

Oral History Interview with Dr. Jack Dinsbeer

Date of Interview: May 8, 2009

Location of Interview: Recording Room at Thomas Road Baptist Church.

Name of Interviewee: Dr. Jack Dinsbeer

Name of Interviewers: Lowell Walters, Dr. Cline Hall

Transcriber: Kaitlyne Showalter

Interview Length: 01:33:48

Notes: The interview began with only Mr. Walters and Dr. Dinsbeer, Dr. Hall joined the interview about half an hour into recording.

Walters: (00:00) Alright, we're going to go ahead now with our opening statement here and then we'll go from there.

Dinsbeer: (00:05) Very good.

Walters: (00:06) Ok. Alright, here we go.

Walters: (00:09) Welcome to this interview in the Oral History Project of the Liberty University Archives. This interview is being conducted on May 8, 2009. Today I am interviewing Dr. Jack Dinsbeer. Dr. Jack Dinsbeer was born May 14, 1929. My name is Lowell Walters and I will be conducting the interview today. Greetings Dr. Dinsbeer!

Dinsbeer: (00:32) Good to be here, Lowell.

Walters: (00:35) Well, we'll start right off with a little bit about yourself. Tell us about some general biographical information about yourself. Where'd you grow up, and your family background, and all that sort of thing?

Dinsbeer: (00:48) Well I was born in Chicago, Illinois, right uh, just a few months prior to the crash in October of '29 and lived in Chicago for seven years and then we moved to Milwaukee. Uh, grew up basically in Milwaukee and finished high school in Milwaukee. Moved to Florida and in Florida we entered the service after one month of being there. Spent three years in the military and came back out of the military and uh, went to a school out in Fort Worth, Texas. And, didn't stay there very long, but came back and went to what is now, Jacksonville University in Jacksonville, Florida.

Walters: (1:39) And then, you joined the military about the time of Pearl Harbor, or World War II? Or was it before that?

Dinsbeer: (1:45) I joined the military in 1946. It actually, uh...the activities of hostility had ceased but the war treaty had not been signed. So technically I'm a veteran of World War II.

Walters: (2:04) I see.

Dinsbeer: (2:06) My family, uh, mother and dad were saved probably about a year before I was born, so they were young Christians at the time of my birth and we uh, my grandparents...in fact the whole family really became Christians, oh about, a year or two before I was born. A little bit about my educational background, I went to Bible Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas and that would have been the '49 about the service and '49 that would have been '49 and spring semester of 1950. And of course, that was the year that the fellowship, what they call the split and the fellowship. And I stayed the first semester and uh, by the time we got to January the second semester, why, I did not feel constrained to remain there so I came back to Jacksonville and started back to University of Jacksonville, what is now Jacksonville University. Then it was Florida Jr, Jacksonville Jr. College. I uh...

Walters: (3:22) Folks I hope future researchers, the fellowship, when you talk about that, can you expand on that as to what your referring to?

Dinsbeer: (3:29) Uh, there was a fellowship known as The World Baptist Fellowship. A key figure in that was J. Frank Norris and J. Frank Norris had quite a reputation. He pastored both First Baptist Church in Fort Worth and Temple Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan. Road back and forth on the train, preached one Sunday one place and the next Sunday another place or just rotated back and forth, and [J. B. Vick] was his associate. And [J. B. Vick] did most of his work at Temple Baptist in Detroit so when the fellowship came apart and they organized Baptist Bible Fellowship, they headquartered it in Springfield, Missouri. [Beechum Vick] was a key figure there, [Dr. Bill Dowe], Wendell Zimmerman, uh...a number of others, Fred Donaldson were a number of individuals and key players in that Baptist Bible Fellowship. [Noll Smith], another one.

Walters: (4:45) Ok. Well then you were talking about uh, as that split happened and then you were...

Dinsbeer: (4:56) We uh...during that split, we were in Jacksonville which was home then. I'd gotten married in uh...April of '49 and we, of course, were back at home in our home church there and the home church associated itself with the new fellowship. And the new fellowship, consequently I just moved into the same uh...it's a good thing that I left Fort Worth because with my military experience I would have followed the general who, to me, why Dr. Norris was like the general of the army and...

Walters: (5:42) I see.

Dinsbeer: (5:43) So I felt like the Lord moved me out of that because I would have never had the ministry that I had.

Walters: (5:51) I'm sorry, the new fellowship being the one in Springfield?

Dinsbeer: (5:55) In Springfield, yes.

Walters: (5:56) Ok. Alrighty. So then, what about your own personal testimony and walk? When and where did you become a Christian? And...

Dinsbeer: (6:05) Living in Milwaukee at the time, I grew up from about 7 to uh...17. We attended a Bible church, Lincoln Park Bible Church. I uh, went to Sunday School and church there and they decided that it was about time for me to become a church member and I was 12 years of age. And so they brought me forward one Sunday morning at uh, in a church service and asked me to quote a few verses of Scripture which I had dutifully memorized and I remember the preacher saying, "well he seems like a nice young man, don't you think we should take him into the church?" And so everybody of course "yay'd" that and I became a part of that church. No one ever talked to me about being lost or being saved or anything. So four years later when we're living out in a little suburb of Milwaukee and uh...[Pewaukee], First Baptist Church of [Pewaukee], uh...a young pastor there by the name of [Harry Chasteen], parents thought I and my brother needed to be baptized and so uh...in the parsonage next door to the church, he inquired, "had we ever been saved?" I frankly had no real understanding of what the term meant and uh...

Walters: (7:53) Didn't quite know what he meant (*chuckle*)

Dinsbeer: (7:56) So he took the Word of God, he took the Bible and took us through the plan of Salvation, we got on our knees at 2 old wicker chairs there and prayed and asked Christ to come into our life and walked over to the church and were baptized. So that was really the occasion of my Salvation.

Walters: (8:16) Sure. The baptism precipitated the true decision then?

Dinsbeer: (8:22) It followed after our true decision, certainly did.

Walters: (8:27) Well then when and where and how did you get called into the ministry?

Dinsbeer: (8:34) Well, that is an interesting story. When I graduated from high school, I was living in a little town called New Buffalo Michigan. My grandmother lived there and I spent the summers with her. This particular summer, she was at the point of death and I was there with a very dear friend of hers. I know Miss. [Landock] was her name. And we're sitting at the table, the dinner table one day in a little breakfast nook and she said, "Well Jack, have you thought about what you're going to do when you get out of school? And I said, "Well, I maybe, well

maybe I'll be a pharmacist or something. I'd been working in a drug store there and she said well, "Have you ever thought about being a preacher?" and I said, "Me, a preacher?" And she said, "Yes. That's the highest calling there is." And I just dismissed that totally, until I got overseas. Going over seas to a place like Korea, although I was not there during...

Walters: (9:46) Conflict?

Dinsbeer: (9:48) during war time, during hostilities, but just being in Korea in 1947 and '48 will make you think about a lot of things. So I dedicated my life to full time Christian service and came back and got in school and went back to Jacksonville Jr. College and uh...it was at the end of about my second year of college that we discovered that we were going to have an addition to our family. And back then, family took precedence over our education. And so I quit school, went to work on the railroad, but continued to work in the church. Had to work with what we called the "extra board" but the Lord worked it out so that I never had to miss a Sunday in church working the extra board on the railroad but made very good money and were ready to uh...you know, take care of an offspring. And it was at that time, I happened to be leading singing, I have a lot of music in my background, and I happened to be leading singing in a revival at what was then known as Beaver Street Baptist Church. Paul Donaldson was conducting the revival. He was the pastor of Park Avenue Baptist here in Lynchburg and he needed someone to supply while he was away that Sunday and so he talked to me about coming up here and perhaps candidating to become his music and youth director. Well I came up that Sunday, then, to make a long story short, by December, 1, this was October, by December 1 why, we came up here and my son was born in October and we made the truck up here. In fact, we actually came up here and led singing in a revival. My son was born and I left the next day and came up here to finish up the revival with Dr. Donaldson, Paul Donaldson at that time. And so that's how I have managed to arrive in Lynchburg

Walters: (12:09) And so that was the Fall of '51?

