

Oral History Interview with Dr. Earl Mills

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Name of Interviewee: Dr. Earl Mills

Name of Interviewers: Randy Miller and Dr. Cline Hall

Transcriber: Kaitlyne Showalter

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Miller: (00:00) Welcome to this interview in the oral history project of the Liberty University Archives. This interview is being conducted on July 1, 2009. Today we're interviewing Dr. Earl Mills. My name is Randy Miller and I'll be conducting the interview today along with Dr. Cline Hall. Greetings Dr. Hall!

Hall: (00:21) Greetings!

Miller: (00:22) And Dr. Mills...

Mills: (00:23) Thank you!

Miller: (00:23) Good to have you with us today.

Mills: (00:24) Thank you!

Miller: (00:25) Good. Well as we begin today, Dr. Mills could you just tell us some general information about yourself? Tell us when you were born, where you were born and a little bit about your family and growing up.

Mills: (00:36) Oh my. Well I, I was born in a little town called Lawrence, Michigan. Actually, I was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, that's where the hospital was, but the town I was raised in was called Lawrence, about 30 miles west of Kalamazoo. One of the things that...maybe the sad thing that happened when I was born, was that my mother died. And my mother's sister was uh, whose name was Pearl Monroe, was a nurse down in Tennessee at the time and it was her homestead that the family lived at. She graduated from, what now is Michigan State and as a teacher first, then she went on to be a nurse and so she was down there then. Well when my father had two older...well there was two older children, my brother and sister. And so my aunt

came home and took care of us children. So from that standpoint, you understand that I went to school all my life. As soon as I could talk I had a chart of ABC in front of me and I had to learn the multiplication tables before I started school, you know all those things. So I went to school all my life practically. And so we lived on a farm there that belonged to his...it was originally the Monroe homestead, which was a huge farm at one time and it kept splitting up into families and so forth. And so I grew up there. The home that I was raised in is still there, was built in 1836. And from there, I...after I graduated from high school, I went to Western Michigan University and I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do at that time. I took general courses. I took a lot of music and I took uh, and finally wound up taking engineering technology. And...which I loved because it had to deal with math and had to deal with drawing and that sort of thing...designing. And I had an uncle who was a genius in that area, so, anyway, after graduating from high school, uh, from college, while I was there I...one of my, one of my friends at the college, asked me to go down and see a Goodman band. You remember that way back then? You would probably remember that.

Hall: (03:38) Buddy Goodman?

Mills: (03:39) Buddy Goodman.

Hall: (03:40) Uh huh.

Mills: (03:40) He was a great, had a great band. So he said, "why don't you come on down with me and we'll watch the band?" So I did and while I was down there, why, he said, "Hey listen, there's a couple of girls over there. Why don't we go ask them to dance?" I said, "Ok." So I went over to ask this girl to dance and after we danced for a while, we were singing away and at that particular time I also was directing a choir, back in Lawrence at my home church. And I heard her sing and I desperately needed a soprano. I heard her sing and she could go up and hit a high "C" like it was nothing, you know. So I told her, I said, "Hey listen. If you'll come and sing in my choir, I'll marry you." And so she did and so I did. So we got married in '50 and then from there I went to work as an engineering field. I worked in a couple of plants first and one of the plants closed up and so I had an opportunity to go work for Ingersol Division, Borg-Warner Corporation. Which we were designing and uh, tanks, a big amphibious tank that you know, had a 105 Hollister on the top. Well I was in charge of the design of the turret and the fire control and also the maintenance of the vehicle. And uh, we, after the Korean War, why then the demand for that became nothing. You couldn't sell it. You couldn't buy a contract to make tanks anymore and most of those tanks are setting out in the desert out, west coast so we switched over to missiles. We were at a good time in the missile field and so I started doing research in missiles and got a contract to try and solve problems that the missile industry was having and blowing up, you know. So I...as a result of that, I got a contract because I said that the heat treating of the missile was part of the problem. So as a result of that, I went...I had to set up my lab at Western Michigan University. As a result of that, the man that I hired to help me with the research, got me to go back to school again, got me taking more, matter fact he signed me up for a class in

higher math and took, walked me to class every Wednesday in order to be sure...uh I think it was three days a week, he'd walk me class and come back with me to make sure I got there, you know. And so he did that. Then he talked me into going back and I got my, that was an AA degree I graduated initially with, then I graduated with a Bachelor in Engineering Technology. And so the company that I was working with at that time was moving right along. Finally, I wound up as Plant Manager at 29. And that was, you know, a major task, because I had...all the men in the plant were in their late 50s, early 60s and their union was ready to strike and so forth. They put me into that mix and I talked with them and we managed to save the...there was no strike and everybody made our contracts on time. But several years later when I told the company, the board, that we had to modernize our plant to compete with the big companies on the west coast, they said, "Well what do you got to do?" I said, "Well, I got to computerize some of our equipment." And so they wanted the cost, so I gave them the cost. And after a few weeks they came back to me and said, "No. We don't think this business is going to last long enough. We're going to close the plant." Well that broke my heart because all these people that I was working with at that time, depended on me, and I let them down. So when they wanted me to go on to a Chicago plant to work in research, I said, "No, I quit." And at that time, the teacher that I had recommended me for a teaching position at a vocational school that was a post-graduate course high school and which, many of the veterans came back and went to there to school to learn a trade. And so I went out there to teach math and drawing and things like that. And then because I did that, that meant I had to go back and get my Masters. So I went back to get my Masters and finished that up and I thought, "Well, I'm done." I ought to be able to relax a little bit now and take it easy. You know how it is when you're going to school and teaching and working also. Well anyway, I felt that I was just about home free, but then, I got a call from the dean of the school at Wayne State University, that's down in Detroit. It's a very large school, probably the largest school in Michigan. The dean asked me if I'd ever thought about going on for a Doctorate. I said, "No sir, I never have." "Well, you ought to. Your teachers tell me you need to do it and so we'd like to interview you." So I went down and I had to take my Graduate record exam right there and I had to be interviewed and I was competing against three or four other people. I went home and told my wife, I said, "Forget it. Those people I'm competing against are way too smart for me to compete." And so a week or so later I got a call and they said, "The job is yours." So that meant, I moved down to Detroit to teach and to work on my Doctorate. After I did that, completed the work there, that was, by the way, that was right at the time they had the riots in Detroit so they day we went down there they burned ten blocks of Detroit. I had to go right through there every day.

Miller: (10:22) About what year would that have been?

Mills: (10:24) That would have been 1968, '68 I believe. And anyway, after I finished everything except my dissertation, they farmed me out to central Michigan. I mean, they didn't even ask me if I wanted to go to central Michigan, they said, "Oh, by the way, you start working at central Michigan in August so you need to get moved up there." So I said, "Ok, well, that's

fine.” So I went up there and as a result of my work up there, is when we started, or when the school was asked to offer programs on military installations. And the president called me in and said, on about a Monday, called me in and said, “Would you like to um, would you be able to offer a program at a military installation...a graduate’s course in management?” I said, “Sure, we can do that.” And I said, “When do they want to start?” He said, “This Friday.” Well, you know. As you can expect, I wasn’t going to get any teachers interested in starting a class this Friday, so I had to teach the first class. And from there, they just went like wire flies...wildfire throughout the country. I had...pretty soon I had twenty different stations, military installations across the country, all the way from the Azores to Hawaii. And each time I would work with a school that was in their area and try and get them to do it but they said, “No, we can’t do it.” So that’s what got me into the external degree program. And one of the things that left uh...probably Jerry was interested in, was my experience in external degree programs. But anyway, I uh, as a result of that, things were going real well. I had over 15,000 students in my external degree program and one time when I was in D.C., at the Pentagon, I was talking to the general about offering a program there at the, at the uh, in the Pentagon. And as a result of that, a man said he wanted to talk to me about another school and I said, “Well, if you want to talk to me, you have to ride with me out to the airport because I’ve got a plane to catch. And he asked me if I’d be willing to come down and help a school in West Virginia. Also, the fact that I was concerned about the education of my two youngest children, because the high school was getting a little bit bizarre and their attitude wasn’t exactly where I liked it. The oldest two got through fine shape, but the younger two were beginning to be affected. So I asked him, I said, “Do you have a Christian school in your area?” and he said, “Oh, yes!” “Well I’ll come down and talk to you then.” But, as a result of that, and the fact that they had a Christian school, I decided to sacrifice my job, which was the best job at Central Michigan, they’ll tell you, because I could go anywhere in the world anytime I wanted to go and I used to have to go to Hawaii every spring, you know? But, it was a time when I felt it was...the children were more important, and so we moved down to West Virginia.

