Oral History Interview with Dr. C. Samuel Verghese and Rita Verghese

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Interviewee: Dr. C. Samuel Verghese and Rita Verghese

Interviewer(s): Randy Miller, Dr. Cline Hall

Transcriber: Joannah Johnson

Interview Length: 1:19:49

Notes:

Miller: (0:00) Welcome to this interview in the Oral History Project of the Liberty University Archives. This interview is being conducted on July 10, 2009; today we are interviewing Dr. C Samuel Verghese. Dr. Verghese was born on March 7, 1947. My name is Randy Miller; I'll be conducting the interview today along with Dr. Cline Hall.

Hall: (0:56) Good morning.

Miller: (0:57) Greetings Dr. Hall and it's good to have you with us today Dr. Verghese.

Verghese: (0:59) Good morning, it is great to be here.

Miller: (1:00) It is pronounced "Verghese" is that correct?

Verghese: (1:02) That is correct.

Miller: (1:03) Correct, OK, well, why don't we start off, why don't you tell us a bit about your early life. Where were you born and a little bit about your family history.

Verghese: (1:10) I was born in India and I was born in a family of Christians, they had been New Testament believers for five generations and before that they were Christians also but they call them ["Marthomar Christians"] more "high church" Christians. I accepted the Lord when I was five and continued my life walking with the Lord and as a teenager I was obsessed with two things: spirituality and the brain. So from a spiritual perspective I did a great deal of youth work

throughout India and then we do some surgery on injured animals, neurosurgery, see how well I could make them work better and most of them survived, so I still continue in the field of neuro-anatomy, physiology, chemistry and so on.

Miller: (2:19) And so your education then, after you completed high school, did you get your college education back in India or here to the United States?

Verghese: (2:29) In India I had up to my Ph. D. halfway in India and then I came to America to do more brain research so I can get more data and go back and finish it and since I had, by vocational interest, that is, youth ministries and medicine, I wanted to find the best youth ministry in America so as I talked to various people and I was staying with a group of people who had come to India and they were with dad in the Language Institute where my dad had a missionary home, so I stayed with them and finally we all decided that I should go and visit Jerry Falwell's ministry, so I came to Thomas Road and talked to a number of people, that was 72. Then during my time here, very short time, they asked me to speak at different groups, the youth group, on several occasions college and then Jerry Falwell happened to hear me and then Dr. Towns and they asked me if I was interested in teaching here and that's how I started at Liberty and I never went back.

Hall: (3:56) Now while you were and before you came to Liberty, did you do any youth work in the church or ministry in India?

Verghese: (4:02) Oh yeah.

Hall: (4:04) OK.

Verghese: OK I was in the ministry and as a teenager I was very actively involved, yeah.

Miller: (4:12) Now it looks like by your resume, that once you got here, you had an awful lot of hats, that they had you doing many things in those early days and we want to talk in the moments we have today about those very busy days, there was kind of a pioneering spirit from what I hear, back in those early days. So when you first came to Lynchburg then tell us about what you were hired to do, what was your first job title and so forth?

Verghese: (4:45) Well I did not want to be hired because I wasn't sure I was going to stay in Lynchburg, so I would do everything without being hired as a volunteer, so I stayed in the Island and helped in the ministries and then it all changed rapidly because of teaching and I taught in different departments and during those early years Dr. Donnelson passed away. He was a godly man, he was in charge of missions so then they asked me to teach all of those courses, so I taught those, then mathematics, physics and New Testament so I taught all of those courses.

Miller: (5:38) Did you feel up to the task or did you feel like you were over extending yourself as far as your, academically...

Verghese: (5:50) Well, the, I had studied under people like Francis Schaeffer and so on so I felt like I was with family in sharing whatever the students could handle because my worldview of missions and ministry was rooted in a different philosophy and that is when a Hindu gets saved, he is usually driven away from home with persecution and he comes and joins your home and you become part of his family, that was lacking here, there was a lack of fire in America, but not at Liberty, there is lots of fire at Liberty, and I loved it and felt at home and in those days I used to look so young, I was very young and the kids thought I was one of the students and they used to call me "See that kid there, he is coming late, let's give him some food on the island." You know? So I really had a very fruitful time, probably some of the best years of my life, where at Liberty.

Miller: (7:08) Well before we even come to Liberty, talk a little about your time with Francis Schaeffer, that's interesting, I know that Dr. Falwell considered Francis Schaeffer to be kind of a mentor of his when it came to Christian worldview and so were you at L'Abri or where did you meet Francis Schaeffer?

Verghese: (7:25) Oh I had a hobby of making watches, like this one I wear, I made that one, so I went to Switzerland to study, but before that Francis, Dr. Schaeffer came to India and Dad and him were very close friends, but I did not keep in touch with him because he was so much older and I was 15 when he first came. But when I later attended we connected and we kept in touch when he came to Boston by the time we were married, with my wife Rita and she was expecting our first son Sam, so he laid hands on her and prayed for Sam. Sam graduated from Liberty four years ago. So I tried to absorb most of Dr. Schaeffer's historical theology and once in while he

would say "Sam, when it comes to world religions I have to rely on you and you have to tell me about Hinduism and philosophy and what you think and so on." And so we had very productive time in those days. He was a fascinating thinker and I think we need more and I don't see too many on the surface yet.

Miller: (8:48) I used to live in Minnesota and went over to see him...

Verghese: (8:50) In Rochester.

Miller: (8:50) In Rochester at the Mayo clinic there and I drove over and it was only about forty five miles from my house so I was able to spend some time with him right before he died.

Hall: (9:00) You mentioned the fact that your father apparently has a ministry in India, what could you tell us just briefly about that?

Verghese: (9:07) Yeah, it, dad was a leader of Indian Christian Ministries and God really blessed their ministry, mom and dad's and their, his parents and their parents and so on so...

Hall: (9:22) Was he a pastor or educator?

Verghese: (9:24) He was a pastor, educator and involved in starting clinics in the medical field and so on, yeah mom and dad and that's the third generation of medical clinics that they have continued to run started by their parents and so on.

Hall: (9:40) So you had a background there of medicine and ministry in your family?

Verghese: (9:47) Yeah, God has been gracious to me.

Miller: (9:50) Now so you came to America and you were wanting to kind of see the ministry here and you started off as a volunteer and at first you weren't really wanting to be hired, now legally were you able to even be hired as far as the forms.

Verghese: (10:05) Yeah, I had the status...

Miller: (10:06) You had the status that allowed you to do that and, so let's talk a little about, we mentioned the island a little bit, I don't know if we have actually called it Treasure Island. So Liberty University is for our listeners that might not be familiar, Liberty of course is in

Lynchburg Virginia and we are on the James River, the James comes all the way out from the Chesapeake Bay, so when they came in and founded Jamestown in 1607, you know, that is the same James River but in the middle of the James River then there was this island called Treasure Island, one other thing that I am going to mention here at the start of our interview is that, when you were here it was Lynchburg Baptist College and so we might kind of use those interchangeably Lynchburg Baptist College eventually became Liberty University and so if we talk about Liberty or LBC if you hear that, they all refer to the same thing back on the day so if you hear that in the early days it was Lynchburg Baptist College. So tell us a little about Treasure Island, what was there, you know?

