Oral History Interview of Randy Tomlin

Date of Interview: February 9, 2011

Location of Interview: Recording Studio of the Student Radio Station, 90.9 The Light

Name of Interviewee: Randy Tomlin

Name of Interviewers: Mike Cobb, Dr. Cline Hall

Interview Length: (1:00:58)

Notes:

Cobb: (0:01) Welcome to this interview in the oral history project of the Liberty University archives. This interview is being conducted on February 9, 2011. Today we're interviewing Randy Tomlin. My name is Mike Cobb and I will be conducting the interview today along with Dr. Cline Hall.

Hall: (00:17) Good afternoon.

Cobb: (0:18) Greetings Dr. Hall, greetings Mr. Tomlin.

Tomlin: (0:21) Good evening.

Cobb: (0:23) Well let's go ahead and get started. Tell us some general biographical information about yourself; where were you born, where did you grow up?

Tomlin: (0:30) I grew up here in Lynchburg, Virginia. Actually was born in Bambridge, Maryland but I was only there for just a very short time two months I think. And then we moved here, where my mom is from the area, Farmville actually. And then we moved to Lynchburg where she met my father and we've lived here, resided here ever since.

Cobb: (0:54) Oh Okay. So like I said a little bit of family history you said that you said that your mom was originally from the Farmville area?

Tomlin: (1:02) Yes she's my her side of the family grew up down in Farmville, Virginia. And her two sisters live there in Farmville in the country and that's where we were as young kids were raised first few years of my life. My brothers and sisters, I have two brothers and one sister but then we moved to Lynchburg when I was around four or so four or five.

Cobb: (1:33) Was that a job or employment that brought you first here?

Tomlin: (1:35) No she meet my father

Cobb: (1:36) Ok like you said.

Tomlin: (1:38) Now and they've been married now since going on close to 30 years.

Cobb: (1:46) Oh great. Now were you reared a Christian?

Tomlin: (1:49) No I was not. We went to church, my grandmother was a very strong influence in my life growing up because she was a very strong Christian and went to a Presbyterian church down in Cumberland and I remember we would go there on occasion whenever we were down there as kids and visited. But was not raised in a as a Christian, really knew about the Lord but not didn't ever make a decision for the Lord until I actually came to Liberty.

Cobb: (2:24) Oh wow okay.

Tomlin: (2:24) As a freshmen is when I really was confronted with the gospel and really at that time really knew my need for Jesus. And I had plenty of witnesses here that spoke to the life changing power that He has within us and I gave my life to the Lord in November of 1985.

Cobb: (2:53) Tremendous. So education then when in high school or Amherst area? Or did you go to, okay.

Tomlin: (2:57) Yes as I was saying we lived in Lynchburg till I was in the fifth grade and then we moved to Madison Heights

Cobb: (3:07) Okay.

Tomlin: (3:08) Which is where I spent most my young years growing up. I went to Amherst high school, and played football and baseball there.

Cobb: (3:17) Two sport athlete then okay.

Tomlin: (3:17) Yeah. Stayed busy you know then graduated in 1985 from Amherst and started here at Liberty in the fall of '85.

Cobb: (3:31) Great.

Hall: (3:32) We'll get into something about your recruitment and all that a little bit later, but what was it like growing in Lynchburg? It's much different now I guess than it was then?

Tomlin: (3:42) Oh yes.

Hall: (3:42) What was your favorite pastime what did you do as a young person?

Tomlin: (3:45) Oh it was so surely a lot different now than what it was. You know growing up I was involved in a lot in sports activities was a major part of my life. But we are a pretty big family oriented family as well. We got together a lot as a family things were pretty much

centered around what the family did and visited my grandmother a lot. I really wasn't an outgoing person to get involved in a whole lot of things other than the sports aspect of it. But there was definitely I remember a lot at that time it was you know Liberty Baptist College and the influence of Liberty throughout the community and just certainly knew about Liberty.

Hall: (4:33) So you graduated in 1985 from high school. But you were not connected with Thomas Road Baptist church or any organization. So what was your impression of the early days of Liberty as you were growing up for instance in high school?

Tomlin: (4:49) Well it was what I remember and recall was the stand that Dr. Falwell took within the community, and just the continual growth of the school. There was you know there was talk about Liberty as being a Christian school and for me growing up a non-Christian it was more of a religious school you know and all the rules that were here and all the things you had to do and I knew a couple of people that went here and you know hanging around them they would talk about what went on here. And it was an interest you know kind of like wow you know I don't know if I want to do that or not. And just because my the influence that I had in my life at that time. But it was a definite you know a influence around the community with Liberty. I remember we did attend Thomas Road on occasion and the only reason I remember is cause back in the old days they sent buses around which they still do I assume, and when we lived in Lynchburg we lived on Main street up on White Rock Hill and the bus would come around we would be put on the bus and taken to Thomas Road and then come back on the bus. And the reason I remember it so much is because we used to stop at McDonalds they used to feed us and that was a fond memory of that, but that was my only influence from Thomas Road. And then we moved to Madison Heights when we moved out there kind of lost track until my high school years.