Hall: (14:24) Now, let me ask you, here at Central Michigan, basically, you were directing the external degree...

Mills: (14:30) Yeah

Hall: (14:30) program

Mills: (14:31) Yes.

Hall: (14:32) Uh, what, uh, what was your Doctrinal degree in?

Mills: (14:37) My Doctrinal degree was in education.

Hall: (14:39) Ok

Mills: (14:40) My Masters was in technology.

Hall: (14:44) So, you, your industry experience led to education?

Mills: (14:48) Education.

Hall: (14:49) Which, uh, which of course, is the rest of your career, basically?

Mills: (14:52) Yeah, yes.

Hall: (14:53) That's interesting, at least how that evolved.

Miller: (14:57) Now, one question that didn't get asked is did you grow up as an evangelical Christian, as a believer in the Lord?

Mills: (15:04) No.

Miller: (15:04) Or did that happen later in life?

Mills: (15:06) No uh, actually we went to church where we never really heard, the fact is, that you had to be saved. It just wasn't an issue. So when my wife became pregnant, why, we could no longer make the trip out to my home town to be in a choir and so I had to give that up and we stayed in Kalamazoo. And a friend of my wife's asked her to come to their church. And so she agreed and of course, as soon as the choir director heard her singing out in the audience, why, he got her immediately to join the choir. She wasn't saved then either. And um, but she did and one time coming back from a trip, why, she went to choir practice and they were having evangelistic meetings and so she walked in, saw that, and started to go out. The choir director ran after her and told her to put a robe on and come out and sing anyway. They needed her to sing. And, why, as a result of that, she became under conviction and she went forward and accepted Christ as her Savior. She came home and told me and I said, "Well hunny, don't worry about it, you'll get over it." And uh, but she didn't. And so, as a result of that, when I was up, uh, in the, working with the vehicle torrent, they had a problem with one of the plants that were providing the uh, equipment, manufacturing it, shipping it to us to mount. And as a result of that, the navy had cut them and shut them down because things weren't working. When I walked into that plant to try to solve the problem, the uh, of course you have to understand, here I was at that point, probably 26 years old or something, looked probably 18, and the manager looked at me and called my plant manager and said, "What are you doing sending this kid up here? Don't you realize that we're in trouble?" So I didn't think much of him. So I went out of the plant and found out where the problem was and to make a long story short, after I resolved the problem, it was late that night and I couldn't catch a plane back home. So I stayed at the hotel and I couldn't sleep after all the day's activity and the pressure because number one I had to be on the phone with the Pentagon for hours trying to get approval to open up one of their parts, and finally got it, found the problem. And then that night I just couldn't sleep so I said, "Well I'll just read." So the only thing I could read was a Bible. I pulled that out and I read the first five chapters, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers...well I wasn't sleepy yet. So I switched over to the New Testament

and I was reading Matthew, I got over to um, the place where it said that if you hate your brother, you'll go to hell. And I thought about that and I said, "Well Lord, I don't really hate him, I just don't like him," you know. But it multiplied on my mind throughout the night. I went to sleep finally, got up, and came home, told my wife what happened and I don't remember what she said at that point. But anyway, the next Sunday I went to church and when the...I had no idea what that pastor had to say but the only that uh...he was a great man, but the only thing I know is that when he asked if you wanted to come forward to get it straight down, I did. And I went down and accepted Christ as my Savior at that point and then he put me right to work. The very next night I had to go calling with him. And we did that for years.

Miller: (19:34) Now what church and what town was this in?

Mills: (19:35) That was Bethel Baptist Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Miller: (19:39) Ok.

Mills: (19:40) So that's a brief story of how that happened.

Miller: (19:45) Ok, now you said that you left your job, now you had said West Virginia. Is that where it was? It wasn't here at Liberty? It was someplace else?

Mills: (19:53) No, It was West Virginia.

Miller: (19:54) Ok.

Mills: (19:56) Ok now, ok go ahead.

Miller: (19:58) I was just going to ask you then, you ended up going to West Virginia and where were you there and what did you do there?

Mills: (20:03) Well, I was head of the external degree program for Charlestown University and uh, which was the old Morris Harvey School, and when I moved in there, the president had just resigned, and so one of the things that happened, is that, this is a Methodist school, and they went out and hired a Catholic who was a non-Christian, to be the president. And it was very difficult because we couldn't agree on anything, the methodology's he used, which were somewhat suspect and so forth. So not being president, I knew that my days would be numbered because I couldn't agree to some of the things he was doing. Well going back, a little bit of history, where I first heard the name Falwell, was at the time, I was working at Central Michigan; I was also the executive director of an organization called, Names. And that organization was made up of schools that provided education to military installations and we became under fire by the government and by accrediting agencies, as to how we could offer quality education like that, on military installations. And of course, that's what my job was for the accredit with this agency, was to improve the education that military people were getting. And I, I had done a lot of research. The person who was heading that up right now, headed up that study, was Grover

Andrews. Grover Andrews was the executive director of SAX, and so he and I, working together, became good friends, and as a result of that, he told me about Jerry Falwell. He said, "You know Earl, you need to go down and talk to him at uh, Falwell's school. They need some help." Now I don't know what he meant by that but he said they needed some help. And so that's the first time I ever heard of Jerry Falwell and so I said, "Ok." And we left and of course it was some years later that I had already moved to West Virginia at that point and guess who showed up at the church where my school...my children were going to school. It was Jerry Falwell and the Pantannas. And uh, so I just introduced myself to Jerry and at the time, we talked just briefly. But as a result of that, I started getting calls that I needed to come down and talk to him down here. And as a result of that, a fellow by the name of Jim Carpenter wanted me to come down and talk to him about starting a 'Think Tank.' A 'Think Tank' was supposed to be an organization for the church and the school. And when I came down he asked me how would I organize it and so forth? So I wrote out this description on how to organize it, what the responsibilities should be doing, and a cost, a budget. So, and I left and I thought, we'll that's the end of that and I felt that I was just going to go back to West Virginia, and continue there. But a few weeks later, I got another call. This was, uh, I think someone connected with Dr. Guillerman. And I didn't understand, exactly now, exactly why one would call me and then another would call me. So I came back down and I met with uh, with Dr. Carpenter, and he said, now I'm willing to, I'm ready to offer you a job, right now, to head up this think tank and that's when I met Godwin who was there also. Well what uh, and I asked him, "Well what was the plan?" and he showed me the plan. It was the same that I had written, but they had doubled, or tripled the budget. And I said, "Well I don't know Jerry Falwell very well, but I know he's after money desperately. And if you, if he approves a budget like this for this think tank, I don't want to work for him," and I walked out. And the finance manager for the college at that time got a hold of Pierre and told him that I was leaving. And Pierre then, got a hold of me and took me over to the restaurant after church service and offered me a job. And that's how I got down here.

