

## Oral History Interview of Dr. Ronald Godwin

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Name of Interviewee: Dr. Ronald Godwin

Name of Interviewers: Randy Miller and Dr. Cline Hall

Transcriber: Jesse Ronda

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**Miller:** (0:01) Alright, welcome to this interview in the oral history project of the Liberty University archives. This interview is being conducted on June 29, 2010. Today we are interviewing Dr. Ronald Godwin. My name is Randy Miller and I'll be conducting the interview today with Dr. Cline Hall, greetings Dr. Hall.

**Hall:** (0:20) Good morning.

**Miller:** (0:21) And greetings Dr. Godwin.

**Godwin:** (0:24) Good morning to you.

**Miller:** (0:27) And why don't we start off with some biographical information. Can you tell us a little bit about where you were born, where you grew up, and your family life in those early days?

**Godwin:** (0:34) Right. I was born in Pensacola, Florida in the pan handle of northwest Florida. And I was born to a set of parents who were also pioneer children of that area. My father just died this last December at the age young of 101. So he was born in 1908

and he was born to a land grant family and, a few miles north of Pensacola and one of eight children and grew up on a farm there, was self educated. And my mother born a few miles to the east of, in Florala, just over the Florida-Alabama line and went to school in that area at a teacher's college and migrated down to Defuniak Springs and had acquired a teaching job in the fishing hamlet of Destin, Florida. A little one room schoolhouse in a fish... in a fishing village there and she would go over and teach for the week and return to a boarding house in Defuniak. My father was sent by the then Embryonic Light Company to string the first electrical lines in that area of the pan handle and found himself staying in the same boarding house and a young single man he had the occasion to meet my mother at the dinner table in the boarding house on, on weekends and the struck up a friendship. Eventually, married and I became the third of three sons that were born to Jake and Elizabeth Godwin. A lot of stories about Destin, Florida and the one room schoolhouse and if you go there today as a tourist, it looks a great deal like Myrtle Beach or Atlantic City or any of the other burgeoning coastline cities. But in those days, it was a tiny fishing village with a one room schoolhouse and that's where my mother was working and teaching. And my father was stringing the first electrical lines eastward across the pan handle of Florida when they met. So that's where I got my start.

**Miller:** (3:24) Well if you could tell us a little bit about your religious background.

Were your parents Christians? Were you reared a Christian?

**Godwin:** (3:28) Yes they were. My mother particularly was a good and godly woman who stacked Bibles on our breakfast table and every morning at breakfast we not only had breakfast but we had at least one chapter in the Bible. And we took turns reading our way through the Bible as I was growing up. We of course attended Sunday school and

church religiously and there was a, an adult Bible class in my neighborhood that was held in the home of some neighbors who went on eventually to open the first Christian bookstore in Pensacola, Florida. But these, this family, the Bradley's, brought in a very respected Bible teacher and on Tuesday evenings the people in our neighborhood and area would gather in the Bradley home for Bible study. So I not only attended all the Sunday school and church services for my appropriate age but on Tuesday nights I was exposed...exposed to some very serious adult Bible study as well.

**Miller:** (4:47) So tell us about your personal conversion experience. When did you come to know the Lord?

**Godwin:** (4:52) North of Pensacola there was a nondenominational camp called Camp of the Pines. And Camp of the Pines had been there since long before this fellow came into this world. And they had a huge tabernacle with split shingle roof, with no walls, woodchip floor, not sawdust but woodchips, and long, long benches. And people would come in from miles around in northwest Florida there in the summer time to hear preachers hold revival services and Bible conferences and they began to then pay a little more attention to what the young people wanted to do and they began to hold camps certain weeks. And as a child I went up to that camp some 12 different years in the summer and gradually became a worker there. But raised in church, raised under Bible teachers, familiar with all the Scriptures, familiar with all the teachings. I was not converted until I was a junior in high school. But at that same camp, during a service there, and under the preaching of a preacher from Tennessee, I suddenly fell under deep conviction. I was unable to sleep. I wrestled with these...my condition and my true situation all night. And the next morning after breakfast, went to the preacher's cabin

and asked to speak to him and told him that I was deeply concerned about my spiritual condition and did not believe that I was a Christian and wanted to become one. And so on the front porch of a cabin, at Camp of the Pines, in northwest Florida, this pastor lead me to Christ and I trusted Christ as my savior, as a junior in high school.

**Hall:** (7:13) From what you're saying I don't uh...I'm assuming that your parents are not college educated. But what, did you go to college eventually after high school or and where and when?

**Godwin:** (7:24) Well, in point of fact, my mother was college educated in the sense that she attended a teacher's college.

**Hall:** (7:33) Ok.

**Godwin:** (7:34) I...suspect that was a fairly rudimentary college experience at that time and place in northwest Florida. However, it was elite compared to the vast majority of the population. And that's how she found herself teaching in that one room schoolhouse. My dad, on the other hand, did not go to college. And he was self taught. He taught himself...he, he bought correspondence courses and I found, I find that a little bit ironic that later, and we'll get to that. But as a young man my father taught himself to play musical instruments. He learned basic electrical principles all from buying soft back correspondence books. I myself, my two brothers they went into the trades. They became electricians and refrigeration mechanics and later air conditioning mechanics and I was the odd man out so to speak. I was the boy who never could stop reading and never could stop learning and I found myself encountering a young couple right out of college Arlin and, and Rebekah Horton who had come to Pensacola to found a inter, interdenominational child evangelism fellowship program. And they formed a committee

there and began to hold lessons there on how to teach flannel-graph stories and Bible stories to young people and they recruited me to that task and I became one of their first student teachers in the projects in, around Pensacola. But while they were getting their child evangelism fellowship program started they, they felt lead to open a Christian school and so Pensacola Christian was founded and at the same time I was very much in their company and, and I came under their influence and they began to tell me I needed to go to a Christian college. And I didn't do that at first. I, my first year I...my father had suffered some severe financial setbacks and, and there was a real shortage of money in the family so I stayed in Pensacola and, and worked and helped the family regather its, its financial footing. And then went off to Baylor University and studied at Baylor for one year. But when I came back from Baylor the Horton's were waiting for me there reminding me that I needed to get a distinctively Christian education. And at that time, my pastor was Dr. Sumner Wemp, pastor of Central Baptist Church. And this is all pre-Liberty. And at that time Sumner was a great champion of Tennessee Temple schools. And Tennessee Temple was at the height of its growth and powers and so he even loaned me his car to drive up to Chattanooga to visit Tennessee Temple. And I did that. And as the summer, that particular summer, wore on, I sent my application in and I got no response from Tennessee Temple. And the conversations there had gone well and I thought I'd filled out my application but nothing seemed to happen. And the Hortons standing by said "well why don't you send an application in to Bob Jones University." And that's where they had both graduated from. And I said, finally I said "ok, well I'll give it a try" because it was getting into early August and, and time was running out. So I filled out an application and like 48 hours later there was a response back from Bob

Jones and a full acceptance. The very next day, my acceptance from Tennessee Temple came back but as the Lord would have it, and I believe it, it was the leading of the Lord for me, I decided to go to Bob Jones. And I remember going down to the train station and pastor Sumner Wemp seeing me off to college and telling me “Godwin I’ll see you in two weeks because you won’t last any longer than that at Bob Jones.”

**Hall:** (12:35) [*laughter*]

**Godwin:** (12:36) And he wished me farewell and as it turned out I finished two years there and graduated from Bob Jones.

**Hall:** (12:49) And what was your major?

**Godwin:** (12:50) I, I majored in Bible and I had a double minor in English and Education.

**Miller:** (13:01) And so then from Bob Jones what was your next degree or where did you go for further education?

**Godwin:** (13:06) Right, well from Bob Jones, I, I graduated because Baylor was on a quarter semester system rather than a full semester system. I had to go an extra semester at Bob Jones, graduated in the middle of the year not, not in May. And so I, the Hortons were waiting for me. They said “come on back to Pensacola. We’ll put you to work in our classroom.” So I returned to Pensacola to teach, to drive a school bus, to run a physical ed. class. Let’s see, what all did I do, I drove a school bus morning and evening. I had P.E. classes, I taught English and I taught Bible. And so I did a little bit of everything at Pensacola Christian which was then growing rapidly.

