L. Wright: Welcome to Interview 5 of Macon Memories, an oral history project at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia. Today is December 10, 2007. I’m Lynda Wright, a librarian at Randolph-Macon, and today I’m talking with Dr. Luther W. White, alumnus and past president of Randolph-Macon College. Mr. White was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the Class of 1947. After graduating from law school at Washington and Lee University, he practiced law in Norfolk, Virginia. He became president of Randolph-Macon college in 1967 and served through 1979. Today he will talk with us about both his student days at Randolph-Macon and about some experiences during his time as president.

To give us some context for your arrival at Randolph-Macon as a student in 1941, can you tell us about your family’s connection to Randolph-Macon?

L. White: Yes, thank you, Professor Wright. The answer to that is that 100 years ago this year, in 1907, my father graduated from Randolph-Macon College, and there were several behind him, generations before him that had come here in the late 1800s, and then in the years after that, my uncles came to Randolph-Macon, my brother, almost all the family in my father’s family and my mother’s family were Randolph-Macon alumni. One is remembered as Judge E. Barrett Prettyman, who was my mother’s brother. He was one of Randolph-Macon’s distinguished judiciary members, graduated, I think, here in 1914, and then there were others. And then our sisters and for the most part the women in our family went to Randolph-Macon Women's College. So we’ve been a part of it for almost its entire history.

L. Wright: You were a student at Randolph-Macon when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Tell us about the response on campus to the events of Pearl Harbor and the effects of World War II on the college.

L. White: Well, that’s a very interesting question and a very poignant one for all of us who lived through that. Of course, it was the winter of 1941, and just three days ago, which would have been 66 years from the date of Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, is when the great attack by the Japanese occurred at Honolulu. And we were just students at the college, I was a freshman, tiny Ashland was very sleepy, and the college was small, we all knew each other well. The prospect of war was looming, of course, in the future but nobody in our country had any real idea that this terrible attack could happen, least of all, the students at Randolph-Macon College. So we were
going about our business, and on that particular day — it was a Sunday, December 7, 1941 — I was in Lynchburg at a college dance. And I was hitchhiking a ride back to Ashland, the attack had occurred early in the morning, and it was afternoon and I was hitchhiking a ride and the driver of this truck had picked me up and said, “They’ve just attacked Pearl Harbor!” And I said, “Golly, where is that?” It was so remote to college students, 18-year-olds such as I, that we didn’t even know where it was. So we were shocked that we had been attacked by the Japanese and knew nothing about it. We knew that it was a cataclysmic event, and of course it was in all of history, and we all came back to college and we were all uncertain and scared about what the future would be.

Well, I had a room in the dormitory of Thomas Branch Dormitory on the east wing on the third floor, and I’ll give you the names of the students who were there at the time, and because we talked about everything, and we decided we should have a prayer meeting. That was an improbable event for students on the third floor of Thomas Branch Dormitory, but we were carried away with the war, and we enlisted our hallmate, Bunny Crum, Reverend Warner Crum, who’s had a distinguished career as a United Methodist minister, to lead us in this prayer meeting. And at the prayer meeting were Jack Simpson, Mac Cantor, Doug Hill, Mac Covington, Jack Russell, Lambuth Clarke, John Rollison, Vernon Gow, Luther White, and Bill McIntyre. The reason I can remember that is they were all the members of the entourage of the third floor. Now, the funny thing about this is that I wanted to be sure about the accuracy of the things I said, and I called Bunny Crum on the phone two or three days ago, and I said, “I’m going down to the college to recollect the things that happened on Pearl Harbor Day.” And he said, “Oh, I remember that well! I was preaching somewhere down on the Northern Neck of Virginia.” And I said, “Don’t you remember? You led us in a prayer meeting?” And he said, “I’m not too sure about that . . .” But anyhow, he did, in fact, and we came back. Now, the reason I’m telling you this story is that we were all joined together in reverence over the things that were occurring to our country, even as young college kids, we knew it was a big event, and we were all from families which had taught us to pray when you needed care. And that’s what we got that night. So that’s the story on Pearl Harbor.