Hall: (25:02) What was, was that position that you were offered?

Mills: (25:06) They offered me the position of developing and planning, planning and developing. Uh, I'm not exactly sure how the title read but that was the issue.

Hall: (25:18) And what was the specific duties that you were...

Mills: (25:20) Ok, the...because of my engineering background, they want me to work with the contractors for designing and developing the facilities. And so basically what I try to do is I try to take Jerry's vision and what he said we'd have for students, next, the following year, or two years, or three years down the road and then I would try to make sure that we had classrooms, office space, for the, uh, to meet that need.

Hall: (25:54) Now exactly what year was this? When did you do this?

Mills: (25:56) I came down in '79.

Hall: (25:58) ‘&9.

Mills: (26:00) Uh fall of...spring of August of ’70, two years after you did.

Hall: (26:05) Yes, uh huh.

Mills: (26:07) So he knows more about it.

Miller: (26:09) (*chuckle*)

Mills: (26:11) But anyway, so that was a major thing. Um, at the time, I worked a little bit with the...Dr. Fitzgerald. Dr. Henry had already left. And uh, we still were not accredited at that point. Dr. Fitzgerald did a lot of work on the initial self-study, I think, with the faculty help. And so I worked with him a little bit and then I became the representative to SACs to work with them directly. And of course I worked on the, on the self-study and of course I say I worked on it, actually, the faculty worked on it. They did the major portion of the work. I had a lot of great deans and chairmen at the time that did a lot of the work and put together a self-study that was very good.

Hall: (27:12) We want to come back, of course, to the accrediting process, but it was interesting in those plans that you drew up...

Mills: (27:20) Yes.

Hall: (27:21) What, uh, are, what was included in that at the time?

Mills: (27:25) Well, the first thing of course was to get the four buildings here completed because when I came up here, what we had, was mud trailers and that was about it, you know. And we started the, they started the buildings, uh, these four buildings, and of course uh,

Miller: (27:44) For those that are listening, which four, we’re up on the actual campus here on the mountain...

Mills: (27:50) Right.

Miller: (27:51) and so which were the first four buildings?

Mills: (27:54) Well, what do you call this spot right here?

Miller: (27:57) The courtyard

Mills: (27:58) The courtyard, the four buildings around the courtyard.

Miller: (28:01) Ok.

Mills: (28:02) And so we started there and we, then we built in, filled in, the spot between the buildings. And then I requested the two story building on the end of the science building and at that...

Miller: (28:18) Which is now DeMoss Hall.

Mills: (28:20) Well, it, yes. But what I wanted to start with, I wanted a two, to three story building on the end of the science building to go out quite a ways and that would be my next building. But the man who was in charge of the finances for Jerry at that time, he was from Louisiana, or New Orleans I guess, and he uh, he said, "Mills, if you will just make it one story, we'll let you build clear across to the end, the end of the other buildings. And I quickly calculated in my mind how many square feet that was and I said, "You got it." And then I stipulated that it's alright to do one story, but please, we've got to have in the plans, they make, that they will go up three stories. And I was guaranteed by the engineer, the people that were involved, that they could do that. I learned out later, when they did actually do it, they had to go back in and put in more footers, uh, but that was the plan. And, so, one of the things that we were able to lay out this facility then and get things started, that helped us a great deal for several years after that.

Hall: (29:52) Uh, was Dr. Falwell, even at this time, talking about the 50,000 student body?

Mills: (29:56) Oh yes! Oh yes. I can't remember when he wasn't talking about 50,000. Uh, he was, he had a vision and of course I was trying to take care of the needs for the next two or three years, the buildings.

Miller: (30:17) So, for someone who would just come to this area right now, they would have driven up and what would they have seen here? So the courtyard, the "U" that's here now, it was just one story where DeMoss is now, and now its four stories. So this courtyard was the first thing to be built but what else was around? Were there the circle dorms?

Mills: (30:42) Well

Miller: (30:42) Or the...

Mills: (30:43) There were, yes. There were a few one story dorms up around the, up around the circle up here and also a gymnasium was...

Miller: (30:53) The Schilling Center.

Mills: (30:54) Yeah that was built. And um, and of course, with that, they built the tennis courts there and uh, I think they had uh, I can't remember, about five or six dorms, uh, that were at least built when I got here.

Miller: (31:15) Now the Cater Glass Mansion was there.

Mills: (31:18) Yes.

Miller: (31:18) Um, Jerry, did Jerry have that as an office

Mills: (31:21) No.

Miller: (31:23) That was uh...

Mills: (31:24) No, uh, the, actually before it became his office and administrations office, I don't really remember what was in there. It was not being used for the college as far as I can remember.

Miller: (31:43) And um, where was your first office then?

Mills: (21:47) Uh, first, my first office was down to the church and we had several offices. The administration had several offices down there.

Miller: (31:57) And was the Lynchburg Christian Academy...

Mills: (32:02) They were, yes. They were...

Miller: (32:05) That separate building was there?

Mills: (32:06) Yes.

Miller: (32:07) And then you had offices. And so then when did you move up to the campus? And where did you move up here at the campus?

Mills: (32:13) Uh, well, we first of all, we moved up dorm 17, I think it was, that was uh, built and the administration moved up and moved into there. First, well actually, the first and second floor, we moved into that. So I moved from the church up to dorm 17 and then I moved, from there, I moved to the Carter Mansion. And from there, I retired.

Miller: (32:48) And any remembrance about that prayer chapel and is there a story behind the prayer chapel there?

Mills: (32:52) Oh, Oh my yes. That was just a tremendous thing. Uh, just, it was just a blessing. I feel that the Lord just blessed Jerry so much because of the prayer chapel and of course, I don't know, the students used that prayer chapel a great deal. Uh, in fact, I can tell you a lot of stories, we haven't got time to do, about young people meeting in the prayer chapel, making a life together, you know. And also...

Miller: (33:25) But, was that added after you um...

Mills: (33:28) Yes.

Miller: (33:28) Ok.

Mills: (33:28) Yeah. Yes.

Miller: (33:31) And is there any story about a donor for that or how that came to be?

Mills: (33:35) You know I do not know exactly how that uh, who built that. Unless the money came...well I hadn't better say for sure. I'm not sure which one gave the money for that.

Miller: (33:52) Ok, and um, so then how did you move from this development type person, making plans, to more of an academic role at the university?

Mills: (34:07) Well, long about the spring of '85, Dr. Jeremiah came up and asked me if I, please would come out and help him to get the school straightened out and to get accredited and you know, they were on probation. Uh, they were...

Miller: (34:31) So this would be Christian Heritage College...

Mills: (34:33) Yes.

Miller: (34:33) Out there in California. Ok.

Mills: (34:35) And he asked me, please, if I would come out and help him. And so I went to Jerry and told him the problem and he said, and he agree, he said, "Well why don't you go out and get it help? We'll wait for you to come back, you know." And I didn't know exactly what that meant or if it meant anything but I learned out later that he told the board that, I'll be gone 2 years. Well, it took 3. But I was able to get them off probation, cut the debt in half out there and I, and I felt that Jeremiah out to be more involved in the fund raising than he was and so I came back here.

Miller: (35:27) Now was Dr. LaHaye involved still? He was the founder of the school.