Hall: (6:34) Now you played of course baseball in high school. Anything particular you want to say about your team on the high school? Did you win any championships on your team when you was there?

Tomlin: (6:48) Well you know Amherst is a country school so you know it's a county school that at the time was growing. Baseball was probably the most successful sport there at that time. Football was huge, I played both sports. Football always gets the most publicity, but we did well as baseball and I believe we did win the district once or twice as I was playing, and went to regionals once, but no championships as far as that concern. But mostly it was a fun time on the team that I have with Jim [Percopio] as the head coach and Randy Thomas was the other head coach and you know Donnie Wilkerson was the coach as well, football and baseball. They were the kind of influences in my life at the time, my development with both sports, and it was a fun time. I because with all those men were great influences on the kids that were there for you know to take stand for being men of character and doing things the you know the right way.

Hall: (8:01) So were there several colleges and universities seeking recruitment for you, in other words on this team?

Tomlin: (8:09) Yes there were schools that were recruiting me. A lot of Virginia schools, I got letters from all over from Virginia Tech, JMU, and there was talk from UVA, and VMI. And some out of state schools, I got letters from. But the thing for me growing up and too, and our family it was the necessity was needed, I needed a scholarship to go to school, and you know the bigger schools offered things to come at the time was to walk on a be a part of the team. And the recruiting process from what I remember was pretty tough as is on some kids, cause you want to have the best opportunity you can and sometimes your expectations are higher than they should be. I wanted to go to JMU, that was my school of choice and JMU recruited me. They came and watched but as my stature, I'm not very big, you know and trying to play football and not only being 5'10", 5'11." You know you don't have that big of a future if you're a really fast runner. And being quarterback I certainly was too small to be a unless you're Doug Flutie. And then baseball you know at the time my development, I wasn't the best on the team. I had good skills but didn't I didn't really qualify in their terms to play at a high division 1 program. So

Cobb: (9:56) Were you pitcher then for Amherst too?

Tomlin: (9:59) I was pitcher and also played the outfield.

Cobb: (10:01) Okay.

Tomlin: (10:03) And got recruited as both, actually the game JMU came to watch me I pitched and did well but they told me I just couldn't compete

Hall: (10:16) Now who from Liberty approached you? Who was the recruiter and why did you decide to come to Liberty rather than?

Tomlin: (10:24) Well that's the story. I never saw Liberty come and see me. I the first time that I heard from Liberty was Coach Worthington called me at home, and told me on the phone that they wanted me to come to Liberty. This was actually after my towards the end of my senior year, and they Coach Worthington told me that he had you know heard a lot about me from the community, and the type of player that I was and that he wanted me to come to Liberty. What made me decide to come there was a kind of looking back you can see the Lord working in my life that I had one of my best friends in high school was killed in a motorcycle accident and he had he was going to Liberty. And actually two weeks before he was killed he got saved, and it was at his house that I met Coach Worthington. And immediately I knew that there was something different in him. No coach had ever or man really had ever approached me and talked to me as a person that I had worth and meant something. And you could just feel and sense the love of the Lord through him, and then when he called me later and offered me to come to Liberty there was no hesitation. Because I at that point the baseball was important, I loved doing it, but I wanted to be where he was.

Cobb: (12:17) Oh cool.

Tomlin: (12:18) Because of that influence

Hall: (12:19) Now did he offer a scholarship at this point did he offer a scholarship to you?

Tomlin: (12:23) Yes, he offered me being a local growing up here in the city I got he offered me a full scholarship. So at the when I first came in I lived at home and got school paid for, but once I got on campus my freshmen year a lot of the guys that were on my team and I played with and I stayed in the dorms cause for me I loved Liberty, the draw coming here because the influence of the Lord here. It drew me here, I didn't want to leave, I did not want to go home. So I stayed I slept on the floor or I slept in an extra bunks. I stayed because I felt like I would miss something if I went home and so later Coach Worthington upped my scholarship so I could stay on campus.

Hall: (13:27) So Ok tell us, you came in fall of '85 is that correct?

Tomlin: (13:31) Yes.

Hall: (13:32) So you were a student here then. Tell us something about student life in the '80's.

Tomlin: (13:38) Well it was culture shock for me. Cause you said going to a public high school to where you dressed and wore to what you wanted to and you coming at Liberty at that time the dress code you had to wear a tie to class you know had to be clean shaven you had to have hair cut a certain ways and all that stuff. You had curfew 10:30 curfew, and not only just a curfew but you had to have lights out.

Cobb: (14:07) Oh really? Okay.

Tomlin: (14:08) So and our RA (Resident Assistant) who you know hall RA we had probably the toughest one Dwayne Carson.

Hall: (14:17) Oh Dwayne Carson.

Cobb: (14:18) Dwayne Carson was your hall RA?

