” His son, John Garland III, might reply, “Good old Gunther is four dollars a case, Dad. Hard to beat!” (John had transferred to Christchurch School from St. Christopher’s in Richmond for the last two years of high school, and he and I became fast friends at that time, circa 1950-52.)

Peggy often punctuated her comments with “Do you know what I mean?” and she clearly expected more than a one-syllable response. Occasionally Garland might inject, “Now Peggy, don’t put ’em on the spot. They’re not majoring in foreign policy.”

Peggy usually “looked sharp,” as we said in those days. Her attire tended to the informal—more often Miller & Rhoads casual, rather than Montaldo’s clubby—to recall two of Richmond’s leading clothiers of the era. Garland preferred ultra-country attire around the farm: well-worn shoes, a rumpled old dress hat, with pants and shirt that showed he’d been engaged in one of his favorite avocations, digging in the sandy Tidewater soil and transplanting trees and shrubs. These labors were for him a welcome change of pace from the frequent board meetings on his agenda. Garland raised and transplanted homegrown greenery from Bel Air to his



*Garland and Peggy Pollard on the Queen Mary, 1962*

children's first homes in the early 1960s. He employed the do-it-yourself method of home and garden improvement long before it became a suburban ritual and a marketing ploy.

Something exciting seemed always to be percolating around Bel Air, the Pollard homestead. The main house, a colonial Williamsburg reproduction, occupies a site that commands a broad view across a green lawn to Deep Creek, which flows past Wills' Point and into the Rappahannock River, about a mile east of Morattico. The view across the river toward Christchurch School and Urbanna is unsurpassed.

A seated brunch for a dozen or so of the Pollard children's friends

might unfold on twenty-four hours' notice, when they were in the midst of their college years. The guests would assemble over several hours, typically invited to stay for a weekend house party. Some traveled considerable distances through time and space—from places like Old Town in Alexandria or Myers Park in Charlotte or the Fan in Richmond—to the destination near Somers, Virginia. Somers was the post office where you turned off state route 354 to reach Bel Air. Newcomers to the area were told, "From Warsaw head east to Chinn's millpond, and bear right on route 354 to Somers. If you end up in Nuttsville, Lively or Mollusk, you've missed a turn." With no cell phones or GPS devices, visitors had to stop and talk to local people to get better directions. Sadly, that form of communication has been nearly eradicated by technological progress.

Visiting young ladies at house parties were well-chaperoned, staying in guestrooms in the Pollards' main house. The boys bunked more casually in the "Little House," an indestructible guest-and-party facility located on the creek about a hundred yards from Bel Air. A 2007 Park Service brochure describes Bel Air as a "Georgian-style mansion." I can imagine certain members of the Pollard family asking incredulously, "The Georgian-style what?" No one used fancy terms when we were growing up, except to describe truly historic places such as Wakefield, birthplace of George Washington, or Stratford, home of the Lees. Those antebellum plantations are located near the banks of the Potomac, about fifty miles north of Somers.

Garland supervised the work of local tradesmen who built Bel Air in 1946, while at the same time he was winding down his career as an investment banker in Washington. Later, with help from

assorted volunteers, mainly relatives and farm employees, he added the one-story, concrete block Little House as a safe haven—to keep young people off the highways, as we experienced the trials and errors of growing up in the 1950s. Our temptations consisted mostly of beer, cigarettes, big bands and dancing cheek-to-cheek. The speed was at 45 rpms—both for our favorite recorded music and for the pace of our lives in those halcyon days that came to be called The Fifties.

I took my first road trip by car as a teenager with Peggy at the wheel. We headed to Little Switzerland, in the mountains of North Carolina. Our destination was the beloved summer colony of her own peaceful youth. In August of 1951 she piloted the family auto—a Studebaker featuring “the new look in motor cars” as I recall—with Mary Lloyd, plus my friend Jack Street and me in the back seat. We headed toward a pinnacle amidst North Carolina’s abundant mountain greenery. Peggy’s sister-in-law, Mrs. Francis Clarkson of Charlotte, was the hostess in residence at the Clarkson family’s summer cottage, along with her daughter, another Peggy—namesake of you-know-who.

The cottage was a white frame structure, with a porch to catch the mountain breezes, along with the usual cooking and dining amenities and several bedrooms for guests. It was located on one of the winding roads that traversed the summer colony that Peggy’s father, Judge Herriot Clarkson, with other friends from Charlotte had established in 1909. Little Switzerland continues to thrive today as a mountain retreat. I hope it has retained some of the understated, family-style atmosphere that prevailed in 1951.

Around 1980, thirty years after that visit, I rediscovered Little



*Trinity Episcopal Church, Lancaster, a block from my home.*

Switzerland when I was a resident of Winston-Salem. I took a solo expedition expressly to find and revisit that mountain hamlet. There I discovered how Peggy had learned to respect local people that she later practiced when she and Garland settled in Lancaster County, Virginia. I learned that her mother and father had modeled those qualities at this remote mountain colony of North Carolina when Peggy was a girl. *The Story of Little Switzerland*, by Louise deSausseure Duls, describes how prominent families from Charlotte went out of their way to show respect and concern for the mountain people around Little Switzerland and in nearby Spruce Pine. Beginning in the early 1900s, these families also insisted that their city-raised, well-educated children show good manners to the mountain people, many of whom had no formal education. We could still see traces of poverty among the indigenous families of the Blue Ridge Mountains



when we visited there.

Here Peggy had learned to show respect to less fortunate people, and she brought that experience with her from North Carolina to Virginia. She passed on similar attributes to her own children when they moved to rural Lancaster County. These sensitivities were tested in the late 1940s when they were students at the public school in Lively. It was obvious that some families lacked sufficient funds for adequate food and clothing, especially in winter, when sources of income for watermen were scarce, and when freezing cold often penetrated their poorly insulated homes. The more fortunate children learned that it was unacceptable to tease fellow students who wore holey shoes, tattered coats and brought unusual items in their lunch boxes. That included molasses in Vick's Vapor-Rub jars, to be spread on crumbly scraps of bread. Many parents performed acts of charity for these needy families, though we children either didn't know the details or were sworn to secrecy.

When he settled in Lancaster County in 1947, Garland Pollard was almost a returning native of the Northern Neck. His family roots were in King and Queen County, not many miles southwest of Lancaster, across the Rappahannock. He knew firsthand about life in rural Tidewater Virginia. His father was a professor of government at the College of William and Mary, who later became mayor of Williamsburg, and eventually served as governor of Virginia in 1930-34. William and Mary boasted many loyal alumni around the Northern Neck, including several of my relatives. Garland understood the quaint customs and folkways of post-war Tidewater, and he spoke the vernacular "pretty well." My mother, who had cousins in King and Queen, was especially

fond of Garland. Knowing that he held an advanced degree from Harvard, she liked to remind Garland that he must continually prove himself to be an exception to the adage, “You can tell a Harvard man, but you can’t tell him much.”

Our trip with Peggy to Western North Carolina was my first venture south of the Virginia state line. Peggy had included on our itinerary a stop in Old Salem, the restored Moravian village on the east side of Winston-Salem. I am convinced that I developed an affinity for the Old North State on that journey that influenced me to take my family to live in Winston-Salem twenty-five years later, in 1977. As a teenager in 1951, I gained a special appreciation for people and places in the Tarheel state. I viewed North Carolina and its people to be the primary sources of stimulation and friendly competition for us less venturesome Virginians. Without a little stirring of the pot through competition and intermarriage with North Carolinians, we Virginians tend to regress into a fortress mentality that dates from our embattled origins at Jamestown.

Another enlightening Peggy Project for preteens involved her transporting a carload of her children and their friends to Richmond to attend live performances of cultural classics. The mission of one such jaunt was to attend Gilbert and Sullivan’s *H.M.S. Pinafore* at the Mosque theatre. Peggy insisted that we dress up a bit—jackets and ties for the boys and sweaters and skirts for the girls. We squirmed, giggled, held hands—and absorbed culture, whether we knew it or not. For Peggy the *Pinafore* performance was thoroughly *delicious*, of course!

The Pollards took a rather traditional approach to spiritual matters. They participated in efforts to re-activate a rural Episcopal

church, St. Mary's White Chapel, founded 1664, in historic Christ Church Parish of Lancaster County. They became active members of "White Chapel," located just a few miles from their home in Somers. Assisting with hands-on cleaning and polishing, and using their financial contacts to raise funds, they helped to restore the building and grounds of the historic church, where the mother of George Washington, Mary Ball, who lived at nearby Epping Forest, had been a communicant.

Peggy and Garland later led a successful program to construct a modern parish hall at White Chapel as a place to hold contemporary activities, which the seventeenth century church building with its narrow nave could not accommodate. The Jesse Ball duPont Fund contributed to the new building, just as it had supported other projects favored by Mrs. duPont, in her native Lancaster County and throughout the Northern Neck. Garland was the quiet resource person for many such worthy fundraising causes. I discovered his special touch later, when I began my career in fundraising at Christchurch School. "Giving helps people who have money to assuage their consciences, so it's often a service to ask them to contribute," he reminded me more than once, with a twinkle in his eye. As to why their consciences might need assuaging he never elaborated. He often left drawing such conclusions to those whom he mentored.

Peggy's most frequent and reliable partner in projects for the greater good was Sue Pollard Boatwright, Garland's sister, who lived just up the lane at Belle Isle Farm. Their typical operating procedure was to do something worthwhile and have fun at the same time. Peggy and Sue were prime movers in starting "The

Christmas Assembly,” founded in 1950 as the first debutante ball in the Northern Neck. Many of my female contemporaries were presented at the Assembly, especially in 1953. That was an easy year to remember, for it was also coronation year for Queen Elizabeth II in England, and balls with coronation themes were in vogue, even in the former British colonies. The purpose of The Assembly was—and still is—to raise funds for worthy causes in the Rappahannock region. The Christmas Assembly merged in 1958 with “The Holly Ball,” an annual Christmas holiday dance that has been celebrated in Kilmarnock since 1895. The Holly Ball’s dancing festivities and The Assembly’s presentation of young ladies to society continue jointly today as the highlight of social activity at Christmas on the Northern Neck peninsula.

Outside of Lancaster County, Peggy and Garland Pollard’s commitment to worthy causes centered on the Church Schools in the (Episcopal) Diocese of Virginia, headquartered in Richmond. The Church Schools at the time included six college preparatory schools, three for girls and three for boys. There were Christchurch and St. Margaret’s on the Rappahannock River, St. Catherine’s and St. Christopher’s in Richmond, and St. Agnes’ and St. Stephen’s in Alexandria. Dr. John Page Williams published a comprehensive history of these schools in 1999. That book was published before the structure of the two schools in Northern Virginia began to change, as a result of trends toward coeducation in independent schools generally, and jurisdictional unrest among the Alexandria-based schools’ trustees. Dr. Williams had served the Church Schools for a total of thirty-five years, first as headmaster at St. Christopher’s and then as dean of all six Church Schools.



*Peggy Pollard and Celeste Cooper c.1953 in New England*

Garland was a trustee of the Church Schools from 1947 to 1976, and served as interim dean in 1950-51, until John Page Williams was appointed permanent dean. Garland held virtually every position of leadership open to a layperson in the Episcopal Diocese, except chairperson of the Episcopal Church Women; Peggy of course held that responsibility. Garland took pleasure in reminding friends that he was raised a Baptist. That inherited asset seemed to enabled him to be a bit more grounded and practical when dealing with the more formal, liturgical Episcopalians.

Garland spoke fondly of “my father,” most often to tell an anecdote about his father’s renown as an adult Bible class teacher, college professor or folksy wit. He never boasted of his father’s rise to the position of governor of Virginia in 1930-34, though he clearly

enjoyed hearing and telling stories about “the Guv.”

In 1961 I became professionally associated with Garland in the “Six Steps for the Sixties” capital fundraising campaign for Christchurch School. I was appointed Director of Development at Christchurch, and I was honored to be the first person to hold that position. I worked closely with the two volunteer co-chairmen of the campaign. Edgar P. Phillips, the chairman, was a successful Richmond businessman, who also was a leading Baptist layman and parent of a current Christchurch student. Garland was the co-chairman, in recognition of his longtime support of the Church Schools, his three children having attend the schools, and upon his remarkable knowledge of finding funds for worthy causes.

We often traveled in Mr. Phillips’s Lincoln Town Car, motoring to various locations around the region to visit with people and organizations that were prospects for financial support. Later in my career I learned to call these efforts cultivation activities. It was not difficult for me to promote this small, Episcopal Church-related school that had done so much for boys like me. For most of its forty-year history, the school had been hiding its candle under a bushel on the banks of the Rappahannock. It now fell to me to help raise the candlestick higher, being careful not to mistake myself for the candle.

Our campaign travels once took us to Chapel Hill, N.C., where the three of us stayed overnight, sharing a suite at the venerable Carolina Inn. I was pleased to overhear Garland say to Mr. Phillips, while I was in a back room of our suite, “I think Gerry is well suited for this work at the school, don’t you?” Mr. Phillips generously voiced his agreement. I felt especially encouraged by Garland’s

comment because it sounded like a professional assessment of my work, rather than a casual remark about a friend of his children. The comments of these two successful men were important to me. They each contributed significantly to laying the foundation for my career in school development and administration.

Many of those early lessons would stay with me throughout my career. Ed Phillips and Garland Pollard were two of the finest models of trustee commitment and leadership that I would encounter in the ensuing forty years. Each of these men held a deep belief in Christchurch School's work with young men, and in the school's unique role among Virginia's private schools—including the ones with greater prestige and larger financial backing. These two wise men based their thorough belief in Christchurch upon their wide experience with people and institutions in many walks of life. From them I learned to champion the underdog—be it an individual or a nonprofit organization. They seemed to endorse the notion that “yesterday's underdog may become tomorrow's champion,” and that became a motivating principle in my life. How fortunate I was to begin my career by working closely with these two remarkable yet thoroughly humble men.

In my view Garland was the epitome of the reconstructed Virginia gentleman. He was descended from solid Southern stock, though I never heard him mention the lost cause attitudes that diehard zealots harbored about the Civil War. He had been well educated, first at the oldest college in the South—William and Mary—and then at the oldest university in United States—Harvard. He modeled the values he had gained from those opportunities, yet he showed no hint of superiority toward anyone. Garland was equally

comfortable chatting with local people on the porch of a country store in Lancaster Court House, or weighing a decision with the trustees of the Episcopal Church Schools in Richmond. He could communicate effectively with Tollie Jackson, whom he and Lee Boatwright employed as the skipper of their oyster boat, *The Belle I*. He could just as easily meet with Paul Mellon, the world-renowned art philanthropist, and persuade him to make a major gift to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

For all of his gentility, Garland could deliver the tough message—on the rare occasions when he felt that such a message was required. He once confided in me regarding an incident that I believe only Peggy knew about, involving the controversial president of an educational institution. This gentleman had been told, inaccurately, that his board of trustees had given him a unanimous vote of confidence in the midst of controversy. Garland had not given his support to that vote, and he telephoned the gentleman to set the record straight. He did this with no malice, no fanfare, and no leaks to the press. Garland simply wanted to set the record straight, man to man. Not long thereafter, that president stepped down when his unsatisfactory performance became clear to a majority of his trustees—and which Garland had discerned months before.

Garland's style of teaching drew upon Socrates and Jesus, both of whom he had studied with care. He usually asked questions, sometimes rhetorically, and he appeared to believe that those around him—especially young people—had the answers within themselves. We who gravitated to Garland may have occasionally struggled with his non-directive style and whimsical responses to life's "burning issues," as they seemed to us. Even in the 1950s, we



had begun to thirst for instant gratification. Garland was usually able to slow us down, if we were wise enough to seek his advice.

Was Garland's measured style too deliberate for the challenges of the twenty-first century? I say, "Certainly not," although not many people other than retirees like me really have time today to take the thoughtful approach that Garland practiced. Whenever I read or studied Ralph Waldo Emerson, I thought of Garland: he was the quintessential American Scholar, whom Emerson defined as "man thinking."

The most emotional moments with Peggy came near the end of her life, in 1984, when she battled cancer valiantly for eighteen months. Prior and I visited with the Pollards regularly at this time, driving to Bel Air from Virginia Beach, where we rented a home from their son, John G. Pollard III. I remember vividly Peggy's bearing of the pain that came with one of life's most heinous illnesses. She displayed a sturdiness that I associate with women of America's earliest colonial times. Those women reached deep within themselves for physical strength and mental courage that is rare in modern times. Peggy was one such woman.

Despite the illness, Peggy's eyes remained clear and penetrating, and she appeared as alert as she had been throughout the forty years I had known her. Surely she was being sustained by her Creator, and for family and friends she became a visible letter of faith, as powerful as an epistle of St. Paul.

Margaret Clarkson Pollard remained for me the finest representative of her native North Carolina—long after her marriage, relocation and achievements made her a prominent Virginian.

The Pollards frequently shared their hearth and hospitality with venerable bishops, neophyte priests, academic deans, heads of schools, and leaders of many benevolent societies. Those who visited at Bel Air often spoke of the warm friendship and wise counsel they received from the Pollards.

Into their balanced relationship, Garland brought his eastern Virginia circumspection—weighing most decisions with extra care. Peggy contributed her North Carolina spontaneity, often expressed by “Let’s get this done—today.” These two people brought a new dimension to my life, as they did to many others. The Pollards of Bel Air touched lives in the Northern Neck and throughout Virginia, always operating from their favorite position—just outside the limelight.

Years later I read in a spiritual guide, “*We have all met persons who make us want to take risks, to see life in a new light.*” Peggy and Garland Pollard immediately came to mind. That was their gift to me, at a time when I needed a fresh perspective, a broader view. They helped me to step beyond the shadow of the Confederate monument across from my home in Lancaster, and begin to see life in a new light. That was one of the steps that changed the course of my life.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Neck, the River and College Prep**

Not long after World War II ended, the two easternmost counties of the Northern Neck, Lancaster and Northumberland, were discovered by “come-heres.” These explorers were the people who would soon begin a major migration to the river country—from whence many of the same folks had originally gone west, either as part of the recent war effort or before that, to find gainful employment. To prepare to come back, these city dwellers needed to accumulate enough wealth—or a sufficient credit rating—to buy river property on which to build weekend getaway places and vacation homes.

Soon they began to rush to waterfront sites on the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers. They came from metropolitan areas fifty to a hundred miles away, some from the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia, and many from Richmond. Very few migrated north from Newport News and Norfolk—folks in the lower Tidewater had a natural inclination to stay south of the York River, on the banks of the James, or near the Atlantic Ocean at Virginia Beach.

Almost imperceptibly, the local financial base began to change

with the gradual influx of the more affluent come-heres. This potential shot in the arm of the economy was a little late for local young people who had determined that there was no work for them in their home county, whether they had completed high school or not. Lancaster's more motivated youngsters, hungry for better-paying work, began an out-migration, even as people with money began to come into the county.

Jesse Hinson was an example of that exodus. He was a native of White Stone and graduate of Christchurch School, Class of 1956 and member of its Sports Hall of Fame. Jesse told me about his personal decision to leave Lancaster County after high school, when he and I visited at Christchurch class reunions in May 2008. "A college baseball scholarship didn't come through for me, so I



*Chownings Ferry, near Towles Point, in Lancaster County, setting for a scene in William Styron's Lie Down in Darkness.*

went to work in my father's construction business. When a Navy recruiter came by to sign up a fellow worker, I said, 'Take me, too—where do I sign?'"

Jesse went on to complete a career in the U. S. Navy, and retired after thirty years as a master chief petty officer, settling in Jacksonville, Florida. He gave more details in an email: "I was just retiring, not becoming senile! Jacksonville has 1.3 million people and White Stone has about 500. Go figure!"

Over the years since the 1950s, Lancaster County has lost countless young people after high school. Many went on to rewarding vocations and never came back—except to visit. Jesse Hinson and I are just two examples. The sad part is that some of us "left-heres" might have had more empathy for the plight of Lancaster kids than the current residents have shown. Recalling what caused us to leave, we might have offered a more useful approach to creating opportunities for local youths.

Back in 1946, I was living in the village of Lancaster Court House when I got a shock and an early wake-up call, causing me to start thinking about my future life. My dad's death motivated me—and certainly my mother—to begin planning for my future ahead of many of my contemporaries. As I've already mentioned, Jim Davenport reached out to me, beginning on that fateful day, Christmas 1945, when my father died in the early morning hours. Later that evening, as we stood in his mother's kitchen in Lancaster, Jim said, "Your dad was a kind of hero of the war years. His age kept him out of active military service, but he helped hold the community together at home. In the process, he probably worked too hard and ruined his health."

Jim's kind words and friendship were comforting for a ten year old, and I will never forget him and his support.

After Dad's death, my mother went back to teaching, at Kilmarnock High School, that offered grades 1-11. I joined her there as an elementary student, leaving Lively High and my first school friends. With much help from Elnora Haynie, my second grade teacher, I learned to fit in socially and to write in cursive—both big challenges for me at the time. Several classmates, especially Dixie Moorman and Catherine Dixon, made me feel at home. After two years of teaching, my mother took a better paying job as chief bookkeeper and office manager at Kilmarnock Motor Sales, where she was employed for twenty years. I returned to Lively High School for the fourth through seventh grades, riding the school bus six miles round trip between Lancaster and Lively. When I got home each day around three-thirty, I played outdoors in the village with friends such as Grace Emily Pierce and John Orville Dodson, or listened to serial radio programs like *Jack Armstrong* and *Captain Midnight*, until my mom got home at five-thirty. I was a latch-key kid, whether I knew it or not, in the safe environment of rural America.

I entered Christchurch School in 1949 as a boarding student, ripe for a full-time college prep program for boys. The school was situated on a high bluff overlooking the Rappahannock from the south side, in Middlesex County. That was twenty-five miles from my home by car and ferry, and in those days it seemed like a long trip—it took half a day. I entered the eighth grade, but Christchurch officials moved me up a grade when they decided that I was prepared academically for the first year of high school. The preparation I had gained in the Lancaster County public schools including teachers

at Lively such as Mrs. Catherine Stephens, “Miss Susie” Blundon and Mrs. Sydnor, proved to be as strong as that of my Christchurch classmates who came from Richmond, Northern Virginia, Newport News, and other urban schools. In the early months, I often wondered why I had left the familiar surroundings of my home, but I became more comfortable with the change as I got to know fellow students.

Also, by Christmas of that first year I had begun to have success in the classroom and to enjoy the extracurricular life of the school. The daily routines were clearly designed to enable boys to grow strong in mind, body and spirit—and to have fun in the process. The headmaster, Branch Spalding, took a special interest in me. He had gotten to know my mother and me the previous summer; he owned a cottage next door to my Uncle Harry Beane on the north bank of the Rappahannock, near Weems. Mom and I frequently visited the Beanes on weekends and we often saw the Spalding family, too.

At Christchurch, Mr. Spalding and his team of masters (as teachers were called in prep schools) became primary influences in my life, and I began to excel in the academic aspects of the boarding school environment. Christchurch was unique because it offered students access to rural outdoor life, along with the more typical, organized athletic program. We were permitted to fish in a fresh water lake at nearby Rosegill Farm, and we also sailed, swam, hunted, and fished on the Rappahannock, just a half-mile down the dirt road below the school. Few schools then or now can offer a natural resource on or near the campus that is so omnipresent and useful as the Rappahannock is to Christchurch. The river was in our lives every day of the school year—we experienced it as we



*Junior varsity football at Christchurch. Gerry quarter-backing with the ball.*

walked to class, or went for a sail, or took off to escape civilization with a walk—and perhaps an illicit smoke—along the river road.

We who were students from the Northern Neck were born and raised on the Rappahannock, and our entire families were connected to it through work or play or both. Our fellow students called us “the guys from across the river,” and it seemed that wherever we went, the river was part of our identity. The river had a special impact upon at least one student who eventually became quite famous. William Styron, a future Pulitzer Prize-winning author, grew up in Newport News, attended Christchurch for three years of high school, and graduated in the class of 1942. In his first novel, *Lie Down In Darkness*, published in 1951, Styron captured the Rappahannock River for all of us:



It was a beautiful river, broad and blue and serene, with no cities defacing its shore. There was something primeval about this river: with the woods crowding its banks, and the ducks winging southward through a blue, cloudless sky, it seemed as if the river remained forever changeless, undisturbed by the tools or weapons of man ...

Fifty years later, in 2000, a majority of the alumni who submitted personal recollections for *Christchurch Memories*, a publication of the school that I helped edit, mentioned their experiences on the river. The river was an integral part of the school for most alumni, similar to the gym or the dormitory or the playing fields. For some, as for Styron, “the river remained forever changeless” as they looked back over their years after graduation.

Christchurch School has expanded its use of the river, offering a curriculum that utilizes the river to great advantage—in marine science courses and as a location for team competition with other schools in both rowing and sailing. Though perhaps not as *undisturbed* as in 1942, the river is an even greater presence in students’ lives today. A majority of alumni, including Bill Styron, have applauded the school for its increased utilization of the river.

I went to Christchurch to receive college preparation and to get to know others who intended to go to college. In contrast to rural public high schools, virtually all of the graduates at Christchurch expected to go on to higher education—certainly that’s what their parents were paying for. College seemed to be a part of every discussion—even bull sessions—in our senior year. We were all conditioned to the idea of attending college somewhere, and we all talked a good game, even if we were struggling with our schoolwork



*Branch Spalding, who brought Christchurch School into a new era.*

at the moment or if we had no idea where we'd get the money to pay the cost of tuition—which was my predicament.

I had become an avid reader, encouraged at home by my mother, at school by “Aunt Lil” Stoneham, the librarian at Lively High, by teachers already mentioned, and by other adults such as Peggy and Garland Pollard. I absorbed the message that books were the gateway to the life I wanted to lead when I grew up. My best subjects were

English literature and composition, and at Christchurch I was at or near the top of my class academically, in most grading periods. I put my energy into academic pursuits at Christchurch, and I benefited when the school gave students tangible rewards in addition to learning for its own sake. Incentives for academic performance included the freedom to study in one's dorm room throughout required evening study halls, the privilege to take occasional extra weekend leaves away from school, and opportunities to hold leadership positions in the various phases of school life.

At Christchurch there were often opportunities to attend cultural events, something that I did not have as many chances to do at home. My mother was usually struggling to make ends meet, and after age 15, I was working summers to help pay my way and augment the scholarships I was granted. As an example of our financial situation, in 1948 Mom brought home a “new” used car, a 1946 Chevrolet that replaced our 1938 Chevy. That was a major step forward in our family transportation, and I can remember being quite proud of that snappy, two-door black coupe. It was still so close to wartime that sacrifices—such as used cars—were generally acceptable, and I didn't feel conspicuous for not having a brand-new car.

I came to believe that I was on an equal footing with my financially better off schoolmates, at least based on my academic achievement and improving social skills. I was aware that our modest home in Lancaster Court House was below the housing standards of housing of many of my friends, especially when compared to the fine suburban homes and country estates where several of my contemporaries grew up. The friends I valued most, however, rarely

seemed to notice my lack of material assets, and they let me know that finances were not the basis for their friendship.

I experienced this supportive attitude especially from the Pollards, whom I've already described, and also from their cousins, John and Lee Boatwright, and their parents, who lived at Belle Isle Farm, an antebellum home and estate. By virtue of its size and date of construction, Belle Isle was the only remaining plantation in Lancaster County. Mr. and Mrs. H. Lee Boatwright had restored Belle Isle to its former beauty in the late 1940s, and Sue Pollard Boatwright became the "hostess with the mostest" of Belle Isle. She had served as hostess for her father, John Garland Pollard, when he was governor of Virginia in 1930-34, and she was skilled in making everyone feel at home, regardless of age, social position or bank balance. Her recipe for fish-house punch became a contemporary legend throughout the count when she and Peggy Pollard mixed its various liquid ingredients and served it at a huge Belle Isle party celebrating Dr. Chichester "Chit" Peirce's fiftieth anniversary in the practice of medicine, 1900-1950.

I was fortunate to grow up among progressive, open-minded people in Lancaster County—especially my mother, the Stoneham sisters, the Davenports, and the Pollard and Boatwright families. I came to think that this would be the prevailing attitude I would encounter in the wider world, after school and college. I assumed I would become a member of a meritocracy—with status based on achievement rather than wealth, and accessed through higher education. I found ample support for these notions, especially in my study of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, and Jefferson. The teaching and example of my schoolmasters, family and friends further

intensified my desire to pursue democratic, egalitarian ideals.

When I entered boarding school at age 14, I found that new world to be first daunting and eventually rewarding. I knew two or three students older than I who had gone off to school, and they seemed to adjust well to the change, but they became sophisticated in the process, and I had found communicating with them more difficult. Further, my mother held a fulltime job to make ends meet, and given the stereotype of prep schools as being primarily for the well to do, I wondered if our limited financial resources would be sufficient, and how I would stack up academically.

“Don’t worry,” Branch Spalding, the Christchurch headmaster, had said. “We’re not a school for the wealthy; we have many families who are making a real sacrifice to send their sons here. You know some of them who live in Lancaster County. And Christchurch will help you with a scholarship.”

That was the first time I had heard any reference to financial aid for education—a concept that would thereafter remain in the foreground of my life and in my career. I think the Christchurch tuition in 1949-50 was \$750; that was a good deal of money for many rural families in those days, and for my mother it constituted a



*1953 Christchurch yearbook*

significant challenge. Only with the help of financial aid could I attend a private school.

Of course Mr. Spalding was accurate in his description of the Christchurch clientele; however, he was voicing an adult perspective, and I felt sure that my experience would be a challenge—in the dormitories ... and there was football ... and the big shower rooms ... just the thought of those unfamiliar situations caused me to feel anxious. In Lancaster County public schools they didn't play high school football in 1949. The local schools offered teams in baseball and basketball, and any shower-taking was done at home. There were only outdoor toilets with no running water at Lively High; thus showers in schools were unheard of, even in the new school building at Kilmarnock. I remember the Kilmarnock principal, Mr. Henry Chase, calling the entire student body together to tell them how to use the indoor toilets properly in the new school building. He even gave hints on how to fold and dispose of toilet paper. The post-war era brought all kinds of modern changes to Lancaster County, for young and old alike, but it was a slow process.

Coming from a rural background, I found life in a boarding school that first fall to be a difficult adjustment. Most of the boys were from the city and seemed to take for granted things I was sure I'd never know. They talked about cars, girls, parties at Virginia Beach, and country clubs—topics known only to privileged teenagers. And did I get singled out as a country guy? Oh no! The sophisticates just ignored me, and went on with their discussions as if I wasn't even there ... following the usual teenage rites of growing up.

By my junior year—*fifth form* in prep-school parlance—I had worked my way into an inner circle of students. A group of us old

boys began to hang out regularly in one particular monitor's room whenever we had free time. Our gatherings were rather harmless, although we came to see ourselves as elite—as adolescent boys often do. We wrote our names in white ink on the black top of a desk in the gathering room, under the heading “The Boys.” Mr. Spalding invited several of us on the list to his study for a chat. He pointed out that there were to be no elite clubs at Christchurch, and suggested that we remove the names and end the congregating. I'm sure he also noted that there were plenty of activities available, and that our college plans would be better served if we devoted our energy to authorized groups and especially to our studies.

The headmaster often spoke of a “sacred trust” that the school placed upon its students, beginning with a student-led honor system. He also urged the conscientious pursuit of academic assignments, and fostered an active student government led by faculty-selected monitors who were top students now in their senior year. These were concepts that the new headmaster was either reactivating or initiating at Christchurch, where many traditions had fallen out of regular practice in the years just prior to his taking over as headmaster in 1949.

Mr. Spalding, as I later discovered, fit the stereotypical image of a headmaster. He wore tweed coats and a rakish Tyrolean hat, smoked a pipe, and walked with a slight limp—perhaps from an old football injury. He draped his overcoat across his shoulders like a cape as he ambled across the campus, and he appeared at all types of student activities, often unannounced. He taught the entire senior class a comprehensive, year-long course that included three plays by Shakespeare and a survey of the English novel. He was a



*Mary Lloyd Pollard and Gerry. Coronation was the theme at Christchurch dance in 1952.*

graduate and disciple of the English department at the University of Virginia. This I realized more clearly when I eventually matriculated at Virginia and majored in English.

When I began to consider transferring from William and Mary to the University of Virginia in 1954, Mr. Spalding stepped to my aid. He supported my desire to change, based largely on his awareness of my interest in pursuing a major in English. He drove me to Charlottesville and introduced me to the legendary Ivey Lewis, who was by then dean emeritus of the College of Arts and Sciences. We went to the Rotunda to meet with Raymond Bice, Dean of Admissions, who outlined what I needed to accomplish at William and Mary in order to transfer to Virginia. I met those requirements and thereupon completed the transfer, arriving on the Grounds in January 1955.



Mr. Spalding had come to Christchurch from a key position on the faculty at Episcopal High School. EHS was founded in 1839 in Alexandria and is one of the oldest boarding schools in the United States. The Christchurch School trustees expected the new headmaster to raise academic standards—and money—to raise it at least on a par with the five other schools in the Church Schools in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. This renaissance could not be achieved in one year, of course. By the time I graduated in 1953, however, it was the fourth year of the Spalding era, and the school had exceeded the academic standards and enrollment levels that it had held prior to World War II.

The pre-war years were the halcyon times that I'd heard about from Jim Davenport, Bill Styron, Frank McGinnes, Ranny Chowning and others in the Class of 1942. Most of the members of that class attended college only briefly and then left to enter the armed forces to fight in World War II. Thus their peaceful years ended abruptly, as America's finest young men went off to foreign shores. Bill Styron captured a sampling of those coming-of-age war experiences in his fiction—first in “The Long March,” published in 1953 and posthumously in “Rat Beach,” that appeared in the July 20, 2009 issue of *The New Yorker*. Styron is believed to have said, “... of all the schools I attended ... only Christchurch ever commanded something more than mere respect—which is to say, my true and abiding affection.” He died November 1, 2006.

Meanwhile, in the fall of 1949, I had experienced another major transition in my life—enrolling at Christchurch as a boarding student. That was probably the last time I felt any yearning for the bucolic landscapes and humdrum lifestyle of the Northern Neck.

There no smokestacks or railroads have ever intruded upon the flat farmlands, marches and glebes. Miriam Haynie, a home-grown Northern Neck historian, who was a contemporary of my mother, published a book in 1952 titled *The Stronghold*, describing the life and customs of the Northern Neck from its settlement in the 1650s through the early 1950s. A *stronghold* is defined as “a place that is fortified or that can be easily defended.” Synonyms may also include “stranglehold.” Any synonyms that connote imprisonment describe how I felt about the Northern Neck, once I reached my late teenage years and became conscious of a larger world that existed west of the fall line of the James River, in Richmond.

By the time my class of thirteen young men received diplomas from Christchurch on “this thirtieth day of May, A. D. 1953,” I had been offered admission and financial aid to two prestigious colleges, Princeton and Yale. That fall, I went off to Princeton, and almost immediately I became disenchanted with my highly acclaimed educational opportunity. Looking back now, over more than fifty years, I am aware that at Princeton I was forced to break out of my storybook existence and to contend with the real world on my own. I got a rude awakening as I took my first steps into the realm of higher education. It all began in an empty dormitory room in Princeton’s Moses Taylor Pyne Hall.

## Chapter 6

### An Empty Room at Princeton

“... a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth.” —*The Great Gatsby*

Entering Princeton University would mark an important step in launching a promising career for most students in any generation. Thus when I enrolled at Princeton in the fall of 1953, having earned a full scholarship, I thought that I too had all I would need to partake of the benefits of that prestigious college. I was ready to get trained to be successful in the larger world. I believed that my record at Christchurch School, where I had earned my share of academic honors and leadership positions, had helped me to gain this opportunity. Surely I was ready for the next step.

Imagine my shock to discover within a matter of hours after I arrived at Princeton that I was quite unprepared for what I would encounter. Unquestionably, a completely empty room in Princeton’s Moses Taylor Pyne Hall was the last thing I anticipated as I began my initial engagement with higher education. Suddenly, I had no place even to lay my head. Looking back I’d say that I had no idea what a college like Princeton would require. I had made a hurried visit to the Princeton campus on a Sunday afternoon in May 1953, had met no students or faculty, and therefore had no real knowledge of what to expect.

That initial visit to Princeton three months before I enrolled was part of a trip sponsored by the Yale Club of Virginia, when they learned that I had been offered admission and scholarships by both Yale and Princeton, but that I had visited neither campus, and was probably going to attend Princeton—sight unseen. The Yale Club offered to underwrite a visit to both colleges for me, and to include my Christchurch classmate, Bill Dabney, who had committed to attend Yale. The trip took place in the midst of our final exams; however, Christchurch officials unhesitatingly gave us a weekend off to go to Washington, catch a train, and visit two Ivy League colleges. Such big-time opportunities didn't arise at Christchurch every day.

We enjoyed an overnight stay at Yale, spent time with several students, visited the Yale bowl and attended the annual Ivy League heptagonal track meet. To cap things off we had dinner as guests of Edward Noyes, Yale's long-time dean of admissions, who took us to Mory's legendary restaurant, made famous across the country by *The Whiffenpoof Song* that begins, "To the tables down at Mory's," as sung by Yale's *a cappella* group, The Whiffenpoofs, who claimed to be the first such ensemble at an American college..

On Sunday we took the train down to Princeton and had a short visit. I have no recollection of who hosted us—perhaps an admissions officer—or what we saw. I have also forgotten how we navigated the train trip from New Haven to Princeton, and then on to Washington. At Washington's Union Station, a member of Bill's family met us and took us back to Christchurch by car.

The Yale alumni club in Richmond went out of its way to encourage me to consider Yale appropriately, and I remember an

affable Yale alumnus who arranged our trip, named Richmond “Dixie” Gray, as I recall, who urged me to give Yale a good looking-over. In contrast, Princeton’s attitude appeared to be, “Here we are; take us or leave us.” I was too inexperienced to see for myself that Yale was clearly enthusiastic about attracting a student like me, while Princeton was passive and perhaps indifferent about my enrolling there. I guess I was too naive to read the social signals at that time.

In September 1953, therefore, my mother, her sister Rebekah (who had a late-model car), and I embarked for Princeton. We undertook a long, complicated trip by car from rural Lancaster, Virginia, through Maryland and Delaware to the New Jersey Turnpike. This was not on the way to anywhere that my family or I had traveled with any regularity. Probably a summer trip to visit cousins at Rehoboth Beach, Delaware in 1951 was as far north as I had ever been.

On that drive to Princeton I was severing my roots and losing my support system, more and more with every mile. Unfortunately, I would discover there was no plan at Princeton to provide for me any replacement resources. Instead, it was “sink or swim,” an attitude that I came to deplore. (Later, in my career in education, I sought to dismantle that approach wherever I could, especially where new students were involved.)