Dinsbeer: (12:11) That was the fall of '51 and actually I started to work at Park Avenue in December of '51. Then we were under construction until I came as a music and youth director and kind of a labor on the construction project.

Walters: (12:28) Ok. And then who were some of the other staff people and deacons there at the church when you came?

Dinsbeer: (12:33) Uh...the staff, the only other staff person was Deloris Clarke, now Deloris Moon and she was the secretary and did the um...very important part of the growth ministry at Park Avenue. Percy Hall was a deacon. [Losen Johnson] was a deacon. I don't know if I remember any of the other deacons or not.

Walters: (13:04) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (13:05) Um...

Walters: (13:06) Had you ever heard of Jerry Falwell then before he came to church the night he was there?

Dinsbeer: (13:10) Not until he came to church that January evening. And the way I really got acquainted with him was I was on the platform leading singing and these two guys came in. There were no seats anywhere in the building and we had...it was just a narrow elongated building with two sections and the center isle and the only seats were right on the front row. And so they were ushered to the front row and sat down. And of course at that point, why Macel Pate was playing one piano, we had two pianos. Macel Pate played one and Deloris Clarke, now Deloris Moon, played the other. So uh...

Walters: (14:01) No organ at that time?

Dinsbeer: (14:03) No organ. We didn't have an organ at that time, didn't have an organ until we moved into the new building. We knocked out one of the walls and that made access to the new, enlarged auditorium. But after the service was over, Percy Hall came to me and said, "Did you know that fellow there?" and he pointed, and I said "Which one was is?" and it was Jerry of course. And he said, "He's a gang leader." Now, gangs back then are not like gangs are as we know them today. He was just the guy everybody followed.

Walters: (14:44) A gang of friends or a peer group.

Dinsbeer: (14:45) A gang of friends, yeah. And he was very obviously a leader in the group. So I ran downstairs quickly and caught him on the sidewalk and told him I taught a Sunday school class on Sunday morning and would he come? And so he indicated that he would. So we had about 15 people in the youth department when I came and we uh, there was a lady there. I wish I could recall her name. she was a single girl, very, very dedicated to the Lord and she became ill later on and uh...

Walters: (15:33) It wasn't the Whittmore?

Dinsbeer: (15:35) No, no, no. Huh-uh.

Walters: (15:36) Well I'll ask you about those in a little bit here about those folks.

Dinsbeer: (15:39) At any rate, she was teaching the youth department, I think we had 15 in there my first Sunday there. And she taught and I began to work with the youth department and then in January, Jerry came and from then on, why, the thing went up hill and we wound up at Easter with I guess about a 150 young people in the youth department.

Walters: (16:06) And Easter being April or March of that year so that was a few months

Dinsbeer: (16:11) Right, just two or three months and we had incredible growth in the youth department during that time.

Walters: (16:17) Well tell us about the weeks following Jerry's conversion.

Dinsbeer: (16:22) Well, I need to tell you about the days...

Walters: (16:24) Ok, sure.

Dinsbeer: (16:27) as opposed to the weeks. They got saved on a Sunday, he and Jim Moon, and the next afternoon, they showed up in my office. For a preacher, even a young youth director, why, for two converts to show up in your office the next day was quite an extraordinary thing. And I thought to myself, gosh, these guys really are uh...I'm shocked to see these people here. But they sat down and for about two hours we just talked and they were just loaded with questions and different things that they wanted to know. You know, what the church was all about and everything, and what the Bible was all about and one of the questions they wanted to know was, "What kind of a Bible should I get? You know I need to get a Bible, what kind should I get?" Of course back then everybody had Scofields. So they came up a few days later with a Scofield Bible. But, the next day, there they showed up again and we talked some more about different things and they were loaded with questions. And so this is Wednesday now, the next day, on Wednesday they show up again. I'm thinking to myself, "Hey I've got...I've been working on the building all morning and I'm trying to...I've got to teach a group of teachers a Sunday school lesson on Wednesday night and these guys are taking up my time. I've got work to do." But, never really realizing what was going on...

Walters: (18:14) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (18:15) and what was happening, and I often kid about...when he says I disciplined them, I disciplined them by default.

Walters: (18:24) Sure, sure.

Dinsbeer: (18:25) But uh, and I think I was the one that he asked what a "tithey" was.

Walters: (18:30) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (18:32) Uh, and I said...

Walters: (18:32) And tell us about that.

Dinsbeer: (18:34) And I said, "Spell it Jerry." And he said, "T-i-t-h-e." "I said, that's not a 'Tithey,' that's a 'tithe'." So then we went into the, what a tithe was.

Walters: (18:43) Where'd he bump into that? From the Fuller Broadcasts? Why was that so quickly on his mind do you think?

Dinsbeer: (18:49) Possibly he had been reading Scripture by that time because he read very rapidly and I don't know that he had maybe gotten over as far as Leviticus by this time...

Walters: (19:00) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (19:01) and may have found it there. If he would have heard Charles Fuller say it, he would have probably heard it pronounced, "tithe."

Walters: (19:09) Well sure, that's true.

Dinsbeer: (19:11) But, so I think he must have picked that up in his reading of the Bible itself.

Walters: (19:17) Well he, he listened to Dr. Fuller from his mom.

Dinsbeer: (19:20) Right.

Walters: (19:22) He heard that in the background.

Dinsbeer: (19:24) Yes. She turned it up for him so he'd always hear it.

Walters: (19:27) Sure. And did you know his mom very well? Could you tell us about her?

Dinsbeer: (19:31) I only met his mother on maybe one or two occasions. She was a very quiet person and the only thing that I ever knew about her was that she never raised his voice to her, her voice to him, and just a very pleasant lady. She did not attend Park Avenue and I don't know that during my time there that I don't know that she ever did come to Park Avenue.

Walters: (20:08) Hmm...well and then to never raise her voice, Jerry was quite an ornery character to say the least, in his youth.

Dinsbeer: (20:16) Well, I was not aware of some of his things until I read the books and until I read Macel's book.

Walters: (20:25) Oh, ok.

Dinsbeer: (20:26) She's the one that reveals, gives him away.

Walters: (20:29) Tells the stories. Sure.

Dinsbeer: (20:30) But, I knew him to be somewhat of a prankster.

Walters: (20:37) Did any of them result in embarrassment or unfortunate circumstances or consequences for you?

Dinsbeer: (20:43) Uh, well I don't know that I should tell this on him or not but we're driving down Campbell avenue one day and he is driving and I'm in the car with him and I believe we're in my car. But there was a railroad tussle that goes over Campbell Avenue and so about the time

we got to the railroad tussle, he switches lanes, to the left hand lane and there's an oncoming car, you know, I'm scared spit less and the other car switches lanes and goes over. So this is apparently something that has been done frequently and he apparently knew who the other driver was but I said, "Jerry, if you ever do that again, I'm gonna kill ya!" (*laughter*)

Walters: (21:24) (*laughter*)

Dinsbeer: (21:25) I would have had a difficult time doing that.

Walters: (21:29) Ok. Well going back to the Park Avenue, the church at that time, you came in the fall of '51 and then Jerry accepts the Lord in January of '52?

Dinsbeer: (21:42) Right.

Walters: (21:42) Tell us about the summer of '52 and who all was in that youth group. What was a typical week like?

Dinsbeer: (21:48) During the summer of '52, why, oh we had just a, kind of a routine of Sunday morning Sunday school and church, Sunday evening we had a youth meeting. And in the youth meeting, we just tried to do different activities that would attract the youth. We had, we would do skits and we would do...one night we had kind of a hillbilly band with a washtub and pans and different things. And we got Jerry and Jim involved in just being up I front of the crowd. One of the things that we did when they would come by during the day, I taught them how to lead singing. I had just a little bit of keyboard experience and I could play enough to get a beat going and teach them the "down, left, right, up" and a "four-four" and then a "triangle" and a "three-four" and uh... "one-two-three-four-five-six," a "six-eight," and I would teach them how to do that. Well then I got them up on Sunday nights in front of the group, actually leading singing and they took to it real well.