**Miller:** (14:01) Now did they have a full K-12 or were they only still a K-8 or?

**Godwin:** (14:05) By then, by then they were through the twelfth grade and I was teaching junior high and high school classes. And I should mention that during my last year at Bob Jones University I married. And so by the second year I was at Pensacola Christian, I...my wife and I began to have children. I had a son and a bit later a daughter. So we were at Pensacola and taught there for several years. But down the road in Panama City, Florida, Panama City, Dr. Hugh Pyle was starting another Christian day school. These schools were beginning to pop up all over the south and the west coast...northwest corner of Florida and into Alabama and Mobile and an association was formed and the very beginnings of a huge nation wide Christian school movement was beginning. And Dr. Hugh Pyle bought a private airfield down there. Hangar, runway, property and decided to start a church and build a Christian day school and he came over and talked me into moving down there to be his first principal. And so after a couple of years teaching with Dr. Horton at, at booming Pensacola Christian, I moved to Panama City Christian School and began to serve as their head master. And there were 36 students there and at the time I arrived and I was there for nearly five years and we, we built buildings every single year. And when I left there, we were approaching 2,000 students and God blessed that effort and that was my first attempts at recruiting and growing schools and hiring teachers and, and pretending I knew how to minister an educational institution.

**Hall:** (16:29) So good preparation for what was the future. [*laughter*]

**Godwin:** (16:35) Well it, it turned out it was, it was good training, you know. All things work together for good and as you look back, my rearview mirror has always operated so much more clearly than my windshield. And as I look back I can see the hand of God

very clearly and I can see purpose and reason in so much of what's happened in my past but as I look to the future that's sometimes a challenge to know God's will.

**Miller:** (17:05) Now, so you're with Dr. Pyle, what's the next step?

**Godwin:** (17:08) Well, I worked with Dr. Pyle for some years of approximately five if I remember right. [*chuckle*] And my brother who had gone into the electrical business and become an electrical contractor with some family friends that I knew from my childhood and he knew, he had married into that family. It was, it was just a local electrical company in Pensacola, Florida. But they were ambitious and these young fellows over there decided to give a try at landing a government contract. And they were successful to their own amazement. And suddenly they had the job of stringing a computer cable in United States Post Offices all over the United States and they needed people to run crews in city after city. And so my brother called me up and said "you won't believe it. You can get 27 dollars a day per diem, you can get paid," I don't remember the salary but it was, was astronomical for me at that time. And he said "you can earn, you know your expenses will be paid. They'll fly you back and forth from work to home every five weeks." And, and I got to thinking about that and I wanted to earn a master's degree. I was, you know, in possession of an undergraduate degree at the time and I began to see that in this burgeoning Christian school educational field, it was early, but I could see that the leaders were beginning to acquire graduate degrees. And so I said "well what if I went to work for you for say a year, year and a half, save my money up and left you?" and just made it clear from the very beginning. Well this was just no problem. They were glad to get people they knew and could trust because they were suddenly responsible to install miles and miles of 60 pair computer cable in post offices across the

entire United States and this was a, a massive undertaking. And so I acquired that responsibility and took a crew and found myself, over a period of several years, installing cable in, with a crew, in some 36 United States Post Offices in 36 cities across the United States. But on my schedule, after I completed my tour duty with them, I decided, because at that time in northwest Florida there was no graduate program, there was no graduate school. My family, children, my wife were all living there in Pensacola, we would have to move somewhere for me to do graduate study. I decided to move them where their grandparents lived and that was in Norfolk, Virginia. So I, I moved my family, myself to Virginia Beach, Norfolk and I enrolled in Old Dominion. And at that time it was a branch that...at that time it was a branch of William and Mary and about to go independent, but still a branch. And enrolled in, even in, at that time, in the summer time I worked uh...went back to New York and several other cities to run computer installation crews to keep some, some money coming into the family and, and during the year at Old Dominion, I taught high school and substitute taught and, and did much of my class attendance at night. But I acquired a master's degree and um...

**Hall:** (21:27) In what field?

**Godwin:** (21:29) Educational administration.

**Hall:** (21:32) Ok.

**Godwin:** (21:33) Not higher educational administration but educational administration.

I, my vision at that time was no higher or broader than maybe one day I could be, have a master's degree and be a qualified school principal. And that was my goal. And I saw that, that was the original plan and I executed the plan and you know, got a wife and two children by then and I'm trying to keep the wolf away from the door and I'm trying to

stay on some career path. And I got that goal accomplished but just as I was graduating, my major professor at Old Dominion sat me down and told me, he said “you’re going to stay and work on your doctorate, aren’t you?” Well I was astounded. I...that was a totally vertical thought to me. I...it never crossed my mind. I never thought of myself ever doing that kind of study or going further and I, I looked at him with just amazement. He said “I can arrange for you to get a full scholarship here.” And this was all very astounding because, I’ll quickly digress and tell you that when I applied at Old Dominion, they turned me down because Bob Jones University was not an accredited university. And they said “sorry but we don’t accept credits.” Well not to be turned aside that easily I made an appointment with the president of Old Dominion and walked in with my brash self and sat down and said “I have real deal for you today. It’s only good today so listen carefully.” [coughs] Excuse me. I said “you’re a wonderful, generous, liberal fellow and your reputation for liberality and generosity is well known. And so I’m going to give you the chance to put me under the status of probationary student.” And I had done my homework and I knew they had such a status. And I said “you’re going to label me as a probationary student and you’re going to give me a opportunity to study here one year and because I’m an ignorant southern boy from an unaccredited college, I’ll of course bumble around here for a while and I’ll fail and I’ll go away but you’ll be able to tell all your liberal friends that you were such a generous magnanimous fellow and you gave another one of these unwashed types an opportunity to go to school and he squandered that opportunity.” And well he’s sitting there with his certain amount of amusement on his face listening to this young whippersnapper run his mouth. And he said “let me get this straight. You’re trying to con me into letting you go

to school here on probation for a year?” And he said “well, you have to maintain the right grade point average.” And so he set me a high B average and I said “ok.” So, long story short [*cough*], I did manage to survive and I did manage to graduate. But that was the way I came into Old Dominion. Now, I’m graduating and suddenly there’s a professor telling me they want to give me a full scholarship to go on and do doctoral work. Well it didn’t compute and honestly my brain had never gone there. So I thanked the guy and said “no thank you.” And I went back to Florida. And I was, had a chance to go to a school up in Jackson County just north of Dothan, Alabama kind of north and a little east of Panama City, Florida just, again, up in the pan handle [*cough*]. And it’s call Marianna, Florida and it’s a cow country. They even have sanctioned rodeos in that area, I learned after I had moved there. But anyway, there was a committee of people who wanted to start a Christian school and they talked me into going there. And I stopped and taught briefly in Fort Walton Beach in the public schools while they were working on these arrangements. I won a teacher of the year award for Okaloosa County public schools and helped start another small Christian school in Fort Walton the semester that I was there. So stayed busy, but then migrated on to Marianna, Florida and we founded a school there. It grew rapidly. We built additional buildings and the population grew and I had a committee there who were very, very oriented toward farming and cattle raising and I acquired the bug and I told them that if I was to stay they would have to help me buy a farm and acquire cattle and dah, dah, dah. And I actually did. I was headmaster of a school in Marianna, Florida, bought a 120 acre farm, went to the auction market and pulled my ear and pinched my nose and found that every time I did that I just bought a cow, and went through those kinds of processes and raised hay, calves, and played farmer

for several years. Well during this time, all this time, I had maintained my friendship with the Hortons and had stayed in contact and they would, from time to time, come over to Jackson County and spend the weekend or whatever at our farm. And that was sort of their vacation escape. And while they were visiting they began to share with me this vision they had of starting a college. And their school, by this time, grown into the one of the largest in the entire nation. Their publishing company, A Beka Book Publishing, had become very, very productive and it was growing by leaps and bounds. So their next step for them in their ministry was to start a college. And so they wanted to talk to me about that. And from time to time they would come and talk and talk and finally Dr. Horton proposed that if I would be willing to leave Jackson Christian Schools there in Marianna and move my family to Pensacola, he would put them, he would provide housing, provide me with a car, pay for my education, and in return for all that I would enroll at Florida State University to get my doctorate and weekends I would come back to help supervise the building of the first buildings for Pensacola Christian. And I would, the plan was I would become the first founding president of the new college which, in fact, is what did happen. So I did. We moved. I made 200 and something trips between Pensacola and Tallahassee. Lived in a little house trailer during the week and traveled back and forth and acquired my doctorate and built the first buildings at Pensacola Christian College and served as its first president and that was a tremendous change in lifestyle and what have you and growth. And then I was approached by a, the founder and then president of Clearwater Christian College in Clearwater, Florida. And they were looking to grow that young college and they had heard about what I had been able to do with my Christian day schools and my work with Dr. Horton and Pensacola

Christian was growing very rapidly at this time. So I took a vacation. Took my father on a fishing trip to Key West and we stopped by Clearwater on the way down to the Keys and looked over this little Christian college there on the shore of Tampa Bay and, and being restless and ambitious and young and full of vinegar I accepted that role and moved my family to Clearwater.