Then, in the days after that, Randolph-Macon was different in many ways, but in many ways it was the same until the end of the war. First of all, almost instantly, a lot of the students went away to the war. And as it turned out, they were, for the most part, student athletes. Now, why that is, I’m not sure, but a lot of the athletes were gone even before Christmas-time, and this was December 7. They went instantly into the service. Others of us didn’t go, and we entered the naval reserve, and then after I had stayed at Randolph-Macon two years, they let me stay here two years, and many of us did, we went into officer training school in the Navy, and then we became officers in the Navy in the Pacific. But anyhow, the college was small to begin with; it only had — Randolph-Macon only had five or six hundred students — but by the time the war was two or three months over, I think the student enrollment was down half. Well, the faculty
members were uneasy because they didn’t know whether or not there were going to be enough students to pay the tuition, and some of them had gone to the war, and most of course the older ones had stayed on, so the college was very resolute in trying to keep up and not lose its standing during the war. And one of the effects of the athletes going so early was that it made it possible for us who were not the greatest athletes to play baseball and swim, do other things for the college in those years. Later on in the war, Dr. Moreland, who was president at the time, and who was just a sterling leader of the college in dire times, was able to get on campus a government-related, I think it was Army-related, unit of soldiers and their officers and their staff to come and occupy the campus, and they had an important pardon, though I’ve forgotten what it was. But anyhow, the income that that produced I’m sure is what enabled Randolph-Macon to get through the war. And then by the time the war was over, many of us came back and finished up, and life pretty well resumed its old ways again. Thank you.

L. Wright: How did the military service experience of the returning students after the war affect life on campus?

L. White: Well, the experience that I had, and others, I was in the Navy in the Pacific, the experience we had was such that we had to mature pretty quickly because we had responsibilities to carry out, and we came back, but we were eager to resume our education. My experience with Randolph-Macon returnees is that they were eager to get through and get on with their careers. Everybody recognized that we lost those years, and three years, in the war, and life was getting on, so they were highly motivated in their work and eager to get on to graduate schools and professional schools, which was my case. So we were glad to get back to it.

L. Wright: Moving on to talk about your time as president . . .

L. White: Yes?

L. Wright: Would you like to give us a brief account of your relationship with Randolph-Macon after you graduated up until your appointment as president?

L. White: Yes, as I said, I had gone to law school and got myself practicing law in Norfolk, and the college asked me, and many others like me, to take a part in the alumni fairs, which I did, and I was a part of the Alumni Association and ultimately president of it, so that position gave me an opportunity to see some of the college closer maybe than others did. So when the time came to find a president I was asked to be on the selection committee. Dr. Moreland had been here 28 years; he said he’d be glad to stay until we found a successor. Well, we went to work to try and find a successor. I guess that experience put me in the eyes of others at the college, and to make a long story short, I wound up being president myself. And I didn’t have the Ph.D. or the qualifications that others had, but anyhow, I and my family were honored to be asked, and we came here, and we served the college happily for 12 years.
L. Wright: That’s great. How did you and your family adjust to life in Ashland? Was the transition for you and your family from private citizen to the public life of the college presidency a big transition?

L. White: Well, it was not as big as you might imagine. First of all, of course Ashland was very hospitable, the campus was hospitable, my children at that time, the oldest was 12, and we had a baby six months, so we came with four children between those ages, the children immediately went to schools in Ashland and Hanover County, and three of my children graduated from Patrick Henry High School before we left 12 years later. So they were busy with new activities related to the college, but for the most part they were playing Little League baseball, and studying piano with Betsy Jones, and we did all the things everybody else did in Ashland. It was a wonderful, wonderful existence for me and my family in Ashland.

L. Wright: Great. You mentioned to me that many famous people came to visit the college during your time as president. Would you like to tell us about some of the people who spoke on campus, and how they came to be invited?

