

Oral History Transcript--Bonnie Culver, 2020 July 20th

Participants:

Tim Gilmour

Christopher Breiseth

Jim Rodechko

Suzanna Calev (recorder)

Bonnie Culver

Transcribed by Huda Khan, Summer 2021

Tim Gilmour: I am ready

Christopher Breiseth: Ready with Bonnie

Bonnie Culver: Sorry guys, can you hear me now? It says it's stabilized.

CB: Well, that segment right now is perfect

BC: Okay, alright

CB: Let's start, if we have to go to the phone, we'll do it.

BC: Again I'll call

CB: Bonnie, let me set the stage for this whole enterprise. It really started mostly with Dr. Mike and partly to make sure that we get Dr. Mike's memories of Wilkes, and he was one really eager to do that of course he was a treasure of information going back to the '50s with Dr. Farley, as well as all the roles he played, dean and then as president through the flood. And we started saying, well you know let's start interviewing other people, so we started looking at key administrators, key faculty, key trustees and we're up to Suzanna what now? 18? 19?

Suzanna Calev: We have 21!

CB: So we have 21 interviews, and we're now kind of in the era where we are dealing with people who are still at Wilkes in an active role or recently, we haven't interviewed Pat Leahy yet but we'll get around to that. So, we've kind of looked at the culture of Wilkes as well as the precise responsibilities of the person being interviewed, uhh wanting to get a big picture of what is Wilkes?, as understood by those of us who played different roles and then get into some of the nitty gritty's of the things that you've done with the whole creative writing program, we wanna hear a lot about. But, before we get there, I think we wanna get your sense as you came into the institution, what you found here, what made it attractive to be here, segwaying into your administrative role as a Dean, and where it's appropriate to talk about creative writing. I personally, since I was in the hiring of you, I hope you'll talk along the way about Adam, because Adam was in my mind was one of those..

[interrupted by technical problem of Bonnie's call]

What's all that?

BC: That was me, I had to leave and it went unstable again, so I am on the phone. Can you guys hear me now?

TG: We can hear very well Bonnie

BC: Okay, good. Then I'll stay on the phone

CB: Did you get my schpiel?

BC: I got half of it Chris, the last two sentences I missed .

CB: Okay, so well we're gonna wanna get your general sense of Wilkes, and the culture and you've seen it from a unique perspective. Uhh we're gonna wanna hear something about your administrative role and again how you understood Wilkes, and your arrangements at that time, and the creative writing program clearly we need to explore in depth because it's been a most unusual part of Wilkes and of your leadership. So, to begin with, say something about your background before you came to Wilkes, how you came and what you found, and you're gonna get a chance to edit the transcript, so we usually are as candid and open as possible and we can deal with problems later, if you think there are problems.

BC: Okay

CB: So, where does Bonnie Culver come from?

BC: Hahaha, okayy I was born in, no I am not gonna do that to you, no I came to Wilkes at a really unusual time for Wilkes but that turned out to be one of the reasons I selected Wilkes. There were a lot of transitions, one of first of many that happened while I was there, umm Wilkes was moving from becoming a college to a university in 1990, and their expectation of what kind of person they were hiring then was someone who was not just going to be a strong teacher, which had been the tradition at Wilkes but also they were looking for folks who were doing more scholarships and maybe already had done some before they came to Wilkes. So, the standard shifted the year that I came, and that was appealing to me also because they hired me to work with both the theatre program and the English Department, so there was a great deal of crossover allowed for me where at many other universities I might have been relegated to just the theatre department or just the english department. Umm my academic background was a PhD in contemporary literature, drama and fiction, and my exams had been given to me by both faculty members from the College of Fine Arts at Binghamton and the College of Humanities and Philosophy, so I was an unusual candidate all the way along, I always had two degrees but many didn't want to look at me like that and Wilkes let me explore both sides. I also had a masters in creative writing and before coming to Wilkes, I'd had several play readings in New York and had several plays produced, had already presented five or six academic papers as a graduate student and so I came there ready to explore both the academic and creative side. And it turned out to be a wonderful set from that perspective, umm Bob Heaman good friend of yours Chris was the dean, Pat Heaman was our chair and I can't think of two more supportive people during that time period, whatever I needed to go to New York, needed a class covered, I had a play reading umm I took students with me from the theatre department and the english department, and it just started this really wonderful scholarship where the students were involved. At the same time, talking about culture, Mike Steele came the year before me, Mike was doing the same thing with the students in the sciences, John Swanson joined the theatre program and we started taking students from the theatre major which became really robust to New York regularly to do student Wednesday performances with talkbacks with stars so they saw people like Betty

Buckley in *Sunset Boulevard*, umm several directors sat down with them. So, we started just with a whole different feel that it was beyond the classroom and I guess that's my personal joy of being at Wilkes as a faculty member for those first seven years was that, that was the kind of attitude on campus Chris as I remember it and Jim? That it was an opening of a university in ways that apparently I was told you know it was still a big focus on still teaching don't get me wrong, but it was the scholarship that included students so it was definitely a major step in Wilkes' history.

CB: Did George Waldner (as Academic Vice-President) uhh did he actually hire you?

BC: He did, yes and Jim Rodechko was the dean! And it was Jim Rodechko, Bob Heaman and Walter Karpinich was the chair who hired me and then Patricia took over for him, because foreign language was still a part of the English department when I was hired.

CB: And that was a huge transition right there.

BC: It was a huge transition. And then Waldner left like the next year I believe '91 or '92, umm and Mike came in. So, that was my beginning at Wilkes.

Jim Rodechko: What year did you come in exactly?

BC: 1990 Jim

JR: Okay, thank you

CB: So, she came right as the university status was achieved which, were you there for the ceremony? When we had Jerry Soika and the President of the University of Pennsylvania came up to

BC: No, I missed that

CB: So, you must've come after we had the status achieved

BC: Yep, it just happened and I started on like August 27 and umm yeah, I defended my dissertation on August 25th, it was a wild summer. It was kind of a race to get that done to begin at Wilkes, which was one of the conditions of hiring.

CB: I knew that you were ABD when we hired you, did we make a condition on salary in terms of you getting the PhD?

[REDACTED]

CB: Huge

BC: Yeah she did

CB: And as far as I know she's handled magnificently right? Isn't she already a healthy adult?

BC: Yeah she is! She graduated from Wilkes, and you know with honors and now she's doing fine.

CB: I'm glad I asked. When did you do the play on the shooting in Texas? Before you came? Or after you came to Wilkes?

BC: A bit of both. My play SNIPER was loosely based on the first high school shooting that happened in Olean, New York in 1976. I was part of a workshop in New York in 1989 where I began writing the play. It was produced twice before I entered it in the Drama League of New York's new play contest; It came in second place and the Drama League sent me a certificate, but the first place winner earned a \$20,000 award and a New York production. One of the readers, Francine Haskell was so annoyed that SNIPER was second, she called me and asked me if she could send it to a producer friend of hers. That was how I met Adam Hill who produced it in Los Angeles in 1995 when I was teaching at Wilkes. Al Groh, who was in charge of the Annette Evans fund, offered to sponsor a production of SNIPER at Wilkes. Adam Hill came to Wilkes to direct it and brought the lead actor in the LA production, Bobby Zameroski, with him. That is how Adam came to work in the theater program at Wilkes. Adam also directed SNIPER Off-Broadway in 2005. I think Chris your office actually supported that work.

CB: Right, I remember that.

BC: And we cast, uh the wonderful thing about Sniper is that there's a lead character who's in every scene but it's really a series of vignettes, so we cast college students and community theater members around Bobby, and for three weeks of rehearsal they rehearsed from 9 in the morning till 5 everyday, and then we produced it at Wilkes and we took it to a uh it was a producers special performance in New York that we landed at Terry Schreiber Acting Studios. And we raised money then to try to get it to come back to New York, they didn't raise enough money to do it then but it was picked up by producers in New Jersey who then eventually moved it to New York in 2005, but that wasn't until 2005 where again Adam Hill directed it Off-Broadway. There were nine other productions before that with three other directors and producers.

CB: I left in 2001 [inaudible] but that was such a powerful production, and that's what brought Adam to Wilkes right?

BC: That's right, yeah you and Adam hit it off immediately in great conversations, I know you and Jane had dinner with him and came to the production. Adam campaigned to bring a new kind of theater program to Wilkes, basically take what he had at his studio with not only training actors and voice and body and movement, but also he included classes on building resumes, auditioning, and the business side of theater. His acting classes all ended with casting agents looking at videos of our students and that was when Wilkes theater students started getting professional gigs. Several worked with the National Shakespeare Company or The National Touring Company. Ben Ptashinski is still at Disneyworld, he got the lead in the The HoopyDo Review and so he has his SAG card for that, several of them got bit acting parts, several others went on to be playwrights and directors and stage hands, so that period of theatre was really robust.

CB: And when did Adam leave Wilkes?

BC: Umm that would've been around 2000, 2001

CB: So, just as I left, I couldn't remember

BC: Yeah, it was after Marvene became the Provost. It might've later like 2002

CB: [Inaudible] after I left

TG: Jim just said it might be a good idea to identify Adam.

