

## Oral History Interview of Dr. David Randlett

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Name of Interviewee: Dr. David Randlett

Name of Interviewers: Randy Miller and Dr. Cline Hall

Transcriber: Jesse Ronda

Interview Length: 1:53:54

Notes:

**Miller:** (0:01) Welcome to this interview in the oral history project of the Liberty University Archives. This interview is being conducted on May 25, 2010. Today we are interviewing David Randlett. My name is Randy Miller. I'll be conducting the interview today along with Dr. Cline Hall. Greetings Dr. Hall...

**Hall:** (0:19) Good morning.

**Miller:** (0:20) And good morning Dr. Randlett.

**Randlett:** (0:23) Well, good morning.

**Miller:** (0:24) Well it's good to have you with us here today. And as we start off, let's start off with just a little bit about you as a person. Can you tell us a little bit about when you were born, where you were born, and a little bit about your family background?

**Randlett:** (3:37) Well I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania uh...back in 1938. So I, I've been around a while myself along with being here at Liberty for a long while. My wife and I were married in 1963 up in, right outside of Boston, Massachusetts where we were in undergrad school. We have two adult children, four grandchildren. Paul is our son, he actually teaches here in the center for worship and his wife Jenny. And then uh...Karen and Rusty Goodwin and they've been around and all our children, of course, attended LU and were involved at Thomas Road and here for years, so.

**Miller:** (1:25) Now how about yourself, were you raised in a Christian home?

**Randlett:** (1:29) I was raised in a Nazarene home, went to a Nazarene undergrad school.

**Miller:** (1:33) And what school was that?

**Randlett:** (1:34) That was Eastern Nazarene College in, in Quincy, Massachusetts. And people said “well how did you come from Nazarene to Baptist?” Well, it was one of those things where my sophomore year in college I started questioning some doctrines and it seemed like I was more a Baptist than I was...theologically, so I ended up being administer of music part time when I was a student at South Shore Baptist in Hingham, Massachusetts and we were married in that church as well.

**Miller:** (2:01) Ok. And where did you meet your wife? Was that at college?

**Randlett:** (2:03) At, at college.

**Miller:** (2:04) And um...

**Randlett:** (2:05) Of course, why do you go to college? [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (2:07) [*Laughter*] Go to college and get your MRS [*Laughter*] degree.

**Randlett:** (2:08) That’s right.

**Miller:** (2:11) So, uh...where and when did you become a Christian?

**Randlett:** (2:15) Alright, uh...I became a Christian; I’m one of these “camp kids.” And uh...I, it was uh...I was 11 years old and I could, I could take you to the place where it was but since then an interstate’s been built through there and if I knelt down there now I’d probably not survive. But it was a summer and I was 11 years old.

**Miller:** (2:38) Now, you said you went to, in the Boston area there at Quincy, for college. Where did you grow up?

**Randlett:** (2:44) Well I grew up right outside of Pittsburgh.

**Miller:** (2:47) Ok.

**Randlett:** (2:48) And just about 30 miles north in Butler and Mercer, Pennsylvania. And then in 1957, my family moved to Virginia and that was in the Newport News area. And so while I was in college, they were becoming Virginians and then I married a Virginian so I, I go back and visit Pittsburgh but that’s about it. [*chuckle*]

**Miller:** (3:06) Ok. And...

**Hall:** (3:07) How did you come to know about Jerry Falwell and Thomas Road?

**Randlett:** (3:11) Well I...alright we, I started out as a high school band director in Newport News, Virginia. And I was there two years and then a Bible college in Nashville uh...Freewill Baptist Bible College, I was attending a church there and they had uh...they needed faculty. And so I moved, well we moved, just the two of us after two years of band directing to Nashville. And it was in Nashville that I finished up my master's degree and we uh...while in Nashville we would watch television. And at 11 o'clock at night the Old Time Gospel Hour would come on. And so we would watch it and it was very uh...always interesting. We, you know those were the older...early days of Doug Oldham and all...

**Hall:** (4:05) Mhmm

**Randlett:** (4:06) And I said, "well," on one of our trips back to Virginia Beach, which is where my wife was from, I said "Let's stop through Lynchburg" because we had a friend who was living here. And so this was New Year's Day of 1973. And we stopped to visit him and I said "while we're in town, I want to go over and see that church I been watching on TV." And so we came over to the old 701 Thomas Road and it was quite, quite different then than it is now, and we visited, talked to some people that just happened to be around that day and long story short was uh...you know they said "you know we're a young school. You've been teaching for so many years and uh...you know so we're, we really need some you know some leadership in the area of music." And so I said "well I'm really not interested in moving." And they said "oh well, here, here take an application home with you anyway." Well this was January and by the end of February I, I'd signed a contract and Dr. Jim Henry was here then. Actually, Dr. Towns interviewed me on the telephone. I didn't, I never had a real face to face interview with Dr. Towns but uh...and so he was here then, I came, and he left for several years but then he came back obviously. So we started out in '73 with just that interview on New Year's Day of 1973.

**Hall:** (5:36) Ok, back it up just a little bit.

**Randlett:** (5:37) Yeah.

**Hall:** (5:38) When you was watching the TV program do you remember who was actually directing the music and...

**Randlett:** (5:42) Oh, Paul DeSaegher was, was...

**Hall:** (5:44) Oh, DeSaegher. Ok.

**Randlett:** (5:45) Paul was the music director at that point. And Paul was the music director until 19...January of '74.

**Hall:** (5:54) Oh, ok.

**Miller:** (5:55) Now at that time, had the new auditorium there at 701 Thomas Road hadn't been built...

**Randlett:** (6:00) No it was built. Yes.

**Miller:** (6:01) Oh it was already built at that time.

**Randlett:** (6:02) Yeah, they moved into that in I think '71.

**Miller:** (6:04) Ok.

**Randlett:** (6:05) And so yes, that, that summer of '73, Paul and the LBC Chorale traveled with Jerry for the summer. And we moved here in May of '73 so I was the interim choir director in uh...for the summer of 1973. And it was, because they were on the road the whole time. And so you know I worked uh...

**Miller:** (6:29) So you were back at the home base [*chuckle*].

**Randlett:** (6:30) I was, I was keeping home fires burning and Dr. Falwell he would go out for the week and fly in for the weekends so we didn't see him much but those were the early days when the main job was going out and recruiting students in the summer of '73 and '74. Well I then took over as the quote interim music pastor in January of 1974 and was there for 21 years.

**Hall:** (6:57) So you were hired really by the church and not the school.

**Randlett:** (7:01) I was hired by the church?

**Hall:** (7:02) Ok.

**Randlett:** (7:03) No, I was both. I was, see I was hired by the college at that point that was my full time job. And then my other full time job was the church.

**Miller:** (7:12) [*Laughter*]

**Hall:** (7:13) [*Laughter*]

**Miller:** (7:14) The one that they, they would say the pay check was from, was from the college.

**Randlett:** (7:18) Right and...

**Miller:** (7:19) And the other was more volun...or, or would they...

**Randlett:** (7:21) Well, I was on a retainer [*laughter*] you would call it. I guess. But again, the college in those days they'd like to pay you, you know, for nine months and then you had three months that you tried to figure out how to make a living. And so in those days, I would supplement it with being part time at the church and then I also built swimming pools. I had a student crew and we built swimming pools. [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (7:44) Oh, ok.

**Miller:** (7:45) One thing that we didn't ask you earlier is when you were in Nashville you said you got your master's degree. Where, where is your master's degree from?

**Randlett:** (7:51) It's from George Peabody College for teachers which is now a part of Vanderbilt University.

**Miller:** (7:56) Ok. And so as we talk about the, the choir back then, you were the choir director for the church over the summer time, about how many people were in the choir back then. Tell us about the choir in those days.

**Randlett:** (8:09) Well as I told, tell many people I said the choir that I started directing was bigger than the church I came from in Nashville. [*laughter*] You know, so the choir loft in the old church would seat just under a hundred people. And so you would, you would have that, you know, so you were running those figures most of the time.

**Miller:** (8:29) And, so, now, for the choir, was there a difference in the choir between the school year when the students were here and the summer time when the students went off to ministry?

**Randlett:** (8:41) No. The students weren't really that involved in the church choir program in those days although they, we tried to involve the students in much of the church activities. Due to television we needed to have the choir loft full at all times, you know, 12 months out of the year. So when the students...if we were to involve too many students in there then we would have had a problem over the summer.

**Miller:** (9:06) So how much time would the choir spend practicing then for just a normal week?

**Randlett:** (9:12) A normal week, alright, we had, we had a little different than they have now. My philosophy was we would only take one day out of their life. So Sunday they were already going to be involved Sunday morning, Sunday night, so we had choir practices on Sunday afternoon and, on a regular basis, we would have two hour practice on Sunday afternoons. And then that would also get us ready for the, because we sang Sunday evenings too, so we would be ready for the Sunday evening service. Now when you, we got to the practicing for the "Christmas Tree," which was you know the tail that

wagged the dog, you know, as far as about three months out of the year. Now I don't say that it...it's been wonderful over the years, but for three months out of the year the "Christmas Tree" really took an awful lot of our time. And so then we would have extra practices and then when we got closer we would have extra and extra and extra and of course Dr. Hall knows all about that. His wife was involved, I don't know if you were involved at that time.

**Hall:** (10:09) No. She was but not me.

**Randlett:** (10:11) But she was, right. So he can tell you that we spent a lot of time.

**Miller:** (10:13) And so for those early "Christmas Tree" practices, how many days a week would you practice during that season?

**Randlett:** (10:20) Well, we [*sigh*] I only did the music portion of it, although I was the director of it, so I don't know about the drama sections but the music portions, we would add, starting in about August, another hour to our regular Sunday afternoon practices. And then when we got to two weeks before hand we'd be going seven days a week.

**Hall:** (10:39) Now from the very beginning I guess the choir did have the robes because that was television purpose.

**Randlett:** (10:44) Right

**Hall:** (10:45) Mainly

**Randlett:** (10:46) When I came we had gold robes and if you look back on some of the, the pulpit classics you'll see us in gold robes.

**Hall:** (10:52) Mhmm.

**Randlett:** (10:53) Then we went from there in the early '80's to the powder blue robes. And that's when we redid the inside of the Thomas Road auditorium and changed colors and all and we changed robes at that point.

**Miller:** (11:04) And then what color are they today?

**Randlett:** (11:06) Today they are a, I think they call it plum. [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (11:09) [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (11:10) [*laughter*] So purple really.

**Miller:** (11:11) And so was there one other color between the powder blue and the plum?

**Randlett:** (11:15) No.

**Miller:** (11:16) Ok.

**Randlett:** (11:17) So when...

**Miller:** (11:18) So there have been three different colors through the years.

**Randlett:** (11:20) As far as I know.

**Miller:** (11:21) And, so, as a musical director there you've got this school is growing and those were the early days of the school. How did they balance the talent from the students? You've got professional outside talent that would come in and, and you even had on staff Doug Oldham and all, and then you had the folks who have been in the church for years and years and I'm sure some of them liked to sing but you've gone on to television. Could you talk just a little bit about how you balanced all of the talent in folks who wanted to sing versus those who could sing and so forth?