L. White: Yes. Well, thank you for letting me do that. Of course every generation, after all, I’ve been gone 30 years and the college has had many, many distinguished people, but I’ve learned to treasure the appearances during the time I was here as president, ’67–’79, of some famous personalities, and I thought it’d be interesting for this history to tell about some of them. Here we go.

First of all, you’ll remember the name Kreskin. I think Kreskin is still operating. He was a magician. And he got on the stage in Blackwell Auditorium, he was highly well-known at the time, it was difficult to get him, and he was able to do the most marvelous acts of magic. And after I left the campus, Kreskin was still coming back, so he was one of the favorites. Another person who came in the early days was Cassius Clay, now Mohammed Ali, the famous Mohammad Ali who said of himself, he was the best-known person in the world. I expect he was. In the early ’70s, he had been convicted of draft evasion, giving the reason that he didn’t go into the service that he was a conscientious objector. He had embraced Black Separatism, or Black Muslim movement, and they were against the war, and we were in the middle of the Vietnam War, so he got convicted.

Well, you asked how we got these people. There was a service that helped the college find these speakers, and we used that service a good bit, plus other services that were available to us. And we got Mohammad Ali lined up for the speech at the campus before he had been convicted. Well, his position in the war was not popular on campuses, plus the fact that he was a convicted felon at the time that it came for him to make a speech. And the officer in charge at the college who looked out for these programs said, “Oh! President White, maybe we ought to cancel this. We can cancel this. Because, you know, we’ll have a big mob here, and people will come here
and they’ll disrupt this speech.” And I crossed my fingers and said, “We’re going to go right ahead.” And he said, “Okay, we’ll go,” but he said, “I’ll call the state police.” And I said, “Listen, I don’t want any policemen in sight, we’re going to go right ahead like nothing ever happened.”

So we had the speech in the gymnasium where we played basketball, because we anticipated the crowd would be too big for Blackwell. It turned out it wasn’t, it was a good crowd, but not an overwhelming crowd. And Cassius Clay drove out from Richmond in his car in the morning, or in the early afternoon, his speech was in the afternoon late, and he mixed with the students in what was then the campus center. The campus center was a little tiny brick building in the middle of the campus where the students could go and get a Coke, and he mixed with them, had the best time. Then he came and made his speech, and it was laced with humor, he did soft-shoe dancing, he was the same ineffable Cassius Clay that we learned about him later. And I’ll tell you this, I don’t think he made any converts, but we all had a soft spot in our hearts for the great Mohammad Ali when he came to Randolph-Macon, because he gave himself so completely to coming. So that was Ali.

Another great personality we had was the great English poet, W. H. Auden, the great, great Auden, the great poet. He came, and the English department, Dr. Bill Gray and others were instrumental in getting him to come down from New York. I was just astonished. Fortunately, we were able to give enough notice in the paper several days before he came, and high school students came from all over Virginia in buses to hear the great Auden. And Mr. Auden, I was a little apprehensive, because I don’t think I’d ever been in the presence of a literary light of his standing. He came, and the principal thing I remember about him on the stage was he wore his bedroom slippers. And they were in a Scotch plaid. So there he was in his modest suit and his Scotch plaid bedroom slippers. I think he had a foot problem. But he made a gracious speech, and he was well-received, and when we took him downtown to the Commonwealth Club for a luncheon, I think there must have been ten of us in the party, I was a little nervous about that, because I couldn’t talk in the English language the way the great Auden had done in poetry. But he was very gracious; he was very gracious to a nervous college president. So that was a lovely occasion to have W. H. Auden.