BC: Yeah Adam hill...

JR: For the record

CB: You're the one who knew him, he's worth being profiled through you for this series.

BC: Yeah he was an interesting guy, he did great things for our students, self made theatre person umm did a roadshow towards started out as a musical theatre person. And then eventually studied with several very well known acting coaches in New York, eventually started his own acting studio, The Adam Hill Actors Studio in West Hollywood and had run it for years out there, when he produced several of my shows actually. After getting to know him, he produced not only "Sniper" but a little piece called "Accident" and then commissioned me to write a different version of my play "Group SOS" that was survivors of sexual abuse. Originally, it was a six women show, but he commissioned me to write an all male version and they ran both versions for a year in Los Angeles in the Los Angeles schools. They took counselors with them and then Al Groh actually asked to read "Sniper" and this is how that all began Chris, and Al Groh so in love with the piece and asked if we could get Adam to come out and direct it, so we got Adam and Bobby to Wilkes. Adam got to know Chris and the theatre folks and they agreed to rewrite the curriculum to make it a very practical theatre curriculum that included how to get jobs in acting, umm what jobs are there in stage managing and other jobs you could do to support yourself, which is kind of how the bases with the tenets of our creative writing program as well. So, Adam was there from '96 to 2002, 2003 umm

JR: What's his surname?

TG: It's Adam Hill

JR: For the record

BC: Yeah that's not his legal name, you're right Jim. I don't remember his legal name anymore, his last name was Hill, but he changed his first name legally. He started out as a tap dancer and had his first roadshow when he was 18. Adam is now probably 80, he's currently well and running an acting studio in Las Vegas [**NOTE: Adam Hill passed away in October, 2021--he was 83 years old and contemplating retirement.**] In LA, he had several star students Heather Lear, Laura Linney, Doug Savant, and Brad Garrett who appeared in "Everybody Loves Raymond" and Brad got a deal in Las Vegas at one of the casinos to build a comedy club, but his deal also included adding an acting studio because he thought Vegas would be a great place to start an acting studio. After Adam left Wilkes, Brad contacted him, took him, paid his way to go to Las Vegas and was teaching in that studio until last year when everything fell apart during the pandemic, so that's the last I've heard from Adam, that's what he was doing before we all went into quarantine.

CB: If you next contact him give him my warmest regards. He brought an excitement to Wilkes and to the theatre program that was unlike anything in my 17 years at Wilkes. I want to push you a little bit, it's one of the people we didn't get to interview who had a very key role in the whole development of the college and then the university is Al Groh and he had kind of a love- hate relationship with the theatre after he no longer was the dominant figure.

BC: Yeah

CB: I'd be interested in your reflections on Al Groh and the theatre program at Wilkes looked at over time as you came to know it. But, more particularly as you worked with him around what you just been talking about.

BC: Sure. One of the jobs that one of the English Department chair Pat Heaman gave me was to work the Wilkes Cultural Committee and the Wilkes Cultural Committee met in the summers and it was led mostly by Bruce Phair at the Dart Center and Al Groh. And what it included was, we all had programs within our programs that had public events like Allan Hamilton Dickson Reading series...the Catherine Bone lecture so the people from chemistry were there, the Max Rosenn lecture there was someone from the president's office there, and we would sit down and create a calendar for the upcoming year of any event that was going to happen in the Dart and Al Groh was in charge of the Annette Evans Fund, and he would then designate money to support various activities. My understanding listening to Al talk about the days with Annette Evans was, the two of them are the ones who (with Wilkes College support) started the Fine Arts Fiesta, and I found it actually in one of the 1960s catalog Chris umm Suzanna sure can find it, where it talked that Wilkes actually started the Fine Arts Fiesta.

CB: Throughout

BC: Yeah throughout! And it was listed in our college catalog, Al gave me a copy of it as having begun at Wilkes and funded by Wilkes. When Annette Evans passed away, there was a good bit of money in the estate and Al became the person who decided how that funding would be used and I don't know the history of why Fine Arts Fiesta left Wilkes, but the connection remained and I think that had something to do with whatever feelings happened when Al retired and I don't know that part of the history. But, Bruce Phair was the one who helped bring him back into the Wilkes fold and obviously Jane Groh was always here.

CB: Is Bruce **Phair** still around?

BC: Bruce is still around yep, he's retired umm

CB: He would be worth interviewing

BC: Absolutely, because he's the one who.. he was a student during that 60s time or the 70s time and he was part of the transition of bringing Al back into the fold and being part of all that. I don't know, I mean I had a sense that Michael O'Neal there was some kind of umm there was some kind of I don't know what it was, but Al no longer felt welcomed in the theatre department but I don't know what happened.

CB: Correct me if I am wrong but Bruce Phair got along with everybody and given the struggle between.. who was the great german who helped develop

BC: Uhh [some name? 25:53] yeah Yes, it was Klaus Holmes who was a well known theater lighting and set designer. The other reason Al Groh came back to support theater was he adored Adam Hill and his vision for the theater program. They became very close.

CB: And there probably was no more titanic struggle between two faculty members in the history of Wilkes than between Al Groh and Klaus Holmes.

BC: True

CB: Both men had immense talent and both were critical to developing the Dartmouth center initially and then the kind of very active theatre and musical theatre that became legient in that field. But I got caught between Klaus and Al to get just a taste of what it had been like but Bruce Phair came in and in a modest staff position, he brought some humane order to that. And you know, thinking of alumni, we had some major alumni who didn't become theatre people after they left but their experience at Wilkes was through the theatre, and one of them is [Rhea Simms , she and Liz [lastname] I could almost figure out some of the other people who did musical theatre with Al Groh, and it was one of the highlights of their lives and that whole era is probably beyond reach now except through Liz and Rhea. And if we wanted to pursue that, those are two people it's be fun to have them on at the same time, because they would bounce off each other and bring back a lot of things we might not get when they're on their own. So, anything else to say about that theatre period of your life, working with your shows at Wilkes and with Adam before we move on to another topic?

BC: No, I mean I worked closely with the theatre program and taught several dramatic literature courses that were cross-listed with English and theater. you know and I actually did have the joy of spending time talking with Rhea and Liz and you absolutely should talk to them, because they have great stories and at that point theatre was a club, umm it was just something that people from all over the school auditioned for because they wanted to be on a show, and so it wasn't a major. So then the big transition under Adam was to kind of turn it into a professional program, umm so I heard about those old days, but yeah, so I think that's enough from me on Adam and theatre.

CB: Well, Tim, why don't you take over because Bonnie's role as dean while it started when I was there right Bonnie?

BC: Yes sir

CB: And then it went into your end and I think getting your sense of administrative structure and what were some of the problems with the administrative structure that the dean and the department share a level over time, it's been a recurring theme so you came in at a point where from my perspective while I was on my way out umm was pretty stable. People knew what deans were supposed to do and the department chair knew, the deans had a role with the tenure and appointments committee it was well established and began under my earlier time and that was not an easy transition to appoint a few departments so Tim and I, I dominated up to now, why don't I just sit back and watch a while.

TG: well we have enjoyed being dominated so

CB: that's the role of leadership

TG: And actually Bonnie you have to note, we have a whole lot of fun in all this. And Jim I think can help me hear a little too, but my recollection is that when I came, you had the deanship from Hell that was impossible to do. Is that a fair assessment?

BC: That's a pretty fair assessment yeah.

TG: And you did it with good spirit and so on, but how long had you been in that role when I got there in 2001?

BC: I was appointed the dean of the School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in '97

TG: So that was four years

BC: I was actually in '96, oh man!

JR: '98

BC: No, that was second appointment. I was appointed by Chris to replace Bob Heaman, so that would have been '96 or '97, and then in '98 I took on the role of the CASPS dean. In [19]'98 through 2002-3 remained in that position. Wilkes had a huge enrollment decline and to save money, Wilkes collapsed the four schools into one uber college and gave me a couple of associate deans, we needed accreditation in the engineering and business. Wilkes had 45 programs and only 1500 students at that time and so it came out of that SLURP (Strategic Long Range Planning Committee) exercise was to find ways of class saving and so they reorganized the entire academic organizational structure. For every program we had, we had departments and that was what Chris was talking about, it was very unmanageable in that sense that you might have a chair with a secretary where a secretary with only two faculty members. But every program had to have a department and so part of the organization was not just collapsing the schools into a college, it was also creating those 14 divisions to consolidate services. We also started the business under Chris of revising the handbook to make sure that the tenure and promotion and annual evaluation processes were clear. Because we now had chairs who had greater responsibilities, we also upgraded all of the secretarial positions to become office assistants, so we rewrote their job descriptions and provided training for those who wished to remain and that was all part of that transition in '97, '98 umm into the college. As Bernie Graham, CASPS included all programs on campus, except Pharmacy. And when you came, Tim, the enrollments had grown, the CASPS structure was becoming untenable. I also had graduate studies and every school but pharmacy was under me, and we were beginning to look at what support we needed. We also tried to give the chairs more involvement on funding, such as decision making on equipment. We changed the way we hired adjuncts. It was no longer a dean's final decision; the chairs were given the right and responsibility to hire adjuncts. Before then, contracts used to require multiple signatures, including Chris's. Do you remember Chris? You used to sign the adjunct form.