**Randlett:** (11:54) Well the television broadcast would have a different set of talent than the rest of the services. So we would use what you would call local talent, you know, Sunday nights, Wednesday nights, you know, Sunday school classes, those kinds of things. And those would mainly come out of the choir. So the choir was a volunteer choir and I would say it was a very good choir, you know, we...for those years we made numerous recordings with Nashville recording companies and they would come in here and we, we well over the years I've produced a little over 50 albums and we put out a whole choir series of books for other choirs to do and it was done with that choir and when we recorded we would also use some of the, the school's talent as well to come in and we would combine the LU choirs and the Thomas Road choirs when we would to recording projects.

**Miller:** (12:53) Now I've seen some of those photo albums and we have some in our archives there and so the purpose of the recordings, was it, were they mainly sold, were they given as premiums, were there a variety of things, if you could talk about that.

**Randlett:** (13:11) *[laughter]* Well that's a good question. What it is, the companies in Nashville who produce music for church choirs, they needed material. We needed material for our choir. So we would...and we had a recording studio, so we would do a partnership where we would get professional quality arrangements, for people like Don Marsh, Dave Williamson, etc. and we would record the projects. They would sell the books, they would sell the recordings. We would get to use this music free. So we didn't

have to pay uh...we had, had an agreement with them so we didn't have to buy the music. So we were getting television quality musical arrangements because we did this partnership with them. We, we did that, I mean, Gaither produced about four of our albums and we had choir books that uh...I mean, you know, it was one of those things where people said "when are you going to put out your next" because television had a great impact and so they would watch television and say "well what's the Old Time Gospel Hour choir singing? Oh, we need that." And this is how it kind of came about.

**Miller:** (14:20) Has anyone ever gathered, you know, and had a complete set of all of the choir albums from those days? It seems as though you were just kind of cranking them out.

**Randlett:** (14:28) [*laughter*] I wish we did. You know, I don't even have them you know and we do ge...we still get calls, I still get calls "where can we find thus and so a tune from the He Lives project?" [*Sigh*] You know, I mean, and we had the masters here for a while but you know after the years...you don't realize when you're doing it you're doing something worthy of archiving. It's just from day to day so I mean the ones that I produced, I don't even have copies of them anymore. And maybe there's somebody out there who collected them all but I don't have them.

**Miller:** (15:02) Talk to us a little bit about Dr. Falwell's philosophy regarding music. Was it clean fill before the really important part of the preaching or was it an integral part of the service? Talk a little bit about what, what he thought about music.

**Randlett:** (15:16) Well you've heard his quote. In recruiting students, students respond to athletics and to music. Those are the two things that in those days would recruit students. So, so he was a firm backer of using music to go out and recruit students. But that would be done, not only through the Old Time Gospel Hour television program and through the choir but we also always had what you would call the Sounds of Liberty today. They were almost like staff at that time because they were on television every Sunday as well as when they traveled. So he firmly believed in using music. Again it wasn't just a set up, he wanted music. He was there, he was listening. In fact, I'll tell you how involved he would be. We had the choir and of course you rehearse your music weeks in advance. But we had what we called a repertoire choir. The choir would have set number of selections that they could refresh on a moments notice and use. And it wouldn't be unusual to be in our choir room, which was downstairs at the time, and about 20 minutes before the service somebody would run down and say "Dr. Falwell wants you to change the song to this song." And so we would you know immediately shift gears and go into that. So meaning what? He was involved. He knew what he wanted and how he wanted to use it and he knew what fit.

**Hall:** (16:47) Did he always request special music or was that your decision?

**Randlett:** (16:51) Alright, the, what you call, the artist chose their own music.

**Hall:** (16:54) Ok.

**Randlett:** (16:55) Alright, but when Kendra Cook would sing, Jerry had favorites and if she wasn't singing one of his favorites he would say "Kendra, sing thus and so."  
[*Laughter*] You know, those kinds of things. But no, he was, I would say he was very involved as a pastor, not to dictate but he wanted something that was going to be useful in that service with where, where he was speaking.

**Miller:** (17:21) So, did you propose a list of here's the congregational songs and so forth. Did you propose that and then he would just review the list or did he say "this is what I'm preaching on this week and here's what I'd like to have for a theme?"

**Randlett:** (17:34) Alright, in the early days, I didn't do the congregational singing. Alright, we had, we had split duties. Jim Moon, his long time buddy, would lead some of the congregational singing, Don Norman would lead some of the congregational singing, but my job was more with the choir and the special groups. So the only congregational song I ever chose was the invitation at the end of the sermon. And I would listen to the sermon and wait until the end to choose what would be the appropriate invitation selection. But I didn't do the upfront except for the last, the last few years that I was the director.

**Miller:** (18:16) For the service that was televised, tell how the invitation ran. Did they...it seemed like Dr. Falwell kind of took a pause, they switched off the studio cameras, and was it a real live spiritual experience for those that were in the auditorium? Talk about that for a moment.

**Randlett:** (18:36) Alright, well we had two formats. And, Dr. Falwell, I don't know if you remember, the early formats when we were uh...we would record the broadcast then they would have to take the tape to Michigan to edit. So [*chuckle*] what would happen...we would do a whole church service and then have the offering and the invitation...the invitation and the offering at the end of the service when we went off the air. Now that didn't last real long. But then we came back in and again it was a real church service and the invitation was very real. And again, when you saw it live, it depends on the time. You may get the invitation or maybe after 58:30 had expired.  
[*Laughter*]

**Miller:** (19:25) That's the number of minutes within the hour. 58:30 was the...  
[*chuckle*]

**Randlett:** (19:29) Right, right we had 58:30 to fill.

**Miller:** (19:32) And uh...

**Hall:** (19:33) So when did uh...at some point along here we begin to do our own editing on studio. When did that happen?

**Randlett:** (19:40) Right and I'm not sure when that was. You'd have to talk to somebody like Bruce Braun could probably fill you in on the dates and when those kinds of things happened. But we, we then gradually would...were getting our own equipment and were able to do our own editing.

**Hall:** (19:53) Now there's been a lot of special soloists I guess throughout the years. Like for you to maybe comment on some of them. For instance, Robbie Hiner...

**Randlett:** (20:01) We had, well we had, alright uh...for numerous years, we had Doug Oldham was there but and he was there "x" number of Sundays a month because he was also traveling. Then we had [*clears throat*], excuse me. After about 1977 Kendra Cook came as a student and she sang for a while. Then she left, then she came back but Kendra was on several times a month. Then we had the Old Time Gospel Hour trio. We had three in that group, and that was Don Norman, Mack Evans, and Robbie Hiner. And, but each of them were soloists in there own right. So they would sometimes sing as a trio and sometimes some of them were on the road. Of course Don was staff here so he was always available, and then, but we had, Mack and Robbie then who would be in periodically and we'd work those in. So those were kind of our, our in house artists at the time. Then along came, you know, after that people like Bev Lowry and Mark Lowry and you know, we went on from there.

**Hall:** (21:05) Did the trio travel a whole lot and sing different...

**Randlett:** (21:08) The trio traveled with Jerry a lot. Yeah.

**Miller:** (21:12) And different personalities in all, could you just share some stories about the different people and were they practical jokers or were they uh...

**Randlett:** (21:24) Well you know the biggest practical joker was Dr. Falwell.

**Miller:** (21:26) Right.

**Randlett:** (21:27) Yeah, and then the other great practical joker of course is Robbie Hiner. And I mean, there is story after story with the "Living Christmas Tree" it was Robbie and then he had Mark Lowry and there his sidekicks Mick and Rick [Vinyell] and for the "Christmas Tree" I mean you never knew what was going to happen. Again while things are going on onstage, Dr. Falwell got pretty well upset one time with uh...Robbie was underneath the "Christmas Tree" and people were out front and he had a long pole...

**Hall:** (22:02) [*chuckle*]

**Randlett:** (22:03) and he was sticking the pole through the tree, through the people there and jabbing the backs of the people who were performing on, onstage.

**Hall:** (22:10) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (22:11) And it, it was causing a little bit of a ruckus and Dr. Falwell took him to task for that. But Robbie loved to have fun. And I'll tell you another incident with the tree though. The first time we ever used the dry ice with the smoke machine. Well we forgot to tell Dr. Falwell we were using it. And the smoke started coming out and filling the stage and all, well he jumps up from his seat and he runs backstage. He's ready to call the fire department; he thought the place was on fire. [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (22:46) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (22:47) So, you know, we have to think that wasn't meant to be a joke but it ended up being, being a joke.

**Miller:** (22:54) Now, you mentioned dry ice. Today don't they use kind of a veg, vegetable oil? When did they switch over for that?

**Randlett:** (22:59) Yeah. I don't know. I...

**Miller:** (23:00) Ok.

**Randlett:** (23:01) You'd have to interview David Allison. David handled all the onstage drama for me at that time and all the effects. And of course the lighting was handled uh...we well we, we started out with a little bit local lighting directors, then we had a student who was learning lighting and had some really decent lights of his own, and finally in the mid '80s LBN came on board with us, the television people, and Alex [Vonsaire] would design our lighting and we, we bought better lighting every year and it just, it kind of grows every year.

**Miller:** (23:40) Talk about the, the microphones and the technical...

**Randlett:** (23:42) [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (23:43) and the produc...and since we're getting this for the history here. What's kind of...did there used to be just a single mic on the pulpit or was it always more elaborately mic'd than that or?

**Randlett:** (23:54) Well, alright, for Sundays of course we had corded mics at that point for everybody. Now, and again, you had the history uh...the soloist always had, you

know, a solo mic, the handheld, the trio would have three microphones. Maybe in the early days before I came in '73 they may have gathered around one mic on the pulpit. I don't, I don't remember that. But we always had individual mics and when we had the small groups sing...originally they would do two on a, on a mic and you can see from the pulpit classics they'll, some of them will be holding and there'll be two leaning in on a microphone. Then we really got brave and said "oh, if we're going to use individual mics, it can't be done, that's too many, too many faders on the board, we can't control that much sound and..." we, that discussion went on and then we ended up of course being on individual mics. But they were still corded mics. Now for the Living Christmas Tree, we had to choreograph what was onstage because everything was handheld corded mics and so when you did any kind of a, a change of position on stage, you had to go into the position then you had to retrace those steps in the exact order that...the reverse order that you did it so you didn't have a mess of cords on the stage. And so uh...

**Miller:** (25:17) So it would seem a bit stiff today uh...

**Randlett:** (25:21) Oh yeah.

**Miller:** (25:22) And so, thankfully you don't even have to consider, you know, watching out for the mic cords.

**Randlett:** (25:26) Oh and then we would, then we went into a time when we got just a few wireless mics. And yet we didn't want cords onstage and there were only a few who needed wireless mics. So we actually took, now this is inside information now. Don't tell this to anybody.

**Miller:** (25:46) [*chuckle*]

**Randlett:** (25:47) But we would take a corded microphone put the connector on it and take a piece of coat hanger wire and make it look like it was an antenna and we had phony cordless mics for some of the people out there. [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (26:02) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (26:03) And, and only those in the know would realize, again somebody watching wouldn't say "those aren't real microphones."

**Hall:** (26:11) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (26:12) But then we, of course, we added and added and added and finally we got to the place where, where everybody, you know, who needed the microphone. We went from handhelds and of course we went to Lavaliers and you know the various ones so that they're now wearing microphones and not holding them.

**Miller:** (26:26) About year, what year would Bev Lowry and Mark come. Tell us a little bit about the Lowry family and their contributions.

**Randlett:** (26:23) I'm just guessing but it had to be somewhere in the mid '80s. It had to be somewhere in [*muffled*].

**Miller:** (26:38) And so did they come so that Mark could be a student?

**Randlett:** (26:42) So that Mike and Mark could be students. The first time Mark ever visited here he was 12 years old.