Verghese: (11:09) Treasure Island was a beautiful Island, it was a small island.

Miller: (11:15) Any idea about how many acres?

Verghese: (11:17) Probably, it was winding around and cut off, every rain we had the island shrinking, I assume it had about ten acres. At the end of the island was the girl's dorm, but the girl's dorm wasn't completed but anyway I will make it short, we helped complete it. The boy's dorms were in the beginning after the bridge, right when you come and the girl's dorms, they were about five in each room, maybe six sometimes, my wife knows more about that one, and the boys dorm usually had three in a room and sometimes we had four, of course they were all full and we had a cafeteria and students would walk, the girls had to walk further than the boys to catch the bus for school, so they would drive them in the bus and then we came to Thomas Road.

Miller: (12:27) And so these were the same church buses that they would have used to pick up Sunday school children...

Verghese: (12:34) Sunday school children, correct.

Miller: (12:36) OK so these were buses that were owned by Thomas Road. In recent years you might be interested to hear that just in the past couple of years, in the Greater Lynchburg Transit System, so know we have a whole system of buses but in these days, we are really in those pioneer days so the students were living on Treasure Island and coming to classes which were at the old Thomas Road building.

Verghese: (12:57) Correct.

Miller: (12:58) And then where was your office, did you just have a room then on Treasure Island or did you have an office in town or how did that work?

Verghese: (13:10) I had an office as a faculty town and then I also had, I decided to, I had a room by, I decided to stay with the students in a room it was, it was an interesting experience for me. I got to know the students well, empathetically I was part of them, so it really gave me insight into what they would need to do well spiritually and academically and physically too, socially and so on.

Miller: (13:40) And now you mention that you met your wife, was she a student at the time?

Verghese: (13:46) She was a student at the time.

Miller: (13:48) So you were single for how many years, when did you two get married?

Verghese: (13:53) We got married in 78 but she graduated in 76 she went home, and then we met again in Cambridge, Massachusetts and we were married there.

Miller: (14:08) Ok, and so the whole time that you were here you were a single man then.

Verghese: (14:12) I was never married and I didn't, I didn't talk to girls according to my wife. [*Laughter*]

Miller: (14:18) And, OK, so then, later on the fledgling university, Lynchburg Baptist College bought a hotel in the downtown area and what determined whether you lived on Treasure Island or whether you lived at that hotel property?

Verghese: (14:39) It was very crowded in downtown area for students to stay in some hotels, we had some living in some hotels, Ramada Inn and so on and Treasure Island had no more room so when this new hotel was bought, we renovated it and had the majority of the students from the island transferred the hotel because the buses then didn't have to travel far to transport them.

Miller: (15:13) And so once the hotels were bought, eventually then Treasure Island no longer was serving as a dormitory or was there always some at both places?

Verghese: (15:25) There were a few still living in the island and the island was shrinking and the bridge was very weak so the buses couldn't travel with the students, so it was a nuisance for

students, it was more than a challenge and I think it affected their academics some but I was the only faculty member who lived in the island and so I don't want to call it a suffering but it was so challenging, I grew up as a jungle boy, doing research in the jungles and so on, even for me I find it challenging [laughter].

Miller: (16:09) Although we have the red type of clay here, so the type of dirt was probably a little different than...

Verghese: (16:16) It was fun though, they missed there breakfast and I was concerned that they were missing because of early hours and they had to travel quite a bit to get to Thomas Road, but the faculty members didn't know that buses had trouble and sometimes it rained and so on and so I would inform the faculty meeting that they had trouble to transport from Treasure Island to Thomas Road and to be kind to them, but I don't think they fully captured my... [*Laughter*]

Miller: (16:50) So besides the trials and tribulations they had in living where they were living, they also had persecution a little bit from the faculty side of things. And so it was problems all the way around here...

Verghese: (17:01) But in the same way I must add that there were godly men and women faculty members and so they had their own compassion toward the students, so I assume they didn't torture them beyond their ability.

Miller: (17:17) So you weren't here the first year of 71, 71 but you were really in on the ground level, any idea about the enrollment in those early years, about how many students there were when you were here?

Verghese: (17:29) There were about a thousand or so.

Miller: (17:30) OK, so it grew very rapidly.

Verghese: (17:31) Very, very rapidly. As soon as we had downtown students came from everywhere and we ran out of room very quickly, then we had to rent other places, to have them stay in homes, believers in the Thomas Road Baptist Church accommodated some of the students and so on.

Hall: (17:57) And how were the students recruited at this point? How were they recruited to come?

Verghese: (18:03) Oh how were they recruited? Dr. Falwell and a singing group travelled throughout the country, he was very busy travelling, most of the days he was on the road, except Sunday he would get here to preach and so in churches they recruited people and sometimes they had hired one or two like marketing people, they would go to different churches and recruit students to come to join Liberty and of course television, Jerry Falwell spent a quarter of his time on television and promoting Liberty University or Lynchburg Baptist College.

Hall: (18:50) Do you remember some of the faculty members that came that second year when you came?

Verghese: (18:55) I recall them, yeah.

Hall: (18:56) Any particular one stand out in your mind?

Verghese: (19:01) A majority of them were dedicated that I knew, all of them were dedicated but I was so busy with the student life, so many of them I know very well, Dr. Wipf, I don't know if you know him but his name is Wipf, Miller, Dr. Towns came back, the same thing with Dr. Guillermin, he came back, I knew all of them. If you name them I can tell you about them all there.

Miller: (19:31) And so now, as far as the students that you were working with then, it was looking like and looking at the graduation rosters in those early years that there were more men graduates then women graduates, what was the ratio between men and women as far as just the students go? Was it a pretty even or where there more males than female students, any idea on that?

Verghese: (19:50) It seemed like, at least from the dorm perspective in Treasure Island and the hotel, we had about 50 to 60 percent were women and then the rest were men.

Miller: (20:10) So there actually, it seemed like there were more women than men?

Verghese: (20:11) But there may have been a great deal of attrition due to the difficult living in the island, the girls may have left, but they came back to the hotel so it was back and forth, they would finish a semester and go back and come and so on.

Hall: (20:29) Now what was the state of the repairs in the hotel, you said they were...

Verghese: (20:34) The hotel was, in the beginning we had to do lots of work, Dr. Falwell asked me to take charge, and he said "Do all of your brains" and he pointed to my head "And make this place ready for students." I said "OK." So I stayed there day and night and he gave me a bodyguard because we had lots of drug addicts selling drugs and so on in the hotel and it was rather dangerous to stay there. So the fourth floor, we had no one living, it was just for junk, piles of junk, over the years, yeah. The second and third floors were done beautifully, boys lived there and then the fifth and the sixth floor were for girls.