CB: Yes

BC: It was crazy!

CB: And a little compulsive

BC: It really was, and it sometimes took up to three months to get an adjunct to get paid because the paper trail was still winding its way through the process, and a lot of the processing changes

happened when we went to the college, Jack Miller stepped up, the vice president of KPMG. Wilkes alum and then Wilkes trustee stepped up and offered to bring in his team to do a forensic exploration of our paper processes. And we flowed it everything from how an adjunct gets paid, sign off and follow the paper trail, how to get a PO done and it actually changed a lot of what we were doing internally, administratively to take us into you know how a university functions. Unlike the college ways that it had been inherited and just done that way forever, so that for me was the biggest transition and the administration was just taking a hard look at how things could be done that would be more expedient, that would be more supportive without building out an even larger administration to support it if we could help it, that was the message from the faculty.

TG: Right. When did that happen?

BC: When we became a college? You mean when we became CASPS? That would have been '97, '98, [inaudible]

TG: Jim has something

JR: [inaudible] was a direct result of the strategic planning committee that [inaudible] in the spring of '98. I was acting vice president at that point

TG: And the strategic planning committee was, what was that slurp

BC: That was SLURP correct. That's that book that I shared with you Tim

TG: I am sorry Bonnie, I didn't get that

BC: I gave you a copy of that report, that 28 page document was their assessment of uhh they spent a year looking at all of that and Jim was the acting vice president, Mike Lennon had taken a year off and I was part of that group. Umm but we got into that booklet I shared with you talk more about the kind of processes that I am talking about eventually that when tried costing out programs for example, or looking at the effectiveness of I don't know SRS forms, or whatever and how to gauge faculty effectiveness, we didn't have a lot of data and so a lot of what happened was SLURP creating institutional research departments that you have now because we had to create that as we were studying it. It was a crazy year, so a lot of that report that I shared with you was pointing that out, that that needed to change, that you couldn't make decisions based on data you didn't have and we weren't tracking it, umm so that was the thrust to a lot of that. Jim, I couldn't hear a lot of what you said, but Jim shared that wonderful difficult with me and all the folks around that, who included administrators, faculty, staff, and trustees. It was a very long exhausting year.

TG: Bonnie, was uhh or should I ask Jim, did you have anything you wanted to say there?

JR: I can apparently hear Bonnie very well, but she can't hear me I think.

BC: I can hear you now

TG: The problem, I don't know what exactly I think a little bit of lag Jim, but your voice is getting picked up by my computer um but anyway what you need to do Jim, when you're making a comment, first of all I need to watch for it and secondly you just need to keep talking. It'll take over.

JR: Okay.

TG: Bonnie, I did have one question, did KPMG get involved in that process at all?

BC: They did, through Jack Miller offered his company don't know because I wasn't involved in the decision to use his services. I don't know if there was a contract at all, but the next thing I knew, Jack was talking to me directly because he offered to come in and assess our procedures. They decided to track our office procedures because we interacted with everybody on campus at that point once we became CASPS. He'd be using our office to study the processes of floating everything from a cheque request to a PO to a contract.

CB: Bonnie was Jack on the board at that time?

BC: He was on the board, that's correct. And I think he was vice chair at that point, because I think he replaced Jerry if I am correct right after that for a year or two.

TG: No, you're talking about Jerry Moffit.

BC: Jerry Moffit correct.

TG: Actually, he didn't replace Jerry Moffit, Bill Tremaine did and then Jack came in, uhh I don't think Jack had an office per se until he became chair but he was always a very influential member, in part because he was a pretty extraordinary guy. But he was, just so you know, and we're trying to keep our history straight here, he was a vice chair of KPMG and he headed up their healthcare and nonprofit practices.

CB: Very early in his career, he was in on a major study involving the government, where he really earned his spurs and I got to know him long after that had passed, our first meeting he described it in great detail and my memory for that kind of detail is now very slender, but he made his name in very big ways for a very young guy and he credited to the work he did at Wilkes, as like Bob Capin would have been critical in his role becoming an accountant. Jim, do you remember what it was that he uhh I think he did it in Harrisburg?

TG: You know I don't remember the specifics of that Chris umm the big one that got him to the upper reaches of KPMG was his work with the federal government and I know that he was involved with the General Accounting Office and I think he aspired to be the head of the General Accounting Office.

CB: What I am searching for, was the success he had in an earlier project that made it clear that he had the ability to take on this major thing, I would say just parenthetically to all three you've mentioned that passed recently, in the past few years. Tremaine, Jack and Jerry.

TG: Yeah yeah

CB: Relatively young guys

BC: Did you say Jerry Moffit died? Aww I did not know that

TG: I am sorry Bonnie, I probably should've told you that knowing that you were neighbors.

BC: Yeah, how long ago did that happen?

JR: Couple years ago.

BC: Yeah, they had moved to Naples 8 years ago 9 years ago permanently, they left a place up here in Lake Harmony.

TG: Yeah he got, you know he was one of the Anderson Parkers that didn't get their payout.

BC: That's correct

TG: And, so he had to I guess downsize his situation, then he ended up there, they had a very nice place in Naples and he was very happy there.

CB: Is there any chance that Moffit on Saturday Night Live one of his sons, Mike Moffitt is wonderful

TG: I doubt it, because the one son I know about who would be of prominence was working I think for NASCAR and was quite successful

CB: Jim, before we go back to the creative writing project, what are your thoughts on the period Bonnie's been talking about? And the administrative perspective you had at the time with the role you were playing to appreciate the kind of role she was playing

JR: I think fairly closely together, we may one day, Tim calls the Slurp together?

TG: Hey I didn't originate that!

BC: Hahahaha what did we do together?

JR: inaudible

BC: I could not hear you

TG: What he's saying Bonnie, I am going to try it get closer to the microphone is that you two worked together closely on Slurp.

BC: Uhh yes we did. And then for the rollout

JR: Rather than trying to explain, I'll wait til you guys interview me, I'm not picking up everything given my phone situation. Can you guys hear me?

CB: We can hear you fine now.

JR: We worked closely and I think very cooperatively and we did a pretty decent job at the time, very trying semester uhh you know we were under a lot of pressure to get the thing done and asking us we were meeting every week for someone to time so

TG: So the purpose that charged the Slurp, maybe somebody should summarize umm so they understand why you were under so much pressure.

JR: Well, I think we were supposed to basically make some cuts, I think we did in the sense of cutting out retirements, by being at..Paul Engel would retire at a certain time because they never did! [inaudible]

CB: That dip in enrollment that Bonnie referred to really caused spasms through the institution and Mike had just come on as vice president back in Student Affairs. He came on and we get to do an early retirement, his first year you would've been there by that time Bonnie but probably were not much affected by that much as the later one that you talked about, and then you had administrative responsibilities. But, we developed early retirement programs as I recall, Jim correct me on this, during the 90s uhh in the face of financial not exigency but pressure, because of the decline in enrollment, and we got Mike Frantz and Mike did a fantastic job and this is not SLURP, we had an active recruitment retention taskforce that included board members including Jerry Goldstein. We met every Monday morning by conference phone call and with Mike Franz and umm we really got on top of the recruitment of students by I guess by 98 or 99, so by the time middle states came, part of their critique was that the long range plan was not finished, so they would not look at anything that had not been completed. But, we had I don't know Tim what

your recollection is, what our full time equivalent or head count was when you arrived but it was way above the 1600, I mean we made a strong comeback which involved the kind of work that Bonnie and Jim are talking about at the faculty level as well as the administrative level. And the trustees! I mean we had a lot of trustees who were involved in recruiting students, even going out to events for recruiting students in key areas, these trustees would go out and be part of the interpretation the institution and VPs and all that came in the period that Bonnie is talking about, after a really grim period, the boat seemed to be leaking.

TG: Right, when I got there I mean we were still dealing with the aftermath of the accreditation visit, but the fact of the matter is that the enrollments were pretty much stabilized. And Jim may remember better than I do, but it was my recollection that we were somewhere around 2200 FTEs and somewhat more head count because some of that was the graduate education program.

JR: That strikes me as accurate, yeah

TG: That's the first time you've told me I am accurate!