In preparation for entering Princeton, I had received sparse guidance for planning my academic courses. In the summer before I enrolled, the university registrar sent me a package of registration papers to complete and return. I remember sitting alone at our dining room table, feeling unprepared to fill out forms and chose

courses that I would take that fall and the rest of my first year. With my mother's help I completed and returned the forms, but I was more befuddled than enthusiastic about the academic opportunity that lay ahead.

Arriving at Princeton, I walked into an empty dormitory suite in Pyne Hall—not a piece of furniture to be seen. I learned belatedly that new students either brought furnishings from home or purchased items at a used furniture exchange operated by returning students. I found myself at the mercy of the system—I lacked funds to buy furniture, and I was shocked that Princeton offered me not even a bed in the university-owned dormitories. There were bathrooms on each floor, open to all.

One of my roommates was an engineering student who had arrived several days earlier than we in arts and sciences, and he was a little better prepared. By the time we arrived, he had purchased a bed and chair. My other roommate (a talented musician named John Eaton, I believe) and I were left to our own devices. We had to rely on the custodian assigned to our dorm, who assured us he would find and sell us good quality used items at a fair price.

“You’ll learn the ropes at Princeton with a little help from me,” he assured us. That custodian’s promise was the only offer of help I heard from anyone in those early days. We bought our basic furniture from him, a double-decker bed and perhaps a chair. I don’t know if the price was fair or not.

I got another shock when I set out to get tickets for the football season, hoping to experience the tradition of Ivy League football. I went to an athletic office to pick up student tickets and found I was again financially unprepared. I didn’t have enough money in

my checking account to buy the book of tickets required for several home games, and the kind lady who waited on me could only suggest that maybe I could buy a single ticket to a game from a student who didn't plan to attend. I was disappointed by the prospect of not being able to attend football games. In this and other early situations, if Princeton had offered either a small loan or a short-term charge account, it would have helped a new student like me.

I seemed to lack the prerequisites for success at Princeton. I had no money, no supportive contacts in the community, and little hope of succeeding in this new world. I felt I had been assured that this prestigious college would prepare me for a life of success in four productive years; therefore, I had no perception of how disappointing my initial experience at college might turn out to be. I came to believe that I had been given a sales pitch on the glories of the Ivy League, but there had been no discussion of any potential downside to the experience. At Princeton, I found the path to success blocked at every turn by customs and traditions for which I had no advance warning or preparation.

My personal dream had been to attend Washington and Lee, major in journalism, and find a career in the newspaper business. So at Princeton I looked for an alternative path. I attended interviews for new students at the offices of *The Daily Princetonian*. I remember talking with other new students who had attended Lawrenceville and Woodberry Forest. When I mentioned in my interview with staff members that I had been editor at Christchurch of both the newspaper and yearbook, I got the feeling that my experience wasn't all that impressive. I was told that they would call me if there were a place for me—I was pretty sure there wouldn't be. I had worked

hard on the publications at Christchurch for two years, had been recognized for that endeavor, and I felt I deserved a chance to show what I could do.

My hopes were dashed by the fruitless interview. I believe that it was at that moment when I decided firmly to leave Princeton. Knowing myself, I can still plug into my feelings of rejection and humiliation from the way I was treated by the in-group of students at *The Daily Princetonian*. As I look back now, it's remarkable that I later became good friends with a number of "Princeton People."

Like most scholarship students at Princeton in the 1950s, I was required to cover part of my expenses by performing on-campus work. My job was waiting tables, which required that I show up at the crack of dawn in the student dining rooms to serve the underclassmen, seated at long tables in those gothic halls. The waiter system, like many functions related to Princeton student life, was controlled by upperclassmen. The pecking order for jobs typified the preferential arrangement that student organizers often employ when they are unsupervised by administrators who might be expected to set mature guidelines. It was clear that new students would get the least desirable assignments, and there was no opportunity to ask questions. It was "Do what you're told and leave the decisions to us upper classmen." End of discussion.

After I had been enrolled two weeks or so and had hitch-hiked home once on a weekend, a Princeton dean contacted me. He had apparently been alerted that I was dissatisfied by someone back at home—I don't know whom. He was cordial, but by then I was determined to leave. He mentioned rather vaguely that some form of professional counseling might be helpful. He then added that if I



really want to attend another college, I could contact that school's admissions office, and I might find a possibility for late enrollment.

I took the dean's suggestion that I contact another college. I got a fist full of quarters at the bookstore, and went down to the Princeton



*My uncle, Charles W. Hubbard, founded Hubbard Insurance in 1928.*

train depot on the edge of the campus to use a pay phone to make calls about enrolling elsewhere. This was a lonely experience: I felt I was told, “Go make your calls as best you can from a pay phone; you’re on your own.” There was little support from Princeton. Of course I see in retrospect that I needed to take responsibility for my decision to change colleges. This was my choice, and it wasn’t Princeton’s problem. Princeton’s administrators seemed to distance themselves from me, perhaps because I was a nonconformist. I didn’t fall immediately in love with Old Nassau, and that was not expected from someone who was entering Princeton on “a free ride.”

From the payphone I reached the admissions office at Washington and Lee University, where I had also been offered admission the previous spring. I had declined W & L’s offer, upon the advice of my headmaster, who urged me to attend Princeton. In my junior and senior years of high school, I had visited the W & L campus for long weekends to attend annual conferences of the Southern Interscholastic Press Association, and I believed I was a budding journalist. My personal ambition had been to attend W & L and study in their highly rated school of journalism.

Dean Frank Gilliam at W & L said he’d be glad to discuss my late enrollment if my headmaster would recommend me. We drove from Princeton via Charlottesville (where we spent the night) to the W & L campus in Lexington. There we discovered that W & L could offer me late admission, but they had no financial aid remaining for the 1953-54 school year. This was tantamount to being turned down, for W & L charged one of the highest private-college tuitions in the South, and I would need significant financial assistance. My mother was willing to consider a bank loan, but I thought it was

unwise, given her limited income. Also, I was unsure that I really wanted to be there: W & L appeared similar to Princeton, especially in its high tuition charge and its fraternity-based student life. One had to join a fraternity right away to have a place to eat. It sounded to me like another Princeton, located just a little farther south.

So we drove home to Lancaster. Right away I contacted Dr. John Garland Pollard, a trustee of the College of William and Mary, who knew me well as a close friend of his children. Also, I was comfortable in telling Dr. Pollard about my college problems, knowing that he would not be judgmental of me. He immediately arranged an interview for me with Dr. Scott Cunningham, the dean of admissions at William and Mary. The College offered an affordable, state-supported tuition, a respected academic reputation, and an accessible location, 60 miles from my home. Soon I matriculated at the second oldest college in America, on the rebound from an unfortunate encounter with the highly rated Ivy League.

William and Mary was familiar to me. I had attended several football games there with my uncle, Charlie Hubbard, a W & M alumnus. Uncle Charlie had died suddenly of a heart attack in 1951, while I was a sophomore at Christchurch. He had been a father figure for me after my dad's death in 1945, and he had often showed understanding for my needs as an adolescent boy. Uncle Charlie would have been involved in my college decision-making, too, if he had been alive, I'm sure. But in the fall of 1953, I had no male family member who knew me well and who could give me personal guidance. I had to make it on my own.

At William and Mary, I gradually regained confidence in my ability to perform academically at the college level, and I was

also able to enjoy a pleasant social life, despite my discouraging experiences at Princeton. I found William and Mary much more welcoming to a new student. Many were helpful to me as I learned the ropes, entering about three weeks after the fall term had begun. The college's administrators, faculty, and students seemed truly interested in helping me to succeed. Admission to football games at William and Mary required only showing a student ID card. This was symbolic of the openness and accessibility I found throughout the William and Mary campus.



*I entered the second oldest college in America, William and Mary (1693)*

My dormitory, Monroe Hall, had a house mother, as did all dorms at W & M, and the lady assigned to Monroe turned out to be Mrs. Ficklin, a friend of my mother's from the Northern Neck. She went out of her way to be sure I received support from other students, and she kept in close touch with me herself. My roommate was from Garden City, N. Y., and there were numerous other friendly "Yankees," along with a majority of Southern boys, all of whom were ready to welcome me to The College. The matter of class—either in the college or in society at large—was not an

important issue. Fraternities had been de-emphasized in the recent past, and all of them were housed in almost identical “lodges” on a fraternity row near the football stadium. No more than two students were permitted to live in each lodge. Social hours were carefully regulated, expenses were controlled, and a wide assortment of students became fraternity members. I joined too, as soon as I had the required grade point average.

**I**n answer to the question, “Why did you choose Princeton University and why did you fail to fit in there?” I offer the following personal assessment, looking back over fifty-plus years since the experience occurred.

First, I was without close, family-based male guidance in my life in 1953. There were men around me, especially at Christchurch, but no one had a clear investment in my future. I certainly felt alone occasionally, especially after going off to boarding school between 1949-53, as I entered late adolescence.

Second, a good deal of anger and rebellion arose in me, especially in the spring and summer of 1953. Although I was doing well at school in both academic and extracurricular pursuits, something was rumbling, just under the surface. The elation of finishing high school at the top of my class and being accepted by three prestigious colleges was predominant, but underneath I had feelings of confusion, inadequacy, and rebellion. I had trouble coming to grips with the complexity of going to college in a totally unfamiliar environment, both socially and academically. As I have thought about how unprepared I found myself to be, I came to realize that I simply felt alone and afraid. I had no one to whom I could openly

express these feelings. Instead, I pushed them down inside and failed to deal with them.

At home in Lancaster Court House we had an unusual next door neighbor in the early 1950s—a man named Alex, a retired reporter for the Baltimore Sun, age about 75, who lived practically as a recluse and claimed to be writing his magnum opus, perhaps a memoir. His small house—the Oldham place—was filled with papers, books and other debris. He had attended Princeton in the 1920s, but had not graduated; he said he had run out of money. I was one of only two or three people in the community with whom he communicated, and when he found out that I was applying to his beloved alma mater, he immediately said he would get in touch with one or more prominent Princeton contacts and urge them to support my application. This became a mixed blessing: he tried to dictate how I went about the application process, and he generally made my life more complicated, when I was already somewhat confused. His interest made it more difficult for me to weigh my options and discuss my future. In short, Alex was a hindrance to my efforts to think about my future—rather than being a mature voice of worldly experience who might have helped me at a crucial time. For him, going to Princeton was the height of life's opportunities, and for me to suggest otherwise was to trigger a tirade on his part. I came to avoid him.

Thus there were expectations everywhere I turned, especially at home, where my mother thought that I had reached the threshold of fulfillment of her dreams for me, and that the rest of my life would be a fairy-tale of success. Meanwhile, something in me was screaming for expression, yet I had nowhere to go with it. I felt I knew no

one who would listen and understand, no one who would not judge or reject me. The persona I had built was based on achievement, and to acknowledge any other side of me was to fall from the lofty pinnacle of success that I had created.

My frustration overflowed at a party the night after my Christchurch graduation in late May 1953, when, after drinking too much beer, I took a classmate's car without his permission and drove it over a ditch, doing significant damage to the undercarriage. It took me 24 hours to confess what I had done, and much longer to face what had occurred in my own thinking. My abuse of alcohol and the results of my actions lay suppressed in my psyche for many years.

After much training and experience with counseling—both receiving and giving counsel—I'd say that the episode of damaging the car while I was under the influence of alcohol remained active in my life and responses for a long time. I carried those emotional effects into my early years of college. Not until the late 1980s did I fully face up to those suppressed aspects of my early adulthood. I began to receive professional counseling to help identify their lingering effects in my life. I found that after fifty years it wasn't too late, once I was willing to receive help from trained persons. My personal inner work has continued into the present, and has been enhanced by my study of the Enneagram, described by Enneagram Worldwide as "... a dynamic system of nine personality types that empowers you to better understand yourself and others."

A third explanation for why I failed to adjust to Princeton is found in my poor preparation for transition into college. My school, my family, and my own personal efforts left much to be

desired. The more demanding aspects of this new environment and challenge were never discussed with me, nor did I face them for myself. There was a large chunk of denial surrounding the entire situation—neither my family, my school advisors, nor I ever discussed realistically the financial requirements and the academic competition that I would face at Princeton. As for the academic part, everyone assumed that since I had done well academically at Christchurch School, I would continue my high performance in college. The academic preparation at Christchurch had been well above average only in the English and Latin classes taught by Joseph Buerger in my first two years, and the subjects taught by Robert Yarbrough, Henry Hackney and Branch Spalding in my junior and senior years. In my small graduating class of thirteen boys, only four or five were as capable academically as I was, and I seldom faced consistent challenges from fellow students. This lack of significant peer competition proved costly to me later, when such competition became the constant rule, not the exception, in all three colleges.

At Princeton, I remember feeling overwhelmed by what I perceived to be impossible odds in the classroom. The constant message from Princeton's president, Harold Dodds, and from other administrators, was how well-prepared everyone was in the entering class, how highly rated were the schools they had attended, and—as I inferred—how impossible it would be for me to succeed under these conditions. It would have been helpful if just one adult had been available to offer me a helping hand.

In later years, after I received training to become a school and college counselor, I could observe with reasonable accuracy that counseling for students to enter college at Christchurch was not



adequate in the 1950s. There was no formal counseling beyond the discussion of grades at the end of each marking period and perhaps some conversation about College Board scores when they were received—late in the school year. In fact, the SATs were relatively new in 1953 and school officials treated them with much secrecy—under the guise of confidentiality. It’s ironic that SAT scores in later years would become over-emphasized at most schools and that parents, especially, would toss them around like the latest share prices on the stock market. By the 1990s the pendulum of misuse of SATs had swung to the opposite extreme, just as the creators of the College Board had feared.

At Christchurch Headmaster Branch Spalding provided all of the formal counseling for college that I received. He advised me sometime in my junior year that I was capable of winning a scholarship to a major, prestigious college. That became his goal for me, and I eagerly accepted the attention related to being “destined” for the Ivy league. I expect that advancing the reputation of the school was part of Mr. Spalding’s motivation, too. He had been conducting a program for four years to renew and strengthen the academic program at Christchurch. Further, he knew how to prepare students for competitive colleges, based on his years of experience on the faculty of Episcopal High School in Alexandria. But perhaps Mr. Spalding, the ambitious new headmaster, overlooked the fact that Christchurch had deficiencies. The school lacked the number of experienced teachers in all subjects and the tradition of sending its top graduates to competitive colleges that had prevailed at Episcopal High School for generations. Certainly the lack of faculty academic strength in a rebuilding school affected the preparation

that Christchurch graduates received in the early 1950s.

After a career in school work, I can imagine the disappointment of Headmaster Spalding when Bill Dabney at Yale, and I at Princeton, did not stay and graduate. Bill joined the U. S. Marines (a family tradition), then later enrolled at and graduated from VMI, and became a highly decorated career officer in the Marines Corps. I found my way through two colleges, and eventually became a preparatory school teacher, counselor and administrator.

As a school administrator I had the opportunity to improve upon the system that had failed to meet my needs as a student. I taught and worked in administration, first at Christchurch and later at three other college preparatory schools: Blue Ridge and Woodberry Forest in Virginia, and at Forsyth Country Day in Winston-Salem, NC. In each of these schools I chose to place special emphasis upon strengthening the faculty-student advising and college counseling programs. I believe I acted positively to raise standards in those areas, wherever I worked.

In my brief time at Princeton and later at two colleges in Virginia, I had learned a great deal about paying my own way. That learning was personal and at times painful—real-life lessons that I rarely forgot. I attended the College of William and Mary for a year and a half, and then decided to transfer to the University of Virginia. My conversations with an English professor at W & M who had recently earned the PhD in English at the University convinced me that I could find a broader curriculum in American literature in Charlottesville. I completed a bachelor's degree in English at the University of Virginia in December 1957, a year after William Faulkner arrived as writer-in-residence. I had several opportunities

to hear Mr. Faulkner discuss his writing in my final months, from January to December, 1957.

I also found a truly democratic spirit alive on the campuses of the two state-supported colleges where I matriculated in the mid-1950s. At both William and Mary and U. Va. I held jobs every semester to help pay my tuition and other expenses. I chose off-campus employment that frequently involved “serving” other students. I never found this work to be burdensome or demeaning. Part-time work was an economic necessity for many students, including me. Students who did not need to earn part of their expenses were usually respectful of those of us who did. At William and Mary several “big wheels on campus” also held jobs—in fact, working was “in.” (I am told that the College has an unofficial organization of alumni called “The Order of the White Coat,” made up of alumni who waited tables in college—many of whom have become prominent in their life’s work.)

My only regret was that part-time jobs made it difficult to participate fully in extracurricular activities. Through the necessity of outside employment, however, I got to know many interesting people, both on and off campus, and I learned to balance study, work, and play. My jobs were not sponsored by the colleges I attended, and therefore I had direct contact with the local business community—another important part of my education.

By contrast, at Princeton there existed a self-perpetuating student upper class that controlled the university-sponsored student employment, which I found unacceptable. Primarily as a result of these class-conscious student attitudes and the administration’s lack of control over them, Princeton was for generations perceived

to be at the top of the list of “snobbish” American colleges. Even Woodrow Wilson, when he became president of Princeton, was inhibited by powerful alumni-trustees from changing the elitist attitudes of the eating clubs, where much of Princeton’s snobbery had originated for generations.

As prelude to greater social balance and diversity within student bodies in the 1960s after I had left college, a quiet revolution had begun to take place at many U. S. campuses. Civil Rights laws dictated that colleges cease all discriminatory practices and implement specific plans for integrating low-income students into the academic and social life on their campuses. Racial integration was the primary goal of these federal laws, but a by-product was greater social access for students of all races. These changes at exclusive colleges were not the result of enlightened attitudes of governance at the best colleges”; rather the adjustments were in response to the threat of physical intervention to enforce federal law. The national news media and the academic press often failed to understand and tell the full story of how non-black, low-income students, in addition to minority persons, came to benefit from the equal-treatment that was mandated by the new Civil Rights laws. I would have benefited at Princeton.

It is clear to me in retrospect that the administrators at Princeton University had not done their duty by the time I enrolled in 1953. By failing to act and to innovate, they significantly delayed that university’s progress toward achieving racial and economic diversity in its highly selective student body. Specifically, although Princeton had begun to recruit students like me from low-income backgrounds, the leaders were slow to develop either a philosophical commitment

or an institutional plan to help those students become successful and feel included on the campus. Thus for me Princeton was a closed, unhelpful place.

Enrolling at a college like Princeton—especially before the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education*—was similar to entering a private men’s club. Princeton’s leaders appeared to be unaware that new students representing a cross-section of this nation’s population might be uncomfortable in an elitist, club-like atmosphere at college. Much has been written about the social, economic, and academic changes that occurred in the African American community as a result of the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. Unfortunately, little has been reported about the positive results that *Brown* produced for low-income white students like me. After *Brown*, the law of the land required colleges to offer increased opportunity and encouragement to everyone, regardless of race, class, or financial means. Eventually, as a result of *Brown*, an active form of inclusiveness began to appear—and to provide what I had found lacking at Princeton in 1953.

In my short time at Princeton, I don’t recall a single meeting being offered in which scholarship students were given useful social orientation or asked what might be done to help them adjust to their new environment. Experienced college officials at a prestigious university should have been well aware that students on scholarship from low-income families would require a different kind of orientation from that of students whose families had attended Ivy League colleges—often for generations. The upper class prepared its progeny for Princeton in a variety of places: in their homes, at country clubs, through summer travel abroad, and at carefully

selected prep schools—all offering experiences designed to inculcate in them the principles of the “Ivy way of life.”

But where was preparation to be found for the rest of us?

Though largely unavailable in 1953, inclusiveness and support for a new breed of students would come to Princeton in time, even if it was hard to imagine in the Fifties. Princeton would eventually provide an undergraduate education for a black young woman who was destined to become First Lady of the United States—Michelle LaVaughn Robinson, who graduated in Princeton’s Class of 1985. As part of fulfilling the requirements for graduation, she wrote a thesis entitled, “Princeton Educated Blacks and the Black Community.”

In an article for POLITICO dated February 22, 2008, Jeffrey Ressler reported on Michelle Obama’s senior year thesis at Princeton as follows (these are excerpts):

Michelle Obama’s senior year thesis at Princeton University ... shows a document written by a young woman grappling with a society in which a black Princeton alumnus might only be allowed to remain on the periphery.

The article in POLITICO offers links to Michelle Robinson’s full thesis and also selected quotes from the 96-page document:

‘My experiences at Princeton have made me far more aware of my ‘blackness’ than ever before,’ the future Mrs. Obama wrote in her thesis introduction. ‘I have found that at Princeton, no matter how liberal and open-minded some of my white professors and classmates try to

be toward me, I sometimes feel like a visitor on campus; as if I really don't belong. Regardless of the circumstances under which I interact with whites at Princeton, it often seems as if, to them, I will always be black first and a student second.'

On February 18, 2008, twenty-three years after she wrote her Princeton thesis, Michelle Obama, while on the campaign trail for her husband, famously commented that "For the first time in my adult life, I am proud of my country because it feels like hope is finally making a comeback." That sounded to me at the time like someone who speaks her mind about what she sees from her unique vantage point, rather than like an "angry black woman," as political foes tried to categorize her. Somewhere in her past she learned to "call it as she sees it"; I doubt she will forget how to do that. If so, the ghost of Eleanor Roosevelt might be there to help her.

Being in the international spotlight now as wife of the President of the United States, however, will probably dictate that Mrs. Obama be more careful in her public comments, especially regarding race. She must adopt her husband's more moderate tone, at least for the present. What she wrote in her thesis as an undergraduate at Princeton in 1985 has drawn a great deal of attention in 2008-09, from the media and from commentators of various political stripes. My reading of parts of her study of "Princeton Educated Blacks" reminds me of my own limited survey of "Black Graduate Students' Experiences at the University of Virginia, Summer Session of 1968," in which I used a small sample and had little impact on anyone's thinking about race except my own. Reading parts of her study convinced me that (a) Michelle Robinson used good, standard

research techniques, and (b) she offered her own measured comments and other data that should be useful to a college administration that is conscientiously trying to sharpen its responses to the needs of a diverse student body and a world-class community of scholars.

The article in POLITICO continued:

The 1985 thesis provides a trove of Michelle Obama's thoughts as a young woman, with many of the paper's statements describing the student's world as seen through a race-based prism. 'In defining the concept of identification or the ability to identify with the black community,' the Princeton student (Michelle Robinson) wrote, 'I based my definition on the premise that there is a distinctive black culture very different from white culture.' Other thesis statements specifically pointed to what was seen by the future Mrs. Obama as racially insensitive practices in a university system populated with mostly Caucasian educators and students: 'Predominately white universities like Princeton are socially and academically designed to cater to the needs of the white students comprising the bulk of their enrollments.

To illustrate the latter statement, she pointed out that Princeton (at the time) had only five black tenured professors on its faculty, and its 'Afro-American studies' program 'is one of the smallest and most understaffed departments in the university.' In addition, she said only one major university-recognized group on campus was 'designed specifically for the intellectual and social interests of blacks and other third world students.' (Her findings also stressed that Princeton was 'infamous for being racially the most conservative of the Ivy League universities.')



In the POLITICO article, Jeffrey Ressler pointed out, “Attempts to retrieve the document (her thesis) through Princeton proved unsuccessful ... The Obama campaign, however, quickly responded to a request for the thesis by Politico.”

America is fortunate to have a First Lady whose attributes include high intelligence, a well-trained intellect, and the ability to speak her mind when circumstances dictate. Princeton University would do well to place Michelle Obama on its short list of future trustees, though perhaps she would have greater impact as president of Princeton. If she decides she’s not available for eight years, she will have time to study Princeton’s record of slow movement toward social and racial equality on its campus. Such a study might also include examining Woodrow Wilson’s unfinished agenda for social change at Princeton, summarized here:

In 1906-10, (Wilson) attempted to curtail the influence of the elitist “social clubs” by abolishing the upperclass eating clubs and moving the students into colleges, also known as “quadrangles.” Wilson’s “Quad Plan” was met with fierce opposition from Princeton’s alumni, most importantly Moses Taylor Pyne, the most powerful of Princeton’s Trustees. Wilson refused any proposed compromises that stopped short of abolishing the clubs because he felt that to compromise “would be to temporize with evil.” In October 1907, due to the ferocity of alumni opposition and Wilson’s refusal to compromise, the Board of Trustees took back its initial support for the Quad Plan and instructed Wilson to withdraw it. ...

Even more damaging was his confrontation with Andrew Fleming West, Dean of the graduate school, and West's ally, former President Grover Cleveland, a trustee. Wilson wanted to integrate the proposed graduate building into the same area with the undergraduate colleges; West wanted them separated. The trustees rejected Wilson's plan for colleges in 1908, and then endorsed West's plans in 1909. The national press covered the confrontation as a battle of the elites (West) versus democracy (Wilson). ... Wilson, after considering resignation, decided to take up invitations to move into New Jersey state politics.

Thus history suggests that there will always be work to do at Princeton, especially to foster equality. Also, it isn't too much to expect that leadership at Princeton may come from people with experience at the highest levels in government, as well as in academia.

I trust that today's new students who come to Princeton on scholarship will not encounter empty dormitory rooms when they arrive on campus this fall—as I did in 1953. I was reassured in 2004 to receive a letter from Princeton's former president, William G. Bowen, stating, "... at academically selective schools such as Princeton ... it's a much improved picture!" Dr. Bowen has dedicated part of his career to leading the effort to bring financial equality for low-income students to exclusive colleges.

I cannot speculate, of course, about the views that Michelle Robinson Obama may hold about the atmosphere at Princeton today. Does she believe that there are now a sufficient number of experiences "designed specifically for the intellectual and social

interests of blacks and other third world students”? I would say that if students who fit that description are being recruited and enrolled at Princeton, then there should be university-sponsored programs and sensitivities that are directed toward their well-being.

In 1953 the group that I represented at Princeton—white, low-income, rural, socially inexperienced—were offered no programs designed specifically for our needs. That’s why, after fifty years, I still remember quite vividly my encounter with an empty room at Princeton. I hope and trust that Michelle Obama will do her share to keep things moving in the right direction—at Princeton and in America. Clearly, the two are linked together in history ... and perhaps in importance to democracy, as well.

## Chapter 7

### Life and Work in Boarding Schools

A system of general instruction, which shall reach every description of our citizens from the richest to the poorest ...

—*Thomas Jefferson*

In January 1958, I was ready to accept Jefferson's challenge to "reach every description of our citizens." I had completed all course work and comprehensive examinations for the bachelor's degree in English at the University of Virginia. Although I would not receive the degree until graduation ceremonies in June, I was ready and qualified to enter the world of work. Happily and coincidentally, my first job would be as a teacher.

I was still working part-time in Charlottesville when Robert M. Yarbrough, the headmaster of Christchurch School, telephoned out of the blue and invited me to fill an unexpected vacancy in the Christchurch English department. I was eager to begin teaching at Christchurch, my alma mater, where my adult academic life had begun. Bob Yarbrough had been my senior English teacher, and he knew that I was completing my degree in English at midyear. He also knew my strengths and weaknesses as a student, and he had been complimentary of my skills in English literature and composition—which he had helped me to hone as my English teacher for two years at Christchurch. I remember saying to Bob,



“You know me well, so if you think I can do the job, I’m on my way.” He said he was sure I’d be a good fit for the position. I immediately headed east to begin work at my alma mater on the banks of the Rappahannock River.

A faculty apartment was not available when I arrived at Christchurch, from January through June of 1958 I lived in a room on the third floor of the headmaster’s house. There Bob Yarbrough was both my host and my boss—as well as mentor. Bob had been divorced for several years, and now he occupied the entire second floor of the official residence. He used the first floor primarily for entertaining students, faculty, visitors and friends, all of whom came and went frequently. They were usually invited, though sometimes people just showed up. Bob’s description of life as top administrator was, “It’s like a fish-bowl,” though he thrived on welcoming visitors most of the time.

Bob and I occasionally had a drink together at the end of the day—if we were not going to have contact with students that night. This was a hard and fast rule for all faculty. We sometimes went to dinner together, either prepared by a school cook in the headmaster's kitchen, or purchased at a restaurant in nearby Urbanna—or farther east in Deltaville. Through these conversations I got an insider's view of many of the highs and lows that go along with boarding-school administration. One of Bob's favorite expressions about the administrator's life and chores has stuck with me—and with other former faculty: "It's endless," he often said.



*Christchurch headmaster Robert M. Yarborough, Jr., my first employer.*

Bob was famous for always responding immediately to correspondence, no matter what the source. A young lady-friend of mine once stayed overnight as a guest in the headmaster's house. She never forgot that Bob had written to thank her for her thank-you note to him. Over the years his indefatigable gift of correspondence won many friends for Christchurch School. I learned later as a development officer that "you can't thank people too often"; Bob was ahead of the curve.

In my first stint at Christchurch, from early 1958 through June 1960, I served primarily in as a teacher of English and history, assisted in coaching sports, and as faculty adviser to students and extracurricular groups. These were typical duties of a faculty master in a boarding school. Administrative responsibilities would come later, after I returned from two years of active duty in the U. S. Navy Reserves. The U. S. Navy had offered me the opportunity to attend officer candidate school (OCS), starting in September 1958. Because I enjoyed teaching at Christchurch, I delayed entering the Navy for two years.

In the fall of 1959 I elected to fulfill my military service commitment, largely because the Selective Service Act or "draft" still existed and required that I, an unmarried male teacher, receive a deferment from my Lancaster County draft board each year. I entered the Navy in October 1959, withdrew voluntarily from OCS in December of that year, reducing my active duty requirement from four to two years. I completed an abbreviated boot camp at Great Lakes, Illinois in February 1960, and reported for duty in Helicopter Utility Squadron 2, at NAS Lakehurst, NJ, on 10 FEB 60. (Here the *Hindenburg* disaster took place on Thursday 6

May 1937.) I served in the helicopter squadron's admin office at Lakehurst and stood guard duty in and around the huge hangars that had been built for "air ships," better known as dirigibles (or "sh\_\_ bags" to sailors). Through my work on a readiness evaluation project, I gained the confidence of my supervisor, a master chief, and the squadron executive officer, both of whom recommended me to take over admin duties for HU 2, Detachment One, located at NAS Norfolk.

I served at NAS Norfolk from June 5, 1960 to June 15, 1961, when I was released from active duty. The skipper of HU 2, Det One, Lt. Commander Don Modeen, said he'd be glad to recommend me for reenlistment and enrollment at OCS, for which I thanked him and politely declined. I had given him a sales pitch for Christchurch School as a training place for young men—some of whom would enter the Navy—so he admitted he couldn't argue with me on that. He did suggest, however, that I might be recalled from the Ready Reserves to active duty—and sooner than I thought. Naval officers in Norfolk knew even then that something was brewing south of Florida, and it wasn't a typical hurricane, although it could have been called Nikita.

My release from active duty occurred four months before the Cuban Missile Crisis began on October 15, 1962, when American reconnaissance photographs revealed Soviet missile sites under construction in Cuba. President John Kennedy imposed a naval quarantine around Cuba, and all U. S. military personnel were frozen in the service. I had missed the freeze by four months. On October 28 Khrushchev announced that he would dismantle the missile installations, and he and President Kennedy reached an agreement,





*Active duty in 1960, US Navy Reserves, with pilot Don Gay.*

just one day after the Soviets shot down an American U-2 spy plane over Cuba. “Nuclear catastrophe was hanging by a thread ... and we weren’t counting days or hours, but minutes,” said Soviet General and Army Chief of Operations, Anatoly Gribkov, years later.

My service in the U. S. Navy had a profound and lasting effect on my perspective as a teacher and administrator. I must only summarize

here by saying that I gained a better appreciation for African American men, based on those whom I came to know in the enlisted Navy—all of whom were well-qualified and highly motivated for their assigned tasks and for advancement up the chain of command. Along with these black sailors, there were many young white men—still in greater numbers in the 1959-61 time period than blacks—who were also highly motivated to succeed in the Navy and return to civilian life and enter some form of higher education. The Navy was doing an excellent job at this time by giving many financially disenfranchised young Americans an opportunity to prove their willingness to work and to earn greater prospects for success. As I returned to my career in an all-boys boarding school, I began to look at students and programs in a different way. Unfortunately, it would be several years before these lessons I learned in the Navy—especially about opposing racial discrimination—began to guide my thinking and cause me to take action.

At Christchurch my administrative responsibilities began when I returned from the Navy. In my final two years at Christchurch, 1961-63, my time was devoted primarily to learning and practicing the procedures in the admissions office, where I became director. I had the invaluable guidance of Mrs. Mary Hunter Harwood, who was my first administrative assistant. I learned that without the knowledge and experience that an assistant such as she possessed, I would achieve little. She never took credit for her assistance to me, and consequently I would never forget her or her many fine examples.

I also began to learn a new position as Christchurch School's first on-staff development officer. I trained to be the faculty liaison

person in the school's initial fundraising campaign, called "Six Steps for the Sixties." The campaign was under the professional direction of Ketchum, Inc., a fundraising organization that was engaged to guide the Christchurch leaders through a campaign from behind the scenes. As a staff person and alumnus, I learned to be the on-campus coordinator. I worked daily with the professional director, Al Fenton, a salty Maine down-easter who swiftly taught me Fundraising 101—in three months or less. I was to coordinate activities of the headmaster, board members and other volunteer leaders in the campaign to raise \$300,000 for Christchurch. This was a challenging goal for a small private school that until 1950 probably had not raised a dime outside of its immediate family. The year 1950 is important, because I remembered from my student days that the then-new headmaster, Branch Spalding, had introduced a publication, *The Christchurch Reporter*, that year. It was sent to parents, friends, and prospects for support; these were the school's earliest efforts in public relations and cultivation for fundraising.

The variety of activities that I learned in the "Six Steps" campaign prepared me in a field that would become the primary emphasis in my career for the next forty years. As my professional life unfolded, I gravitated to planning, development and fundraising in each of the organizations where I eventually became employed. Thus the opportunity to learn development at Christchurch enabled me to enter on the ground floor of a new professional area in education. This work soon was called development—quite different from alumni relations. Eventually other euphemisms emerged, such as institutional advancement. However, development was and is about raising money—a very clear mission and purpose.



*Hatcher Williams and Grover Jones, coaches at Christchurch around 1957*

To present a complete picture of what happened in my final two years at Christchurch School, I must step back to August 1961, when, while school was closed for a short summer break, I was driving back to Christchurch after visiting friends in Charlottesville. I stopped in Richmond and called Jack Street, my former roommate and fellow merrymaker since the 1950s. He had finished his active duty commitment in the U. S. Army and was working in his hometown, the famous “Mecca on the James River.” Jack and his current girlfriend, Peggy Christian, met me at some restaurant that was a successor to Smokey’s in the West End.

The upcoming weekend was the annual Labor Day celebration, viewed as the last rite of summer in Virginia’s river country. Jack and



*Dr. Samuel Spencer, president of Mary Baldwin College, crowned Prior May Queen in 1962*

Peggy quickly let me know that they had plans for a big house party at Gloucester Banks, a cluster of summer cottages populated mostly by Richmonders, and located on the bank near the mouth of the York River, facing east toward Yorktown and the Chesapeake Bay. This was only about twenty miles from my bachelor quarters at Christchurch, where the fall term was to begin a week after Labor Day.

Peggy, a perennial party-giver and sometime matchmaker, insisted that I immediately join her in a telephone call from an old-style, squeeze-in phone booth, a more interesting exercise than the ubiquitous cell phones of today. We were to call one of Peggy's co-workers in the visitors' center of Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company.

“This gal is cute, younger than you and Jack, and momentarily unattached. Her name is Prior Meade and she’s about to enter her senior year at Mary Baldwin College. As of the end of work today, she didn’t have plans for Labor Day weekend, but let’s not drag our heels.” We called Prior in the next moment (at AT 8-3332), and after Peggy employed her legendary skills of persuasion for what seemed an eternity, Prior agreed to talk with me on the phone. Eventually, we overcame the stigma of having a blind date on the longest weekend of the summer, and agreed to meet at Gloucester Banks that following Friday night.

Thus began Prior’s and my history that flowed into forty-seven years (and counting) of marriage and family life together. One of our cottage hosts at Gloucester Banks, Bob Butcher, later commented, “Those two never left the swing on our front porch—they were swinging right through mealtime—Swingin’ like a New York jazz spot.” Prior and I both remember sneaking off once to a restaurant at Gloucester Point for a quiet meal together. Also, I recall learning to cook “sugar toads” in someone’s cottage kitchen, so we weren’t in the swing the entire weekend.

Fortunately, I had acquired ample experience as a roadrunner in my three undergraduate years at Virginia, and that prepared me for a year-long courtship of Prior, driving between Christchurch and Staunton, a distance of perhaps 150 miles. By then my car was a 1961 blue and white Plymouth, with tail fins and push-button gearshift. At least once I made the trip home through a winter wonderland of trees draped over the highway near West Point. We had used tire chains that weekend to navigate the hilly streets of Staunton.



That's how our courtship began, and it would culminate one year later, almost to the day, with our marriage on September 1, 1962—Labor Day weekend, of course. “You forced us to start the weekend in town,” said Jack, “but the parties began on Wednesday, so all was well. We still got to the river by Sat-day night.”

Prior and I reached our honeymoon cottage in Myrtle Beach, S.C. on Sunday, where we boiled water for instant coffee, and dined out the rest of the time. Prior's considerable culinary skills would emerge sometime later, without pressure. We lived in three

boarding schools over a fifteen-year stretch, where we were expected to attend meals, and this gave her ample opportunity to learn to cook at her leisure.

We got back to Christchurch for the opening of the fall semester of 1962, and began our cottage-dwelling phase: this time on the banks of the Rappahannock River, a few hundred yards from the Christchurch School waterfront. We started married life in a summer cottage, as we waited for a new dormitory to be completed. That cottage was a mile or so from the school campus, and our seclusion was only interrupted when we invited folks over, or when my former fellow-bachelor master, Robert Felix Gillespie, showed up. He was a weekly guest and required no invitation; we continued



*Prior, Gerry and Celeste Beane Cooper, his mother*





*Doing “The Twist” in the mid-1960s*

to get together most Friday nights before Saturday football games to talk strategy. I was Bob’s assistant coach of the Christchurch Seahorses varsity—meaning that I carried clipboards, blew whistles in practice, and rode on the five-man blocking sled, yelling “Stay low—dig, dig, dig! Demolish those Saints!” On Friday nights Bob and I would have a couple of libations and cook something on the outdoor grill. Prior tried not to hear the football talk, set up our plates and prayed that the steak or chicken we were grilling would not fall into the sand—again. At least once the *pièce de résistance* was a mess of saltwater eels that Bob had caught and cleaned, as if he were a Guineaman from Gloucester. That was a far piece from his native Lebanon, in the heart of coal country—almost as far west as you can go in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Bob, Prior and I would be reunited at Woodberry Forest School when we Coopers moved there in the summer of 1966. By then Bob

had married Catherine Matthews, who had spent a few weekends with us at Christchurch while dating Bob. Thus Prior and Catherine tilted the playing field to the female side. Also, there were new, small players on the field: our son Evan had appeared on the scene in September 1964, while we were at Blue Ridge School, and the Gillespie's first son, John, showed up at Woodberry soon thereafter. I was honored to be John's godfather; he later followed admirably in his father's footsteps as a teacher and coach at Woodberry Forest. Bob retired at Woodberry in 1991 and passed away April 22, 2009.