Tomlin: (14:19) Yes.

Cobb: (14:19) Oh wow!

Tomlin: (14:20) Yes, and so Dwayne's great.

Cobb: (14:23) Sure yea.

Tomlin: (14:24) I used to get on him cause when I was here he was a big influence on me as well. You know cause he knew from being here in the area of the life we lived and the culture that I was coming from. And but it was definitely a culture shock because of the rules that were

here. But again for me I didn't care. I needed it, and that's why it drew me here was for that structure and for the influence around me.

Hall: (15:00) So you were recruited as a pitcher, is that right?

Tomlin: (15:03) As a pitcher and as an outfielder

Hall: (15:05) Okay. So did you pitch games in your first year as a freshman?

Tomlin: (15:10) Yes, I pitched right away I played right away. Mostly as a pitcher but I did get some time in the outfield. And some at first base, but I knew that my success was going to come on the mound, and at the collegiate level anyway. But just because of you know I'm a realists I understood that I couldn't hit as well even though I loved to hit, I couldn't hit as well as a lot guys. So my opportunity would be on the mound then. And there were you know I was fortunate enough to be successful and again if it weren't for Coach Worthington's influence on the baseball side helping me tremendously because I was just a sponge in every aspect of my life, and I practically sat in his back pocket the whole time.

Cobb: (16:01) When you talk about Coach Worthington and you talked about Dwayne Carson were there other people on campus that had a stood out as having a positive impact on your life in your time here?

Tomlin: (16:12) Every teacher that I had I you know coming in as I was really a non-Christian I didn't know the Lord I didn't know anything about the Christian life. So everything around me you know I was observing, I noticed everything teachers did within the class, I noticed how they treated the students, I noticed when they prayed before class, during class with kids. Things like that. There were some professors that through the years have you know I drew closer to Dr. Linda Farver was one she was a big influence on helping me academically to understand how to balance athletics and my classes. She was a big influence help me to get structure to be able to study to get the grades. Dr. Bonheim was a big influence as a man and just how some of the classes I had with him, he was a man of character and talked to you, you know not just at you. Helping me a great deal even though you know it wasn't like I went to him, but just the times that we were there he really helped a lot in his example of things. And of course there were a lot of others Coach Worthington again was probably the number one influence on a daily basis. And then Bobby Richardson was here my sophomore year and my junior year and you know as well as Coach Hunton, Johnny Hunton.

Hall: (18:05) So that brings up some chronology here. Worthington was the coach when you came and Richardson came shortly after that is that correct?

Tomlin: (18:14) Yes Coach Worthington was the head coach when I came, and Jeff Mincey was the assistant coach, my freshman year. My sophomore year Bobby Richardson came in as the head coach and Coach Worthington took over as pitching coach. And so we had the benefit of

two major league players being our coaches but not just players you know they were two really huge examples of living the Christian life within major league baseball and leaving a lasting influence there. As well as Coach Hunton's inspiration and his guidance and living the Christian life and then studying the bible and as well as his experience playing professional baseball, we had Coach Richardson together.

Cobb: (19:03) What was it like having the professional players as coaches I've always thought that had to be interesting if with Bobby Richardson I mean his world series experience and the impact that he had on the Yankees, the people that he knew those Yankee dynasties. I mean was that ever something that was either brought up, was that something that you sort of considered when you were trying to interact with him? Or was he just a pretty standard guy?

Tomlin: (19:31) Well both of them are very humble, both of them are very I would say very they show God's love towards who they're with and doing that the experience that they had they brought to the field everyday demanded respect because of their because of that experience and what they've been through. Sure it would easily come to the field everyday with both of them was you know like oh my gosh I have the greatest I'm going to the greatest place I can for baseball. You know with all that's available there and coach Richardson would you know would tell a lot of stories of the Yankees and of you know during his playing time as well as Coach Worthington would tell about the things that happened with him during his playing time. Both baseball related and about living a Christian life, and their influence on the players that they played with.

Cobb: (20:39) I have to ask. I know we're interviewing you but would you mind sharing a story or two that kind of stood out from what they told.

Tomlin: (20:47) Well one particular Coach Richardson was good friends with Mickey Mantle and he often told of the times that he would share with Mickey about the Lord and just the reactions that Mickey would have to him and the bond that they grew together. And with Coach Worthington it was a daily thing, Coach Worthington every day came to the field we had the opportunity to grow spiritually cause he was going to tell us what he had learned what he was praying for what we should be doing, and relating life to us. And his experiences on the field he would you know tell stories about playing and about his you know coaching with and in playing Minnesota and you know the stories he told were really life related to us and but we you know it was I guess in a sense some sense says you just want I mean came onto the field it was you didn't think about it you just knew it was going to happen. And that's why it was so much fun and awesome to be here at that time.

Hall: (22:08) Now what about facilities as a Worthington field as we know today was that already here when you came?

Tomlin: (22:15) The field was.