Walters: (23:18) Well I believe in Dr. Moon's interview, he talks about how Jerry and possibly himself, came back to the wall and led singing with the other peers who weren't involved yet, even, correct?

Dinsbeer: (23:30) We weren't aware of that.

Walters: (23:31) You weren't aware of that.

Dinsbeer: (23:33) That was during those early weeks.

Walters: (23:36) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (23:37) And then those weekly or daily meetings like that, probably went on for two, maybe three weeks at a time. So they may have done something. I know one time I went out to the wall and met some of the guys, probably during that early week. And uh, just, I think I may have met [Otis Riot], [Buddy McCollie], and don't know who else.

Walters: (24:08) And those were two people who got saved as well, correct?

Dinsbeer: (24:12) Yeah they did.

Walters: (24:13) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (24:14) I remember making a visit with Jerry. Jerry and I visited quite a bit and he was very unique to visit with because you never, uh..., he never asked anybody to come to Sunday school, he just said, "you're going." I remember one time we visited a guy by the name of Buttercup Bill. I don't know what his other name was but they called him "Buttercup Bill." And he said, "Buttercup, I'm going to church and your going with me Sunday." And Buttercup says, "Ok." So that was the way it went.

Walters: (24:49) Sure. He told them, that was him telling him to go.

Dinsbeer: (24:53) That was Jerry telling him that.

Walters: (24:55) "You're coming to church and that will be it."

Dinsbeer: (24:57) Right.

Walters: (24:58) Let's mark the time at this point. We'll integrate Dr. Hall into this.

[At this point Dr. Cline Hall joins the interview.]

Walters: (25:06) Ok, you've talked a little bit about Deloris Clarke and the fact that she was a staff member. Tell us a little about Macel Pate. Of course Macel Pate Falwell and did you know much about her as those days unfolded then?

Dinsbeer: (25:20) Macel played the piano and Macel was our accompanist for uh...with choir music and things we did. And I recall, I can't remember whether Deloris did as much accompaniment as Macel did. But Macel accompanied the special music and Deloris did more of the singing. Macel, I don't know that Macel ever sang with us but she uh...Jean, her sister did. So we had quite an extensive music program at Park Avenue. But Macel was the accompanist...

Walters: (26:13) ...kind of for special music.

Dinsbeer: (25:57) She lived over on [Munford Street]. I think before [Munford] is the number where they lived but uh...often times, my concern about Macel, and you may have to edit this out, my concern about Macel was getting her there on time. And she wanted her hair to be just right, and if her hair was not just right, she was unhappy. She was a perfectionist and if, if things did not go right on the piano, why she would get very upset with herself and I've seen her take the music on the piano and wipe the piano clean. *(laughter)*

Walters: (26:59) *(laughter)*

Dinsbeer: (26:44) She probably will die if she ever reads this...

Walters: (27:03) (*more laughter*) we'll maybe we'll just...

Dinsbeer: (26:48) So don't let her get a hold of it

Walters: (27:07) Well um...the Pate's were fairly well established in that church, correct?

Dinsbeer: (26:56) Yes, very well established. In fact, the Pate's kept our son who came here at about 2 ½ months of age or a month and a ½ of age. They kept him every Saturday. Mrs. Clarke kept him during the week. And I would take, I would drop my wife off downtown at the bank to work and as she would uh...then I would take the baby out to Mrs. Clarke's. She kept the baby all day then I'd go back and pick him up. But on Saturday's, why, he was at the Pate's and I might have them to blame for spoiling him to the degree that they did because they bought him something every week, an outfit or something.

Walters: (27:45) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (27:46) They just really took terrific care and so we were at the Pates, or at the Clarke's, at the Clarke's every day and at the Pate's in the evenings lots of times and on Saturdays, every Saturday. My wife got Macel her first, and perhaps, her only job as an officer at the bank downtown. I forget the name of that. I don't remember if it was First National or what it was. But anyway, it was a bank downtown.

Walters: (28:16) Well Macel was obviously single at that point but...

Dinsbeer: (28:18) She was single.

Walters: (28:19) Evidently, the church wasn't large enough to support you fully for your family at that point in time.

Dinsbeer: (28:26) Well, at that point in time, I was on full-time.

Walters: (28:30) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (28:31) I was on full-time staff.

Walters: (28:32) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (28:34) And uh, so um...Deloris and Macel were our key people on the piano.

Walters: (28:47) Ok. Did the church, so to speak the church "youth group," mix readily with the converts like Dr. Falwell and the folks that he brought in off the wall gang?

Dinsbeer: (29:02) First of all, Jerry was accepted, and Jim was accepted very, very readily. It seemed like almost everybody in the church knew them. They were just uh...they just were

amalgamated into the church congregation. And the church youth group was pretty much accepted the same way. There was just a lot of excitement about what was going on in the church. My personal opinion is that the youth group is actually what built the Park Avenue Baptist Church. Now, the youth group, you have got to understand, one Jerry got there, was the...he was the focal action of that youth group to a great degree. But the interesting thing about the youth group, in the year and a half that I was at Park Avenue, we never had a youth activity. You know, we never had a party of any kind for young people, but we met every Monday night for visitation and we would have 30, 35, 40 young people, come out for visitation...

Walters: (30:15) Wow!

Dinsbeer: (30:16) we would have so many young people out for visitation that I could not handle them unless I had adult help to drive because very few of them had automobiles or were even at a driving age. So I trained them in how to prospect, how to find prospects. We put six people to a car, give the visit that's to be made to one of the couples, and then the other couple would go to the houses on one side, knock on doors, and then the other couple to the houses on the other side and knock on doors. And they would come back loaded with prospects, people that didn't attend church any place. And here's where Deloris' part was very, very important. She catalogued all of those prospects that we got and would send them out and would send them out as visits with the teachers in the Sunday school who would go back to those homes. But let me back up just a little bit, explain to you, how I taught them to prospect. You go up and knock on the door, introduce yourself, and say, "Just out in the neighborhood and I wanted to invite you to our church and uh, by the way, I didn't get your name." And get their name, the family name, and say, "Oh, do you have any children?" "Uh, well yeah, we got children." "Well, how many children do you have?" "Oh, we have three children, four children, whatever." "Well how old are the children?" And uh, so we'd get the age. "Well which child is which age?" And get all those together, and I'm training them," keep all this in your head. Your going to ask the same question to every door you go, and ask them in the same order, so that you learn to catalogue these people in your mind and then when you get out to the street, take this little card I'm going to give ya, put that family name down, names of those children, and the ages of those children. And then the last thing you do before you leave, look up and get the number of the house. And then bring that information back and that's what we turn in to Deloris Moon." So when the person, the teacher of that age group, went back the next week, she had the name of the child, the family name, and would knock on the door and said, "Hey I'm (so-in-so) from Park Avenue Baptist Church. I understand that you have a child by the name of Johnny. He's eight years old and I teach eight-year-olds." So back then, mind you, the people could not imagine, "how in the world did you get that information?"

Walters: (33:15) That was before computers too.

Dinsbeer: (33:17) That was before computers and people came back. I don't know if during that first year of Thomas Road, if that's the system Jerry used.

Walters: (33:26) I think he listed that in his autobiography, “The Falwell Autobiography.” Did um, did you come up with all those methods kind of on your own or were you taught those...

Dinsbeer: (33:36) out of necessity...

Walters: (33:37) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (33:38) because I had all these kids on my hands and I had to do something with them. Buy my, I’ve always held to the concept that the important thing about young people is that they don’t have to be entertained, you just have to give them something meaningful to do, that is going to be productive and for, for young people, want to be productive. And what they were doing was productive because all of a sudden, they began to see people, whose doors they had knocked on and remember names they had gotten, come to church and come forward, and they were having a part in the growth in the ministry of that church.

Walters: (34:23) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (34:24) So that’s all young people need.