Meanwhile, around Christmas of the 1962-63 session at Christchurch, construction was completed and students and faculty moved into the new John G. Scott Dormitory. It was an exciting time for everyone, and having a brand-new apartment was a special treat for us newly-weds. The seclusion of the river cottage was gone, but so were the small inconveniences: an inefficient space heater, cold winter winds from the river and no insulation against the blast. Prior became the school's librarian, which entailed a good deal of work and study. She took a correspondence course in library science, to fill in the gaps from her preparation as a biology major at Mary Baldwin. We also enjoyed having three seated meals a day, available in the school dining room, just two floors below our apartment in Scott Dormitory.

There was a fine cadre of students on our floor of the dormitory, and several came by frequently, helping Prior to get a real sense of the boarding school routine, and to hear what students really thought. Chris Rhoads was a monitor on our floor, and he and Prior could always exchange stories about living in Richmond, if things got boring. An exciting visitor from the community was Mrs. Lewis

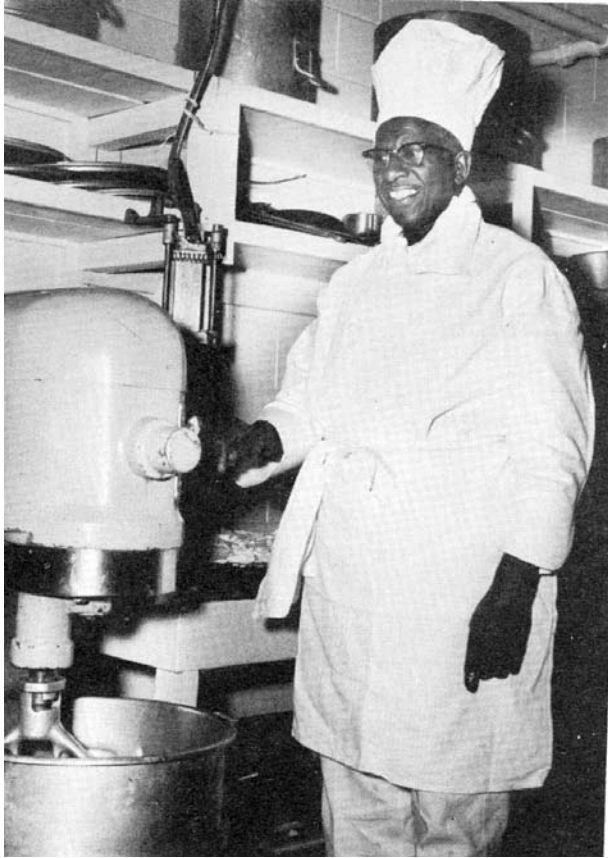
B. Puller, who took us—mainly Prior—under her wing, and included us in bridge games with General Puller and herself, after he retired from the Marines and came home to Saluda.

“You play the hand, Virginia; your strategy is better than mine,” said the most decorated Marine in U. S. history, as he puffed his pipe. “Oh, Lewis! You always flatter me,” was her reply. The general paced the floor, chewed his pipe-stem, and watched his home-based adjutant win the hand—with great deference to the opponents.

The basement of the new Scott Dormitory was the domain of a most remarkable African American man named Joseph C. Cameron, chef and dietitian for Christchurch School. Joe had run his food operation for many years in the basement of Bishop Brown Hall, the school’s original residence building. Joe’s contribution



*Joseph C. Cameron, chef and dietitian for Christchurch*



to Christchurch students' health and high morale got appropriate recognition with the move in 1963 to new quarters that included adequate food preparation space and an attractive dining area. His legendary good food had given students something to brag about for twenty years. Now the master chef had the first-class facilities that his culinary skills had long deserved.

Joe was everyone's friend, from budget-conscious headmasters to homesick "new boys." In my student days, Joe would prepare whatever game we students managed to bag and bring home: fish from Rosegill Lake or the Rappahannock River, and quail or squirrels from the

woods and fields that surrounded the school. Although hunting by students came to an end in the early 1950s, I was delighted to find faculty masters who hunted when I joined their ranks in 1958. Bob Gillespie, the football coach and biology teacher, let me know early in the fall of my first year back that it was possible to get in a quick bird hunt between recess and the end of lunch—if we had a free period together. Miraculously, we found such a time, bagged a few birds, and prevailed upon Joe to do the cooking honors.

Joe had earned administrative status at Christchurch by the time I came back to teach, and for good reasons. His department enabled the school to maintain a high level of student morale and often to overcome deficits in the overall budget, with no loss of quality in the food served. He prepared the best soft crabs to be found on the Virginia coast, which he had also served for some years in the summer months at Hurley's Restaurant on the waterfront in Urbanna, a few miles from the school. Many students were recruited to Christchurch as a result of their parents' enjoying the food and fun that were to be had along Urbanna's waterfront in the summertime. This authentic Tidewater riverport town was a mecca for all kinds of boaters in those days. The annual Labor Day power boat races drew speed boat enthusiasts from up and down the mid-Atlantic coast. Later the sailboat people moved their boats and regattas to the Deltaville area and created the Fishing Bay Yacht Club, at the mouth of the Piankatank River.

As Prior took early steps learning to cook in her own kitchen, Joe was always available to her with his best recipe and the promise: "Just come on down here if you run into problems in your kitchen—or with that young man you married. I'll back you up." Many of us

were proud of being “Joe’s boys,” and he never hesitated to comment on any aspect of school life—though always with a smile and a hand on your shoulder. Christchurch was fortunate to include an impressive, professional black man among its faculty and staff, well before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court. Years later, when the school named its planned giving organization “The Cameron Society,” in honor of Joe, many of “his boys,” along with former colleagues, were greatly pleased.

Surrounded by friends and colleagues such as Bob Yarbrough and Joe Cameron, I found it difficult to contemplate leaving the picturesque shores of the Rappahannock River. Increasingly however, I came to feel that I needed a new challenge beyond the familiar setting at Christchurch, where I had spent four years as a student and now four more as a teacher. I had grown up there, and I came to believe that it was time to explore “fresh fields and pastures new,” as John Milton suggested in *Lycidas*. We decided to make a change in the spring of 1963, and in June we moved to Blue Ridge School near Dyke, in Greene County, Va. Near Charlottesville, yes, but pretty far out into the hinterlands.

This newly revitalized school for boys was located on an 800-acre campus in the foothills of Virginia’s Blue Ridge mountains. This had been an industrial or occupational training school for mountain folk—a mission enterprise of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia.

The new school became a thriving community in forty miles northwest of Charlottesville, just north of Earlysville. The school in 1963 included about 150 students and faculty, along with 25 or so local people, who worked in a variety of jobs at the school. The headmaster, Hatcher C. Williams, who held A.B. and M.A. degrees

in English from Duke, had left a successful career at Christchurch in 1961 and had taken on the challenge to build a new private school. The stated mission was to meet the needs of boys who possessed average academic ability, but who had become discouraged, either at large, urban high schools or at highly competitive college preparatory schools.

Meanwhile, Christchurch, in my view, had moved away from working with these average students. This was a sign of the times in the early 1960s, when applications and enrollments reached new highs in all private schools. Formerly less competitive schools such as Christchurch became more selective, even as the most competitive prep schools such as Woodberry Forest and Episcopal High, passed down their enrollment pressures from higher up the feeding chain.

The majority of Blue Ridge's first group of students were young men who had been academically unsuccessful at schools such as Episcopal, Woodberry, and Virginia Episcopal, along with Christchurch, St. Stephen's, and St. Christopher's—the latter being boys' school members of the Church Schools in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. The fact that over half of the faculty and a goodly number of students were drawn from Woodberry and Christchurch evoked humorous nicknames for Blue Ridge School, such as "Blueberry Forest School" and "Christianberry Church School." Hatcher loved to joke about the school's multiple roots, while at the same time he was moving its unique program forward—to the point of becoming a remarkable success story in just ten years or less.

"We want to be known for the boys we save from academic discouragement and help go on to the college or other programs that fit their abilities," said Hatcher. He believed that teaching at Blue

Ridge was more rewarding than working in old-line, highly selective prep schools. “There are plenty of schools that get boys ready for the most competitive colleges, but so few schools are committed to helping the average boy,” he often said. That philosophical perspective had motivated Hatcher to help start a new school in the first place.

In 1964 Hatcher appointed me to be Blue Ridge School’s first guidance counselor. With the school’s financial support, I enrolled at U.Va.’s Curry School of Education to pursue graduate training as a counselor and head of guidance. Also, Hatcher asked me to travel throughout Virginia and North Carolina to find colleges that would be willing to take a gamble on these average boys, once the Blue Ridge faculty had re-engaged them academically, taught them good study habits, and restored their confidence in themselves. I enjoyed meeting professional people in the small colleges I visited, most of whom were impressed with Blue Ridge’s unique philosophy and program and were willing to give these rejuvenated students a chance to attend college, despite a few soft spots in their academic records. It was a pleasure to drive across our two beautiful states, making stops on campuses that were located “from Murphy to Manteo,” as natives of North Carolina like to say, and “from Norton to Norfolk,” to coin a similar phrase for the outer limits of Virginia.

Prior and I had our first house at Blue Ridge—a small yellow bungalow on the side of one of the hills that surround the Blue Ridge campus on the west. It was a modest two-bedroom dwelling of cinder block construction. It had been given a fresh coat of paint inside and out, along with a new drain field and basic landscaping



of the yard to increase its appeal. Several apple and pear trees grew nearby, and there were attractive views of the mountains and the valley in three directions. This area was known as Bacon Hollow. From the “Bacon Hollow Overlook” on the Parkway above, one could see far down into the valley—including on a clear day a vague outline of the school, some twenty miles below.

In this our first free-standing home, we would start to raise a family. Prior took a part-time job as librarian, continuing her work from Christchurch, and she began to reorganize books and supplies that were stored in nooks and crannies of buildings all around the Blue Ridge campus. With help of students and faculty, she brought these books to a newly renovated space above the dining hall and classroom building. She set about cataloging the books and putting them on shelves so that students could have access to them. The early Blue Ridge book collection was small and consisted of a wide assortment of well-used, hand-me-down volumes, including old encyclopedias and other research books.

*Primitive* is the word that describes the early years at the new Blue Ridge School. When we arrived in June 1963, the school had completed its second year of operation under its new mission and philosophy—and its first under the headmastership of Hatcher Williams. There had been a start-up operation headed by a gentleman who had a vision for opening a school for average students, but he had no experience in the day-to-day work of organizing and administering any sort of school—and particularly not a new one. The Board of Trustees had prevailed on Hatcher to fill the gap, first as acting head, and after he had achieved much immediate success, he agreed to take over as permanent headmaster.

Hatcher's initial reluctance to take the role of headmaster was overly cautious in my view; however, it was quite understandable in the context of the new school and of what had motivated him to get involved with Blue Ridge in the first place. The fact was that Hatcher had come to Blue Ridge with the understanding that he would give primary attention to relocating his already established summer program there. This program was called Corolla Academy—deriving its name from the place where Hatcher had started it on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, just south of Virginia Beach and the state line. Yes, it's the same Corolla that today is the summer address of thousands of condominium-owners, cottage-dwellers and time-sharers who come from all over the eastern United States.

Hatcher and his co-founder, William B. Ravenel, head of the English Department at Episcopal High School, had started the summer program in a former hunting lodge, known as the Whalehead Club. In those days the highly competitive prep schools rarely offered summer courses for students to make up failures or to gain extra credit. Corolla Academy filled some of that gap. After two summers of operating in open-air, beachfront surroundings, Hatcher was forced to seek new quarters for the summer program when the Whalehead property was sold.

Through his remarkable network of school people, Hatcher learned that a group of Episcopal clergy and laypeople were reopening the old Blue Ridge Industrial School in the foothills, northwest of Charlottesville. When Hatcher approached the board of trustees of the new school, they immediately recognized his experience and contacts in boys' boarding schools as valuable insurance for the new Blue Ridge School to open on time and

be successful. Thus Hatcher and the Blue Ridge board fashioned an agreement for him to operate Corolla Academy that summer on the Blue Ridge campus. Then he would serve as assistant headmaster of the new Blue Ridge School in the regular session of the school year. It was a win-win arrangement.

I had little knowledge of these developments at Blue Ridge, but I had grown restless at Christchurch. I felt that the school's philosophy was unclear, lying somewhere between Christchurch's mission of the past and what the more competitive schools were offering in traditional college preparation. I also felt that the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia as an umbrella had been both a blessing and a curse for Christchurch. The school had struggled financially virtually every year since its founding in 1920, and it seemed to me that while it was kept afloat by the assets of the Diocese of Virginia in hard times, Christchurch had never been given the opportunity to achieve the full identity and strength for which it had the potential.

Now I learned that Blue Ridge School, which had its own board and was not controlled by the Diocese of Virginia, would begin to take the role that Christchurch had formerly filled, and would do so under the leadership of a man who was imbued with the Christchurch philosophy. Blue Ridge had the backing of an independent board that would fully support the methods for helping the average student that Hatcher had found effective at Christchurch. Meanwhile, Christchurch would continue to fill a niche within the broader goals of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia.

Hatcher was careful, of course, to avoid any appearance of recruiting Christchurch faculty to join him at Blue Ridge, and I was equally cautious not to give the appearance that I was leaving



*Prior when we moved to Blue Ridge School in 1963*

Christchurch for negative reasons. It became clear that he did not recruit my services in any way, for at this time I was talking with several other school administrators about new options as I thought about leaving Christchurch. This was a school that I'd attended, taught at, and had known almost from childhood. The Reverend Emmett H. Hoy, who had been school chaplain when I was a student at Christchurch, was now headmaster of St. Stephen's School, a day



*The Chapel and Headmaster's Residence at Blue Ridge School*

school for boys in Alexandria. Emmett and I had maintained a close relationship since my student days, and he had led the service at Prior's and my wedding. Thus it was natural for us to discuss the possibility of joining the St. Stephen's faculty.

After much thought and discussion it became clear to me that Blue Ridge as a new residential school might have a definite need for my experience in boarding school admissions and development. And, when I made a formal inquiry at Blue Ridge, I discovered an opening there for someone with my experience. Another plus was my preference for boarding schools in rural locations; in this Blue Ridge seemed like a good fit. Fortunately, Prior was agreeable to whatever position seemed best for my career, and we also learned that Blue Ridge needed her skills to get its library organized.

Getting back and forth to Charlottesville from Blue Ridge involved a 40-mile drive on twisting, turning mountain roads, at least until one reached US 29, south of the Charlottesville airport.

The drive to Blue Ridge remains challenging today, though many sections of the roads have been improved. Our first son, Evan, was born at the University of Virginia hospital in September 1964. He had several ear infections, and a two-year battle to heal that condition ensued. A pediatrician from Charlottesville was the school physician at Blue Ridge. He attempted to deal with Evan's ear problems by piercing his inner ear—extremely painful for an infant. Prior had to hold the screaming baby in her arms throughout the procedure. This was an unpleasant experience for Evan, Prior, me—and probably for the physician. The remote location of Blue Ridge School became more and more of a factor in our lives, and led me to be interested in considering opportunities at other schools.

I had enjoyed working in this unique program for average students, and Hatcher had given me the opportunity to gain broad experience, both as director of admissions and as development director in a brand-new school. I believed that now I was ready for a more traditional type of boarding school, a new set of challenges and opportunities for growth, and a better location for our family.

Prior and I loved central Virginia, and we had taken full advantage of the school's proximity to the Blue Ridge Mountains by driving, hiking and camping there every chance we got. Given our druthers, being near Charlottesville would always be high on our list of preferences. I had heard via the private school grapevine about certain innovations and opportunities that were emerging on a campus bounded by the Rapidan River, in James Madison country. I decided to investigate these possibilities for myself.

## **Chapter 8**

### **A New Era at Woodberry Forest**

I knew immediately when I met A. Baker Duncan, the headmaster of Woodberry Forest School, that I had encountered a man on a mission—and a mighty tall man from Texas, at that. That first encounter was at a gathering of independent school administrators in Richmond. I remember making a careful effort to stand on the second step of a stairway in the lobby as I was talking with Baker, so that I could look him straight in the eye. Maybe that impressed him.

“When you’re ready for a new challenge, let’s talk,” I recall Baker’s saying at the end of that initial conversation. He let me know there were plenty of opportunities for ambitious young schoolmen—a reasonably accurate description of who I was in the spring of 1966, as I was completing three years at Blue Ridge School.

Soon I requested a meeting with Baker at the school, and I really became interested in relocating when I learned details of how this tall Texan had set out to “modernize” Woodberry Forest. He intended to bring this staid, tradition-bound school into a more competitive era. Even his supporters viewed his leadership as

aggressive and slightly iconoclastic. I learned later that in the midst of bringing about needed change, Baker was mindful of the school's traditions, and respectful of its long-time alumni supporters. Baker was himself a graduate of Woodberry Forest, as had been his father, and he had an alumnus's respect for the history of his school. He also brought to the headmaster's position a strong commitment to private education, a good deal of personal success in the world of investment banking, and keen instincts for raising money for a worthwhile educational cause.

At Blue Ridge I had already heard "another view" of Baker's changes, primarily from faculty members who formerly held positions at Woodberry. Two of these men had been part of the Woodberry old guard and had departed in the wake of Baker's new regime. I had respect for both points of view, and as a youngster, thirty years of age, I was fascinated by the aggressive style of this headmaster from Texas who had an Ivy League demeanor and neither a trace of a southern drawl nor an interest in lost cause attitudes. Baker

*Baker Duncan, never happier than when he presided at weekly assembly.*





came to Woodberry Forest with sufficient academic credentials: an undergraduate degree from Yale, a teaching internship at The Hill School in Pennsylvania, and a master's in economics from the University of Texas—along with a good deal of confidence from work in the securities business in Houston.

I attended a meeting of the Secondary School Admission Test Board in Princeton in the spring of 1966, as a representative of Woodberry Forest admissions, although I would not join the faculty and administration until summer, when I was slated to begin taking responsibilities in admissions and teaching two sections of English. The SSAT was (and is) the admission test used by all of the leading independent schools in the U. S., and SSAT's board members comprised an elite group from the top schools. A well-seasoned admissions dean from Lawrenceville School said to me at the SSAT meeting, "Why would you leave an exciting young school like Blue Ridge for an old-liner like Woodberry Forest?" I'd love to think I said, "I'm ready for the big leagues," but I probably apologized humbly for my "vaulting ambition." (Lawrenceville and its New England peers knew of Blue Ridge, too, for all of the top-tier prep schools had waiting lists and needed reliable schools to suggest for average students. As Director of Admissions at Blue Ridge, I had admitted several such students, as part of fulfilling the school's purpose.)

In my heart at this time I was convinced that my work with Baker Duncan would provide for me a whole new level of challenge and experience, especially in independent school admissions, development, planning and finance. For over five years I had worked hard for two quite deserving schools that often struggled to make ends meet and frequently got passed over by the few foundations that

granted big bucks to independent schools. Indeed, Woodberry had just received a grant of \$300,000 from the prestigious Independence Foundation of Philadelphia, and I eagerly desired to join that level of competition.

I was not to be disappointed. I soon learned that a major part of my training and experience at Woodberry would be in the art of raising big money. Of high importance among Baker's "guidelines for top ten schools" were for schools to have impeccable annual audits, aggressive investment counsel for the endowment, and a commitment to spending money to raise money—and to being clearly accountable about everything. He phoned me in the middle of my first year as development director and asked, "What's the budget down there?" (My office was in the basement of Walker Building, under the headmaster's office.) "About \$25,000," was my answer. "Double it for next year—goodbye," said Baker, and I knew instinctively that he meant for me to spend more money and raise a lot more money.

But wait a minute: How did I end up in the development office, when I had come to the school to be admissions director and teach English? A more pressing need arose in the development area when the director resigned in the fall of 1966. In view of the fact that I had experience in capital fundraising campaigns at Christchurch and Blue Ridge, and after an informal search failed to produce a qualified alumni candidate, Baker offered me the position.

H. Lee Boatwright Jr., Woodberry class of 1923, also played a role in my early success at Woodberry. He was father of my friend H. Lee Boatwright III, a 1950 Woodberry graduate. The senior Lee was a member of the Woodberry Forest Board of Trustees and

its Executive Committee. He and fellow Executive Committee members Lawrence Lewis '38, Bill Judkins '38, and Coleman Walker '20, along with Baker Duncan, were instrumental in the board's decision to promote me to the position of Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Director of Development in the fall of 1966. I had been a member of the faculty for just a few months, so this was a rather speedy action for the Woodberry trustees to take. I have never forgotten the confidence that those distinguished men showed in me, and the guidance that they gave me. I have always placed them at the top of my list of Woodberry leaders. It saddens me that of those five men, only Baker Duncan survives today.

In the course of making the decision about my appointment in the fall of 1966, three of these Woodberry "elders" (Lee Boatwright, Bill Judkins, and Coleman Walker) came to our home at Woodberry after their executive committee meeting to tell Prior and me in person that I would be appointed Secretary of the Board and Director of Development. We were suitably impressed, both by the news of my appointment and by the courtesy of these fine men. This was an early example for us of the "Woodberry way" of doing things in those days.

Woodberry Forest School, in the decade between 1961 and 1971, attracted a highly diverse, academically well-qualified faculty. I believe this was the finest collection of teachers in the school's history to that time. Woodberry thereby became arguably the leading boys' boarding school in the Southeast. More than one-third of the faculty were young and somewhat liberal, drawn from nationally recognized colleges such as Williams, Harvard, Stanford, Michigan, and Yale. Other faculty were graduates of colleges more typical of



*Gerry when he joined the Woodberry Forest faculty, 1966*

the school's traditionally Southern roots, such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Virginia, along with smaller, all-male colleges, including Hampden-Sydney, Sewanee, and Davidson.

Baker Duncan, the school's fourth headmaster (1962-70), deserves full credit for attracting new faculty members of unusual interests and talents, for enabling them to feel immediately valued and included, and for convincing the school's trustees to recognize the importance of the faculty's increased diversity. He also persuaded the trustees to provide competitive salaries, retirement benefits, and attractive on-campus housing. The old guard of "masters" (as teachers were called) had been expected, if they dared to marry, to



*Harry Frazier and Gerry at the J. Carter Walker Day in 1997*

raise their families in cramped apartments in the boys' dormitory buildings. That's the way J. Carter Walker had set things up in his 51-year reign as headmaster (1897-1948), and that's the way it stayed until Baker began to build comfortable faculty homes—recognizing the importance of families—at various scenic locations around the campus in the early 1960s.

In the summer of 1966, my introductory year, someone in a group of senior faculty and their wives, sitting at lunch in the school dining room, remarked not totally in jest, “No one speaks at Woodberry faculty meetings in his first couple of years here.” To which I replied, as tactfully as I could, “I don’t think I can wait that long.” None of the eight new faculty members in 1966 had that kind of time to spare, and many of us believed that Woodberry’s potential for achieving a truly national reputation lay in the near

future, not in the distant past. We were grateful for the school's solid foundation as a base upon which to build, but our commitment and faith were in the days ahead.

A year or so after my appointment as secretary of the Board of Trustees, I met FitzGerald Bemiss '41 and Harry Frazier III '44, who were to become two of the most effective trustees in that era of the history of Woodberry Forest School. They ranked among the very finest men with whom I had the privilege to work at Woodberry Forest, along with the elders whom I have already mentioned. One very tangible reason for my esteem for Gerry and Harry is the fact that they took responsibility for shaping and perfecting the Woodberry Forest Advisory Council, a new concept that had been approved by the school's trustees in 1968, and was a part of our planning and development agenda for the future. It would take a special effort and unique talents to establish this new council and to guide it to usefulness.

The Woodberry trustees enlisted Gerry and Harry to accomplish these goals for the first "Alumni Council." We soon changed the name to "Advisory Council" so as to include non-alumni parents and friends—another step toward opening Woodberry's governance to persons other than strictly alumni, as had been the case for decades. When I arrived in 1966 I was told that "the alumni own the school," which if true would not have been a productive arrangement; it was not true in actual practice. The school was, of course, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit educational institution, chartered under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Walker family had converted the school's corporation to this nonprofit arrangement in the late 1920s—with little financial compensation for themselves.

Thus, in 1968 it was Gerry and Harry's assignment to provide the founding documents and to delineate the role and direction of the school's newest organization, the Advisory Council. Gerry had served with distinction in the Virginia General Assembly, and Harry was a master of preparing corporate documents at Hunton & Williams, a major, Richmond-based law firm. Together they provided unique skills for building a new organization within the leadership of a traditional school that had passed its 75th birthday just three years earlier, in 1964-65. I had the privilege of working regularly with these two men—often meeting with Gerry on Saturday mornings at his retreat place, "The Briary," on the Rapidan River not far from the school.

Gerry Bemiss had received special recognition for his work as a state legislator, where he was commended for his skills in building a consensus and getting action on difficult issues. Whenever we drafted documents in those Saturday sessions, Gerry would say, "OK, let's pass this by Harry's legal eye, and then we'll take it to the full Council." I was expected to provide a measure of salesmanship for new ideas, especially among the school's traditional constituency—primarily in the alumni body, and also among the non-alumni parents.

The Woodberry Forest Advisory Council was first and foremost a source of fresh faces and new ideas for the school. Members were people who could bring to the council's assignments and deliberations a variety of perspectives that were drawn, geographically from around the country, and generationally from diverse graduating classes and eras of former students and parents. After its first year the Advisory Council was expanded to include spouses of its members in all activities. This was a major milestone in the history of leadership

at this male-dominated institution, encouraging for the first time a strong representation of females in an official organization of the school.

The Advisory Council's deliberations and contributions were helpful to Baker Duncan's administration—who aspired to move the school from a place of uncontested prominence in the Southeast to a position of bona fide excellence among the top independent schools in the nation. Measurable data for this ranking would include test scores, both SAT and Advanced Placement; college admissions results, market value of endowment, and the percentage of operating funds allocated in key areas, especially student scholarships, faculty salaries and other academic purposes—to name a few of the competitive criteria. Baker Duncan had initiated regular meetings and exchanges of information with his colleagues who were the heads of top independent schools. (One such informal group was known as “Baker's Dozen.”) Through my personal contacts with development colleagues at Deerfield Academy, Lawrenceville School, Choate School, and Taft School, I had helped to open the door wider for this sharing of vital information. We also began to draw more useful data from the National Association of Independent Schools about other, comparable schools—provided to member schools in type-specific, though anonymous form. For example, we were able to compare vital statistics from several unnamed “boys' boarding schools with enrollments of 250-450,” compiled annually by NAIS. Thus our awareness of the competition became more useful, based on factual data.

Time seemed always to move faster for me at Woodberry Forest than I could ever have hoped for or imagined—even in my



eager days of the late-1960s. Baker Duncan had stepped down as headmaster in June, 1970, marking the end of an era that I would call the “Salubrious Sixties,” to describe the period 1961-1970 at Woodberry Forest School. The Duncan years included the most pronounced changes ever enacted at Woodberry, and especially our group of younger faculty had every reason to believe that the future would be bright and filled with fresh opportunities.

The Reverend Charles W. Sheerin Jr., an Episcopal priest who had been serving as chaplain at Groton School in Massachusetts, became Baker’s successor. Charlie was a member of the Williams family—a First Family of Virginia—that had long been prominent in the education and religious life of the Commonwealth. Almost simultaneously with Charlie’s appointment, a storm of student unrest came rolling south from the campuses of New England colleges and preparatory schools. Many administrators in boarding schools located in the middle Atlantic states and south hoped and trusted that this storm would wear itself out before it crossed the Potomac River, but we soon discovered that we would not be so lucky. In the face of this onslaught of all kinds of abuses by students—illegal substances, unruly behavior, defiance of authority, and others—Woodberry’s fifth headmaster, whoever he might be, would have only a limited chance for success.

Near the end of the critical transition time, 1970-73, the Woodberry Board of Trustees determined to change the school’s leadership, and to appoint an interim headmaster to facilitate the transition. Charlie Sheerin resigned, as of June, 1973.

I was asked in the spring of 1973 to serve as Acting Headmaster of Woodberry for the 1973-74 session. This occurred just seven years

after I had arrived at the school and had heard those cautionary comments from members of the faculty old guard, as noted above. I am happy to remember that one couple who had been at the faculty lunch table back in 1966 were among the first to visit me that spring of 1973, and to assure me of their support for my role as Acting Headmaster and to express their hope that my appointment would become permanent.

It was abundantly clear to me that the task of getting Woodberry Forest School back on an even keel would require a remarkable team effort. Based upon my belief in the strength and diversity of the existing faculty, I was convinced that the job could be done. I will mention here several persons who gave special amounts of their time and talent to restoring Woodberry Forest to its former position of educational strength and leadership. Let me point out, in addition, that virtually every employee of the school who held responsibilities while I was Acting Headmaster rendered fine service to the school, primarily by helping to maintain the high levels of performance that had become one of the school's most practical traditions—one that had not diminished in the early 1970s.

The trustees gave me wide latitude to organize an administrative team for this recovery period, and I asked several individuals to add to their duties and to step into special leadership roles. For example, F. Robertson “Rob” Hershey, a young, highly effective Director of Admissions, stepped forward to provide additional assistance with all aspects of daily student life. Patrick F. Bassett offered first-rate support by arranging an attractive schedule of on and off campus events to enrich students’ experiences outside the classroom. (Rob and Pat were both 1970 graduates of Williams College. They have



*Associate Headmaster of Woodberry Forest, 1971-77*

each become outstanding leaders in the independent school movement at the national level—Rob as head of Episcopal High School and Pat as president of NAIS.) Travis J. Tysinger had been my close colleague in the alumni and development

area, and he continued there, adding and carrying out most of the duties that he and I had shared. Hendrik R. “Rik” Woods (Princeton A. B., Harvard M.A.T.) was a gifted history teacher, advisor to students, and curriculum planner, and he contributed greatly as Academic Dean. Joel McCleary, a 1967 Woodberry graduate, was fresh out of Harvard (1971), and he provided to our team and to me insights as to what was on the minds of students, especially the exceptionally bright but often alienated ones—typical of the 1970s. Joel, as a result of his rapport with students, gave us a perspective and way of reaching students that we could not have gained from any other source.

Stalwarts of long-standing on the faculty who had never wavered from their course—even in the “trying times”—included John Stillwell, Senior Master; Harry “Red” Caughron, Athletic Director; Jack Glasscock, Disciplinarian; Robert F. “Bob” Gillespie, teacher, coach and my longtime friend from our years together at Christchurch; Cuthbert Lamb, Latin master and feisty member of the old guard; A. C. “Corky” Shackelford, born and raised at Woodberry and forever loyal; Malcolm Moore, head of the art department and my closest personal friend; and many others whom I regret not being able to mention in this limited space. There was one person who gave me daily confidence—Dot Brockman, longtime administrative assistant to the headmaster, who could have run the headmaster’s office without me, but never let me feel that way. After my wife Prior, Dot was my next strongest encourager.

Internally, the interim administrative team faced broad challenges, particularly in three key areas: to restore to the school its traditions of order, discipline, and academic excellence, to regain

its position of respect and leadership among its peer schools, to reaffirm its accreditation by state and regional associations.

Each of these areas had become weakened in three years under a headmaster who, though well intentioned and fully supported, had no experience in leading the broad-based administration of a complex, independent boarding school. As mentioned above, Baker Duncan, along with others, including me, had worked hard to establish active, effective relationships with the more competitive schools, both in Virginia and in the Northeast; however, these peer relationships had begun to suffer as a result of inattention at the top in 1970-73.

In late 1973, James B. Massey, the longtime head (1950–1978) of Norfolk Academy, said to me (and later confirmed in writing), as we stood behind The Residence after our annual football game, “You and your associates have done a remarkable job of restoring Woodberry Forest to its top place among our Virginia schools. We of Norfolk Academy feel welcome on your campus again.” Mr. Massey was the recognized leader and longest serving head in independent schools in Virginia at that time. Norfolk Academy is the oldest independent school in the state, founded in 1728. “Red” Massey and I enjoyed a regular correspondence from that time forward. His letters always gave me encouragement—right up until his death in January, 2000.

Lee S. “Sandy” Ainslie, Associate Headmaster of Episcopal High School at that time (later headmaster), wrote to me in January, 1974:

I feel in just one year you have done some remarkable things—not the least of which is to renew what has

been over the years a very positive relationship between Woodberry and Episcopal. On a professional level, I know that Woodberry and Episcopal will always be able to maintain a ‘good relationship,’ but I question whether it will be done with the enthusiasm and sensitivity that you have reinitiated this year.

Sandy and I had come to appreciate the Woodberry-Episcopal friendly competition for special reasons. We were capable of using the rivalry on occasion to “inspire” students—even trustees—to special accomplishments. The remarkable Fred Hummel field house at Episcopal provided a goad to Woodberry’s leaders for several years, until eventually the Harry Barbee Center appeared at Woodberry to equalize the playing fields. Before that, when Woodberry opened the J. Carter Walker Fine Arts Center in 1966, the two schools’



*Celeste Cooper with Evan, 2 years old, and Irene Davenport, at Woodberry*

attention to the arts had ratcheted up a few degrees—which was needed on both of our campuses, where the arts had for generations been subordinated to athletics.

Several heads of schools were among the very first to offer their personal support when I was named acting head. Archibald H. “Flick” Hoxton and his wife, Ruth, graciously welcomed me to their home at EHS when I traveled their way that summer. “I’m your strongest supporter,” said Flick, “on every day of the coming year save one in November, when we play The Game!” Of course I knew what he meant, for by then I had attended at least seven encounters between the football teams of Episcopal and Woodberry, described in the press as “the South’s oldest schoolboy gridiron rivalry.”

I was grateful in 1973-74 that a significant number of Woodberry’s parents, alumni, and Advisory Council members wrote to the trustees’ headmaster-search committee to support my selection as permanent headmaster, while I was serving as acting head. My personal assessment of my candidacy was—and still is—that I lacked certain qualifications that I consider prerequisites for an ideal Woodberry headmaster. As I saw it, my deficiencies were primarily in my lack of depth in academic background: I held a master’s in guidance, not in an academic subject; and second, my shortage of extensive classroom experience: I had spent more than half of my time in administration, dating back to my second stint at Christchurch in 1961.

In administrative preparation and experience, however, I was convinced that I knew how to organize and direct the type of diverse team that was required in a competitive boarding school such as Woodberry. I had demonstrated this strength and ability to lead in

various roles, culminating in the position of Acting Headmaster.

I had entered the headmaster selection process late—after I had adjusted to being acting head and had found that I could in reality have an impact upon the direction of the school—especially as it went about the recovery process from a crisis in its history.

The people who worked with me were exceptional in their creativity and boundless in their commitment to bringing about a fresh experience for the students—and indeed for the entire community at Woodberry Forest School. I'm sure that I was at times amazed by what we accomplished, and was inwardly rewarded when things that I proposed or sponsored were especially successful. It was clear to me even in the trying times that this unusually fortunate school could and would regain its position of influence on young men for many future generations. (I had also hoped that the school's enrollment would always include a number of female day students—for which there was historic precedent and whose enrollment I had encouraged.)

As best I can recall, Gerry Bemiss and Harry Frazier broke the news to me that I had not been selected to be permanent headmaster, in a meeting of the three of us at Gerry's home in Richmond; I guess that was in December of 1973. I remember being angry—I think I was fairly controlled in my response, but I let them know that I was really disappointed and thought they had made a mistake. I don't remember any other details, but I'm sure I calmed down and parted company amicably with these two men for whom, as already noted, I had the greatest respect and friendship. (In those days, friendship did not warrant granting special preferences and positions to old school friends.)



I also remember that Frank Hereford, then provost of the University of Virginia, who was a trustee and member of the Woodberry search committee, went out of his way to assure me of his personal regard for my work. Later, when Frank was assembling his administrative team in preparation for becoming president of the University of Virginia, he urged me to join him, and he repeated that encouragement after he became president. Unfortunately, I was unable to become sufficiently enthusiastic about being a college administrator at that time—although I knew that an association with Frank and the University offered special opportunities for a Virginia alumnus who cared for the University of Virginia as much as I did.

Many other members of the Woodberry family also stepped forward to assure me of their personal appreciation and support: people at every level, inside and out of Woodberry. Two letters touched me especially deeply; the first from Lawrence Lewis, WFS 1938, and longtime Woodberry trustee and benefactor: “I am sure that I don’t have to tell you again that you have been my choice for the headmastership all along, and I felt absolutely certain that you were going to get the job.” I had often thought that I was much too “liberal” for Lawrence, but I believe he knew how much I respected Woodberry’s development of leaders in the past, and perhaps he saw how much I believed in the school’s potential to do the same in the future—even if in a changed world.

One of the finest “new friends” that I gained after coming to be part of Woodberry Forest in 1966 was Dr. Julian T. Buxton Jr., Class of 1946, (and Princeton A.B., plus Johns Hopkins, M.D.) of Charleston, S. C. Julian and I “just hit it off” from the first time we



*Charlie Cooper, John Gillespie and Evan Cooper at fountain near Woodberry Forest track, 1970*

met, which was in 1967 in the Fort Sumter Hotel, where Baker and I had arrived as Julian's guests, to meet with parents and alumni in Charleston. Much later, when the difficult times arose, one of the most troubling performances by our new headmaster took place in Charleston. Julian was a trustee by then, and when there was a break after the headmaster's remarks, he took me aside and said, "Gerry, what is going on? It sounds like the school has gone to pot!" This was at the time of a school holiday—spring break—and a few current students were in the audience. They did what they could to be good examples, but the damage had been done by the headmaster's comments—which I remember as being nervous, rambling and inconclusive. The Woodberry Forest he described was not what alumni and parents believed the school to be.

Years later, in the spring of 1994, Julian wrote to me after reading

my article on Big Ed Dorsey—one of Julian’s favorite people—and said, “I think often of those terrific days when you took over a sinking ship and righted it. As you know, I fought long into the night to keep you at the helm.... Woodberry has its very survival to thank you for.” After working with people like Julian who loved their school and were so grateful to those of us who served there, I sometimes wonder how I ever got up the motivation to leave.

Meanwhile, back to December, 1973, I met with the faculty and staff to tell them that I had not been selected permanent head. We met in a small lecture hall in the math-science building as I recall. I can remember getting choked up while making my comments—something I rarely did—and I’m sure it was easy for all to see that I was truly disappointed by losing out in the selection process to be the next headmaster.

Did something change significantly in me in that day or as a result of that process? I don’t know. I do know that it was clear to me that I could get through the rest of the year successfully. I told the faculty, with appropriate irony, that they had better continue to do their best, or I’d report them to Emmett Wright, who was to be their new boss.