Hall: (22:16) Oh the field was, but not what we call the club house?

Tomlin: (22:19) No when I was playing here all that was here was the field, and the dugouts. We had to dress in the dorms, which we were in the baseball dorm was in dorm 18 on the top of the hill. So we got dressed and walked down hill to the field and we didn't have all the equipment and things that they have now. Which at the time we didn't it didn't matter. Cause we had the opportunity to play division I baseball, and had two of the best coaches you could ask for and we went out you know and played. It was you know it wasn't any complaint about what we had it was let's go play. The you know the before I came it was much tougher. They had to practice over at Miller Park and you know the small fields driving Coach Worthington, driving his car around the infield to drag it you know. So when I came here it was the field was here and for me at that time was the best field I played on.

Cobb: (23:33) Oh.

Tomlin: (23:34) Yeah it's always been nice. The playing surface has.

Cobb: (23:38) You talked about dressing in the dorms, was there so game day. What was game day was there anything special and different about game day, other than the regular student.

Tomlin: (23:57) There were times when it got as my years went they got a little easier on game days we got to slip out of class early. Professors were really understanding, they were understanding but they were also hard because they made sure you knew exactly if you are leaving class early you had to make sure your work was done. And it was also good of the support from the professors because we'd see them at the games.

Cobb: (24:27) Oh ok.

Tomlin: (24:28) They'd come out, they'd come over and you know walk by, I don't know if they were checking on us.

Cobb: (24:34) See if you actually went to the game.

Tomlin: (24:37) On a game day it was kind of an excitement in the air at the time because baseball was one of the most successful sports on campus, it drew we drew well. And it was an excitement, but you know we'd get to the field around 2 o' clock.

Cobb: (24:59) Now how early before the game started did you have to get to the field?

Tomlin: (25:02) Well you would try to get there after the latest the last class you had. You tried to go to class as long as you can. Usually that was around the 1:30 range cause the game started at 3:00.

Cobb: (25:19) 3:00, ok.

Tomlin: (25:21) So we'd get there at 1:30-2:00, and you're changing and if you could get there early enough you were having batting practice and doing all the pre-game things on the field. For me as a pitcher I got I think my last class got out at like 1:10, so I could get there depending on which day it was but if I was pitching I could get there in plenty of time to stretch and get myself ready to go out and pitch.

Cobb: (25:51) Now you said with there only being dugouts someone got, you talk about dressing in the dorm room. If someone got hurt during a game or something like that I mean where did they get taken to to get checked up?

Tomlin: (26:04) Well there were trainers here if someone got hurt to that respect that needed to leave the field they'd go straight up the field to the Hancock Center.

Cobb: (26:10) The Hancock, ok.

Tomlin: (26:12) But I don't recall anybody needed that while I was here fortunately.

Cobb: (26:17) Ok.

Tomlin: (26:18) That's a good thing, they'd usually treat them with you know ice and whatever you need to on the field, and take care of them you know later. But we were well taken care of in every way. I never remember thinking we lacked in anyway.

Cobb: (26:38) Now teams I always figured had to have some sort of personality. Where there certain people on your team that had different roles, keep you guys light, keep you guys loose? I mean was there certain traditions or pranks that you guys did that kind of defined who you were, and gave your team an identity?

Tomlin: (26:54) Well I think there were certainly you get the personalities amongst your team that you know bring the unity the team you know that's what it helps a great deal. Through the years there were different characters in that sense. My freshman year Pat Sipe was here, he was one of the best hitters to ever come here. And he was just a goofball. And you know he didn't care anything about baseball and he kind of kept lose because of the comments he would make. You know to guys in situations that to keep them lose so. But there were some very strong, strong character guys on the team. I was a freshman with Tim Foster a short stop, he's very strong. Dave [Wonder] who was a catcher at the time too while I was here, just a number of great, great guys that you know we bonded together because of being together and you know growing close. Again the biggest influence though was coach Worthington. Our attitude amongst the team and the kind of team that we were was built around him. With the attitude he had about expectations of being men of character, and integrity, and playing the game hard, and representing the Lord while you played. He never accepted anything but a 100%, because he said that's what the Lord requires of us. And if Jesus played baseball he would play hard you know. But it you know I still keep in touch with a lot of the guys that were here. Dave Clark he lives in

the town, Todd [Swisher] is a police captain here. Together I mean a lot of good, close friends that we've kept in touch with over the years.

Hall: (29:05) Now people like Sid Bream and Guetterman were they get here at the same time or before or after you?

Tomlin: (29:09) They were here before me.

Hall: (29:11) Before?

Tomlin: (29:12) Yes. Yea we got to the opportunity and the privilege of seeing those guys kind of during their playing years as they would come back to in the fall for alumni games and things like that. And it was that was a pretty exciting time because of the stature of that, and where they had reached. And their success, they were having. It was you know and still is you know they're very strong men in the faith and great examples to a lot of people, myself included. I'm close to both of them and you know have through the years I got the benefit I guess of when I played with the Pirates I got to stay with Sid when they played in the big leagues for a while. So and over the years I've grown close Lee.