BC: Hahahaaha

CB: Bonnie, an institutional culture question. Having come in at this stage, to a pretty heavy administrative role, what was your sense of the dynamics to the administration and the faculty, administration and the board of trustees, the board of trustees and the faculty? As a playwright, if you could capture the working culture in the late 90s when you were playing a major role [?? 49:14] What kind of observations would you make? Be critical

BC: Got it. It was umm my first six years I spent hearing about a lot of the faculty complaining about some of the cultural changes as Wilkes became a university. Some faculty missed the old days where it was just about teaching and we were genteel liberal arts school, and this transition into what I ended up doing and actually looking at the programming that Wilkes had, was partly because some of the faculty just wanted to go back to being liberal arts, and if engineering and nursing uhh the sciences went away, so be it. So, there was that culture shift that I felt when I was the dean of the school that became a totally different pressure when I represented all of them, and in the end Tim, you and I talked about this when you arrived. In the end what SLURP decided partly because they did not create a one page summary of: these are the programs that need to go immediately, it was more like, this is the information the administration needs to have to make sound decisions that look at not only the past the traditions but also taking into account the cycles of some programs, like engineering and nursing which were on the cutting block, umm Jim and I were a part of those discussions, such as programs had too many faculty and they had few students at that point. If we had jettisoned them, this last four years of Wilkes wouldn't have happened and we wouldn't have the portfolio that we have going forward that other small liberal arts colleges would envy, umm especially now because that's just not gonna work and a lot of what we were doing in that committee was trying to lay down processes that would help the administration make decisions. So, with that said, there was definitely a division among the faculty that the administration knew things that they didn't share, umm the administration was very small, I mean Chris you had very few actually at the president's cabinet meeting and part of what Jim's and my sense with you was to create a support system that was lacking and also part

of the strategic plan, that we didn't have people to go to get answers and that was much needed. So, when I look at the strategic plan, that's what I saw. The faculty really got hung up on the charge and they really felt that we were a hit committee and we never really shared the full report because it was more complicated than just a summary could ever capture, and I think that was a point that could have solidified more faculty input but there wasn't that culture yet built in where faculty were totally included or engage, something that I've felt since those committee's have gone into place. So the fact that we were on a team with board members was a huge shift, umm that faculty on that committee had access to board members and form new relationships, Jack Miller asked to come in and see me teach creative writing, Essie Davidowitz asked to see me teach creative writing, Beverly Hiscox, Mary Rose..umm it opened up doors for conversations, I understand it can also be an issue and it's like where the pendulum goes the shifts of you know the 0one administrative structure in terms of another, and it was in my mind a good thing Tim, to shift it make it look more formal, to have a provost, and build that university structure because we were ready for it. But it was always a struggle because you have this almost like a bipolar culture at Wilkes that, there are still folks that will say...Owen Faut will still call me still and say, how are we gonna get Wilkes to go back to the liberal arts and there's still that idea that that's what we are; more a small college than a full fledged research university. I don't think that's how the new faculty feel about it and I am talking mostly about the old guard that I've experienced during my first decade here and Jim would have a lot more to say I am sure, but there was that bifurcation among the faculty and it felt like we finished one transition just to enter another one.

CB: I think bipolar is a word we've not heard so far and I think its very apt to describe the tensions that existed, I think you've used the word burning once but in your perspective of what the pharmacy program did to this pattern you've been describing.

BC: Yeah I went into the dean's position, I was literally congratulated by you Chris for getting tenure and promotion and you called a week later to ask if I'd accept the dean's position, so I was like clearly not prepared. The best thing Mike Lennon did for me was enroll me in the a ACE National Identification program for Future Female Leaders where I spent a year going to Washington DC training every month, one month it was in finance, next month it was in advancement and we would sit next to college presidents most of whom were female CFO's or CEO's because it was all a training program. I really learned how to be a better dean, but what they didn't talk about were the soft skills like how to manage people and how to try to make situations win-win especially with faculty and faculty and student relationships, and I learned that from Bernie Graham. Bernie was highly protective of his faculty, but he mentored them and mentored the students, never had a favorite child and he knew what to say individually to them all. Actually we came to a agreement, Bernie and I, we had a code of silence agreement that if he had an issue that needed to sort out that he couldn't talk about with anybody, or I had an issue during my six years I couldn't talk about with anybody, we would meet over coffee and just sort it out, and say what we might wanna say to a faculty member but knew we could not and make it win-win when we finally sat down with that person. And I learned that from Bernie, Bernie also was responsible for one time with Jim Rodechko for getting me kicked out of the Jim;s academic

meeting umm because we used to meet when Jim was vice president when he still had Mike's load. The registrar, library, student affairs, academics, athletics, they were all under the vice president's office. So we go to a meeting and one day we were talking about the grass growing on the football field, and you all know Bernie, he started writing notes to me and saying, will you please raise your hand and say why are we talking about the grass for an hour? Can we go now? You and I have other meetings, can we go now? So, he'd write things like, you have tenure you tell Jim we're leaving. [laughter] and we started giggling and Jim kicked us out of the meeting, but, that was the other side of the Bernie Graham story.

CB: You want to avenge yourself on this?

[Laughter]

TG: Did you hear Jim on that Bonnie?

BC: No

TG: He has no recollection of that, and would never throw you out of a meeting!

[Laughter of Bonnie]

BC: He said, you two, you have other things to do, why don't you do them?

TG: Well that makes sense

CB: Bonnie at this point, we're interviewing Bernie next week. And you've given him a perfect setup for us, because it clearly, what you're defining from my perspective the pharmacy program came in really from the outside, many different people had their hands on it in creating it, had different motivations of what they thought they would do for Wilkes, whether it was recruitment of students, faculty, increasing revenue, uhh establishing a doctoral program, I could go on and on, but it clearly from my perspective as I was approaching end of my 17 years it in many ways transformed the institution. It became the Cadillac if we can use that old metaphor, of our programs almost instantly, it strengthened everybody else and the one thing I would say given faculty behaviour, since it's a theme we've repeatedly come back to, it was remarkable support by the faculty, of this new high cost program. I wish we were revamping buildings in a major way that were not necessarily advantaging the older faculty, that's not true in chemistry and biology, but it was the best shot in my 17 years there. And hiring Bernie Graham was the tenth strike and you're just getting further evidence that I will say some of the same things next week when we interview him, and he had a way of putting oil on troubled waters as an administrator outside of his area dealing with the nursing program, and things that in another campus? could've led to trench warfare, Tim by the time I left I can't remember pharmacy being in a struggle with any other part of the institution. They felt superior to the rest of us, but in many ways they were, I mean they were bringing in people from around the country, many of whom wanted to come back to the Valley and were bringing credentials that were really first rate, so that itself was a shot in the arm to faculty culture. And the faculty, Jim correct me, I think they were proud of it, of the program almost from the beginning, I take it as a credit to the Wilkes culture because there was a lot of nipping before that, one group feeling they're being advantaged over another, and part of which the deans had to do was to negotiate among

yourselves as deans also among your realm of departments, and one could make an argument that pharmacy profoundly transformed the culture of Wilkes.

JR: I think he had the kind of personality that he really fit in with what existed at Wilkes, and changed the programs on leverage with the faculty at large.

TG: I'd be interested in Bonnie's view on this, but just to sort of kick it off I thought the faculty in pharmacy was pretty good at becoming a part of the Wilkes faculty.

JR: They were, I think that's true, they volunteered for committees, they made real contributions, we had the assessment committee and David Maise played a really big role in that, it was a shame he left eventually, Dave Foote was another...

TG: Right so you look at those and gosh that's embarrassing umm

CB: Arthur Kibbe?

TG: No, Annie uhh

JR: Annie Lin

BC: Annie Linn yeah

TG: Yeah, and every person we've mentioned has gone either to an associate deanship or deanship of a pharmacy school elsewhere. And you know...

CB: You know that's the story for the--

TG: And we really ought to be pinning Bernie down on this next time, but Bonnie we gotta get back to you, umm but I was just finished and I was saying, in some cases the schools were more prestigious that they became deans of.

BC: Yeah that's absolutely true

CB: Bonnie, segway? into the creative writing program which..

[Inaudible]

TG: Bonnie I don't know if it's painful for you, but you know we had that transition period where I came in and felt that we needed a different kind of structure and I don't know if you want to talk about how that worked for you or didn't.

BC: Sure. Well, one last thing about Bernie to give you some more background with him and our relationship, I was carrying the University Curriculum Committee in 1992 as an untenured faculty member and the idea of the pharmacy program came up and the first proposal, Chris and Jim would've been a Dean probably umm this was before they hired Bernie, was basically written its not like at the back of a napkin? and the Curriculum Committee rejected it and I had to be the one to go meet with Umid Nejib to explain as an untenured faculty member, and don't forget the cigar smoke. But then they hired uh Umid went back to the drawing board and they hired Bernie to come in and develop the curriculum. I worked with Bernie for two years carrying the University Curriculum Committee while he was on campus writing that curriculum, so he didn't come in and just drop it on everybody's head, he intentionally from the beginning went to nursing, biology, he built relationships with each of those chairs and built the curriculum so that by the time it was presented a year and half later to the faculty, there was nobody that didn't support it. So that's another way of talking about him Chris and how he approached Wilkes, he also built into it community service for the students and faculty and asked each of the department

how they could help them, so he came in from the beginning building that into the Wilkes culture rather than the other way around, and that's another way of talking about it Chris that I think is really important to be said about Bernie. So, I don't know if he'll tell you that piece, umm so at first he told me he absolutely detested me as the chair of the Curriculum Committee and we became fast friends very quickly...

TG: That would be great you know?