Miller: (21:29) Now were you ever able to see the time, when did they start moving to the campus up here on the mountain, was that during the time that you were there or was that after you had left?

Verghese: (21:42) My last memory of the time was five faculty members jumping into my Volvo car and we were going up on Candler's Mountain and the car wouldn't make it anymore for prayer to claim that mountain, Dr. Falwell and the other students had already gone there and there was about a half-inch of snow and we went up there finally and we prayed, claiming for that mountain and we sang, "We Want that Mountain" and that, that was the last of my involvement...

Hall: (22:19) Now in the spring of 77?

Verghese: (22:21) That is correct when I left...

Hall: (22:23) Were you there at the time that the famous meeting in the snow?

Verghese: (22:26) Yes I was there at the top, yeah.

Miller: (22:30) And let's go back to the students a little bit you were working with here. Anything more about the background of the students, that they were primarily Baptist students or do you not recall?

Verghese: (22:44) No they were primarily from Baptist background they were different, different Baptists but most of them were quite dedicated and had a desire to go back to their churches, their youth ministries or for teaching, they were really a group of very nice students.

Miller: (23:07) Now I guess I am wondering today Liberty is a Christian liberal arts college where students study business, psychology and education and so forth but it seems like in those days it was almost more of a Bible college flavor, that there were more students studying for ministry and even if they were studying education, they were planning to go and teach in the new Christian school movement and things. Is that a correct characterization?

Verghese: (23:35) Very correct.

Miller: (23:38) That [*cough*] in, so as far as you as a faculty member goes, do you remember how many hours you taught per semester?

Verghese: (2:51) I taught about 18 hours.

Miller: (23:54) So that is more than a full load [*laughter*] and you were also having responsibilities, did you have any, were you basically just someone who was a single person who was just kind of living in the dorms or did you have administrative student life responsibilities, whereby you had to be giving reprimands or anything like that, did you actually have a function in student life or were you just hanging out with the guys?

Verghese: (24:24) I grew up in a very disciplined background and I liked discipline in those days and but I involved in all the activities of the students and involved in the teaching and administration but I wasn't extremely hard on the students when it came to discipline.

Miller: (24:53) Now when we were talking with Dr. Henry in a earlier interview, he said, really in those early days he didn't have a lot of disciplined, discipline problems. Students that were here really wanted to be and had kind of caught that spirit and so he said there weren't a lot of discipline problems that he knew of in that time, would you concur with that?

Verghese: (25:25) Yeah, for the most part it was true, but we adopted, I don't think I was part of doing all of that, I was kind of an integrated, eclectic Christian, but we had a little, I would say, heavy handed approach on students in the dorm but I didn't get involved in appointing all the

rest of them and so on. I don't recall if I gave too many demerits, that was one of the complaints they had, that I was not giving enough demerits.

Miller: (25:56) Now today they call them reprimands, but back in that day they called them...

Verghese: (25:58) They used to be demerits, that is what they did at Bob Jones, so they adopted most of Bob Jones, the disciplinary books and all those various things. So we had some trouble makers. Which there was a funny one in the hotel, but I was still nice to him but they expelled him from the school. You can probably cut that off [*laughter*] he was quite a big guy, he would buy apple cider and keep it in his room to make, whatever, until it became ten percent alcohol and whatever, but I had no idea, but they called me here from the main campus and said, "You guys are drinking there in the dorm, what's going on?", you know and so on, so finally the students showed me the room where they were doing a particular thing. It was just one student, who had separated from the Lord later, and he was older than the other students and he had a little problem with alcohol and I assume they decided to expel him.

Miller: (27:04) Now I don't know how familiar you are with the current disciplinary system and by the way before I ask the question here, you had the Lynchburg Baptist College way that was kind of the hand book or the rule book, is that what they called it there? And so let's just go over some of those rules, so for instance, and feel free to jump in but like ladies had to skirts to classes, did gentleman have to wear suit coats or just ties to classes?

Verghese: (27:37) Not suit coat but they had to have a tie.

Miller: (27:42) Did they have to wear suit coats to supper, to meals?

Verghese: (27:44) No, no.

Miller: (27:45) There was never a time when they had to wear a suit coat then, OK, and then no rock music, how about contemporary Christian music?

Verghese: (27:54) There weren't much in those days, basically music around here on the radio, you couldn't hear contemporary for some reason, but we had, if it was contemporary then I wasn't aware of it, we had lots of Bill Gaither's and lots of other songs, but what the students listened to I don't know, in their dorms but music was basically Thomas Road music, and when

the students came from California they have brought some contemporary music, but it was all saturated by southern gospel music.

Miller: (28:37) Well OK.

Hall: (28:37) Were you involved in writing what became the Liberty Way? Dr. Henry talked about it yesterday, putting together the rule and that, were you involved in the writing of that?

Verghese: (28:50) I was in the early stages but I saw a trend that I didn't like so I, I was so busy so I said "OK, brothers and sisters, you handle it them." I took care of my other responsibilities but...

Miller: (29:10) Basically they kind of took the approach that Bob Jones had, they had demerits and it was very strict rules and...

Verghese: (29:14) Some of the things I liked it very much that the students making their beds, keeping the bathroom clean...

Miller: (29:22) Oh, that's right, I forgot about dorm checks but, so every morning the monitor would come in and make sure their bed was made and their trash can was empty.

Verghese: (29:31) Exactly, white glove inspections and stuff.

Miller: (29:34) I remember when I was a student in my school that was very similar to Liberty in those days, I had one little hole punch in my trash can but they said that "Well it wasn't totally empty, but they said that it wasn't completely empty." And so some of those things can kind of engender some bad attitudes that, you know, ok so, some were very, very picky and some went by the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law and so, and so things have loosened up quite a bit in those days but, like the students weren't allowed to play playing cards I imagine?

Verghese: (30:04) Yeah, correct. Right they weren't allowed to.

Miller: (30:06) OK, well let's talk about the relationship between Thomas Road then and the college then at that point, now today we actually have a campus church, we have a campus church service, on the campus for students, but in those days, all students went to Thomas Road, unless they had previously been in another church in the area, is that right?

Verghese: (30:33) Correct.

Miller: (30:34) And the same thing was true with faculty by and large that they would attend there and so where they required to do Christian service in those early days?

Verghese: (30:46) Students, were, as part of their curriculum, especially if they were pastoral majors or youth majors, they had plenty of work, and it was good I thought in those days, sometimes that meant they have, a little too much for the students because of the academic work, you know?

Miller: (31:05) They are trying to do their schoolwork plus being involved in the church and all.