Soon after these events—in December, before Christmas—Emmett invited me to visit him in New Orleans, where he was headmaster of Metairie Park Day School. We had known each other previously, for Emmett had served on the Woodberry faculty for two years before Baker Duncan’s retirement, and he subsequently had come in second as a candidate to succeed Baker. Emmett and his always-hospitable wife, Betty, welcomed me to New Orleans. We had a cordial visit, in the course of which Emmett encouraged me to stay on at Woodberry, at



*Dr. Julian T. Buxton, Jr., WFS class of 1946, a trustee who wanted Gerry to be permanent headmaster in 1974.*

least until he got himself established, and I had a clear notion of what I wanted to do next. This was both a gracious gesture and an astute move by Emmett. He knew he had to give his full attention initially to the complicated internal situation at Woodberry, and he also knew that I had a thorough grasp of the school's external constituency, along with an understanding of the capital needs and other development requirements for the immediate future.

Most importantly, I believe Emmett knew that he could count on me to be loyal, both to him personally and to Woodberry generally—and dedicated to excel in my assigned duties. We had open, candid conversations and “spoke the same language,” especially regarding the purposes and future of a school such as Woodberry Forest. On a personal

level, I was confident that Emmett, for his part, would do whatever he could to help me grow and fulfill my career aspirations. I was forty years old at the time, and many of life's opportunities lay ahead for me—and for my wife and our two sons.

After hearing of our discussions from Emmett, Woodberry's board chairman, FitzGerald Bemiss, sent out a letter dated March 13, 1974:

Dear Fellow Trustees,

I am pleased to advise you that Gerry Cooper just called to tell me that he plans to stay at Woodberry for at least another year to attend particularly to designing and implementing a major program for development of the School's financial resources.

I am particularly pleased that he first called Emmett Wright about this and he and Emmett are fully in step on this course of action.

\* \* \*

I know you are as pleased as I am that Gerry will continue to be an important part of the Woodberry leadership.

On my copy of his letter, Gerry had penned one word, "Splendid!"

Thus I continued my association with Woodberry for three years, 1974-77, with the title of Associate Headmaster for External Affairs, and as a committed team player in Emmett Wright's administration. Working together we gained genuine respect and appreciation for each other, as we pursued our various responsibilities as a coordinated team. Emmett assigned most of the long-range planning and external development activities to me, while he concentrated

on strengthening the school's competitive academic programs and restoring the routines and requisites of boarding school life.

Emmett and I eventually experienced a bitter-sweet parting of ways when I decided to accept the headmastership of Forsyth Country Day School in Winston-Salem, NC, effective in June, 1977. Many friends and colleagues wondered why I would leave the happiness and security that Woodberry Forest provided to my family and me; perhaps only Emmett and others who had accepted a similar challenge to "try one's hand at headmastering" after years of being a "number-two man" or in a supporting role could understand.

Before his initial service at Woodberry Forest (1968-70), Emmett Wright had served with distinction for many years as a top administrator and renowned teacher of history at the highly regarded Westminster Schools in Atlanta. From 1970-74 he was headmaster of Metairie Park Day School in New Orleans. Based on this extensive experience in day schools, he advised me that I would find a sharp contrast between the rather autonomous boarding school atmosphere in which I had thrived for nineteen years, and the constant exposure to parents' demands and students' after-school life that I would encounter at a relatively new, eight-year-old day school that had been founded—and was governed—by parents of current students.

I was convinced, however, that my family and I would benefit from an opportunity to live in the midst of a vital community like Winston-Salem, where the arts were a rallying point for a majority of its residents. Prior and I had been in the fishbowl of boarding school life for fifteen years—our entire married life. I had been on call virtually "24/7," and much of the raising of our two sons, who

were ages thirteen and ten in 1977, had been left to Prior. It was therefore not surprising that we would wish to try a non-residential school located in a diverse and vibrant community.

Over the thirty years since I left Woodberry Forest that June 1977, I have often examined my emotions and recollections about my eleven-year experience there. After serving as acting headmaster, and not being selected permanent headmaster, my family and I were particularly well-treated throughout our final three years at Woodberry, especially by Headmaster Emmett Wright, and also by the trustees—all of whom clearly appreciated my service and commitment to the school.

At graduation on May 21, 1977, the Woodberry Trustees presented to me the following statement, framed and rendered in beautiful calligraphy:

The Board of Trustees of  
Woodberry Forest School  
hereby declares that  
in recognition of his outstanding service  
and dedication from 1966-1977  
Gerald Lyn Cooper  
be awarded this  
Certificate of Appreciation  
on this twenty-first day of May, 1977

This was one of several special gestures that the trustees and the school made to Prior and me, and we greatly appreciated each of them. Of note is the fact that in the summer of 1974, Woodberry Forest gave the two of us a trip to England with Hatcher Williams' "Corolla in England" program that enrolled both students and adults. This was a mini-sabbatical, and Prior and I paid for our sons to accompany us. The venture provided an unforgettable and educational time for our family. The trustees also presented an antique drop-leaf table to Prior and me that had been restored in Winston-Salem, our soon-to-be new home.

There were many special people at Woodberry Forest who meant so much to me on a daily basis, in addition to members of the leadership and faculty groups; people who worked entirely behind the scenes. The loyal members of the support staff are, I believe, special guardians of the heart and soul of a school—indeed, it is these people who help significantly to define the superlative institutions. The best example of this guardianship at Woodberry Forest, in my observation, was found in James Edward "Big Ed" Dorsey. My description of his role and influence within the Woodberry community follows in a special chapter.



## Post Script

In February of 2009 I received the following letter:

February 19, 2009

Dear Gerry:

At our recent meeting in Greensboro, the board of trustees voted unanimously and most enthusiastically to present you with the Woodberry Forest School Distinguished Service Award.

The board of trustees created the Distinguished Service Award in 1980 to honor those alumni and close friends of the school who have distinguished themselves by their exceptional service to and support of Woodberry Forest School. We are truly grateful to you for your outstanding loyalty to the school as exemplified by your service on the faculty from 1967 to 1977 and service as acting headmaster for the 1973-74 school year and thereafter as associate headmaster for external affairs.

We plan to present the Distinguished Service Award to you at Commencement on the morning of May 23.

I look forward to presenting you the Woodberry Forest School Distinguished Service Award.

Yours truly,

*Sion*

Sion A. Boney III

Chairman, Board of Trustees

This letter surprised me as much as when the Woodberry Forest Board had asked me to serve as Acting Headmaster in the spring of

1973. A news release in May 2009 stated:

Gerald L. Cooper received the Distinguished Service Award from Woodberry Forest School at the 120th graduation exercises on May 23, 2009. The school last week awarded diplomas to 95 students from 30 states and four foreign countries.

Sion A. Boney III, of Hillsdale, NY, chairman of the school's board of trustees, made presentations to Cooper and two other honorees. He said the trustees created the Distinguished Service Award in 1980 "to honor those alumni and close friends of the school who have distinguished themselves by their exceptional service to education and in support of Woodberry Forest School."

Boney told the graduation audience, "We are truly grateful to Gerry Cooper for his outstanding loyalty to Woodberry Forest, exemplified by his teaching and administering on the faculty from 1966 to 1977, and by his special accomplishments as Acting Headmaster for the 1973-74 school year. He then was named Associate Headmaster for External Affairs, and led the drafting and implementation of our trustees' ten-year development plan for the school's financial and physical resources.

"On a personal note," Boney said, "Gerry was my faculty adviser for all four years of my stay at Woodberry Forest, and he helped me every step of the way until I graduated in 1974. At the end of the 1976-77 session, Gerry left Woodberry Forest and went on to serve with distinction at several other educational institutions in North Carolina and Virginia. Today we commend him for his service to the education of young people throughout our region."

Prior and I spent two delightful days as guests of the school, hosted by Headmaster Dennis Campbell and his wife, Leesa. We stayed in Duncan House, now lovely guest quarters, formerly the home of Sally and Baker Duncan in the 1960s. Lessa saw to our comfort and enjoyment of the school, along with that of several other special guests—not to mention the families of ninety-five graduating seniors.

Our son Evan, a 1982 Woodberry Forest graduate, came over from Charlottesville for the ceremonies and brought his wife, Cassandra Barnett, and their two boys, Miles and John Cooper. It was a most special day for our family—lacking only our son Charlie, who was not able to attend from Los Angeles.

We wrote to the Campbells, summing up the delightful visit:



*Gerry beaming over Prior, Miles, Johnny, Evan and Cassandra*

Dear Leesa and Dennis,

Our recent visit back to Woodberry will linger in our memories for a long time, and your hospitality and graciousness will long be remembered, too.

The two of you are making a lasting contribution to the School and to the lives of students. May you be appreciated both now and in the future—as you have helped us to feel.

*Prior and Gerry*

Our return to Woodberry was special in every way. We had good visits with Travis and Dottie Tysinger and also Pat and Richard Barnhardt—with whom we had been close friends and colleagues for much of our time at the school. To have Sion Boney, my four-year student advisee, present the award in May set a high-water mark reminder for my career. As I wrote to Sion, “Having had a part in your growth and development means everything to me!” As he knew, I remember how lost he was when he arrived at Woodberry as a “new boy” in the fall of 1970; how his mother said, “Sion needs structure”; and how he came by to see me after lunch each day for his entire first year to report on how he was getting along. Eventually he mastered Woodberry’s education system for himself, went on to succeed in college and to prosper in life. Now he is back as Chairman of Woodberry’s Board of Trustees, helping to plan and assure the school’s service to future generations of students.

Having opportunities to help students like Sion get a firm foundation for themselves made my time at Woodberry a key part of my life and work in education. It makes me even happier when I discover that they are giving back at whatever level they choose.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Ed Dorsey: Powerful and Effective**

Ed Dorsey was a guardian angel for the people and principles of Woodberry Forest School for forty years. He never taught a class there, never played on or coached an athletic team, and never received a diploma. Yet for countless students, faculty and alumni, Edward Dorsey was a guiding spirit in this boarding school for boys—considered to be one of the best in the mid-Atlantic region. Older alumni included songwriter Johnny Mercer and movie star Randolph Scott; a more recent prominent graduate was Marvin Bush, class of 1975, son of former President George H. W. Bush.

This prestigious preparatory school eventually awarded Ed Dorsey an official document that he could hang on his wall: at the school's graduation ceremonies in 1974 he received the Frank S. Walker Award, with a citation from the school's trustees:

To James Edward Dorsey  
in recognition of his 36 years of  
devoted service as  
a staff member at  
Woodberry Forest School

I had the privilege of presenting the Frank Walker Award to Edward Dorsey, for I served as acting headmaster of Woodberry Forest in the 1973-74 session. This was especially significant to me, because Ed had been my trusted advisor and friend at the school, from the moment I became a teacher and administrator there in the summer of 1966. Alumni and former faculty of the school had alerted me to Ed's remarkable loyalty and indispensable service, a year or so before my wife, our two-year old son, and I arrived on campus in June 1966.

"Big Ed," as several generations of students and faculty knew him, held various titles: first janitor, then custodian, and eventually Director of Buildings Maintenance at Woodberry Forest. Woodberry was founded in 1889 upon the traditions of the Old South—honor, discipline, *noblesse oblige*—by Captain Robert Stringfellow Walker, CSA (Confederate States of America), a member of Mosby's Rangers, the most daring cadre of dragoons in the Confederate army.

Ed Dorsey, an African-American, began his term of service more than 50 years after the founding of this traditional southern school, and he proved that loyalty and dedication to duty were characteristics that members of his race could exemplify as fully as anyone else. These traits became his means to personal reputation and respect at Woodberry Forest, regardless of his race. Ed and the crews of men he supervised kept the school buildings in first-class condition throughout his 40-year tenure—a great tribute to the custodians' work ethic and a significant benefit to the general reputation of the school.

Beyond his assigned duties, Ed was a benefactor to any in need, a protector of Woodberry's traditions, and an unfailing friend for



innumerable students, faculty and staff. There was a distinctive spiritual dimension to Ed Dorsey, which he quietly demonstrated in his daily work, unflappable attitude, and smiling visage. The greatest test of Ed's character came in the early 1970s, when Woodberry Forest and other American schools and colleges faced the most difficult behavior problems from any generation of students to that point in U. S. history.

Children from white, well-to-do families generated most of these problems. Their misbehavior included drug abuse, rebellion against authority, and poor personal hygiene, along with open defiance of the ideals held by adults over the age of 30. These were the attitudes of America's most promising and often privileged adolescents in the decade of the 1970s. (Now, in 2006, these students are in their fifties and are often in roles of leadership; how have they turned out?)

In 1970, the dormitories at Woodberry Forest School changed overnight from being places of near-military orderliness to venues of untidiness and rebellion. Alumni could not understand these aberrations. Even for alumni who graduated as late as 1970, the school's living spaces had been clean and orderly, reflective of the precedents of the nineteenth century. That's when the founding Walker family established the traditions, and everyone accepted the maxim that "cleanliness is next to godliness."

In the late 1940s a cover story in *Life* magazine had featured Woodberry's senior prom, depicting the children of the South's rich and famous in formal dress, with special focus on the sons of Edward R. Stettinius, FDR's secretary of state. Woodberry's student body included the sons of prominent captains of industry in the South—children of tobacco and textile magnates in North Carolina, distillers of world-famous bourbon whiskey in Kentucky, and extruders of aluminum in Virginia. Here were sons of families who were destined to lead the emerging urban centers of the "New South," especially Atlanta, Charlotte, Charleston, Savannah, Jacksonville, New Orleans—and Richmond, a later-sleeping giant just 70 miles down the road from the school.



Not even the most frolicsome and uninhibited alumni could accept the “Scenes of the Seventies” that were acted out in the dormitories, on the surrounding golf course, and elsewhere on Woodberry’s commodious, 1,000-acre campus in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. “Old Tigers”—the alumni—might relish telling tall tales from their student days of amorous dalliances on the school’s golf course after big dances, but the disappearance of order and discipline “on dorm” was almost as unimaginable to most alumni and faculty as was violating Woodberry’s revered honor code that prohibits lying, cheating and stealing.

Impeccable dormitory order was an unwritten part of the school’s founding principles, as laid down by the first headmaster, J. Carter Walker, son of the founder. “Mr. Carter Walker,” as he was known by generations of students, parents, and faculty alike, served as unquestioned leader for fifty-one years, from 1897 to 1948. He established a tightly knit chain of command, and the masters (faculty) and prefects (student leaders) maintained all rules and customs to the letter. Questioning authority was not expected at any level.

Ed Dorsey had received rigorous on-the-job training in these traditions and codes of communal living at Woodberry. Thus in the early 1970s, when order in the dorms suddenly disintegrated, Ed was probably more personally affected—and deeply disappointed—than anyone else on campus. In the fall of 1970 it was clear to Ed, though not as yet to the more insulated faculty and administration, that something totally unprecedented was taking place. Empty beer cans and charred smoking paraphernalia found around campus were frequent reminders of student misbehavior as the 1970s unfolded.

The intensity of alumni-parent shock and outrage heightened as one traveled south through traditional “Woodberry country.” Reactions ranged from bemused nods in northern outposts of alumni—like New York City—to glimmers of understanding in Atlanta, escalating to strident proposals for immediate, school-wide expulsions by loyalists in Charleston and Jacksonville.

Members of the administration and faculty heard all kinds of questions and suggestions on our tours and presentations in cities of alumni concentration. We were frequently cornered at the refreshment bar or in the men’s room by alumni with statements such as, “It sounds like the school is out of control—what’s going on?” A friend of mine, an alumnus and parent, called from Richmond to give me his view: “Gerry, the monkeys are running the zoo; it sounds like Mad Lane (U.Va.’s fraternity row) up there.”

None of these reactions was useful, especially not to Ed Dorsey and his crew in the dormitories, nor to the faculty and administration in our daily efforts to educate. We at the school did wonder occasionally, “Who raised these kids, anyway?”

Over time Woodberry’s alumni and parents came to realize that our problems with student behavior were part of a national phenomenon. Even in the Solid South, children living in their own homes were rebelling against established customs and breaking rules of behavior that had stood for generations. College campuses ignited regularly with acts of student defiance of authority and rejection of family values. The most violent student demonstrations were against military service and every aspect of the war in Viet Nam. Student protests were constantly in the news—on TV and front pages of newspapers across the country.

Meanwhile, back at Woodberry Ed Dorsey never wavered in his commitment to keeping the living and learning spaces clean and presentable, even when faced with open defiance by some students. Ed kept inspiring his work force to persevere, often despite uneven support and responsiveness from authorities in the school.

Through good times and bad, I never heard Ed make a harsh or uncomplimentary comment about anyone—neither student, faculty member, administrator or fellow staff person; these were his community, his neighbors, and his friends. One could easily see that he loved them unconditionally; even some of the more self-centered students must have noticed. Ed could practice tough love: he was quite capable of giving respectful correction to students, faculty, headmasters, even trustees, when his wisdom told him what was best in a situation, and he always gave his guidance with a broad grin or a disarming smile.

In 1968 when Woodberry Forest had begun to enroll African-American students, Ed made no special remarks; he rarely commented on school policy in areas like admissions or academics. He made it clear, however, that he was in favor of people from his race coming to the school, as long as they could do the work. Ed quietly offered ideas about integrating students, when he was asked; that was more his style than were public pronouncements.

Ed was in touch with the early African-American students in the everyday life of the school. He interacted with them, just as he did with other students: some more, some less, depending upon the natural flow of each relationship. Ed was especially helpful as a friend and counselor to several black students who encountered adjustment problems in the dormitories; that was where he

functioned best, throughout his career. He was a constant help to me from the day I arrived as a “new boy” faculty member in 1966. We met in the basement of Walker Building (the main and original edifice of the school), in the office of the school’s housekeeper, Miss Tiny Dunn.

Ed said, “Mister Cooper, you’re a friend of Mister Worthington and Mister Sam Fray; they told me to look out for you. That’s good enough for me; what you need?” Over the next eleven years I needed a lot, and Ed was always there to help.

Ed and Mrs. Dorsey lived a couple of miles west of the school gates, on the road running west across from Kube’s Store on U. S. 15. The Dorseys had a comfortable home, set among big oak trees. The front porch faced toward Woodberry Forest, though you couldn’t see the entire school campus through the deep groves of trees. Ed could see the top of Walker Building and also the water tower. For nine years my family and I lived near that landmark water tower, and I felt we were always within Ed’s range of protection.

Visitors often drove over to see “Big Ed” in the years after he retired from Woodberry. He was enjoying his retirement, sitting on his porch, thinking and praying for the people he had gotten to know and for the school he had come to love so much. Ed’s talk with visitors was mostly about the good old times—even those difficult years of the early 1970s. With the healing of time, Ed quickly moved the difficult years into the “good old” category, too.

Ed continued his practice of sending the little offering envelopes imprinted with “The Mount Pisgah Baptist Church Annual Men’s Rally” to his friends among the alumni and faculty who donated to this event. He was the faithful leader of the Men’s Rally for many

years, until his death in 1988. Ed was an effective fundraiser because he believed in the mission of Mount Pisgah Baptist Church. He also did a lot of effective cultivation of Woodberry Forest alumni over the years, and we in the development office were always eager to give Ed opportunities to show his enthusiasm to “the alumnus,” as he called them.

Late in his retirement “Big Ed” Dorsey said to me, “I sit on this porch and pray for Woodberry every day.” I could tell that he had been doing that long before his retirement, too. He didn’t expect any recognition, and he didn’t tell a lot of people what he was doing in his prayer closet. To Ed, praying was something you did automatically for people and places that you love very much.

If I were asked to make a list of the strategies that pulled Woodberry Forest through the difficulties of the early 1970s, I’d put the prayers of Ed Dorsey at the top of the list, and his dedication to his duties would be right up there, too. Those who knew Ed Dorsey, especially his spiritual side, would agree that James 5:16 in Ed’s favorite book describes him well: “A good man’s prayer is powerful and effective.”

Ed Dorsey did more to keep alive the soul and spirit of Woodberry Forest School than written histories can ever record. The school was fortunate to have such a good man at just the right time. Throughout his career the prayers of James Edward Dorsey “availed much” for all whose lives he touched and for the school he loved.

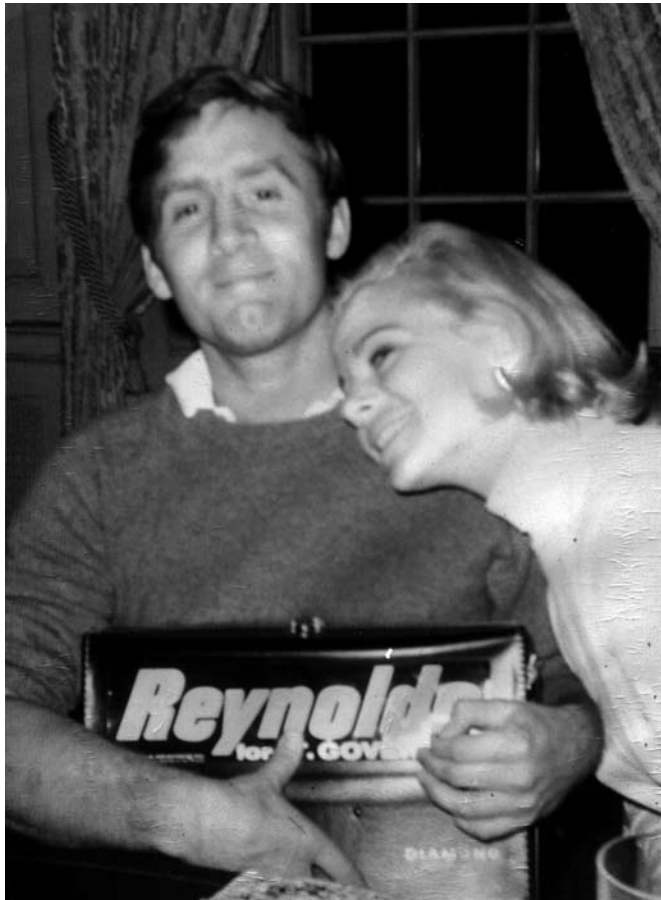
## **Chapter 10**

### **To the Children of Tomorrow**

For the many people who knew and admired Julian Sargeant Reynolds, it's hard to believe that he has been absent from this earth for nearly four decades. His friends and admirers will never understand why Sarge was taken from us so prematurely in 1971 at the age of thirty-four.

"Who was J. Sargeant Reynolds?" If a pollster asked that question in any part of Virginia today, the name *Reynolds* might bring replies like, "Someone in the Reynolds Metals family," or perhaps "One of those North Carolina tobacco people." In Richmond a response could easily be, "The guy who started our community college."

The pre-eminent, and to date the only, complete biography of Sarge Reynolds makes it clear that none of the above answers really does justice to the man who died in office while serving as Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, nearly forty years ago. Andrew H. McCutcheon and Michael P. Gleason, two aides to Reynolds in his brief, star-crossed political career, published *Sarge Reynolds: In the Time of His Life* in 1996. Let us remember that Sarge was a genuine, made-in-Virginia politician who attracted national attention by



*Running for office: Sarge and Mary Ballou with aspirations.*

virtue of his own energy. He didn't marry a movie star or a President's daughter to gain prominence. Sure, it might be argued that the Reynolds company's best-known product, "Reynolds Wrap," was a household word, and that gave him name recognition and helped pay the bills.

Respected political analysts throughout the region agreed that Sarge was destined for a role on the national scene, and a few believed he might become a Democratic candidate for President.

Among older Virginians some might have said, “Sarge’s ambition bothered me,” or “His politics were way too liberal for me.” But that takes nothing away from the importance of remembering Sarge and contemplating his short, politically active life. It’s worthwhile for students today to read about him to find a role model, to recognize that people of affluence can choose to make a difference, or to learn that Virginia, the “Mother of Presidents,” was not totally barren throughout the twentieth century. And that might lead the current generation to dream that there’s still hope for another presidential pregnancy in the Old Dominion.

A great diversity of people got to know Sarge Reynolds, not only as a political figure, but also through ordinary encounters of life. The authors of *In the Time of His Life* provide an admiring but not worshipful biography, enabling the human side of Sarge to shine through. They mention by name over three hundred of Sarge’s friends and admirers, and a few opponents. All are people who knew him and shared some part of his life.

“The truth is that, while Sarge’s grandfather, Richard S. Sr., founded Reynolds Metals Company and had worked briefly for his uncle at R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, there was never a formal connection between the tobacco and aluminum companies,” according to McCutcheon and Gleason. Many thought a corporate tie existed between the families, especially because cigarettes were wrapped in “tin foil,” a product that was predecessor to aluminum foil, before World War II. The company started in 1919 as the U.S. Foil Company in Louisville. In 1928, Richard S. Reynolds purchased Robertshaw Thermostat, Fulton Sylphon, and part of Beechnut Foil, added them to U.S. Foil, and created Reynolds Metals Company. In



1938 Reynolds moved the company headquarters permanently to Richmond.

What is the usefulness today of reflecting on the life of a wealthy guy who played a large but abbreviated role on the stage of Virginia politics? A helpful comment came from former governor L. Douglas Wilder, who succeeded Reynolds as state senator from Richmond and later became the nation's first African American to be elected a state governor.

"Virginia has lost more than she realizes," Wilder said when Reynolds died of a malignant brain tumor on June 13, 1971. Twenty years later, Wilder achieved the impossible, and he has recognized publicly that Sarge had set the stage for that historic moment. It happened in Virginia, which had been the capstone state of the old Confederacy.

James Latimer, an esteemed political writer at the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, proposed in 1990 a most intriguing scenario for Reynolds and Wilder, according to the authors of the Reynolds biography:

"If Sarge's life had been lengthened, the course of Virginia and national political history would have been profoundly altered," wrote Latimer. He went on to suggest that Reynolds undoubtedly would have been elected governor and then U. S. Senator. Thus, in 1990, Latimer projected, the inauguration of the nation's first African American governor, Virginian Lawrence Douglas Wilder, might have been graced by the presence of a President Reynolds.

That would have been a tall order for the young politician, but such rapid assents to power occurred with increasing frequency as the twentieth century played out. Although Sarge was still a youngster in 1971 and short in physical stature to boot, he had the kind of personality that radiated through any gathering, enabling him to connect quickly with individuals and to captivate a crowd when he entered a room. He enjoyed recalling that early in his career someone had shouted from the back of a crowded room, “Stand on your wallet, Sarge, so we can see you.” I was reminded of the old saying, “Money talks.” Especially in politics.

While Sarge seldom lacked either personal assets or political capital, he often had to prevail upon friends and aides to pick up the tab, for he frequently found himself with no ready cash in his pocket.

I wrote a review of *Sarge Reynolds: In the Time of His Life* when it was published in 1996. As a former college preparatory school teacher, I thought it would make excellent collateral reading in history and political science classes at the high school and university levels. I believe young people, especially those aspiring to political life, should have the opportunity to know what can happen when a talented, well-funded person puts his mind, heart and substance into the political process and makes helping those less fortunate than himself his foremost concern.

Sarge never attended public schools. His parents sent him to private schools, kindergarten through high school—a choice that politicians often try to hide, though Sarge did not indulge in such deception. He acknowledged his private school roots, as a few other prominent politicians have done, including popular Democratic presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, an alumnus of Groton School,

and John F. Kennedy, a Choate School graduate. Both of these successful Democrats were able to use their prep-school backgrounds to their advantage. FDR's connections enabled him to assemble top scholars as his advisers. Jack Kennedy paraphrased his old school's motto to read, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country," and made it a popular mantra for his administration.

In the twenty-five years that I served as a teacher and administrator in private schools in Virginia and North Carolina, many of my fellow school professionals joined me in the hope that our schools might produce a few graduates who would aspire to political leadership at the state or national levels. The number of independent school graduates in the U. S. is relatively small when compared to public schools—less than ten percent of Americans graduate from private schools. Many of us who worked in independent schools in the 1960s and '70s, however, felt that the opportunity existed for private-school graduates to make a significant impact on the political process, especially based upon the fact that their families often possessed both the financial resources and the national contacts that are useful, perhaps indispensable, in running for high office.

Sarge Reynolds was one young man who seemed to have listened to his prep school instructors when they encouraged students to consider serving good causes. This type of encouragement was widely practiced in the more competitive, NAIS-member schools, as I observed them in the 1970s through '80s.

Sarge attended St. Christopher's School in Richmond, an Episcopal Church-affiliated school for boys, from kindergarten

through the eighth grade. In 1950 he enrolled at Woodberry Forest School in Madison County, Va., near James Madison's home, Montpelier. His brother, Richard S. Reynolds III, known as "Major," had preceded him at Woodberry, graduating in 1952.

There are indications that Sarge's independent school experiences had an impact on his vocation in politics, although he wisely did not flaunt his prep school background while in office. In June 1971, near the end of his life, Sarge was receiving treatment in New York. He wrote several memorable reflections upon his feelings while attending a boys' boarding school, and about the school's influence on him. These are found in *School Days*, Chapter 3 of *In the Time of His Life*. He recalls the athletic fields at Woodberry Forest as a place where he learned about competition and gained self-confidence. His recollections of his boarding school days remind me of the mythical "playing fields of Eton," the English boys' preparatory school, where Great Britain's political and social leaders have been educated since the school's founding by King Henry VI in 1440.

Sarge recreated his boarding school years in a lyrical retrospective, writing from a New York hospital:

Where now are those scenes of Woodberry—where now are the settings of those boys moving in and out of that front hall ...

And what of the boy in the Third Form (ninth grade) who had just made the wrestling team and won a match and was going to get his letter, which was the moment in his life when he realized that he was making it in a competitive world and would never again be looked at as one of the crowd.

And where has that boy gone now—I know well what happened to the boy—I know how he grew up and went on and achieved and failed and achieved ...

When I lie down and die, when I am covered up and can no longer compete—when I can no longer feel—God store my days at Woodberry and keep them safe...

And now I was going onto that field (a football game with arch-rival Episcopal High School) ... out there on the field in the middle of the epic pantomime where grace and courage were being mixed in great profusion...

Sarge was captain and quarterback of the Woodberry football team in 1953. He was reported to weigh 140 pounds and his height was listed at five feet, six inches. He later said that a rival team from Fishburne Military School "...looked me over and thought, 'This ought to be a pushover.' But I was determined we were going to beat them." Final score: Woodberry 21, Fishburne 0. Sarge scored all three touchdowns.

In the decade of 1966-77, from my vantage point as a teacher, administrator, and development officer at Woodberry Forest School, I followed Sarge's career with special interest. Between the years 1961 and 1970, the school's headmaster, A. Baker Duncan was making an all-out effort to raise the students' awareness of placing service to others above considerations of personal gain. As Baker Duncan stated it to me, "Woodberry Forest has not produced its share of leaders in service roles in the 1950s and early 1960s; that needs our attention in 1967."

That message was being sent to the entire school community, and we in the administration were delighted to discover alumni

who were involved in social and community issues as part of their work. Meanwhile, Sarge was beginning to make a political impact in Virginia—and that was helpful to us in urging students to become involved in activities that addressed the needs of others. We tried to demonstrate that not everyone would return to the family business, right out of college, or even if they did, they might look for ways to serve others.

In my college years, I had been a casual friend of Sargie, as his contemporaries from earlier days called him. I had occasional contact with him as his political career evolved. In the *Woodberry Forest Magazine* of which I was editor, 1967-73, we often featured the newer, “relevant” types of campus activities. These included the welcoming and integrating of African American students, various attempts to test the potential of coeducation as a means to enrich the learning experience at an all-boys school, and inviting a broad spectrum of speakers to the campus to broaden our viewpoints. The latter events became known as colloquiums, that lasted about two full days and included speakers, panel discussions, group breakouts, and use of the limited, 1970s media: primarily film and videotape.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. visited Woodberry Forest as a colloquium speaker around 1970. He had won both the Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award in 1966 for his eye-witness book titled, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. My colleague, Hendrik R. Woods, who was an accomplished, moderate-to-liberal history teacher and held degrees from Princeton and Harvard, used his Ivy League connections to attract speakers such as Mr. Schlesinger to the Woodberry colloquiums.

Rik Woods and I drove to the Charlottesville airport to meet

Mr. Schlesinger and bring him to the Woodberry campus. He was the keynote speaker in a colloquium designed to give our predominantly conservative students an exposure to another side of national and world issues. Most of them had grown up in southern families with homogeneous points of view. We in the development office often sent announcements and summaries of campus events to Woodberry's alumni, especially in the younger classes of 1950s and '60s, including Sarge's class of 1954. We hoped to let our constituents know that the Woodberry campus was alive and open to a variety of views, discussions, and perspectives. We got responses that ranged from positive: "It's good for those kids to know how the real world thinks," to occasional negative reactions: "Looks like Woodberry has gone liberal, just like the colleges." The faculty and administration at the school were probably split along similar ideological lines to those of our alumni and parents. In a faculty of sixty, about a third wanted to include some liberal voices among our speakers; another third thought we were swinging too far left, and the final third were somewhere in the middle—and fairly silent, though not a majority.

One young alumna of the late 1960s era summed up these feelings well, speaking on a panel at the school: "When I'm on campus at Yale, I feel pretty conservative, but when I go home to Southside Virginia, people think I'm a raving liberal." I wish I could relate comments I heard from Sarge on the issues of the early 1970s, but I cannot. He gave his attention to issues that primarily affected Virginia, and we could only hope that the school had given him the academic strength and personal courage that he needed to persevere in the world of politics.

I also had the pleasure of knowing Sarge's wife, Mary Ballou (formerly Handy), from our having known each other socially in college. She is a native of Lynchburg and a graduate of Sweet Briar College. In the late 1950s she was a frequent visitor on weekends at the University of Virginia, where I was completing an undergraduate degree. Thus in June 1971, when Sarge's death was reported to be imminent, I got in touch with Mary Ballou to tell her that we at his old school were concerned and wanted to offer whatever support we could.

Within the administration at Woodberry Forest, we discussed how to establish a suitable memorial at the school to honor Sarge. Woodberry faculty and alumni who had known Sarge as a student had great respect for him, and many expressed the desire to honor him with a memorial at the school. We also received inquiries from at least two corporations and foundations about helping to recognize Sarge.

Although Sarge had been too heavily involved with his political life in the late 1960s to attend Woodberry alumni gatherings, he had often sent greetings to friends at the school, and he acknowledged the impact that the school and its faculty had upon him when he was a Woodberry student. Sarge had served as Senior Prefect, equivalent to head of student government, which gave him a good deal of clout on campus, and included his being chairman of the honor committee. At commencement he was awarded the school's highest prize to a graduating senior, the Archer Christian Medal, for sound character, effective leadership, and athletic ability. Clearly, J. Sargeant Reynolds stood at the top of the Woodberry Forest student body for the 1953-54 session.



At the time of Sarge's death, I talked by phone with Mary Ballou. She was enthusiastic about our proposal to establish the "J. Sargeant Reynolds Memorial Scholarship" at the school, and she approved our draft description of the scholarship, which stated that it would "... give preference to a deserving student from a disadvantaged background." Mary Ballou added, "We hope the scholarship will bring to the school the kinds of people Sargie liked to help, and that sounds like what you are saying."

I confirmed Mary Ballou's impression. Later we told her about the first student to hold the J. Sargeant Reynolds Memorial Scholarship: a young black student from a rural county located not far east of Richmond's city limits. The recipient had already demonstrated that he had the potential to be a school leader, and he got strong recommendations for his work in a community development organization that assisted minority young people and adults in attaining education and vocations. He continued his achievements at Woodberry Forest as the first J. Sargeant Reynolds Memorial Scholar, excelling as an athlete and student leader.

Annual reports from Woodberry Forest indicate that the J. Sargeant Reynolds Memorial Scholarship continues to succeed in its purposes, is supported by a well-endowed fund, and will continue to provide aid to students in perpetuity.

Soon after Sarge's death, I wrote the following comments in *The Woodberry Forest Bulletin*:

Sarge Reynolds was a public figure who was secure enough to acknowledge what he had gained by attending private schools. He probably knew that, in time, people from all

income levels would be attending private schools, using financial aid funds that have grown significantly at these schools.

For some, Sargeant Reynolds had become the symbol of what Woodberry Forest might accomplish with its particular type of promising students. Reynolds' moderate approach, his ability to unite disparate forces, and his keen sense of humor through both the smallest and greatest adversity were the kind of characteristics that schoolmasters point to with pride in an alumnus.

It is clear that Sarge was also a dedicated supporter of public education at all levels. He believed that nurturing Virginia's tradition of educational excellence, with roots reaching back to the founding of the College of William and Mary in 1693, was one of the state's most important responsibilities. Like Thomas Jefferson, Reynolds believed that the purpose of public education was to enhance the ability of Virginia's people to govern themselves, and to enable them to find and become successful in gainful employment.

Sarge gave the highest priority to Jefferson's vision for creating an "educated citizenry" to keep our commonwealth free and productive. Sarge would have had little patience with the ambivalence of members of Virginia's General Assembly regarding these educational commitments as the twenty-first century began. He said in 1971, as a preamble to his famous Shad Planking speech, "For me the oppression of local government, whether it be here at Wakefield, in my city of Richmond, or at the state level—bureaucratic red tape and interference (from state sources) is equally bad as that which emanates from Washington."

It is safe to assume that Sarge would have supported recent steps to remove Virginia's major universities from the direct budgetary control of the General Assembly, and thereby to avoid the "bureaucratic red tape" that he described as offensive at any level of government.

Sarge also showed respect for labor unions, the New Deal, and the National Democratic Party. These diverse commitments were anathema to the old-line, conservative Virginia Democrats—many of whom would soon defect to the "new" Republican Party, as it became a gathering place for right-wing, no-tax, no-progress conservatives.

In matters of racial justice and educational opportunity, Sarge shared principles and convictions with Linwood Holton, the Republican Governor with whom he served. Holton had little in common with the emerging right-wing-dominated Republican party of the 1970s, and he particularly distanced himself from the surreptitious racism of this group.

Sarge was respectful toward the conservative old guard in the Virginia Democratic Party; however, he had both the courage and the convictions to speak the truth to them in 1971, at one of their annual rituals that had originated in the heyday of the Byrd Machine. This event was the outdoor Shad Planking that was held in Wakefield, a small town in the conservative Southside region of the state. Shad fish are caught in the brackish rivers of southeastern Virginia, where they come to spawn in the early spring. The preferred cooking method involved filleting and spreading the fish on a wooden plank before an open fire. Shad planking, like oyster roasting and crab picking, had been a traditional part of political

gatherings in Tidewater Virginia since the Revolution.

The fact that most white members of the Virginia General Assembly would continue to make the trek to this rural event was a reminder that for decades the Byrd Machine had ruled the state, drawing its power from rural places like the Southside. These communities were as deeply segregationist as any county in the Mississippi delta.

Sarge went to Wakefield on April 21, 1971, the day after the U. S. Supreme Court voted 9-0 to prohibit the use of school busing to avoid integration in the public schools of the United States. Here are excerpts from his message:

I believe the state has two basic responsibilities to each generation...