CB: Well you know we talked about the Al Groh-Klaus Holmes? Relationship. And Bonnie and Bernie are worth delving into, but something Bonnie said also brings up a theme that has been constant in these interviews and that's the extraordinary role that Umid Nejib played.

BC: Absolutely!

CB: I mean there would be no pharmacy program without Umid Nejib and he made the adaptations in terms of the internal culture of the faculty and administration uhh to work so well with Bernie, and Bernie really took over the conceptual work that Umid and Mike Lennon were working on, and from a science point of view Umid was doing heavier lifting there than Mike, Mike was dealing with how does this fit into the whole institution but we'll ask Bernie about his sense of who he is in his role. But I think his relationship with you playing the new role that you were beginning to play, uhh is a critical part of why it worked so well and it really did work well.

TG: It would be fascinating case study to do because there is such a need for that kind of capability today.

CB: Yes, the interdisciplinary thing, Tim, and something that Bonnie started talking about in the beginning, Wilkes has really done that well not always easily, but we've done the interdisciplinary thing so that the point that Bernie became the dean under your leadership of both pharmacy and nursing, there was a culture for that and that's not always a marriage that would occur in a bigger institution.

TG: No

CB: We were small enough that we needed to work together, and Umid who was the empire builder of all on the campus knew that he only could build his empire which was engineering if he worked with others, and his liberal arts focus was so clear, so committed that he was in the professionalization body you talked about which was happening, and the liberal arts program felt they were being diminished umm as we moved towards more and more professional degrees. It really was not the problem umm and the way he brought pharmacy in strengthened in many ways the liberal arts, it could've been just the other direction that we kind of build the professional programs period, and let the others become kind of meeting the distribution requirements in the liberal arts. I mean, do you agree with that or is it offbase?

BC: You know I agree with it and another little known thing about Umid for those who don't know him, umm he was the most renaissance men I knew, he came to see "Sniper" when it came to campus and he came three times, and he asked if he could take me out for coffee and wanted to talk about the play and asked if he could have a copy of the script then I gave it to him, and he said, I want to sign and ascribe it to Umid Nejib and I want you to promise me that when it finally goes to New York you'll send me a ticket because it will go to New York all the time and

this is better than any of the straight shows Barbara and I see. And when I became dean and replaced him in essence, he would come into my office at least once a week and shut the door and talk to me about poetry, about books and then at the end because it was Nejib offered me a bit of advice on engineering.

[Laughter from Tim]

Yeah and some of that advice was, well if you give them these labs and take it away from nursing it'll be much better umm so of it was tongue and cheek but he was an extraordinary person that I think to many people saw in black and white terms Chris, and he was much more complicated than that. And again, another person I learned a lot from and then I pointedly asked him, well you're telling me this is the problem with this person and this person but you hired and promoted them, [laughter] and he said, it was a different agenda and different time, so.

TG: Yeah. So Bonnie, let's get you back on track if you're willing

BC: Yeah!

TG: So, we're talking about this period then from the time just before I got there to the time that you moved into creative writing, just sort of what were your impressions during that period?

BC: Sure. Well, I can tell you honestly from '97/98 to 2002/2003 as the CASPS dean, as the programs began to become more robust, the need was more specific and it was becoming unmanageable absolutely, by the time you came Tim, and when I sat down with Marr at her interview and with you on your interview, I think I said as much to both of you that, also because after 2000/ 2001 we were also looking at nursing had faced a major transition into national certification, and literally I was glad I was an actor because they trained me to answer what questions and gave me a role to play which was fine for the evaluations team, even though I wasn't a nurse. But, I had to be able to explain all of the labs, same thing with ABET and engineering, same with ACSC when business was seeking that accreditation, it was becoming more and more clear that you needed someone who wasn't just representing the forms of Wilkes as a dean but those specifics needs by program, because we were growing! That was the good news, umm and the student numbers were coming back up, there were more faculty needs, more support needs, and just having one associate dean with a couple others on special assignments like Prahled Murphy was on special assignment for ABET, Marianne Rexer for business was on special assignment, and Debbie Zbegner for their nursing accreditation that I had these special assignments all the time, but that was really ghosting a need for an organization that could support that, that was beyond the uber college that was CASPS. I also felt like I could finally sleep after seven years, I don't think I slept during those years because I was constantly trying to solve problems and kept learning about programs along the way, umm one thing I learned from Mike Lennon was not to make appointments in my office, but to go sit in the offices of each of the chairs, get to know their staff and go to the faculty labs and see them. One thing I did when we first became a college was to have a show and tell with the chairs, showing off their division, having faculty do presentations and that would be our meeting for that week and we did that for 14 straight weeks. And what amazed me that has always been an issue at Wilkes and is partly our geography, is how siloed we were, one of the good outcomes of having CASPS was that finally

all the chairs sat at the same table. I started the process by which they made equipment requests, they all went to all the chairs, had to make proposals for the next year for what they needed, what money they wanted, because the dean's office had the equipment budget which was a first. And then they would rank them as the 14 chairs, and they would each talk about their proposal with each other and having seen their space which they didn't even know how to find some of the labs in the basement of Stark for example, they didn't know there was a vault for the Sordoni Art Gallery in the basement, until the Gallery Director showed it to the chairs. Or the chairs finally knew what the GPS Center was when they met the director. [inaudible (names)]

TG: You said something Chris?

CB: Bill uhh

BC: Bill Toothill! They also saw the writing lab and for the English department after seeing what bio was doing and the vastness of what they were doing, and the scholarship and the lab equipment. When they had to defend each of their proposals at the end of each year for the next year, it made sense and I was beginning to feel that was the best outcome out of CAHSS was that there was more of a singularity of mission was starting to happen, and non siloed is for a bit because we had more of a common cause. And as Chris mentioned, we hit the Middle States in 2000/ 2001, that was already in place and so when the faculty was charged with creating a new GenEd they did it because those chairs were already meeting as one group, we just added Bernie and his two chairs, and that I think was the positive that came out of that, the negative was obviously what I'd already said about being able to represent all of those voices with specificity that I can't do as a non-engineer, you know I can't do as a non nurse or business person, so then I would have to depend very heavily on the chairs to explain that to me.

TG: Yeah, makes a lot of sense. It was such a broad portfolio, it's hard to imagine anybody being able to I don't know what the right word is uhh but carry it with the kind of expectations we had, because I think often some of the professional programs we have because they're small in kind of institution at Wilkes is they're always on the fences [inaudible]

BC: Yeah yeah

CB: Bonnie I got an off the wall question before you get into creative writing, the three plays you mentioned all deal with one form or another disaster, umm how does that sensitivity to what human beings are capable of doing to each other prepare you for the kind of administrative role you played at Wilkes?

BC: That's really not as off the wall as you might think, umm I wrote horrible pieces during that six years, meaning that they were thin and weak and it was kind of the death of my creative career for a while when I became dean. I didn't have the brain capacity because it's the same muscle, it's the same creativity you need to be a good administrator at least try to be a good administrator, creative of solving problems, figuring out puzzles of researching, deciding, talking, listening umm that's all part of being a creative writer, and unfortunately for me, in '96 "Sniper" also won uhh it was fortunate but unfortunate, it also won a tenth place in Sundance Film Development Program, and it was great and it gave me a literary manager in Los Angeles and I really thought I could handle both being a creative writer and being a dean, and that was

totally wrong. The two plays that I wrote or the two films that I wrote during that time, neither one were produced or auctioned and my literary manager left me after two years, because uhh managers are different than agents, they give you an idea and they want you to write it and they have a specific person they're gonna send it to, so it's not like its your own ideas, its something that they feel is gonna sell. And the piece that I came up with ended up really being the treatment for what's it called "Will and James" whatever the umm it became a tv series, it was really that and it was based upon my relationship with Jim Harrington, Chris, going through divorce and having a gay friend that creates different lives for you in any case. But to answer your question specifically, I think that's the key answer that what writers need to do to enter worlds of other people who are not like themselves because you can't write caricatures, you have to be able to write a whole personal story, people who do evil things have full lives, and they have love, they have desires and they have needs and wants, to balance to make someone read a piece like "Sniper" or hear a piece like "Sniper" or "Group SOS" which is about sexual abuse, umm you need to find a way in that nobody's a total victim and nobody's a total monster and that's probably the best training I had, to listen to the faculty which sounds really awful on the surface, but you could disagree with a faculty member then about something really terrible they've done but look at the whole person, and when you finally speak to them about behaviour that might be inappropriate or whatever the issue was. You prepare yourself in another way to listen to them, to try to make it a win-win for them to walk out where you can, and I think that's really the skillset. It's not off the wall as much as you think.

CB: Okay. Creative writing! How did that whole program shape up in your mind and it's actualization?

JR: I am on the phone here.