**Miller:** (31:06) Now what was your role there? Were you president there as well to?

**Godwin:** (31:09) I was president at Clearwater.

**Miller:** (31:11) Now was that before Dr. George Youstra?

**Godwin:** (31:14) Yes it was. It was one, one...

**Miller:** (31:18) You were right before him.

**Godwin:** (31:19) Yeah, yeah, yeah. In fact, I was the guy who recommended George.

**Miller:** (31:22) Ok.

**Godwin:** (31:23) George was a classmate of mine at Bob Jones. We'd known each other all of the time I was enrolled at Bob Jones. So it was very easy for me to recommend George and to know who he was. So yes I played a role in that and knew George as a classmate in college. And um...

**Miller:** (31:42) And what was your thesis, your PhD thesis, there at Florida State?

**Godwin:** (31:47) My PhD thesis interestingly, was in...I can't say it correctly any longer but it, it boils down to the history of, of Christian higher education in America and the founding of, of a, of a Christian institution of higher education. We fudged that just a bit because something so practical, see at that time we were...I was there in order to found and start a Christian college. And I wanted to have a PhD thesis that basically required me to study what I had to do in order to found the college. We made it a bit more

abstract and a bit larger and broader in view but I was actually able to do my PhD thesis closely in the area of founding and, and developing a Christian college from scratch. I actually wrote the charter. I actually wrote the first catalog. I went home on weekends and built the first building. I hired the first faculty. I did everything that you have to do to start a Christian college, a Christian institution of higher education from scratch in the state of Florida and so that, there was a correlation there.

**Hall:** (33:20) It's very interesting because it seems to fit together here for the future. You were involved in building buildings [*laughter*].

**Godwin:** (33:28) I see how well, I see how well the rearview mirror works [*laughter*]. It's interesting how that is true.

**Hall:** (33:34) Curriculum development and all of that.

**Godwin:** (33:36) Yeah. Everything that, that I had no idea what the future held at that time. And I joined a Baptist church there. And low and behold in the second year that I was there, a preacher came, a visiting preacher came to speak and his name was Dr. Jerry Falwell. First time I ever met him. I don't know that I'd even heard hardly anything about him before then. I really didn't know anything about Dr. Falwell. I, I knew people who were up there. Jim Soward was a friend of mine and a young fellow who had gone to Youth for Christ meetings with me in Pensacola when I was a senior in high school. And I attended Bible classes in his mother's living room there in the north side of Pensacola. And so Jim Soward was up here and, people may not know, but Jim Soward was the music director, the trumpeter, the choir director, the all purpose assistant to Dr. Falwell during the early days of the building of the Thomas Road Baptist Church. He traveled with Doc, provided the music. He was kind an all, jack of all trades. And he

designed that Jeffersonian type building of Thomas Road. His parents moved up here as it turned out and his father worked on the janitorial staff. His mother was involved in the ministry for many years and, and Jim Soward's widow lives here today and, and she worked at Liberty University for many, many years. So there is a connection. And so Jim Soward uh...and by then Sumner Wemp had migrated here and he was sort of a campus pastor. So there was Sumner Wemp here, there was Jim Soward, and then, perhaps most importantly, Pierre Guillermin was president. And Pierre Guillermin, like George Youstra, was a fellow classmate of mine at Bob Jones University. He and his wife both were fellow classmates of mine. And so I knew the Guillermins really well, Jim Soward, and of course my ex-pastor Sumner Wemp was here. So I knew some people but I didn't know Dr. Falwell. And, but his pastor, my pastor there at, in Clearwater, you know, told him that suddenly Clearwater Christian College was growing and that a lot of refurbishment and improvements to the property and to the buildings was occurring and there were some good things happening at Clearwater; a library was being constructed. And so Dr. Falwell approached me after the service and, you know, his fashion, my first experience during that service but I later became very familiar with it, he, I could see him talking to the pastor and they were looking at me while he was sitting in the audience you know. And then Dr. Falwell got up to speak and said "and I'm glad to see my good friend Dr. Ron Godwin here sitting in the audience." Well, you know we'd never even met.

**Hall:** (37:11) [*laughter*]

**Godwin:** (37:12) And so but after the service I went up and chatted with him and he said "you know" just right then he said "you know you need to, you need to come on up to

Liberty and help me build this college up there.” And we began to talk and long and short of that was it appeared in negotiation as to whether he really would pay my airline ticket or not. I finally told him “you know, if you don’t buy my ticket, I’m not coming.” “Well I’ll pay for it when you get there.” “No, no. If I’m dumb enough to do that, I’m not going to be smart enough to help you, so pay for my airline ticket, then I’ll come.” Well finally Dr. Falwell did pay for my airline ticket and that was one of the few arguments I ever one and I did come up for a visit and...

**Hall:** (38:05) What year was this?

**Godwin:** (38:07) Oh my goodness. I, I don’t know. I’d have to reconstruct. I arrived here though in ’78.

**Hall:** (38:15) ’78, ok.

**Godwin:** (38:16) So there we go, so let’s say ’77 or somewhere there because it took some months of negotiating.

**Miller:** (38:23) Now that first time that you ever met him in person, that was in Clearwater not in Pensacola? We kind of get those two...

**Godwin:** (38:27) No, no.

**Miller:** (38:28) No, it was in Pensacola?

**Godwin:** (38:30) No it was not in Cl...Pensacola. It was in Clearwater.

**Miller:** (38:32) Clearwater, right, ok.

**Godwin:** (38:33) I was president of Clearwater Christian College. I was attending a local Baptist church in Clearwater, Florida. He came to speak in that Baptist church in Clearwater and that’s where I first met him. And I made my visit, my exploratory visit here from Clearwater up to, up here to Lynchburg. And I remember there was a tent on a

muddy field and it was cold and windy and they were having chapel inside the tent and I was sitting to one side up against the, just barely inside the tent and it was flapping mightily in the breeze and snapping and popping behind me. And I was...had to lean to see around the poles that held the tent up and they were holding chapel here out on the mud flat and that was my first experience. After some period of time and months, I completed the school year down there and did move my family and, and up here to Lynchburg to, to work for Dr. Falwell.

**Hall:** (39:58) Now this is fall of '78. What position did...were you hired for?

**Godwin:** (40:05) Well it was for really nebulous. I was hired by Dr. Falwell to assist in the plannings because I had acquired my PhD, I should mention that, in, in planning, in higher education planning and management. And so my, my doctorate actually was in higher educational planning and management. It's the equivalent of a lower level administrative educational degree is what the closest thing that Florida State offered at the time. So I was to help plan the growth and what have you which means I was imposed on, assigned to work for Pierre Guillermin, you know. Pierre didn't hire me, he wasn't particularly happy to see me coming but there I was working for him by edict of Dr. Falwell. Well Pierre didn't want me on campus so he put me over at Thomas Road Baptist Church in the side building there I could find it I guess. You walk up stairs somewhere and in the back hallway there was, there were a couple of offices. Earl Mills had just been hired and it was down the hall from me and we were the only two guys over there and we would drive back and forth to the University for various meetings. And I, I came as a administrative assistant to Pierre Guillermin and my role was to help plan and manage growth. And I had a lot to do because the school was "growing like topsy" and

our dining services were not large enough and the medical facilities were not large enough. The sewerage was backing up, was not making its way downtown and...so we had lots of challenges regarding the infrastructure and the operation of the University and so I spent several years here working with Pierre and a fellow name Bill Paul who was the financial vice president and Dr. Eddie Dobson was dean of students and Sumner Wemp at that time was still campus pastor in the beginning.

**Miller:** (42:39) Now coming from the very...you graduated from Bob Jones, Pensacola Christian College is known as a real fundamental school. At that time was there a closer connection between Liberty and Bob Jones or had they already kind of parted ways and one's going more towards the conservative evangelical side and one is more of the militant fundamentalist side? Could you talk about that for a moment?