Verghese: (31:11) The church and we had lots of outreach and it was great, so I tend to think that it was fine, but because reaching all of these lost people throughout this area was a tremendous ministry especially, there was a wonderful man there, Gordon Love, he was head of the Youth Department and he had a zeal for all his children from divorced homes and on drugs and so on so he used all the youth majors for the most part to reach out to the these people and I thought it was great ministry and so my philosophy, when I first came here was I want to be part of a church that will just burn up for Christ and so I was happy that the students just, literally burn out, they couldn't wake up in the morning to go to class.

Miller: (32:10) Was there a lot of door to door soul winning?

Verghese: (32:12) Oh yes, door to door schools, or rallies and we went far, up to even Pittsburg to reach out to people.

Miller: (32:21) And then Saturday mornings, were there bus calling and bus routes?

Verghese: (32:37) Yes, yes, door to door campuses, I also started an international students ministry. I talked to Dr. Falwell, and he said "Sam, start anything you like" so we had those students coming too, so by way of ministries it was an exciting time.

Miller: (32:46) So tell us a little bit about that national student ministry there? I know that Dr. Falwell was very generous, gave scholarships to some of the students, how did they recruit international students back in that day?

Verghese: (33:03) Well there is an interesting story that probably sets the background for international students, when we were in London, all of us students there was a brother who came from Haiti, he was in the Bible School, his name was Joe, the immigration office in London held him back because he didn't have any immigration papers. All of us tried to talk to them, the immigration people in London, but they wouldn't let him come.

Miller: (33:35) OK, I am not quite understanding, was this the trip they made, that second year, when all the students got to go to England. OK and so they were, want...he was a Liberty student, yet he had come from Haiti to Liberty, he was taking a trip that all the others were to England but they were not wanting to let him come back, or they were holding him up or delaying because he didn't have the appropriate...

Verghese: (33:58) He didn't have a passport or immigration letters from the school so they didn't believe any of us...

Miller: (34:05) "Oh yeah, he is one of us." They weren't believing that.

Verghese: (34:09) They didn't believe any of us, so we had to delay a day and wire some papers to the immigration office from here to indicate that he is an authentic student, so they let them come, we had two groups going, so the group was flying the following day, so he joined them, then the first I did as soon as we came, my, by that time I had left the dorm because my teaching load was heavy and I was a student in the seminary and the attorney of the organization was a marvelous Christian, Michael Jackson, and we rented a house and lived there so he was helping me and I started a, I contacted the Immigration and Naturalization Service and we organized an international student office at Liberty, so that was the beginning or all the issuing F1 visas, student visas for students who wanted to come to Liberty.

Miller: (35:23) The have their I-20 papers?

Verghese: (35:27) Correct, their I-20 papers.

Hall: (35:30) These were for students at Liberty?

Verghese: (35:30) Correct, at Liberty, it was the first...

Hall: (35:31) How many did you, do you think we had at that point – international students?

Verghese: (35:35) Oh we had, when I was leaving we had eleven or twelve.

Miller: (35:41) All of the approximately one thousand students?

Verghese: (35:45) By that time we had about, 77, we had close to 3500 or so.

Miller: (35:51) OK, so the numbers had really gone up.

Verghese: (35:51) They had increased.

Miller: (35:52) But today we have, you know, many, many more international students.

Verghese: (35:58) I think more students would come if we had the facilities, we have had to turn so many students away, we would get hundreds of letters from around the country because of the television and the pastors who wanted to send their kids and students here, but we had no accommodation.

Miller: (36:17) And so that really, the physical capacity of the campus somewhat hindered the...

Verghese: (36:23) Limitation.

Miller: (36:25) The recruiting efforts there, so it was almost like there was standing room only for that there. Are you familiar with a group named SMITE, S-M-I-T-E?

Verghese: (36:38) I am familiar with them and we started and so on but I was not part of SMITE but I was part of the missions department but they were a new group that came, Vernon Brewer and Roscoe Brewer and they started a nice ministry of their own and that was, oh a year or two before I left.

Miller: (37:02) OK, and so, going back to student life, the food, what kind of food did the students eat, you know today we have five or six different stations so at any meal you could get the Asian choice or you can get hamburgers and hotdogs, there is the grill and the classic comfort food and things like that I imagine things were simpler in that day. What were the dining hall meals like?

Verghese: (37:27) Well, let me be conservative [*laughter*]. The food was minimal and the students were so busy, I don't think most of them ate well. We didn't have good food, the food

was meager, for example for lunch a table was peanut butter and Campbell's soup – that was it. And most of the breakfast, the students missed, the breakfast wasn't bad, we had pancakes, little fruit cups, milk, eggs, eggs and cereal. But it got better as it progressed so, there is no comparison to what students enjoy today, you can't even begin to compare. At night time for dinner, the typical food available in those days was spaghetti, meatballs, hamburgers, chickens and all those kinds of things.

Miller: (38:49) Now tonight we are having chicken and mashed potatoes with green beans, that was the meal for this evening and if you don't like chicken and mashed potatoes and green beans then you go hungry. One time was funny, I think this is a good one if people misunderstand the early missionary pioneering days, one night we had dinner and it was raw fish, so cut the fish open and it was blood and everything coming out so one of the students wrapped that thing and brought it Liberty the next morning and showed it to Dr. Guillermin. So since that time the food started changing a little bit. [Laughter]

Hall: Now there were a little bit of dining facilities on the island and at the hotel too?

Verghese: (39:41) Now when we were at the island, we didn't have the hotel, concurrently there was no food served in both places, once we left the island, there were no more food for the students, there were just a few students taking care of the horses and this and that and there was an office so they just decided to stay there, they were working outside, they cooked their own meals and so on, but the hotel had better food, it was catering food, a step higher in nutrition.

Miller: (40:16) And so was there, were they, I guess I remember seeing in old videos of the cafeteria of Thomas Road, was there a cafeteria at Thomas Road as well too?

Verghese: (40:30) Thomas Road itself didn't have a cafeteria of such, there was only lunch served, it was a little hall of the academy, OK so whoever was hungry, great, if your students came to lunch, they were busy with classes, I don't know where they are during lunch time, but dinner was served at the hotel, there it was rather well done.

Miller: (40:55) Ok, so the Thomas Road building, there was the Original Donald Duck building and then they added the, what became the Pate Chapel building and that's you had the Sunday services where then later on they built the big, octagonal, large auditorium.

Verghese: (41:16) Lots of classes met there. Large classes would meet there, introductory classes would meet in the auditorium and then all the other classes met in the other buildings, the surrounding buildings.

Miller: (41:25) OK, now were the college students kept separate from the LCA students or were they all in the same building or were they in different floors?

Verghese: (41:35) No they had separate classrooms from the...

Miller: (41:38) So they had some college classrooms and some LCA classrooms.

Verghese: (41:42) Correct, definitely yeah.

Hall: (41:43) You mentioned interesting thing about horses on the island, is that, did you?

Verghese: (41:48) Oh that was for the summer camp.