**Miller:** (26:49) Ok.

**Randlett:** (26:50) He came to visit, but then they moved. And I'm saying it's the mid '80s. And then we had both Mark and Mike were very active. And Mike still plays in the church orchestra right now.

**Miller:** (27:03) And, and Mark was he, you know...I, I know him as a comedian and, and kind of secondary...was he more of a singer or...

**Randlett:** (27:11) Mark was a very good singer and so, but, now I don't think Mark ever traveled with any of our ministry teams because Mark has always been kind of an individual. And so he, he would do his own, cause even when he came here he'd been, at 12 years of age he was, he was a soloist.

**Miller:** (27:29) Now you mentioned Jim Moon as being a song leader. Who else have been some of the congregational song leaders?

**Randlett:** (27:36) It would have been Jim or Don Norman.

**Miller:** (27:39) Ok.

**Randlett:** (27:40) Right.

**Miller:** (27:41) And then, now...

**Randlett:** (27:42) Now before that, it was like Jim Soward and this would have been pre 1971.

**Miller:** (27:48) And so can we just try to trace the congregational song leaders up to Charles Billingsley today?

**Randlett:** (27:54) Alright, we can do that. Like I said it was Jim Moon and Don Norman for years. When Don left I did all but the opening song for probably three or

four years and after and I think Robby came in about 1975 or '76 and Robby then became the congregational leader, the stage person. I did the choir for one more year under Robby and then Robby took over at that point. Robby stayed for a while and then Robby went out on his own again and Mike Speck came in at that point, and we had Mike Speck and the Speck trio. And then when Mike left we were uh...we had Charles came in.

**Miller:** (28:41) And now Doug Oldham then didn't ever lead congregation...

**Randlett:** (28:42) No, no.

**Miller:** (28:43) he was just a soloist.

**Randlett:** (28:44) He was just a soloist.

**Hall:** (28:45) Now Doug Oldham uh...he traveled a bit and later, of course, he was at PTL.

**Randlett:** (28:50) Right.

**Hall:** (28:51) But what is the sequence here. Was he here in the early days?

**Randlett:** (28:55) Alright, he was here through '73 maybe '74. Then he went out. And I'm not sure when Doug and Laura Lee returned but it was after the PTL days. But he would come in periodically and do special things but he was not, he was not a staff soloist at that point but, now back in the mid '70s when we were doing the traveling with Dr. Falwell and we would, you know, Doug would do some of that.

**Miller:** (29:26) For a typical Sunday, and I've kind of asked the question around a couple different ways so, for the music for a Sunday, would they hand that to Dr. Falwell and say "this is what we're doing this week" or, or...

**Randlett:** (29:41) Yes.

**Miller:** (29:42) did he have a part in saying "this is what I'd like you to do"...

**Randlett:** (29:45) No.

**Miller:** (29:46) Did he leave it to the professionals? *[laughter]*

**Randlett:** (29:47) He left it up to them and most of them had their own repertoire. And they would do music from their own repertoire.

**Miller:** (29:55) And...

**Randlett:** (29:56) And it's amazing the Holy Spirit would lead and things would just come together.

**Miller** (29:59) It would be his message but they didn't talk about it before hand it was just that it seemed to fit well with the message that he...

**Randlett:** (30:05) Well remember, Dr. Falwell was a master at, at taking whatever was in front of him and making it fit. He was, you know, I mean he was the same thing at the end of the service, I mean, no matter what sermon he preached, he could go into an invitation that was terribly meaningful because he, again, was a master with that. I mean God had just equipped him in such a way.

**Hall:** (30:27) Now for a while there the Pantana family was singing quite often.

**Randlett:** (30:30) Oh, yes, they were here, cause they were, were local but they traveled a bit on their own but then we would use them, I'm not sure if it was like once every two months they were, they were kind of on a regular, you know, type of a schedule.

**Hall:** (30:43) They are ever on the paid staff at this point?

**Randlett:** (30:45) No, no they were not staff.

**Hall** (30:47) Just volunteers.

**Randlett:** (30:48) Now, when I say they weren't staff, they weren't Thomas Road staff. Some of them taught at LU.

**Hall:** (30:53) Yes.

**Miller:** (30:54) Now, it seems as though music in general there was a switch from the old style music...you know, there was a time at, at Thomas Road Baptist Church and LU that they were almost more if we can use the phrase "Bob Jones-like" in their music and then they went to the more contemporary sound and you also saw going from we've got a single song leader standing out front waving his hands and leading the music to more of a worship and praise team. Can you talk about that evolution at Thomas Road in the philosophy of music in the contemporary music versus the more traditional music?

**Randlett:** (31:34) Well the change came with Charles Billingsly. Up to that point it was still a quote song leader mentality rather than a worship leader mentality. But with Charles came the worship leader style and that, of course, a lot of the other churches around the country were transitioning in that direction as well. Now, as far as the style of music, we progressed over the years. Again, when I first came here, it was choir, piano, and organ. Then we went to the recorded tracks which took you into another venue

completely where you had a full orchestration behind you. Then we added a live orchestra as well at that point but that again you were doing a different style than doing straight hymn book straight up and down things and so we, we moved, we were moving right along. In fact, at times we had our detractor saying “you know your, your moving too fast, you know we don’t want that style of music in the church.” But remember, it was called the Old Time Gospel Hour and my personal philosophy at that point was that the choir should be the representative of the old time gospel style of music. So it would be hymn tune arrangements, gospel song arrangements those kinds of things. And we let the soloists and the smaller ensembles do what would be considered more contemporary. But then of course the choir came along with it so we, we have constantly changed I think for the better and leading the congregation on. But it’s always been a slow process, you know, change is always hard.

**Hall:** (33:17) Dr. Falwell have any preference as to one or the other style of music?

**Randlett:** (33:22) Whatever worked. [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (33:23) Ok. [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (33:24) Again, Dr. Falwell really liked the big ballad. You know, he, he liked that, you know, again, they aren’t [*muffled*] they’re just big, full ballad sounds. And it could be a hymn tune, it could be a newly composed Gaither tune or in the early days John Peterson, you know, Dotty Rambo, you know, those kinds of things. We were, we were there uh...Lanny Wolf tunes, those kind of things, and those were, those were the writers of the day by the way. Again, in the ‘50s it was John Peterson then the Gaithers came along in the early ‘60s and they were kind of the stock and trade and everybody sang Gaither music but they would be arranged by various arrangers and we had our arrangers like, like Don Marsh and Dave Williamson and Cam Kirkland and those guys but...

**Miller:** (34:16) Now Don Marsh was in Nashville...

**Randlett:** (34:17) Right.

**Miller:** (34:18) and now he’s since then come...

**Randlett:** (34:20) Now he’s here.

**Miller:** (34:22) here and he’s on staff here then.

**Hall:** (34:24) Did he do some of the arranging back then too?

**Randlett:** (34:26) I didn't...Don arranged, Don arranged...I met Don when I was teaching in Nashville and we struck up a friendship there and we used him over the years for, for many projects. He, he worked with us on our traveling shows, our Christmas music, he's just been kind of a good friend that we would hire to do the arranging that we wanted to have done.

**Miller:** (34:46) In the old 701 Thomas Road building there was a pipe organ, right?

**Randlett:** (34:50) There was a combination organ. Alright, it was both electronic and had nine ranks of wind blown pipes.

**Miller:** (34:57) Ok.

**Randlett:** (34:58) It wasn't a complete...

**Miller:** (34:59) It wasn't a full...

**Randlett:** (35:00) pipe organ.

**Miller:** (35:01) pipe organ? And is there a pipe organ in the new auditorium?

**Randlett:** (35:04) No. It's all electronic.

**Miller:** (35:05) It's all electronic but there, there is organ capability I guess, I've never heard.

**Randlett:** (35:09) Oh yeah, yes, yes the organ uh...alright, you hear the organ mainly today at weddings and funerals although it's playing along with the band on a regular basis, it just becomes a member of the band, not a feature. But when we have communion, you know, those kinds of services, when we have weddings and funerals I, it, it's the main instrument. And then of course on Wednesday nights in the play chapel, we use only piano and organ and Dr. Borland on violin.

**Miller:** (35:42) And so can you give us some idea of, as far as the years, when did you go from mainly piano and organ to the tracks to then the live orchestra that you have provided, any idea on kind of range of years?

**Randlett:** (35:57) Oh yeah. Wow...

**Miller:** (35:59) Asking the tough questions today. *[laughter]*

**Randlett:** (36:01) Alright, in '73 when I came, I would say for the first two years maybe three years we did mainly piano and organ. Then we, we started doing, doing track from

that point on and then somewhere in there we added live orchestra to the track and then, you know, it's gone from there.

**Miller:** (36:22) And, so, before we leave some, some people and all, did you have an influence, did LU or Thomas Road, on the careers of some nationally known musicians uh...Guy Penrod, talk about him.

**Randlett:** (36:41) Alright, [*clears throat*] alright, in 1975 uh...I, I formed a student group. They were called the Enpsalms, and that's e, n, p, s, a, l, m, s. And it was a group similar to the LBC Chorale and the LBC Chorale was always Dr. Falwell's feature group and they traveled with him. They traveled with him until 1980. In 1980, the Enpsalms became what we now know as the Sounds of Liberty, same group just changed the name. And then we would use...we would recruit, how shall I put it, I guess, we would recruit for that group because that was a scholarship group. And that was a pretty good thing if you could get a full scholarship. But we had to have your full attention. If, once you were on the Sounds of Liberty, you couldn't have a part time job because you were on call. Any time Dr. Falwell needed to have the college group with him, they had to be available to go. Now, in the early '80s, this big tall boy from New Mexico, Hobbs, New Mexico came in and visited the campus with his dad who was a pastor there and had known Dr. Falwell. Well that's, that was Guy Penrod. And we've had over the years guys, people like Guy who were in the Sounds of Liberty as their training. And because we did recording for the Nashville companies...when I say that, they would have...they would be putting out projects uh...publication projects and they had to have a demo of it. They would bring it to Lynchburg and in our studio at 701 Thomas Road, the Nashville producers would come in, they would have already recorded the background tracks for it and we would use the Sounds of Liberty as a studio group at that point to record their demo projects for them. What did we get out of it? We got the use of that music we recorded. We could put it out on our own label. We could take it and sell it on the tables. And so we benefitted from it but also Nashville didn't have to hire musicians to record it. And because those kids were of that caliber, and I'm bragging on them but these kids had to be able to come into a studio and almost sight read the music and do the recordings at a professional level. So we had to recruit students who had that kind of talent and those kind of voices. And out of those groups came people like Guy Penrod, Stephanie Hall, Chuck Sullivan, Dave Gallagher. They all went on because Nashville producers heard them, when they graduated, they went to Nashville and they became part of the scene in Nashville. They, they had jobs. They, some of them ended up traveling. Some with groups like The Spears and those kinds of things.

**Miller:** (39:47) When you talk about the studio at Thomas Road, now there's the choir loft in the auditorium, was there a separate studio that would hold how many people?

**Randlett:** (39:57) Alright, the studio at Thomas Road was just behind the choir loft. And we had a fairly small engineering booth and we could get about twelve people in the studio. Probably we could set up four mics with about no more than three around a microphone in there. Now, to do the choir, we actually did that in the choir loft because we were right there behind it. We were hardwired to the auditorium and we would then record in the choir loft. And to communicate with the booth, we had flow circuit TV to talk back and forth.