BC: So Tim Gilmour came to town, and was looking for suggestions of new programming and there was a suggestion box Tim put out there, and Mike had rotated out umm Tim I think was back in the VP slot waiting for Marvene to come on board, and Mike was going back to the faculty and I was still the dean, but I was thinking about leaving because in my talks with Tim realize that you know that position was going to change, and whether I was a part of it or not was not gonna be my decision it was gonna be the new provosts' and Tims', and I was plenty ready to go back to the faculty as well and start writing again. So, Mike and I came up with the idea of a graduate creative writing program that was low residency but used online education instead of the mail path that Goddard and Goucher and Bennington were using, and they had been in existence for like 15-20 years they were literally using mail packets that they sent out once a month, and Tim agreed that it would be a good idea and Mike and I had it in our head Tim, that we were gonna be on the advisory board and not really do any work. But Tim thought otherwise, and said, why don't you two just do it! and we were given the luxury from 2003 to the launch in January 2005, every request we made to the administration to give us resources to do this right, and not because it was a new way of doing it at that point still, Web CT was still there but you had to know a little code to do it, they sent Mike and I to a bootcamp at Drexel and we flunked that miserably. We went back to Tim and said, we need someone who can coach us through this,

we didn't have the Office of Technology we have now and e-learning. Only the RCRC computer resource center, that Joe Belluci had started had already been disbanded. We didn't have the resources to develop it, so through him graciously, Joe helped us find a consultant. We spent a year where we gathered the writing faculty on the weekend, it might be a fiction weekend, then a playwriting weekend, screenwriting, non-fiction poetry, and we also decided that what would make it really different is that Mike would use his connections through Norman Mailer that the really unique offering we could do that really would set it apart was to involve agents and editors, publishers and producers from the very beginning. So through Norman, we got entree to several top agencies. Random House. Folio management, and we regularly had agents and editors sitting in the room while we were developing the curriculum, so it quickly became as unacademic as we could make it to be a professional creative writing program and eventually led to the decision that unlike every other program in the country which is still true, the second reader for our students' creative work was not going to be a second faculty member. Umm every other program, masters program, MFA program, PhD program in the country uses faculty members as second readers to sign off, which means you read my students manuscript and I'll read your students manuscript and we're gonna sign off. We wanted to push the envelope and that meant that the second readers then would be agents, editors, publishers, producers and to fully prepare students for the life of a writer, their capstone experience would have to emulate what would happen if you had a new play, so if you have a new play in our program, first of all you should know that 80% of the MFA programs in this country don't require complete manuscripts to finish, they require most of the manuscript with an outline and a lot of critical papers. We went the other way and said, we need a full manuscript, a smaller critical paper because its gonna be read by an outside person who is professional, it needs to be done it can't be partial and it needs to be ready to be read, so that meant we hold people back if it's not ready otherwise the agents wouldn't read it they say, we are not gonna read a student work that's a draft we're just not gonna do it. So, that changed everything in our curriculum and the other piece capstone would say, they're not only gonna be evaluated by an outside agent let's say if they're in fiction, poetry or non-fiction, an agent or editor reads and evaluates that work for craft and marketability, and give some suggestions for revision and meet with them in interview face to face to learn how to take feedback like that. Something none of our writers in our program have ever been taught how to do, umm if they're a playwright we use equity actors in New York and we have them read about drama skills, reading rooms all about playwrights or guild members, it's the only thing cheap in New York it's 25/hour, they get a rehearsal in the morning for the playwrights working with the director and the actors in the room, and they get a formal stage reading with a talkback to follow. If they're a screenwriter, they have a table reading on campus, with a 70 minute cutting, with at least three film producers in the room to give them notes to talk back and an outside evaluation. We're the only program in the country that does that because it's hard, we had our most difficult struggle the first two years was with even with Norman's blessing and handful of folks that worked with us, it's still is a struggle to find at the beginning umm really good top like agencies and publishers to work with us. That's not the case

anymore. Johnny Temple from Akasha's books joined us (which is a for-profit out of Brooklyn) and he brought us five or six new agents and editors since then, Chris Tomasino who worked with Joe Torres, the former Yankees coach.. she was his literary manager and Shelby Foote in his "Civil War" work, she is a top five agent who's joined us and they have brought us other agents and editors. So the program has become this community, and by the way the original faculty, the original twelve are all still with us with exception of one who turned 92 this year, John Bowers, he finally had to say he couldn't do it anymore, but they are the ones who brought us other people so the whole program has been built by word of mouth from that beginning twelve faculty and five agents and publishers who then became a part of it. I've never hired anybody over the transom, we brought some guests from time to time to try out and it's a very different kind of teaching that we do, because it's a mentor one on one program umm the faculty get as invested in the reading list and the drafting as the students, and they literally do everything from thrillers to romantic comedies to literary fiction, you know Marlon James is our superstar alum, obviously with Man Booker Prize, but we've had several going on just as much success, not as well known. But in all different kinds of areas, in film, poetry, playwriting. We have a high number now, I think five have gone on to PhDs, we've had about twelve alum who've founded their own writing theories or journals, or magazines because that's also a piece of what we do in the program is to talk about community giveback and how to support yourself, kind of what I said about Adam earlier, supporting yourself in the writing world that may not seem just to your writing, because writers have a lot of weight to support themselves. The most notable one is Hippocampus magazine is now Hippocampus book and Donna Talarico. I think you remember her Chris, a communications undergraduate major

CB: Yes, terrific!

BC: Yeah, and she founded it and she used it as her masters, she got her MFA from us and came back and got a Masters in Publishing from us and used it as her project and Publishers Weekly has twice named Hippocampus, the best non-fiction online magazine in the country, so it's now a publishing books as well.

CB: Tell us the Marlon James story.

BC: Marlon James haha, Marlon umm and he actually told part of the story when he accepted the Man Booker Prize and he finally announced publicly to the world that it was Wilkes University and Kaylie Jones who encouraged his writing. Kaylee met him in Jamaica at the Calabash which is a literary festival. He had submitted an opening chapter of a book that eventually became "John Crows Devil" and he submitted it to get into the workshop, she accepted him, he shows up in July and he has no manuscript! She asked, I wanted to see the rest of the novel, where is it? he said it was rejected over 70 times by American publishers, so he destroyed it. He had no copy. And Kaylie said, well you better damn well find a copy because I'm Kaylie Jones, she said you better call all your friends, he wrote to all of his friends, one of his friends in The United States emailed him an early draft, and he sent it to Kaylie. Kaylie read it, gave it to Johnny Temple at Akaschic Books, Johnny fell in love with the book and they published it during Marlon's first year at Wilkes. Marlon umm Kaylee said well you need to be

serious about your writing, I am part of this program we're opening in January 2005, I think you should be one of the first students because I think you're that good, but you need to learn a lot. So Marlon came to us from Jamaica, had a thin sweatshirt and sneakers on when Mike met him at the airport, Mike had him staying at his house umm because he kind of came into a hat in hand. It was starting to become difficult for international students to come to low res programs in The United States, that was part of the problem. So, he had come on a business visa which he had to pay a good bit for apparently, umm anyway he came to us and halfway through the semester told us he was going to leave because "John Crows Devil" was coming out and he wasn't sure he needed us, and I said down with him and Bob Mooney sat with him and Johnny was finally the deciding thing saying, you need this program because editors don't edit like Maxwell Perkins anymore or they don't guide you, they just market work, you need to learn how to structure novels your novels are all over the place, so he stayed, he worked with Bob Mooney and then instead of having an outside agent or editor or reader, he made the unique request that Colum McCann who was still on our board and came to our residency at that point umm be the second reader to talk about structure because Colum's books are big, there are multi characters like his. Every agent and editor working for us wanted Marlon James and Marlon said no to all of them, and spent another two years after the masters working on *The Book of Night Women* well that was his thesis for us, that was the name of the second book but for us it was called *Burnt Sugar*, and I asked him what version was finally published? And he said, 9E. One through nine was the different combination of narrators, A through E was the number of drafts he spent and he took two whole years to do it, and he said he learned through working at Wilkes about the uh you know it's great to have these ideas and just beau out the stuff on the pages, but have to have structural architectural control is what he learned at Wilkes, from those mentors. He's been very gracious. He and I have hosted national events that AWP The Association of Writers and Writing Programs conferences. Every time I asked him to host something he's done that with me, these conferences are annual and they draw like 15000 writers, and he doesn't do like the public kind of appearances, but he loves to do interviews, like Seth Meyers? you could find it everywhere, but public appearances and readings he's more guarded, he's actually very private umm so, that's our Marlon story.

CB: Wonderful story!

TG: Yeah it's a fantastic story. Bonnie, one of the things that always struck me about the program is the kind of community that was just absolutely apparent if you were anywhere close to it, as you remember I lived next door to one of the places. It was infectious and what did you do to create that real sense of community, and you felt like, I remember going to a couple of your sessions and people were rating some of their work and it was such a supportive environment. How did you do that?