Another great literary light we had was Katherine Anne Porter, who was the great author, among others, of *Ship of Fools*. Katherine Anne Porter came as a result of a family contact I had with her, and she was a guest in our home. And my wife entertained Katherine Anne Porter for several days. She was a genial, affable guest, and when she was in our home, we were worried, you know, what was she going to say? And the main thing she was worried about was what gown she was going to wear, I remember that. And she went on the stage in a flowing, and again the students came, high school students came from all over to hear the great Katherine Anne Porter. She’ll be remembered for saying about her writing, “If you’re not willing to tell all you feel, you better not write it at all.” And that’s the way her books are. So she was a great visitor.
I want to get on with this now. We had, in addition to that, Ramsey Clark, the famous assistant attorney general. We had the cartoonist Jeff MacNelly. Jeff MacNelly was the author of the comic strip *Shoe*. *Shoe* is still going under the successors to the *Shoe* name. But Jeff MacNelly was a genial cartoonist, a political cartoonist in those days on the Richmond newspapers, and he came out and he was in our group.

Another guest we had . . . I say guest, we never really could get him to be a guest, was Supreme Court Justice Lewis H. Powell. Justice Powell of course was at that time Virginia’s most distinguished citizen, a member of the Supreme Court, appointed by President Nixon. And his son, at that particular time, was a quarterback at Washington and Lee University football team, and when we played Washington and Lee, Justice Powell would always be there. But when the time came for us to play Washington and Lee in Ashland, I knew Justice Powell and Mrs. Powell would be there. So of course we turned the crank and got some hospitality up for a nice party, and invited Justice and Mrs. Powell to a party. And he declined in a most gracious way, he said, “I don’t have much time,” and I knew him from the law days so he said, “I knew you’d be hospitable towards me and the college and I appreciate that so much, but I want to see my son play for a few minutes, and then I’ve got to go.” And Justice Lewis Powell parked himself behind the goalpost. He would not go in the crowd, he wouldn’t let people idolize him, he went behind the goalpost, and I can remember sitting in my seat in the stadium watching Washington and Lee play Randolph-Macon in football, and looking down there, and there was a Justice of the United States watching his son play from behind the goalpost. It was a special time.

A couple more . . . am I going too long?

L. Wright: No, this is great.

L. White: A couple more people: we had a lot of people from the government. We had a special thing with Senator Hugh Scott from Pennsylvania, who was very prominent; in fact he was the leader of the United States Senate. He was an alumnus of Randolph-Macon and a trustee. And Hugh Scott was a great boon to the college and he was a great entrée for us to invite and get to come here Senator John Tower, Senator Scoop Jackson, Senator Frank Church, our own senator, Senator Harry Byrd, and others we were able to get to come. We weren’t too far from Washington, and they were, for the most part, glad to drive down. And the college was edified by being able to invite into its midst people of prominence of that kind and have them talk to the students. I remember serving lunch to Senator Frank Church, my wife prepared that luncheon and then we all had the best time with Senator Frank Church. He was unquestionably one of the most powerful people in the United States at the time. So he was fun to have at Randolph-Macon.

Another person that we had was President George H. W. Bush. In the year 1975, one of the things I had to do every year was get a graduation speaker. I used to make the speech myself
until the students objected so much that they made me get somebody else. So this particular year was going to be the graduation class of 1976, and I didn’t have a speaker. And a senior, his name is Tony Zinsser, came in — he’s now a physician, he’s been a physician all these years — and he said, “President White, have you got your speaker yet?” I said, “No, I haven’t.” He said, “How would you like to get President Bush?” Well, President Bush at the time was director of the CIA, and he had been our delegate to the United Nations. Of course, he was the Vice-President at the time. No, he was director of the CIA at the time. So I said, “Of course I’d like to have him. What makes you think that we could possibly get him?” He said, “Well, my mother is his secretary!”

So we were about to go on our Christmas break then — he was not President then; he wouldn’t have come if he’d been President — Zinsser said, “I’ll see him over the break, and I’ll invite him!” Well I thought the last thing in the world we could expect was for Mr. Bush to come, but Zinsser came back after the Christmas break, he said, “I got him! I got him!” So bless Pete, George H. W. Bush and Barbara, the famous Barbara came down in a black Cadillac with a driver to Randolph-Macon College and made the speech in 1976, and it was great to have him. He was just as genial then as he turned out to be later.