Hall: (30:07) Now on travel days how did you travel mostly or by bus or what?

Tomlin: (30:13) We had Mr. Charlie Elder who was our bus driver and Charlie

Hall: (30:18) He's still around

Tomlin: (30:20) Charlie got us where we needed to go. And it was always fun on the way. Charlie knew everybody and knew every place we needed to go, we got there fine and the bus was you know just a regular bus that we had. Had plenty of room, we had a card table on the bus we played Rook. Coach Worthington was a big Rook player and I got to his partner, which was fun. But they were it was you know the bus was a also a bonding time because you'd get the interaction with your buddies about whether school or about issues you're having or you know just things preparation for the game and after game so. Travel was fine, we ate good. That was one thing that coach Worthington made sure of. He would tell you we may not win but we're going to eat good. And we did. He'd work a deal better than anybody with restaurants and you know with the budget that we had and we never lacked for food. Like I said I never once thought that we never didn't get what we needed. You know we also got the benefit of bus talks with coach Worthington. Whether it was after a game or before a game, or if we got rained out or something he was subject to walk the bus and preach to us for the next half hour forty five minutes and it was good. That's where I learned a lot. I told you for me it was great, he could do it every day.

Hall: (32:03) This might be the place to talk about the conferences no big south at this point but what conference? Or did we belong to a?

Tomlin: (32:12) Well we are were still independent at the time '85 when I got here was we had baseball had just went division I on the year before in '84. And I believe it was the first division I sport on campus. But we played everybody. We played all the big schools around here now.

Cobb: (32:31) The Techs, the UVAs

Tomlin: (32:34) Yeah we played them. Really all the Virginia schools that we play now or they're still playing today; Tech, UVA and JMU, George Mason, Richmond, VCU and all those. And we competed we beat them.

Cobb: (32:52) Which ones are memorable games, I mean you've beaten Tech sometime or?

Tomlin: (32:56) Oh yeah. I guess my freshmen year would be a memory because I pitched a game up at Tech. When I came out of the game we were winning really big, like 16-5.

Cobb: (33:11) Oh.

Tomlin: (33:12) Yeah 16-something. And when I came out of the game we ended up losing [laughter]. And Coach Worthington tells the story because he says he would never do that again.

Cobb: (33:26) Take you out of the game.

Tomlin: (33:27) Take me out. And we ended up losing and then the next week Tech came to us and I happened to pitch again he didn't take me out I guess the whole game. We actually won 16-0.

Cobb: (33:41) Oh wow.

Tomlin: (33:42) So it was a kind of a funny story because it was a the way he can tell stories it's funny. With the way things were going into the game that ninth inning it was just one thing after another and we end up losing. But also you know we competed against ranked teams. As those years went on I don't remember exactly which year it might have been my junior year but we went to Miami and played against Maine University of Maine you know at the time it was ranked number nine in the country, and we beat them.

Cobb: (34:17) Oh you did, wow.

Tomlin: (34:18) And we played at the University of Miami's field and beat them in a tournament down in Florida National. But we weren't in any conference so we didn't really compete for any championships. Really everyday game we'd play was you know was valued to us to win.

Cobb: (34:41) Did you have a rival though while you were independent? That

Tomlin: (34:47) Oh every Virginian team was a rival.

Cobb: (34:49) Ok.

Tomlin: (34:50) I mean the just because of you know a young school going to division I playing against all the top division I programs already established and to some respect to out to prove that just because we were a Christian school does not mean that we settle for anything less than you know a 100% on the field and winning, but winning in the right way. And there were many opportunities because of that because of the heart of the team for the there were many opportunities after the game for witnessing. And many teams complimented or would tell Coach Worthington about and Coach Richardson about the you can just see the difference in our players, and how they played.

Hall: (35:47) What was your record at Liberty?

Tomlin: (35:49) Mine? To be honest I really don't know.

Hall: (35:52) Ok.

Tomlin: (35:53) I know that you know that as we started to grow after my freshmen year there was a big turnover of seniors. So we have had a younger group and we battled I think we didn't have a winning record my sophomore, junior year. But there were a lot of great young men that played on teams that we played hard and got better as a result. And laying that foundation for the development future development program of the expectation and work ethic and the ability that you need to compete. But it was there were some trying times, and it might have been '87 I think we only won twelve games and I think I won six of them. But it was never you know again every game was just an opportunity to go out and try to and win. You know we didn't you know there was no one person that was more important than anybody else. We were all out there trying to do our best and win that game.

Cobb: (37:11) I forgot that if I ask really quick I'm sorry. I forgot to ask you about your family. Are you mind if I ask are you married?

Tomlin: (37:20) Yes, yes.

Cobb: (37:21) Did you meet your wife here or?