**Miller:** (40:32) And is there a studio in the new Thomas Road building?

**Randlett:** (40:35) Yes there is. There is.

**Miller:** (40:37) And, so now, just a curiosity question, Guy's hair. Did, did he ever have short hair when you were there?

**Hall:** (40:44) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (40:45) [*laughter*] Oh yeah. His persona took on, the one that you see now, after he left here obviously. But remember, Guy came from New Mexico. He was a cowboy to begin with. I mean this is not some, you know, phony get up. This is the real Guy Penrod.

**Miller:** (41:03) And um...when um...well I forgot what I was going to say. Let's, let's, Toby Mac, talk about him.

**Randlett:** (41:14) Alright, well again, those guys were never part of Thomas Road Baptist Church. They were, they were Liberty. But, you know, Mike Tate was...alright we go back to the Tates. Linda came first, his sister. And Linda, again, was never part of a group but she was a fine soloist and she would always tell me "Dr. Randlett, Dr. Randlett, you got to hear my little brother. He's a whole lot better than I am. He's a whole lot better than I am." And they, they came here from Washington D.C. Well when Mike came on the scene, of course, Mike is Mike. And again, he was an individual. He put together a group with Kevin and Toby and Mike became DC Talk. But they were, again, they put that, that was LU. Rarely were they at Thomas Road. But they would go over to Dr. Falwell's backyard and gather around his pool and Jonathon Falwell was friends with them so they were close to the ministry but they were basically on their own.

**Miller:** (42:14) Was there ever a time when there was a group who wouldn't have been approved by the school because their music was too contemporary?

**Randlett:** (42:21) Of course. [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (42:22) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (42:23) And I would have been one of them. [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (42:23) [*laughter*] That would have been...ok, so at that time in the evolution of the school, their music was a little too cutting edge for Liberty itself.

**Randlett:** (42:33) Well, it was too cutting edge maybe, maybe for Thomas Road.

**Miller:** (42:38) Ok.

**Randlett:** (42:39) Of course the students always loved it. But remember, the students are always to the left of their parents.

**Miller:** (42:43) And I do remember what I was going to ask you. When it came to the Sounds of Liberty, today, don't they recruit as juniors and seniors in high school and they go out and serve, they serve their stint as fulltime musicians and then come and kind of get the scholarship that they earned. Isn't that how they do it today?

**Randlett:** (43:03) Well...not really. Alright, we do recruit but we usually recruit out of, out of high schools. Alright, and they're here because they're undergraduate students. And even back then, I mean, at College for a Weekend, we would have tryouts that would go on forever because again they...we wanted to see what the talent is and we would every now and then get one or two that would be of the quality that we would want for the Sounds of Liberty, for life singers, Youth Quest, for uh...for Exodus, for those kinds of things. I mean that's where we really find the talent, in those, in those auditions. And sometimes we would have it uh...we would find it in the churches. One that we found in the church was Jody McBrayer who went on to sing with Truth and Avalon. Well we were in Florida and Jody's high school choir director brought him to our concert. And he said "I got a boy I think you want to hear." So we heard him and said "you better believe we want to hear him." And we recruited Jody and Jody was with us for about two and a half years. He went on from there and sang with Truth, then he went on from Truth to uh...they formed the group Avalon and he was with Avalon for many years.

**Miller:** (44:17) Sherri Falwell...

**Randlett:** (44:18) She was with the LBN singers. Now that was...that was another track. The LBN singers were brought in as a semiprofessional group. And uh...and they had...and that's really where we started to go to having a, the small band concept rather than the orchestra concept. With the LBN had their instrumentalists and their singers and they were really good. And they took us from the real traditional, I mean, they were the contemporary leaders for us.

**Hall:** (44:55) Now who was...

**Randlett:** (44:56) And Sherry was part of it.

**Hall:** (44:57) It's sort of, it's confusing here. You got so many different groups but they're all the same group with different names. What about the Chorale?

**Randlett:** (45:03) The Chorale phased out in 1980 when the Sounds of Liberty came in.

**Hall:** (45:07) Ok.

**Randlett:** (45:08) Alright? And then but we still had the Sounds of Liberty, we had Light Singers, who were mainly missions, we had Youth Quest, which was youth, then we had the road teams and we would put, we would...some kids would drop out of school for a year. And then they would, we had two teams that would go on the road and they were the LBC singers and they went on the road and were literally on the road for 12 months. Then they'd come back and they would get a full scholarship when they came back.

**Miller:** (45:37) Ok, I guess that's the ones I was thinking of. But quite a few of the groups, they were going to class Monday through Friday or something but they might have weekend things that they were doing...

**Randlett:** (45:45) Oh they were always on the road on the weekends, yes. The Sounds of Liberty would have been the only ones that would have been home on weekends and we had the privilege of being gone one weekend a month. Other than that we were here and had to be available for Sunday morning at 11 o'clock, we had to be available for Sunday morning at 10 o'clock; we had to be available for Sunday night. They were a staple ensemble.

**Hall:** (46:10) Are these all related to the church or to the school?

**Randlett:** (46:13) Uh huh. [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (46:14) [*laughter*] So both?

**Randlett:** (46:15) It was both sure. In those days there was, there was a very gray line between the church and the school. I mean the school was academic but as far as sharing talent and, and being involved, we were all one big happy family.

**Miller:** (46:32) And what about the convocation services at Liberty University and the music for those?

**Randlett:** (46:37) Well that's an interesting question. Alright, the early days I lead it and I was traditional and that's when we were still singing hymns and even had hymn books for convocation.

**Miller:** (46:53) Hmm.

**Randlett:** (46:54) And we met in the Schilling Center, alright. Then, you know, after a while, you know, the school was going a little beyond my comfort zone and we had several students who would lead who were very fine early worship leaders. You know, an Eric Lovett that, I mean, those, but uh...the first band at LU was the Sounds of Liberty band. We formed a band and before that, I mean, they had somebody playing the piano. And so the first band in the Vines Center would have been the Sounds band that would double as the convocation band and from there then they started, remember musicians recruit musicians. So when you have a good band, good musicians from out there will say "oh, I want to go to that school. There's a band there. I want to play there." And it's like athletes. Good athletes recruit good athletes.

**Hall:** (47:52) So about when did the band start?

**Randlett:** (47:55) This would have been in the early '90s, in the early '90s.

**Miller:** (48:01) You don't remember what hymn book they used to use?

**Randlett:** (48:04) The earliest hymn book was called *Living Hymns*, I believe it was. It was one that had been edited by Al Smith. And then we went from that to the *First Word Hymnal*, the gray hymnal and use, used that. And of course today we use everything on the screen, except on Wednesday nights. And if you come to Thomas Road and go to the Pate Chapel service on Wednesday nights, we still use hymnals, piano, and organ there. It's the traditional service for those who, that's their comfort zone.

**Hall:** (48:38) Since you mentioned Al Smith, [*not understandable*], he...I remember him coming here...

**Randlett:** (48:43) Right.

**Hall:** (48:44) but he was never part of the ministry nor paid staff.

**Randlett:** (48:47) No, no. He, he was just a guest artist. Right.

**Miller:** (48:51) And do you remember when the words started going on the screens at the old Thomas Road?

**Randlett:** (48:57) It happened while Mike Speck was here. He was instrumental in getting the big screens put up and going into that area. So that would have been maybe uh...late '90s.

**Hall:** (49:10) '90s.

**Miller:** (49:11) Tell us a little bit about the history of the Old Time Gospel Hour trio then. And then when did they become a quartet?

**Randlett:** (49:20) You know uh...I've al, they were always a trio. And they didn't, the Old Time Gospel Hour quartet was a totally different animal. The, the trio was always know as, Robbie, Don, and Mac. And right, then when, when Mac passed away, and Don left, and uh...so when Robbie came back, he formed the Old Time Gospel Hour quartet. And he had uh...you know, three, well two of the guys were local. Robbie was local. Then their first bass, Christian, he was a, a student that was recruited, a really fine bass. And that's how the quartet came about.

**Hall:** (50:10) Now didn't, did they travel a whole lot or?

**Randlett:** (50: 12) They traveled on their own for a while. Yeah. But they were also here. And Dr. Falwell liked quartet music and Robbie liked quartet music...

**Hall:** (50:20) Were they paid staff?

**Randlett:** (50:22) They were paid staff. They were.

**Hall:** (50:24) Oh, ok.

**Randlett:** (50:25) And when they weren't on the, on the road, they had assignments. They had work assignments here, here at the church in various departments.

**Hall:** (50:31) Let's go back and talk about the tree a little bit since that's been very important throughout the years. The first tree was what?

**Randlett:** (50:39) The first tree was 1971. And uh...

**Hall:** (50:42) Just before you came.

**Randlett:** (50:43) Paul DeSaegher brought that concept from the West coast. He came here...

**Hall:** (50:47) Ok.

**Randlett:** (50:48) in '71 and the first Christmas trees were down in the L.A. area. Well maybe that wasn't the first but the first ones that we knew about. So he brought the concept here in '71 and he directed 1971, '72, and '73. I came in '73 and I, I helped him in '73. He left at the end of that and I had it on my own from '74 through '95.

**Hall:** (51:20) Oh, ok. So you was the music director but did you direct everything, I mean the planning part?

**Randlett:** (51:24) I was the producer director right.

**Hall:** (51:27) Ok.

**Randlett:** (51:28) But, so I had complete control over all the music but the drama in the early days it was Toby Anne Davis who taught speech at LU and she did some of the drama portions of it for several years before they left and returned to California. And then David Allison became very close working partner with me and, and David directed the dramas, he wrote some of the dramas and, you know, he handled all that onstage drama and choreography and blocking assignments, uh...costuming that portion went to him in that portion but I handled uh...the buck stopped here. You know, I had to make decisions.

**Miller:** (52:16) In those early days, did they have a full blown drama? Was there always a story along with it or was it just a choir presentation?

**Randlett:** (52:24) No [*sighs*]. Alright, '74 and '74 it was basically music vignettes. You may have a reading. You may have a monologue, those kinds of things. But then, we then went from there to actually having a storyline that went through it so that everything kind of fit and the music would fit the story line. And sometimes it was one that we had borrowed the script and embellished it or sometimes it was homegrown and we had some really fine, the first fully homegrown script we used was I think 1986 and the concept was Robbie Hiner and Angie Hunt actually scripted it. And that would have been, I think it was called *Love Brought a Miracle*. Yep that would have been '86. But now, it went back and forth because after you do a drama for a while, then you say "well let's go back and let's just use variety show format." So then you would do it Radio City style where you had, you know, a group and then you'd move on and do another group so you might have one in Elizabethan style then you might have one Santa Clause, 1940's, you know.

**Miller:** (53:48) Did you ever get criticized for having Santa Clauses?

**Randlett:** (53:51) Oh of course.

**Miller:** (53:52) [*laughter*]

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

**Randlett:** (53:54) But I was always careful in those days. We would use multiple Santa Clauses always onstage and explain in the script, and it would fit in and go, you know we, in fact we had a song that was said “which one is the real one?” And we’d have 20 Santas on, on stage and it would explain, you know, well Gimbel’s had a Santa, Macy’s had a Santa, Penny’s had a Santa, you know, which one’s real. So that, again, kids would get the idea, you know, Santa Clause is not Jesus. And so we didn’t portray and we would have Santas coming down the aisle in a sleigh and they’d be throwing candy to the kids in the song and you know it was a fun time.