Now, let me tell you this and then I’ll get off the subject. One guest we tried to get, but we couldn’t get, and that was Katharine Hepburn. The great actress Katharine Hepburn we invited down. Katharine Hepburn’s grandfather, Reverend Hepburn, had been the Episcopal clergyman at Hanover courthouse. And that was our connection with her. She was interested in her forebears and their history, and her father, who was the son of the Reverend Hepburn, had gone on to be a distinguished physician in Connecticut. So we were in touch with Katharine Hepburn, and we invited her to come down and make a speech, and to receive an honorary degree, and in the file here at Randolph-Macon, in the Katharine Hepburn file, is her response. She wrote in her own handwriting, here was one of the most famous actresses in the world, she said, “I must decline your offer of an honorary degree,” she said, “when I was at Bryn Mawr, my father told me, ‘Don’t accept any degrees except those you earn.’” And that was her reason for not coming to Randolph-Macon. So that’s a list of some of the people who came.

L. Wright: Could you talk about the issues leading up to and surrounding the college’s exploring collective bargaining in the 1970s?

L. White: Yes. That happened in 1973, and it was for me one of the most harrowing and difficult times that I had, and I suppose I am in part responsible for it, because, as I’ll try to explain, the onset of collective bargaining came as the result of the dissatisfaction of some faculty members in what was going on at the college at the time, and after all I was president, so I’ll have to take my responsibility for that. But what’s involved is that the collective bargaining is of course a big part of our national history and has served our country so well in many areas, particularly in the area of the factories and the laboring people and the government employees. The advent and the
existence of unions in the United States has been a great, great boon to the improvement of salaries and working conditions for millions of people. So collective bargaining is something that we all can cherish. However, collective bargaining has never, but never, been a part of our education. The reason for that is said to be that colleges, although their faculties and employees are employees just as other industries have employees, the faculty, the college setting is not suitable for the airing of the complaints and other needs of employees, the principal among whom, of course, is faculty. So collective bargaining had passed by higher education, generally speaking.

However, during the early years of the ’60s and the ’70s, those tumultuous years, faculty people in the United States got the idea that their own positions would be improved if indeed they did have unions on their campuses. When that possibility came to me, came across my thinking at Randolph-Macon, I thought, “Oh that would be terrible.” Not a single private college in the United States has collective bargaining among its members, not a single one. The only ones in fact that had collective bargaining at that early time were some of the community colleges. Well, I’m not drawing any distinctions, but only to point out that collective bargaining was not a part of the higher education scene. So you can imagine my concern when some of our faculty said, “Well we think we should have a collective bargaining unit.”

Well, of course, we tried to talk them out of that, but they wouldn’t be talked, and let me say right now, when the time came for them to decide what they were going to do, they turned it down, much to the credit of them, and to the goodwill of the college. But in the intervening months, the National Labor Relations Board took charge of this whole effort. It was really scary. We had to hire expensive lawyers to steer us through it, and for about 18 months there a good part of my time was spent in trying to understand the needs of the faculty and to talk them out of voting. It was their vote to have a collective bargaining unit.

Well let me say that … you would say, “What would the effect of the collective bargaining have been?” It would have been this: faculty would be members of the union, and they’d send their representatives in to the board of trustees to make their demands for whatever they wanted, and in that sense, they’d be like other laboring people whom I’ve lauded so far in this talk, but the position of them at a college would have been inappropriate in a collective bargaining setting. So as I said I spent a good bit of time. The National Labor Relations Board sent a person and a lady who was their referee, I think they called it. She oversaw the election. And life at Randolph-Macon, I tell you, went on just like it always did. Basketball game tonight, a lecture tomorrow, this, that…. Life went on except for this collective bargaining countdown, when members of the faculty, and some of the staff who had teaching responsibilities were also permitted under the law to vote. And the day of the election came, and the lady from Washington oversaw the election, and it would have required I think 2/3 of the faculty to have approved it, and they turned it down.
Well, it was a happy day, I think, for the college, and a good one, because I think subsequent events in our country have shown that collective bargaining in this mode was really not what would have benefited the faculty or the college. Now, I think I’m correct that the AAUP, which is of course the great national association to which all college professors belong and which is the group that really oversees their best interests, they were the ones pushing the collective bargaining, and I have not been close to it recent years, but I think nevertheless I am correct in saying that collective bargaining as an issue in independent private colleges has subsided, and not a minute too soon. [laughs] So that’s my story on collective bargaining, and I think the story on collective bargaining is generally not known at Randolph-Macon. I’m glad to have this opportunity to tell about it.