**Godwin:** (43:03) Well the short answer to your answer is simply to reply that as soon as I arrived here, very soon after arriving, I received a letter from Bob Jones telling me that I was now persona non grata. I was not to ever return to the campus which, by the way, I have never done. I don't go where I'm not invited. And I was uh...I had made the fatal error of going to work for one of America's leading liberals and so if I was going to work for that theologically apostate Jerry Falwell, I was no longer welcome at Bob Jones. And so that's how Bob Jones reacted to my coming here [laughter].

**Miller:** (43:59) [laughter]

**Hall:** (44:00) So it's somewhat ironic. You were from Bob Jones, Guillermin was from Bob Jones, Dobson was from, I believe it was from...

**Godwin:** (44:07) I think in those days, Bob Jones viewed each of those as a defection of, of sorts; a kind of traitorship of sorts. And there view was so rigorously legalistic and,

and separatist that, that...now later, see I was a classmate of Bob the, the third at Bob Jones. We were friends and I actually dated his eventual wife a couple of times. We were all classmates. We all knew each other very, very well. And so when I came here it really offended Bob the third and so he wrote me this letter. Now later, some years later, we both joined an organization called the Council for National Policy; a very large politically conservative organization that Dr. Falwell and Tim LaHaye and I were founding members of. And some time after that organization was founded, Bob the third joined it. And we found ourselves attending workshops and meetings together and occasionally at the same table for a meal. And he was much more genial and, and...

**Miller:** (45:51) Warmed up a bit.

**Godwin:** (45:52) just socially he warmed up. I never got another letter telling me I was welcome again and I never tested whether I would be turned aside at the gate but in the early days, just as I arrived here, I also received a letter from Bob Jones telling me I was no longer welcome there.

**Miller:** (46:05) And how about your relationship with the Hortons then? How has that been through the years?

**Godwin:** (46:09) Well, that's interesting. The Hortons worked closely with my brother who was in the, by then a senior officer in that local electrical company. He built uh...he did the electrical work on a lot of their buildings. They knew and worked with my oldest brother who was a real estate developer. They knew my parents very closely. We, we remained friends. Not close at all because they, if anything, prided themselves on being to the right of Bob Jones theologically. But we never had a, any kind of letter between us like was sent to me from Bob Jones but it was an estranged relationship. Over the years

as family members died and things happened there would be a brief note of condolence or whatever. And, but there's a point to answering that. After all these many years of cool estrangement, this last year I received an invitation from the Hortons to come visit the campus to see what they had, what was going on. So I flew down one day and visited the campus and was given the grand tour and at lunch time the Hortons drove over and met me in their executive dining room and we had a lengthy lunch. And it was very cordial. And it was, in some ways, it was fascinating in that it was almost as if there'd not been all these many, many, many years of lack of communication. Because when I was young and before as I was in high school and in college and then following college [cough] I had worked very closely with the Hortons and then all these years of lack of communication had passed and, and the luncheon was very cordial, very warm. And Arlin showed me his kingdom and told me he didn't owe a penny of debt and explained to me how A Beka Book publishing company had provided the income for them to void all that debt. And I said he was going to graduate 800 people from the college this year and I was appropriately impressed and went out of my way to mention no numbers at all from Liberty University and invited him up here. And he accepted the invitation and said he was coming this summer; this very summer. And then he called me just two weeks ago and he was up here in the Smoky Mountains vacationing and he said "I'm sorry. I'm not going to be able to come. I have a problem with my throat and I'm going to have to return to Pensacola but I...if you'll give me a rain check I will visit." And so after all these years there's been a kind of reestablishment of, of friendship and a warm relationship with the Hortons. And I, I'm pleased about that.

**Miller:** (49:40) Well that's been a good recap of the years and the time coming up about '78 when you started here. So let's dig right into the early Liberty years. Now you had a time when you were here, then you left for a while, went to be with the Moral Majority, and that and came back. So let's talk about those early Liberty years. What were things like? What can you remember and share with us about the history of the University at that time?

**Godwin:** (50:06) Well, when I was first at the school, we lacked a medical clinic. And I went down here to Martinsville and I bought a modular. Brought it up here and planted it in the lawn in front of the Schilling Center. I don't know if you can perhaps remember...

**Hall:** (50:27) Yeah.

**Godwin:** (50:28) that but we put a little modular right up on the grass and created an instant clinic and built that. And then, as I mentioned earlier, we, we rebuilt all of the kitchen facilities for the dining hall in the back of, of the building that John Borek eventually set up his administrative quarters in but we built kitchens across the back of that. We redesigned the sewerage system so that that would work and to, happily it works even today. And we did much planning and designing of, of buildings and streets and infrastructure classrooms, etc. And in those early days I had almost no contact with Dr. Falwell other than I attended church on the weekends; worked very closely with Pierre Guillermin, with Bill Paul, Eddie Dobson, people here at the University. About that time, we began to hear, out here at the University, from the pulpit, that Dr. Falwell was becoming involved with a group of [*cough*] conservative intellectuals in Washington D.C. and was taking them great interest in a national role. He wanted to become more active in national politics and national issues. And that began to bleed into his sermons

and into his public remarks and uh...but I didn't pay a lot of attention to it because I was very preoccupied with the planning and growth that we were experiencing. I had discovered that the check-in and registration process in the fall each year at Liberty was an excruciating process and people stood in line for endless hours and then moved to the next line and did that again and did that again and so I redesigned all that and...

**Miller:** (53:05) If we could stop for just a second with that. Originally, was it all paper based?

**Godwin:** (53:09) Oh yeah. It was very paper based, you know, completely. I mean, we had typewriters and we had some file cards that came out of a huge main, mainline computer...

**Miller:** (53:27) One of those, those old 80 column IBM cards that they...

**Godwin:** (53:31) That's right, yeah.

**Miller:** (53:32) and they were, so there were punch cards and that but it...

**Godwin:** (53:33) That was, nothing better than punch cards. Nothing better than...the hot thing in those days was this electric racing typewriter; an IBM typewriter that had a white tape that could actually erase...

**Miller:** (53:47) Erase.

**Godwin:** (53:48) your errors. And it was like wonderful sweet relief that you could, to be able to have the latest IBM erasing typewriter. But the system was manual to the extreme and, and there was just, this was just the way it had always been done in universities and colleges and nobody was very concerned about it, students having to stand in line forever. So we reorganized all that radically. But compared to the process today, what we, what we created was very primitive.

**Miller:** (54:27) So did you just create an improved manual process or did you computerize it?

**Godwin:** (54:31) No. We didn't have the computers so we, we greatly streamlined the process. We changed the forms. We changed the application. We changed the, the sequence of lines. We, we just tinkered with the everything...

**Miller:** (54:50) You just streamlined the whole process.

**Godwin:** (54:51) Yeah that's right.

**Miller:** (54:52) I remember at my little college, we had these rods that you'd go through some things and lift up so that way they could, you know, do the classes and that to, to lift up for the cards. And so you just improved the process...

**Godwin:** (55:04) That's right.

**Miller:** (55:05) as well as you could do without computers.

**Godwin:** (55:06) We went to each weigh station and, and developed a descriptions of what action took place at that particular point. And then we put them up on chalkboards and studied them and reorganized them. And by we I say we, you know we had Dr. Guillermin, we had Bill Paul, we had Dobson. We had all of the leadership helping to, to sort this out. And we reworked the system and we reduced line time by more than 50 percent and we were very, very pleased with all of that at the time. That was the best we could do and that was as large as our vision allowed us to, to improve things.

**Hall:** (55:55) So basically a student would, in a line, would get a card for his, that particular class and then he would have to go to the next line for...

**Godwin:** (56:03) And then do it again. And then do it again. And then do it again.

And, you know, that's five or six of those and, and then there are other lines for other things and so it was just a...

**Miller:** (56:13) And so then the teacher had a stack of cards and so is that what they would also later put the grades on that?

**Godwin:** (56:19) Well, I honestly can't remember. I, I can't remember. All I remember is the way I've done things all my life. I approach a particular challenge or problem and I immerse myself in it and I, I analyze it. Then I come up with a fix...

**Miller:** (56:41) Then you walk away.

**Godwin:** (56:42) Then I walk away to the next one. And I've been doing that for an awful lot of years [*laughter*] I'm afraid. And uh...