**Miller:** (54:38) Now every year’s production was different...

**Randlett:** (54:41) Brand new.

**Miller:** (54:42) You never did the same thing from year...

**Randlett:** (54:44) Well we didn’t do the same...we used the same theme twice. We repeated a show twice. But some of the favorite music would be repeated just like I mean you want to hear something that you like. That’s why you buy CD’s. That’s why you buy MP3’s. You want to hear good stuff...

**Miller:** (55:00) Would you ever come back five years later and do the same thing again or you just kind of move along?

**Randlett:** (55:04) We did it twice. And it was always harder to do it the second time because everybody remembered the first time. It’s kind of like seeing *The Sound of Music* without Julie Andrews.

**Hall:** (55:18) [laughter]

**Randlett:** (55:19) [laughter] You know, it’s not the same.

**Hall:** (55:20) Yeah. When did it first start to be televised?

**Randlett:** (55:23) That would have been...I think, again, it would have been late ‘80s. It’s when, it’s when LBN moved from Charlotte and a lot of their staff joined ours at that point and we, we had their expertise and it was, they were a tremendous help. And so we, we started recording it. There are videos I think back probably about as far as ‘86 I think.

**Miller:** (55:53) Prior to that time, they, they did have some that were on phonograph records, did you record them every year on records or cassettes?

**Randlett:** (55:59) Sometimes it was recorded live, I mean. [*Laughter*] And sometimes we did a prerecording so that we could sell it. Yeah.

**Miller:** (56:08) When did they first have a light program?

**Randlett:** (56:10) Well the light's another story. It evolved. When I first came we had the big C-7 lights, five colors, strung across every tier of the tree and we had I think nine tiers on the tree going up so and they were...so there were five colors across. And we had a light board, like you would have your light switch at home, we had five switches and the guy would sit down there and he would just...

**Hall:** (56:32) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (56:33) to the, time the music, he would just flick the lights on and off in combinations. But it was just terribly manual. Then the next phase, one of the fellows who had been our sound tech, with the Sounds of Liberty, he and his brother-in-law came up with a, a system where it was more complex than that but still similar. It still had the five colored lights, the big lights on the tree. Then we heard of a church in Buffalo, New York that was using small lights and they were actually covering the whole tree with the lights in segments. And so you may have, across the tree, seven segments around and they would line up uh...and so you would then to control them. And so we uh...Don Schofield went up with us. We flew up and looked at their system. And he came back and with some of his fellows, they devised the original system and Richard Barnhart from the computer department here at, at LU and the students they wrote a cobalt program for the lights. And then but it was still not tied to the music physically. Richard Barnhart or one of his students, they would sit back at the computer, on the spacebar, and they would tap the space bar in time to the music as you were going and that would then activate the lights on the tree with the various programs. But it was still manual and because you were tapping it was just slightly behind, not much. Well then several years after that Jon Daggett called me. And John had come up with a system and he had lights outside of his house. And he said, "I'd like you to come over a see, see my lights." Well I went over and John had it, he had it all programmed to the music and it was tied to the actual tape music...

**Miller:** (58:36) The, the waveform of the music.

**Randlett:** (58:38) Yeah, right. And so I mean he just flipped a switch and it went automatically. I said "wow," I said "we need that for the Christmas tree." And so it was the next year and the Barharts moved from here so it was a good transition at that point. In fact, Barnharts took the control system and they're living in Indiana now, they still have it and they use it for the lights in their front yard.

**Hall:** (59:03) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (59:04) But John came up with this system and, and he developed it over the years we put the boxes on the tree and the program and all and it went from there and he's still developing it every year. He has it commercially where he offers it publically to other churches and whatever use. But, so now it's, it's all tied into the music itself.

**Hall:** (59:26) Which is the most memorable tree?

**Randlett:** (59:30) [*laughter*] That's like saying "who's your favorite child." [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (59:32) [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (59:33)[*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (59:34) You know, Dr. Hall, uh...

**Hall:** (59:38) Any one in particular standout?

**Randlett:** (59:39) I, I don't...no uh...not really. I mean we had some that we had some incidents that were interesting but you know...

**Miller:** (59:50) Share. [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (59:51) the year. Well, about the last year we, we had, Robbie and I were doing it together, and we rented some live camels. And they weren't real big but they fit into the old Thomas Road and come down the aisle well. One night going up on the stage, on the ramp, the one camel stepped into the orchestra.

**Hall:** (1:00:13) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:00:14) Just one foot but uh...and then we also tried one year with a small pony and a pony cart, live. And we used the pony, you know, and the man said "he's used to crowds, he's used to noise, nothing's going to bother him" and we tried it the first weekend and the pony got spooked and he wouldn't do what we needed him to do so we just said "thank you, we'll pay you for the second weekend but we're just not...it's not going to work." Because Dianna [Canovits] was supposed to ride in the pony cart and sing *White Christmas*. She was petrified. [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (1:00:47) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:00:48) So, you know, we did with things like that, that you know, we would try uh...now as far as memorable, and I don't know if this is memorable good or memorable questionable...

**Hall:** (1:01:02) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:01:03) but we had one program that we called *White Christmas*. And so we changed the tree from greens to white covering, which was again, it, it's the greens but you can buy it in colors and white so we did the whole tree in white and it looked like a giant wedding cake. [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (1:01:25) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:01:26) And we tried low voltage lighting. Alex [Vonsaire] said "let's try low voltage lighting." So we did. Well, they really weren't bright enough though. They were too muted to really be awesome. But it was a beautiful sight; it just wasn't a spectacular sight.

**Miller:** (1:01:45) And now what about choreography with people kind of moving around...

**Randlett:** (1:01:50) Oh, well now you're going... [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:01:52) Dr. Falwell, you know "the only dancing that's allowed here at Liberty is to go to the Sweet 16 for the NC double A," or something like that.

**Randlett:** (1:01:59) When did it change? [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:02:02) When did that change?

**Randlett:** (1:02:03) Alright well, it changed in the mid '90s and we had a couple on the Sounds of Liberty who were just fine dancers. She had been trained, he had been trained, in fact, he's on Broadway now. But uh...and uh...we had some selections where they would just do a very innocent waltz on, onstage, you know, those kinds of things but, I mean, nothing like we have now with, you know, the stomp routine, you know, those kinds of things.

**Hall:** (1:02:33) Yeah.

**Randlett:** (1:02:34) But it started with that and it was "[*gasp*] They're dancing. Oh my goodness. What are we going to do?" You know? But it was, again, very innocent and then we just kind of progressed, you know, you're not trying to push the boundaries but you're pushing the boundaries little by little and if you do it gentle enough uh...now people don't think a thing of it.

**Miller:** (1:02:56) When did you start charging a fee for the Living Christmas Tree?

**Randlett:** (1:03:01) I can't give you the date. I can just give you the timeline. For a while we would just pass the hat and get an offering. But we didn't start charging because of, we wanted money. But because we had no way to control the crowds, uh...Saturdays have always been a big day for outsiders and for bus tours to come in. Well we got to the point where at times we would have to turn a bus or two away that drove hours to get here because the auditorium was overfilled. And we said "we have to be able to control the crowds." And free tickets don't do a thing because people take them and then they don't show up whatever. So I met with Dr. Falwell and Mrs. Falwell one afternoon. We went to lunch downtown and I, and I gave him the idea. I said "we want to charge three dollars a ticket." And I told him why we wanted to be able to control, know who's coming on what nights. Now remember, when the Tree started, it was three performances; Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday night.

**Miller:** (1:04:11) Just one weekend?

**Randlett:** (1:04:12) One weekend, that's the way it started. Then we went from there to doing five. We did Friday night, Saturday matinee, Saturday night, Sunday matinee, and Sunday night. Then we went from there to doing two weekends that way. So it, it expanded. But, the crowds also expanded. And we needed to be able to know who was coming when. So we originally started with a three dollar ticket and we had some local people that said "well, I want to come to my church and I'm not going to pay to come, come to my church." You know and because, again, so what uh...you can come on uh...no they, what was it they...oh they said "I'm not going to pay to come to my church on Sunday." Because we, we had tickets on Sunday. Well we said "well we do have another option though. There is a service at Liberty University and that's part of Thomas Road and that's free. You can go to church there Sunday night." You know but no everybody had to have a ticket. And it went from there from then we had three and five dollar tickets. The under the balcony and on the sides was a three dollar ticket. The good seats were five dollar tickets. Well, what happens? Nobody wanted to buy the three dollar tickets. So, we ended up saying "ok, they're all five dollars now."

**Hall:** (1:05:30) *[laughter]*

**Randlett:** (1:05:31) So we went from there. Then it just gradually went from there...then, and those were just guaranteed to get into the auditorium. Then somewhere along the way we went to actually numbering the pews. We actually measured out 19 inches and every 19 inches we put a number down and we had rows and numbers and people then had guaranteed seating. You bought a ticket and that was your seat. And that was with pews and of course when we moved up here we had the individual seats then.

**Miller:** (1:06:01) Now was the Living Christmas Tree the only thing they ever charged for at Thomas Road or did they have other paid concerts there in those earlier years?

**Randlett:** (1:06:10) I don't remember any paid concerts at that time. There may have been if Liberty did something but the church didn't have any paid concerts.

**Miller:** (1:06:22) And when did the city start charging then a tax for...

**Randlett:** (1:06:24) [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:06:25) the Christmas Tree [*laughter*] and what were the repercussions of that?

**Randlett:** (1:06:27) Well I'm the one that got in trouble the first time [*laughter*].

**Hall:** (1:06:29) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:06:30) I didn't even know you were supposed to pay any entertainment tax and I got a bill. I said "what in the world is this?" because we didn't have that built into the tickets. He says "no, you're charging for a performance." And so I mean I went, and I knew the city treasurer at that, that time, and I said, "look, E.C. Glass doesn't pay a tax on it" and I went down all these high schools and I said "why do we as a church..." Well, because E.C. Glass is under the city budget. Well I, I lost my argument and so we had to start paying this, I think it's five percent, entertainment tax. And it's there today.

**Miller:** (1:07:12) I thought it was seven percent.

**Randlett:** (1:07:13) Maybe it seven.

**Hall:** (1:07:14) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:07:15) I don't know what it is no but whatever it was we had to pay it. And...

**Miller:** (1:07:17) But, but uh...so...

**Randlett:** (1:07:18) in the first years, we didn't even build it into the price. Now we're saying, "ok the ticket," I'm just here...

**Miller:** (1:07:22) Ticket is 10 dollars, 70 cent tax or whatever.

**Randlett:** (1:07:24) 10 dollar...yeah, right.

**Miller:** (1:07:26) And, so now, did Dr., that bother Dr. Falwell to have to?

**Randlett:** (1:07:29) He [*sighs*], I don't think it did. You know, Dr. Falwell's always been render to Ceasar what belongs to Ceasar.

**Miller:** (1:07:35) Before we leave the Christmas Tree, I've, I've read that, that for Dr. Falwell, the Living Christmas Tree was something he was really proud of. This was something for, for the city that he could kind of almost showoff Thomas Road in that. Could you address that?

**Randlett:** (1:07:52) This was always his gift to the city; his gift to the city. He wanted, I mean, and, and he loved it and uh...he was very proud of it. In fact he was always very much involved with the production itself. We would talk to him; tell him what we were going to do. And it's not that he dictated anything but he, he always knew ahead of time what it was going to be and who was going to be there. And uh...I think there still doing it, but at one point the second Sunday afternoon was always, always for the invited guests of the Falwells. And that would have been city leaders, uh...