Hall: (41:52) Oh the summer camp

Verghese: (41:53) We has summer camp at the island.

Hall: (41:51) OK, what other uses were made of the island itself? Did the football team practice there?

Verghese: (41:57) They would practice there, correct, the soccer team, the early days.

Miller: (42:02) OK, since it is not there anymore and just kind of trying to establish the record, if I get the idea correctly there was a bridge that comes out to the island, there was a men's dorm, a women's dorm, perhaps a football type practice field...

Verghese: (42:17) Nice field, yeah.

Miller: (42:20) OK, and it sounded like you had some horses there. Where there some other cabins and that they used for camps. Or is that all that is all that they really had on the island or is there any other building I am missing there?

Verghese: (42:31) The cafeteria...

Miller: (42:32) The cafeteria...

Verghese: (42:32) Attached to the cafeteria was three buildings but in one unit used for offices and Dr. Falwell's secretary and husband, they were living there even before the college started, they still stayed there. That was about it, yeah.

Miller: (42:54) And...

Verghese: (42:56) Oh yeah, there was a chapel; the chapel was first, then the office, cafeteria, then the boy's dorms and then the girl's dorms.

Miller: (43:03) So now I imagine the chapel was used for summer camps, was there a use for the college, for the chapel?

Verghese: (43:10) No because the college students came here, and so yeah, that was used for the Island, special meetings or prayer meetings and students would go there for bible studies, it was a very small chapel, but summer time, it was used extensively for summer campers, it was a effective ministry, summer ministries.

Miller: (43:33) In those early days of Thomas Road, well it wasn't the early days of Thomas Road, in the early days of Liberty, when you were there in the youth ministry, talk to us for a few moments about the youth ministry of Thomas Road Baptist Church, did they have Saturday night youth activities, or what was youth ministry about at Thomas Road, how did that work, how did that function?

Verghese: (43:58) Well I need an hour or two explaining that. [*Laughter*]

Miller: (44:01) Go ahead and take some time, that's great.

Verghese: (44:04) And my wife was a youth major too at the time. Saturday would be like bussing in hundreds of students from all around the neighborhood, including church, they would just go to neighborhoods that they knocked on and they would invite students to come and we would have, four, five, six thousand kids.

Miller: (44:33) And were these mainly elementary kids or were they bringing in teenagers?

Verghese: (44:36) All kinds, all kinds and they would invite them and sometimes we would provide pizza for them, so that was a motivation and then beautiful singing with all kinds of

instruments, testimonies and then one of the youth staff members would give a nice message. We had hundreds getting saved in those days.

Miller: (45:00) OK, so now, was this the Sunday morning time then?

Verghese: (45:05) No this was Saturday...

Miller: (45:06) Ok so this was Saturday, OK so this was, OK so they would run the busses for the youth activities then, OK. OK, on Saturday. OK so for the bus routes taking the kids to Sunday school on Sunday morning, they would have bus calling on Saturday morning busses that would go out and pick up youth and have youth activities on Saturday night, was it every Saturday night thing pretty much or ever other one?

Verghese: (45:35) There were Saturday activities in general, most Saturdays but we had special Saturdays, where that is when the pizza's were served, and you would have thousands usually joining you.

Miller: (45:49) Like a youth rally.

Verghese: (45:50) Yeah, they were frequent.

Miller: (45:54) And then on Sunday, on Sunday morning, the bus ministry, that was primarily for elementary aged students?

Verghese: (46:02) No, it was for high school-ers too.

Miller: (46:05) High school-ers too.

Verghese: (46:06) They would separate them by age, high school for high school-ers and different ages groups.

Miller: (46:11) OK, and then was there, for kind of your core kids, the ones who are church member's children, did you have Sunday evening services as well too then for the youth, or was it just the Sunday evening church types?

Verghese: (46:27) There was a special service for the teenagers and children so, on evening too, yeah, on Sunday evening, because the Thomas Road Church was used for the members and other students and so on for service.

Miller: (46:41) Now did you know Dr. Jim Vineyard, was he at?

Verghese: (46:45) Now he, Jim Vineyard, Jim Vineyard, he was here, I didn't have much contact with him, I think he left, rather early, yeah.

Miller: (46:54) OK, and...

Verghese: (46:54) Hang on...Jim Vineyard, he was not the same Jim I was thinking about.

Miller: (47:01) OK, that he, I think he ran the bus ministry for the children.

Verghese: (47:06) That's right, he was involved in bus ministry, but not with the college, or the college students.

Miller: (47:11) And was there anything that went on with the youth, with either the children or the youth throughout the week? Did they have AWANA clubs?

Verghese: (47:20) Excellent AWANA club.

Miller: (47:23) And when did that typically meet in those early days?

Verghese: (47:24) Wednesday evenings, it was main service, the kids...

Miller: (47:28) The children were in AWANA, though, OK. Now did they do anything with the Word of Life curriculum?

Verghese: (47:37) Correct, they used that in many of the classes and of course summer time, many would go to Word of Life, our students worked in the Word of Life camp in summer time. We had a close association with Brother [Jack Wordsend] and Dr. Falwell praised his ministry at [Adirondack], yeah.

Miller: (48:03) OK, now, you had mentioned in your resume, working with the college and career group, tell us a little bit about that.

Verghese: (48:11) We had Academy teachers, all of them just about, I assume, except one, who was single and college students, now this is just about the early stages of the seminary. There were no activities for those of us who were that age, twenty six, twenty five or so.

Miller: (48:33) You are already a college graduate and so its, you know, college and career aged and so what did you do for them?

Verghese: (48:40) I had the privilege of starting one, so college students all joined, we would go to Roanoke for ice skating or we had many, many activities around here and the Gym, at the island, then we would have special guests coming from different parts of the country, they would preach on Sunday so they come earlier and we would have some special activities, bible studies, singing, lots of singing with instruments and so on, it was a very lively group, but Sunday morning also, we had Sunday school for the college and career class.

Miller: (49:16) Now coming from another country did you ever feel any prejudice? Here at...

Verghese: (49:23) Liberty?

Miller: (49:25) At Liberty or the Virginia area and that?

Verghese: (49:26) I didn't know that prejudice exists, so at Liberty, I never felt any, it is a real factual statement. I was part of the kids, I lived in the dorm, I had to look at my skin sometime to remind myself that I am not white, you know? [*Laughter*] We were like one family.

Miller: (49:53) Brothers and sisters in Christ.

Verghese: (49:54) Correct, yeah.

Miller: (49:56) And, well that's good. Let's talk about Dr. Falwell, what was your relationship with him? Later on it got to be, when you have five hundred faculty, it is hard to develop a personal relationship but did you have a personal relationship with Dr. Falwell?

Verghese: (50:12) Because it was very small when we started and we worked together on many projects, I had the privilege of working with him personally, travelling with him. We would pray together sometimes in his office and of course involved in many projects and other decisions and so on, also I was with him in television ministry, I assisted him with contacting other people and

so on, a small amount because he had his brother in law taking care of some of those things, yeah.