BC: Umm well partly it was taking it out of the playbook of learning to be an okay dean I think by the end of seven years. By listening more and deciding less, and making a team out of those 14 chairs. The last four years of my deanship were rewarding because of that, they didn't know each other much less even acknowledge what the others did, and when Mike and I started

building this we said, to do this right we wanna follow that model because we're not you know I've written a novel and I majored in fiction and playwriting at Binghamton, but I wanna know what Colum McCann thinks, I wanna know you know the people who are breaking out as being major writers. I want to know about their process, about what they think and to build this curriculum right, we need to have a team and really listen. So, we spent a lot of time with white paper on walls saying, asking writers, agents, editors what did you learn in your program that we need to keep? What did you not get out of your graduate program? And we picked people who had MFA's or PhD or agents or editors, and for the agents or editors, well what do you look for in a novel? You know what excites you? And what are the industry standards we need to be worried about? not what the Writer's Magazine says or Writer's Digest or what popular book people use, but what do you really want? And then let's build it in the curriculum that here's a query letter that'll work, here's a template, here's a synopsis of the way it's supposed to be done, and by having that two years Tim to work with that basic group and then that group brought in other writers, so for example, Kaylie umm we wanted someone who was high powered in non-fiction, and she said well I know Bev DoNofrio, wrote "Riding in Cars with Boys" it was a major movie you know she's a major memoirist. And so I talked to give Bev's phone number and I called her, and when we were having dinner one night and I said, we really need uh we have three movie producers who are all in New York and are very singular, they are all independent film makers, it's Robert May, Michael Mailer and Richard Uhlig. But they are indie producers, we need someone from Hollywood, and Bev said well how about I call Susan Cartsonis. Susan worked for Universal Pictures and she bought "Riding in Cars with Boys", so I think you'd love Susan, why don't you call Susan, Susan in 2010 we brought her on board, had been named the top grossing producer not female producer but producer of 2010 and 2011. She had just done 'No Reservations', 'What Women Want' still grosses is like 10 million a year which is remarkable for me that old Mel Gibson film, but she had an A list of you know she 'Where Her Heart Is', 'The Truth About Cats and Dogs', 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' was her in film at Universal, the original film. So she had a track record and she came and taught Foundations for us because she loved teaching and didn't get a chance, and she said I'll do anything to have a week with Bev Donofrio and if Bev says you guys are okay, you're okay. That's how the community was built but what they do really well that also is amazing to me because that's unusual in any program, they don't tell each other you know that's great stuff, they actually bring a lot of new work in during that week and share it with each other and push each other, they don't agree they're all totally different ego, totally different personalities, but they accepted that as okay, we're all writer though and we wanna be the best program in the country. And that's how they took it from the beginning and that's led by people like Kaylie, like Mike Lennon, umm Nancy McKinley, Bob Mooney, Phil Brady. They were at the top in their profession in teaching and writing at other institutions, but they happened to be acquaintances of mine and Mike, and then that built the circle that added to that circle because everytime we needed someone else you know they would introduce them to us. And that's why I'd never had to hire anyone over the transom. Because we had a couple of people who came in and the faculty are protective of the

community. If we had a potential new faculty member come to us, we'd have them each do a craft class, anybody who was kind of auditioning for us, and we'd hear their work, hear their reading and the faculty would hear how they talk to students, and if they were prescriptive in any way meaning: well this is how you write a novel, if you're gonna work with me this is how you're gonna do it, if they hear any of that because it's a very creative open community, the faculty would come to me and say we don't want this person working with our students. They all feel the same when they start a new project, they're starting students at like the beginning, so it's a very different teaching than I've had before a very different community, and that's the infection you feel, and they don't like each other and everything that they write but certainly respect each other as writers. And that's the sense of the community that's been the most rewarding, that's gonna be the hardest part for me to miss, but I do have a caveat. David Hicks, who is the new Creative Writing Director, is absolutely wonderful and he was enamored by that sense of community as well. He's invited me to stay on the faculty and continue to be part of the program. I actually have the advantage of not having to deal with the administrative stuff and just be able to talk to students and faculty as writers which will be great and fun.

CB: That's good

TG: So Bonnie uhh I am sure if this is a complete fair question, but just to treat about what your assessment is since you're rotating out, what do you think the future of the program is?

BC: Umm you know when we started this, Tim knows we had five competitors, and we were going head to head nationally with other programs. By 2010/11 we had 120 students which was our peak, since 2010 there are 65 new low res programs in this country, umm the competition is incredibly high, the Marlon factor, however, the kind of student who's applying to our program is much higher this class, had 11 new students but they were all accomplished writers coming in. And that's the profile that the retention rate is higher, does that make sense Tim?

TG: Yeah sure

BC: Because we're getting much better quality of students because of the Marlon thing, because they know we're serious. we're not playing around. There's a couple of opportunities that I had in development that I shared with David in terms of recruiting one offering totally online versions of our foundation classes across the country as a certificate for potential students who still have to apply after those nine credits but it'll be a way to get our alums teaching and bringing in another revenue stream. And the other one is a 698 class added for MSA, MA, PhD creative post graduate studies, it's a six credit class that offers a revision of a manuscript plus a marketing strategy, for post-MFA, MA students from other programs and can be totally done online which we think could be a huge additional revenue stream. So we're trying to find ways to support the main body which is still the MA and MFA, we have about 60 students now which still makes us one of the largest programs in the country but certainly I don't think we'll hit those numbers of 120 again with all that competition because people are looking more regionally. The other gifts that in some ways David Hicks has been given uhh in June we had to go totally online because of the pandemic, so we took the five discreet three credit classes learning during each residency, we took all five of those courses we started working March 2nd umm just in case, and

ended up making the call March 23rd we made the call to go online before everything closed. And we spent from that time until June 2nd moving all of that totally online and training the faculty, getting the students prepared to be online and it worked, so now what David has in his hands and because of the Mesa experience, Tim, we also created the weekender version that we ran in Mesa. So what he can do now, he has master classes in Desire to Learn from the program as a low res, and completely online virtual residency, as a weekender on the ground and as a weekender online. I think having talked to other directors around the country who crashed and burned bad during their residencies because they waited too long to make that move, they end up having a lot of frustrated students. They didn't bother to train the faculty they just scheduled zoom calls and thought it would all work out, and you saw what happened today with us, could you imagine 125 people, we spread it out over 13 days instead of 8 to take away some of the fatigue, we embedded videos for evenings so that they could watch on their own and again not be doing zoom from 9 in the morning till 9 at night, we followed all the best practices Tim and did a lot of research to make it happen. And again I went back to the faculty and said, I need your help, do I have volunteers to help move this, and we did it. That again that community that they really want this program to succeed, they want their students to succeed, and they write more and better the faculty all tell me since they've been part of this program, but they also write blurbs for each other, they also send grants to each other, they help find work for each other along with the students and that's another part of the network that has built a real deep sense of commitment and gratitude within the community. And I've never experienced that in any other writing program, in fact residency programs are usually snake pits and that's what all of us had experienced.

TG: Well this is fascinating to me Bonnie, I don't know if anybody else has any questions but I would ask you is that, is there anything you know that we haven't asked you that you think we should've asked for this oral history project?

BC: Wow, you know this is just amazing. It's been very sad for me to leave Wilkes without a lot of closure, and this is just me personally speaking it isn't really about the oral history, and it comes out of a worry about what we do for a living in our institutions and how can we do it during a Pandemic. It's a horrible time for everyone umm but higher education especially is a whole new reckoning, it's pointed out a lot of efficiency that I knew if I was staying I'd be worried about it every night. But I think the best thing is that having gone through SLURP, gone through being the dean of everything but pharmacy and then developing this program, had the luxury of the last 16 years to do that, Wilkes is in a better position than most if it can ride out the financial issues in the next two years then it's just gonna be there you know, because of what we were already when this started and because of what its broader portfolio offers us that many schools don't have. My own niece is a senior at Wilkes, and she did in three years because she did a lot of online classes coming into Wilkes because Wilkes put her in the Young Scholars online program, and she was in the honors program and they can take 21 credits and she's been doing that, umm and she's very worried she's gonna miss that whole senior year experience, and she may be right. It's a difficult time for all of us, you know I was still on Terri's deans cabinet

because I still reported to Terry started reporting to Reynold then reported to Anne and then Terry, and they baked the cake and we all pretended we had a slice of it on a zoom meeting that was my retirement party and I know that a lot of folks who are leaving Wilkes are feeling like that. It's just a strange position umm for whatever that means to you all, they had plans the faculty had plans, the vast banquets you've experienced those Tim, they wanted to have me be the keynote speaker and they already had Marlon ready to surprise me by a comment.

TG: Oh wow!

BC: And three other alums were gonna come in by zoom, but we didn't do any of that.

TG: That's such a shame

BC: Well, you know but the thing is the work that happened building into the residency and the community effort that came out of it, I feel rewarded because that spirit is there. And with David, David Hicks taught with me and shadowed me, the new director and he said, he's gonna be great. And he asked me, well he waited till midweek but he said, well I get the sense from you that it's really about the community, it's really about Wilkes and it's not about Bonnie Culver's ego and therefore I'd like you to stay on the faculty. And that's the way I'd like to be remembered that I did a lot of things for Wilkes that you know some of Tim, that Chris knows some of, Jim knows some of, Pat knows others and you know my whole experience in Mesa, and those two years out there, it's like I've never been bored at Wilkes that's for sure.