**Miller:** (1:08:33) The mayor.

**Randlett:** (1:08:34) Yeah, yeah. And you know, congressmen. It was a VIP performance. And Dr. Falwell just loved it. Mrs. Falwell loved it. To this day she loves it. I mean it's just they love being gracious and give Lynchburg something that Lynch, that Lynchburg could enjoy.

**Hall:** (1:08:54) When would it start to be called the Virginia Spectacular?

**Randlett:** (1:08:58) The Virginia Spectacular, that was uh...now Scott Bullman is the director of it now and came under once uh...I think once Robbie stopped doing it and Scott started doing it, it became the Virginia Christmas Spectacular.

**Miller:** (1:09:14) Was it that or was it when they moved into the new auditorium?

**Randlett:** (1:09:16) No it was before that.

**Miller:** (1:09:17) It was before that.

**Randlett:** (1:09:08) Yeah, he started using the term back then but now it's the title now.

**Miller:** (1:09:24) Now, it seemed like some early ones that I attended, did Dr. Falwell come to every performance and have kind of a gospel message? Was that his...

**Randlett:** (1:09:34) Every performance, every performance. He was there to open up every performance. He was there to give the invitation every time unless providentially he couldn't be there and several times I had to do, do the invitation and, and the closing.

He was usually there to open even if he had to be called away. But no, this was, this was priority for he and Macel. In fact if you'll see some of the old videos of it, many times he was the brunt of some of the jokes. You know, again, we, we had one fellow here for a while, Richard Dunn, who did this double talk routine. We called him "terzel furkey" and he did this thing and it was funny but part of it was around Dr. Falwell. It would be part of the story line and of course Dr. Falwell just loved being there and he would just sit back there and laugh and smile. I mean, he enjoyed being part of it.

**Miller:** (1:10:34) And um...well has that changed now since his passing? Does Jonathon still...

**Randlett:** (1:10:44) Uh...Jonathon's still there. Oh, Jonathon's there every time, right. But remember, Jonathon has a totally different persona.

**Miller:** (1:10:52) And so, let's switch gears all together now. We've talking about, we've been talking a lot about the Thomas Road ministry, so let's switch over to your Liberty hat.

**Randlett:** (1:11:02) [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (1:11:03) [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:11:04) And since you were hired to come and teach music here...

**Randlett:** (1:11:06) Right.

**Miller:** (1:11:07) So at what point did you become the chairman of the fine arts division at LU?

**Randlett:** (1:11:14) Alright, I came here in the, May of '73. I worked on the staff, teaching, for the first semester of '73 school year. I helped develop the music education curriculum and write the program. But the fellow who was in charge at that time, he left at Christmas time. And I'm not sure I know why and I'm not sure I need to but he was still around and he was a good friend of Vernon Lewis and so I became the temporary head of the music department; the interim head of the music department because my degree was a Master's Degree. Dr. Jim Henry wanted earned doctorates in charge of every program so I was not given the title department chair at that point, I was the interim department chair. Well over the years that, you know, changed but, so, that would have been '74. Then we moved to the mountain, when in '76? Is that right? Is that when we...

**Hall:** (1:12:29) '77.

**Randlett:** (1:12:30) '77, ok. And we built, then, what is now the fine arts department building here now at that point and I was a fine arts chairman by that time. Dr. Henry and Dr. G. had given me that title and so I was, I was the head of the music department, the fine arts area. And I'm not sure how long...and I taught various uh...well from the beginning of the first year I was teaching music theory, music history, conducting, I mean you taught it all because there wasn't anybody else. We only had two other faculty members and I was the concert choir director. But then once we moved here we in '76 we started hiring more faculty, hired Ray Locy as band director, Dave Ehmann came in to teach keyboards and Sandy Mathis came in to teach theory and we started building a faculty at that time. So by the time we moved up here we had pretty strong faculty going at that point. My joy has always been the classroom though and not going to meetings, writing policy, doing ten year plans, uh...you know those kinds of things. So I'm not sure at what point I turned the actual operation of the music department over to Dr. Jim Siddons. And Dr. Siddons was, was chairman for a while and then when he left Dr. Ray Locy took over. And both these men, I mean, wonderful, wonderful administrators. I like to teach. I like to talk. I don't like sitting behind a desk coming up with policy, like I said, going to meetings and that kind of thing, so I stepped back at that point and I was teaching the church music courses and conducting. We had experts in each field at that point.

**Hall:** (1:14:23) You mentioned that you helped to design the...

**Randlett:** (1:14:26) Music Ed. Program.

**Hall:** (1:14:27) Well, the building.

**Randlett:** (1:14:28) Oh, the building. Oh yeah.

**Hall:** (1:14:29) What can you tell us...

**Miller:** (1:14:30) Talk about that.

**Hall:** (1:14:31) about that. What did you want in there? [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:14:33) Well, we actually were uh...we were given 28,000 square feet of a metal building. And we designed where the walls went and what the usage was going to be and the auditorium and if they had only build it four feet higher we could have had a second floor on it. [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (1:14:52) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:14:53) But uh...but uh...actually Kim Renas, who was our choral director at that time, and Ray Locy and myself kind of sketched the thing out and nobody told us right or wrong, they just went ahead and built it. [*Laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:15:07) And now let's talk about the purpose of the music program. Where were your graduates going to go? Were they going to be church music pastors or were they going to be teaching music in Christian schools, both of those or?

**Randlett:** (1:15:27) All of that because again we had a very strong, and still do have, a very strong music education program. So we had, they were going into, Dr. Falwell believed in Christian schools but he also believed in populating public schools with Christians. So we were preparing them for that. We had performance degrees and we have people that went from here on to get their masters and doctorates in, in performance or did uh...you know opera, did accompaniment, you know, those kinds of things. So we were preparing them, but then also had, still do have, many who were going into churches but the church segment was only a portion of the education. Not everybody was going there.

**Miller:** (1:16:10) And was it required...did they have certain performance requirements you have to sing certain songs or be in choirs and that? Talk about the requirements for them.

**Randlett:** (1:16:18) Well, the education was what you would call traditional, conservatory approach. Whether you were going to be in a church or teaching in a school or be a performer, you had the same theory courses. You had the same repertoire whether you were going to be singing, I mean you would do, again, your, your classical literature. It wouldn't matter, again, everybody did it. We didn't teach repertoire where you were going to be singing contemporary Christian or Bill Gaither. You did that on your own. When I was doing my masters work, this is kind of a side, in Nashville, the same guys who were playing in the Nashville symphony on weekends were playing fiddle in a country band. And it dawned on me, I said "why can't you be a quality classical musician but still be excellent in doing comfortable church music in an evangelical setting?" You know you can be both. You don't have to be either or.

**Miller:** (1:17:31) I think of Rudy Atwood and he would always practice with the classics and then he would have his beautiful hymn arrangements. And that's what he would practice with is the, is all of the complexities of the classical music and then it would normally just transfer over to...

**Randlett:** (1:17:47) My goal was always, when we would send a ministry music out, for them to go into a community and they would have the respect of the musical community in that town because a lot of times it's "oh, don't worry about that. He's just a church

musician.” Just, well no, no he’s not. I mean this guy can do the Brahms Requiem or he can do country western. Or they could sing *Unclouded Day*. And there’s no, you know, you should be able to do the style of music that you’re performing in an authentic style. You don’t want Gaither to sound like Bach. *[laughter]*

**Hall:** (1:18:26) *[laughter]*

**Miller:** (1:18:28) Now, are, do you consider yourself a musician in, are you an instrumentalist or a soloist or are you mainly a director and teacher?

**Randlett:** (1:18:37) Alright, well my undergraduate degree was in voice. My Masters I measured in low brass. And so when I came out, well when I came out of my undergraduate I had a major in voice and I was a high school band director. Because again, instruments have always been a big part of my, my life, I was always involved so when I came out I wanted to be, I wanted to be a band director even though I was a voice major in undergrad school. When I went from being a band director to Nashville, to teach in a Bible college, there wasn’t an instrumental program. And that’s where I started to hone my choral skills at that point. And so right now I’m very comfortable in front of an orchestra. I mean I, I love orchestral conducting but also I love doing choral. And I’ll do everything from, again, the classics to what you would hear every Sunday morning.

**Miller:** (1:19:38) Talk a little bit about the founding and the evolution of the fine arts division here at Liberty. And even when you were the head of the fine arts division theatre was part of that so broaden that a little bit. Rather than just the music and the church music, talk about the fine arts department here at Liberty if you would.

**Randlett:** (1:19:58) Well I really wasn’t much of a part of that but I can give you a bit of an insight on it. Again, we had, we had a music department and we had a drama department which was actually at that time I believe part of speech and English. I think it was at that point. And then somewhere in that area Dr. Don Garlock was, was here and he, I’m not sure how it moved over, but anyway they formed the division of fine arts. And he was the chairman for a while and then I became chairman of it, I’m not sure again exactly when or how, but again but they were still two separate areas that just had to work with the same building...

**Miller:** (1:20:41) Get along with one another. *[laughter]*

**Randlett:** (1:20:43) The same building and share budgets. But we got along well obviously, you know, because again the auditorium was here in the fine arts building. You know, and so...

**Miller:** (1:20:54) And so right now that theatre is only used for theatre and...

**Randlett:** (1:20:59) Right

**Miller:** (1:21:00) it's their sole domain but was there a time when that was the recital hall for music?

**Randlett:** (1:21:06) No.

Miller: (1:21:07) No.

**Randlett:** (1:21:08) The recital hall for music originally was where the television studio is in the fine arts building now. When you first come in the door immediately on the right there was a wonderful recital hall there. But LBN needed to expand at one point so they said "we will take the choral room" which you know is right there now and they put a stage in there and raised seating and theatrical seats and all and made that not only the choral room but they also made it the performance auditorium, the recital hall. And LBN then took over those spaces down at that end of the building.

**Miller:** (1:21:44) Now there's a smaller room now that was room 100 and now has been named the Doug Oldham uh...

**Randlett:** (1:21:50) Right, that is the, that was where the recital hall moved to.

**Miller:** (1:21:55) Ok. Talk for a little bit about...it seems to me that now there's kind of a fine arts music division where they're teaching music educators and performance and there's the music and worship department that meets over at David's Place. And it seems as though there's really kind of...at one time were those two together and then did they split or? How, how did that happen?

**Randlett:** (1:22:19) Yeah. It kind of started that way and I was gone by that time. I was over at the church full time by that time. But the, yes Ron Giese and I think the early Charles Billingsley days here they were housed in the fine arts building and working there. But then it became I think better for them to, again, develop their curriculum and I'm not sure how that happened. And then when Dr. Whaley came on, I mean, it was then by that time it was two totally different departments. And it seems to be working out well because they do have shared faculty as well.

**Miller:** (1:23:01) Do you still actively teach for LU at all?

**Randlett:** (1:23:05) Only as a guest lecturer.

**Miller:** (1:23:07) Ok. Let's go back then in history, tell us about the I Love America program you were involved with that.

**Randlett:** (1:23:14) [*laughter*] Well of course the original one came on this land where we are now in 1975. A musical was written called *I Love America* and Dr. Falwell wanted to tour the 48 state capitals with this program and do capital step rallies. And so we did the first performance here in 1975. Then we took of course the bicentennial was 1976 and that's what...at that point we had four different musical teams like the Sounds of Liberty, Light singers, etc. there were four teams and they were on their own but then they would come together for the I Love America rallies and they all knew the program and we would do those, we would travel and we had our nice white polyester suits and long gowns and we did the programs uh...traveled, I'm not sure how many states we eventually did but we did that for, was it just one year. Boy, it becomes foggy but I can remember traveling with that and again they were exciting and the crowds would gather. It was a great flag waiving patriotic program.