L. Wright: Thank you. Do you know if the vote was close, or do they just know that you didn’t have the 2/3 required?

L. White: Ah … at the time I knew exactly what it was, it failed of a passage by a comfortable majority, I’ve forgotten what the exact numbers are, but it wasn’t close.

L. Wright: And were the issues primarily financial?

L. White: The issue was financial, and it was also who did what. Faculty saw, as they should and as they have, a wide discretion in matters of our college, particularly in the area of our academic program. But they also had interest in other things; they had interest in the financial life of the college, which after all is their livelihood. So it’s natural for them to have that concern. I think that has to be the answer to your question.

L. Wright: Thank you. Okay, I now want to talk about something you’ve told me that you’re very interested in, which is the church-related college, and if you could talk a little bit about your views on that, and particularly about Randolph-Macon.

L. White: Well, I thought it would be interesting for me to get my own ideas together on the whole theme of the church-related college. It’s been a theme which has occupied the thinking of college administrators and their trustees ever since Randolph-Macon was formed in 1930: what is it to be a church-related college. As a matter of fact when I was a president here, some dissident presidents got so upset about it they decided they were going to call the thing in reverse, they were going to call it the college-related church. They were going to talk about the college-related church, which is to say they took upon themselves to secularize the colleges and try to relate the church to it rather than the other way around. Well I abhorred that and said so at the time, but the whole question of what is a church-related college was on everybody’s mind. Now, I looked at the 2007 Randolph-Macon alumni directory, which is pretty current, isn’t it? Just came across, I got a copy here today. It says, and I’m not criticizing this, but this is a fact, it says about Randolph-Macon, and I quote, “Founded by Methodists in 1830, Randolph-Macon is an independent college that retains a relationship with the United Methodist Church. Through
this living tie, the college draws strength from a religious tradition that nurtures creative social change and personal accountability.” That’s the statement by the alumni directory about church-relatedness.

After World War II, and during the time I was in the presidency, college presidents, United Methodist College presidents, were always mulling in their minds what are they going to say in their directories about their college relationship to the church. And they had all kinds of funny ideas about it, and it was amusing to me, because the reason for the college’s founding and its reason for being were clear to me, and they still are. And that is, Randolph-Macon was founded on the Christian belief that Christ is lord of our lives, and everything else proceeds from that fact. Now, I’m not making that up; that’s what the basis of our college was founded on in 1830. That’s not to impart any imperfectability, that’s not to take away a bit from its obligation to educate students in the liberal arts, and they call it a liberal arts college because it did not teach engineering and other pursuits of that kind, it stuck to arts and letters, and that’s why they call it liberal arts, but it was an outreach of the college that had been started by the Church, which knew what it believed in. So liberal learning is to be valued for a full and productive life, but in the view of the founders of our college, it is a function of faithfulness to the Lord. And I think it’s correct to say that the humanists, not maliciously, or even in a non-religious way, took that understanding away from the church-related college, leaving them to value, as the book says, to value that own relationship, but not assigning any religious value to the education of students.