Walters: (34:27) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (34:28) They don’t need a lot of entertainment. Course that was 50 years ago.

Walters: (34:30) Now when, do you think, I’m kind of straying away here. But yeah, how has the environment changed since then? I mean could, would the same effort work now? It’d be easier to do with computers, but?

Dinsbeer: (34:41) My contention is yes, it would work now if we’d just do it.

Walters: (34:45) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (34:46) If we just do it.

Walters: (34:46) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (34:47)The difficulty is, its more difficult now to knock on doors...

Walters: (34:52) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (34:53) then what it used to be. So that would not facilitate it as easily now as then.

Walters: (34:57) Well what was taught concerning Christian lifestyle at that point for these young kids at that time?

Dinsbeer: (35:02) Well...

Walters: (35:02) And what were the issues that they were dealing with?

Dinsbeer: (35:06) Back then, you dealt with movies, dancing, drinking, and there wasn't a whole lot to do with anything, premarital sex back then. You talk a little bit about being careful about getting out and parking somewhere in a car and petting.

Walters: (35:32) Sure. Uh-huh.

Dinsbeer: (35:34) That type of thing but we didn't have drugs and so forth

Walters: (35:39) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (35:39) to deal with...

Walters: (35:40) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (35:40) back then.

Walters: (35:41) Ok. Well we have, since we started here, we have Dr. Hall joining us as well. And Dr. Hall has some questions he'll be asking as we go along and he'd like to ask his first one for you here as well.

Hall: (35:55) Ok, sure. Well during the time that uh, well Jerry was converted, I believe, what in January '52. By the spring time, I guess he had thought to call the ministry, or at least he was going to go to Baptist Bible College. What role did you and the pastor play in his decision to go there? And how did that come about?

Dinsbeer: (36:18) Well I don't know how much conversation he had with Paul Donaldson who was the pastor, but I know that we've had, we had a little bit of conversation about that. Uh, let me say that I went with him to try out, and I believe the farm team here was the St. Louis Cardinal's farm team, I think. Um...I went over to the ball field one day with him to try out when they were here, the scouts were here, and he could have played for uh...he could have gotten into the farm system, maybe gone straight to the major's, as good of ball player as he was. But we were traveling to Danville one night, for a meeting and I took some of the young people with me and some of them sang, and so forth and on the way back, Jerry asked me, he said, "how do you know if your called to preach?" and I said, "Well, if the Lord gives you a burden and you feel like that's just the thing in life you have to do and you feel like that's what God wants you to do." And I said, "You know, pretty much that constitutes the call to preach." And so, we didn't have a lot of discussion on it after that, but the next thing I knew, I uh, he was ready to go to Baptist Bible College. Back then, that was the only place you went if you were going to preach. At least among the group that we uh...

Walters: (37:50) in the fellowship.

Dinsbeer: (37:51) Right. Um...you were talking about my call to preach. The Lord called me. I got shook up because I didn't surrender to preach back when I was sixteen when this lady made that audacious comment. But I surrendered to full time service, and then came here and Pastor

Donaldson was out of town on a Sunday or two and I had to preach. I dreaded the pulpit. Very comfortable leading singing, I could lead singing all day long, but I dreaded getting in the pulpit. There was a little short fellow that had joined our staff named Bill Kingston at that time, only four foot tall, a little hump-back guy, terrific preacher and terrific singer. He preached in the morning and I was on to preach that night and I said, "Now Lord, I'm fighting this battle over whether you want me to be a pastor or be a song leader." I said, "tonight when I preach, if nobody comes forward," I said, "I'm gonna continue in the music area and consider that, that's what You want me to do." And I prayed that nobody would come forward. Low and behold, when we gave the invitation, seven people come forward, I think two or three of them for Salvation, and Jim Moon's mother came forward that night...

Walters: (39:14) Wow.

Dinsbeer: (39:16) to join the church. I think she was already saved but she came forward to join the church. So from then on, why, it was determined that's what the Lord wanted me to do.

Walters: (39:26) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (39:26) And from that point on, things became very uncomfortable...

Walters: (39:30) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (39:31) as far as church, and financial issues that arose in the church, so uh, Wendell Zimmerman was here at the time, in the revival and he came to me and he said, "I think Paul's gonna let you go." He said, "come on out to Kansas City and do the same thing for me out there." He was the pastor of Kansas City Baptist Temple. And I said, "No, Wendell, I think the Lord wants me to pastor." Uh, didn't have anything on my line to go to but finances got bad to where Paul needed for me to resign...

Walters: (40:10) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (40:11) and we had little go around about it because he just wanted me to resign and really he was letting me go. I said, "Paul, I'm not going to stand up and tell the congregation I'm resigning." But uh, and there was a church probably...I think I would have done it differently now, knowing, after pasturing for 46 ½ years, I would have done it differently. But we did what we did and the church wanted us to stay and said, "Let Deloris go." I said, "No, I need to go." Two reasons, I know what the Lord is calling me to do and secondly, Deloris is more important to a degree in this church, with the function she's doing to these prospects than what I am. And financially, her salary wouldn't solve the financial problem. So I said, "I'm, I'm gonna go.

Walters: (41:02) Sure.

Hall: (41:04) So you, uh, you left and then where did you go?

Dinsbeer: (41:06) I went back to Jacksonville, to our home.

Hall: (41:08) Back to Jacksonville.

Dinsbeer: (41:09) To our home church, and uh, took a bread route and then uh, that was May. And in September/October, I got an opportunity to candidate the local mission church and they called me in September 1953...

Hall: (41:32) Now while all of this was going on, course Jerry was at Baptist Bible College.

Dinsbeer: (41:37) Right.

Hall: (41:38) Did you keep up with him during the student years?

Dinsbeer: (41:41) Uh, only really when he came home, maybe a telephone call now and then but back then you didn't talk too much cause you paid \$3 a minute for every minute you called so...weren't too many long distance calls.

Hall: (41:53) Yeah.

Walters: (41:54) And then where did Pastor Donaldson go after leaving Park Avenue? Do you know anything about how he determined to go? Or...I don't want you to tell on him.

Dinsbeer: (42:05) I know he wound up in California. Let's just leave it there.

Walters: (42:07) Ok. That's fine.

Dinsbeer: (42:08) He wound up in California.

Walters: (42:10) Sure. Ok. And then a Mr...Pastor Frank Wood came and replaced him?

Dinsbeer: (42:15) Right.

Walters: (42: 16) And then Dr. Falwell left school, according to his biography and then came back and helped create a revival with another gang, so to speak. Right?

Dinsbeer: (42:24) Uh...

Walters: (42:25) Can you expand on that? Or...

Dinsbeer: (42:26) I'm not totally familiar with what happened, in the uh...as far as the growth of the church is concerned. I'm sure that Jerry's presence here would have almost overshadowed Frank Wood. They were two different types of personalities. Jerry was everybody's friend. Frank was, I think, maybe a little distant from people. He didn't have that charisma that Jerry had. And when Paul left, that group that went to...that formulated Thomas Road, had called me and asked me if I'd come back and pastor. And I said, "No." I said, "I don't feel like that's what the Lord wants me to do." And not only that, but in The Fellowship at that time, if you took a split from another church, why you were blackballed for some time to come. And uh, so that group became

dissatisfied with Frank and I'm certain, justly so because they were dissatisfied before. Went to Jerry, and Jerry called me and talked to me about it. I said, "Don't do it Jerry." I said, "Don't do it." I said, "The Fellowship will blackball you if you do." But wisely he understood the will of the Lord and instead of what my advice was.

Hall: (43:52) So there was a in a sense in the church and Jerry...

Dinsbeer: (43:55) There was.

Hall: (43:56) became the pastor.

Dinsbeer: (43:57) But, but, that group was going to leave anyway.

Hall: (43:59) Yeah.

Dinsbeer: (44:00) They were going to leave. They wanted to leave back when Paul left.

Hall: (44:04) Yes.

Hall: (44:05) So uh..., he uh...was it during this time that you, so you uh, course you were in Florida at this time. Is it true that Jim Moon came to Florida to work with you at ____ Baptist?