**Miller:** (1:24:28) Did you travel with the group?

**Randlett:** (1:14:29) Yes.

**Miller:** (1:24:30) Were you um...were there, it sounded like there was more than one group.

**Randlett:** (1:24:35) Alright, I traveled with the main group and my group was in it but there were uh...Randy [Rebold], I don't know if that name has come up, but Randy was a graduate here and he was really talented in staging and what you would call mild choreography. You know, that's hand raising and you know stepping to the left and stepping to the right. And Randy handled that and traveled with us, I handled the musical portion of it, and when we put on the program then Dr. Falwell would get up and speak. And uh...

**Miller:** (1:25:12) Well you see pictures sometimes of Dr. Falwell with Bill Clinton on the steps in Arkansas...

**Randlett:** (1:25:18) I was there. [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:25:19) Ok. So let's take that one as an example, you know, from when you get there tell us how the program went. Was there drama? Was there music? Was there preaching? Can you just go through a typical program of the I Love America program?

**Randlett:** (1:25:35) The I Love America program was a program written program I mean and it was published and sold. So I mean, and so and we used various soloists with it. But it was choral with soloists and even some spoken parts. In the early days, Charles

Hughes would do church triumphant readings, those kinds of things. But again, you'd come into town, and we had several busloads that would come in, you know, have to put them up in a hotel and feed them. We'd come out, we would do the program, sometimes on flat surface, sometimes it was on capital steps, we had all the big sound that went in, you know, hours ahead of us and set it up and they could hear it miles away. And uh...but and usually the local political structure was there like you see the pictures with Bill Clinton. I think he was what, was he 28 years old in that picture, something like that, you know, and I was there on the steps. I didn't shake hands with him at the time but I remember being there in Little Rock, Arkansas. I remember Tallahassee, Florida. It was early spring and it snowed in Tallahassee, Florida we were there in those long dresses...

**Hall:** (1:26:50) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:26:51) and, and white suits and the kids were freezing but the show must go on. Remember South Dakota, went in, remember Montana, oh my goodness, and again [*laughter*] we went, one of the memorable things that didn't have to do with the program, it had to do with travel. We'd been uh...well actually it did have to do...we were in Phoenix. And there was a theatre in Phoenix that was a theatre in the round. And it also had a rotating stage. You don't do a proscenium program on a rotating, round stage. So it took about three hours to choreograph the stage into two groups, one facing one way and one facing the other way doing mirrored productions on that stage as it turned. And it was very interesting. It did work. But then when we left there we were heading for San Diego which is about an eight hour drive. And we had two tractor trailers, we had the buses with the students on, then we also had the DC3 and Dr. Falwell, you know, it would hold about 20 folk. And the DC3 was not known for its speed. Well we took off from there and they took off on land. And there was such a headwind going and the DC3 couldn't go real fast, it was discouraging when we'd look down and our trucks and buses were pulling away from us.

**Hall:** (1:28:17) [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:28:18) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:28:19) Eventually we got up high enough where we could get some forward motion.

**Miller:** (1:28:26) And now, did you, did you work with local churches...

**Randlett:** (1:28:32) Yes.

**Miller:** (1:28:33) at all?

**Randlett:** (1:28:34) Yes.

**Miller:** (1:28:35) And, and how about the local, was the Moral Majority active with this at all or?

**Randlett:** (1:28:28) Alright, this was pre-Moral Majority, alright. But this was when they were again, we would have a, an advance team go in. And they would have banquets and meetings and all and get all this stuff set up ahead of time. So when that crowd came, it wasn't just because we ran an ad in the paper.

**Miller:** (1:28:55) And so you had promoted it all, was, was this just a net expense for Liberty? You talk about hotel rooms and thing like that, did they ask for contributions or this was the gift to the states or how did that work?

**Randlett:** (1:29:08) Usually they got the support from the banquets, not from the rallies.

**Miller:** (1:29:13) Tell us about the banquets.

**Randlett:** (1:29:14) Well these would have gone on ahead of time; weeks ahead of time. And it would have been again, Dr. Falwell would have gone in. And then we had, you know, some fellows that worked for us in these areas uh...Duke Westover was involved at that point. Bill Faulkner was involved at that point. We had professionals in that area who knew what they were doing in going in and uh...

**Miller:** (1:29:34) And so they would come in and say "we're going to come and we're going to minister to this area. We need support to bring in the team and would you support, this is going to be a great outreach type thing. Now, did Dr. Falwell preach for...

**Randlett:** (1:29:45) Oh yes, he would preach at the banquet he would then also would have his message at the rally. And this was the rallying cry for conservative government.

**Miller:** (1:29:57) So now the students who were in the I Love America program, were they missing all their classes back then or did you schedule it so that...

**Randlett:** (1:30:03) It was scheduled so that they didn't miss a whole lot of class. You know, again, and if you got in at 3 o'clock in the morning, you still went to class the next morning at 8 o'clock.

**Miller:** (1:30:15) And um...

**Randlett:** (1:30:16) Now remember, some of this was done summers because you couldn't do all that lengthy travel.

**Miller:** (1:30:21) And especially, you don't want to be going to the capital steps in Minnesota in...[*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:30:24) Right, right. [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (1:30:26) [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:30:27) in the, in the winter time there so. Ok...

**Hall:** (1:30:30) Did you have any, what about such things, special things, like Super Conference? Did you...

**Randlett:** (1:30:34) Oh, Super Conferences were always a, you know, big, big event and with big events Dr. Falwell wanted big things. So I was always tasked with the job of having a mega choir put together of Thomas Road people and LU people to, again, be there. And we usually brought it guest artists but we also would feature our own and Sounds of Liberty and our smaller groups as well.

**Hall:** (1:30:58) Did you have anything to do with the Baptist Fundamentalism '84?

**Randlett:** (1:31:02) I was the musical director for BF '84. When we, again, met in the Convention Center in Washington D.C. and we put together about a 700 voice choir for that with, again, all these churches coming in and I'm not sure how many different colleges they combined at that point but we then sent out music ahead of time and these people came and we rehearsed them there in the Center and sang for the big sessions and...it, it was amazing, it was just amazing. And that was of course 1984.

**Miller:** (1:31:38) And what was kind of the purpose of that Baptist Fundamentalist '84? Was it just to be a rallying point?

**Randlett:** (1:31:44) Rallying point. It was a rallying point and of course it was also to, I'm sure, to show support for, again, Ronald Reagan and his revolution.

**Miller:** (1:31:56) Now, were you involved with Smite or Youth Quest?

**Randlett:** (1:32:01) No.

**Miller:** (1:32:02) Ok.

**Randlett:** (1:32:03) I was not, they were, again, from their own departments. They had their own directors in the youth area and the missions area.

**Miller:** (1:32:11) We're kind of wrapping some things up here. What were some of the major recording projects that you've been involved in through the years? Is there some

of the musical recordings that stand out in your mind? We talked about kind of some of the stuff that you cranked out for the choir companies and that but.

**Randlett:** (1:32:28) Well we had those but probably the, what we call the Flower Series. It was published by Gaither music and there were four in that series. Four actually collections of choir tunes and they were arranged by the same arranger and they probably would have been the highly because we...uh...again they were, they were sold commercially, it was well done, they were selections that people wanted, and this would have been the early 80's. '84 in fact some, the music that was done at BF '84 was music that we recorded for one of those choir collections. And so they would probably stand out but then we, the stuff that we did with the Sounds would fall into a different category because they, again, I don't even know half of the ones that we did but we, we did one recording in two days that was called *50 Favorites for the Evangelistic Choir*. We recorded 50 selections in two days. It basically took, you know, we allotted almost a half hour a tune, which is unheard of. But again, it was familiar stuff from I'll Fly Away and Church in the Wildwood. It, it was just, you know, sing along things and that sold for years. We did a project with [Littleness] Publishing Company that again was basically Nazarene hymns from their hymnal type things and we did it with Mosey Lister. And again, but it was called *Hallelujah Celebration* and it was a hallelujah celebration and, and it was nice stuff but again, it was for a niche market.

**Miller:** (1:34:12) It, it seems as though that there's been a move away from the traditional robed large choir to more of the worship teams and things like that. Could you talk about that for a second?

**Randlett:** (1:34:25) There is a move away but remember, the pendulum swings both ways and in some places it's coming back. They have now what are worship choirs where the choir becomes a large worship team where in the old days, your services were, I call, a series of parenthesis. You'd sing congregational songs, that was one, then a soloist would come up and they'd do their part, then a trio would come up they would do there part. Then you take the offering then you go back and a duet would sing or the choir would sing and then you went to a sermon. They were, they were a series or parenthesis. Now it's a completely free flowing service all the way through; everything connects. And the Choir isn't so much as a performance group as it is, it's a participation group where they actually help lead in worship.

**Hall:** (1:35:20) Which means more and more, for instance the choir is actually a backup to the soloist.

**Randlett:** (1:35:25) And, and the choir can be...and that came [*Sighs*] the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir kind of was the pioneer of where you had the soloist and you had the

choir and the soloist would sing the verse and the choir would sing the chorus and back them up and that became very popular and very useful and it still works.

**Miller:** (1:35:44) Does Thomas Road sing a lot of the Brooklyn Tabernacle mat...

**Randlett:** (1:35:46) They still do some of it. They sure do.

**Miller:** (1:35:48) So now what precipitated your move from the Liberty University side of things to I mean solely involved with the church in '96?

**Randlett:** (1:35:58) I'm not sure that there's a real good answer there it's just that the uh...there were several things at the church that transpired where they needed me more time than what I could give in areas and so Liberty was growing and they were able to hire people uh...to do some of the things that I did and it was easier to hire somebody at Liberty and I really have a passion for ministry and so I went in as basically what they call senior associate pastor. And I'm not sure if it's because senior in age or had more grey hair than anybody else, but that title still holds today and basically I'm in charge of congregational care. And that has to do with benevolence, missions is under me, the fifty plus ministry, the heal 'em home for alcoholics, counseling. Those are all areas that basically, I told you I didn't like administration, well...

**Miller:** (1:37:00) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:37:01) I'm kind of administrator...they all work under my and I work with them on their budgets...

**Miller:** (1:37:04) So do you do, do you do anything with music these days?

**Randlett:** (1:37:08) I am the traditional leader on Wednesday nights. I lead the singing and MC the Wednesday night service in Pate Chapel that has the hymnals, the piano, the organ, and the violin, and lead prayer time and that's my involvement. And then periodically I will substitute for Scott Bullman with the choir and that's coming up again here several weeks Scott will be out of town and I'll go in and I'll, you know, help him out.

**Miller:** (1:37:36) But other than that what is a typical week in March or October for you then?

**Randlett:** (1:37:41) My schedule is controlled by the telephone. In other words, because I'm in the area of benevolence, and there's an awful lot there, that, that means helping people who are going to be evicted who don't have any food, whose electric is going to be turned off, those all come across my desk and we have a benevolence committee. That would occupy I'll say the majority of my time. Then I'm also because of having

been around a while, I sit in on meetings with the pastor when people request to meet with him. He has a policy, and always has, that he doesn't meet with anybody by himself. And so again I'm uh...with my age and my hair I'm rather nonthreatening. A lot of the people know me at that point too so I will a lot of times is spent there as well with the pastor.