**Hall:** (56:49) In regards to buildings, what was your first major building project on campus?

**Godwin:** (56:54) We did something fairly radical with, with Schilling, I forget. The whole frontend of Schilling we put the bricks from the donors in and if you re...to this day you can go into the hallways up in front of Schilling. And then we came over here to the, to the lobby of the area outside our black box fine arts theatre that is now becoming a classroom and we did a lot of change there. We redesigned what was then a, a tiered faculty classroom into a television studios. And we redesigned the cafeteria program. And we built some dorms. And um...I don't remember.

**Miller:** (57:50) Couple three questions here. Before the Reber Thomas Dining Hall was built, where did students eat? Where was the dining hall?

**Godwin:** (57:58) Well they were in that area...

**Hall:** (58:03) Straight across...

**Miller:** (58:04) We're recording...

**Godwin:** (58:05) right here. I mean we're not far from it, I mean it was right there wasn't it...

**Miller:** (58:06) right, we're recording this in the courtyard area here and so it was in the corner of the courtyard right next to the hangar there.

**Godwin:** (58:13) In fact the kitchen that we built was just across the courtyard against, just inside this next...

**Hall:** (58:18) Where the Helms Government, School of Government area...

**Godwin:** (58:20) Yeah that's right. Where the Helms School of Government eventually and currently has its home. All that was dining area and, and the kitchen part was against this outer wall over here and um...

**Miller:** (58:37) Ok. About how many would that seat?

**Godwin:** (58:41) I don't remember. I have not a clue.

**Miller:** (58:43) Sure. Was the Light Medical building, was that meant to be a permanent solution, it lasted, you know probably 20 years, 20...

**Godwin:** (58:51) It lasted a lot of years. It was just our...in those days we were growing so rapidly and there was so much pressure to fix a urgent problem that we would come up with a fix that was...to say that we thought about long term fixes would be too kind to us. We didn't do much of that, although occasionally we did. When it came to, for example, this massive sewerage problem we had and the fact that we couldn't, we couldn't service this university campus then, much less what we were planning to do later, caused us to back up and do some planning and to build some pump stations and do

some, do some longer term planning. But that was almost an exception. Very often we engaged in, in whatever it took to make things operate better immediately; and that's just the unfortunate truth [*laughter*].

**Miller:** (59:58) Well so for instance, the circle dorms. I've heard how oh, those were not meant to be a permanent thing. Those, let's get them up because we have to house students.

**Godwin:** (1:00:06) Absolutely. We threw up these very inexpensive buildings and we did it in uh...under the, under the gun of here, here the students were coming and we had to accommodate the growth and we just did what we had to do to stay one step ahead of the literal demand and very frequently we didn't always stay ahead of it but we, we made due and we never gave up.

**Miller:** (1:00:39) The, the one other question then that I had is you mentioned the bricks over in the Schilling Center and there are similar bricks in the Fine Arts area there, any idea, how much did it cost, if you wanted to sponsor a brick? I see all those names that are still there.

**Godwin:** (1:00:53) I'm trying to remember. It seemed like it was maybe 500 dollars. I think it was 500.

**Miller:** (1:00:59) Ok.

**Godwin:** (1:01:00) See, the first several years that I was here, during my first tour of duty so to speak, I worked totally on the University things. At a certain point though, Dr. Falwell came one day and picked me up. He said "I'd like you to take a ride with me." And he drove me up on the mountain here, up on top of Old Baldy. And we had to bump and grind our way up a deeply rutted, treacherous, old, worn out, eroded two track to get

to a clearing at the top. I made several trips up that mountain with Dr. Falwell and each one of them changed my life. On that occasion, we bounced our way to the top and turned around, looked down across what was then Liberty University and toward the mountains. And he said “God’s really laid it on my heart to, to take a national role and I’m going to form something called the Moral Majority. And I’m going to need somebody to administer that and direct it” and of course never was any ques...he was the president. He was the spokesman. He was visible leader but he wanted somebody to manage and make everything happen. He told me all about that and he said “and in the meantime, I’d like you to start attending my Old Time Gospel Hour meetings; fundraising meetings and planning meetings and strategy meetings” and I said “well you’ll have to tell Pierre about that because he’s going to be very unhappy that somebody is having contact with you.” And Pierre was very concerned with any of his subordinates having regular communication with Dr. Falwell and he had managed to keep me quiet...

**Miller:** (1:03:02) Can you elaborate on that a little bit? You’ve kind of hinted at that back...can you talk about that for just a second?

**Godwin:** (1:03:06) Well, Pierre is a dear lifelong friend of mine all the way back to college days and I have nothing but huge affection and respect for him. But like many administrators, he, he had a fear of his subordinates going around him or having communication with his superior...

**Miller:** (1:03:31) Doing and end run.

**Godwin:** (1:03:32) Yeah. It was like a violation of the chain of command. Fairly understandable and, really, largely realistic because Dr. Falwell was a blatant violator of chains of command. He, he would set up chains of command and then he would ignore

them for himself. And so that concerned Pierre and I understood that but on the other hand, Dr. Falwell was the, the ultimate leader. And so he did, he called Pierre and told him what he was going to do with me. And so I began to go over and attend Old Time Gospel Hour, what we call, marketing meetings where we planned the fundraising efforts and the strategies for raising money for the Old Time Gospel Hour, for the University, for all our projects. And we had regular meetings and I attended very many of them. In those days Mark DeMoss was a student and he was attending. There was uh...I'll think of his name now but there was a fellow who was a direct mail consultant from Richmond, Virginia who came over and gave professional advice and...

**Miller:** (1:04:59) That wasn't Viguerie?

**Godwin:** (1:05:00) No, no, no, no. Richard Viguerie was and is a dear personal friend of mine and it's, we have a long history but for some reason we never did business together. And Richard and I talked on the phone earlier this week but no Richard, huge direct mail guy, but not our direct mail guy.

**Miller:** (1:05:26) And it wasn't Thomas?

**Godwin:** (1:05:27) No, for some reason the name won't come to me. But this guy was a real legend in direct mail in those days and has written a number of books on the subject. My point though, from my selfish, enlightened perspective, as I was attending those television production meetings, those fundraising strategy meetings, I was introduced to and began to learn a brand new skill set; a field of knowledge that I never had any exposure to. No training in. Knew nothing about direct mail. Knew nothing about television fundraising. Knew nothing about television production. This is an area that I

was a blank page to and I absorbed it avariciously. I really, really enjoyed it. I wanted to learn it and I really became quite involved with it.

**Hall:** (1:06:38) Now you mentioned some of the people in those meetings. Are there other names that stand out that were usually present in those, those meetings?

**Godwin:** (1:06:47) Well, Cal Thomas at some point became a, an active participant. Jimmy Thomas, Dan Reber were at some of those though at some point they and Jim Soward resigned from the organization and went off and started RST Marketing, which stood for Reber, Soward, and Thomas, and started their businesses and, and of course eventually, some years later, Jim Soward died of a heart attack and Jimmy Thomas and Dan Reber remained local business people and good friends and Jimmy Thomas is now on our board and, and Dan Reber is a personal friend and sometimes business partner of mine even today. But yeah, those were some of the players. Mark DeMoss, Eddie Dobson, Bill Paul...

**Miller:** (1:07:47) Let's take just a moment and talk about now Mark DeMoss seems as though he was elevated to a fairly high position fairly early on. What was his position and talk a little bit about the DeMoss family? We're right behind the DeMoss Learning Center here. Could you just talk about the DeMoss's for just a moment?

**Godwin:** (1:08:07) Yeah. Mark's father was a close friend of Dr. Falwell's and he was the fist major donor to this University and, but he was a godly man and a great soul winner I'm told and, and a counselor and advisor and good friend to Dr. Falwell. He died a sudden, premature death on a tennis court of a heart attack. And so I think, Mark as the oldest son in the family coming to Liberty, Dr. Falwell had first went out of his way to express kindness and generosity and to treat Mark almost as a stepson. He had him over

to his home all the time. He really, there were no barriers. Mark was free to leave the dorms and spend the weekend at the Falwell house and, and he was treated with great kindness by Mrs. Falwell. And, and he was sort of given the green light to special treatment here at Liberty University because his father, Dr. Falwell's friend, had been such a dear friend and donor to the University. But, that said, Mark was on the football team and his only role was kicking the extra points. He didn't even kick the kickoffs. He was a short kicker. But he had a fantastic record. I think to this day he may hold the NCAA record for successive, successful extra points [*cough*] and he really was very good at the one football task that he had. And I mentioned that because he also was very good at what he did for Dr. Falwell. He sort of became Dr. Falwell's volunteer student assistant. He travelled with him a lot. And then when he graduated, he actually assumed a salary role here as Dr. Falwell's travel handler...