Tomlin: (37:22) Well actually I met my wife after I was drafted to the Pirates my junior year. I met her in Watertown New York in 1988, and we were married in 1990. And it's going on twenty one years.

Cobb: (37:42) Fantastic.

Tomlin: (37:42) We have three kids. My oldest [Koi] who was born while I was still playing with Pittsburg he's going on eighteen. I have a daughter whose fourteen Ellison, and I have a son Quade whose will be turning nine tomorrow.

Cobb: (38:00) Nine tomorrow alright. Happy Birthday Quade.

Hall: (38:05) Of course you played both under Worthington and Richardson?

Tomlin: (38:09) Uh huh

Hall: (38:10) Apart from their Christian testimonies was there any difference in the strategy that they used or techniques with the players? Were they different in that way?

Tomlin: (38:22) There was Coach Worthington really wanted you he wasn't a big mechanical guy. He for me as a pitcher only mechanics I ever got from him Coach Worthington was to get out in front and on top.

Cobb: (38:42) And that meant?

Tomlin: (38:44) Exactly you know we tried to figure out what does that mean?

Cobb: (38:48) Ok.

Tomlin: (38:49) But I understood what it meant because it's a just a term you got to get out and release the ball in front of you and your fingers have to stay through the ball to be able to throw strikes.

Cobb: (39:00) Ok.

Tomlin: (39:00) And it's just a relative term that you're trying to go after a point and a throw you're trying to get to. And but the big thing that I learned from Coach Worthington was more of the mental side and the game strategy side of what pitch to throw, where you're throwing it, why you're throwing it, and being able to adjust off of that. And Coach Richardson's kind of style was more of an aggressive style. Coach Worthington was aggressive too especially offensively. But Coach Worth ah Richardson kind of you know would certainly work with infielders a lot more cause he was such a great second baseman.

Cobb: (39:46) Second base man yeah.

Tomlin: (39:47) And also he came from South Carolina which you know had a great program then, and he was successful there so there was a kind of a raised expectation with him here of where the level you're supposed to play at. And he certainly pushed guys to try to get there. But the both of them had you know they were there for the asking and the opportunity to learn, all you had to do was listen. Every day you could learn something just by listening, and then during the games the same way, that's what I do during the game I didn't sit off in the dugout talking I sat right between them.

Cobb: (40:35) Really? Ok.

Tomlin: (40:36) Yeah because I wanted to hear what they were talking about related to the game. You know related to what they're seeing in the game. Especially Coach Worthington as he

would sometimes call pitches I would ask him why, you know what do you see those types of things. And that's what helped me become the pitcher that I was.

Hall: (40:57) Now Dr. Falwell usually attended most of the games I think. Did you get to personally know him, and what was your relationship with him?

Tomlin: (41:04) Well when I was here as an student and an athlete I met Dr. Falwell certainly when he came down to the field, and got to know him a little bit at that time. It was always an exciting time when he came around. You always had to be ready at any time for a punch in the abdomen, but which was fine. But you know when he came around there was always a sense of he came down to see his boys. He came down to see you know what was going on. Just checking on you to make sure everything was fine, you're doing ok. And you know Dr. Falwell had a great desire to win, he wanted to you know he wanted you to do everything you could to win on that field. And you know for the athletic programs to continually develop to be a top division I program. And you know he when he came down he was you know he would talk about his playing days.

Cobb: (42:09) Ok.

Tomlin: (42:09) And kind of you know what he did when he was younger and kind of mix in a little bit. And then he'd also throw you know throw his arm around and ask how are you doing you know those types of things.

Cobb: (42:22) Did he sit in the dugout with you guys?

Tomlin: (42:22) He came in the dugouts yeah. Which I didn't mind I thought it was kind of neat.

Cobb: (42:27) Now he didn't ever like heckle the other team or anything did he?

Tomlin: (42:30) Oh he heckled the umpires really bad, he and Terry Falwell.

Cobb: (42:35) And Terry Falwell, okay.

Tomlin: (42:36) Yeah but Dr. Falwell yeah they you know in kidding they would just get yelling at each other at the umpires, it was kind of funny. But it was fun for him to be around.

Hall: (42:51) Is there any one thing that stands out as you might say the most important thing you learned as a baseball player here at Liberty?

Tomlin: (43:00) I learned that you are it's not just playing baseball that's important. You play on the field ok you're trying to do the things you need to do for you to be the best baseball player. The best in the grand scheme of things that's not the most important thing, what matters is you know at Liberty at and certainly at in the Liberty program all eyes are on you all the time. The teams you play, people who come watch there is one from the Lord an expectation for you to be a light to those people and to show the love of the Lord as well as Christian character while

you're doing it. So in the course of games and in the course of life we are to reflect that and whatever happens to us, and not be and try not to be overcome by the situation but to be able to be a coming or to have the answer and to act like you have the answer to what's going on. Baseball was certainly a sport that is going to challenge you in every aspect emotionally and physically and mentally to where those things are going to come out and you have that opportunity every day to deal with issues within your own hearts such as anger when you're playing you get mad. You know what do you do when you get mad? Well you know you control your anger, you know don't vent. You know don't let you know unwholesome words come out of your mouth, you don't do those things. That's what reflects or the other team sees that's what people see around you, and that's what we're to do when we live our life, we're supposed to be that example to those we're around.