Miller: (50:55) Well tell us about Jerry Falwell the man, what are some of your memories with him? Maybe a memorable quote or a story with just some time that you spent together, anything that you remember about Dr. Falwell, the man or his vision or his philosophy?

Verghese: (51:12) He had an undying vision, his motivation also was indistinguishable, in a sense it was inter-related so you couldn't muffle his drive, he had enormous drive to accomplish the goals he had set at the time to reach America for Christ and to produce thousands of Champions and millions, and you call them Champions and I think he accomplished that very well, as I travel around the country. Now there are so many things I can talk about Dr. Falwell, there is a funny one, there are so many funny ones, but I will refrain from a few but one, we were going to a rally in D.C., a large rally with buses and students all travelling, though we were in front of Jerry Falwell's car, maybe one of two cars in the front. It was so hot, so the car was packed, there were maybe eight people in the little car, so I was driving, I had the window down and he comes running at the stop sign, comes running from behind, we didn't see him and he is trying to grab my pens and so on and choking me at the same time [laughter] like mugging in D. C., so he would do lots of goofy things.

Miller: (52:53) Practical jokes.

Verghese: (52:55) Practical jokes, yeah.

Miller: (52:56) Any quotes that you remember something that he said that stuck out to you?

Verghese: (53:00) He had so many, quotes...I don't recall any one, he had many nuggets, especially like Champions for Christ and those kind of things, yeah.

Miller: (53:15) So then what precipitated your move to leave Liberty and what have you been doing in your ministry with your life since then?

Verghese: (53:25) I left Liberty to pursue brain research, that has being my passion as I indicated, so I went to a number of universities and pursued brain research, unfortunately the brain research was still a frontier then primarily because we didn't have all the imaging

technologies that we do today, even today I would consider brain is still a frontier and being a follower of the brain and the Bible, I indicate often on my television and radio interviews around the world that the Bible is the most advanced book in giving information about human character, personality and even emotional functions and so on, in other words, people would say, I think it is ignorant to say that the Bible is not a science book, Bible doesn't teach this and that but as they discover more of the brain, I won't leave the other sciences behind because they are all crude compared to the brain, there is no science that is so advanced as neuroscience, nothing, one neuron in the brain, although we have the same of a neuron in the G. I tract, it is called an [interrex system], one neuron is like a huge factory. It is more, many, many times more advanced than the space shuttle, if space shuttle is an advanced, so called advanced technology, technological wonders, brain is a million times more advanced so I pursued my avid desire and that is one of the reasons that you have seen my *Brain Power* book, and you have seen my other...

Miller: (55:41) I look forward to reading that, speaking of books, one question that I hadn't asked you before is of interest to me. What was the Library like in those days?

Verghese: (55:50) Well in the academy days, in other words when we were at Thomas Road. We had a very little library, students had a difficult time finding anything worthwhile to do research, but shortly after we had lots of people donating books and then Dr. Elmer was hired to be downtown they rented a whole place, leased and we had more things to use for research and so on. Its history, we had more books coming from all over the country.

Miller: (56:28) And I believe they even bought another library's collection.

Verghese: (56:31) Two, three of them, libraries they bought, yeah.

Hall: (56:33) So that, the first collection, you might say was at the academy?

Verghese: (56:41) Correct, that is where they did their little research some Bible commentaries and a few books and so on, not much.

Hall: (56:48) The they moved downtown to the...

Verghese: (56:50) Correct, once. And we had another one at Timberlake too, classes were held at Timberlake...

Hall: (56:59) Timberlake Church?

Verghese: (57:00) School.

Hall: (57:00) School, OK.

Verghese: (57:02) So lots of students went there for classes in the morning, they were bussing them, and we had a library there too, lots of students were bussing there.

Hall: (57:11) Now was this the old high school building?

Verghese: (57:14) Correct.

Hall: (57:16) OK, alright.

Miller: (57:18) Did Jerry Falwell ever teach any classes?

Verghese: (57:20) If he did it was before my time, he was so busy with so many things.

Miller: (57:25) With other things then.

Verghese: (57:27) He was involved with motivating students, he spoke in most of the chapels, unless he had guests.

Miller: (57:33) Let's talk about chapels for a moment, how often did you have daily chapels and he was the Wednesday speaker, how did that work, were there daily, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, do you recall when the chapels were?

Verghese: (57:47) Every Wednesday we had chapel and of course there were other meetings that went on but Dr. Falwell was the key speaker on most Wednesdays, we would have guests that he would bring, but and I have to ask, did we have chapel everyday dear? I didn't think so, we wouldn't have time. It was on a Wednesday, Wednesday is when we had them.

Miller: (58:09) Well, OK, any other story that we haven't had a chance to really talk about, I am wondering, were there any memorable students, you mentioned Vernon Brewer. I am wondering

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if there are any students who just stick out in your mind, either because of what they have gone onto since then or maybe they were a close friend when you were kind of just above them by a

few years as a faculty member there, any students that stick out in your mind?

Verghese: (58:37) Quite a few, one is Tom Dicks, he was helping me in the island and you

probably know him, he teaches at, I think...

Hall: (58:49) At Regent.

Verghese: (58:50) Regent, right? Yeah, yeah I knew yesterday that he was teaching there, and

my wife knows some of them, they used to goof around with them, since I was a faculty and

student I only spent half the time with students. What is the other name we were talking about

last night? [Steven Vandergrilt], but there was a, the fellow that sang with Bill Gaither, oh yeah,

Mark Lowry, OK, that is right, Mark Lowry, he was goofy then too. [Laughter]

Miller: (59:24) Let's do this if you don't mind, why don't I get you and your wife to switch

places, would you mind talking to us for a few moments our would you prefer not to?

Verghese: (59:34) It's my pleasure.

Miller: (59:41) And we are kind of putting you on the spot here but I appreciate your willingness

to talk with us, tell us your name again.

Rita Verghese: (59:48) It's Rita Verghese.

Miller: (59:50) What was your maiden name?

Rita Verghese: (59:50) Rita Gilbo

Miller: (59:54) Gilbo, G-I-L-B-O?

Rita Verghese: (59:54) Yes.

Miller: (59:57) And could you tell us a little about what it was like to be a female student in

Liberty at that day, we already talked about, well the girls had to wear skirts to classes and things

like that, but I imagine with high heels and that red Georgia clay there were some problems, just

chat a little about this if you would?

Rita Verghese: (1:00:12) Well, yes they definitely had a dress standard in those days, the women had to wear their skirts below their knee, a little below their knee, usually long sleeved, no jeans, pants, they would have to be a pant suit, if you were going to wear pants, jeans were not allowed.

Miller: (1:00:34) Now that was definitely for classes but what if you were going to be shopping at a store, was that all of the time, if you were out of the dormitory you weren't allowed to wear pants or was it just for classes?