**Miller:** (1:10:26) Personal assistant type thing.

**Godwin:** (1:10:27) personal assistant, driver, ground transportation organizer, etcetera, etcetera for his travel and his speaking and did an excellent job at this and was always there as his assistant. And when I would come and attend the Old Time Gospel Hour marketing meetings and television production meetings and what have you, Mark was always there. And he and I became good friends back in those days and we remained very, very close friends to this very day and Mark is on the executive committee of our board of directors at Liberty today. And the family at large, Mark's mother headed up a foundation that Mark's father had set up before he died and continued to lead that. He has several sisters, a twin brother that most people are not aware of. He had a younger brother named David who died in an automobile accident and the building on our campus

called David's Place is named after Mark DeMoss' younger brother. Dr. Mark's twin brother is a, something of an entrepreneur and has been a friend to the University over the years as well.

**Miller:** (1:11:57) And then there's Nancy Leigh DeMoss. How is she related?

**Godwin:** (1:12:00) Well Nancy is a sister.

**Miller:** (1:12:01) Ok.

**Godwin:** (1:12:02) And she is a great Bible teacher and very popular radio personality, Christian radio personality. But she has another sister, Deborah [*coughing*] and so many years later now, the DeMoss foundation lead by Mark's mother decided to donate additional funds here to Liberty University and hence became the DeMoss Center. So not only are DeMoss Sr., Mark's father, but later his widow also has financially befriended this University in significant ways.

**Miller:** (1:12:55) When it was just a one story building was it still the DeMoss Center there or was that when it became a two, three, when they added the second, third, and fourth floors?

**Godwin:** (1:13:05) I can't remember if it was. We put the large sign up and began to call it the DeMoss building when we built all three floors. That's a good question and I honestly don't remember the chronology. It was always there because of the DeMoss's. They, internally we always gave them credit. Exactly when we officially...they had some, I do remember this now. One of the reasons it did not go public before it did was at their request. They did not want it to be known. They specifically requested that they remain anonymous. In fact, they were a bit unhappy when it finally did go public. They just did not want public credit for it.

**Miller:** (1:14:03) Before we get into the Moral Majority aspect of things here, talk a little bit, you, you eluded to the fact that you really took to the fundraising, the direct mail and all. And through the years we've had some major donors. These are big ticket donors playing for big projects. It seems to me that back in the days the approach was kind of, you know, get mom and dad and Aunt Mable and everybody else to give ten dollars a month or 15 dollars a month or 25. Can you talk about the, the evolution of giving to Liberty and the Old Time Gospel Hour and just how this big machine was funded?

**Godwin:** (1:14:42) Well, in the vast majority, the Old Time Gospel Hour and Liberty was funded by what we used to call little old ladies in tennis shoes referring to the small donors. Somebody who gave 25 to ten dollars, 50 dollar donor was a good donor, a 100 dollar donor was an exciting donor. There were from time to time larger donors in the early days but millions, literally, of people supported this ministry to the tune of 25 dollars or less and that dominated the earlier years. As the school grew, and much more so in the recent years, very recent years, the giving pattern has changed radically but to go back to the beginnings, to go back to the days when the Old Time Gospel Hour was on every major, was in every major market in the United States; on every major television station in the United States. That support overwhelmingly came from godly people who resonated and responded to Dr. Falwell's vision and preaching to his, to the passion that he expressed, for the ministry he was building here, for his...they were, many of them, a great many of them, supporting what he was trying to do for the nation at the same time that he was building his ministry here.

**Hall:** (1:16:36) And that was basically the Faith Partners what you're talking about?

**Godwin:** (1:16:41) Faith Partners were the most...they were the critical mass, yes. They were the people who could be trusted to support month after month. They were not single donors by in large. Faith Partners were people who had committed to give over a period of time on a monthly basis and so yes, the Faith Partners...there were a number of what we call clubs; different subgroups, endless numbers. But Faith Partners were the critical mass that was, that provided the backbone and support over years and years.

**Miller:** (1:17:18) And it was a kind of back and forth time thing, it was almost like Dr. Falwell was their pastor. It seemed like there were tapes that went out and, and phonograph records and premiums and I remember the world's smallest Bible, getting one of those back in the, way back in the day. Now it seemed like that was really true all throughout the late '70s early '80s. Did that really decline then during the late '80s early '90s...evangelist...when all of that stopped or is there Faith Partners still to this day or how does that work?

**Godwin:** (1:17:58) There's probably a very small cadre of Faith Partners still operating today. In fact, I know they are. But this is a cyclical kind of thing that occurred over a number of years. In the early days the primary money came from donors, small donors. As time passed on, thousands and thousands of small donations would come in but from some, from time to time, somewhere in television land a wealthy person would be listening to Dr. Falwell in a hotel room or in his home and he would be captivated by Dr. Falwell's vision and message and the phone would ring here. And this person would introduce themselves and said "could I come see you? Could I meet you?" And we never knew who was coming next. We never knew who they were. Some of them were Jewish. Some of them were Catholic. They were, came from all faiths, all walks of life,

but they were captured by Dr. Falwell's vision and message. And from time to time, someone would come here, introduce themselves, and be moved to support us in some significant way. And so in unpredictable fashion and timing, it became to be a pattern of three to four to five million dollars a year would come in from major donors and we could expect about four to five million dollars a year but we couldn't tell you where it was going to come from or from whom.

**Miller:** (1:19:56) But the Lord knew it was needed and so...

**Godwin:** (1:19:58) Yeah and so as the ministry grew and our needs grew, these larger donations were absolutely essential to our survival and they came in hit and miss unpredictably but in, in the nick of the Lord's timing.

**Miller:** (1:20:20) So those, those kinds of donations were primarily helpful with day to day operating expenses more so than capital projects.

**Godwin:** (1:20:28) Oh yes. Many times Dr. Falwell's vision had outstretched available funds and there were a series of crises. And he, several times, this ministry came to the brink of having to close and payrolls were not met and there was great danger faced and I could go into endless side stories about that. We could sit here for two or three days. But there was a time when, you know, when Dr. Falwell went out to visit with Dan Reber who had long since left the University. Built his own business with Jimmy Thomas and, while friendly, was busy with his own life doing his own thing and Dr. Falwell went to Dan and Jimmy and asked for financial help. He went to others. He sent me to see Ben [Collier] and other wealthy individuals in other states. We borrowed money. We went to people to whom we'd owed money and asked for forgiveness and to be able to pay a dime back on a dollar. And Dan Reber went around the country visiting people we owed

money to and bought down our, you know, I have, I have 50 thousand dollars in a check today and if you'll take it you can have it but if you do that you have to forgive five million dollars in debt. And there was endless attempts to stay afloat during some very, very difficult years.

**Miller:** (1:22:25) Let's go back to the mountain top then. You're up there with Dr. Falwell. He says he's going to start the Moral Majority. So the gears are in motion there. How did you eventually end up in Washington D.C.?

**Godwin:** (1:22:37) Well, [*clears throat*] he wanted to open and operate an office and have representation in Washington and we did do that. We opened up an office there and I fell into the pattern of going out to the airport here in Lynchburg every morning. Climbing onto a little two engine Cessna, having, we had a pilot. He would fly me up to Washington and I would spend the day working in the office in Washington D.C. and, and that night or the next day, I'd stay overnight sometimes. But very frequently I simply spent the day in Washington, flew back to Lynchburg and, of course, then there was travel all over the United States since the Moral Majority began to grow. We had state representatives in every single state. We had organizations in every state. We had, we started a Moral Majority newspaper that eventually grew to over 1 million in circulation. We engaged in, in affecting elections in a number of senatorial and state representative races. We debated all the issues of, of the time. And, of course, Dr. Falwell was the leading spokesman and the leading debater and, but he was not by any stretch the only one. Cal Thomas was traveling greatly at that time speaking repeatedly. I traveled all over the world honoring, speaking obligations that Dr. Falwell couldn't honor. I spoke in over 50 synagogues in the United States [*coughs*] for example, and numerous, numerous

other locations and, and venues. Went to Australia, South America, Europe; it was an amazing phenomenon. The response of the media, the public, the world to the Moral Majority was just beyond all prediction and all, all expectation.

**Miller:** (1:25:07) To really kind of narrow down on that meaning Dr. Falwell met with you up on the mountain, said he was going to do that. Was there actually then a meeting of leaders that lead to the founding of the Moral Majority?