Mills: (35:32) No, uh, he was not. In fact, Dr. LaHaye, I threw a big party out there, not a party but a ceremony honoring Dr. LaHaye and Dr. Morris and uh, as co-founders.

Miller: (35:51) So they were the founders of the school...

Mills: (35:52) Yeah

Millers: (35:53) but they had kind of stepped aside or...

Mills: (35:54) Yes.

Miller: (35:54) off the record?

Mills: (35:55) Nobody had paid any attention to LaHaye up until that time. And of course when I gave him...I ordered rings for them, you know. I learned that from Jerry. And honored them for starting the school and what they meant. And as a result of that um, LaHaye told me, he said,

“You know, Earl,” he said, “You’re the only one that had ever honored me for this.” And as a result of that, I think he got more involved out there then and started to take more interest in what they were doing.

Miller: (36:35) And um, so let’s back up just a little bit here. We were talking about 1979 and you left in about ’85 so let’s talk about the SACs process and what ended up happening there. One thing I was going to ask you before we started that was did they start off right away looking at regional accreditation? Was there any other...

Mills: (36:54) Yes.

Miller: (36:55) Was there any other group they looked at as far as, like AABC, they weren’t a Bible College and so...

Mills: (37:02) No and I don’t believe, as far as I know, that that was not considered. SACs was considered. Several reasons for that are because the sports that Jerry wanted to get into had to be regionally accredited. And um, so I think that was the only option, I think was available. And as a result of that, we, after Rover Andrews left, uh, SAC, he went to head up an external degree program for Georgia, the University of Georgia. And then a fellow by the name of Ashmore came in. Do you remember him?

Hall: (37:44) No I don’t.

Mills: (37:45) He uh, he was a great man. He was older, quite a bit older, but he was a great man in which he uh, I think he liked us. He’d argued with Pierre quite a bit, I know, but I think that he had, he really like our school. I think he liked Dr. Fitzgerald. He always seemed to appreciate me, I don’t know for sure but at least on the surface anyway he appreciated me also. And so what we did is we started the process of getting the program ready for accreditation and of course we submitted our application and got our...well we first were candidates then the initial accreditation and of course we had a number of things that, they approved us and we had a number of things we had to take care of in order to, before we uh, could come back.

Hall: (38:52) Do you remember what those things were?

Mills: (38:54) Well, mainly, of course, you remember when you first came we had a lot of faculty who were marginally, uh, credentialed. A lot of them had master’s degrees and so we had to have so many doctorates and of course that’s when we started pushing our faculty to go back and get doctorates. And I think that we were making sufficient progress in that area, that we were progress in that area that we were approved. Then we, when I came back, then we had to be approved for five year accreditation. After the five year accreditation, and of course that’s when we started the uh, external degree program, and they uh, they didn’t like that too much. Um, we’d taken care of everything but one of the things that they were really, very suspicious of is that we didn’t have sufficient controls of our external degree program to ensure that the students

were doing the work. And so I had to promise that we would institute a program of monitoring and we would...remember back in the old days, I don't think they're doing it today, but we had to...

Miller: (40:24) Back in my previous job, before coming to Liberty, one of our students was a Liberty student and I was one of his proctors and I had to sign off...

Mills: (40:33) Sign off, right.

Miller: (40:34) And, and give the test. I think now with Blackboard, with the technology that's there...

Mills: (40:39) They uh, are able to...

Miller: (40:40) They have that built into the process...

Mills: (40:42) process

Miller: (40:42) so I don't think they...

Mills: (40:44) that's different.

Miller: (40:45) sign things here with the proctors anymore.

Mills: (40:46) I think uh, I think your right. And so I'm not exactly sure exactly how that will work. I know I serve as a proctor to some people that go to school out in Ohio. But uh, it uh, that was one of the things and we almost lost it at that point because the fact that they, we didn't have that in place. And when I got through the SACs meeting, I had, uh, I called Pierre and Jerry and told them what they were considering, putting us on probation and they flew down to Atlanta and we all met in Atlanta and talked to them and I gave them my plan and they bought it and we got off of the, uh, away from the probation.

Miller: (41:46) Let's talk about that for just a second. Is that, when the distance program started, did it start right off, offering degrees or was it just a diploma program with Dr. Wilmington's School of the Bible?

Mills: (41:56) No, it didn't, the program didn't have anything to do with Dr. Wilmington that was completely separate. And of course I felt that, that was a tremendous diploma program. I always supported him and felt that that program was excellent. The program for the external degree program was initially, uh, developed around tapes. We'd send out tapes to people and they'd listen to the lectures and they would do the assignments and send in their exams. Um, and...

Miller: (42:32) Oh, they were actually working on degrees, not just a diploma?

Mills: (42:34) Yes, they were working on a degree. I can remember I had a studio, I think it was uh, I think it was uh...I can't remember now. It was in the stud – in this building wasn't it? We had a studio...

Miller: (42:56) In the Fine Arts building I think.

Mills: Where I had, where I had teachers that were working, giving lectures.

Miller: (43:02) Now were these videotaped or audio taped?

Mills: (43:04) No, they were videotapes.

Miller: (43:05) Ok.

Mills: (43:07) And, uh, I can still remember. I had, uh actually I had teachers coming in there teaching around the clock. So that meant that I was here part of the time around the clock. And I walked in one time and I saw Dr. uh, oh, what's his name? He teaches the religion department, uh...

Miller: (43:31) Elmer Towns or?

Mills: (43:33) No. Uh, he uh, went and got his degree from South Africa.

Miller: (43:40) Hindson?

Mills: (43:40) Hindson! Hindson was teaching. And there were people in the background making faces at him, waving their hands and so forth, trying to distract him and that man just kept his mind right on his job and he never batted an eyelash while they were trying to distract him. But I kicked them all out and got them out of the studio but he was my first teacher and of course, you know, he is excellent. And so that took off pretty good. Dobson was my next teacher and then we started moving around the program. I think you taught one of those, didn't you?

Hall: (44:25) No I didn't.

Mills: (44:27) Didn't you?

Hall: (44:27) I never taught one.

Miller: (44:29) Now, what degree could someone who was off-campus earn? Was is just in the religion area or could they do it in business? What area areas did you have available for them?

Mills: (44:41) Well, it started out religion. Uh, it started out mainly religion and it branched off into business and the other departments.

Miller: (44:52) It seemed as though, even until just a few years ago that there was a limitation. And this was kind of limiting Dr. Falwell's vision of the 50,000 is that it seemed that there was a

stipulation I didn't know if that was unique to Liberty or other SACs schools that you couldn't have more distance students than you had residential students.

Mills: (45:14) To me that was not an issue. I never felt that that was going to be a problem. And uh, although I know it was discussed and talked about and a concern, but the main concern I think, centered around the faculty. One of the things that we had to be careful of is that we weren't overloading the faculty on the campus to the point where it would detract from the work that they were doing on campus. That was one of the major concerns that I had to take care of and we had to hire people outside to monitor the programs that the students were in.

Hall: (46:02) Now I understand, basically, using the tapes, the videotapes, was basically at the cutting edge of this type of thing at the time. Of course they don't use those now.

Mills: (46:14) No.

Hall: (46:15) But, wasn't Liberty recognized as being one of the foremost instigators I guess you might say? Are they distance learning by use of the tapes?

Mills: (46:25) I think they were one of the first to really, uh, employ that method. And of course, uh, from there, they went into the computers, which were, and of course that was national. As you know, you can look on your computer and you can find all sorts of schools that are offering internet courses.