Dinsbeer: (44:25) When Jim left Baptist Bible College, he went to Indianapolis and the church that he was in, called another pastor and the other pastor called in his staff of course and so uh...knowing that Jim had developed into a good second man, particularly in the area of music, and I needed somebody particularly in the area of music. And I invited him to come down and he spent three years with me in Jacksonville.

Hall: (44:53) So he was music director?

Dinsbeer: (44:54) Yeah, he was a music director there.

Hall: (44:55) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (44:57) Jim just did everything. He did whatever we needed him to do.

Walters: (45:01) Now was he, I'm sorry, was he married to Deloris yet at that time?

Dinsbeer: (45:05) Yeah, they were married at that time.

Walters: (45:06) And then did you use her talents to do the same thing?

Dinsbeer: (45:10) Oh, absolutely!

Walters: (45:11) Sure. Did you see the same results there?

Dinsbeer: (45:14) She did, she did more singing there than she did, well she played the piano some too. And uh, in the process of this, we began to develop, we began to get some more musicians. And we had a lady by the name of [Peggy McKee], and Deloris and my wife sang as a trio, and I was the lowly accompanist who barely could pick out the music on the piano. But I prayed, Lord please give us some decent keyboard people.

Walters: (45:51) Sure. Now Dr. Falwell writes a lot in his autobiography about an Ann and R. B. Whittemore. Do you know anything about those folks?

Dinsbeer: (45:59) I do not know...

Walters: (46:00) Ok. They're kind of a missing piece for me sometimes, but you don't know those folks?

Dinsbeer: (46:05) I don't know. I noticed there's some reference to uh, deeper life, uh...thinking and theology. I had gone through that pattern of deeper life thinking and maybe just a short time after that was when I was aware that Jerry was going through the same parallel experience and I talked with him about it and I said, "Jerry," I said, "I don't think you want to get too deeply involved in that." I said, "I think it will kill your evangelistic enthusiasm if you do that." Because at that point in time, he had 800 people, probably 785 of them were adults, in the ministry. And he called me and wanted me to come and do a children's ministry for him, but I didn't feel the Lord was in that. So he got other people that did a much better job for him...

Walters: (47:17) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (47:18) than I would have done. But uh...

Moon: (47:20) Now as the church, of course, began to grow, I guess you kept up with what was going on here?

Dinsbeer: (47:27) I kept up with him because as uh...back then, churches couldn't borrow a lot of money and banks wouldn't, they just wouldn't give you the time of day. So we did bonds. And bond companies run up, that were uh, very readily able to raise money by the millions. And so Jerry and our church, Thomas Road and our church, happened to be in contact with the same bond company. So in the course of that, why, the bond company got into some trouble. They were, they would sell bonds and while that church was waiting for the bonds money to be used and construction to catch up and that money to be transferred to them, why they would use that money to facilitate other bond programs. Well the S.E.C. (Securities Exchange Commission) and they didn't exactly like that method of operation and they shut them down. There was a group of us that got together and there was a bank in Atlanta that had a wrap-around agreement on that bond company which meant that any church that was owed money would have lost everything they had. So, we were one of the churches that was owed money. So what we did was we filed an involuntary bankruptcy on that company and we divided, the court divided up the assets. And

I took a large portion of Thomas Road's Assets because I knew Jerry and I knew eventually we were gonna get that money. And uh, let's see, what was the guy's name? George uh...he's old now.

Hall: (49:32) George Rodgers?

Dinsbeer: (49:32) George Rodgers! And George and I were on the telephone back and forth because I just listened to Jerry on TV and all these fantastic things and I said, "George! Give me some of that money! I'm starving down here." But uh, and George and I are good friends but George really, he went through the thick and thin with it. And eventually why, that money was all paid back to us. He's the only one that ever did. We had fifty or so thousand from other churches that weren't able to pay it back and we finally wrote it off. But...

Hall: (50:04) Now there was a lawsuit...

Dinsbeer: (50:06) with Jerry's integrity

Hall: (50:07) Yeah.

Dinsbeer: (50:08) I knew that Jerry would eventually pay it.

Hall: (50:10) Yeah. There was a lawsuit here in this situation somewhere about the bonds, if I remember correctly. What was that about? Do you know?

Dinsbeer: (50:20) Well, the...I don't think that there was ever, to my knowledge, there was never a lawsuit that involved Thomas Road. The lawsuit involved other churches and Thomas Road just happened to have money that was involved in that lawsuit. They were, I'm not sure...I could reconstruct exactly how the, all the money went in and out. But we just took paper for \$150,000. That was a lawsuit. To my knowledge, there never was a lawsuit involving the bonds with Thomas Road.

Hall: (51:09) Ok. As the church is growing here by leaps and bounds, what was the reaction of Baptist Bible Fellowship ministers across the country about Jerry Falwell's success?

Dinsbeer: (51:20) They blackballed Jerry, pretty much one and all. Because that was just the way it, that was the way of the ground back then. And until Jerry got so big, and until I guess he started the university, and people began to see, "hey, this thing doesn't happen unless God's in it. We better quit fighting Jerry because we're fighting God in the process."

Hall: (51:49) So eventually there was a reconciliation?

Dinsbeer: (51:50) Eventually there was reconciliation among some. Some still haven't reconciled.

Hall: (51:56) Ok.

Walters: (52:00) How did your relationship with Jerry change and grow over the years then?

Dinsbeer: (52:06) Well we uh...in the early years, prior to his and Macel's marriage, he'd come down occasionally to visit and the Pates would come down with he and Jim. I remember them coming down one time. And I'd be up to places nearby for revivals. I came to Appomattox one time and Jerry came over to Appomattox. That was they were getting ready to build the uh...the octagonal building there on Thomas Road?

Walters: (52:48) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (52:50) And he was explaining to me about it and kind of deciding, trying to decide, you know, "How should I...what direction should I take as far as ministry is concerned?" And I said, "Well Jerry, just go after the whole world." And that was back when we kind of had those deeper life discussions.

Walters: (53:18) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (53:19) And just, "go after the whole world."

Walters: (53:22) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (53:23) But over they years, why then once the university got started, my kids started coming to school up here and they became acquainted with such figures as Eddie Dobson and who uh, had a very difficult time keeping my second son in school.

Walters: (53:42) (*chuckle*)

Dinsbeer: (53:44) And the Yale twins, who he roomed with, which was not a good idea either because between their frivolity and his lack of interest in school, why he finally came back home and...

Walters: (54:00) Now what years would that have been then? The early 80's? The late 70's?

Dinsbeer: (54:02) Now that would have been when they were, I don't know the year number but it was when the dorms were in the Old Washington Hotel.

Walters: (54:09) Oh, so that's real early on then. The mid 70's then.

Dinsbeer: (54:13) Yeah, the 70's, right.

Walters: (54:14) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (54:15) So they have, you know, were back and forth and then my youngest son came up and Eddie Dobson was uh, I think he was still the Dean but we came to enroll him, or to bring him up to school and they still had that facility down there and my wife says, "You're not going to put my baby in that facility!!"

Walters: (54:45) *(laughter)*

Dinsbeer: (54:47) And before we could get to the next stop on campus, the message had gotten around. And so he wound up being one of the ones in the dorms.

Walters: (54:56) Huh.

Dinsbeer: (54:59) It was a funny thing.

Walters: (55:01) Well then, if what, if any ways, were you involved?

Dinsbeer: (55:03) From that point on, why, we began to have a...every time we were up here to see Dan, why, Jerry would call if he knew we were in town and we'd have lunch together or we'd have...and by osmosis, just from being around, he'd say, "Come go with me. I've got a meeting." I guess they'd have a board meeting or something. I'd go with him to the meeting and I finally, I said, "Jerry, am I supposed to be going to these things or not going to them?" Well the next thing I knew, he had me on the boards. So uh, it was official then.

Walters: (55:42) Sure. Now what, if in any ways, were you involved with Jerry's political initiatives?