**Godwin:** (1:25:18) Yes. There was. At, at, and, and this meeting actually precede Dr. Falwell's mountain top meeting with me. He invited a number of conservative leaders from Washington D.C. to come to Lynchburg for a, sort of a strategy meeting. Paul Weyrich was invited. Howard Phillips was invited. Richard Viguerie was invited. Morton Blackwell came. I, I don't know who else was in that particular meeting but soon that group expanded to, to involve a number of ministers um...

**Miller:** (1:26:06) I was going to say that, that group was primarily people that were more interested...

**Godwin:** (1:26:11) [*cough*]

**Miller:** (1:26:12) in public policy type things. And so Tim LaHaye would have been one of that group of ministers?

**Godwin:** (1:26:15) Yes. Tim LaHaye, Dr. Kennedy down at Coral Ridge, Charles Stanley, and a growing number of ministers were drawn into the movement by Dr. Falwell as they were excited and inspired by what he was doing. It was, it was a true vertical leap in, in thought. It was a shift in, in what was acceptable and what was doable on a, on a huge scale. I'm not as articulate about this as I should be but let me just digress for a moment and, and paint this picture. Prior to the Moral Majority,

conservative, fundamentalist, particularly, independent, evangelical Christians tended to be preoccupied almost entirely by family, church, home, school, local life and issues. They eschewed politics. They actually felt like, in many cases, that being involved in politics was to be involved in being unequally yoked together with secular people in a secular enterprise and it was something to be avoided. And then there was just a vast disinterest in...if it didn't involve the church and the family and missions and the home, education, they weren't interested. Dr. Jerry Falwell, an independent Baptist at the time, a small town southern Baptist preacher. The fact that he was able to escape the insulated subculture in which he lived and see that he could have national influence for the greater good of the nation regarding issues of national and international importance was an intellectual vertical leap of unbelievable proportions. Dr. Falwell was the first to speak up and tell conservative, Christian evangelicals "it's not only not wrong for you to be an active, voting, participating citizen, it's your duty. You have both a salt and a light responsibility." And when Dr. Falwell brought these New Testament Scriptures to the light and began to tell Christians that it's ok to be a citizen. It's ok to exercise your right...in fact it's your right. And when they tell you that you don't have that right, you need to stand up for that right and you need to be an active participant in, in how your government functions. You need to change some of these things that are being voted on by others who are glad to go to the polls. That was vertical. That was a radical departure from the status quo and it opened people's minds up. It enflamed the opposition. It was an amazingly galvanizing controversial initiative that a small town, Baptist, independent Baptist preacher did. I mean, you have to go back to that time and that place in history to appreciate the revolutionary magnitude of what occurred.

**Miller:** (1:30:35) Well now there are several things going on. You had Rowe vs. Wade in '73, you had Madeline Murray O'Hare earlier in the '60s there. Now Jimmy Carter becomes president in '76, was there any rippings of the Moral Majority before that or did it not come until during Carter's administration?

**Godwin:** (1:30:56) No it, it's fair to say it came into embryonic formation during his administration. There was real reaction to...of disappointment what have you among...see there are three, three different subgroups of conservatives. There are the political conservatives, there are the economic conservatives, and there are the social or faith based conservatives. And those three subgroups still dominate the conservative movement. Back then, people like Richard Viguerie, Paul Weyrich, they were faith based people, people of great faith. But, their driving interests were politics. Then you brought in Pat Buchanan and people like that who were also, Pat was a strong Catholic, but his interests were, were political. The economic conservatives [*coughs*] kind of stood back; didn't have that much to do with social conservatives or even sometimes political conservatives. And getting all three groups to understand how important it was to cooperate was something that was beginning to go from a trickle to a rivulet to a stream finally to a river as the Carter administration wound down and, and Reagan began to start his, his campaigns in the west.

**Hall:** (1:32:48) Somewhere I read that there was a meeting in Indiana, Indianapolis that seemed to be the organizing meeting. Is that separate from what you're talking about here in Lynchburg or? What do you think about that?

**Godwin:** (1:33:04) Well you see that's everybody wants to have been at the founding meeting. And there was meeting of ministers and, mainly ministers in Indiana. And that

was...fair to say that would be one of the founding meetings that involved religious leaders in this movement. But prior to that there was this group of political strategists and intellectuals who came down to Lynchburg itself and that's where the actual name Moral Majority was coined. Not in Indiana but in Lynchburg, Virginia.

**Miller:** (1:33:44) And now were you at that meeting or?

**Godwin:** (1:33:46) No, no I was not. I didn't attend it. Didn't know Richard Viguerie. Didn't know any of the players [*clears throat*] I, I came in...I was not the first um...I was not even there during the first months of the Moral Majority. The office was already set up when I, when Doc took me up on the mountain. He actually sent Dan Reber up to Washington to buy the lease and set up the first offices.

**Hall:** (1:34:15) And where, and where was that located in Washington?

**Godwin:** (1:34:17) Well, I don't know [*laughter*]. It's down near, I can't remember...

**Hall:** (1:34:22) Ok.

**Godwin:** (1:34:23) how to tell you but I know where it's at, I just don't remember the street address. But it was on the way into town. You came across the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, ducked off at the first exit, and there you were.

**Miller:** (1:34:34) Now, there in Minnesota where I grew up, it seemed as though the state Christian school leadership, they were the ones who already had kind of a little machine going there and they were interested, there was things as far as the definition of a school and, and homeschooling really wasn't very popular at that time. There wasn't as many homeschoolers as there were. But in our area, the Moral Majority leaders were also the American Association of Christian School people. Was there a close tie in with the Christian school movement and the Moral Majority in those state organizations?

**Godwin:** (1:35:14) Yes. And the short answer is yes and I'll go back to what I mentioned just a few minutes ago about the three legged stool or the three subcultures that make up the conservative movement. One of the amazing characteristics of the movement that Dr. Falwell personally engendered and lead, was the fact that he was able to get all three branches of the conservative movement involved. And so, but it is fair to say that the social branch, the faith based branch was and, to this day, is the branch that provides the greatest energy, creativity, commitment, zeal to the entire conservative movement. And it was faith based people who most aggressively resonated with Dr. Falwell's message. When he, these guys who came down to see him from Washington if you step back a moment and say "well why did they come?" Well they were people who, they were generals who didn't have an army. They lacked troops. They were strategists, they were intellectuals who spent a lot of time talking to one another and almost nobody else. They couldn't get anybody else to answer. There were three major television networks and the gatekeepers of those television channels decided what Americans were to hear everyday. And to get another voice to reach the people...they didn't have it. And then they hear about this guy down in Lynchburg, Virginia who, who's built this television empire and suddenly he's talking to people on every television station in the country, just about, and they, from their enlightened self interest said "we can travel down and if we can enroll Jerry Falwell in our cause then we're going to have a spokesman that can maybe do an end run around the gatekeepers." That was these strategists' and political conservative leaders' reason for coming. "Dr. Falwell, come down. Tell me and educate me. Tell me how Washington works." He was, he was like a sponge soaking up everything they had to tell him but what they had no idea of was while

they, they viewed him as this neophyte preacher that they might shape and mold and use to their advantage, he was looking at them and absorbing everything they had to tell him and at the same time he said “ok, I’ve got this group sort of figured out and I’ll set up an office in Washington and, and we’ll, we’ll keep this, this going.” And then he turned and went to Indiana and he went to Miami and he went...oh, started flying that jet all over the United States and holding meeting after meeting with ministers. And he started holding meetings on the capital steps of state capitals all over the United States and Dr. Falwell refused to be handled or manipulated by any branch of the conservative movement. He instead infused life and energy and focus and purpose into the movement emanating from his own vision and his own goals.

**Miller:** (1:39:04) So did he learn to do direct mail from them or did they learn how to do direct mail from him or is that one area where, you know, uh...?

**Godwin:** (1:39:12) They were...Richard Viguerie is truly the godfather of conservative direct mail. He came from Louisiana and Texas and he founded that movement and started conservative, political direct mail and nobody needed to teach Richard how to do direct mail. The other leaders, like Paul Weyrich, they had their organizations, they had to support them. They had all gotten into the direct mail business. Many of them used Richard. Howard Phillips had The Conservative Caucus and he used Richard Viguerie. And so Richard was sort of the source of expertise and knowledge for direct mail, for political, conservative direct mail. Dr. Falwell had, had gone his own way and he was learning direct mail from this guy whose [*laughter*] name I cannot say from Richmond,...