Miller: (46:51) And uh, so with SACs, we applied. There were some concerns about the credentials of the faculty, little concerns about the distance program. How was regional accreditation received by the evangelical community that Liberty was in? I know that at that point, Bob Jones had kind of made a point that they were against accreditation. Was there ever a consideration of not being accredited or a reluctance to be accredited on the part of some?

Mills: (47:23) As far as I know, there was not a concern because of the fact of Jerry's vision to become another Notre Dame or a vision to become a sports power house, which was necessary then to become a regionally accredited.

Miller: (47:47) So if you're going to be in the NCAA for athletics...

Mills: (47:49) Right.

Miller: (47:50) you have to have regional accreditation?

Mills: (47:52) Right. Yes.

Miller: (47:52) And so that was all part of the package?

Mills: (47:55) Yeah. That's one thing that TRACS have not achieved yet is approval from that "A" area.

Hall: (48:03) Since you mentioned it, the sports, maybe we want to come back to the accrediting here, but uh, what in the planning, what were there first facilities for the sports.

Mills: (48:13) Well the first one of course, was the basketball arena over here. The next one that was uh, laid out the plan was for the baseball field, the track, and the hockey team and then the football stadium that was laid out as a direction that we wanted to first attempt. And of course, in the mean time, we also put on, uh, built a softball team up the road here just a little bit for the women's softball. But the baseball team, uh, baseball was the first stadium that goes up – that went up. And of course, you remember our first coach in baseball, uh, what was his name? Uh...

Hall: (49:12) Worthington?

Mills: (49:14) Worthington, yes. Worthington Field, you know? He was a great man. I mean I just dearly loved working with him because he was very supportive of things that I wanted to achieve and he was very outgoing in terms of leadership was concerned and I appreciated him very much.

Hall: (49:37) Was the plan to put like the football stadium and other things approximately where they are now or?

Mills: (49:41) Yes.

Hall: (49:42) Ok.

Mills: (49:44) Yeah.

Miller: (49:46) And so for a while, we had football before we had a football arena here. Where did they practice or what did um...

Mills: (49:57) Boy, I'll tell you. Where did they practice? I, I...

Hall: (50:01) I don't know but...

Mills: (50:02) They practiced down across the road, across the road, 29 here. We had a football field down there.

Miller: (50:10) Where Wal-Mart is now?

Hall: (50:10) Where Wal-Mart is.

Mills: (50:11) Yeah.

Miller: (50:12) Ok.

Mills: (50:12) We had a field down there. I'm not sure if they...

Miller: (50:15) I thought I heard somebody say that they either played games or practiced in the City Stadium.

Hall: (50:19) City Stadium's where the games were.

Mills: (50:19) Yeah, they did. They played the, the games were played in City Stadium but I think they may have practiced across the road but I'm not sure.

Miller: (50:31) You mentioned hockey. Now, was there an early hockey team? Or was it an outdoor rink? Or...talk about hockey for a second.

Mills: (50:37) Well we had a hockey team, you know. And it was more of a...what do you call it?

Miller: (50:41) A club sport?

Mills: (50:43) A club sport and of course they had to go over to Roanoke uh, to play hockey. And so it surprised me when of course uh, what's...

Miller: (50:58) Dr. LaHaye.

Mills: (50:58) Dr. LaHaye came through his, was it his nephew that played hockey?

Miller: (51:04) I don't know. Grandsons or something?

Mills: (51:05) Grandson or something? And so he built that hockey stadium. And I thought, "My, that's great."

Miller: (51:16) Ok, well let's go back to the accreditation then. Do you have any recollection, when was it that we first achieved, uh, candidate status so that we can say, "Ok, our graduates then are, um, at least provisionally approved." And do you recall at all as far as the timing on that?

Mills: (51:36) Ok now shortly after I came, I'm thinking it was around '82 or somewhere in there that we were initially accredited. When I say, um, that's what you call "candidate status." And you're in that stage at least maybe five years before you can move onto the next – before accreditation. And then you have another five years, you have to be accredited again and then I think it stretches out then to ten years. I don't know what it is now. But, so I think that was the progression. Shortly after I got here, I think we were initially candidate status.

Miller: (52:32) And now, was there something as far as, I'm thinking of other ramifications of the accreditation, something regarding creationism and something regarding chapel and convocation?

Mills: (52:45) Ok, chapel, I mean creation was not an accreditation issue. Uh, it was an issue with the state. We had uh...they said that we could not have uh, creation studies in the science department. And uh...

Miller: (53:08) That was for the, when they stand up and say, "By the power invested in my, by the state of Virginia to grant degrees"...

Mills: (53:14) Yeah.

Miller: (53:14) that was more of a state recognition of the degrees rather than a regional accreditation issue.

Mills: (53:20) Right

Miller: (53:20) Is that what I'm hearing?

Mills: (53:21) I don't – I do not remember, uh, a great deal of hostilities with the SACs with creation. But, it was such an issue with the state, we had quite a battle. And so we agreed to take the creation studies over to religion. Of course the people, who were doing the creation, were out of the science department. And I can remember yet, when the DeMoss building was laid out, and I was sharing and I was taking Jerry around and saying, "This is where this is going to be. This is where that's going to be," and he came across the end of the building up here and he said, "What's in here?" I said, "Jerry, this is the thing that's going to mark Liberty University as a great religious institution." I said, "This is going to be a science, uh, this is going to be a creation museum." And he looked at me and he said, "Because of the fact that we've had so much trouble with the state, we've got have something to make the people know in the community and around the world that we believe in creation." And he uh, and as a result of that, he endorsed it and allowed me to move ahead with it. And of course you remember Jim Hall. He's not your brother is he?

Hall: (54:58) No.

Mills: (54:59) Jim was greatly involved in developing the lab and greatly involved in the museum and they had a great museum there. And as far as – you know, I thought things were going well. We would have school kids come in to visit the lab and have lectures quite often and so it was a great outreach to the community and to the school districts around Lynchburg to bring children in to see the museum.

Miller: (55:33) And later, that dissolved or went away. Any idea on what happened there?

Mills: (55:39) Ok, I'm, you know, I really don't know for sure what really happened but I do know the library people wanted that space. But I kept uh...I maintained that it will not be. The creation, that's their program, they will have that space. When I retired, in '95 and the spring, well I the spring you know, I told them that I was going to retire and I think that they started

working right away to get that space away from creation. And I'm not sure exactly who approved it. Whether Jerry approved it or who approved it, but the library took that over and of course they lost their museum.

Hall: (56:32) And for a while there were some of the displays scattered around in some of the various parts of the library.

Mills: Yeah.

Miller: (56:38) And I hear that some of them are on storage right now. One of the issues with the library is that the weight bearing capability, the floor, as we had talked about earlier, you can't put books on the second, third, and fourth because there's not enough weight bearing capability there.

Mills: (56:51) That's what...see that was one of the things that was promised me that they didn't deliver on.

Miller: (56:56) And, so, then we didn't talk about the chapel or convocation if you can address it. Was that a li – was that a state recognition issue or was that a SACs issue?

Mills: (57:07) You know, I don't believe that it ever became a real issue. It may have come up several times. They may have talked about it. But in my conversations with the state, or my conversations with the SACs people, I don't recall that being a real strong issue.

Miller: (57:33) But they just uh, instead of calling it chapel they called it convocation?

Mills: (57:39) Yeah.

Miller: (57:39) And instead of having Christian service, they changed it to Christian/Community service.

Mills: (57:44) Yes.

Miller: (57:45) But you could do either one.

Mills: (57:46) Yeah.