Dinsbeer: (55:50) Uh, only to be in total agreement with what he was doing...

Walters: (55:54) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (55:55) ...politically. Um, I do not know whether I ever had any influence on him or not. I had come in contact down in our institutions with a couple of things called the Red Books. And they related the American heritage that we had in the founding of the nation and connected the Christian aspect of that in a way that was teachable in school. And I was so impressed with that that brought some basic Biblical principals but stated in a political context. And so I went to the library and they happened to have a copy of that book. And I took the book and I bookmarked in that book, certain things and I put them on Jerry's desk. I said, "Jerry," I said, "this is what we need to be teaching kids and this is what we need to be ingraining because the philosophy of the founding fathers was, 'if we don't inculcate this in the upcoming generation, we'll lose it.'" And the reason a lot of them got involved in education in one aspect. You know, some of them published books, some of them started universities...

Walters: (57:19) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (57:21) So the next thing I knew, I hear Reagan quoting things that are...

Walters: (57:28) In the Red Book?

Dinsbeer: (57:30) that I've seen in those Red Books.

Walters: (57:31) Oh, ok. Sure.

Dinsbeer: (57:32) Whether or not there was any connection there, I don't know.

Walters: (57:35) Now that's Bill Gothard. Is that who that was or not?

Dinsbeer: (57:38) No. Now Bill Gothard has basic Biblical principles too. These books were written by a couple of ladies.

Walters: (57:45) Oh, this wasn't, had anything, this had nothing to do with Gothard?

Dinsbeer: (57:48) Nothing to do with Gothard.

Walters: (57:48) Oh, ok.

Dinsbeer: (57:49) They were written by a couple of ladies who were uh...one of whom served in the Roosevelt administration, and she became concerned about the drifting away of young people from loyalty to the United States. And she began to investigate that. And she discovered that it was just not being taught properly in the schools and so she wrote this book. And then another lady uh, [Roserly Slada] was one and other was [Verna Hall]. She said, "Well, you've got to have this in a teachable form," So she wrote a book called Teaching and Learning. The other one was the American History of...The American Christian History I think it was. And so she put it into a teachable form. Then Gothard, the way I uh...I became a fan of Gothard when some of the teachers I hired to teach in my institute, my school, introduced me to Gothard. Well, I had a guy on staff uh...Larry Coy. Does that name ring a bell with either...Larry Coy was here for a while. And he worked with Larry Coy in a family ministry and so I took these principles out of the Red Books and said, "Look at these principles. Tell me how they relate." Well they said, "They're the same principles, but stated in the political context or governmental context." And Gothard states them in a religious context. So, what I did for my ministry, I merged those two.

Walters: (59:40) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (59:41) Ok. Then Gothard did a little thing called, Character Qualities and had a little game. It had 49 character qualities, had a little card game. I took those cards and worked with them and really defined the opposites for those and they divide into seven groups according to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and they really tell you what the character of Christ was.

Hall: (1:00:14) Do you feel any of those things that you mentioned here, these had an influence on Jerry?

Dinsbeer: (1:00:18) I, I don't have a discussion of Jerry about Gothard...

Hall: (1:00:22) Oh, ok. Sure.

Dinsbeer: (1:00:23) ...because I don't think Jerry was much of a fan of Gothard.

Hall: (1:00:26) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (1:00:27) He may have been but I don't know.

Walters: (1:00:30) Sure. Well then in the late 80's, you know, we have the whole PTL Scandal. Were you affected in any ways with that? Was there any advice...?

Dinsbeer: (1:00:40) I wasn't affected but I was around when it happened and uh...

Walters: (1:00:42) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (1:00:43) I'd been to PTL and it was an incredible facility, a great place for Christians to go. And when Jerry jumped into that, I thought to myself, "Well, boy. What a noble thing Jerry is doing! He's jumping in here to save the testimony of Christianity. Because Jim Baker had a wide following and you know, my thinking is that if Jerry jumps into that thing and he saved the day so to speak, boy what a tremendous job, what a tremendous thing that would be! Well it didn't work out. As soon as Jerry got into it, he found the thing was loaded with corruption.

Hall: (1:01:28) Did you give any advice to him whether he should or should not go on with it?

Dinsbeer: (1:01:31) I, I didn't. By that time, Jerry was beyond my advice.

Hall: (1:01:37) *(laughter)*

Dinsbeer: (1:01:41) Although, there was an occasion when I did give him some advice. Something I thought he ought to do. But it was a personal issue between him and another individual and I said, I think you need to do this.

Walters: (1:01:58) Sure.

Dinsbeer: (1:01:59) And he did.

Hall: (1:02:00) Now its about this time, course the late 70's, that he got started with the schools, course the academy and then the university. What do you know about the...why would he want a school system?

Dinsbeer: (1:02:14) Why would he want a school system? Well...

Hall: (1:02:18) Yes. I think his academy first.

Dinsbeer: (1:02:21) I think probably the Lord just laid on his heart that he wanted a system where a person could start in preschool and go all the way through high school and college and get a Ph.D. in a Christian atmosphere. I think that was his conviction that a person ought to have the opportunity to do that. Somewhere there ought to be a facility where they can do that. And I think that was what drove him and just uh, he stuck with it, stayed focused and just did it. So, we uh, started a university...

Hall: (1:03:02) Yeah. I was going to ask you, was that the same time as this?

Dinsbeer: (1:03:06) Uh, about the same time. Pierre Guillermin had been here, if I recall, but had left and was at another school and Joe Soward was with me and I needed somebody to help me with the university or college. So we got Pierre to come work with us. Well, we were on our way. We had received our initial acceptance by the state of Florida. Florida was pretty ridged with there uh...they were trying to do away with their paper mills down there then, their degree mills. And so we uh, Dr. Guillermin took us to...got to step two and then Trinity opened in Jacksonville, strictly a Bible School. We were gonna go just uh...what's the other term?

Hall: (1:04:13) Liberal Arts?

Dinsbeer: (1:04:14) Liberal Arts! We were gonna go Liberal Arts and, but I didn't feel there was enough market there for a Bible college and then a Liberal Arts Christian college with the same location, the same vicinity. So...and he needed Pierre and so Pierre came back that year.

Hall: (1:04:34) So he was, Dr. Guillermin was here and then he went to help you and then he came back? Is that right?

Dinsbeer: (1:04:40) But there was another, he made another stop in between...

Hall: (1:04:43) Oh, ok.

Dinsbeer: (1:04:44) before coming to me. Now I didn't hire him away from Jerry. That's Jerry's philosophy, "If you want a good man, steal him."

Walters: (1:04:50) *(laughter)*

Hall: (1:04:51) Do you know, where did he go...the place? Do you know where it was?

Dinsbeer: (1:04:54) It was a Methodist school I think.

Hall: (1:04:56) Oh, ok.

Dinsbeer: (1:04:57) If I'm not...I'm not familiar...if I'm not mistaken.

Hall: (1:05:03) Ok, uh, I guess you became a member of the board of trustees at the university. When was that? And of course your still on the board officially right?

Dinsbeer: (1:05:12) You know,...still officially. It happened by osmosis. I don't really know the year that it actually took place. Probably somewhere in the minutes of the board meetings there's a record of it. But uh...

Hall: (1:05:28) So you know, you've been on the board a good many years?

Dinsbeer: (1:05:31) A good many years.

Hall: (1:05:33) Out of the experiences as a board member, is there anything that stands out in your mind as being the most significant decision made by the board?

Dinsbeer: (1:05:43) I think that the most significant decision that the board ever made, was to make sure of two things. Number one, that Thomas Road was in total control. In the final analysis, Thomas Road had charge. The second thing was how board members are appointed. Board members are appointed in a way that any single board member can veto a board members application.

Hall: (1:06:20) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (1:06:22) Or you know, they don't actually need applications but if any board member says, "We don't want this guy," they can cancel him.

Hall: (1:06:31) Is that still true today?

Dinsbeer: (1:06:32) It's still true today.