**Miller:** (1:40:10) [*Laughter*]

**Godwin:** (1:40:11) Virginia who was a true pioneer and leader in direct mail. So, Dr. Falwell's over here learning donor, faith based direct mail while Richard Viguerie and his colleagues were learning political, conservative direct mail. So, two different groups.

**Hall:** (1:40:32) Were their lists ever combined? Mailing lists from both sides.

**Godwin:** (1:40:35) No, we were...for some reason we never ever cooperated with Richard on a businesslike basis. We were colleagues always and worked together closely. And Paul Weyrich, we worked with him on a weekly basis and I held conventions and conferences with Paul Weyrich as the head of the Moral Majority in San Francisco, in Texas, believe it or not, in Australia. We, we cooperated at work with these people but we didn't use them to raise our money. We were better at raising money than all of them. And we, we had a, we had the television network, not them. And they always wanted Dr. Falwell to be more radical and more um...

**Miller:** (1:41:31) Political if you will.

**Godwin:** (1:41:33) yeah, more extreme and more totally political and they were always unhappy with his refusal to, to go to their limits. Dr. Falwell was looking to try to reach the whole country and he, you know, while he was being viewed by many, many people as an extreme right wing radical, compared to the people on his right, he was quite moderate. And, you know, the same thing goes on today. There is Obama trying to please this extreme left wing radical group in his party and he's still trying to govern and I can see the tension and strain from the opposite direction that's going on in this administration today. These, these degrees of extremism operate today just as they did in the early days of the Moral Majority.

**Miller:** (1:42:27) So you were going up to Washington D.C. everyday; getting in the Cessna. What were some of the things you were doing there in the Moral Majority office? Was it primarily lobbying or just having your voice heard somewhere? What was your real focus?

**Godwin:** (1:42:42) There were, as I say, there were a number of conservative groups and organizations and Dr. Falwell was trying to get them to cooperate. They had been historically non cooperative and very independent and it got very little done because of this. So we held innumerable coalition meetings. We attended each of those organizations' meetings. We hosted our own. So there was, and there never has been, any shortage of meetings to attend in Washington D.C., I promise you that. And so we were, we operated our offices there. We dealt with endless media requests. We, as I say, attended so many organizational meetings and hosted our own. And we brought our pastors and state leaders to Washington D.C. for conferences and, and um...

**Miller:** (1:43:39) Trying to them up to speed somewhat.

**Godwin:** (1:43:51) Oh yeah. Keep them informed, keep them motivated, keep them...

**Miller:** (1:43:54) And so if there was some issue before the Supreme Court or something and, and the leaders of the, if Phil Donahue or Ted Koppel or something like that wanted a media spokesman, were you one that would arrange those kinds of things?

**Godwin:** (1:44:07) I, I very, I almost became the, the handler of or the scheduler of all of Dr. Falwell's television and radio appearances because they tended to come through our office in Washington. And so we, I arranged for Dr. Falwell on Donahue 14 times, you know, and yes we were with Ted Koppel and we were with every major network and, and we got hundreds and hundreds of radio requests. So I often handled some of those

myself, Cal Thomas handled many of them [cough], and Dr. Falwell we gave the, all the best ones to. And so there was a huge amount of media activity. There were all of these many Washington group organizational and coalition meetings. And then, you know, there were bills before Congress [cough]. There were people running for office that we were involved in races, we set up a, a 501(c)(4) so we could deal with political races because the technical, legal limitations of a 501(c)(3) is that you can't have over five percent of your (c)(3) activity involving partisan political races so we set up a, a different organization for that [cough]. And we had the Moral Majority report to, to produce. We had our fundraisings to get out. We...there was an endless amount of activity.

**Miller:** (1:46:02) So now Dr. Falwell, just a couple of questions with that here.

**Godwin:** (1:46:06) [Cough]

**Miller:** (1:46:07) Is, how is this affecting his pasturing back home?

**Godwin:** (1:46:12) Well that depends on who you are as to, is the answer to that. He, he without embarrassment or reservation believed that this was something God had called him to do. So he didn't see it as something separate or different. He, he, his, his sermons became, his sermons were, his political concerns and the, the issues of the day and the goals he was trying to achieve nationally and politically became warp and woof of his sermons. And he was criticized for that and praised for that. And thankfully they were more praisers than there were criticizers so, but, over his, over all those many years Dr. Falwell was continually criticized for being so political from the pulpit.

**Miller:** (1:47:20) Who were his intellectual mentors in the conservative movement? I think of Francis Schaeffer. Do you recall him having much contact with him and are

there some, like did, um...was he an originator or did he um...did he really borrow ideas from other folks?

**Godwin:** (1:47:41) He was both. He, he literally was both. I've actually given a lot of thought to this. Dr. Falwell was a uniquely gifted personality. He um...when he saw a need to learn a subject or a field of knowledge that he didn't know, he literally would turn into a sponge. He would, he would cajole, he would bribe, he would be uh...he would do whatever it took to get the people who knew what he needed to know to, to share that knowledge with him. He would fly them here. He would spend weekends with them. He would, he would consume their literature. He would listen to their speeches on tape. He would attend their conferences. He, when he decided that he needed to become a political force in Washington, he invaded Washington. Now, you say "well then he was a, he was a learner. He was a guy who absorbed from others." Absolutely, but many, many times, constantly, the people who were willing to teach him and willing to share new knowledge with him and willing to bring them into their inner circles etc., they were doing that for their reasons, for their agenda. And he never ever agreed to the agenda. He would be kind and winsome and generous and whatever it took to learn from them what he wanted to know. But then he took that knowledge with what he was learning from [*laughter*] some other group and some other branch and he came up with his vision and his mission and his purpose. And it was always broader than, than any one, one group's agenda. He, he was, he was a great vertical thinker. What was an independent Baptist preacher from Lynchburg, Virginia doing uh...taking on, debating four and five people at a time on national television issues of international importance? I mean, how did he get to that place? Where did he get the knowledge base? Remember how Sarah

Palin was so roundly criticized for her ignorance? Well, that seldom ever happened with Dr. Falwell. He, he was, he was ready for the...most debates.

**Miller:** (1:50:34) Did he do that...what was his style of learning? Was he, was he reading voraciously...

**Godwin:** (1:50:40) Yes, yes he was.

**Miller:** (1:50:41) And he...

**Godwin:** (1:50:42) And listening and he was attending whatever meetings were necessary. Oh, we sat through endless meetings and I would run out of all patience and, and he'd sit right there and absorb and...Dr. Falwell was a brilliant learner, had a photographic memory. He had all the mental tools necessary for all of this. And I used to laugh about the fact that I treated him like my phonebook. We were together constantly and so I, I never kept a phonebook. I, if I needed to dial somebody, I just turned to Dr. Falwell and said "what's so and so's number?" And no matter how many people it was, he, he knew thousands of telephone numbers. He had this...

**Miller:** (1:51:40) That's fascinating. Is there somebody though that he really considered to be his mentor? I knew that he liked John Rawlings, B.R. Lakin, Francis Schaeffer. Can you...

**Godwin:** (1:51:51) Yeah, he had particularly older men, he always had some one or two significantly older people that he had great respect for their wisdom and their judgment and he believed very seriously in turning...it goes over to the book of Nehemiah and he talked about not getting your advice from men of your own generation but, but listening to the older and the wiser. And you've name people who at different periods...John Rawlings, to this day, calls me up about once a month to tell me what I think and uh...

**Miller:** (1:52:26) [*laughter*]

**Godwin:** (1:52:27) and he did that to Dr. Falwell [*laughter*] as long as Dr. Falwell was alive. And B.R. Lakin was a great influence on Dr. Falwell, that's true. The, you know, politically he had great respect for Paul Weyrich. He had great respect for Richard Viguerie, for Martin Blackwell. These are all people who he had...he was not afraid to take advice. He was not afraid to ask for others' convictions and opinions.

**Miller:** (1:53:04) Well, I think that's where we're going to draw it for a close for today's interview.

**Godwin:** (1:53:07) Sure.

**Miller:** (1:53:08) And we're going to pick this up then tomorrow and we've got some more questions for you. We'd like to get into the development of Liberty Online program that you've been vitally concerned with as well, too, so. Thank you for talking with us today and we'll pick this up again tomorrow.

**Godwin:** (1:53:25) Thank you for listening to this odyssey.

**Miller:** (1:53:26) [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (1:53:27) [*laughter*]