Miller: (57:46) Ok. And um...so then as you were involved with what you were involved with, were there any other challenges or issues with the SACs accreditation? Did finances, when they went through a difficult financial time, was that an issue for SACs?

Mills: (58:04) Yeah. Yes. It was a very serious issue. Of course when I came back to Liberty in '88, we were right in the midst of a tremendous indebtedness and of course we had to make a lot of changes and a lot of...we tried to minimize the expense as much as possible. You know, I worked very hard with the deans in order to make sure that our classes were full. When I say full, I don't mean a hundred or so. I mean that we tried to maintain a student teacher ratio of under 25

to 1 and every teacher, in fact at that time I did studies demonstrating that every teacher earned their salary, every teacher brought back money sufficient for the development of the institution and had a plan that could show that we were being very austere but we were being within the limits of what we should be doing. And I think that, as far as I thought, I thought Jerry was very appreciative of that. I thought that things were going along real well. However, after I retired, I understand that a number of people were let go that summer after I retired which broke my heart but you know I couldn't do anything about it at that point.

Miller: (1:00:00) Now, we didn't talk about – ok you left about '85, went out to California for about three years, what was your title out there in California?

Mills: (1:00:11) I was president.

Miller: (1:00:12) Ok so you were the president of...and it was still Christian Heritage College?

Mills: (1:00:16) Yes.

Miller: (1:00:18) And then how did it work – was your job there done or did Jerry ask you to come back? Or did you tell them, "I'm done."? Who initiated the return to Liberty process?

Mills: (1:00:29) Well, I'd gotten calls, of course from here and asking me when I was coming back. I don't know if that's exactly the way to put it. And also, Jeremiah is one of the greatest preachers you'll ever meet. He's a great, great preacher. But um, he um, I couldn't get him to do some of the work of publicizing the school and helping me raise money, which I felt that he could do much easier because of his name. I couldn't get him to do that and so I asked him, I said, "Now listen, if you don't want to do it my way, I'm going to take the highway and I'm going back to Liberty." And as a result of that, I finally just came back. I'm not sure whether or not he got that message. His wife told me that she was really upset with me but the fact is that I left. But I think there were people who were willing to step in and try but they failed. They had several failures after I left. I think right now they're doing fairly well but I don't know for sure.

Miller: (1:01:56) And they have a new president, Paul Ague...

Mills: (1:01:58) Yes.

Miller: (1:01:59) who's been there for one year now. So you came back and you had been the vice president of development and you came back as provost?

Mills: (1:02:09) Yes.

Miller: (1:02:10) And how did that door open up and how did that come to be?

Mills: (1:02:16) Well, the Provost is a fairly common name in large universities and usually the provost is the person who has most of the campus responsibilities, academic. In other words, everything reports to him with the exception of probably the finance. The president usually

maintains the finance. When I came back, the goal was that Dr. Guillermin would be more heavily involved with the raising of funds going out, perhaps with speaking and helping Jerry with fundraising. I'm not exactly sure what happened there, but he didn't go out as much as we were hoping and so it just didn't come about the way that we had originally planned.

Miller: (1:03:18) Now was there an academic dean or provost prior to you?

Mills: (1:03:22) No I was the first provost. We had an academic vice president that was Dr. Russ Fitzgerald. And the agreement was that he would stay as the academic vice president but he became disillusioned over not getting what he wanted I guess and left and went up to West Virginia.

Miller: (1:03:52) And now, a little bit of the history of the provost office. So you were the first one to have the title of provost and then Dr. Rist has that now. Was there anyone between the two of you?

Mills: (1:04:00) No.

Miller: (1:04:01) No. So you...

Mills: (1:04:02) Actually, actually when I left, I recommended Dr. Rist and kept recommending him and I kept working with Jerry. Jerry was very good to me. Even after I left, I would work with him a little bit. And of course, when I went to tracts, he helped support me in tracts as well. So he was uh, so I felt obligated to helping him as much as I could over here. And I kept recommending Dr. Rist because I thought he was just a great man. I just felt that he would do a better job than I did and so after about one year, they finally hired him as provost.

Miller: (01:04:51) And, so tell us a little bit...your back now. This is a difficult time in the history of the institution where it's beyond belt-tightening, its just finances are really tight in those first few years as provost but what was a day in the life of a provost like? What areas were your main responsibilities?

Mills: (1:05:11) One of the things that I think I look on as a blessing, was I had great faculty and great deans and so I appreciated their help and so I worked very closely with them on trying to develop better ways. One of the things that we were experiencing at that time were students coming in unprepared and there was no...they would be here for a semester and then they'd be gone.

Miller: (1:05:45) Academically they weren't ready for college?

Mills: (1:05:47) They were not ready.

Miller: (1:05:48) And so the whole general education thing and the remedial...wasn't up to speed at that point?

Mills: (1:05:53) No, so what we did is we tried to develop a program of counseling and testing and placement of students in a course level that they could handle. Uh, Dr. Wagner...has he got a doctorate now?

Miller: (1:06:16) I'm not sure. Jim Wagner you're talking about?

Mills: (1:06:18) Jim Wagner.

Miller: (1:06:19) Barb Sherman, was she involved at that point?

Mills: (1:06:21) Yes, a little bit but she was over in education at that time.

Miller: (1:06:25) Ok.

Mills: (1:06:26) Um...

Miller: (1:06:28) Dr. Groat?

Mills: (1:06:29) Yeah, Dr. Groat was one of the keys. He was a great...see I...when I left here in 85, I took him with me out to California and he was my registrar in California. When I came back, I brought him back with me. And I knew his ability to work with students and so we had him work with the students in counseling, advising, and he did a, I think he did an excellent job. I know he helped my son get through so I thought he did a great job. And he also, Wagner also developed a test that each student would get when they came in so we could find a place...be able to place the student in the classes or at the level that they could function. I think this was a very successful program. I don't what happened. At that time, Mrs. McDo...uh...

Hall: (1:07:41) Donaldson?

Mills: (1:07:42) Donaldson headed that up, that program.

Hall: (1:07:45) Yeah, Pauline Donaldson.

Mills: (1:07:45) Pauline Donaldson. And I believe that things were really coming along very well. But I don't know if that program was continued or not. Or what they have in place of it.

Miller: (1:08:02) Ok. Let's talk about tracts for a little bit. And um so, how did that get started? And you didn't leave...T.R.A.C. S. was formed and began before you left Liberty so could you just talk a little bit about the formation of T.R.A.C.S., what they do and it stands for the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools. That's T.R.A.C.S. right?

Mills: (1:08:26) Yes, long about '82, Dr. Guillermin asked me to attend a meeting down in Dallas with several presidents of schools that were very concerned about the demands by regional accreditation on things that they can do and can't do. And of course Dr. Morris was one of them. Dr. Paige Patterson, Florida Bible College had the president there and Pierre. And we all met down there and Pierre asked me to go along because he thought I could develop if for

him. So they asked me to develop the standards and write up the materials for the process and how to work the schools and how to do the accreditation and that sort of thing. So I got the things started and started making some of the initial calls on schools and then I realized that I couldn't do that and do my work here at Liberty and so we voted and I was aware of Dr. Henry and his work. I had read a lot of his material because a lot of his files were turned over to me when I first came and so I read a lot of his files and I was very impressed with this guy. And I knew that he moved up to a school New Jersey I think it was, or...and he was the president up there. Well anyway, we contacted him and asked him if he would become the executive director. He did that in '84. In '84...from '84 then to '94, he uh...towards the end of '94, the end of that year, he resigned so he had a little over ten years. He had built the agency up to about 32 institutions at that time. As I said at that point, when I retired from here, they asked me to take that over again and so I did. I told them I'd do it for three years max and then they'd have to hire somebody else. Well then they hired Dr. Fitzgerald. And then I retire again Dr. Fitzgerald said, "Oh no. I served you for three years, now you've got to serve me for three." So I agreed. So in 2000, I retired again and became just a consultant and that got too busy. I mean I had as many as ten institutions I was working with and helping to get them at a place where they could be accredited. So at uh, I think it was about 2006 I think it was or maybe close to 2007, I kind of phased out the institutions I was working with and they asked me to come back to T.R.A.C.S. so I did and I'm almost ready to retire again.