Hall: (1:06:34) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (1:06:35) Still true today. Now the board's made up primarily of pastors and that is by design. And uh, that would be probably number two or number three of most important decisions because acameditions tend to go left. Pastors tend to go right. And uh, the way that the Southern Baptist Convention lost all of its universities, was because boards of the universities are perpetuating, self-perpetuating, and they are perpetuated, they perpetuated the acameditions. And the pastors lost control, the churches lost control of the universities so they could hire whoever they wanted. And they always go to the left and so finally it got so far left, they were denied the scripture and everything else. So this is set up, the board is set up in such a way that its controlled by pastors who are going to lean to the right, and although we take a lot of advice from the very well schooled acameditions, Dr. Rist and Dr. Godwin, and all of the others that are there, Hawkins and all of them...

Hall: (1:08:10) Now during the 80s I guess it would be, the accreditation process, there seems to be, if I recall, some changes that were made about the department of board members. Uh, are you familiar with that or...

Dinsbeer: (1:08:28) The appointment of board members?

Hall: (1:08:30) Yes, or how the board was made up.

Dinsbeer: (1:08:31) Uh, well, I think in order to avoid conflicts of interest, people who did business maybe with the university, uh, and I'm not sure whether this is a SAX concern or whether this was a concern just on the part of Jerry, that individuals who did business, it would probably be better if they didn't serve on the board. Let's not have any appearance of the evil here. But at any rate, I think that they may have been when some of the, some changes were made. And I think Macel was on the board, and I think there was a time when maybe, and I really don't know this for certain, but possibly the SAX felt like, uh, did not want it to become a family situation. And I'm, like I said, I'm really not certain of that.

Hall: (1:09:48) What uh, basically is the chief function of the board? Is it the policy making decisions?

Dinsbeer: (1:09:53) The board sets policy. We do not get in the point of administrating, but we set policy. And the policies are set by committees making their recommendations to the board and uh, sometimes the recommendation will come from, sometimes Jerry will make recommendations and the board will discuss recommendations and then pass on them. But uh...

Hall: (1:10:33) How does the board come to some decision? Is it discussion among the board members and then...

Dinsbeer: (1:10:40) Uh, a healthy discussion among the board members. Yeah.

Hall: (1:10:42) and then come to some consensus? Is that the way it's usually done?

Dinsbeer: (1:10:44) They come to agreement but things are, a number of committees, 6 or 7 committees and the committees meet at the board meeting time, we have an hour/hour and a half session in which we go over with liaison, any number of things that are going to be brought before the total committee. Sometimes the committees will bring in department heads, and they'll brief us. The committee uh, I happen to be on academic affairs, and sometimes there's just things we want from Dr. Rist and we'll ask him to provide information for us so that we can make better decisions. And he always comes to fortify as much information as he can about a new degree program or a new course that's going to be offered and we discuss the pro's and con's of it, then it goes to the board meeting.

Hall: (1:11:59) Can you make recommendations to it?

Dinsbeer: (1:12:00) We make recommendations to the board then it's open for discussion to the board meeting and uh, a recent one was over an ethnic music major. I guess it was going to be uh, you can check the minutes on it, but it's ethnic music worship...

Hall: (1:12:23) Ok

Dinsbeer: (1:12:25) uh, degree, where they're going to study music of ethnic cultures and see if there's some way to use their music to bring into the music, the message of Christianity. Uh, there's some healthy discussion and a board meeting over that. It was ultimately approved, but there is plenty of discussion about it.

Hall: (1:12:54) So, this committee discusses new majors, new academic programs, departments...

Dinsbeer: (1:13:00) Academic Affairs does

Hall: (1:13:02) They don't, down to like individual courses, approve or disapprove individual...it was mainly programs right?

Dinsbeer: (1:13:13) Uh...if they're going to enter into a new field, like engineering, we may inquire, "Well what are the courses going to be in this field?" I don't know that when we approved engineering we actually did that, but uh, because you assume there's going to be basic engineering courses. But we don't approve, if you're going to add another class of English 101 or if you're going to do English 100 instead of 101 for this group or whatever.

Hall: (1:13:57) Does this academic committee get involved in the finances of supporting, financial support of a program like engineering, or music, or anything else? Or is that some other?

Dinsbeer: (1:14:10) Only, only to the degree that we want to know that it has been shown to be financially feasible to offer this program. And of course, those studies are made before it gets to our committee and all we do is say, "Is this a financially feasible venture?" which, if it wasn't, it wouldn't come to us to start with. But uh, if it's believed to be financially feasible, then come to us and we'll...Now we as a committee, have gotten involved in salaries, to the degree that in order to hire staff that uh...the professors of the quality that we want to have here, we want the compensation for that at a point that's going to be able to attract good people. And uh, so, a number of years ago, why, we offered a uh...I don't know that you'd call it a matrix but, something similar to that. A program that would gradually keep things moving and to my knowledge, as of the last meeting that we had, which would have been in March, why, we're on target. We're following, and everything is on target with that.

Hall: (1:15:48) Now the board meets, is it twice a year, or how often?

Dinsbeer: (1:15:51) It has for several years, maybe three years, met once a year but we are now going to begin meeting twice a year again. That came out of the last board meeting.

Hall: (1:16:04) Out of the people that you've known on the board now, ok...

Dinsbeer: (1:16:08) If there was a necessity for a teleconference, we do have teleconferences. In fact, uh, probably six weeks ago, I was on a teleconference meeting with a representative from S.A.C.S., as a board member, because S.A.C.S. wants to know that the board members and committee members know what's going on. So we had, from Academic Affairs, I think Jerry Thorp was from his committee and Askew, Bill Askew was from his committee and I think there was another one, four of us. So we were in direct conversation with the S.A.C.S. rep.

Hall: (1:16:57) So, the way I understand then, the way the board's organized, your organized into different committees...

Dinsbeer: (1:17:02) different committees, ...

Hall: (1:17:03) which operate and make recommendations, and the final decision's made by the board...

Dinsbeer: (1:17:09) made by the board...

Hall: (1:17:10) and of course you have officers

Dinsbeer: (1:17:11) that becomes...

Hall: (1:17:12) on the board like Chairman of the board and other officers on the board.

Dinsbeer: (1:17:17) They can, they say, they do sometimes make recommendations too.

Hall: (1:17:23) Out of the peoples you've known on the board, who would you say was an outstanding board member?

Dinsbeer: (1:17:30) I think Harvey Gainey was certainly an outstanding board member.

Hall: (1:17:35) Could you, who is he now?

Dinsbeer: (1:17:38) Harvey Gainey, owns a trucking...

Hall: (1:17:41) Oh, ok.

Dinsbeer: (1:17:43) out of Grand Rapids. He's got trucks all over the country. But he has been the Chairman, the past Chairman of the executive committee. Jerry Prevo, from Anchorage Alaska is certainly outstanding. And uh, I'll tell you who I think is has been an extremely

valuable contribution to the board is Jerry Jr. because, now he's Chancellor. But as a board member, in capacity of council, why, he has just been very, very, in my opinion, a...and of course Jonathan too, but uh, from a spiritual standpoint, Jonathan. But the university's in good hands in my opinion.

Hall: (1:18:37) So is there any difference in the way the board operates under Jerry Jr. than it did under his father or is it pretty much the same?

Dinsbeer: (1:18:45) On the humorous side, Jerry Jr. is much more, well...he's not humorous either but he's much more relaxed. Now the first board meeting that Jerry Jr. conducted, it was quite lengthy. But he's shaved it down quite a bit now.

Walters: (1:19:15) It appears that TRBC and Liberty University has gone from being associated with separatistic fundamentalism to conservative evangelicalism. Do you think such a perception is accurate? And would you elaborate on that?