One, To guarantee an opportunity for each youngster, rich or poor, black or white, regardless of the circumstances of birth, to get an opportunity to receive as much education as will be beneficial to that particular student.

...I tell you one thing that is not going to happen and that is an open defiance of that order (of the Supreme Court) the way we attempted tragically years ago.

*School means too much to the children of tomorrow, and it won't happen again. Nor will we fight another Civil War; nor will we be intimidated by those who cry for impeachment of the court. Virginia will not be propelled into Massive Resistance again, forward, backward or bilateral movement. Its efforts were futile and very expensive for the present generation of Virginians ... (emphasis added).*

The federal system is our system. We created it. ...If

coming down here to the shad planking in Southside Virginia and making such statements spells political doom for me—so be it. At least I will have had the very warm feeling of having done and said what I thought needed doing and saying....

Two, I believe that the state also has a solemn obligation to develop its economic resources to the point where each child coming from the education system can get a good and decent job that will allow such person to support his family with dignity and not charity....

These words of a young leader who held these strong convictions—and who had the courage to speak them to the recalcitrant politicians who needed to hear—constituted a landmark in Virginia politics. Only death could interrupt the rise of this young leader in Virginia and in the United States.

In my view, then and now, Sarge's death was also a setback for his preparatory-school alma mater. The demise of Sarge Reynolds, and the loss of the fresh vision that he represented, reduced the probability that Woodberry Forest School would turn out leaders of national caliber in the era that followed. Schools build traditions of producing leaders based upon their graduates achieving prominent positions in public service. If Sarge had continued to be active on the political scene in the 1970s, he would have been a great asset, both to his country and to his preparatory school.

*School means too much to the children of tomorrow* summarizes Sarge's declaration of educational independence for Virginia, in which he asserted the state's need not only to educate all of its children, but also to break symbolic ties to outmoded, old south ideas.

He used words like *Civil War*, *impeachment* and *massive resistance* to remind his listeners that the sins of the past need not be visited upon subsequent generations of Virginians ... or Americans.

Sarge acknowledged that what he was saying could mean “political doom for me,” leaving no doubt that he had calculated his odds for the future. His close political associates believed by this time that Sarge had enough support from a new base of voters—especially African Americans and young people—and that they would rally behind him to defeat any last-ditch efforts by the old-guard conservatives to preserve the status quo.

Here was a harbinger of a new electoral base that thirty-seven years later would constitute a majority in the voters’ booths. That base of younger voters and African Americans would, in 2008, move Virginia back into the Democratic column of a national contest and help to assure the election of Barack Obama as the first President of African American descent in our nation’s history. Obama made eleven campaign visits into Virginia, showing that he recognized the importance of Virginia’s unique political history and that he wanted the Old Dominion to be part of his new coalition.

Our former governor, Timothy Kaine, was among the earliest backers of Senator Obama, and he shares with the President a number of similarities. These include ties to the American Midwest, law degrees from Harvard, and wives who themselves graduated from Princeton University and Harvard Law School, though at slightly different years in the 1980s. Governor Kaine also taught law in his adopted home city at the University of Richmond Law School, as did Senator Obama at the University of Chicago’s School of Law.

Governor Kaine is married to Anne Holton, daughter of former

governor Linwood Holton. Anne and her brother had made the front pages in 1970 when Governor and Mrs. Holton decided that their children would attend Richmond's recently integrated public schools. The Virginia First Lady's website describes her commitments to public service and to children:

Anne Holton graduated from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs in 1980. She went on to earn her J.D. from Harvard Law School, where she met Tim Kaine and graduated in 1983. After marrying Tim Kaine, and convincing him to become a Virginian, Anne Holton served for many years as a legal aid lawyer representing low-income families and then as a juvenile and domestic relations district court judge in the City of Richmond.

As First Lady, Ms. Holton remains dedicated to improving the welfare of Virginia's children and families—and to see that all Virginia children have the opportunity to reach their God-given potential. In January of 2007 she launched her signature initiative, "For Keeps: Families for all Virginia Teens."

We can only guess what Sarge might have said about the contributions of Tim Kaine and Anne Holton to contemporary life in Virginia. If the past is prologue, he might have made a simple comment that he used earlier with Gov. Holton,

"Thank you, Governor."

Larry J. Sabato, creator of *Sabato's Crystal Ball* of political analysis at the University of Virginia, gave this comment in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* after the November 2008 election:

A straight line can be drawn from that proud November day nineteen years ago when Douglas Wilder's victory (as America's and Virginia's first African-American state governor) caused one national newsmagazine to headline 'the end of the Civil War.' In both 1989 and 2008, four out of ten whites in Virginia joined a nearly unanimous corps of minority voters to open a new era for state and nation. Perhaps it is less surprising in retrospect that in 2008 Virginia pulled the lever for another minority chief executive, and not just in Northern Virginia. While Barack Obama swept the northern regions with a plurality of over 230,000 votes, he also held John McCain to a virtual tie in the rest of Virginia....

These developments in 2008 make it clear that Sarge's statement at Wakefield in 1971, championing schooling for the children of tomorrow was a landmark declaration. It was a statement of a personal commitment that also had far-reaching consequences into the next century. Despite Sarge's untimely exit from the political stage, he crystallized the agenda for future leaders in Virginia and the nation:

*School means too much to the children of tomorrow.*

It was all the more appropriate when in July 2005 Larry Sabato, as director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, arranged a commemorative event to honor Sarge. According to Sabato, "The J. Sargeant Reynolds Conference was to honor and remember Reynolds," adding that Reynolds "might have been the Southerner leading national Democrats back to the White House in 1992, instead of a flawed native son from Arkansas."



Former Governor Holton was a key participant at the Reynolds Conference. He recalled that black leaders in Richmond were apprehensive when they heard that Lt. Governor Reynolds might attend the traditionally segregated political gathering at Wakefield in April 1971. Several of these leaders suggested that Governor Holton ask Sarge why he intended to make such an appearance. Governor Holton promised to pass on their concerns to Reynolds, and he quickly did so by phone. Reflecting back thirty-four years, Holton recalled Sarge's response verbatim:

"Thank you, Governor."

The audience at the Sargeant Reynolds Conference that day included many of Sarge's family, friends, and former colleagues. All gave an appreciative laugh, recognizing in Governor Holton's quotation the impish aspect that Sarge's repartee could take.

Clearly, Sarge had his mind made up about what he would do and say at the shad planking. He motored down to Wakefield and faced the conservative lions in their den. He spoke to the old white men who had for years prevented Virginia from achieving racial progress and economic parity for lower income Virginians. They had concealed the economic ramifications of their policies from the poorer whites, whose votes they needed to maintain a political base. Their plans to defy federal law requiring racial integration of the public schools had begun to fail in the early 1960s—ten years before Sarge appeared in Wakefield. Their attempts to resist federal mandates dated even farther back, to 1956 when Senator Harry Byrd and his political organization promoted what became known as *massive resistance*, circumventing the integration of schools through hastily enacted laws that cut off state funds and closed any Virginia

public school if its board even hinted that they would consider integration.

Norfolk's newspaper, *The Virginian-Pilot*, was the only major daily in Virginia to take a stand against massive resistance, and the editor, Lenoir Chambers, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1960 for his editorials. Coincidentally, Chambers was a 1910 graduate of Woodberry Forest, Sarge's old school.

Members of my generation—born in the mid-1930s and living in Virginia in 1971—were no less aware than Sarge was of what a curse and an embarrassment the massive resistance doctrine had been to our state in the 1960s. But to speak up publicly was risky, and not many of us were brave enough to do so. Too many felt it was sufficient to immerse ourselves in our professions. Remember also, we were the college graduates of the 1950s, and our interest in personal success was far greater than our concern for the betterment of society. We laughed at Virginia's *ancien regime* of politicians, and figured they'd disappear eventually: "They'll die out, just give 'em time."

Fortunately, Sarge Reynolds had a different perspective, one that enabled him to speak the truth to old guard Democrats on their home turf in Southside Virginia. Too many young, ambitious politicians had gone along with the worn-out creed of *de facto* segregation, afraid to oppose the shadowy remnants of Harry Byrd's power structure. The Southside was the stronghold of former governors Bill Tuck and Lindsay Almond, who looked and sounded exactly like the political bigots associated with the Deep South. Virginia voters had put these men in the governor's mansion, and the moribund Byrd Machine had failed to condemn their segregationist attitudes. Nor

did they bring forward new economic programs or qualified persons to lead the Commonwealth.

The essence of Sarge Reynolds' influence upon Virginia was well summarized by an editorial in *The Virginia Observer*, a voice for the organized labor movement, at the time of his death:

Because of "Sarge"—Virginia is a better place in which to live. He was a modern day patriot, a profile in courage. Not all of us can achieve the devotion to mankind that he fought for. But all of us must try. "Sarge" Reynolds was a giant among men. We are all the richer because he lived. We are all the poorer because he has left. We shall not look upon his like again.

While he lived, Sarge would have cautioned his friends not to go overboard in their praise of his accomplishments. He was thoroughly human and a product of the 1950s, as he was quick to affirm. Suddenly a pernicious disease overtook him at age thirty-four, and his rapid demise was "unbelievable" to those who knew him well—or even those who were in occasional contact, as I was. One of my ties to Sarge's career was through my former college roommate, Edward C. "Ted" Maeder, who had worked hard to help Sarge be successful in his political endeavors. Ted had also helped me open my mind to ideas outside the conservative mold of my rural Tidewater origins, and he often dropped in a line or two from English poetry to keep me on my toes as a fellow English major.

I believe that Sarge embodied his share of the spirit that began at Jamestown. Like Thomas Jefferson, he found and promoted opportunities for all of his countrymen, not just the fortunate few who, like himself, had gained wealth, position, and opportunity by being born into the right

family. Sarge was especially attentive to those who came from different backgrounds from his own. He seemed to know instinctively when he encountered people who had a talent that could benefit others, and he didn't hesitate to let them know that he admired them. Such people in turn would do their best to return the compliment by supporting Sarge. His recognition of this fundamental of what we call "people skills" had a lot to do with his broad support and vote-getting ability.

Sarge could envision a bright future without being threatened by the change required to get there. Like Jefferson, he believed that preservation of the status quo would only benefit the established few, and that change among leaders could release the power of new blood and fresh ideas. Thus, a newcomer could aspire to achievement: he—and later she—did not have to be born into leadership. That was not what I had observed growing up in Tidewater, where leadership was too often based upon family ties. As a result, many young people avoided politics and the state lost potential leadership.

A kindred spirit motivated both Thomas Jefferson and Sargeant Reynolds to stand tall in separate eras of Virginia's history. In 1776 Jefferson persuaded first his fellow Virginians and then an entire young nation to take the risks that he believed democracy required. Reynolds found a similar opportunity to speak a new truth to Virginia's political leaders in 1971, almost two hundred years after Jefferson:

"...I tell you one thing that is not going to happen, and that is an open defiance of that (Supreme Court) order the way we attempted tragically years ago. School means too much to the children of tomorrow. ... Virginia will not be propelled into *Massive Resistance* again."

President Barack Obama has also focused upon the children of tomorrow, pledging "... to help our children compete in a 21st century economy ... to send them to 21st century schools."

That sounds like Sarge.

In fact, Sarge Reynolds prepared Virginia for this historic moment—the election of our first African American president—thirty-seven years earlier, with his declaration of educational independence at the Shad Planking in Wakefield. We can imagine how happy Sarge would be about the election of Barack Obama. President Obama is fulfilling Sarge's vision—first by his own election as president: when Sarge made his comments about *the children of tomorrow*, Barack Obama was but ten years old.

Andy McCutcheon knew Sarge better than most people. His final assessment of the Sarge Reynolds legacy is clear:

"Fundamental to his entire political career was his interest in opportunity for young people, particularly those who did not enjoy the advantages he had, or possess his white skin....

"It's best to close...with a look at the gravestone that covers his remains in Patrick County. It says: 'Courage, Humor, Concern, Accompanied by Vision.' "

Thank you, Sarge.

## **Chapter 11**

### **To Winston-Salem and Beyond**

Near the end of my eleven-year stay at Woodberry Forest School, Frank Hereford, who had served as a trustee at Woodberry, became president of the University of Virginia. Frank suggested that I consider joining his administrative staff in a major development role. Frank eventually invited Prior and me to Charlottesville for an official visit in 1978. By then we had moved to Winston-Salem, NC, where I had become headmaster of Forsyth Country Day School in June of the previous year. It was clear to me after a year away from boarding schools that my stay at this seven-year-old, parent-dominated day school would be short. I was learning and adjusting, but I was not a good fit.

Forsyth Country Day was founded in 1970 for at least one wrong reason—to circumvent the effects of federally mandated busing for racial balance in the public schools. There were also some good reasons for starting the school—mainly to offer a college preparatory curriculum in a city and area that boasted considerable affluence, based on longstanding economic success, both in the tobacco business and in textile manufacturing. Since the turn of the



*Evan and Charlie at Forsyth Country Day School*

20th century Winston-Salem had been the home of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, one of the world's largest producers of cigarettes and other tobacco products. The Hanes family had also founded several companies in Winston-Salem that became the Hanes Corporation, a national leader in the manufacture of women's hose and men's underwear, and had expanded to numerous other products. Members of the Hanes family were leaders in civic and philanthropic activities in Winston-Salem, as were descendants of the Reynolds family and others who held executive positions with R. J. Reynolds Tobacco over the years.

I had worked with several leaders and family members of these two companies who were alumni of Woodberry Forest and served on its board of trustees; thus I was familiar with the economic strength of piedmont North Carolina, as the region around Winston-Salem

is known. Unfortunately, none of the people whom I had known as trustees at Woodberry were among the founders and leaders of Forsyth Country Day. Instead, I discovered there was a negative attitude about Woodberry that stemmed from another reason for the founding of a day school with a college preparatory emphasis at the high school level. This was the desire to reduce the flow of students to boarding schools like Woodberry—to keep them closer to home for their high school years. It was my first exposure to an outright anti-boarding school attitude. Thus my former association with three boarding schools over the previous twenty years was more of a liability than an asset in my work at Forsyth Country Day. For many FCDS parents, boarding schools connoted either snobbery and elitist attitudes or a place for kids who had problems. I had never encountered these extreme attitudes concentrated so strongly in one parent body.

I saw almost immediately that I was in a different culture in this country day school, despite the diversity of economic and social backgrounds that I considered to be a strength. The first indicator appeared when the FCDS board of trustees opposed my request to establish a need-based financial aid program, which I presented to them in my first summer, well before school opened for my first year.

Eventually they approved a limited financial aid program, but some trustees strongly objected to financial aid for needy families, contending that other parents' hard-earned dollars should not be used for this purpose. One trustee astonished me when she stated in a board meeting that, while she herself had attended Salem Academy and College on scholarship, she was opposed to financial aid at Forsyth Country Day.



Next, I encountered significant trustee resistance to a tuition remission plan at no-cost-to-the-school to help the children of faculty members who qualified for aid. This was a program that would fill empty seats in our classrooms and would also give a benefit to teachers and administrators in the school who were clearly underpaid in comparison with their peers in local public schools.

As background, after I accepted the head of school position, but before reporting for duty, I had interviewed every member of the faculty individually. The unanimous concern was pay and benefits, so I hoped to address that problem immediately. Most faculty members had children who were well qualified to enter the school, but few had been able to afford the tuition. After much discussion, and with the support of two or three board members who were not parents of current students, we were able to offer tuition remission to faculty families who had documented financial need, based on application forms and guidelines from the School Scholarship Service, an independent school subsidiary of the Educational Testing Service in Princeton.

The lack of awareness that the trustees and parents of Forsyth Country Day showed for standard independent school methods and procedures upset me a great deal. I felt that many of these people had one limited goal: to recreate R. J. Reynolds High School as they believed it had existed through the 1950s, only to be weakened by racial integration and cross-town busing in the 1960s. My standards for excellence in an independent school were based on my years as a student, teacher and administrator in boarding schools, and were considerably different from this local perception. Before coming to FCDS I had served on committees of the National Association of

Independent Schools, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, and the School Scholarship Service; also I was co-founder of the Virginia Independent Schools Development Association. I knew what constituted a top private school.

It was therefore logical to think that I would be open to leaving Forsyth Country Day at the end of my second year, and certainly the thought crossed my mind. By this time, however, Prior and I had become quite active and comfortable at First Presbyterian Church in Winston-Salem, and the encouragement I was not receiving in my work at the school was much more available from the pastoral staff and from many members of this large church's diverse membership of some 1,500 congregants. Neither Prior nor I had ever experienced such a varied and rewarding church life before—or since. Also, we enjoyed an active social life, largely with new friends who were not associated with Forsyth Country Day .

In the midst of these mixed emotions and experiences, we decided to accept Frank Hereford's invitation in the spring of 1980 to visit the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. In this way we would try to decide if we as a couple would be happy if I became involved in the major development program that was about to begin at the University—the first really comprehensive fundraising campaign in the University's history.

Frank Hereford arranged for me to meet with some of the longstanding staff and with newer members of his administration. The old guard included Gilbert Sullivan, longtime alumni director, a person from whom I would need maximum cooperation if I became chief development officer. Gilly and I had a number of mutual friends who were leaders in the overlapping constituencies



*Our home on Paddington Lane*

of Virginia and Woodberry, and I was grateful but not surprised when he assured me that I would have his enthusiastic support if I became head of university development. He and I had many experiences in common as we had both labored in groups of alumni of these two historically intertwined Virginia educational institutions.

On the evening of our visit, Prior and I were guests of the Herefords at Carr's Hill, the president's residence. Other guests included several vice presidents of the University of Virginia, along with their spouses. We were keenly aware that Frank and Anne Hereford were dedicating themselves for the next several years to a nationwide effort to move the University into the small group of public universities that were at this time becoming competitive with the top private colleges in gaining financial support. The Herefords' decision to give hundreds of hours of their lives to entertaining in their home and traveling to alumni centers around the U. S. was a first for the University, and was especially meaningful.

The Ivy League colleges had for several generations dominated the educational fundraising rankings, drawing funds from their affluent alumni, and from national corporations and foundations—where many of the same individuals held seats of influence. I was conscious of the advantages of working with a president like Frank Hereford, who was capable of leading Virginia's disparate alumni and friends to new levels of support. The position would also involve returning to an institution where I had received two degrees, and I was therefore aware of many of its strengths, traditions and a few weaknesses.

As part of the discussion process, Frank became quite helpful to me, as I sought to work out my struggles at Forsyth Country Day School. I wrote to Frank in late May, 1980:

Dear Frank,

I have told my Board Chairman that I will be here for the 1980-81 session. I intend to inform him soon that I will consider other opportunities that may arise for 1981-82....

The work here over three years has been difficult for several key reasons: (1) the school had no strong administrative direction (before I came); (2) the school's constituency has little understanding of independent education; (3) the vagaries of day schools were new to me; (4) certain trustees were untrained, unsupportive, and at least two were unethical; (5) I have often lacked patience and at times have become angry in the face of these factors.

...we have made a good deal of progress. Most of the problem trustees have rotated off, the direction

and control of the administration are established, and we are becoming a stronger school academically and philosophically.

In a graduating class of 32, we have an Echols Scholar (at U.Va.), a Morehead (UNC-CH), an Angier B. Duke (Duke), and a Merit Finalist Scholar at Princeton. We are upgrading the faculty by drawing in key people from all over the country....

... The only reason I would consider requesting a release Jan. 1, 1981 is a continued lack of positive commitment and support on our board, which is 100% parents of current students, and the majority of whom cannot put aside their personal, selfish interests in virtually any key decision or program. Also, my family and I have taken more than our share of persecution, though I know that life is tough for people in highly visible positions, and we have found that we can take a lot and keep going—just as Ann and you have, I know.

Thank you for giving me this cause for soul-searching, and for showing confidence in me....

Seven months later, I wrote:

Dear Frank:

Having reached a decision to remain here in Winston-Salem for the immediate future, I want to tell you why I have made this choice....

I am looking for something that will develop and draw on my spiritual resources to a greater degree than I have experienced up to now. At age 45 I believe this is the time for trying something different. I know I can

make a contribution at the Triad Methodist Home [where I would become director of development], and perhaps in a year or two I will be able to see if a change of course should be a permanent thing.

I thank you for the interest and concern you have shown for me, especially over the past year... .

Thus, after much discussion and soul-searching, Prior and I decided in early 1981 that I would not become a member of the University of Virginia's development team. It is difficult to explain fully our decision not to return to Virginia, because in many ways it presented the opportunity of a lifetime. For the two of us it ultimately became a decision based on a new kind of spiritual consideration.

I had burned out in the private school world as head of a country day school, and I took a position in development at a Methodist Church-affiliated retirement facility, where I helped establish annual giving and plan the fundraising to build a healthcare unit.

The stage was set for us to hear from some new source as to where we might pursue the next stage of our journey. We decided to wait patiently to see what would come to us, rather than to go out and actively seek a new opportunity.

We were not disappointed, for in the spring of 1982 I received an unusual and interesting phone call.

## **Chapter 12**

### **A Different Kind of University**

In the two years just before Prior and I left Winston-Salem and moved to Virginia Beach, in 1982, we had become active in evangelical Christian circles. We had heard before we got to CBN that there was a conflict among born-again Christians, charismatic or Full Gospel believers, and the rest of the mainline denominational church. At CBN, however, we discovered a major center for a brand-new holy war. It seemed that many of the plans for internecine Christian battles originated at CBN's world-outreach television headquarters, located a mile east of Interstate 64 in Virginia Beach. From there emanated sounds and pictures heard and seen 'round the world.

Tucker Yates made the “interesting phone call” I mentioned earlier, to ask me about coming to work at CBN University. He was chairman of the Board of that university and also a member of the governing board of the Christian Broadcasting Network—one of only five board members, that included Pat Robertson and his wife DeDe, along with the Robertsons' longtime friends, Harald Bredesen and Bob Slosser, plus Tucker. The Yates were a

prosperous North Carolina family that had been active in such varied religious organizations as the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship International and the Protestant Episcopal Church. Their evangelical roots were several generations deep.

Tucker knew of my work at Woodberry Forest School, where he, along with his brothers Ogburn and John, were graduates, and he was also familiar with other aspects of my life and career. By the spring of 1982, however, when I received Tucker's telephone call, we had never met in person. I had recently been introduced to his daughter at a girls' preparatory school in Virginia where I was doing consulting work. Tucker called from Virginia Beach, advised me that he was chairman of the board of CBN University, and filled me in on the history and activities of CBNU, by then in its sixth year of existence. He invited me to come to Virginia Beach to discuss CBNU's unique philosophy and curriculum, along with its more typical development needs.

Prior and I made several visits to Virginia Beach, and we got to know Tucker and his wife, Ginny, quite well. We immediately became friends, based on the fact that we had mutual acquaintances and similar spiritual interests. After a series of in-depth visits with administrators of CBN University, I was offered the position of vice president for development, and we moved to Virginia Beach in July 1982.

When we arrived at CBN that summer, both Prior and I were ready for a total change in lifestyle. We had already become involved in "serious Christianity," somewhat in reaction to difficulties in my career. I had burned out in the private school world as head of a country day school, and I had taken a needed break by working for



a year at a retirement facility affiliated with the United Methodist Church, where I assisted in fundraising and learned the basics of administration. There was a good deal of emphasis on Christian principles within the retirement home staff. The executive director had once served as chief lay leader, or moderator, of the Southern Presbyterian Church. Before that he had been converted to born-again Christianity while a prisoner of war in World War II. Thus I gained experience with mainline Christians who were dedicated to doing God's work while living in the real world. In retrospect I would say they were walking their faith, and not talking about it a great deal.

At CBN University I noticed immediately that there was a lot of verbalizing about one's faith, and overt demonstrations of belief through using the "charismatic gifts." The CBN leaders' goal seemed to be to establish a rarefied spiritual atmosphere among two thousand people who claimed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and openly practiced the "gifts of the holy spirit." Many individual leaders claimed spiritual experiences that involved personal encounters with God's spirit. One university dean, for example, often described publicly how he and his wife had seen Jesus Christ descend into their bedroom and confirm that God wanted them to leave an extremely worldly existence in a secular university and become warriors for God—moving to the opposite pole from their former life.

There were also many ordinary Christian footsoldiers who were making sacrifices to do the Lord's work, who were committed to their beliefs, and who were not obsessed by Pat Robertson and every word that he might utter. Unfortunately, a majority of people at CBN

were enthralled by Pat, and seemed to be working in his organization primarily to be near him. These employees spent a good deal of energy trying to get Robertson's attention and to earn his "favor," loosely defined as showing evidence of God's grace in their lives. It seemed that the evidence of God's blessing was to be corroborated at CBN by achieving success in one's work—particularly in the eyes of Pat. I don't believe that Robertson consciously desired to attract such adulation from employees; however, his leadership style caused especially his top lieutenants as well as others to covet his approval. Unfortunately, he had difficulty expressing succinct compliments to employees in public for work well done. That was part of the problem: it seemed extremely hard to please him—in the effort to do God's work.

This obsession with Pat Robertson's persona was not so evident among the faculty and staff at CBN University, physically located across the street from CBN's world headquarters. There I observed a good deal of normal academic activity and campus interaction that I had found in traditional, secular institutions. The professors appeared well-trained and held advanced degrees in their fields. Many professors had earned their credentials at recognized colleges and universities, not just from obscure Bible colleges.

The "manifestation of the gifts of the holy spirit," however, did receive much emphasis, especially among the top academic leadership of the university. These gifts of the holy spirit had been brought into the charismatic renewal in the latter part of the 20th century from the Pentecostal movement that dated from the Azusa Street Revival of 1906-1909. The use of the gifts of the holy spirit defined a pecking order among the leaders of the university, and their

fluency with these gifts was related to their previous experiences and places of work. For example, several members of the administration and faculty had taught at Oral Roberts University, considered in the 1980s to be the “Harvard” among evangelical, spirit-filled academic institutions.

I cannot trace here even a brief history of the various branches of the evangelical and charismatic Christian groups; suffice it to say that the administration and faculty of CBNU included people who were scattered across the spectrum of religious faith and practice. Some were neophyte charismatic practitioners, who might have been raised in mainline denominations (as I was in the Episcopal Church), and who had later been drawn to seek a closer walk with God. At the other extreme were those who had spent their entire lives in the Pentecostal movement. These included a number of sons and daughters of preachers of the Assemblies of God, the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), and other Pentecostal denominations. Those who had direct ties to old-line Pentecostalism were usually at the top of the pecking order at CBN. They were the first to receive key assignments, to be selected to appear on television, and to lead other public activities of the CBN ministry.

In my personal assignments at the university, I received fair treatment, despite my lack of Pentecostal experience or upbringing. I believe a good deal of my favorable opportunities were the result of a special credential that I held—my relationship with Tucker Yates.

When I began my work at CBN University in July of 1982, I was the first person to hold the position of vice president of development at CBN University; before I arrived the CBN staff had provided development services to CBNU. “The Ministry,” as CBN is called

internally, was not in the best position to provide development and public relations services to a university, even a Christian, graduate-level university that seemed inseparably tied to Pat Robertson. At least that's how I saw the situation from the perspective of my conventional background.

Early in my tenure I began to test the possibility of changing the name of the university to something that did not include CBN in the title. Those initials had diverse connotations, including several negative ones, in the outside world. I thought that the graduates of this fledgling university would have a better opportunity for success if they were perceived to have attended a university that stood on its own. I soon learned that the leadership of the Ministry saw this tie to CBN in name and practice as a huge asset—they thought it was preposterous for anyone to think otherwise. Thus CBNU continued to be a subsidiary of CBN, functioning as a division, similar to Operation Blessing or Middle East Television. Pat had had the vision for CBNU and his close, non-academic associates believed in should remain clearly an arm of the overall ministry.

The issue about the name arose again while I was still there, in 1985, when for the first time the university applied for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional accrediting agency for all universities, colleges and schools in the southeastern United States. Among the questions that arose were, “Would this university continue to exist if CBN’s financial support ended?” and “Is this truly a free-standing educational institution that meets traditional, non-religious definitions?” The university administration convinced the SACS visiting committee of educators that CBNU was meeting secular standards independent

of CBN, and on the basis of that assurance, the Southern Association granted CBNU full accreditation.

No one made any effort to disguise CBNU's spiritual activities, and the SACS visiting committee had no criteria to evaluate the religious part of the program. Their greater interest was to be sure that the university had enough autonomy to follow the appropriate standards of academic operation, and to continue to exist if the CBN ministry ceased to provide funds. Surprisingly, the committee became satisfied that both autonomy of operation and sufficient financial support existed, and they granted accreditation. The SACS committee left in abeyance questions about long-term financial support. To his credit, Pat Robertson did eventually see to those needs by creating a significant endowment fund for the university, with some of the proceeds from the sale of the Family Channel, I believe.

Not many years after I left, the name was changed to Regent University, and of course I thought that was a wise decision. My early recommendations about changing the name hadn't appeared to get much attention, but the eventual change affirmed the result that I had hoped for. The university had its own mission and purpose and was not exclusively the lengthened shadow of one man, Pat Robertson; nor was it based entirely on a cult of personality. Increasingly Robertson was diverted to other interests and he did not have time to be involved in the daily complexities of a university. He often commented to vice presidents at the university, "I've got too much on my plate, brother." To his credit, Pat made it clear that he had a special enthusiasm for the university, and he pledged to provide for its long-term well-being.

Looking back on these events reminds me of how complicated it was to get internal action, both at the university and at CBN ministry, while I was there. As in many large organizations, access to the top person at CBN was highly restricted, and the gatekeepers cherished their role. They doled out audiences with Pat as if they had been anointed by God to choose who might stand before the throne of power. Their decisions too often smacked of worldly biases, thinly disguised as divine discernment.

I recall being with Pat Robertson one-on-one in his office just once in my five-year tenure at CBNU. It was about 1985 and our topic was endowed scholarships. We discussed the naming of CBNU's first merit scholarship program for Fred Beazley—a legendary Portsmouth entrepreneur, by then deceased, who had helped Robertson financially in the early years of his ministry. Pat wanted to honor him by transferring one million dollars from CBN to CBNU to endow the Beazley Scholars. The Beazley Scholars would be merit awards similar to the Morehead Scholars at UNC-Chapel Hill or the Echols Scholars at U. Va. We later sought the Beazley Foundation's financial support for these scholarships as well, but were unsuccessful—primarily because the Beazley trustees, unlike Mr. Beazley, were not sympathetic with Pat Robertson's religious work, even in a university setting. I know this first-hand, based on my numerous conversations—often over lunch—with Judge Lawrence I'Anson, who chaired the Beazley Foundation board in the 1980s. Judge I'Anson made it clear to me that he and his fellow trustees did not wish to endorse Pat Robertson's theology.

Another area that drew my attention was the tone of advertising used to promote the university. The themes emphasized warfare

and conflict, and the ad copy ran along bellicose lines: “We’re in a war to win the minds and hearts and lives of the people of America,” and “CBNU is training Christians to reclaim business and law and politics for Jesus Christ.” This struck me as Christian zealotry in the extreme.

Printed materials originated in CBN’s extensive marketing and advertising departments, not at the university. I was never comfortable with what they wrote—especially when the language was hostile, and the tone was “it’s-us-against-the-world.” CBN’s copywriters often displayed attitudes that seemed narrow-minded and exclusive. They appeared to believe that this was how Pat Robertson saw the world, and that the extreme language conveyed an image that he approved of. Robertson for years had reviewed the verbiage that CBN sent out to supporters in millions of printed pieces annually. As his outside political activities increased, however, a few key vice presidents had the power to approve the messages, especially if they had worked closely with Pat and had gained his confidence. The materials that I questioned rarely crossed Robertson’s desk for approval, and too often people below the vice-president level generated and approved them.

I began to raise questions about the CBN ministry’s language when I received draft copy for the university’s printed materials to be used in direct mail. Over time the CBNU president and I were able to change the tone of these materials. This was especially true after Bob Slosser became president of the university in my third year, 1984, succeeding Dr. Richard Gottier. Bob was a member of the CBN board and had Pat’s complete confidence. He also had been an assistant managing editor at *The New York Times*, and had

published several books. With Bob's support we began to develop our own marketing and public relations staff at the university, and these young graduates of CBNU learned to write and speak for CBN University in language that was more appropriate for a *bona fide* academic institution. We reduced the themes of war and conflict in all materials for the University.



The Cooper family in 1987: Gerry, Prior, Charles and Evan



With Tucker Yates's support and encouragement, I was able to accomplish many development projects, especially within the university's Board of Regents. Tucker helped me plan most of the projects that the board undertook, and I worked out the details. We had a close working and personal relationship, and I found it a pleasure to be associated with Tucker at all times. We also traveled together to areas where donors who showed a preference for the university were concentrated—such as Orange County, California—to tell the story of the university and its students.

My early interaction with the internal administration of the university was more complicated. In the first months after my arrival, I had to adjust to the heavy emphasis on spiritual gifts and other activities of the charismatic persuasion. Most of the university administrators were veterans from charismatic academic circles, into which I had just arrived. The administrative leaders of the university gave me encouragement in spiritual activities, and I soon felt included in the leadership and administration.

Another challenge to my effectiveness at work was the need to interact with numerous people and committees at the CBN ministry. As vice president for development, I interacted primarily with the CBN development committee that met monthly. Pat Robertson usually chaired these ministry-wide meetings—at least until he began to pursue the Republican nomination for President of the U. S. in 1986-87. The CBN development committee included several vice presidents and department directors from all areas of the CBN ministry, including *The 700 Club*, Pat's daily television program; donor cultivation activities, including quarterly seminars at CBN for top donors; a planned giving department that

was growing nationwide; and finally the direct mail enterprise—the pipeline for all types of gift income. I found these meetings to be professional, challenging and often a learning experience for me. I had never before worked in a major ministry, nor in fundraising related to television, and I was amazed by the power of television to reach huge audiences and donors across the country and around the world.

Clearly, Pat Robertson's on-air persona and persuasiveness was the primary engine in CBN's gift-generating process. In the 50 years of CBN's history it has been proved that Pat—and only Pat—has the ability to sustain CBN's phenomenal levels of gift income and annual growth. Whenever he has been absent (as he was in the course of his 1987 bid for the Republican nomination), the numbers of donors and dollars have declined immediately—and the alarms go off throughout CBN world headquarters as if a major catastrophe were about to occur.

In my time there, when Pat wove his magic on *The 700 Club*, a phenomenal support system went into gear to follow through. I found it remarkable how the CBN system was able to convert donors' interest into dollars, to receive and process thousands of pieces of mail each day, and to acknowledge those gifts in a timely and personalized manner. It took a year or so for me to become familiar with the functions of this highly complex, computer-based activity, and to grasp its intricacies. Later, when I visited the offices of IBM's matching gift executives in Armonk, NY, I was able to assure them that CBNU was a free-standing educational institution and therefore eligible for IBM's corporate matching of employees' gifts to higher education. The IBM executives were impressed to hear of

CBN's sophisticated computer systems that enabled the tracking of all gifts—especially those earmarked for the university and eligible for their matching-gift dollars. We had no further questions from Big Blue about matching gifts.

Soon after I arrived at CBNU, Pat Robertson began raising funds to cover the costs of a major library and classroom facility for the university. This building was to be state-of-the-art in every respect, and it was commodious and beautiful to behold, even while it was under construction. Pat devoted a live telethon of several days' duration to fundraising for this 152,000 square-foot library building. He showed graphics of the architectural plans and gave live, onsite reports of progress in the construction.

To my amazement he raised hundreds of thousands of dollars each day from thousands of donors. The gifts were usually in \$100 increments and everyone who made a \$100 gift received a copy of Pat's latest book, *The Secret Kingdom*, by return mail. Thousands of these volumes went into the mail each day as fulfillments. In the space of about a week, Pat raised several million dollars to cover about two-thirds of the \$13-million cost of this remarkable building. I was astonished at what he was able to achieve—using the outreach of television, calling upon the ongoing loyalty of his supporters, and attracting hundreds of new donors as well. Not even the venerated Ivy League colleges could rival CBN's fundraising.

For example, in an annual report for 2006, summarized in *The Virginian-Pilot*, CBN ranked 89th in the nation in donations from private sources, according to *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. CBN Ministry surpassed organizations such as Princeton University and the American Diabetes Association on *The Chronicle's* list of major

fundraisers in the nation. CBN reported in 2006 a complement of 1,164 employees, including 916 who worked at the Virginia Beach World Outreach Center.

Thus far in this chapter I have described my personal encounter with a form of religious zealotry that for some would seem to be extremism. Now I will write about how I have come to view that experience over the ensuing twenty-two years of my life, and how I see it today. I hope that my grandchildren will someday find this reflection on my experiences to be useful to them as they seek for themselves a fulfilling life, especially in the spiritual aspect.

As the end of the first decade of the 21st century draws near, I believe that the greatest threat to civilization is religious extremism. This threat is not restricted geographically to the Middle East, as we practitioners of western democracy might be inclined to believe. Today religious extremism has potentially negative effects among the peoples of all theological persuasions, in all countries, located in every corner of the world.

Many humans have a natural desire to communicate directly with a deity or a higher power. Certain leaders of the charismatic movement that I encountered played upon this inclination or hunger. They gave the impression that they had an ability to communicate with the deity in ways that few others could. This attitude suggests an intent to create a new priesthood—an inclination basically in conflict with both the Protestant and the Pentecostal traditions of Christianity.

In some charismatic churches and TV-based ministries I observed a tendency for lay leaders to bestow unusual powers on

an individual clergyman or layperson founder, and to believe that such leaders serve as intermediaries with the deity, in a manner similar to that of Moses or of some other royal priesthood. The fact that this concept contradicts the historic concept of “the priesthood of all believers” ascribed to Martin Luther, as well as other basic tenets of Protestantism, seemed not to worry most of the charismatic-movement believers. Many of them reject or ignore theological history and context as a useless, man-centered pursuit. It’s as if they wish not to be confused by either secular history or biblical pedagogy.

Pat Robertson, according to his early autobiographical writing in *Shout It from the Rooftops* and in other public statements, confessed worldly escapades in his early life for which he believed he needed to be forgiven. He also described his share of repentance. He later appeared, however, to bring to his high-profile leadership of a Christian ministry an inordinate desire for worldly power, some of which had caused problems in his life before he became “saved, born again and anointed with the Holy Spirit,” to use the Pentecostal vernacular.

Robertson reached the high point in his pursuit of secular power in 1987, when he announced that he believed that God was telling him to seek the presidency of the United States. In secular terms, running for president is generally viewed as requiring maximum ego strength, especially if one has had no previous experience in seeking and holding elective office. Pat’s defeat in his effort to win the Republican nomination as a presidential candidate was a huge setback for him, in both secular and spiritual terms. This defeat may be what thereafter triggered his controversial pursuit of financial

success in the secular realm of international business. He amassed millions of dollars in assets through corporate transfers of media properties, reaching an apex in the early 1990s when his CBN ministry spun off The Family Channel as a separate entity. He then sold The Family Channel to Fox Broadcasting Company in mid-1997.