Miller: (1:11:58) Talk about the relationship between Liberty and T.R.A.C.S. through the years. Now I've wondered, was this kind of a fail-safe type thing if something were ever to happen with...

Mills: (1:12:09) No.

Miller: (1:12:10) ...with the regional accreditation? Was that a factor at all in that?

Mills: (1:12:12) I...you know I don't believe that that was an issue. Although Jerry told me at one time, he said, "You know, T.R.A.C.S. may be the only game in town at some future date." And if it became a point where he could not see...the different agencies were putting some pressure on Christian schools and he recognized that that was an issue. However, I think we made some games in that field so I don't think that was going to be a problem at that point. Now I do know that some of the states and some of these agencies give schools a hard time on the creation issue. And of course that's bizarre, but Jerry felt that...he really felt that we were very important. Very important to them and he was very supportive of me and very supportive of T.R.A.C.S. Whether or not, if he'd have lived, whether or not there would have been that separation, I don't know. You've got to understand that Liberty went through a little bit of a problem. I understand, and I don't know exactly what the details are, with SACS because of the turning in data that may not have been up to date or...what happened. And so they had to get all the people together to work in order to get the date up to date as far as their assessment plan. That was a major concern. And so they, at that point I think they recommended that they not try

to carry on and be...and start another self study for SAC...T.R.A.C.S. because they are working with SACS. We would have worked with them, I'm sure and Dr. Fitzgerald and would have worked with them. Although I think that they um, I'm not sure but I think that TRACS gave them a little bit of a hard time on one of the degrees that they were offering and that was a person who was with T.R.A.C.S. at that time. I don't know, stipulated certain things and I don't think that Liberty appreciated that. I'm not sure.

Hall: (1:15:02) Was SACS looked upon...I mean was T.R.A.C.S. looked upon as being somewhat of a substitute for the Christian schools who did not want to go the S.A.C.S. route? Or...

Mills: (1:15:13) No. I think it was an alternative. Not a substitute but maybe uh...it depends on how you define that. I think that S.A.C.S. was an alternative that became popular among many of the schools and very supportive because they go the same benefits out of U.S. Office and uh, as the regionals. And the...we worked very closely with the U.S. Office and I'll have to tell you, it was amazing because they have really heaped a lot of praise on the work that TRACS has done, both in assessment and self evaluation. We probably have turned in the best reports of any agency that they have coming to U.S. Office. And at least that's what they've told us anyway.

Miller: (1:16:19) and I know working with a little school, that when you get with these regional creditors, they have a real time with schools that have 200 or 300 students.

Mills: (1:16:29) Yes.

Miller: (1:16:29) I was involved with a school that was working with North Central Accreditation up in the Midwest area up there and they had some of the smaller American Indian Colleges than that that had 200 or 300 students. But other than that, it was hard to find these, just to have evaluators and consultants and those that understood those little schools. And so they really appreciated TRACS and the ability to do that.

Mills: (1:16:52) Yes.

Hall: (1:16:52) Were most of the TRACS accredited schools also accredited by SACS?

Mills: (1:16:58) No. I uh, we um, I'm not sure. I think we got one other school that's accredited by SACS and TRACS. We have maybe some other schools that were accredited by regionals across the country and TRACS. But the major portions of our schools are TRACS only. I think we had one school also that's accredited by AAC and TRACS.

Miller: (1:17:42) So let's go back and take a look at the big picture then. What would you say were some of the major accomplishments that you had at Liberty? You know, if someone said, "Could you summarize...what are some of the things that you're most proud of?" what would they be?

Mills: (1:17:59) Oh my. That's a...

Miller: (1:18:01) That's a pretty broad question but...

Mills: (1:18:03) Yeah that's a pretty broad question. I think the things that I was proud of, was I mentioned about the creation center. I was very proud of that. I was very proud of our...the improvement in our faculty. I was very proud of our, I thought that we were doing a better job as far as reaching our students and student outcome. I felt we're getting much better. I felt that they were achieved in great number. We had a program once in which we offered the new students coming in. we offered them a seminar. Was it a three week seminar or something like that?

Hall: (1:18:57) Yeah, orientation.

Mills: (1:18:58) Introduce them to...orientation? Well I taught a few of those. And I can still remember one couple that was in my class, and they met in my class, and they would come together throughout the next four years to my office and share with me, what was happening here, what was happening there, what was going on. They were not my spies, but they did give me a lot of feedback that gave me a thinking of the students and that was very helpful. And they uh, they finally wound up in...graduated and got married. It all started in my class. I always felt that was kind of a delight. A couple of other things that I felt that were kind of funny in a way, when we made the plans to build the shed in back of the building. In back of the soccer field back there, you know? What's that building called? Uh, well anyway...

Miller: (1:20:14) The field house or something?

Mills: (1:20:15) Yeah, it was initially made for maintenance and that sort of thing. And I can still remember Dr. Falwell, Jim Rodgers, and the man that was the head of the grounds, at that time, met there and I said that I wanted this spot for a student center.

Hall: (1:20:38) Are you talking about what we call David's place?

Mills: (1:20:40) Yeah.

Miller: (1:20:41) Oh, ok. That's it.

Hall: (1:20:42) Yeah.

Mills: (1:20:42) And anyway, I lost that battle and they made it a grounds building. But three years later it became David's place. And so I always remind that guy, you may have won initially but I won finally. So that was, that was kind of a good thing.

Hall: (1:21:03) What was...thinking back in the '80s when the name was changed, when it became a university...

Mills: (1:21:09) Yes.

Hall: (1:21:10) Any thinking about that? Or...

Mills: (1:21:14) No, I was pretty supportive of that. I felt it was right. You know, in the definitions of a university, we had to have a doctrinal program I felt and we had to have several masters programs and I felt that those qualifications were there so I supported the change in the name, recognizing that the future of the institution probably depended on that recognition.

Miller: (1:21:43) Now, a couple of rumors out there. When you were the head of development, someone had said that they at one time were thinking about putting a monorail on campus...

Mills: (1:21:53) Yes.

Miller: (1:21:54) A train track. Was that true?

Mills: (1:21:55) Yes, it was talked about. However, it, at the time, I don't think that the plan was finalized as to how it would work. I thought that, initially, I thought that it's a little much I didn't know if it would work. But, you try to get into this place during the day, you know, I thought "why start...the monorail might have been a great idea."

Miller: (1:22:29) Well, the busses have certainly helped in the past couple of years.

Mills: (1:22:32) Yeah. And you know, I know teachers that have to teach up in the north campus and they have classes down here somewhere, they have to get up there and they can't drive their car up there I guess because of some restriction on parking and they have to catch a bus in order to get up there. Well...

Miller: (1:22:54) that monorail would have done that.

Mills: (1:22:56) Yeah.

Miller: (1:22:57) Any thing else that they had talked about building but that never actually materialized?

Mills: (1:23:01) Well, of course, Jerry Jr. had been successful I think at trying to put the ring around and trying to get that in place. I think that there could be some additional work done on the highways. You know, we talked also about, in back of the dome we were going to put in a parking lot there which would be a three story parking lot.