Now you’ll say, “Well, President White, now you’re preaching,” and that may be, but I’ve often thought, I’ve sometimes thought, that the basis of the college’s existence, as opposed to colleges that are started by the state and have no pretense, or no aspiration, of being church-related, the basis of our college’s beginning was the admonition in the Bible that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Now that telling story, that telling sentence tells us that students who go to college first with an awe and reverence for God are the proper subjects to which education can be imparted. That was the way the church-related college took its mission. And I think the evidence of its efficaciousness is that over the years, particularly in the first century, students who flocked to Randolph-Macon and to Hampton-Sydney and the other church colleges were students who for the most part were raised at their parents’ knee in the fear of the Lord. And when they went to college, the college took them and used that basis to education.

Now you’ll say, “Oh, my gosh, you’re a hundred years old, Mr. White!” I may be, but I think so much about it. I know my father, who was a student here in 1907, he was very much a man, he wasn’t any less a Christian because of the fact that the college was a liberal arts college, and it was a tough college for boys, you know, it was tough. But it was underlain by the consent, the belief of its trustees, its alumni, even its faculty, that this was a function of the church, which found its true value in its devotion to the Lord.
So I’m glad to have an opportunity to say that, and you may want to cut it off when we get to the end.

L. Wright: No, I was just going to follow up, how did you see that change during, that church-related college as you have presented it, change from the time you were a student to when you became president, or during your presidency?

L White: Well, it’s been a gradual thing, if I may say so, and I’m no student of this, I’m no scholar about this, but it’s generally admitted that the secularization of society has invaded the college as one of its places. I think the secularization of society has invaded our personal mores. I think it has invaded the way we act as people. The religious foundation that many of us were raised on, and our parents before us, has taken a backseat to secularization. I think the college was swept along in that same thing. Some identify it with the ‘60s. I hate to put it that way, because I lived through the ‘60s, and I know some magnificent people, Randolph-Macon people, who were great, great Christian people during the ‘60s, so I can’t blame them all. I don’t blame anybody. But you asked me the question, I think the general secularization of our country away from religious values was a part of what swept Randolph-Macon and other colleges up with it. I hope we’re coming back.

L. Wright: Could you address some specifics of that, like chapel requirements, or curriculum issues that may have changed, or you saw evolved?

L. White: Well, I wrote down somewhere — I didn’t know you were going to ask me that — I wrote down some of the mistakes I made as president of Randolph-Macon, answering your question. I came here and faculty and others urged me to discontinue the requirement of Randolph-Macon that every student had to attend chapel. When I was a student we went to chapel three days a week, and there wasn’t any question about it. We went. By the time I came back as president, that requirement had been slackened somewhat, so that the students, the chapel existed, but the students didn’t have to go but so many times a semester, and they signed a card, and then they didn’t have to go anymore. And when I came, they urged me to discontinue the requirement altogether that students had to go to chapel. And I fought that, but I acceded to it. There wasn’t any other college in Virginia that I knew of that still required chapel. So we did that, and that was a mistake. Well, in that sense I participated in the problem myself.

Another thing, we discontinued the requirement that all students had to take Bible. That was a mistake. That was a part of the secularization process that I spoke about. It wasn’t any lack of religious concern on the part of our faculty, our faculty people were for the most part devoted church-related people themselves, church-attending people, but they felt that in the mood of the country at the time it was a mistake to require students to do anything. And that attitude is the soil in which secularization grows. So I’m answering your question, I had that part in it, so there
were some of the indicators of colleges moving away from the importance to it of its church-relatedness.

L. Wright: Thank you. Do you have any final remarks you’d like to make either about your time as a student, or just reflections on your time as president?

L. White: Well, I don’t have any more. I have some other topics that I hope you’ll ask me to talk about, one being student unrest at the college and the effect it had, and another thing I’m doing research on, we’ve talked about this, is how Randolph-Macon bridged the racial gap. Colleges were slow, colleges like Randolph-Macon were slow to admit students of other cultures, other races. Randolph-Macon got over that bridge and I’ve got a good story to tell if you’ll let me come back.

L. Wright. I look forward to it. Thank you so much, Mr. White.