Rita Verghese: (1:00:43) No, even when you weren't in class, you had to, if you were going to wear pants it couldn't be jeans, they were just very strict about the jeans and walking from the women's dorm, there were three dorms that they had built for the women, further down on the island and they were divided into three sections, each of the dorms where we had six women in each section and they finally did put in a little pathway for the women to walk on, you know? It wasn't just dirt then, partly it was and then they finally filled that in. It has asphalt so that you could walk down, it was a little bit of a trek to go from the dorm down there to the cafeteria and pick up the bus.

Miller: (1:01:31) Well now, did you have rules for chaperones?

Rita Verghese: (1:01:35) Yes.

Miller: (1:01:37) OK, what was the rule, at, I mentioned Pillsbury, that is my alma mater. I was a little Bible College in the seventies there that was very, very similar to the way Liberty was in those days but you, if you were going to go off on a date you had to have one more female, than there were, at our school you weren't even allowed an even number, there had to be one more female.

Rita Verghese: (1:02:02) Correct, correct they did, you had to get a pass, you had to get a dating slip, they had to know who was on it where you were going to go, when you were going to be back because they had the curfew of course and one incident was I wanted to go home for Thanksgiving, but I didn't have anyone who was going in my direction that was a female, but there was one fellow from my church, who went to my church, he was willing to take me but I couldn't go because I didn't have another female, so I ended up staying there for Thanksgiving.

Miller: (1:02:33) All because of the chaperone rule.

Rita Verghese: (1:02:35) Correct.

Miller: (1:02:36) And you just didn't think of anything differently, you might have resented it a little bit of the time, but that was just the way things were.

Rita Verghese: (1:02:42) Yes, that was just the way things were.

Miller: (1:02:44) And I recall those days very well, and so where could students go on dates?

Rita Verghese: (1:02:52) Well you could go, well you definitely couldn't go to the movies, I didn't go on a whole lot of dates, but we went bowling or if they had a game, you know, the football game or basketball game, ice skating, roller skating around here, but there wasn't really, we didn't have anything going on as far as on campus, we didn't have anything available so we had to go into town.

Miller: (1:03:23) And Lynchburg is really built up; as you look around here now, all of the things on Wards Road weren't there then. Movies were definitely out, not even Walt Disney or "G" movies, no movies in the movie theater, they didn't have DVD's and things like that in those days and so it was a very different thing. Now unlike your husband who was here as a faculty member and later came back and took some classes like that, you were a student in those days, tell us about the academics in those days and how many hours did you take and how about the academic rigor of your classes.

Rita Verghese: (1:04:00) OK, well I was a youth ministries major, I was interested in the youth, I had gotten saved when I was fifteen and the Lord seemed to lay that on my heart, to pursue the youth ministry. So we had lots of practicum classes with that and then of course we had the requirements that we had to have, the basic requirements and I mean, I was always a very good student, but my average, for the first two years I averaged around twelve to fourteen credit hours, then I decided I was going to change my major, because I think I found out that I couldn't spend all the time that was required to be involved in the outside activities to do my academics, so I thought "Maybe I will do something else." So I did some psychology and some speech and then I decided, "Well I don't think I like that so much." So then I switched back, I ended up, in my last year especially taking twenty credit hours per semester and that was pretty rigorous for me. But I

did manage to be able to graduate in four years because I believe that many, there may have been students who were caught up in this, they require so many graduate, under credit hours, but it was, they were not in fully informed until I think the junior year, or the 3rd year, so you were scrambling to get all that in and try to finish up in four years, I believe had to do another year, or maybe they didn't graduate, I don't know.

Miller: (1:05:31) So, did you actually graduate from Liberty?

Rita Verghese: (1:05:33) Yes I did, in 1976.

Hall: (1:05:35) What was the atmosphere about studying I mean, the library was not really accessible.

Rita Verghese: (1:05:42) Well they, yes, I lived on the island my first year and then my second and third year lived at the Stewart Arms Hotel, they did have a, underneath on the bottom floor they did have a place you could study, if you wanted to, or in your room so I did spend my time down there, down below, doing my studies because I didn't have a car of my own and it was a little bit of a hassle to have to take the bus and travel over to the library and back, I just basically chose to stay in my room or do that, so that was, it seemed to work out all right.

Miller: (1:06:16) Now things were kind of crowded in the rooms that you were in, both, how many on the island and how many there at the Stewart Arms?

Rita Verghese: (1:06:23) On the island there were six girls in the dorm, six girls in each section, and then we had one big huge bathroom that we all shared, it was like four sinks and four showers at one end so I didn't really have much privacy there on the island with all those roommates and then when I was in my second year at Stewart Arms, I had two other roommates, I had and we had like a three-tiered bunk-bed and on the one wall and then we had the dresser and everything on the other side so you just had a little bit of a section to walk around and move in and you had your own bathroom though, you didn't have to share that, and then my second year I had just one roommate and then my fourth, my fourth year I actually, I was, I lived off campus, my four year so.

Miller: (1:07:07) And now they were fussier in those days about who they allowed to live off campus, what did have to do in order to have permission to live off campus?

Rita Verghese: (1:07:16) Well, I believe they let the seniors, the seniors, they didn't seem to have too much of a problem, and I just let them know that I had a roommate and who I was living with and pretty much, and I didn't really.

Miller: (1:07:30) Get permission.

Rita Verghese: (1:07:30) And I didn't really get permission. So from what I understand I didn't really have to do anything special,

Miller: (1:07:39) And it just seems like from back in those times, in the seventies when I went to college and you went to college I think your husband mentioned at least one child, how many children did you and your husband have.

Rita Verghese: (1:07:50) We have three.

Miller: (1:07:51) Three, OK and so you are probably familiar with their lives today, dating is very different in those days. There were many girls that seemed like, in the 1970's, many young ladies, I guess you would call them that were coming for their MRS. You know? Was that the case at Liberty as well too? There were many women who weren't particularly interested in completing their degree, they were just wanted to find a husband and do whatever he did?

Rita Verghese: (1:08:18) Yes, yes. That's true too. I have to say that I had many gentlemen who would ask me out and sometimes it got to be a little too much. They would ask me, and so I just decided at one point I was not going to bother with anybody, and then I happened to meet my husband and he was saying that I said he didn't talk to women, well, that was his quote that he gave me one day at the dinner table, he told me he doesn't talk to girls. [Laughter] So I said OK. So somehow the Lord worked it out that we did communicate again, for four days, it happened that I was going out to work in a church out there that was a sister church of Thomas Road Baptist Church, it was [Berrean] Baptist of California, and I wasn't even, I didn't even know that they were having any of the Youth majors were going out there, but I was on the list apparently, so I hurried up, grabbed up and got ready and I ended up going on the bus and I happened to be the only seat left was by him, so he didn't have a choice to ignore me at that point.