Critics viewing these business dealings from both Christian and secular perspectives have questioned the ethics of Pat Robertson and his family for personally taking tremendous profits from a former nonprofit, Christian cable network. He had chartered the network in 1977 with the exemptions provided by Virginia's statutes pertaining to charitable and religious organizations.

Pat Robertson's business and political activities had no influence on my coming to CBN University. My own individual quest for a new and different spiritual experience in an academic setting brought me to CBN University for five years, 1982-87. Later, however, in the spring of 1987, Pat's political ambitions did play a large part in my decision to leave. Clearly, his efforts to gain the Republican nomination affected every person and program at CBN, if for no other reason than that all lines in the organizational chart led to Pat. This proved to include those of us at the university—at least those who related to the public.

My assigned responsibilities as vice president for development were primarily to direct efforts to raise funds, recruit students, and assist graduates in finding jobs. Therefore, the political atmosphere and emphasis that began to permeate the CBN ministry in 1986 had great impact upon all of the areas assigned to me at the university. Several members of the CBN University governing board, for

example, made it clear to me in private that their financial support and community influence would now be focused almost entirely upon Pat's candidacy, as long as he was in the running. They believed that getting Pat elected president of the United States had the highest priority—and that success in that effort was a distinct possibility. The needs of the university became secondary, and the indication from several CBNU board members was, "Get on board Pat's political train, or get left behind."

Tucker Yates resigned his senior executive position at the CBN corporate ministry in early 1987, as Pat Robertson's political effort intensified. Thus, Tucker would no longer be present in any of the day-to-day activities at CBN or the university, although he continued as chairman of the university's governing board. Tucker's departure clearly would hinder my ability to negotiate the complexities of CBN and to motivate the members of the university's board to keep their focus on fundraising, recruitment and other development activities for CBNU.

In the spring of 1987 I notified Bob Slosser, CBN University's president, that I would leave in June of that year. I had regularly pointed out to Bob the negative effects that Pat's political activities were having on all areas of my responsibility, particularly in fundraising. Prospects often refused to contribute, either saying they were giving exclusively to Pat's campaign or claiming they didn't approve of his political activities and would not give at all. Bob advised me in his straight-forward manner that the attacks on Pat "are going to get worse." I remember his making that comment in a conversation Bob and I had right after the *Wall Street Journal* printed a copyrighted, in-depth story in spring 1987 about Pat's

background that made harsh claims about his personal life. As Bob, the experienced *New York Times* journalist, had predicted, the attacks and allegations about Pat Robertson got worse.

Prior and I had come to CBNU as part of a new spiritual journey. I was seeking a way to direct my life toward a more spiritual purpose. Ironically, at CBNU I learned the hard way that spiritual opportunities were not exclusively to be found within the limited framework of a fundamentalist Christian movement, especially not in one that claimed to know the one and only true way. My life, experience, and education had been considerably more diverse than what I found in this movement. In fact, narrowness of religious belief and worship had never been a part of my life—not at home, not at Christchurch School, nor anywhere else—prior to 1980. Thus by 1987 I was ready to return to a more orthodox approach to life, to spirituality, and to continuing my vocation in education. A commitment to tolerance, diversity, and equal opportunity for all people had been central to my education and activities throughout my career. This dated from my earliest days—primarily while first studying and later teaching in schools that espoused the Judeo-Christian tradition.

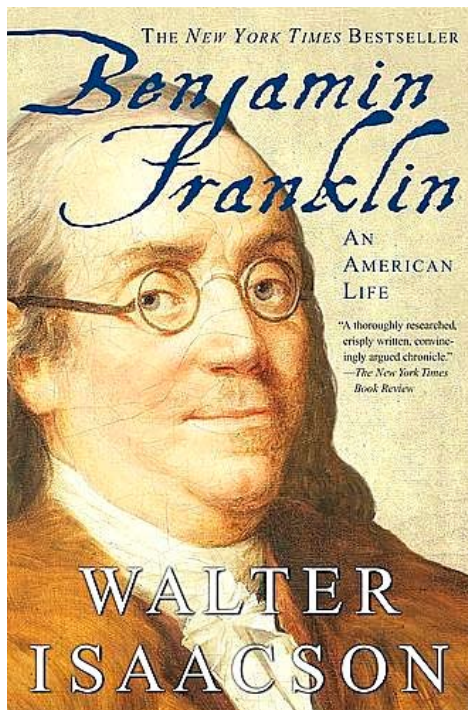
**I**t's been twenty years since I completed a five-year engagement as vice president for development at CBN University. Two years after leaving, I was no longer involved in the evangelical Christian movement. From time to time even today, someone will say to me, "Have you heard the latest on Pat Robertson?"

The fact is, I haven't heard Pat say anything for twenty years. Certainly he has had his ups and downs, both in the religious



environment and in the electronic media. Newspapers and other media find something major to report about Pat every six weeks or so, and his attention-getting actions often seem orchestrated. He appears to enjoy the limelight, even when it's not favorable by conventional standards. The crowning blow for me came when Robertson floated the notion in 2008 that CBN might purchase *The Virginian-Pilot* newspaper "as a training place for Regent University's journalism students." That statement was an excellent example of *reductio ad absurdum*—to suggest that an organ of the working free press might be bought and used within the confines of a notoriously biased, religious training institution.

While reading Walter Isaacson's book, *Ben Franklin: An American Life*, in 2006, I was moved to reflect again upon my



CBN University experience. Isaacson describes Franklin's spiritual life as "a religious outlook based on humility and openness," and attributes to Franklin "a good-natured religious tolerance ... one of the greatest contributions to arise out of the Enlightenment." Isaacson continues:

In both his life and his writings, Franklin became a preeminent proponent of this creed of tolerance. He developed it with great humor in his tales and with earnest depth in his life and letters. In a world that was then (as, alas, it still is now) bloodied by those who seek to impose theocracies, he helped to create a new type of nation that could draw strength from its religious pluralism.

Somehow in my limited academic study of Franklin's *Autobiography* and *Poor Richard's Almanac*, I missed the impact that this uncommon, common man had upon the formation of America's practical and philosophical foundation. Was my ignorance of the extent of Franklin's role in part a result of his having lived so long abroad while at the height of his philosophical powers? Or because he never served as president of the United States? Or that I, like many Virginians, was so obsessed with the Founders from Virginia that I paid little attention to this Philadelphian—who turns out to be a champion of everything I hold dear? Did I fail to pay attention, or were my teachers also somewhat to blame for giving short shrift to Franklin and his commitment to tolerance?

I learned from Isaacson's biography that Ben Franklin paved the way for America's success in "disentangling morality from theology." Further, Franklin's championing of the common man in America—

and elsewhere—places him at the top of the list of proponents for worldwide freedom and democracy. His founding beliefs for our country, together with those of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Mason and Lincoln, have enabled our nation to resist the effects of imposed theocracies. The Founders knew that our citizens must never give in to personalized creeds and doctrines—such as those espoused by the Religious Right—nor yield to any other form of tyranny.

America's most effective early leaders were seldom renowned for their personal charisma. For example, Washington was famously aloof, especially to political entreaties, and Jefferson was at best an awkward public speaker—but what a writer! Each Founder saw a task to be done, did it to the best of his ability, and stepped back into private life. They only came forward again if and when there was a broad-based call for their further service. For those early leaders, staying in office was seldom their abiding intention—nor did they view politics as a source of livelihood. That's quite a contrast to what we see in the political arena today, where many elected representatives use their positions to gain money and influence.

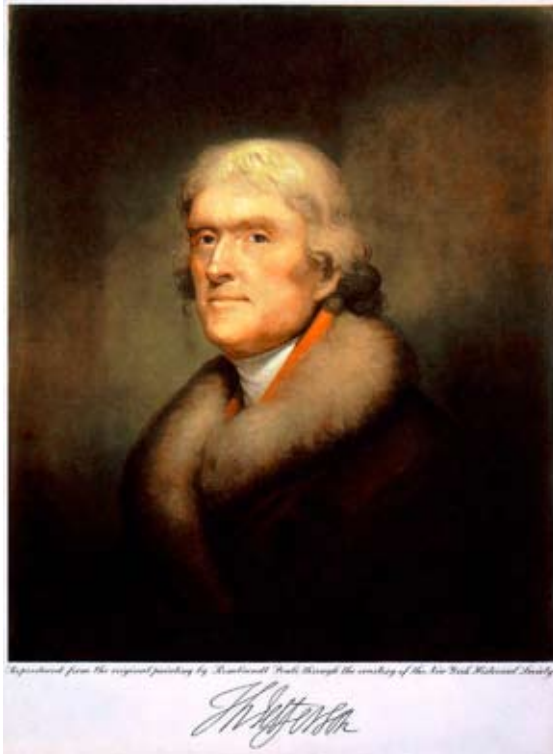
As a nation we continue to benefit from combinations of the practicality of Benjamin Franklin and the idealism of Thomas Jefferson—perpetuated in our founding documents and traditions. Pat Robertson's narrow assumption that America is a "Christian nation," as defined by his personal theological views, reveals his tragic flaw. Whereas both Franklin and Jefferson founded universities, they also specified carefully that their institutions would be neither elitist nor sectarian.

Franklin, describing what became the University of Pennsylvania, specified that what should be cultivated in students was “an inclination joined with an ability to serve mankind, one’s country, friends and family,” and that “should indeed be the great aim and end of all learning.” Walter Isaacson writes that Franklin’s “ideal was more egalitarian and democratic than even Thomas Jefferson’s view of a ‘natural aristocracy,’” among students at the University of Virginia.

In 1822 Jefferson described his vision for the University of Virginia as having national influence, adding, “Our aim (is) the securing to our country a full and perpetual institution for all the useful sciences.” He also envisioned an institution that would be open to people from all income levels and that offered a diversity of political points of view. He insisted that there be no requirement of religious



*Regent Library*



affiliation or practice. Isaacson notes that Franklin's predecessor academy (1751) that became the University of Pennsylvania was "the first nonsectarian college in America." It has been said that the University of Virginia (1819) was the first American college to be centered upon a library rather than a church.

Pat Robertson founded Regent University in 1977, centered upon his unique, evangelical-charismatic theology. Regent's vision as stated on its web site is "to provide Christian leadership in transforming society by affirming and teaching principles of truth, justice and love as described in the Holy Scriptures, embodied in the person of Jesus Christ and enabled through the power of the Holy Spirit." Today, as when I worked there in 1982-87, Regent

University's philosophy is narrowly focused upon the theological perceptions of one man. In earlier decades at Regent, the academic leadership appeared to be more traditional by including a president, separate from the CBN ministry. In 2009 Dr. M. G. "Pat" Robertson is listed as President and Chancellor. This suggests that Robertson is closely involved at all levels of operations and governance. Regent University remains "A Different Kind of University," after thirty-two years—apparently in keeping with the wishes of its founder, Pat Robertson.

In contrast, the leaders of the Universities of Pennsylvania and Virginia, inspired by their founders' visions, have moved on to greater heights of influence. They have thrived under changing leadership, have included broader academic programs, and have extended their influences to all sorts and conditions of men and women from around the world. Today's university leaders, as did Franklin and Jefferson before them, dare to think beyond the borders of states and nations. They seek financial resources from many nations, and reciprocate by offering educational opportunities on their campuses in Philadelphia and Charlottesville to students from around the world.

The result of these expanding educational worldviews has been a triumph of the universal over the parochial in many colleges and universities throughout the United States. Franklin and Jefferson would be proud.

## **Chapter 13**

### **WSSU—Where Failure Was Not An Option**

The acronym “HBCU” was not well known to my friends, former associates or to me in 1989. Neither was I familiar with the full scope and accomplishments of Historically Black Colleges and Universities until I began to discuss possible employment at Winston-Salem State University, one of the twenty-eight historically black institutions in the contiguous states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

An HBCU is defined as “...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans...” as stated by the Higher Education Act of 1965—see <<http://www.smart.net/~pope/hbcu/hbculist.htm>>.

My work at Winston-Salem State University became an important part of my learning process, although that assignment occurred in the last quarter of my career. At the age of fifty-four I was still young enough to learn and grow—and WSSU provided me opportunities to do both. Because I had planned to include in this book only my experiences that took place in the state of Virginia,

I almost didn't write this description of my WSSU experience. I decided it is important to include my second five-year assignment in North Carolina, at Winston-Salem State, primarily because it gave me a chance to get back into conventional development work, which was my strong suit. Further, working in a historically black university proved to be important for my own sensitivities and excellent training for the final position of my career, with the ACCESS program that eventually brought us to Norfolk.

I began my employment at WSSU officially on July 1, 1989. Prior and I had been for nearly a year reorienting our lives after leaving the Christian evangelical movement, as described in the previous chapter. My efforts to find suitable employment in a traditional educational institution were somewhat inhibited by the fact that my most recent five years of employment had been at CBN University, a subsidiary of the Christian Broadcasting Network. It was difficult to convince some development people who hadn't known me in the past that my work at CBNU was quite orthodox—focused primarily upon establishing standard development procedures in areas such as annual giving, capital fundraising for endowment, and other functions one would expect to find in any normal university.

To counteract my uncertainties, I talked with several people with whom I had worked closely before I left the path of traditional institutions. Those who knew me well assured me that the quality of my performance in traditional settings would speak for itself, and that I should not worry about my five years of work in what some perceived as a radical Christian university. One such advisor was FitzGerald Bemiss, a former state legislator who had been chairman of the Woodberry Forest board at the time that I served as acting



headmaster. Gerry Bemiss and I had worked closely together for several years at Woodberry Forest. He offered to give me his enthusiastic recommendation, after we had an open conversation. He summarized by saying, “You really haven’t lost your balance, Gerry Cooper.”

I learned that WSSU was searching for a director of development from another old friend in UNC’s central office in Chapel Hill, where the president of the UNC system and staff oversee all seventeen of the constituent institutions of the North Carolina system of higher education. I contacted WSSU in Winston-Salem and found that the search for a director of development was in progress, and I submitted an application. Once I connected with Dr. Nat Irvin II, who was vice chancellor of development and university relations, my participation in the search became quite active.

Nat Irvin in 1965 integrated the junior high he attended in North Augusta, S.C., where he was the only black among 763 students. In 1969 he enrolled at the University of South Carolina, where he was one of about twenty-eight blacks in a student body of roughly 25,000. He enrolled in a media arts program at U. of S. C., and wrote a musical treatment of the Noah’s Ark legend as his master’s thesis. He completed a doctorate in music composition at the University of North Texas in 1987, where he composed for his doctoral thesis an opera based on the life of John the Baptist, a work later performed by the Dallas/Fort Worth Symphony.

Nat and I established immediate rapport. I had worked with a number of black students in a formerly all-white institution—Woodberry Forest in 1967. I was a member of the Woodberry administration that had decided to request that the Board of Trustees

approve our taking tangible steps to bring racial integration to the school. Also, I was one of several administrators who worked closely with foundations that were dedicated to locating promising black students, especially from northeastern inner-cities and the south generally, and helping them to enroll in competitive boarding schools—primarily in schools located from North Carolina north through New England. Also, as a faculty advisor to small groups of students—an assignment shared by virtually all members of the faculty—I counseled one of Woodberry's first black students, and his mother, a single parent from Washington, DC, eighty miles north of our rural campus.

This African American mother, like many I had known who were white, was primarily concerned that her son stay out of trouble in his new environment, do his school work to the best of his ability, and practice good habits of health and attire while away from home—and from his mother's inspection—for the first time. More than a few times this friendly, straight-forward lady said to me, "Mr. Cooper, you know boys, so you catch my Johnny the moment you see him out of line—and then call me, please, so I can back you up."

Soon I was able to respond, "Johnny is on the honor roll and he handles himself well with his peers and with adults, Mrs. Jones. He visits in my home at least once each grading period. I believe you and I both know Johnny is above average, don't we?" She'd replied, "Well, I think so, but you never know what kids will do when they are away from home." Johnny went on to earn one of the top scholarships to a New England college, later completed law school, and eventually was elected to the Woodberry board of trustees.

As I got to know Nat Irvin in the interview process at WSSU, I sensed that he also was from one of those families who, regardless of racial or ethnic origin, go out of their way to guide and motivate their children to a high standard. By 1989 I was aware of many of the experiences and challenges that emerging black college students would face at formerly all-white schools. This enabled Nat and me to communicate openly and comfortably as we talked about the possibility of my working at WSSU, an HBCU.

I went through the formal application process, and among the interviewers I met was Marshall Bass, who was president of the WSSU Foundation. This dapper, highly organized man had been the highest-ranking black employee at Reynolds Industries, the corporate parent of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. Marshall was well connected in the corporate world and held excellent credentials among volunteer leaders, both local and national. I will never forget our interview, and I later quoted to Marshall from my notes on that occasion, at the end of my stay at WSSU.

Marshall had said, "I will assure you of one thing, if you join this effort, you will find that we will succeed; failure is not an option." That was the kind of confidence I knew was required to reach high goals, and I was glad to hear such assurance from a key leader. As I wrote to Marshall five years later, "I knew at that moment that the WSSU development effort was something I wanted to be part of."

It was an important step in my career to be selected director of development at WSSU. My first significant assignment was to analyze a proposal submitted to WSSU's leaders by the national fundraising firm, Ketchum, Inc. Here again I was fortunate because I had worked with the Ketchum organization at several institutions,

beginning in the early days of my career. Ketchum had conducted a campaign for Christchurch School in the early 1960s, the first such experience for me. Ketchum later directed a campaign at Woodberry Forest in 1968, soon after I became director of development there. Thus I knew from experience Ketchum's system for campaigns.

Ketchum had completed a campaign feasibility study for WSSU, had submitted a formal report of the study, and had made a proposal to conduct a campaign based on the information they had collected in the feasibility study. I found the Ketchum proposal and feasibility study to be thorough and encouraging for WSSU. I indicated my opinions to Nat Irvin and Chancellor Cleon Thompson, and they then passed their approval to the campaign leadership. Soon the decision was made to go ahead with the campaign under Ketchum's direction.

It was tremendously important to discover who Ketchum would assign to the campaign as their resident campaign director. That person turned out to be Charles Phlegar, a young white man who had literally grown up on the Virginia Tech campus, as the son of a long-time development officer there. Charlie and I had never met, but we shared similar interests. He was a die-hard Virginia Tech fan and I was a supporter of Tech's archrival, the University of Virginia. So we had a good deal to banter about from the outset.

As the campaign began to unfold, Nat Irvin, Charlie Phlegar and I melded together as a team. I played the role of wise old owl between two young eagles. We had many pleasant moments and very few disagreements. Of course there were daily challenges and every success depended on planning and coordinated effort. We all benefited from the awareness that failure was not an option.

An example of Nat's leadership was his scheduling of a two-day staff retreat that had a unique focus. He brought in as facilitator a female, African American PhD candidate from North Carolina State University. The focus was upon using the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory to give staff members information about personality traits for ourselves and for our fellow workers. The facilitator was well-trained, affable and skilled, and all staff members, about twelve in number, participated enthusiastically. That included Charlie Phlegar, of his own volition, for his job as consultant did not require him to take part in a staff retreat. At this time the Myers-Briggs was not so widely used in either corporate or university situations as it later became—as a widely used tool for building teamwork.

We in the WSSU Division of Development were a mixed group on the basis of race, age and gender. Through this well-planned and conducted staff development program we each got to know our fellow workers and ourselves in a more informed, though less formal, shared experience. After the retreat, our division showed greater cooperation and we became more friendly and supportive of one another. We learned that our differences usually stemmed from our individual traits—perhaps quirks—and had little to do with prejudices stemming from race, age or gender. Our improved internal relations contributed to the eventual success of the WSSU Centennial Campaign—and to our enjoyment of achieving success together.

My work at Winston-Salem State restored my confidence in my ability to be effective in a challenging development position. I was well suited for my assignments, and I was not expected to perform duties that didn't fit my strengths and experience. I had very few

internal supervisory responsibilities; instead, my two main tasks were to help plan strategy for appeals to foundations, corporations and individuals, and to write the proposals that were needed in many of those situations. These were the kinds of duties about which I had confidence, and the proposal writing especially was something that I enjoyed. I liked the challenge of getting on paper the university's priorities, and matching those needs with proposals of what large donors would be most likely to support.

Overall responsibility rested upon Nat, and it was my job to support him as best I could and to carry out the duties related to major gift solicitation in the private sector. Those limits were just right for me, and my belief in shared responsibility and teamwork was again reinforced—just as it had been back at Woodberry Forest in 1974 when I served as interim headmaster. Nat and the other leaders were appreciative of my experience in these tasks, and they gave me much encouragement and thanks for my contributions. Further, we began to bring in the money, and that's what makes the planning and strategizing for fundraising worthwhile. Nat wrote a memo to me in August 1990 that is typical of his positive, unselfish comments throughout our time of working together:

Gerry, I cannot tell you how pleased I am to know that your efforts in working with the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation have turned out so positively! Your focus and dedication to accomplishing the important task of bringing Winston-Salem State University and the two foundations together will have implications far beyond the receipt of any grant monies.

This is one more step in our quest to build key relationships. And as we have often said, this campaign is about more than raising money! But we need the money too! As a result of your dedication, insight and judgment, it now looks like we are going to get both!

I thank you and the University thanks you!

*Nat*

Those words reveal a lot about the person who wrote them: they reflect his knowing the task that must be done, his being aware of the broader implications of the campaign—more than raising money—and yes, his encouraging a valued subordinate in his work. These are all qualities of a gifted leader—and that was Nat.

As I've looked back on my five years at WSSU, I've come to realize how fortunate I was to be given that opportunity in that particular environment. What I needed most was to get stability back into my life after six years in the Christian evangelical movement. In addition to the fact that the WSSU assignment was especially appropriate for me, the daily understanding and support that Nat Irvin gave me was tremendously important. Nat himself had been raised in a Christian home, and he conveyed that commitment to his wife and children and to his fellow workers. At work he was a consistent practitioner of the golden rule, and a constant encourager to those around him.

So many of the people whom I got to know at WSSU had a faith that they practiced in the “walk it, don't talk it” mode, similar to what I had experienced while growing up in Lancaster Court House. At WSSU it was a breath of fresh air to be associated with people who treated each other with great fairness and equality,

and who did not need to compete excessively with one another to reach their goals in life. In contrast to what I had too often observed at the Christian Broadcasting Network, at WSSU there was no internal competition to attract the attention of a single, all-powerful leader. Everyone involved at whatever level shared in the success of WSSU's capital campaign.

Leaders of the WSSU Centennial Campaign reported that gifts and pledges had reached \$21,350,000 by July 22, 1993. The remaining \$3,650,000 became the target of the final phase of the Centennial Campaign. The Campaign continued to receive major gifts from foundations and corporations—especially a large gift of real estate near the WSSU campus, in downtown Winston-Salem, from R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. We also established a planned giving program, focused on individuals that included mailings to inform the constituency about wills, bequests and other forms of planned gifts. There were encouraging planned giving responses from alumni and other friends of WSSU. Thus the WSSU Centennial Campaign reached its \$25,000,000 goal in mid-1994, and the campaign was cited nationally as the largest subscription of private funds to a public HBCU up to that time.

Leaders like Paul Fulton (chairman of the campaign and president of Sara Lee Corporation), Marshall Bass, Cleon Thompson, and Nat Irvin spread the feeling of accomplishment to all levels of those who worked in the WSSU Centennial Campaign. For example, when the university played host to key corporate and foundation officials, staff members and academic officers from several areas of the university were asked to participate. We wanted the heads of Wachovia Bank, NationsBank, the Mary Reynolds Babcock



Foundation, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation—and a number of others—to know that Winston-Salem State University was an enterprise of depth and substance, and that it would continue to serve the community for another one hundred years and beyond.

Working at WSSU also gave me the opportunity to gain a better understanding and appreciation for the needs and aspirations of African-American students and their families. Although I was not teaching in the classroom, I had ample opportunity to interact with students and faculty at WSSU. There were student interns who worked in our offices each day. As I spent time gathering information to write proposals for fundraising, I had contacts with students and faculty in the library, the art department and in academic divisions. With much participation from other faculty and staff, we wrote proposals for such diverse programs as a “Student Retention Initiative” for young undergraduates, and a center for life-long learning for older members of the multicultural community surrounding the university. It was rewarding to see these cooperative efforts bear fruit and to help the university become a learning center for a diverse group of people.

Through my association with Nat I had opportunity to observe him in a number of interesting personal encounters. When Nat walked across the campus, he would randomly stop students and ask them how they were doing, if they were putting their best foot forward, and to describe their goals and aspirations. Nat had a nice way with students and showed his genuine interest in them. These contacts compensated for his not being in the classroom at that time. The demands of running the development division in a capital campaign did not permit him to have teaching assignments.

Nat kept in touch with students, however, as much as he could—as good school people are wont to do.

I had felt from the outset that a five-year commitment at WSSU was probably appropriate for me—time enough to see the major goals of the campaign completed and to decide how I would like to spend the final five or six years of my career. In 1993 I made a quick visit to Norfolk, primarily to introduce a consultant from Ketchum, Inc. to a few key leaders in the Tidewater area. At that time, Elizabeth City State University, a fellow HBCU, had selected Ketchum to direct their fundraising campaign. Elizabeth City State, though located in North Carolina, is only about fifty miles south of Norfolk, and draws a considerable number of employees and students from the Tidewater Virginia area.

The Ketchum representative and I visited with Joshua P. Darden, Norfolk's leading fundraiser, whom I had known since our student days at the University of Virginia. Josh told us about the ACCESS program that he and Frank Batten had started in the public schools of Norfolk and Portsmouth, with the purpose of assisting students in finding financial aid and entering college. He said that a majority of the students being assisted were from black, inner city families. About a year after that visit, I saw an ad in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* announcing that the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation in Norfolk was searching for a new executive director. The person selected would have the primary responsibility for coordinating fundraising in a college access scholarship program. I immediately called Josh to be sure that this was the same organization that he had mentioned when we visited the previous year.

Josh assured me that it was the same program, and he encouraged

me to apply for the position. Based on what he knew of my experience, Josh said, with characteristic discretion, he thought I'd make an excellent candidate. And that's how I began to consider a change that would take Prior and me from Winston-Salem to my native Tidewater Virginia. The outcome of that decision is recorded in the following chapters.

I made the decision to leave Winston-Salem State and move to Norfolk to become executive director of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation, effective July 1, 1994. I was honored to receive several meaningful recognitions of my work at WSSU. Chancellor Cleon Thompson wrote, "You have done a tremendous job in securing private funds to support WSSU programs." Marshall Bass was equally complimentary: "Your services contributed significantly to the overwhelming success of the Centennial Capital Campaign."

Paul Fulton, Campaign Chairman and president of Sara Lee, wrote to Dixon Spangler, president of the UNC University System, "... I can recommend Gerry highly as an individual. He has a high level of energy and the highest degree of integrity ... an excellent administrator and an integral part of the successful \$25 million capital campaign ... ." Paul in 1994 became Dean of UNC's Kenan-Flagler Graduate Business School. I appreciated Paul's awareness of my commitment to WSSU and his acknowledging my respect for the UNC system, which he stated to President Spangler.

Gracious leaders such as these are adept at recognizing all of the players. They and I knew that my contributions were part of a larger strategy and effort. Nonetheless, their kind words were important to me, and I have cherished their comments and remembered their good fellowship over the ensuing years.

Nat Irvin, II is now Strickler Executive In Residence and Professor of Management in the College of Business at the University of Louisville. He was consistently encouraging throughout our five years together, and I'm sure he teaches that by word and example in his management courses. I found it difficult back in 1994 to imagine a working day without his positive comments and supportive presence. Even now, our occasional phone conversations and email exchanges still can make my day. Those conversations usually include, "And how is Mrs. Prior Meade Cooper?" That's the Nat I know and love!

I will never forget being part of the WSSU Centennial Campaign, an enterprise where failure was not an option.

## **Chapter 14**

### **College Access at Career End**

After thirty-five years of work in the nonprofit sector, one of the strongest lessons I had learned is that smaller nonprofits require special treatment if they are to grow and prosper. That notion was immediately reemphasized for me when in July 1994 I became executive director of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation (TSF) in Norfolk. I was aware that the two men who had founded this special purpose foundation had done most of the planning, decision-making and fundraising, while the other board members had functioned primarily as endorsers on the letterhead. Thus it was one of my challenges to persuade all board members to become active and to use committees and personal involvement to accomplish TSF's work. Several board members had logged substantial experience on other successful nonprofit boards, and this nucleus was ready and able to become truly active. "Leave it to Frank and Josh" was over.

In the five-year startup phase of TSF there had been little or no time for committee deliberations; however, it was now clear, both to the founders and to me, that it was time to take a more inclusive



*Bonnie Sutton was essential in her position.*

approach to governing this organization.

When I became executive director of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation, I was accepting my last full-time assignment as an administrator in a nonprofit organization. A selection committee that included the superintendents of the public schools being served and the officers of the Foundation's board conducted the search for a new chief executive. I accepted the appointment and arrived in July 1994, and Prior joined me four months later, after we sold our home in Winston-Salem. We moved into a house in the West Ghent section of Norfolk on December 7, 1994.

From the moment I arrived for my initial interview with the TSF selection committee in the spring of 1994, I was aware that there was one key staff member who was essential in her position. That was Bonnie Sutton, who was the program director in the schools

and who had been in TSF's central office since its inception. I met Bonnie in the reception area of the law offices of Anne Shumadine, president of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation board. Here I would meet with the selection committee, and it was certainly understandable that Bonnie would want to get a look at this candidate from out of town.

Bonnie and I had a brief, informal visit, and I think both of us acknowledged later that we communicated pretty well. If I had learned anything in my years with a variety of organizations, it was that a leader, to be successful, may not function as the Lone Ranger—rather, teamwork is everything. Thus I know that I tried to make a good impression with Bonnie, just as I would do with the selection committee. She later made reference to our meeting as having been a “Kumbaya” moment, and I took that to mean “Come by here,” or “you’re welcome here,” based on the American folk tradition.

I quickly learned that Bonnie was highly effective in overseeing the daily work in the schools and in maintaining the internal record-keeping and accountability in the central office. It was obvious that she should be clearly designated as the program manager and chief administrative assistant. I made every effort to support Bonnie in her daily work, to enable her to take broader responsibility in general management, and to give her increasing involvement with the TSF board. I felt it was important for the board members to see for themselves the high quality of her performance in the many daily functions of the program. It became clear to me that, before I arrived, the TSF board had lacked awareness of internal functions, especially the scope and quality of Bonnie's daily work. I included

Bonnie in all board meetings and encouraged her to interact with board members by reporting on her work in the various aspects of the program.

In the light of what I had learned in my first four months on the job, I began to review my previous experiences and convictions about board leadership and financial support. Each morning I walked a stretch of Redgate Avenue, bordering the Norfolk Southern railroad property, near my home. I walked my dog and pondered my work for the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation, which was primarily overseeing its college ACCESS program in the eight public high schools of Norfolk and Portsmouth. The mission was to assist young people, especially those from low-income homes of the inner city. The process included helping students complete high school, locate financial aid, select an appropriate college, and embark upon undergraduate study. A majority of the families served had no previous experience with college or financial aid.

Often I spoke into a handheld recorder as I walked, creating drafts of several basic documents for the ACCESS program, including a brief program history, a clear mission statement, and a case for support. These are documents that all nonprofit organizations need to accomplish their mission, and that the TSF leaders had not had time to put into writing. Before I arrived, the plans for promotion and fundraising had existed almost entirely in the minds of the two founders, Frank Batten and Josh Darden. At this point in its history, TSF's administrative staff was drawn from Norfolk's public schools, and therefore had no experience with fundraising in the private sector.

I came to Norfolk with great expectations, both for this work



assignment and for the opportunity for us to again live in Tidewater Virginia, near where Prior and I had started our married life—at Christchurch School, just seventy-five miles north. I brought a varied background in nonprofit organizations, drawn from experience in administration and fundraising, primarily in schools and colleges. I believed that I could make a significant contribution to this relatively new enterprise that had been firmly established and had an excellent mission in the public schools. Frank Batten and Josh Darden, in starting the Foundation, had used their personal standing, financial resources, and fundraising acumen to secure significant commitments for annual operating support from the ten or so larger corporations and foundations in the Norfolk area.

Using their substantial influence in the community to cut through any minor resistance, the two founders had solicited multi-year pledges of funds from several corporate donors. Further, they had set a clear leadership example by giving generously themselves, both individually and corporately. Frank gave from various sources connected with Landmark Communications Inc., of which he was chairman, and Josh from private and foundation sources in which he was the principal officer. I had worked with executives of this caliber, dating back to my years at Woodberry Forest in the 1970s, and thus I approached these men with great respect and appreciation.

As I settled into the position of executive director, I began to ask myself what special contribution I could make to the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation, now in its sixth year and clearly capable of even greater accomplishments. The expansion of the foundation's college access services to a larger number of high schools in South Hampton Roads was TSF's greatest opportunity and challenge, it

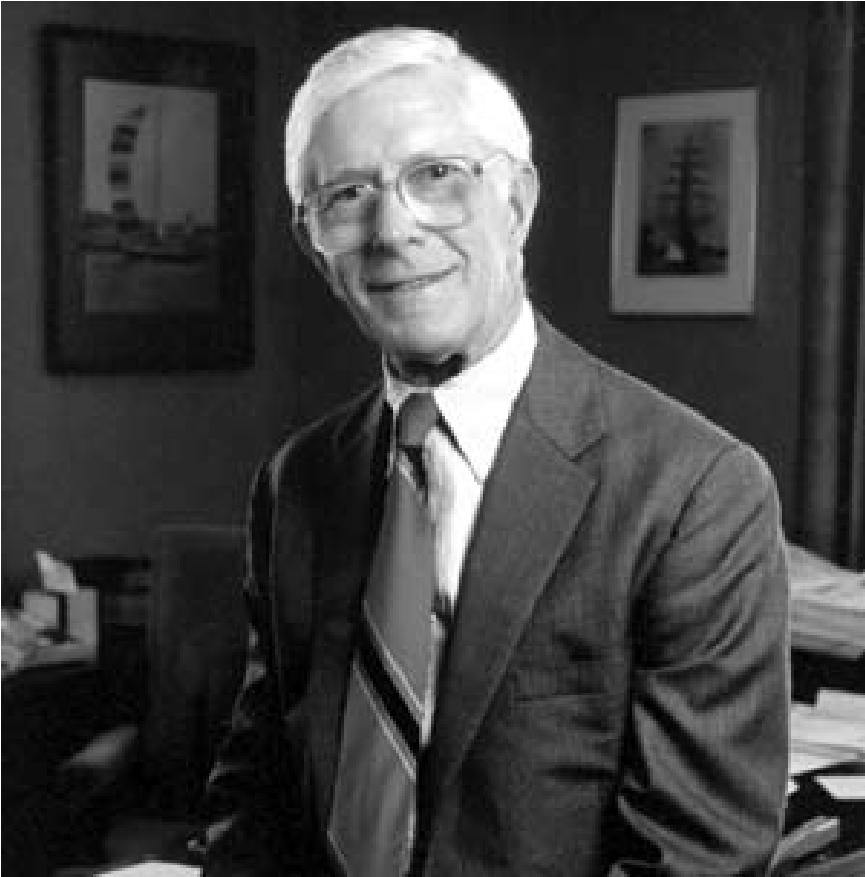
seemed to me. The ACCESS program initially had been limited to the five public high schools in Norfolk; then, after three years of success, the founders extended services to the three high schools in Portsmouth. The program was a locally based, privately funded benefit to low-income families in the area's two oldest cities. It was clear that students in the other three municipalities of Southside—Virginia Beach, Chesapeake and Suffolk—needed the service just as much as those in Norfolk and Portsmouth did.

We began to build a case for expansion, drawing on my previous planning and development experience in schools and colleges, and on Bonnie's thorough knowledge of the intricacies of ACCESS in the schools. The first step was to establish a long-range planning process, for which we proposed a method and timetable at a board meeting in January of 1995, six months after I arrived. This was my initial attempt to bring a more professional emphasis to the ACCESS program. It was also clear that developing a broader base of financial support—especially seeking a large number of smaller gifts from the community—was important, if for no other reason than to inform more people about the ACCESS program. It was generally agreed that ACCESS was a well-kept secret, both among potential donors and in the lives of needy students. In my most recent position, I had gained experience in helping to build a more diverse constituency for Winston-Salem State University, where we identified white supporters for an historically black college. Now we began a similar process at TSF in Norfolk. Using our existing office staff we initiated a traditional annual giving program. We also asked board members to make personal solicitations of prospects for larger gifts. Concurrently, Bonnie and I prepared a direct mail appeal to

attract the smaller contributions that are essential to success. I knew that this direct mail effort would uncover major gift prospects, as is typical within an annual appeal. In a year or two the number of gifts from individual donors and small businesses grew from a handful to several hundred. For direct mail we used a manageable mailing list, personalized appeal letters, and the services of a direct mail production company that was located near our offices in Norfolk.

As mentioned, I had worked at Winston-Salem State University, a public, historically black university (or HBCU) that was a member institution of the University of North Carolina system of higher education. At WSSU there were several levels of boards and an extensive committee structure. These diverse groups of volunteers helped this formerly all-black university become a higher-education resource to serve the multicultural community in the western Piedmont area of North Carolina. Tidewater Scholarship Foundation was, by comparison, a considerably smaller nonprofit organization; however, I was convinced that TSF's 17-member board of directors must take a more active role in our governance activities. They could make decisions and assume other board responsibilities that formerly had been handled by the two founders and one or two others. I was given a preview of this need for expanded governance when I interviewed for the position. Members of the selection committee told me, "Frank and Josh can't handle it all anymore. The board must step up and do our part, especially in fundraising. We expect the new executive director to guide us."

Based upon my previous experience with boards, I knew that concentrating control in the hands of one or two powerful trustees—often founders—is a mistake that too often occurs in nonprofit



*Frank Batten, co-founder of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation.*

organizations. Thus I began to present organizational suggestions to the TSF board from several sources, including a conference I attended that gave me a useful contact with Richard P. Chait, a nationally recognized author and expert on nonprofit governance. Chait's book, *The New Work of the Nonprofit Board*, was highly rated in the 1990s.

I was delighted when our newer board members became enthusiastic about fresh approaches to board practices. We re-

activated several standing committees of the type that are essential in most nonprofits. These included finance, educational program, fundraising and long-range planning, and board development. This brought to an end the startup phase where control had rested in a small executive committee of three or four people who previously had handled most of TSF's business over lunch.