Cobb: (45:11) To try to switch gears just a little bit. When did you first get the idea or hear about the possibility of being drafted or playing ball beyond college?

Tomlin: (45:22) Well it was a surprise cause you know I'm a small left-hander pitcher. At the time I didn't think I threw very hard and certainly scouts and other people told me I didn't throw hard enough to play. That's what I heard my whole life about playing, anyway you didn't run fast enough, you couldn't throw hard enough, you couldn't play with bigger kids and all that. But I never believed them, and it was more about I'll show you type but I was fortunate then that enough people saw me a big influence and that was Coach Worthington and Coach Richardson to the fact of the ability that I was showing through as I got older and getting into my junior year I started to throw a little bit harder and then I pitched some games against some really big schools. One in particular I learned later where the Pirates heard about me was against NC State. We went down there and played and at that time they were like leading the nation in home runs and things like that. We lost 2-1 but I threw the whole game. And an umpire called the Pirates after the game and told them you need to come and look at this guy and then Coach Richardson was a big influence on telling the scouts that I mean you can fly out to but that guys is going to pitch in the big leagues and some of the scouts didn't believe him, fortunately the Pirates did.

Cobb: (47:02) I was just going to say.

Tomlin: (47:03) And so on draft day in 1988 you know I didn't expect anything cause I hadn't heard anything. I had no contact from any scouts at all. Second day of the draft Jack [Bone] the scout from Pirates called me and said Randy we just drafted you and we want you to be a Pittsburg Pirate. And I was like ok. *[Laughter]* You know then you know back then you know in the '80's you didn't sign for much. You know it was an opportunity, and I felt it was my one opportunity. Because of you know it just may not come again, so I said yes.

Cobb: (47:49) So you were drafted with the Pirates played with the Pirates, how long were you in the minors?

Tomlin: (47:55) I was drafted June of '88, started in Watertown which is a short season single A team and the summer of '88 and '89 I played in the Carolina league in Salem which is the same league that the Hill Cats play in here actually they come to Lynchburg the Red Sox where here at that time. In August of '89 I got moved to double AA which is Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and I started 1990 in Harrisburg. And then August of '90 I got called to the big leagues, so just over two years in the minor leagues. And then spent the next part of the next five years in the big leagues with the Pirates

Hall: (48:35) With the Pirates, ok.

Tomlin: (48:36) Yes. I came up there in the '90's season and right in the middle of pennant race and was fortunate enough to be on those three national league championship teams in '90, '91, '92, and then in '93 started to have some elbow problems. And eventually '94 my big league career ended because of some injuries and the strike, but then I did sign on and played a little bit with the Giants organization in '95 and the Red Sox in '96, and finished signing with Kansas City Royals in '97. I went to spring training with them but retired.

Hall: (49:29) What was the tell me about the experience for instance when you first went into professional ball. How was it different then obviously then what you'd been used to at Liberty?

Tomlin: (49:42) Well the biggest obstacle for me as I said I'm a guy that's strong-willed, determined. When I got drafted and went into the minor leagues I was I had the mentality I don't care if you're drafted number one or whatever I can play just as good as you, you have to do the same thing I have to when you get on the field. The just the opportunity to get into professional baseball I think kind of relaxed me a little bit, and kind of threw those doubts out of the way. From you know what I heard growing up about you can't do this you can't do that, I just got the opportunity to do it. And it was during that summer that I really that I bloomed I really I picked up velocity and start throwing harder and I had was able to be go through really fast cause of what I learned with Coach Worthington and but it was a definitely another culture shock for me. Life in professional baseball is very difficult. You're on your own, when I went to Watertown first place that I stayed at I was in a one bedroom about the size of this room right here with seven other guys, and then with rent that was way above what I could pay. So I only stayed there for a week and then I moved into a house with ten other guys, no furniture I slept on the floor in a corner in the living room on a little sleeping bag all my clothes lined up against the wall. But it didn't matter I had no problem with that at all because I was there for one reason. I was getting the opportunity to play professional baseball and that's what I was there for. And then it was during that summer when my wife so things got better in that respect. But my professional baseball is really tough because as you move up you make a little bit more but still very difficult because of travel. And long bus rides and the constant grind of having to you know go through twenty games in spring training and then a 140 games in the minor leagues. And with you know the expectations of you can't get tired you got to play, you got to show us what you got every time you step on the field.

Cobb: (52:40) How do you make a family work as a professional athlete?