Miller: (1:09:23) OK, and the rest is history as they say.

Rita Verghese: (1:09:23) That's right.

Miller: (1:09:24) Now were you involved at all in the "I Love America" rallies?

Rita Verghese: (1:09:28) No, I was not involved in that.

Miller: (1:09:30) OK, and did you go out on any trips representing the college? Did you go out on the London trip?

Rita Verghese: (1:09:39) Yes, I did.

Miller: (1:09:39) OK, tell us a little bit about that London trip.

Rita Verghese: (1:09:42) Yes, well we went into London and saw all the, well we went to [Spurgeon Tabernacle] and we went to Shakespeare country and we just saw the historical, historical...of course Hyde's Park and all those things. And they just basically had some lectures; I think when we were at the Spurgeon Tabernacle. Yes, and the British Museum, those kind of places, we just hung around you know? We had our friends with us.

Miller: (1:10:18) About how many people went on that trip?

Rita Verghese: (1:10:18) Oh, I guess it was the entire, entire...

Miller: (1:10:22) The entire student body at the time.

Rita Verghese: (1:10:22) Yes, they had two planes, they had two chartered planes that took off one day after the other, because they couldn't accommodate everybody on one. So they had two planes I think, that took the students.

Miller: (1:10:37) And so I would be interested to know why, were there any other colleges you considered and what was Liberty doing in those days to recruit students and why did you choose to come to Liberty?

Rita Verghese: (1:10:50) Well I really believe it was the Lord's providence in my life, because, as I had said I was raised Catholic and I had gotten saved when I was fifteen and there was a group of students who had come into one of the churches I was visiting, I was invited by a friend to come here them, there were these students coming from Indiana as a revivalist team, so I went

for that and I got all excited about that and I said to the Lord, "if that is what you want me, I would like to go to that school." and so I was talking to my pastor about and I said I was going to the school in Indiana and he said "Oh no you don't want to go there!" and I said "I don't?" he said "No, you want to go to Liberty Baptist College." He says "Larry..." which was one of the members there and he had just gone, [Larry Stoffel] "He went there and he just loves it." And he said "You have to go too" and so I said "OK" and being of Catholic background, I had to approach my mother and my father had actually passed away the year before and he had brought me to the Lord and so I said, "Lord, if this is your will my mother is going to say yes", she will, I wasn't so sure so when I did approach her she said "Yes, if that is what you want to do." So I did and I took the step of faith and came here to Liberty and got involved with the youth, the practicum and the youth ministries and of course Mr. Love was just a wonderful teacher and motivator.

Miller: (1:12:21) And so what was your original home town, where were you born?

Rita Verghese: (1:12:26) So at the time I was living in Clinton, Maryland.

Miller: (1:12:27) OK, and well that reminded me of something else and that was the great influence that pastors and youth pastors had on the children in those days and I am thinking of the difference with the children today. I have four children that are now all out of college age, I have one who is a sophomore here at Liberty and there is a lot of other factors that students look at today as far as, what kind of job can I get and what are the academic credentials, but in that day, a lot of young people went to where their youth pastor said that they ought to go and it was very often where he went, if he knew something there. That is kind of a difference in the history these days, as far as the relationship of students then to Jerry Falwell in those early days, do you have any stories about Dr. Falwell and his involvement with the students or maybe that you got to meet him personally and that?

Rita Verghese: (1:13:22) Well he was always around, I mean when he was in town, because he was always travelling, doing his promoting with "I Love America" rallies, I believe it was called in those days and he would come around and shake hands and say "How are you doing?" and then he would always seem to want to be there to see how things were going of course, which is great and of course, like my husband said either on Wednesdays challenging the students in

chapel and I did, he did have the seniors over to his home for a get together in the senior year, so I had an opportunity to meet him there. One time I did meet him, not intending to meet him, my husband had asked me to go for a banquet and so he, we were sitting together and he came up and said hello to my husband and he had an opportunity to meet me then too so that was about the only time we really had a chance to talk to him.

Miller: (1:14:27) So you went over to Dr. Falwell's home here in Lynchburg, now did you know any of his children?

Rita Verghese: (1:14:33) I personally did not know, I, he would talk about them of course and, you know, you would see the pictures of them and so forth, but I did not know Jeannie or Jonathan or Jerry that well.

Miller: (1:14:46) OK and were there any memorable quotes from those Wednesday chapel services or something he would talk about all the time. Seemed like in the later years he would often talk about as we approach the 50th anniversary of Thomas Road he would talk about his early days, I am sure he shared some stories of that.

Rita Verghese: (1:15:07) Well yes I mean, his, his, from the Donald Duck Bottling Company and how he himself would say he went out to door to door knocking on doors, you know I always was very avid at taking notes every time, but, and I used to keep these notes and I was actually trying to find those note cards the other day because I would actually write down his quotes, but unfortunately...

Miller: (1:15:27) Not coming to mind right now.

Rita Verghese: (1:15:29) Oh we has always just, you know, "Don't give up" and "Don't be discouraged."

Miller: (1:15:34) "Don't ever quit."

Rita Verghese: (1:15:34) "Don't quit", correct, you know because God has enabled you to do whatever He has for you that what He has planned for you He will equip you and it was always you are looking up, looking upwards and just challenged, being challenged to know that God is greater than your circumstance, no matter what is put in front of you, you will be able to take it,

God will be able to help you overcome any obstacle that comes in your way so, it yeah, he was always there for that so I really appreciated his motivation.

Miller: (1:16:09) Well as you look forward at the future of Liberty, any thoughts at a look ahead, what do you foresee as the future of Liberty?

Rita Verghese: (1:16:18) I think Liberty is doing wonderfully. God is truly blessed Liberty from the infancy stage of the college, the vision that was birthed by Dr. Falwell, it definitely has gone beyond his imagination I would say and all his provisions and I personally am excited, I have my daughter coming here next year and possibly my son in the spring term, my older son graduated from here and found his wife as well, he met his wife here and I think that this is a wonderful, evangelistic college that, it will birth many evangelists, for this future, for our younger generation because they are what counts for our future church and for evangelism as a whole.

Hall: (1:17:11) You say your son just graduated?

Rita Verghese: (1:17:14) Yes.

Hall: (1:17:14) Do you ever compare notes with him about what your student experience was and what he experienced here and [*laughter*], differences.

Rita Verghese: (1:17:21) Well he does, he knows that there is no comparison, he was an RA, he was a Spiritual Life, Prayer Director and in his dorm and an RA he saw all the things that needed to be done and he, and he just loved it, he just loved Liberty. And he learned so much from here and from what he is doing now, I really feel that Liberty really helped him to be a confident young man and bold in his faith.

Miller: (1:18:00) Well, good. And with that we will conclude today's interview with Dr. C. Samuel Verghese and his wife, Rita Verghese. This interview has been conducted as part of the Oral History Project of the Liberty University Archives.

[End of Interview]