Miller: (1:23:30) A parking ramp type of a thing?

Mills: (1:23:31) Yeah.

Miller: (1:23:31) Ok.

Mills: (1:23:32) And I was very supportive of that, hoping that we could get that off and done but that also didn't materialize. They did put the building where I wanted it but they didn't put the parking ramp in.

Hall: (1:23:48) Was there a master plan back in those early days?

Mills: (1:23:52) Yes, but you know I do not have a copy of the stages that it went through but we did have a plan and we had sketches of the campus. I even made some of the sketches.

Hall: (1:24:04) How well have they been followed?

Mills: (1:24:07) Pretty much, pretty much the...like for example, DeMoss building. I had a little different plan for the DeMoss building that we showed vendors you know to try to raise money. I drew a building you know, a three dimensional building and it was helpful to get some money help but we didn't build it that way.

Miller: (1:24:34) And um, now I did see an early one where it had a fountain out front and for years there wasn't a fountain, it was just a parking lot and now within the past year, they've added the fountain out front.

Mills: (1:24:43) Right. That was initially was considered way back, I think, it was on Jerry's mind. Jerry had a...was a like some people told me, you know, he took Moon up to the campus up here before the buildings were started and Jerry outlined, you know, this building over here and this building here and this is where the campus and this is where that's going to be and all Moon said, "The only thing I could see down there was trees." But Jerry had the vision of what the campus was even going to look like in his mind long before architects started drawing plans.

Miller: (1:25:09) There was another rumor that at one time they had talked about moving the college to Atlanta.

Mills: (1:25:34) Oh dear. Yes, and that was a serious issue for the main point. It was the city, for some reason or other, was fighting Jerry on a lot of issues. And he was very discouraged and so he just, talked to the people and I don't know if it ever went very far, but I know that he talked to some people about moving the campus to Atlanta. I think he would have gotten money, support to build a campus down there, but uh, I think that the city finally woke up to the fact that if they moved out of here, it would...

Miller: (1:26:21) Be quite financially detrimental there.

Mills: (1:26:23) Yes. And I think things started working a little better.

Hall: (1:26:28) Was that just talk or was it really a serious issue?

Mills: (1:26:30) Well it was a lot of talk at least and as far as...I don't know in Jerry's mind whether it was a, uh, very serious or not.

Miller: (1:26:44) A credible threat or whether it was...

Mills: (1:26:46) Yeah. You know, he did not share with me which way it was but we were...I was quite concerned that we were going to, that we might do it.

Miller: (1:26:58) Well, as we wrap down here, can you talk about Jerry Falwell the man, your relationship with him and maybe just some of the things that you maybe appreciated about him, maybe a quote that you remember? Talk about your relationship with Dr. Falwell.

Mills: (1:27:10) Well, you know, after meeting him in West Virginia as I shared with you before, and coming down here, and he saw me down the hall and walked up to me and said, "Earl, we're so glad you come down." Amazed my sense of, "Man, this guy has a memory like a hawk." So that's the first thing I understand about him. He remembered names. He had a memory that uh I don't think he ever forgot anything. And also the thing that I admired about him was he was a man of great integrity. As far as, you know, he was very protective of his image. You know, like he said, he says, "There's a woman over there on the sidewalk and it was raining like cats and dogs and she's going to get wet," because he wouldn't pick her up. And I can't, you know I probably would stop and pick her up you know, because it just never dawned on me but he was very protective of his personal integrity. A second thing, and probably the greatest thing that he impressed me with is he said, "You need to state the vision and make it plain." And that rang a bell in my head, the whole time I was here. Make the vision plain. And you have to admit that he's done that. He was a great sports person and of course I enjoyed sports. I probably was as bad as he was as far as wanting to see us have good sports. But he uh, he was very competitive. I often think of the time that uh, when he was up speaking at a conference, thinking, maybe New York area, and the singer that was traveling with him, uh, played a joke with him and put Vaseline in his coat pocket because he knew that he'd always put his hand in his coat pocket. So when he put his hand in his coat pocket, he knew he couldn't take his hand out so he had to preach the rest of that sermon without taking his hand out of his coat pocket. And according to the stories when he got back on the plane he thrashed that young man so badly he said, "Nobody should be beat like I was beat." So he was a competitor. I just appreciate him very much.

Miller: (1:30:16) Now did he do something special when you finally left Liberty for the last time?

Mills: (1:20:21) Oh yeah. I'll tell you, he uh, I should have brought the video. There's a video of the presentation made at my bon voyage He gave a talk that I couldn't believe who he was talking about. I was sure that...I looked around and I was sure that he was talking about somebody else but it was very complimentary. Where I thought that there was reason to fire me many times he never did. He uh, he was very supportive. And the same thing with Jerry Jr. He was very supportive. When I run into problems, he...I'd go to him and he would talk to his dad, we'd get some help.

Hall: (1:31:16) Do you have a favorite quote, Dr. Falwell's quotes?

Mills: (1:31:19) Probably my favorite quote is "State the vision and make it plain." "State the vision and make it plain."

Miller: (1:31:27) Well, one last thing or two that you want to get on the record? We're kind of winding down here but any little story, maybe a person that you really remember? Who's the most memorable person here at Liberty that either came to speak or maybe a fellow teacher or graduate, any remembrances there?

Mills: (1:31:46) Well of course there was...Jerry had a lot of great people come here to speak and of course I enjoyed interacting with most of them. Probably President Bush, the first President Bush was a very memorable time talking to him and his wife. His wife was just a, she was just a mother's mother. You know, she was just a great person and I sat beside her at the graduation you know, when we had a stadium, and I appreciated just getting to know them when they were here. I think um, and some of the evangelists that came through here were also just absolutely...some of the board members that we had, on our board were great people and very supportive. As you know, I would be asked to come into the board meetings to relate the plans and to talk about the future of the direction that we were going as far as facilities and programs and things like that. And they were also very, very supportive.

Miller: (1:33:08) And so, for yourself, what do you see as the future of Liberty as you look in the days ahead if the Lord should tarry?

Mills: (1:33:14) Well, that's the issue, if the Lord tarries. Of course you know I am concerned, mainly because of the direction of our country. Students are dropping out...young people are dropping out of churches like crazy, so the drawing card of coming to a Christian institution may be dropping and so I'm concerned that that will effect our drawing the right students to Liberty. Also, the fact that I believe, if the government continues to go in the direction it is now headed, its going to be exceedingly, extremely more difficult for us to continue the work that we believe is important. Example, if they pass the laws that are in the house right now, it will make it very difficult for our teachers to teach the truth, as well as preachers to preach the truth. And so this will have, I'm very concerned that this will have an impact on Liberty as well. Those are the major things that would probably be a concern.

Miller: (1:34:43) Do you see any possibilities of, in the future, homosexual rights being treated the same as civil rights were that that became kind of an issue then for some Christian schools that had been racially discriminatory and that never has been really an issue here at Liberty. But they had to change their policies and in that case they should have but in the other case they shouldn't.

Mills: (1:35:07) Yeah I think that uh, I think that it will become very difficult to teach the Bible as its written and so therefore I think that will effect the...it could effect our, we could run into some real legal problems down the road over that issue.

Miller: (1:35:30) Well, with that, we'll conclude today's interview with Dr. Earl Mills. Thank you so much for spending some time with us. This interview has been conducted as part of the Oral History Project of the Liberty University Archives.

Mills: (1:35:45) Thank you very much.

End of Transcript.