Two members of the TSF board who were especially helpful to me from the time I arrived, and whose gentle natures enabled them to stay comfortably in the background, were Dr. Lambuth Clarke, retired president of Virginia Wesleyan College, and Clifford A. Cutchins III, former president of Sovern Bank, one of the entities that eventually became first NationsBank and then Bank of America. These two men were well-recognized professionals in their fields, and now had no more worlds to conquer. Instead, they gave their energy and experience to ACCESS. Lambuth Clarke, who had really been the builder of Virginia Wesleyan, was a most unique college president—both a fundraiser and an academician—we spoke the same language, and over several months he introduced me to many people who became solid supporters of TSF and ACCESS. He and his wife, Alice, also invited Prior and me to their annual New Year's Eve party—a relatively small, select group of behind the scenes key people in the area—helping us to feel welcome in our new environment.

Cliff Cutchins served as treasurer of TSF, providing the prestige of his stature in the Tidewater community and the expertise of his able assistant, Mrs. Nancy Baker. This team gave ACCESS immeasurable financial and public relations credibility. Our money was totally secure, well-managed, and available when needed. Cliff's

three sons had all attended and graduated from Woodberry Forest while I was there, although in those days—mid to late 1970s—he had been so busy with the bank that he and I had only met. We made up for that in the six years I was at Tidewater Scholarship: I'd estimate conservatively that we averaged having lunch together twice a month. We both were country boys from Tidewater—Cliff grew up in Franklin—and we had plenty to talk about, including his perspective as Mr. Virginia Tech of eastern Virginia. Fortunately, my father had attended Tech in the mid-1920s, and that covered a multitude of my own shortcomings. It is impossible to estimate the number of Hampton Roads business people to whom Cliff introduced me at lunch in the Harbor Club. Usually, we just sat there and they came by, attracted by Cliff's genial manner and ability never to forget a face.

I was further encouraged after a few months at ACCESS when co-founder Frank Batten wrote to Randolph McElroy, then president of NationsBank of Virginia (now Bank of America), one of TSF's larger corporate supporters, in his own words:

Gerry has submitted to our board a plan for an expanded development effort, and we will implement that plan over the next two or three years. We will certainly appreciate a continued high level of support from NationsBank, especially until we have secured a broader base of contributions from local businesses and individuals, which is a major focus of our two-year plan.

This letter demonstrated that Frank understood our newly expanded approach to development at the Tidewater

Scholarship Foundation and that he fully supported it. In this written statement he also acknowledged my leadership role as executive director, and he indicated that the full board was involved. This is the kind of board-level endorsement that is required for organizations to be successful. Such statements need to be made clearly and regularly, especially in a relatively new nonprofit—as TSF was at that time—to establish full credibility. Displaying the names of well-known community leaders and large donors on the letterhead is not enough to convince corporations and foundations to give high-level support.

Randolph McElroy of NationsBank, whom I had known since our college years together in Charlottesville (and he was an alumnus of Woodberry Forest), confirmed the importance of board involvement. He was candid in his private comments to me about the importance of our full board's being involved and also about improvements in our ability to track ACCESS students' performance once they entered college. NationsBank soon thereafter approved a \$25,000 challenge grant to be matched with first-time gifts to TSF's annual fund. We met the challenge and created broader-based enthusiasm for ACCESS.

In the summer of 1994, when I met with Frank Batten for the first time, my notes show that we talked about endowment. Frank said he believed that the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation's last-dollar awards should be underwritten by endowment support. I was coming from recent experience in a capital campaign at Winston-Salem State University, where the university's leaders and volunteers had raised \$25 million from the private sector—a national record among historically black universities at the time. Among the goals

at WSSU was providing endowment of scholarships in traditional fashion, and also endowing certain operating budget items, including teaching and administrative positions.

With that WSSU experience fresh in mind, I suggested to Frank that some of TSF's essential operating functions and key positions might also be underwritten with endowment funds. He was interested, and at his suggestion I later put those thoughts and related financial projections on paper for the board's consideration in the future planning at ACCESS.

A few months before I arrived, a widow in Norfolk had left TSF an estate valued at about \$300,000. After I arrived, the board agreed to use that bequest to establish our first endowment fund. Soon Frank began to strengthen TSF's seedling endowment by making anonymous grants for us to match.

Months later I accompanied Frank Batten and Anne Shumadine, our president, to make a presentation to the trustees of the Beazley Foundation in Portsmouth. This foundation was already underwriting three-fifths of the ACCESS program's expenses in



the Portsmouth public schools. Frank described to the Beazley Foundation board members in considerable detail how the ACCESS program functioned in the schools, what our plans were for the future, and why the Beazley Foundation should make a million-dollar

*Joshua P. Darden, Jr., co-founder of the  
Tidewater Scholarship Foundation.*



commitment to the endowment campaign for ACCESS. Several of the Beazley Foundation board members were Frank's contemporaries and friends, including former Virginia governor Mills Godwin, and another Norfolk leader, Leroy "Buddy" Canoles.

Of course, everyone on the Beazley Foundation board knew that Frank himself was the largest donor of philanthropic dollars in South Hampton Roads. His personal visit and his thorough understanding of the ACCESS program impressed the Beazley trustees. They listened attentively to Frank's remarks, and they later set aside their foundation's usual guidelines and made a significant gift to the endowment of ACCESS, thereby underwriting the program in Portsmouth for the long term.

This meeting also demonstrated our team approach and full board involvement, especially in seeking major gifts. If Frank Batten was making calls for ACCESS, no one could be exempt from that board responsibility. Nor would any major gift prospects in the area fail to give their full attention to a grant request from the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation.

I knew much better the other co-founder of Tidewater Scholarship Foundation, Joshua P. Darden Jr.. Josh and I attended the University of Virginia, where we both had graduated in the class of 1958. Josh's father was Pretlow Darden, a leading Norfolk businessman in the post-World War II years, and owner a Chevrolet dealership. Josh's uncle was Colgate W. Darden, a former Virginia governor and later president of the University of Virginia. President Darden had retired at U. Va., soon after presenting diplomas to our class of 1958—the last class in which every graduate walked across

the stage and shook the Mr. Darden's hand.

Josh and I had not worked together in a nonprofit organization before, although we knew of each other's activities in educational fundraising, especially in connection with preparatory schools and the University of Virginia. Josh made himself fully available to me when I arrived at ACCESS, and he and I were in almost daily contact by phone regarding the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation. After six months, when I had a good grasp of the program, Josh suggested that, while I might be tempted to spend much of my time fine-tuning the daily functions of ACCESS, he believed that I should now devote the majority of my time to fundraising. I agreed, for it was clear that assuring a steady flow of funds was our primary and ongoing challenge. Also, in the final analysis, Josh was the boss and he knew the territory.

From then on, my commitment to activities in fundraising increased each year, which were made clear in my written annual goals for performance evaluation. These goals were mutually agreed upon by the board president and me at the beginning of each school year. In the last three years of my tenure, eighty percent of my time was devoted to fundraising. I reached and exceeded a variety of challenging goals—thanks to indispensable support from board and staff. These measurable targets were set each summer, and I was evaluated on them, preliminarily in January and finally in June of each year.

I was then, and I continue to be, committed to the concept that performance evaluation must begin with the operating head of the organization and must include all staff members. I am also convinced that the governing board should conduct an annual evaluation of

its own performance, using recognized evaluation instruments and including the assistance of an independent evaluator or facilitator. I am always surprised to learn how many nonprofit groups fail to establish such annual, comprehensive performance evaluations—often waiting until problems arise, when it may be too late.

In the early months of my arrival at TSF, I had observed that the daily operating system of the ACCESS program required fine-tuning. I saw procedures that could benefit from attention I could provide as an experienced private-sector administrator. Working closely with Bonnie, the hands-on program manager, I gave priority to these internal operating matters—such as careful hiring procedures and regular performance evaluations—and I continued to monitor key operating procedures throughout my six-year tenure. In my view, no effective chief administrator can afford to ignore contact with internal operations—no matter how pressing external matters such as fundraising may be. The chief administrator must first and always know the program thoroughly and be able to improve upon it. She or he must also stay in touch with new developments in the field, and bring new ideas into action. If the overall program functions smoothly and effectively, then the money will follow—provided that there is full board participation. Administrators who failed to follow these principles in the 1990s created many of the problems that drew adverse attention to America's nonprofits. Several problem cases were large charities that had formerly been acclaimed for excellence, including the United Way and the American Red Cross. Over time, the credibility of these organizations has been restored, but time and money were lost.

I gave setting and accomplishing goals a high priority for

every member of TSF's staff, starting with the program manager and extending to the team of in-school ACCESS advisors. Their daily work in the high schools where we served was the foremost purpose of ACCESS, and I believed it was my responsibility both to encourage their success and to improve their working conditions and compensation when possible. In the early months of my tenure, I spent a good deal of time visiting in each of the high schools, where I talked first with ACCESS advisors, and then with principals, teachers, and students.

Later I transferred much of this in-school role to the program manager, but I let it be known that I was always available, either in my office or by telephone. The advisors seemed to enjoy dropping in for a quick visit with me when they came to the central office. That enabled me to keep in touch with what was happening in their schools. We were a people-oriented organization, and I felt everyone enjoyed keeping me in the loop of information. As program manager, Bonnie Sutton, usually let me know when an advisor was visiting the central office and what might be on that person's mind.

**I**t didn't take long for me to recognize Bonnie's potential to become executive director of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation upon my retirement. Later, after board members had worked closely with Bonnie in committees and at full board meetings, they all began to gain their own awareness of her potential to take greater responsibility. Identifying promising individuals like Bonnie and helping them rise to the top was one of my foremost personal goals throughout my administrative career. It was the teacher in

me, and that trait insisted upon being expressed. I came to see that Bonnie was as ready to take on greater internal responsibility as any staff person I had observed or supervised in my previous work at a variety of schools and colleges. In a more traditional public school organization, it might have taken much longer for Bonnie's potential for growth to be recognized—especially if required courses for state certification were a primary consideration.

My own perspective was drawn from independent schools and other nonprofit organizations where a person of Bonnie's ability could, and often did, move up the ladder more quickly than was possible within a state-controlled system. TSF had its own high standards and did not need to be constrained by state certification regulations that applied only to personnel in the public schools where ACCESS served.

In the 1996-97 fiscal year, to broaden our fundraising activity beyond annual giving, we launched our first capital campaign, for which the board set a goal of \$1,000,000, to earn a matching challenge gift of that amount from a close, anonymous friend. I tried to convince the board's development committee that we should set a goal of \$2,000,000. I believed a larger goal was both justifiable and attainable, and would present a greater degree of challenge and provide more eventual satisfaction for all of us.

"Let's show our anonymous benefactor that we can meet and double the value of the challenge gift," I said, based on my experience with campaigns and matching challenges. My plea in a meeting of the development committee to raise our sights did not succeed, however; too many members were not risk-takers and preferred to go for a sure thing. The committee set a less demanding goal and

achieved it without stretching our fundraising sights to any great degree. It is well-known among nonprofit executives that an in-house fundraiser, as I was, will find it difficult to set truly challenging fundraising goals for a board that “pays his salary.” That’s one reason—but not the only one—why outside fundraising counsel is often brought in when it’s time to seek top dollars. Generally, a board must be challenged to stretch itself in the giving and getting of major gifts, and often an outside professional is required to raise the board’s sights.

In development and fundraising I held a strong commitment to the importance of a thorough, systematic planning process—what I believe is required for any organization to be successful. My conviction began with my experience at Woodberry Forest School, where for ten years I held primary administrative responsibility for conducting the school’s development program. I learned that to be fully successful, a nonprofit organization must do its homework first and produce a thoroughly validated plan, especially if high goals are to be achieved. The plan must be summarized in a document to which all of the board members give thought, suggestions and approval. Eventually, all board members will be expected to give and get the funds required; thus they must ‘buy in’ at the outset. I had adhered to this development philosophy for twenty years at other organizations, and I continued to use that approach at the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation.

From my own point of view as staff leader of TSF, I was fully committed to the importance of knowing the competition, studying comparable programs, and examining the plans of similar organizations. While I was editor of the school magazine at

Woodberry, I had written an editorial supporting the concept of full disclosure in private schools and other nonprofits. Thus, when I came to the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation, I set out immediately to learn about practices at other college access organizations around the country. I began by making contacts with executive directors of the programs in Cleveland, the recognized prototype for most successful college access programs, along with those programs in Baltimore and Philadelphia. I was a little surprised to discover that a college scholarship program in Richmond did not follow the prescribed and proven access format and was not among the leading programs that would collaborate to form a national network, soon after I arrived in Norfolk.

In early 1995 the executive directors of successful access programs in the three larger cities to the north, plus TSF in Norfolk, met and officially chartered the National College Access Network—NCAN. My new colleagues, who had been discussing forming such a group for sometime, decided to sign the articles of incorporation in Norfolk at the offices of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation in February 1995. They chose to meet in Norfolk in view of its southern climate, hoping to avoid the threat of snow and ice in Cleveland, Philadelphia and Baltimore. This proved to be a good southern strategy that got TSF in on the ground floor with NCAN.

The National College Access Network quickly grew to include about twenty college access organizations in its membership. Geographically, these programs stretched from Miami and New Orleans north to Cleveland and Dayton, Ohio, and across the U. S. to Santa Barbara and Sacramento, California. I felt strongly

that Norfolk should have a place in the leadership of this national college access movement, based on the impressive results achieved since 1988 in the ACCESS program. The TSF administration, staff and board deserved to be represented among national programs, both in recognition of their accomplishments and to learn about innovations at other programs in the college access field. As a key NCAN founder, Joyce Kroeller, later wrote, “We all gave and taught, as well as received and learned.”

I had previously worked in schools that were members of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), and I knew that nationwide membership organizations of this type are beneficial, if one is willing to attend meetings, be open to new ideas, and take a fair share of the responsibility for the making the organization successful. I committed to keep TSF active in NCAN throughout my time as executive director. My enthusiasm was based on my having learned so much from my colleagues in other programs when I was new to the Norfolk access program. My primary mentors initially were Joyce Kroeller, the executive director of the CollegeBound Foundation in Baltimore, and Tina Milano, executive director of the Cleveland Scholarship Programs. Joyce served as first president of NCAN, and Christina Milano succeeded her in 2000 and continued in the role of NCAN’s chief executive for several years.

After the formation of NCAN, we exchanged ideas and information with college access programs around the United States. The friendships and sense of mission that we shared in NCAN were similar to the benefits I had experienced in independent schools and colleges through organizations such as NAIS, the Council for



Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), and state-level associations in Virginia and North Carolina. Back in 1969 I had been co-founder, with William Booth of Episcopal High School, of the Virginia Independent Schools Development Association. I was convinced even back then that networking with friendly competitors is indispensable to success in educational fundraising.

An excellent example of the tangible benefits of NCAN membership occurred in 1998 when Anne Shumadine and Joan Brock, president and president-elect of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation board, accompanied Bonnie Sutton and me to the national meeting of NCAN in Santa Barbara, California. Our Norfolk contingent learned a good deal from trustees and staff of other programs at this meeting, and we also contributed our fair share by making presentations. TSF received some direct funding through NCAN for several projects, including setting up a mentoring program for ACCESS students to improve the effectiveness of our in-school activities.

Cooperative fundraising at the national level was a key goal for those executive directors who founded NCAN. I coordinated the writing, editing and printing of a brochure for NCAN's members to use to promote college access in their cities and to raise funds nationally. Established foundation donors to college access in several cities came forward with seed money for the NCAN start-up efforts. My work on the NCAN brochure was Norfolk's contribution to getting NCAN off the ground. I was disappointed that we were unable to find a cash gift.

TSF gained information from our NCAN affiliation that helped us make the case for improved evaluation, compensation and

benefits for ACCESS advisors. Based upon what we learned from other access programs, we began to offer our advisors stipends for continuing their education, we began to pay them better wages, and we provided more funds for health care benefits. We in the TSF administration learned from experience and from other NCAN programs that we needed to hire employees who would stay with us for several years. To keep qualified people, we needed to provide our employees more competitive compensation, just as is true the business world.

Our advisors' ability to understand and explain the complex aspects of college financial aid was especially important. We therefore hoped that our employees would stay with ACCESS for several productive years. It took at least two years for new advisors to become comfortable with their work, especially that of presenting the intricacies of college financial aid to students and parents who were new to the college process. It was also important to develop consistent working relationships with teachers and administrators in the schools and colleges where we served.

TSF intended to hire and keep employees who performed well and were excited about our work. We had a small administrative staff, and we needed to avoid the frequent turnover of advisors that led to the constant recruitment and training of new people. Our challenge was to conserve our time and energy into directing program delivery and raising money.

The creation of effective employment procedures and staff evaluation criteria were my most important internal contributions to TSF's ACCESS program—perhaps Bonnie alone recognized this fact and contributed to the process herself. We put in place annual,

systematic goal setting and performance evaluations, modeled after those used in the private schools and colleges where I had served as an administrator before coming to Norfolk. I also encouraged the employment of people from diverse backgrounds, especially the hiring of qualified male employees to a formerly all-female advisor staff. We expected our advisors to serve as role models for students in the schools, and for the performance of our employees to compare favorably with that of the personnel in the school systems where they served. I believe our ACCESS staff met these expectations.

In my first comments to staff and board when I arrived, I had acknowledged the special debt of gratitude I owed to the students, faculty and staff of Winston-Salem State University, where I had learned on the job to work more effectively in what was officially described as a historically black college or university—hence the HBCU acronym. At WSSU I became familiar with some of the goals and aspirations of African American students and their families. I also came to appreciate the “chunky stew of diversity,” as described by my colleague Nat Irvin, vice-chancellor of development at WSSU. Integration and racial diversity had become established aspects of our American education system by the late 20th century, and thus quite familiar to the many thousands of U. S. citizens who worked in the various levels, from elementary through graduate schools. Eventually I realized, however, that many people my age did not have these contacts through education, and were lacking in any normal, interracial experience. I believe it is these people who have the greatest difficulty either understanding or accepting the fact that the United States of America now has its first president who is an African American.

Any non-profit organization in Tidewater Virginia was considered extremely fortunate to have both Frank Batten and Josh Darden on its board, and for the two of them to be co-founders was viewed as a sure sign of success. The Tidewater Scholarship Foundation was born from Batten-Darden parentage in 1987. These were perhaps the two busiest men in the eastern Virginia region. Thus it is especially notable that they became hands-on initiators of a program to help the often overlooked, average-ability students in the public high schools discover that it is possible for them to go to college and gain access to a successful and satisfying life. Frank and Josh were remarkably involved in the operation of ACCESS throughout its first ten years.

The expansion of the ACCESS program through the tunnels under the Elizabeth River to Portsmouth after two successful years in Norfolk was equally important, and required increased amounts of Batten and Darden's time, patience, and fundraising. What many observers overlooked was how much personal attention these two successful Norfolk natives would invest, over a twenty-year period, to make ACCESS a remarkable community resource. The superintendent of Portsmouth Public Schools, Richard Trumble, famously described ACCESS as "the greatest innovation in the public schools since sliced bread," and we quoted him often. Those who administered ACCESS from Norfolk had one goal: to provide to students and families in Portsmouth the same benefits as those offered in Norfolk. Our team included strong leadership from Portsmouth, beginning with Bonnie Sutton, program manager, who is a lifelong resident of Portsmouth and a great loyalist to her city.

The presence of the ACCESS program in Norfolk, Portsmouth

and eventually Virginia Beach is one of the primary—though underpublicized—reasons that public high schools achieve far better college admission and financial aid results than do public schools in other parts of the state and nation. In the first place, ACCESS accepts the complex challenge of convincing low-income public school students, and especially their parents, that they can go to college, regardless of their financial circumstances, if they will work hard and demonstrate personal motivation. Further, ACCESS promises to provide “last-dollar” funds that students often require after they have received all traditional, need-based financial aid for college. In many cases these last dollar awards, though often in small amounts, make the difference as to whether low-income students actually enroll at and attend college.

The ACCESS program’s eligibility requirements are clear and uncomplicated. In the high school years a student must achieve (1) an overall C academic average, (2) 90% school attendance, (3) a sober, drug-free lifestyle, and (4) the high school’s endorsement for good citizenship. These are requirements that students with average abilities can achieve on the strength of their own commitment and perseverance. Students who have top test scores, GPAs and other qualifications are welcome in the ACCESS program—and often do enroll—but high-level grades and scores are not required.

Given this straightforward design and enviable record of success for ACCESS, I was glad to learn in 2009 that college access programs are now found throughout Virginia. They are all part of the Virginia College Access Network, and Bonnie Sutton is president of “Virginia CAN,” as the group is known. Many educators agree that the availability of a college access program is as important to the

future success of today's high school students as is computer literacy. It is clear that achieving higher education is fundamental to success in all walks of life. Therefore, I applaud Bonnie for taking a lead role in multiplying ACCESS throughout Virginia—and I commend her board for enabling her to provide that leadership.

In 1998 the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation reached a significant milestone when a relatively new board member became president of the organization. That person was Joan Perry Brock, whose husband, Macon F. Brock, with other family members, had started locally and expanded nationwide the merchandising organization known as Dollar Tree Stores. This enterprise became one of the great success stories of the American business scene in the late twentieth century. It was not a new-era dot-com; rather the Dollar Tree concept combined traditional retailing with exceptional energy, integrity and customer awareness.

Joan Brock brought those special qualities to the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation, and the organization began immediately to achieve important new goals. This enthusiastic new board president seemed to have an unlimited ability to give of her own time, talent, and financial resources to move ACCESS to a new level, picking up where the ACCESS founders left off. Joan had additional strengths: she was a graduate of Norfolk's public schools, she lived in Virginia Beach, and her family's business corporate headquarters were in Chesapeake. Thus she was a perfect proponent for spreading ACCESS into all of the high schools of South Hampton Roads.

In short order much of the expansion that the administration of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation's had hoped and planned for

was underway. A great deal of the implementation of this progress took place after Bonnie Sutton took over as executive director, following my retirement in June 2000. Bonnie had been a faithful staff leader at the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation since its founding in 1988, and she was indispensable to my work for six years. The board leaders became convinced that Bonnie should become the next executive director, and they wisely decided to promote Bonnie from within. This made the proverbial nationwide search unnecessary. Such an exercise could have interrupted the momentum that had built up over the foundation's thirteen-year history. Although I am partial to bringing in fresh leadership when it's needed, Bonnie was ready for this new challenge, and she had the internal support she would need for success.

Bonnie had the strong endorsement of the president, Joan Brock, and of Susan Hirschbiel, who was a relatively new, active and contributing board member. Susan also brought a fresh perspective to ACCESS, having lived in other parts of the country and, like Joan, she was able to see the clear imperative for the expansion of ACCESS. These two relatively new board leaders gave their support to Bonnie, and that enhanced her chances for reaching new levels of achievement as executive director.

Anne B. Shumadine, a Norfolk native, graduate of Wellesley College and William and Mary's Marshall-Wythe School of Law, president of her own investment management organization, and a long-time TSF board member, also endorsed Bonnie as the new chief administrator of ACCESS. Anne brought her own historical perspective as an officer of TSF since its founding. In 2000 she was chairman of the board, and she had previously served as president—a role she held when I was

appointed executive director. It was from Anne that I received the official offer of the position. In the early months of my tenure, Anne and I met almost weekly, and she helped me through the challenging adjustments that I had to make to the way the TSF board functioned at the time. She had the complete trust of the founders and could usually help me understand Frank and Josh's *modus operandi*.

I am also grateful to the original ACCESS board members—especially Cliff Cutchins, Lambuth Clarke and Tommy Johnson. Tommy thanked me profusely for giving Bonnie increasing opportunities to work with the board, and for coaching her in the few areas where she lacked experience—primarily in the private-sector skills of fundraising, long-range planning, and development. When Tommy was president of the board, in the middle years of my tenure, he insisted that he and I meet on Saturday mornings in his law office. “That’s when I do my nonprofit work,” he said. I later came back with, “Tommy, just remember that I worked in boarding schools for twenty years, and meeting on Saturdays is not new territory for me—I just don’t want to spend every Saturday morning that way.” We eventually managed a compromise, and Tommy offered useful insights into the way we managed ACCESS.

Beginning in July 2000 the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation had new leadership and energy for a major expansion, and was poised to enter the twenty-first century in a mode of accomplishment. The early history of that new era is most impressive. It began with the largest endowment gift Frank Batten ever gave to the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation—in 2003 he gave \$11,000,000 that provided great impetus to the expansion effort and made the future of ACCESS quite secure.



At my retirement party in May 2000, Josh Darden kindly remarked that he believed my work for ACCESS was the high mark of my career in education, exceeding what I accomplished anywhere else. I considered that a high compliment from a person who had been a leader for fifty years in educational philanthropy throughout Tidewater, the state of Virginia, and the southeastern United States. Josh had known of my work for many years before I came to Norfolk. I now consider him to be the most focused and committed volunteer leader whom I ever worked with. While we were never pals, I believe we were good for each other and in a way challenged each other. We both attended boys' boarding schools affiliated with the Episcopal church, and we graduated from the University of Virginia together in the Class of 1958. Thus we usually spoke the same language, even when we had different points of view.

In many ways Josh Darden was a gift to me at the end of my career. Maybe it's part of the "iron sharpens iron" metaphor, in a humanistic sense, rather than a religious connotation. I hope he feels the same way about me. I know we both have been influenced by our respect for Mr. Jefferson. Some folks say that because Josh so often spoke for the University of Virginia publicly, he came close to "looking like the founder." For my part, I was happy if I quoted Jefferson aptly once in awhile.

In my modest career I achieved several subtle personal goals that were—and are—most satisfying to me. I derived special delight from helping others learn, grow, and reach new heights in their work. That is a goal I had tried to pursue throughout my career, hoping to give back some of the mentoring that others had given to me. These mentors and role models included Dr. John Garland

Pollard Jr. and Robert M. Yarbrough at Christchurch School; Dr. John Page Williams, dean of Virginia's Episcopal Church Schools; and two headmasters: Hatcher C. Williams at Blue Ridge School and A. Baker Duncan at Woodberry Forest.

Finally, in my last working years in education at ACCESS, I learned a remarkable new way of helping students. This experience gave me an exposure to really fine public schools and their people, especially in Norfolk, where our Tidewater Scholarship Foundation offices were located in the central administration building of Norfolk Public Schools. I retired from this work convinced that America's public schools' programs can be raised to a higher standard, and that more graduates of those schools may go on to postsecondary education, may overcome financial limitations, and may compensate for a lack of college familiarity—and even enthusiasm—within their families. According to most recent figures released by ACCESS College Foundation, the program has assisted 70,000 students in South Hampton Roads to climb the ACCESS ladder to higher education.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. captured the spirit of ACCESS in his “I Have A Dream” speech in 1963:

Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

The ACCESS program is an example of how the American people and their hard-earned capital may work together to lift needy young people—including a high percentage of African Americans—to the “solid rock of brotherhood” that Dr. King envisioned. As a result of the ACCESS program in the public schools of South

Hampton Roads, thousand of graduates have already moved on to higher education, and many more will follow, thanks to financial contributions and selfless leadership of benefactors, employees, and volunteers at the ACCESS College Foundation.

The college access concept may be effectively adapted to every public school system in America. To be convinced, one only needs to hear the success stories of young people who have gained college opportunities through the many ACCESS programs across the country. The first requirement for spreading the college access movement is to find leadership—committed leaders and philanthropists like Frank Batten, Josh Darden and Joan Brock, who are willing to invest time and money to benefit young people in the public schools, and who believe that students who gain higher-education are our country's hope for the future.

In 2001 Gerald L. Baliles, Virginia's former governor, started a college access program in his native Patrick County, a rural county west of Danville. In the early years of its existence, the Patrick County Education Foundation achieved remarkable progress toward challenging goals. I had the opportunity to advise Governor Baliles in the startup phase of what is called the Patrick Plan. I will describe certain aspects of that rural access program in the next chapter.

America has worked for generations in the public schools to develop an educated citizenry that includes all of our people. College access programs pick up that challenge and take students to a higher level—closer to the fulfillment of their personal dreams and of our nation's destiny.

A worthy goal for the emerging new America is “College Access for All.”

## **Chapter 15**

### **Changing Lives in Rural Virginia**

**G**erald L. Baliles, Virginia's former governor (1986-90) and attorney general (1982-86), telephoned me in the late spring of 2001 to talk about the Patrick County Education Foundation. Jerry and I had met once before, when he came to be the keynote speaker at the annual luncheon of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation in 1998, for the celebration of the organization's tenth anniversary. Jerry had been governor when the ACCESS Program was established in 1987.

Jerry knew I had been executive director of the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation and that I had retired in June 2000. He had been a friend over many years of Frank Batten and Josh Darden, co-founders of the ACCESS Program in Norfolk, and I assume that he talked with them about my work in the ACCESS Program. Jerry is a natural and experienced networker, so I imagine he had checked me out pretty carefully.

I went to Richmond to meet with Jerry to discuss becoming the interim executive director of the Patrick County Education Foundation that he had started within the past year. He had Pete

Boisseau with him for the interview; Pete had consulted with Jerry in communications and public relations from the time Jerry was governor. We talked for over an hour, discussing the needs of the fledgling PCEF organization and how I might fit into their organizational first steps and initial efforts to raise funds from corporations, foundations and individuals. By that time PCEF had its 501(c)(3) tax designation, thanks to expeditious work by members of the Hunton & Williams law firm, where Jerry Baliles was a partner until his retirement in 2006.

We reached an agreement as to my activities in general terms and agreed that there would be a formal memorandum of agreement that Jerry would send to me and I would sign, outlining the scope of the work. I had never really worked for a former governor or any other high level state official, so I didn't foresee how detailed that memorandum of agreement might be. When it arrived in my hands, I could see that Jerry Baliles' extensive experience in government and the law had enabled him to leave no details unaddressed. Jerry subsequently reminded me from time to time that before he was governor of Virginia he had served as the state's attorney general; the significance was that he is a stickler in matters pertaining to the law. I had worked with other sticklers, but no one who was quite so precise, nor so farsighted in anticipating legal issues.

Jerry Baliles and Gerry Cooper—sometimes referred to as the Two Jerrys—worked together in the Patrick County Education Foundation start-up program for the better part of a year. Jerry made available to me his family home near Stuart, Virginia, as a place to set up my office and also to stay overnight when I was in Patrick County working for the foundation. The Baliles homeplace is on

the road to Woolwine, state route 8 heading north from US 58. I drove back and forth to Patrick County from my home in Norfolk two or three times each month. In Norfolk I would get on US 58 a few blocks from my home and travel 250 miles due west, staying on 58 until I reached the town of Stuart, the county seat. I got to know that highway pretty well.

The Baliles homeplace in Patrick County is a lovely, two-and-a-half story country home that Jerry has had restored to its original condition, preserving the understated rural charm of the house and grounds. The house features wooden accoutrements: wainscoting, floors, staircases and other items, symbolizing the importance of timber products to the economy of Patrick County over many years. From Jerry I first heard the expression “The Three T’s”—standing for timber, textiles and tobacco. Those products



*The Baliles homeplace in Patrick county. Photo by Gerry Cooper, summer 2001.*

were the backbone of the economy of much of Southwest Virginia, where Patrick County is located. The decline and disappearance of these sources of commerce and employment in recent decades has virtually devastated the economy and employment opportunities in Southside and Southwest Virginia.

It was in the face of these economic challenges that Jerry Baliles initiated the Patrick County Education Foundation, offering a three-pronged approach to addressing the economic problems of the area as the twenty-first century began. Certain details of the solutions that Jerry and his board of trustees developed are described at the end of this chapter. Jerry's three-part initiative came to include what is now widely known across the state as "The Patrick Plan."

Working with Jerry Baliles became a wonderful way for me to ring down the curtain on my career in non-profit educational organizations. My vocation had begun in January 1958, as an English teacher at my alma mater, Christchurch School. My retirement in June 2000 at the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation seemed to be the final act—until I got a call from Jerry in mid-2001 to perform a one-year reprise with the Patrick County Education Foundation.

Perhaps more than anyone else with whom I worked in those forty years, Jerry Baliles understood the areas of concern that I held to be most important in my career. These fall into three main categories: 1. extending educational opportunity to all, 2. seeking attention for the underdog, and 3. recognizing the values of rural living. Jerry is about five years my junior chronologically, and he has worked extensively in the legal, political and corporate arenas of Virginia and the nation, which I had never done. I had, however, managed an occasional look into those areas, for many of the board

members at the schools and colleges where I served were leaders in the fields of business, law, government and politics—in twenty or more states. Through my work with them, I had a vicarious notion of life beyond the walls of academia.

There was no person, however, whom I encountered anywhere in my career of working with volunteer leaders who could rival Jerry Baliles in the areas of innate intelligence, commitment to the needs of less fortunate people, and a general desire to serve the common good. Jerry has a vision for public service that reminds me of “the common glory” that Dramatist Paul Green depicted in words, music and action in his outdoor symphonic drama of that name. *The Common Glory* was presented in Williamsburg from 1946 to 1976 to commemorate the birth of the American nation and to illustrate the spirit of her people. Gerald Baliles has demonstrated in his life a remarkable share of that spirit.

Jerry gave me an unforgettable example of how someone in public life can be committed first and foremost to the good of the people in the area he serves, and yet never lose sight of a larger picture and a greater good. Both in public office and in private causes, Jerry never showed a desire for personal profit or any interest in bringing attention to himself. Most impressive to me personally were his examples of patience and perseverance—probably because I lack the former and rely overmuch on the latter. I wondered if working with Jerry Baliles at an earlier time in my career might have enabled me to get a better handle on my impatience and to balance my determination. Jerry clearly demonstrated that being patient—even suffering fools gladly—could pay off in long-term results.

While I was working in Patrick County and staying at the Baliles





*Jerry Baliles—There must be faith in our future and a willingness to take a giant leap forward.*

homeplace, Jerry would frequently drive down from Richmond for working sessions with me and quarterly meetings with the board. He would always include in those business trips a time for visits with friends and relatives in the area. He would typically arrive on Friday evening, and we would go to the Rock Castle restaurant a few miles north of the homeplace, where we would enjoy a good meal and Jerry would take the opportunity to greet friends of long-standing. He had an uncanny ability to remember people over long periods of time—a hallmark of his public life for sure.

We often made several stops around Patrick County in the daytime, that might include an interview on the local radio station, perhaps breakfast at a local eatery, a quick peek into the public library, and visits with other leaders in the area, both business people and elected officials. Jerry's knack for inclusiveness is demonstrated in the people with whom he stays in contact and in the unique group of people whom he recruited to be on the board of directors of the Patrick County Education Foundation. That board includes three main categories: five top county officials, five current civic and business leaders, and five Patrick County natives who have made their mark elsewhere—including Jerry Baliles himself.

Wherever I went with Jerry Baliles in the course of our work together for the PCEF, people greeted us with personal friendship and a willingness to help and cooperate. This was based largely on the fact that Jerry is respected in that manner. He has laid the groundwork over time for support, especially among the people in his place of origin. There were also those who had not known Jerry all his life or while he was governor, who nonetheless could see that what he proposed to offer Patrick County and the surrounding area

was a systematic effort to address the declining economic conditions in the region.

Jerry's commitment to the future of Virginia's rural areas especially appealed to me. He said it succinctly in his speech to the Virginia Heartland Economic Development Summit at Longwood College on May 1, 2002:

There must be faith in our future and a willingness to take a giant leap forward. I believe a rural education action project is needed, particularly across Southside and in Southwest Virginia. There is the power of symbolism in the acronym R-E-A-P (Rural Education Action Project). In the rural areas where agriculture has long been a way of life, citizens instantly understand that one reaps what one sows. *And if the rural areas of Virginia do not invest more in education, if they do not sow the seeds of education throughout the areas for all of its citizens, then where is the harvest and where is the future?* (Emphasis added.)

Jerry is gifted in using the rural vernacular—stemming from his years of familiarity with agrarian living—though not a farm boy himself. Having grown up in a rural environment is a big part of Jerry's identity, first as a person and second as a public servant. Gerald Baliles is a fine example of the adage, "You can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy." He is just as comfortable in the cozy confines of the country store up the road from his homeplace as he is in the chilly marble halls of governmental power in Washington.

I was attracted to the genuine Jerry Baliles to some degree

because his background is similar to my own. He grew up in rural Patrick County and went to elementary school there, checked out a record number of books weekly from the Bookmobile, and attended Fishburne Military School, an all-boys boarding high school near Waynesboro, Virginia. Although Fishburne is a military school, it is similar to Christchurch School, where I attended. Both are small, tightly budgeted, under-endowed, and unpretentious preparatory schools. Both are better known in Virginia than they are regionally or nationally. While the above characteristics of Fishburne and Christchurch may appear to be drawbacks to some, they are assets in my viewpoint, particularly after working in schools for over forty years.

Jerry told me that he originally planned to attend the U. S. Air Force Academy in Colorado, but in his senior year he had an interview with a representative of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, in the process of making college plans. As a former private school administrator and college counselor, I see the decision that Jerry then made to attend Wesleyan as the kind of opportunity that even “unpretentious preparatory schools” may provide. I’ve known a number of students and graduates of Wesleyan University, and I have been impressed by their respect for a Wesleyan education, and by their results, especially in academic and public service roles. Thus in my mind, Wesleyan University played a significant part in shaping Jerry Baliles’ life and career. He is also a graduate of the law school at the University of Virginia, and the importance of the study of law shows up in his success in all areas of his life—as practicing attorney, elected official, corporate director, and international lawyer.

In October 2006 Virginia Military Institute presented to Gerald L. Baliles the Institute's top award for public service. A newspaper account read as follows:

Baliles will be recognized for a public-service career in Virginia that began in 1967 when he was an assistant attorney general and continued through service in the General Assembly, his election in 1982 as state attorney general, and his term as governor from 1986 to 1990. He is now director of the Miller Center for Public Affairs at the University of Virginia. The award citation points out Baliles' contributions to the state's economic development, its transportation infrastructure, higher education, teacher salaries and environment.

That summary is too brief to capture the full career of Jerry Baliles and his many contributions to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the historic place that he, somewhat from habit, refers to as "the Commonwealth." It is a challenge to portray the many dimensions of this man who has quietly put the best interests of others—especially Virginians—ahead of his own well being for over forty years. I'm convinced that Jerry learned his exemplary way of dealing with people at an early age, while growing up in rural Virginia. Therefore, when the pursuit of higher education took him first to Connecticut and then to Charlottesville, and when his vocation led him initially to Richmond and later to Washington, he remained grounded in the soil of Patrick County. He and the other four Patrick County natives from elsewhere whom he enlisted to serve on the Patrick County Education Foundation board all agreed

that they owed their success to the solid foundation they received growing up in Patrick.

## AFTERWORDS

In December 2005, President John T. Casteen III of the University of Virginia named former Virginia Gov. Gerald L. Baliles to be the director of the Miller Center of Public Affairs, the nonpartisan institution dedicated to studying U.S. national and international policy, with a special emphasis on the American presidency. President Casteen said:

This appointment signals a new direction for one of our most distinguished and productive centers. ... Gov. Baliles' coming to lead the Center is the best possible news as we build on the dominance established in recent years by its publications of major series of presidential recordings, by its educational programs, and by its new ventures involving the papers of persons close to the presidency.