**Miller:** (1:38:41) For our listening audience, what he's talking about with his hair is grey. He doesn't have unusual hair... [laughter]

**Randlett:** (1:38:46) [laughter]

**Hall:** (1:38:47) [laughter]

**Miller:** (1:38:48) it's just, just his age here so. What do you think, as you knew Dr. Falwell and all, can you give jus some memories of Dr. Falwell and your time with him? And what would he think of the current transition in the leadership?

**Randlett:** (1:38:04) Well let me tell you the story that I tell and I would teach in the classroom. And this is affirming somebody at the right time. You know, a lot of times we are short on our affirmation of those people who are working with us. You know, it's like the old story, you know the wife says to her husband "you know, you haven't told me you loved me in 40 years." He says "well, I married you didn't I?" You know, you must...well Dr. Falwell wasn't that way and people need affirmation. And that summer that I was pinch hitting, I sat on one side of the platform, he sat on the other, I was new to the scene, he really didn't know me. I was doing the choir and some music at that point. And it was early August and we're walking through the backroom on a Sunday night. And he walks up in his inimitable style and he puts his around and he says "David, I really appreciate what you've done for us this summer. It's been great." Now, that's lasted since 1973. And I learned that message, you're never too big to affirm somebody else at the right time. That was Dr. Falwell. I mean he was, he was great at, again, doing the right thing at the right time. Of course now, everybody knows, you know, his antics, his stories, his wrestling, his rolling cherry bombs up the aisle in the plane and scaring the tar out of the pilot, you know. We've all been there for those, for those things and, but that was, Jerry Falwell was so unique. This was a small town redneck central Virginia young man that rubbed shoulders with kings and he was the same everywhere he went. The most amazing individual I had ever been around and there's not many people who can do that. People who rub shoulders with kings usually don't speak to anybody else. You know, he was there for everybody. And till his dying day, he was there visiting in the hospital, he was doing weddings, he was doing funerals, and he was meeting with government officials.

**Hall:** (1:41:25) What do you see about...so far as the future of the church and the school?

**Randlett:** (1:41:30) Oh, I think it's getting stronger. You know, again, you know, I, again people thought "oh, when he dies, what's going to happen?" Well, God had that well in hand. Well in hand by, again, having Jerry Jr. as the chancellor and Jonathon there and you know we're housed in the same building, I mean, how much closer could you be? And, you know, Dr. Falwell laid the foundation for all of this and things have just blossomed, you know, in only a way that God could make it happen with the church growing, the university growing. But it, none of this would have happened other than with Dr. Falwell. I used to tell the Sounds, and this, you didn't ask this question. I don't know if I have time.

**Miller:** (1:42:12) We've got about 15 minutes.

**Randlett:** (1:42:13) Ok. The Sounds of Liberty were always involved in doing things in Washington D.C. We did Jesse Helms' birthday party, we, you know, I had the privilege of introducing at a banquet George Bush senior and the Vice President of the United States and the Sounds of Liberty were good, let me not take anything away from them. But I had to continually caution them; don't get a big head. The only reason you're here and somebody else isn't here is because of a man named Jerry Falwell. That's why you're here. You're riding his coattails because he has opened the door and he brought you along. But without him, who knows who'd be up here singing for Jesse Helms' birthday party. Who knows who would be here for this, you know, again, this banquet, Moral Majority banquet. Whatever it is, BF '84, we, we did other political things and, and again, it wasn't because we were that good, although we were good, but it was because of him. I mean, oh, since early 80's, every year we have done the March for Life in January in Washington D.C. He got us in there. Since then, the Sounds of Liberty have been back every year since then as they do that March for Life, speaking out against abortion.

**Miller:** (1:43:37) What would you say, if the Lord should tarry and you depart this world and go to your reward, what would you like to be remembered for? What is your most memorable accomplishment? What gives you the most satisfaction as you think back on your Liberty years? And Thomas Road.

**Randlett:** (1:43:56) My trophies are those young men and young women who are out there serving the Lord in churches and in the profession. Those are my trophies. And right now I, like that group I told you about, the Enpsalms in the 70's, they contact me...I mean facebook, my goodness.

**Miller:** (1:44:17) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:44:18) Even before facebook, I mean, they were calling me...oh...once a month, couple, couple times a year, you know there is, there is still a connection. Then the Sounds of Liberty came along and they're the trophies. You know, there was a fellow that was early on by the name of Wally [Bellison]. He had come out of the Army and he was part of the early group. And he started calling me Boss. Well that name has stuck to this day and I'll have people, I mean even up and down the halls of the church now they know me as Boss. I was their boss at that point. But those are the people now that, they can, I was just on, my wife and I were on the cruise that Jonathon and Noel were on, and onboard that cruise ship were the families, two of the families, of two of the gals who were in the Sounds of Liberty, with their husbands and their children. And we just had a great reunion, you know, onboard the ship. And those are just, I mean, Dr. Hall, you know that with your students. I mean those students that actually go on and, you know, not everybody is a success story but some have fallen by the waist side and miraculously got has brought them back. And it just, it's a thrill to go through year books and, and uh...I remember more of the ones that were in the choirs and in the Sounds of Liberty than I do those that pass through the classes. Although, you know, I'll pull out an old roll book and "oh yeah, I remember this name." But you know, again, the ones that have gone on and live around the area here, it's wonderful to have been a part of that.

**Miller:** (1:46:02) As you look ahead, and if the Lord should tarry, what do you think would be the future trends in Christian music?

**Randlett:** (1:46:07) [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:46:08) And what will Thomas Road's music be like? Any...

**Randlett:** (1:46:12) Don't put me on the spot. [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:45:15) Put, make you a prophet here or something. Would, would you have been surprised if you could look ahead in 1990 and look ahead to 2010?

**Randlett:** (1:45:25) Oh, we're always surprised. Alright, you have to trace the history of church music. And it has moved on, I mean, David had his choirs and his huge orchestras in the Old Testament, then we, I mean, we came into the era of the Isaac Watts and the Wesleys. Remember, Isaac Watts took the chants and he would write his version of the Psalms because up to that point they were singing Psalms. Well [*Sighs*] the people in the church just about crucified him. What are you doing with the, you know, and he was paraphrasing the Psalms. Well that's gone on for years. There was, the new has always riled up those who are set in their ways. Change is always hard. I mean, I'll give you a story. Years ago, this is a name out of the past, John Peterson, 1950's. Alright, John was the first one that really started writing what I would call church music in the style of the 1940's and 50's big band. He wrote in that style. Oh, you would have

thought the world was coming to an end. And John actually got a letter from a person it said “John, you are the worst thing that’s ever happened to Christian music and, you know, you should stop. You’re ruining everything.”

**Miller:** (1:47:47) What a compromiser. [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:47:48) Oh, yeah. Well, 20 or so years later, this is truth not fiction here, he got a letter from the same person. “John, hold the line. This stuff is getting out of hand. You’re the only one we can depend on.”

**Hall:** (1:48:04) [*Laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:48:05) Because why? Gaither had come in and he was doing his style now, you know? And then in the 70’s we started in with the praise and worship music as we know it now. And you know, the Flower Children, that’s where it all, you know, that style came from. “Oh, that’s going to be the downfall of the church and we’ll never know hymns again and...”

**Miller:** (1:48:24) The Marinatha Music.

**Randlett:** (1:48:25) The Marinatha Music. Oh yeah, the Hosana Integrity Music. All of that, you know, so it’s always, I mean, it’s moving. Now, I was lucky because I was part of an educational system where I didn’t age like others my age because I was always around the younger kids and I realized how effective it was being in their lives. Now, is it my comfort zone? No, not really. I mean, can I worship with it? Yes. Is it what I whistle in the shower? No. You know, but, now what about the kids today? This music is their comfort zone. What’s it going to be? I don’t know where it’s going. But again remember, it’s always going to be met with resistance to change and to take somebody, somebody my age should say “remember, you’ve had your day. Now let’s help those who are coming along now.”

**Miller:** (1:49:23) How did Dr. Falwell feel about that particular issue, as far as music?

**Randlett:** (1:49:27) He made the change. He made the change. Now that wasn’t the music he listened to in his car, but he made the change. Why? Because he knew it was reaching his target audience.

**Hall:** (1:49:40) What would he be listening to in his car?

**Randlett:** (1:49:42) He still loved Bill Gaither.

**Hall:** (1:49:44) Oh, did he? [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:49:45) Oh yeah. You know, Gaither homecoming stuff.

**Miller:** (1:49:48) And as you were one who was with that original generation and you saw Liberty from those early days, you know, as we look back on Moody and you could think about Sankey and those days, what would you, if this recording was being listened to 20 years from now as I said if the Lord should tarry, what would you like people never to forget or to always remember?

**Randlett:** (1:50:17) Wow. I hadn't thought about that. Of course church, church music today is very effective. But I think you're going to have to, again, couch it in the terms of, again, it is being effective because it is reaching the people that we want to reach. And in every generation, remember Fanny Crosby wrote over 8,000 words; she was a poet. She wasn't a musician per say. And today there are probably six or seven that are really familiar today and really 15 that have still lasted. I have to ask myself, how much of this is going to last...

**Miller:** (1:51:03) The, the test of time.

**Randlett:** (1:51:04) The test of time? And we do have classic praise choruses today. You know, I mean "Shout to the Lord" is probably getting into that category of, of a classic. And then we'll have some that are literally temporary music; they were written for a specific purpose and a specific time to do a specific thing and, and six months, it will be gone. But some things are written and will last, will last the test of time.

**Miller:** (1:51:33) Aside from the music area, something about Dr. Falwell or Thomas Road or Liberty from those early days that you'd like folks to remember.

**Randlett:** (1:51:44) Dr. Falwell made some, you know, changes as, as he matured in his ministry. And I'm going to couch it in music terms. He was from the "old school" and B.R. Lakin would tell that, he would say "Robbie, sit down. This is my crowd. They came to hear me preach. Sit down."

**Hall:** (1:52:11) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:52:12) Well, Jerry grew up in that. Now, he never told anybody to sit down but his mind was always preparing for the sermon. So whatever went on in front of it, sometimes he would be disconnected. Well as he matured and all, that changed and then he was right there in the middle of it. I mean, he was, he was singing along with it. He was just not worrying about quote "his" part. And that's amazing for a man, again, like that. He was willing but...his mentors were preachers who had a song man. [*Laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:52:53) [*Laughter*] Who, who got the crowd ready to hear the preaching basically.

**Randlett:** (1:52:56) Right, right, right.

**Miller:** (1:52:59) As opposed to this is all part of a, an overall worship experience.

**Randlett:** (1:53:03) All part of a...exactly. And by the time we moved up here to this pro...to this campus and all, I mean, Dr. Falwell was right there every minute of every service. Amazing.

**Miller:** (1:53:16) Well, I think, unless, did you have a final thought?

**Randlett:** (1:53:19) No, I've enjoyed this. I'll tell you what, you've sure stirred my mind.

**Miller:** (1:53:22) [*laughter*]

**Hall:** (1:53:23) [*laughter*]

**Randlett:** (1:53:24) Pulled some things out that are... [*laughter*]

**Miller:** (1:53:27) Well with that we'll conclude today's interview with David Randlett. This interview has been conducted as part of the oral history project of the Liberty University archives.

[*end of interview*]