Tomlin: (52:42) It's very difficult you got to have a wife that cares, and you got to have a wife that loves baseball like you do, and then you got to have family kids that love it too just like you do. And I'm truly blessed by the Lord that to have to have Janet cause she's as much of a baseball fan as I am, and has endured every step of the way. Met her in July my first year I was drafted in June I met her in July and she had been with me you know twenty three years.

Hall: (53:15) Did she attend any of the games?

Tomlin: (53:18) She attended every game she could get to. Started from the early years and then through the minor leagues through you know she lived in Watertown I lived in Virginia. So it was kind of tough as I would go to different spots she was at home obviously working and sometimes she would be, she would come around. But it was hard as you know and that was when we were dating, once we got married in '90 she was with me all the time. She would go on a lot of road trips in the big leagues and then as we had our first boy [Koi] you know we had made it a priority that again baseball isn't important it's what I do but it's not who I am. I'm first you know a man who loves the Lord, and then I love my family, and then it's my job but I'm a Christian and that's what's important. And family is number one that you have to stay together and if you don't do that in professional baseball then bad things happen. You know you're confronted with everything possible on demand in professional baseball the higher you go the easier it is and you're if you don't stay together then it becomes extremely tough.

Hall: (54:52) Coming out of Christian school of course what did how did that train you I guess you might say to be a Christian witness to those in the professional ball that many of them I'm sure were not Christians and how has this what role did you play there?

Tomlin: (55:10) I had three voices in my head I first had the Holy Spirit speaking to me, then I had Dr. Falwell speaking to me about you have come from Liberty University you are expected to act like a Christian and live for, and then I had Coach Worthington in my head saying you're a man of character you do this, and this. And you know it was you know it was expected to do that, and the Liberty helped me because of the training that I got here. I wish I had had my whole life; it would have prevented issues that certainly developed at a younger age and things like that. But certainly as the my time three years that I spent here helped me a great deal and in life training, being prepared for you know to go out and live in a world that really opposed to what you believe. And so it helped a great deal with me.

Hall: (56:20) Any particular instance that so far that your testimony your fellow players that lead them in the right direction you might say?

Tomlin: (56:31) I when first year I was drafted I played with Tim Wakefield. Tim was on my team he's been pitching with the Red Sox for a long time. Tim was drafted as a first basemen.

Cobb: (56:46) He was a knuckle baller now.

Tomlin: (56:47) He's a knuckle ball pitcher yes. And Tim struggled and there were times we were got close and there were great many times on the buses and on the trips and things that we would talk and you know I was just a friend to him and got to know him and there was towards the end of the season time where he was really dealing with some family issues and things. And he came to me and we got to really sit down and talk about the Lord and you know he tells because of that later he that's why he came to know the Lord. Not because of me trying to over bear him with my beliefs or with Christianity or the bible but because he knew that he could talk to me and I would give him straight answers, and sound advice. And for number one I cared about him, and there was some you know again that's what you try to do. You're to invest in those around you and to share what you've been given to us by the Lord. And you know that's what I did in my whole playing career.

Cobb: (58:08) Did you interact with any of the LU alumnus when you were a professional? I mean we talked about Sid Bream, and Lee Guetterman before. Did you ever pitch against I guess Sid Bream being a first baseman? Or did you ever pitch I guess I don't know if they did interleague play back then?

Tomlin: (58:25) Well actually yes I got the advantage I guess let's start here at Liberty when Sid came back for alumni games I always had to pitch and I always had to let him hit.

Cobb: (58:40) Yeah yeah.

Tomlin: (58:32) Coach Worthington would be on third base coaching box yelling at me Randy, Randy shaking his finger at me "they're here to see him", I mean I threw but

Cobb: (58:53) Just kind of ease

Tomlin: (58:54) Soft ones, and then once I was with the Pirates Sid signed with the Atlanta Braves and while he was with the Braves I got to face him one time and I think it was actually in the play offs and he grounded out to second base.

Cobb: (59:12) Oh ok. Kind of make up for all the times.

Tomlin: (59:15) I kept telling Sid when I try to get you out if I want to get you out I could get you out. But no Sid was a great hitter. With Lee didn't see him when I was playing in the big leagues. We crossed paths ironically in 1997 both of us were trying to hang on. Lee was with a team in the Northern League, an independent league and so was I, I was in Duluth Minnesota. Our teams played each other and we crossed paths then he whooped us. [Laughter] So that was the only time we got interaction. Now when we played alumni games I make sure Lee's on my team so.

Cobb: (1:00:07) Now the press had to have known that you were coming out of Liberty. Did they ever give you a hard time about Dr. Falwell or about liberty or anything?

Tomlin: (1:00:14) They were always questions you know always remarks oh you came from Liberty or from that religious school. Which just gave me the opportunity to set them straight it's not a religious school its Christians and this is why I live the best way I can relate to that was the first time I walked into the club house. After they already told me I was going to the big leagues I walked into Philadelphia the Veteran stadium. And I had on a suit and tie you know it happened to be Sunday and I walked around asked where Jim Leland was, he was my manager.

[*End of interview*]