Dinsbeer: (1:19:29) It's probably somewhat accurate. I think that uh...the university is moving in sync with the times. Years ago, the issue was doctrine. And if you, I mean you, you just drilled "doctrine, doctrine, doctrine." And then we gravitated to, not so much what's right, but how do you do right? and what will help me when I get on the job tomorrow? And so this became relational in the emphasis and relational is a big issue right now. Well, I don't know that that has a great deal to do with the evangelicalism but I think that may be where evangelicalism is now. It's a relational direction in which it's going. Doctrinally, I think the university is solid, a rock foundation. And I think very wisely, Jerry, particularly Jerry Jr. and Jonathan, are doing this relational thing and in my opinion, as one from that former generation, they got it, you know, right on target. And I, I'm very, very pleased to see the direction that the university is going. I've got grandkids up here and I've got more of them coming and just very, very pleased with what I see out of them. I've got three or four that have already graduated and they're doing a great job. That's my take on it.

Hall: (1:21:23) Now, during the days of uh, well Moral Majority, when that was going on in the late 70s into the 80s, were you involved in any way in the state organization or the Moral...I think the state organizations?

Dinsbeer: (1:21:36) No, the only involvement I had was to give what support I could. And you know, if any of the groups are nearby and so forth, we try to support it. Or if they're going to Tallahassee, we'll try to send some of the people from around our place to Tallahassee to support the rally over there.

Hall: (1:22:00) Uh, of course there was a big drive for voter registration through the Moral Majority.

Dinsbeer: (1:22:03) We did that.

Hall: (1:22:04) Did you church participate in that?

Dinsbeer: (1:22:06) Yeah, we participated in that. Yeah we sure did.

Hall: (1:22:09) How successful was that?

Dinsbeer: (1:22:10) I think that was successful. We had people register that would probably not have registered otherwise. Some people think to get involved in politics is almost not Christian. But since you're going to do it in the church, why, it makes it alright. Now you can go vote!

Hall: (1:22:26) Which leaves me to the point here, probably, or is it true that some of the Baptist Bible Fellowship people disagreed with that approach?

Dinsbeer: (1:22:35) Uh, I think some of them may have. But they, most of them, jumped on the band wagon. The only group that was very, very rigid, legalistic group, and they never did take too much to Jerry.

Walters: (1:23:00) Why was Dr. Falwell able to accomplish so much and influence so many people?

Dinsbeer: (1:23:05) I think he had a couple of qualities about him. Number one was his integrity. If Jerry said it, you could depend upon him doing it. Not only his integrity, but he loved people, he appreciated people, and from a personal standpoint, he made me feel very much appreciated. Any time that he was where I was present, he would acknowledge me and just always made me feel like I was special. And I think he did that with everybody. I think he had that ability to make everybody feel like they were somebody special.

Walters: (1:23:52) Did you feel...realize from the beginning that Dr. Falwell had a special anointing maybe? Or gift?

Dinsbeer: (1:24:04) I don't know about anointing right from the beginning. But it was very evident from the beginning he had a way to lead people. And with just the leadership he had among his peers, out there in the Fairview Heights area and then as he got into the ministry and the first year of Thomas Road Church, why, from 35 to 800+, why, obviously there's, this doesn't happen unless God's anointing is on you. So by that time he's, you know...and then when he gets into the field of politics, why, and government, why, definitely he swung a big bat at the politicians.

Hall: (1:24:55) Now you of course knew Dr Falwell for many, many years. What's your favorite memory about him?

Dinsbeer: (1:25:02) I think my favorite memory about Jerry was how he always um...has just always made me feel appreciated, always seemed to appreciate the little part that I'd had in his life. Just um...

Walters: (1:25:39) Is there any favorite quote that you liked that he...he's famous for many different quotes. What's your favorite?

Dinsbeer: (1:25:48) I did not hear him personally say this, but I heard Jonathan say it and I think it would be my favorite quote from him: "All failures are prayer failures." "All failures are prayer failures." Jonathan spoke at First Baptist, the first conference they had after Jerry's death. And he preached on the subject, "Things I learned from my father." And it was a great, great message. And that was one of the things that I remembered from his message that "all failures are prayer failures." That would be my, probably my favorite quote.

Hall: (1:26:35) What do you think that Dr. Falwell's greatest contribution was so far as his ministry was concerned?

Dinsbeer: (1:26:42) Well, the university.

Hall: (1:26:43) The university?

Dinsbeer: (1:26:47) The university would be the top thing.

Hall: (1:26:51) What about the American culture in general? Do you think he had a big influence on the way the direction of the country went?

Dinsbeer: (1:27:00) Oh I think he had a whole lot to do with Reagan's election. And the fact that he organized Moral Majority and organized the people, he became the voice for conservative...religious conservatives. You know, prior to that, we did not have a voice, politically, but he became that voice and so I think by virtue of the Reagan years, certainly, I don't think Reagan probably would have gotten elected without Jerry.

Walters: (1:27:43) From your perspective, from what you were doing down in Florida, what point did you see him go from his Jerusalem here so to speak in Lynchburg, to being in the national influence in the national ministry outreach? Did it come with his national expansion of televangelism? Or was there a certain event?

Dinsbeer: (1:28:08) No, he became involved, and I don't know if this story has ever been told, and I think that where I heard it was in a board meeting. When Jonathan was a little fellow, and when the abortion issue began to boil, or began to become an issue, Jonathan said to his dad, I guess in the privacy of their home, "Well dad, why don't you do something about it?" And I think that triggered something in Jerry and at that point in time, is when he got involved.

Walters: (1:28:56) I think that's written in his autobiography.

Dinsbeer: (1:28:57) Is that in his autobiography?

Walters: (1:28:59) I think so.

Dinsbeer: (1:29:00) I heard him tell it...

Walters: (1:29:02) Ok.

Dinsbeer: (1:29:03) if it's not in his autobiography.

Walters: (1:29:05) Well what do you see, foresee in the future of Liberty University?

Dinsbeer: (1:29:09) Well, uh, I think that uh, the opportunity to influence the nation and society is an incredible influence. You don't go very many places that people don't know about Liberty University. Riding up here this afternoon with my son, "I said you know, there just aren't very many..." well we were sitting over in Doc's Diner a little while ago and I said, "you know, there just aren't very many places in the center of people in the south east that don't know about this university. And not just the south east but all over." Uh...as to challenges that the university has for the future, I think keeping true to biblical truths will always be a challenge. I think hiring procedures, having vital screening of the people who are going to stand in front of these young people and teach them, making sure that they're solid and have the right perspective and view of things that we have. I think that will always be a challenge.

Walters: (1:30:40) In your views, what are the uncompromisable?

Dinsbeer: (1:30:44) You can't compromise on the infallibility of scripture, on the inspiration of scripture, you can fallible...you can't um...or go astray on the deity of Christ, or the triune character of God, the trinity. Uh, those are...you can't compromise on heaven and hell.

Walters: (1:31:16) What about Thomas Road Baptist Church? What's its future in challenges from your perspective?

Dinsbeer: (1:31:26) Uh...well I think the challenge for Thomas Road Church, I think as long as Jonathan's around its going to be safe. I think when Jonathan's time has ended, why having to call in the next pastor will be the challenge. But you've got to keep someone at the helm of the Thomas Road who understands the philosophy of keeping the church in control of the university. The church has got to be in a position to where if they see the university going the wrong direction, they can say, "that's it! We're not going to go that way." You know, "you're out!" you know? So...

Walters: (1:32:31) What would you, let's say the Lord tarries, and the rapture doesn't take place in the next 70 years to 100 years or something, what would you have to say to three generations from now, 100 years from now?

Dinsbeer: (1:32:53) Well don't be afraid to change your methodology but whatever you do, don't ever change the message. Be true to the Book.

Walters: (1:33:06) Ok

Hall: (1:33:07) Are you saying then from, your saying then from the leadership, like the pastor of the church, uh, hiring of faculty, those are the vital things that you see to keep the school and the church on track?

Dinsbeer: (1:33:19) Yes. Those are vital things. You've got to keep in uh...those professors that are standing there in front of those young people, giving it out they've got to be giving out truth.

Walters: (1:33:37) Well, with that we'll conclude today's interview with Dr. Jack Dinsbeer. This interview has been conducted as part of the oral history project of the Liberty University Archives.

[End of Interview]