In March 2009, over four years after Jerry Baliles became the director of the Miller Center, the Virginia Press Association recognized him as "Virginian of the Year." After accepting that prestigious award, Jerry gave a well-researched and heart-felt analysis of today's problems faced in newspapers and print journalism, titled *"The Fourth Estate and the Governance of the Country."*

After giving a survey of the history, importance and challenges for newspapers in America and Virginia—from colonial times to

the present—he posed a question and what the Miller Center will do to help find an answer:

Thus, the question: Can we govern the country without newspapers, the provider for much of the news that is carried by radio, television and the Internet?

At the Miller Center we intend to convene in the coming months a national working group of key media leaders, stakeholders and academic experts to systematically address two questions:

1. What are the future prospects for the infrastructure of news journalism?
2. What effects will trends with newspapers and the media in general have on the governance of the country?

The Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia has been known as a place for leaders to come together to find solutions, and perhaps we can contribute now in some way, as a facilitator, in helping to identify lines of progress as newspapers and journalism face today's changing trends and technology.

I thank you, again, for the honor of this award—and on behalf of the Miller Center, I look forward to being of service in helping to consider the path ahead for the very Jeffersonian work of the press.

Those closing comments are vintage Jerry Baliles: identify a problem, do the necessary diligence in research, and set up a forum of informed persons to discuss the situation and to recommend solutions.

As its web site states: “The Miller Center Forum presents more than 60 speakers each year, drawn from high-ranking public officials and others involved in shaping public policy, from the academy, and from journalists covering national and international events.”

For several years I was hopeful that Virginia’s former governor, Gerald L. Baliles, would run again, even after almost twenty years out of office. Now I see that he has a most significant role at The Miller Center, advising our nation’s leaders, perhaps even the President, and “... following Jefferson’s vision of the University’s public service mission... .” I will concede that there is more than one way for such a talented citizen to serve his country—and the Commonwealth.



## **Chapter 16**

### **Leading to Diversity at the University**

In 1955 when I entered the University of Virginia, it was a mirror of the upper class of the state in which it is situated, and was also fairly emblematic of the white well-to-do in the rest of the southern region. Illusions of grandeur lurked in many corners, and the worthiness of truly national stature was difficult to confirm. That changed in the 1960s, when the University began to take both tangible and symbolic actions to replace the flickering shadows of past glories. Current accomplishments and positive plans for the future began to appear. The University seemed poised to enter a new golden age, not envisioned since the retirement of president Edwin A. Alderman, in 1931. Alderman was the first president of the University of Virginia, from 1904 to 1931; his predecessors had been designated chairman of the faculty, a title said to be the preference of Thomas Jefferson, the University's founder.

The Center for Politics is an example of modern programs at U. Va. that have consistently earned verifiable national recognition. Larry J. Sabato, the Norfolk native who is University Professor and Robert Kent Gooch Professor of Politics at the University of

*Presidents Edgar Shannon and Frank Hereford*

Virginia, is also founder and director of the Center for Politics, which offers innovative programs ranging from civic education of young



people to election analysis and oral political history. In June 2009 the Center and the Community Ideas Stations (PBS) received an Award of Excellence, given annually by the International Academy of Visual Arts, for “Questioning the Constitution,” an in-depth look at constitutional reform in America.

Frank Hereford’s leadership, initially as provost and then as president, 1975-85, provided the impetus for U. Va.’s return to preeminence as a nationally recognized, comprehensive university. Hereford achieved remarkable success in attracting record levels of private support for this public university—a new field of endeavor for most state-funded institutions in the 1970s. The affable and academic President Hereford brought the University of Virginia into the top tier of “public ivy” universities, with auspicious leadership from the Board of Visitors and its thoroughly active and supportive Rector of the Board, Joshua P. Darden Jr.

In 1990, John T. Casteen III became the sixth president of the University of Virginia. Leading up to this time, the two Virginias—state and university—had been blessed with a disparate group of political and education leaders in the 1970s and ’80s. The leadership

at the capitol in Richmond included Linwood Holton, Sargeant Reynolds, and Gerald Baliles, who moved the state forward in new ways, despite the usual obstructions by the conservative old guard. The leaders on the Grounds in Charlottesville were enlightened educators such as Edgar Shannon and Frank Hereford, who nudged the university toward a higher goal than just being best in the south. They prepared the way for U. Va.'s objectives for the twenty-first century to be fully national, and often international, in scope and focus.

In the political-social realm, the General Assembly of Virginia passed a resolution in the spring of 2007 expressing regret for the evils of slavery that had besmirched Virginia history. This resolution noted that enslaved people were forced to construct facilities at the University of Virginia, between 1825 and 1865. The University's board of visitors soon thereafter announced its own unanimous resolution of apology for slavery—on Founder's Day, April 13, 2007, Thomas Jefferson's birthday. The board of visitors' resolution commended the General Assembly for its expression of regret about the practice of slavery at the state level, and the board went further by reaffirming the University's commitment to "equal



opportunity and to the principle that human freedom and learning are, and must be, inextricably linked in this Commonwealth and in this Republic." President Casteen reported this action to the University's constituency in an

*Frank Hereford, Virginia's fifth president.*

online news advisory, *An Eye to the Future*, in July 2007.

These resolutions are examples of how public acknowledgment of errors of the past may produce positive actions in the future. The University began to take extraordinary strides to bring diversity to all phases of life on the Grounds—tangibly, by quadrupling its budgetary commitment to financial aid for low-income and minority students. Symbolically, the University declared that diversity will be its first priority in all activities for the years ahead. This declaration appeared in the *Commission on the Future of the University* in June 2007:

The University will embrace and promote diversity in every sense of the word—in the academic enterprise, in student admissions and student programs, in faculty advancement, and in the institution's business practices. Professors will encourage students to engage persons from other races and cultures. All students from all economic backgrounds will have full access to the range of study abroad, January-term, and other co-curricular programs, regardless of the students' financial means. As a matter of principle, and in the best interest of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the University will ensure that all businesses and business owners have equal opportunity to share in procurement. The University will embrace diversity because it is a core principle of university life, and because human diversity builds strength in the University and in the nation.

John Casteen as president has influenced the University of Virginia community to draw on the distinctive attributes of its past

and to make changes in its practices for the future, aiming to set standards for measurably higher achievement in the twenty-first century. In the almost twenty years that he served as president, Casteen has encouraged recruitment of a diverse group of people for the University's faculty and administration, and he has fully supported them in their new environment. Thus fresh voices have been able to achieve remarkable goals immediately, and to lay the groundwork for greater accomplishment in the longer term. Programs such as AccessUVA have received widespread, positive coverage in both the national and the education press.

For all of this progress, President Casteen has had a plan.

John Casteen has worked patiently with the U. Va. Board of Visitors, and has also built a solid senior administrative team. It takes time to attract such a team, to develop the internal trust, and to learn to work together at maximum efficiency. In the two decades that he's been president, Casteen has earned the equivalent of an advanced degree with honors in the art of institutional planning, development and fundraising. He combines this art with his formal academic credentials and his thorough understanding of and concern for people. These assets enable him to be one of the two or three most effective university presidents in America today. He had important training and experience leading up to becoming president of U. Va.

Immediately before coming back to U. Va. he had been president of the University of Connecticut, 1985-90; he served as Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1982-85; and before that was U.Va.'s dean of admissions, 1975-82. He also earned respect as a scholar and teacher, having taught English

at both U.Va. and the University of California at Berkeley. He had entered the University in 1961 at the age of 17, as the first member of his Portsmouth, Virginia family to attend college.

John told me of how U. Va.'s relatively new dean of admissions—Marvin Perry, former head of the English department at W & L—visited in the Casteen home and sealed his family's decision for him to attend Virginia. Casteen earned three degrees in English from the University. Later, as dean of admissions, he too visited in the homes of many future students, and readily acknowledges the influence of his mentor, Marvin Perry. Serving as Dean of Admissions from 1960 to 1967, Perry traveled throughout the state and beyond, talking with alumni groups and visiting high schools and preparatory schools. "We needed to cover Virginia," Perry said, "because some counties still had never sent a (student) to U.Va." (from *The Transformation*, an oral history of the University.)

Most impressive on the list of John Casteen's accomplishments is his commitment to achieving economic, racial and gender diversity in U. Va.'s student body, as well as among the faculty and staff. He is in the forefront among national leaders in higher education who have "put their reputations on the line" to insure that capable students in families at the lowest economic levels are recruited to attend the most prestigious colleges in the country. Those institutions will now guarantee that a student who is academically qualified but financially hampered by a lack of funds will receive the financial aid needed to enter one of those colleges and be successful. Recruitment is a requirement if a college is to achieve diversity—as are attention and follow-through with families who have little or no college experience. This Casteen knows by heart.

High profile leaders such as John Casteen and William G. Bowen, formerly at Princeton (president, 1972-88, and faculty member, 1958-72), have taken a personal, unstinting interest in helping needy students gain admissions and internal support at competitive colleges. The presidents of Harvard, Yale, UNC-Chapel Hill, and the University of Virginia were among the first to announce major changes in their institutions' financial aid packages in 2004, aimed at attracting larger numbers of needy students. This movement in competitive universities has grown and spread significantly in the ensuing five years, and the University of Virginia remains at the forefront.

At last, a wide-ranging "educated citizenry" as envisioned by Thomas Jefferson is an achievable goal in our country. Imagine Jefferson's elation over the present initiative at the University of Virginia to expand the economic diversity of its student body through the program called AccessUVa. President Casteen has said, "We are reaching out to qualified students who are able to succeed here, but do not realize that they can afford U.Va. We are letting them know that we can and will help, and that a first-rate university education is within the reach of any student with the academic background and demonstrated financial need." From a news release of May 22, 2009:

#### **After Five Years, AccessUVa is Successful**

In the five years since the University of Virginia unveiled its AccessUVa financial aid plan, two things have become clear. First, it's working. Qualified applicants are seeing that money need not prevent them from getting a U.Va. education. The

University is enrolling a more economically diverse student body. The University's culture is changing.

Second, it's expensive. Total need-based aid to U.Va. undergraduates rose from \$37 million in 2003-04 to \$59.1 million during the just-concluded 2008-09 academic year, and some are forecasting that the number may top \$73 million in 2009-10. And while some of those funds will come from federal, state and other outside sources, the share paid from University funds and endowments has more than doubled over the last six years, from \$14.1 million to \$31.3 million.

Thomas Jefferson from the outset had envisioned that the academic institution he created would play a role in assuring the young American nation's presence on the international stage. He believed that establishing the University of Virginia was of equal importance with his drafting of the Declaration of Independence, and he said so in the epitaph that he prepared for himself:

Here Was Buried Thomas Jefferson  
Author Of The Declaration Of American Independence  
Of The Statute Of Virginia For Religious Freedom  
And Father Of The University Of Virginia

History shows that from its statutory establishment in 1819, the University has faced resistance from arch-conservatives and other politicians in the Virginia legislature who failed to catch the vision for the University's outreach to the entire American republic. Jefferson himself commented, early in his drive to



establish the University, that he encountered opposition from “the lawyers in Richmond” who failed to grasp the importance of his educational dream. The naysayers were not all Richmond residents—the state legislators simply gathered there for their sessions, just as they do today.

Soon after the turn of the twenty-first century, remarkable changes began to occur in U. Va.’s governmental relationships—particularly in interactions with the state of Virginia and with the General Assembly. President Casteen took a low profile but an influential role in paving the way for these changes—drawing upon his experience as Virginia’s Secretary of Education. He reported the impact of the “Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act” to the University’s constituency in his *President’s Report 2004-05*:

More than at any time since its founding, the University of Virginia is prepared to fulfill Thomas Jefferson’s intention to create the “bulwark of the human mind in this hemisphere.” It stands ready to demonstrate that a public institution can take its place in the front rank of all universities, public and private. Institution-wide, it is looking at what it will need in the way of improved programs, expanded facilities, and additional resources to realize Jefferson’s vision in the twenty-first century.

On July 1, 2006, after the state of Virginia’s top leaders in higher education had spent untold hours of behind-the-scenes planning and negotiating, the Governor and General Assembly approved

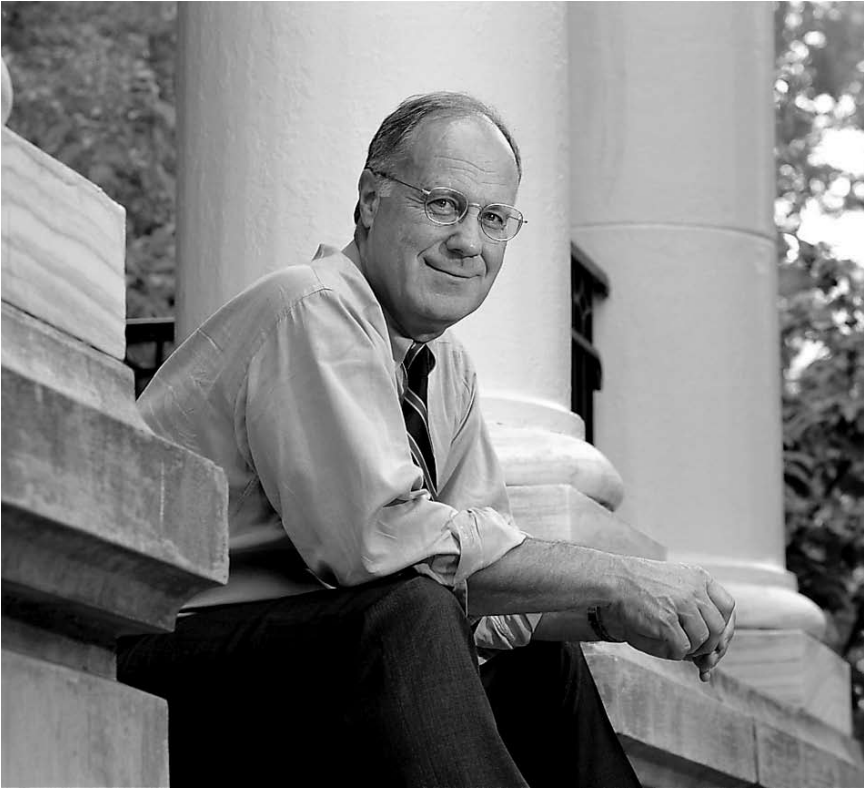
a monumental change to the structure of higher education in the state:

“A new era was created by the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act, which gives all 16 public colleges and universities new freedom from state control in areas such as spending, tuition and personnel management, while also requiring the schools to meet specific goals set by the state.” The University of Virginia, along with Virginia Tech and the College of William and Mary, were granted the highest of three levels of autonomy available under the new system, which President Casteen described as “a framework for transforming public higher education.”

This change is another step toward achieving the position of national influence that Jefferson envisioned and described in 1822:

“Our aim (is) the securing to our country a full and perpetual institution for all the useful sciences. ... Patience and perseverance will secure the blessed end. If we shrink, it is gone forever.

This quotation became a statement of purpose and motto for the remarkably successful Campaign for the University of Virginia that was completed in 2004. It sparked the most ambitious fundraising effort attempted in an American public university to that point in time. A record number of national corporations and foundations joined the University’s alumni and friends as donors to enable the



*John Casteen—orchestra director for this new world symphony.*

campaign to succeed. The University subscribed over one billion dollars to support an institution that is “national, not sectional.”

Today’s U. Va. leaders, like Jefferson, dare to think beyond the borders of the state and nation. They draw financial resources from multinational sources, and reciprocate by offering educational opportunities at the University to students from around the world. In 2009, a campaign to raise \$3 billion was two-thirds of the way to its goal.

When Thomas Jefferson’s was a college student, no state in the young nation provided education for the ordinary man at any level.

Jefferson wished to provide public education at little cost to all those who would participate in the democratic form of government that he had helped to establish. He abhorred the notion that only the wealthy would be able to run the government, simply because they could pay the cost of educating themselves and their children.

Jefferson also worried about America's potential leaders being trained exclusively in one political philosophy, namely Federalism in his time. Federalism was taught at New England colleges, especially Yale and Harvard, and Jefferson worried that those views might come to dominate in the American government. He therefore worked vigilantly to create an institution that was open to people from all income levels and that encouraged a diversity of political points of view. He also insisted that there be no requirement of religious affiliation or practice. It has been said that the University of Virginia was the first American college to be centered upon a library rather than a church.

Jefferson's assignments in France and travels on the Continent had enabled him to learn first-hand of the European models for higher education. He also studied broader intellectual ideas such as "inalienable rights," reading scholars of the Enlightenment in several countries, especially England, Germany and France. Few American universities have had a founder with such a broad world-view as Thomas Jefferson. It therefore takes great courage for the president and board of visitors in the twenty-first century to pursue Jefferson's dream of a "University for the education of all succeeding generations of youth in this Republic." The University, in charting a fresh course to serve many nationalities of people, is again pursuing what Jefferson envisioned as part of his dream.

John Casteen has been the orchestra director for much of this new world symphony that is being performed at the University of Virginia. He has personally established the methodical, academic manner in which the University goes about the planning, examining and enacting of diversity policies throughout every level of the institution. The success of these policies is a study in ways of responding to the most important societal issue of the twenty-first century. The remarkable success of these diversity policies is a tribute to the patience and commitment of a seasoned, insightful university president who has taken his time over twenty years.

Where other presidents may have chosen to push too hard for change—without first gaining the understanding and support of their trustees, faculty, students and other constituents—Casteen has chosen to move more slowly, working from the inside out. He has unified the leadership among the board of visitors; he has empowered representatives of the students, faculty and staff; and he has gained understanding from the alumni who are spread over several generations and hold various points of view. All of these members of the University community must eventually walk in a procession down the Lawn together if a world-class institution is to be a reality. Casteen has succeeded in bringing the University of Virginia to a high level. His goal, he says, is “To fulfill Thomas Jefferson’s intention to create the ‘bulwark of the human mind in this hemisphere.’”

I have observed the University for over fifty years from several vantage points: as a student and alumnus, as a college preparatory school administrator, and as a financial aid advocate. The university is now on a path to become all that Mr. Jefferson envisioned.

Regarding students' financial ability, he wrote in an 1818 letter to Joseph C. Cabell:

A system of general instruction, which shall reach every description of our citizens from the richest to the poorest ... will be the latest of all the public concerns in which I shall permit myself to take an interest.

Thus we see again that Jefferson was a man of limitless vision. Under President Casteen's administration the University of Virginia has reached an unprecedented level of socioeconomic inclusiveness, of excellent physical facilities, and of unmatched financial stability.

John Casteen also knows that achieving full diversity is more than just "the latest" on societal challenges for institutions to meet. He knows that diversity is a new source of strength for the University—just as it is for our nation. I am thankful that his vision has been built upon diversity and inclusiveness. While the University of Virginia may have taken longer to reach this position of total commitment to diversity, the unfolding results are solid and will be a firm foundation for generations to come. Here too, the University imitates the continued advancement of American society.

President John T. Casteen III has effectively advanced the objectives of his distinguished predecessors in the University's leadership, beginning with Thomas Jefferson, the remarkable founder of the institution. Casteen has also set high standards and opened new opportunities for those who follow after him, in all

categories—students, faculty, administrators and alumni—when he steps down in August 2010.

It continues to be difficult for me to separate the two Virginias—the state and the University—in thinking about John Casteen. He has throughout his career had a remarkable impact upon both. It is hard to imagine his straying far from the Old Dominion when he retires. May he, like Jefferson, find another world-class challenge in education, and reveal to us soon, as Jefferson did to John Adams, what his next project will be. The two Virginias, as well as the nation, need him in the years ahead.



## Epilogue

It is well known that Thomas Jefferson wrote hundreds of letters to people ranging from former President John Adams to the grounds manager at Monticello. Perhaps not so familiar is the fact that John Casteen writes many email messages to his U.Va. colleagues and constituents—I cannot imagine how many on a given day. I do know how much I appreciate his notes to me, especially this one that I received in early March, 2009:

G—Congratulations on receiving the Woodberry Distinguished Service Award. What a fine and fitting recognition of your contributions to Woodberry and to its people. I am on the road just now ... then home late Friday. I always appreciate receiving your kind notes and observations. This piece of news is especially welcome. Best wishes, J.

John and I became friends when he was appointed Dean of Admissions at Virginia in 1975, and our paths have crossed personally or professionally ever since. Boundless is my esteem for





him and his accomplishments for the University of Virginia.

I wish to thank several people by name for their special help to me with this book. First, Robert V. Hatcher called me out of the blue in April 2003 and both encouraged and enabled me to begin writing about “growing up in Tidewater Virginia and working in education.” Bob made it possible for me to stop doing consulting to earn money, and to discover that I could pursue the writing life. As he might say, he “got me off the dime,” and I never looked back. How generous was this man!

Next, I reconnected with a former student, Alfred P. Scott, at his Christchurch School class reunion in May 2006, near the school’s waterfront, overlooking the Rappahannock River. I was

inspired to tell Alfred of my writing project, and its connection to the Rappahannock, and he offered to convert chapters stored on my computer into PDF files and to print proofs for me. This he has done, as well as produce twenty copies of a printer's proof version. Alfred's mastery of computers, especially design and printing functions, has enabled me to produce both the online and print versions of this book; thus, "No Alfred, no book." He also enlisted the help of Jack Amos, a talented graphic designer, who has provided layout and other excellent design features for the book. Alfred also persuaded his daughter, Sara Scott Adamson, to read the manuscript, and she gave me numerous specific, useful suggestions—hard to come by for a novice writer.

A considerable number of people mentioned in the book have given me their suggestions and corrections. Of special note are Josh Darden—Mr. U.Va.—and Bonnie Sutton—Mrs. ACCESS. My writer friends Phil Walzer and Steve Frazier often kept me going with a good word. My reacquired friend from Christchurch School days, Carl Barnes, showed me by his example in his book, *Carefree*, that a memoir of his father and family can be well done and useful, and that has moved me to complete this work.

Ally Peltier, a writing consultant, said, "It may be your greatest joy in life to publish this manuscript into an attractive book and simply send copies to everyone who has impacted your life, to everyone you love and admire." I'm doing that now. In spring 2008 I took an eight-week memoir writing workshop with Michael Blumenthal, who holds the Mina Hohenberg Darden Chair in Creative Writing at Old Dominion University. Both the instructor and other workshop members were most thoughtful and balanced

in their suggestions. Before that, I worked on memoir-writing with The Muse group in Norfolk, ably directed by Lisa Hartz. And going back to 2001 when I started writing in the memoir vein, Debbie Bellucci listened to my recorded drafts on cassette tapes and turned them into hard copy—sending them back to me by email for my final editing.

Others, too numerous to list, have helped me along the way—formally or informally. My always supportive wife Prior has read or listened to every word, has made key suggestions, and has urged me to stick to writing the truth. I've tried to do so—even if I occasionally tell it slant, if possible, as Emily Dickinson suggested.

Gerry Cooper

Spring 2010

Norfolk, Virginia



*Gerry Cooper and Alfred Scott*

## End Notes

There were at least two considerations to be made about the use of notes with the text of *On Scholarship*. First, I did not want to slow down the reader's progress through the chapters of the book, so I eliminated footnotes and endnotes for each chapter. I want to be sure, however, that my sources are clearly acknowledged, and that readers may have some indication of where they may find additional information.

I have therefore listed items that I believe relate to each chapter; however, I have not tied these sources to specific words or lines in the text.

I hope that the Notes will be helpful to readers and will encourage them to go deeper into some of the subjects that I have mentioned. Whenever possible I have added comments to help the search, including links to material on the World Wide Web and Internet.

## Chapter 1

### My Early Years

*See records of Lawson-Ball Camp No. 52, United Confederate Veterans of Lancaster County, Va.* William G. Beane had a large family and considerable land holdings. He had enlisted at age 18 in the Confederate army, Company C of the 42nd Battalion that later became part of the 24th Regiment of Virginia Cavalry.

The Rappahannock Record, Kilmarnock, Va. ([www.rrecord.com](http://www.rrecord.com)) printed a public recognition of former County Supervisors, dated August 31, 1995.

Information about the Beane family was collected from the Beane family grave enclosure at the former Edgley Church, on state route 201, north of Lively, Va.

William G. Beane's second marriage was to Annie Robertson of Wicomico County, Maryland. Source: Annie Robertson's "autograph book," with handwritten inscriptions of friendship and god-speed, dated 1881-83. [Gerry Cooper owns the autograph book, given to him by his mother.] Annie was called "Nannie." Their marriage produced seven children, all of whom married and had eleven children among them.

Lancaster County was also the original home of Lucy Elizabeth Robinson, who married Benny Baker and had a son, Russell Baker, who became a columnist for the *New York Times* and wrote *Growing Up*, a memoir for which he won a Pulitzer Prize in 1983. Baker

wrote that his mother, while hospitalized at age 81 imagined “she was a young girl standing on a wharf at Merry Point, Va., waiting for the Chesapeake Bay Steamer” bound for Baltimore. (*Growing Up*, First Signet printing, 1984, page 12.)

My dad and his brother came to storekeeping naturally, for their father had owned the general store, “George L. Cooper & Sons,” in Neola, Iowa. A promotional calendar for that business, circa 1908, included a photo of the Coopers’ twin sons, Leo and Lyn, with the slogan, “Double Value at Coopers’ Store.”

## **Chapter 2**

### **Getting an Education, Not the Confederacy**

The LeMat revolver was patented by Dr. Jean A. F. LeMat of New Orleans in 1856. LeMat went to Paris at the time of the Civil War and had his revolvers made there. He sold them to both the army and the navy of the Confederate States of America. (From a private source.)

## **Chapter 3**

### **Log Cabin on the Corrotoman**

Editor’s Note: Spellings varied in Colonial times. Today’s spellings for these rivers (and for the Native American tribes from which they are taken) are Rappahannock and Corrotoman.

*The Poetry of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

*The 1784 Map of the Corrotoman River*: “Reproduced at slightly

reduced size from the original 1784 map in the archives of the Virginia State Library and published with permission by the Mary Ball (Washington) Museum and Library, Inc., Lancaster, Virginia 22503.”

The Mary Ball Washington Museum and Library’s mission: “To discover, collect, preserve, understand and interpret the history of Lancaster and surrounding counties of the Commonwealth of Virginia for the enjoyment and educational benefit of all residents, succeeding generations and visitors to the area.” [www.mbwm.org/index.asp](http://www.mbwm.org/index.asp)

## **Chapter 4**

### **Seeing Life in a New Light**

The Pollard’s home, Bel Air, is now part of “Belle Isle State Park” and is open to visitors year around. See also “Belle Isle State Park,” a brochure by the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation, that contains full information and maps. *Bel Air* and the “Little House” may be rented for overnight use. See also [www.dcr.virginia.gov](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov)

*The Story of Little Switzerland*, by Louise deSausseure Duls, (Whittet & Shepperson, Richmond, Va. 1982).

*The Holly Ball: The Northern Neck’s Unique Tradition*, 1895-1995. Compiled and written by Nancy Hubbard Clark. Kilmarnock: 1995. Page 25.

*A History of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia*, by Dr. John Page Williams, (Trustees of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, Va., 1999).

*Man Thinking: The Nature of Emerson's American Scholar*, by Judd Taylor, March 23, 1999. See also [www.jjnet.com/emerson/amscholar.htm](http://www.jjnet.com/emerson/amscholar.htm)

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Neck, the River and College Prep**

*Lie Down In Darkness*, by William Styron (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1951). Styron's first novel, for which he won the Prix de Rome.

*Darkness Visible*, by William Styron, New York: Random House, 1990.

*William Styron, A Life*, by James L. W. West III, New York: Random House, 1998

*The Stronghold*, by Miriam Haynie, Richmond, Dietz Press, 1952

Robert M. Yarbrough Jr. was a graduate of Millsaps College, Miss., and held a Master of Arts degree in English Literature from West Virginia University. He joined the faculty at Christchurch in 1952 and taught senior English. He became headmaster in 1957 and held that position for 13 years. He led the school to new heights in student enrollment, stable finances, and attracting well-qualified



faculty. At Christchurch he was called “Mr. A.” to differentiate him from another master named Yerbrough, who was called “Mr. E.” He died in Baptist Hospital in Miami, Fla., on October 25, 2006, at age 82.



*Gerry reading dedication for Memorial to the Reverend Dr. Emmett H. Hoy in Christchurch School Chapel, 2009*

## Chapter 6

### An Empty Room at Princeton

The student waiter system at Princeton mirrored many of the male-dominated rituals of corporate America, past and present. Men in various corporate positions have considered themselves to be above accountability, bringing discredit to the business and political leadership of our country.

“Virginia” is the name by which the University of Virginia was known up until the 1960s, when it was modernized into “U.Va.” We

of the old guard continue to talk about V-I-R-G-I-N-I-A.

Joseph Blotner, *An Unexpected Life*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005. See especially Chapter 12: “The University and Mr. Faulkner.”

Edwin A. Alderman was president of the University of Virginia from 1904 to 1931; his predecessors had been called “chairman of faculty,” a designation that was said to be preferred by the founder, Thomas Jefferson. Also see Edwin A. Alderman, “Edgar Allan Poe and the University of Virginia,” (the Virginia Quarterly Review, spring 1925) from *We Write for Our Own Time: Selected Essays from the Virginia Quarterly Review*, Charlottesville, 2000.

Woodrow Wilson, while president of Princeton (1902-10), “... attempted to curtail the influence of the elitist ‘social clubs,’ ... met with resistance from trustees and potential donors. He believed the system was smothering the intellectual and moral life of the undergraduates. Opposition from wealthy and powerful alumni further convinced Wilson of the undesirability of exclusiveness and moved him towards a more populist position in his politics.” USA-Presidents, 2004. [www.usapresidents.info/wilson.htm](http://www.usapresidents.info/wilson.htm)

William G. Bowen, Martin A. Kurzweil and Eugene M. Tobin, *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005).

University of Virginia officials with whom I have communicated

in recent years include Edward L. Ayers, then dean of the College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (now president of the University of Richmond); Larry J. Sabato, Robert Kent Gooch Professor of Government and Foreign Affairs and Director of the Center for Politics at U.Va.; Nicole F. Hurd, former Director, Center for Undergraduate Excellence; John T. Blackwell, Dean of Admissions; and John T. Casteen III, President. I do not intend to imply that any of these officials have endorsed my views expressed here.

Ellis, Joseph J., *American Sphinx* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 334-342, with excellent bibliographical references. Ellis does reasonable justice to Thomas Jefferson's personal role in planning and establishing his "academical village," the University of Virginia, in the last period of his life, 1816-26. Jefferson spent his early years of trying to get Virginia's legislators to initiate public education system. He believed that capable students who lacked funds would be supported at public expense. According to Ellis, he gradually came to believe that Virginia's young men needed an alternative to the colleges of the North—especially Harvard and Yale—where he viewed the graduates to be "fanatics and tories." Ellis also makes references to Jefferson's insistence that members of the University's Board of Visitors always attend meetings, even when they were incumbent Presidents of the United States—as were James Madison and James Monroe.

## Chapter 7

### Life and Work in Boarding Schools

My teaching experience at Christchurch was interrupted in 1959-61 by two years of active duty in the U. S. Naval Reserve. I served most of that time as administrative petty officer for Helicopter Utility Squadron Two, Detachment 1, at the Naval Air Station in Norfolk, VA.

Our elder son, Lyn Evan Cooper II, was born at the University of Virginia Hospital on September 12, 1964. He later attended Woodberry Forest School, the University of Virginia, and now lives with his family in Charlottesville.

Our younger son, Charles Meade Cooper, was also born at U.Va. Hospital, on June 28, 1967. He graduated from Norfolk Academy and James Madison University, and lives in Southern California.

## Chapter 8

### A New Era at Woodberry Forest

The SSAT was (and is) the admission test used by all of the leading independent schools in the U.S. The SSAT's board members consisted of an influential group from the member schools.

The following definition is apt for the new era at Woodberry: *lib·er·al*—1. tolerant of different views and standards of behavior in others; 2. favoring gradual reform, especially political reforms that extend democracy, distribute wealth more evenly, and protect the personal freedom of the individual.

The Alumni Bulletin of Woodberry Forest for fall, 1966 included pictures of these “New Masters”: Manuel R. Ascarza (U. of Md.), Gerald L. Cooper (U. of Va.), Robert E. Cox (UNC-CH), Geoffery F. Evans (Stanford), Joseph H. Harman (U. of Mich.), Arthur L. Johnston (SUNY-Albany), Rosemary Severance (U. of Ill.) and Travis J. Tysinger (Hampden-Sydney).

## **Chapter 9**

### **Ed Dorsey: Powerful and Effective**

In the late 1970s independent schools became more conscious of the external perceptions of their programs and activities, especially boarding schools, as they sought to overcome some of the negative impressions made among the general public earlier in the decade. I recounted a sample of the problems in this chapter about Ed Dorsey. The schools also became more inclusive—both racially and economically—among the members of their student bodies, and within their faculties and staffs.

I have tried to focus on the educational challenges and opportunities that I and others found at Woodberry Forest School, and to overlook the behavior of a small number of students in a time when there was much unrest in our society at large.

My time in preparatory schools, comprising three-fifths of my career, was an important segment of my total educational experience. I believe that this involvement helped me to be more aware of the high academic standards that can be achieved at the secondary school level, and therefore I became a more effective educational administrator.

## Chapter 10

### To the Children of Tomorrow

Many of the quotations from Sarge Reynolds' public speeches are found in the only biography of Sarge, written by Andrew H. McCutcheon and Michael P. Gleason, *Sarge Reynolds: In the Time of His Life*, (1996: Gleason Publishing Inc., Gwynn, VA 23066). I had helpful telephone conversations with Andy in 2006, and I had visited with Mike several years earlier. Copies of *Sarge Reynolds: In the Time of His Life* are available at Gleason Publishing Inc., Gwynn, VA 23066.

*The J. Sargeant Reynolds Conference* was the title of the Eighth Annual Virginia Political History Project, held July 22, 2005 at the Richmond Marriott Hotel. Dr. Larry Sabato organized the conference as a project of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, of which he is founder and director, and the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. I was privileged to attend the conference.

The two University of Virginia Centers published an attractive, bound "Official Transcript" of *The J. Sargeant Reynolds Conference*. Its contents include a J. Sargeant Reynolds biography, remarks by Larry Sabato, Richard S. "Major" Reynolds III, Sarge's brother, and J. Sargeant Reynolds Jr., Sarge's son. Also included are keynote speeches by Andy McCutcheon and Mike Gleason, and the comments made in two panel discussions.

The University of Virginia's Center for Politics worked in partnership with the PBS Community Idea Stations in Richmond to produce

“Sarge Reynolds, A Documentary” in 2006. For more information, see [www.ideastations.org/sarge](http://www.ideastations.org/sarge)

*The Land Between Waters, Virginia's Lancaster County, 1651-2001*, by Maurice Duke, inspired my comment on the spirit of adventure that emanated from Jamestown and motivated leaders such as Thomas Jefferson and Sargeant Reynolds. (Mary Ball Washington Museum & Library, Lancaster, Va., 2001.)

## **Chapter 11**

### **To Winston-Salem and Beyond**

I am happy to learn that Forsyth Country Day School appears to have thrived in the past twenty-five years, since I departed in June 1981.

## **Chapter 12**

### **A Different Kind of University**

“Azusa Street Revival,” from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: The Azusa Street Revival, also known as Miracle At Azusa Street (1906–1909) took place in Los Angeles, California and was led by William J. Seymour (1870–1922), an African American preacher. It began with a meeting on April 14, 1906 at African Methodist Episcopal Church. Seymour preached that speaking in tongues was evidence of Holy Spirit baptism; his first Los Angeles parish therefore expelled him. Seymour continued preaching until he and a small group experienced glossolalia. Crowds began to gather and a mission space was found on Azusa Street, in a run-down building in

downtown Los Angeles. Worship there was frequent, spontaneous, and ecstatic, drawing people from around the world to a revival that lasted about three years and brought much attention to it. The Azusa revival was multi-racial, welcomed poor people, and encouraged the leadership of women, which was very controversial at the time. The revival drew many from the Holiness Movement, Baptists, Mennonites, Quakers, and Presbyterians, as well as people from various other denominations. The location is part of Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, California.

## **Chapter 13**

### **WSSU—Where Failure Was Not An Option**

Winston-Salem State University, a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina, is a historically black university that today is a recognized regional institution offering baccalaureate and graduate programs to a diverse student population. U.S. News and World Report has ranked the university among Top Public Comprehensive Colleges in the South - Bachelor's Category for the last nine years (2001-2009).

## **Chapter 14**

### **Promoting College Access at Career End**

This chapter contains numerous references to materials that I used in board and development activities for the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation, as well as in several other organizations where I led development and governance projects before I came to Norfolk in July 1994. Many of these materials are still in my files or on





*Prior on the U.S.S. Yorktown—Dependents' cruise*

computer disks, and I will consider making these available to bona fide nonprofit organizations upon request.

## **Chapter 15**

### **Changing Lives in Rural Virginia**

Update on the Patrick County Education Foundation: the following information for 2006-07 is quoted from PCEF's newsletter, *Changing Lives*:

#### **On Our Way to 2011**

The Patrick County Education Foundation is making real progress toward accomplishing our mission of raising education attainment levels in Patrick County. Here are a few highlights of that progress:

*College Access Program*

Assisted Patrick County High School (PCHS) students in securing nearly \$2.7 million in college financial aid since 2002.

Awarded 114 “Last Dollar” Scholarships and committed \$427,500 in aid to PCHS seniors.

SAT scores are up an average of 242 points for 31 PCHS students who participated in Foundation-sponsored SAT Prep activities earlier this year. (Scores are as of March 2006.)

*GED Promotion Project*

Patrick County now ranks 2nd among 44 rural Virginia counties in number of GEDs awarded per 1,000 residents, up from 43rd.

Number of GED graduates rose 153% from 2003 to 2005, from 19 in 2003 to 48 in 2005; enrollment up 42%, from 101 in 2003 to 143 in 2005.

Committed \$114,000 in \$1,000 GED graduate incentives.

*Workforce Training Program*

Trained 508 County adults through 32 Foundation-sponsored classes in 6 programs/courses.

Invested more than \$118,000 in job training for County adults.

Launched 3 new worker training programs since January 2006 and a fourth is planned, all in addition to those already underway.

(NOTE: Unless otherwise noted, data given is cumulative. For more

information, please visit the website: [www.patrickfoundation.net](http://www.patrickfoundation.net).)

## **Chapter 16**

### **Leading to Diversity at the University**

”John Casteen will be remembered as the person who understood Jefferson’s vision of this place and catapulted it into the 21st century.”—Heywood Fralin, rector of the University’s Board of Visitors, February 2010

### **Elite Colleges Open New Door to Low-Income Youths** (excerpt)

Concerned that the barriers to elite institutions are being increasingly drawn along class lines, and wanting to maintain some role as engines of social mobility, about two dozen schools—Amherst, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, the University of Virginia, Williams and the University of North Carolina, among them—have pushed in the past few years to diversify economically.

*The New York Times*, 2007.

# GERALD L COOPER