[Laughter]

TG: Yeah one of the I uhh just a couple of quick reactions if I can have that luxury, one of them is as you talked about how you dealt with the Covid 19 onslaught, I can't imagine a program handling things better than that umm you know under those circumstances. And I assume they're also in fact as you talked about, there was some real creativity that emerged out of that but, well kudos to you and all the people on your team for doing so well with that. You'd hope that the same thing would be true of you know a lot of other programs, but I am actually involved in working on a book right now about how you address these issues because Covid 19, as huge as it is, is probably the tip of the iceberg for higher education.

BC: Yeah you're right!

TG: It's all going to have to begin to look a whole lot more like online programming, that is you know you are in a team bases, helping people master a craft that is very difficult and very complex but they also have to figure out how to sell it you know, and get it published. And that's what you've done and I think that's what we're gonna have to do with students in general, it's absolutely the rigor, absolutely the kind of things that we associate with traditional disciplines in such a way that it really has some meaning and some excitement and relevance that gets them to do it, and then to practice it in real life. I really just admire you so much on that, nobody ever Bonnie I don't think ever thought you had ego issues ever.

BC: Hahahahaha, well thank you I'll take that.

TG: Yeah! For sure.

CB: Let me because it's really kind of is the end of this, umm besides continuing to teach in the program which I think is fabulous umm what else is on your horizon?

BC: Well I did have, I really haven't told you any of you in my personal life but I probably would've stayed at Wilkes till I was 70 or no longer drooling over myself because that was my life. Wilkes has been my institution umm its something I've devoted a great deal of energy and fought and cared for as well as well taking care of me, so that was clearly my goal. Tom Rupp was hired to replace Bruce Phair as the Dart technical director. Tom came to Wilkes from Center Stage, Baltimore you may know Tim, it's a more professional theatre in downtown Baltimore that only does big Broadway kinds of shows, and discovers new works as well. And Tom was the technical designer for them for 38 years, had a union shop of about 14 carpenters, metal workers, lighting designers all who worked underneath him, umm he wanted to get out he retired, was hired to replace Bruce and they were also starting uh the theatre department was starting a technical theatre degree, and that was one of the reasons they hired him as well. So, he runs the Dart center. We both were divorced, never gonna be interested at all ever again in finding anybody, and we had lunch one day and we married on the Dart stage in January of 2019. He created a set Chris, Jim and Tim, it was thousands of stars on the back wall, on the overhead umm with palm trees waving, a 30 ft screen over the audience that was showing slides of the two of us. Amazingly same time period doing different things in theatre, all through our lives, uhh in any case, we had 100 guests and we had a wonderful time umm and we didn't ask for gifts, we said instead would you please donate to the Wilkes Creative Writing Scholarship Fund and it raised \$9000. So umm that Tom and I uhh so after meeting him and I also was starting to get more interested in my own work again because I created a staff now and I had an associate director finally and an office assistant, and I was able to start writing again the last couple of years umm I wrote a piece Chris based on Norris Church Mailer's 'Ticket to the Circus', I think Tim you might've heard her read from that actually I know you met her.

TG: Yeah I believe I did. Certainly met her.

BC: Before she passed, Norris and I became really good friends, and after she passed her sons came to me and had read a piece that I had written for the Mailer Review about her, and said, you have the voice of our mother, would you think about writing a play? And so, I got the option to her memoir about four years ago, and its been in development ever since. We had a couple of readings in New York, it's like in its fifth draft now. Umm it was finally picked up last year and it was scheduled to open in May of 2020, in Santa Monica at the Edgemark Center for the Arts starring Anne Archer, developed by Michelle Banner who was the artistic director there. They had planned to open the first week of May for previews audiences and for London producers who wanted to take Archer to London on the West End. Of course all of that has come unraveled umm it's now slated for January/ February of 2021 umm but who knows, I mean that's where we are. Umm I also had a screenplay that won a couple of awards that I'm revising to send out to Michael Mailer who's interested and Susan Cartsonis, so now some of those people who've been working with me you know are asking to see my work, which I've never shared by the way when I was a director, and they were all a little unhappy with me but I said, you need to look at the

student's work first and it was kind of a peculiarity of mine. But now I am a faculty member, so it's a little different but umm any case, that's what I'm working on and a novel, I started a novel just before the pandemic and tryna get back to it. I am very happy sitting in our little house in Lake Harmony looking up at the deers and the trees, and umm you know just...I am personally happy.

CB: That's great!

BC: Its one thing umm [cough] excuse me, I remember saying this to Harold and I didn't think Harold Cox and I don't think I take my own advice, but and for all of you, institutions don't love you back, people do

TG: That's right!

BC: You know, and I really and Harold put his whole life into Wilkes, you know Chris and Jim, and it was hard for him when he could no longer contribute. And I personally didn't wanna feel that I wasn't contributing to Wilkes and umm then also I had a personal life so I just have been incredibly lucky to find Tom and I think he's much luckier to have found me, and I'll tell him that.

TG: Tell him that we and you said that.

BC: Hahahahaha, you would all enjoy him. He's a fantastic artist, smart but kind and used to wrangling stars so, he's turned the Darte into exactly what Bruce had made it, a welcoming place that can handle any production you bring him. And I know that Pat liked working with him and others who got to know him, but that's him so.

CB: Bonnie this has been a wonderful wonderful interview! I think one of the most remarkable we've had, and it was wonderful to preserve your sense of the institution and of yourself in it with the crowning glory of the creative writing program. I think Jim, I am glad you put the pressure on us to have this interview, I think it really was terrific. And Bonnie, thank you for all you've done and continued to do for Wilkes! Jim, any final comments?

JR: I think we covered everything. It's a very good interview, Bonnie

BC: Well I'm glad

JR: Bonnie, can you hear me?

BC: I can, I heard you that time Jim, I heard you. The only thing we didn't talk about, and I don't know where it fits in your oral history is Mesa, and that was another piece of my life, but it was

TG: It would be a minute

BC: Say that again?

TG: well i don't know, Chris you have to get going?

CB: I kinda do but, we can do 10 minutes on Mesa, that would be great

TG: Yeah, we could do that

BC: Yeah, I think it was another opportunity, you know, that Wilkes was trying something new, I think that's a good part about Mesa. Answered the call that was really interesting. We were interviewed by The Chronicle, and NPR a couple of times about this new town experience where we would occupy along with some other partners a building that the city of Mesa would provide,

and we would not build our dorms and cafeterias and all that but they would give us classroom/ office building and would use the downtown, the existing library the existing technical support and use the city as part of our patent literally. It was a great idea, five of us went in as institutions and Tim left, I think you left right after we signed? Is that true? Or just before?

TG: Umm I think just before we signed. I think there may've been successor agreements but we decided on my watch that we were gonna do it.

BC: Right right. And it was really uhh so in any case, personally what happened, how I got involved umm was when Pat came on board, some of the faculty nominated me as a potential interim Provost and Pat was interviewing me, and I was very happy with the creative writing program and I told them I wasn't interested, she said I wanna interview you anyway because **Mike Speziale** said that you have past dean experience umm we need somebody on the ground [something?] because we're not getting things done because there are no eyes on the ground. And it's too expensive flying groups out there once in a while and we really don't have control over the building. We were supposed to have complete oversight on the building on the refitting of the building which was 60,000 sqft, and they turned it into a classroom office building for us, engineering lab in the basement, bio lab, chem lab, upstairs lecture hall umm spaces for students to have cohort meetings in groups. But we got to pick out um it ended up being Westminster College and Wilkes going into the building, and we wore hard hats for 14 months umm to actually look at everything from the internet bandwidth, and we bring in people from Wilkes to be part of meetings at Westminster and engineers of the city of Mesa, umm we did everything from the final tile to what the offices looked like, what the furniture felt like, we had raced it down the hallways testing the note chairs just to see what they were like, and had this great faith. And I also was in charge then of going before the Arizona State Education Department to present the programs for accreditation, so I was special fitting the building trying to recruit students and be totally immersed in the city. The city, on its part, appointed me to the mayor's council on the arts and education, I had to go to those council chamber meetings, they appointed me to the board of the Southwest Shakespeare Company which houses the Mesa's fine arts center which was an incredible space, and eventually the Mesa Art Center put me on their board, and so the city did its part to try to integrate us, the problem is and I think eventually it failed, well I know umm we didn't understand the culture really in Arizona umm it's really more anti- higher education government than we realized, and what didn't appear on paper was the community colleges have also been blocked from becoming four year colleges by the three major universities. So the reason they weren't private colleges out there, was that those three universities were very strong at blocking everything that would've led to a four year degree from somewhere else, and we kept wenting up against them, ASU was the big Gorilla that everytime we announced something, they had something bigger, so it was difficult to begin with. We did get uh we graduated 20 creative writing students by developing the weekend program, that was a secondary thing and we had maybe 15 MBA students, then maybe another 30 bachelors, accounting students, business students, umm what we didn't know was that, if you were a community college out there and took a certificate program in engineering and could pass the

engineering exam and state exam , you didn't need a four year degree. So, while we were trying to sell engineering, they were looking at us like why would we spend 40,000 a year if we can spend 5000 a year, get the certificate, pass the exam and earn 85K from the Salt Lake river project, So only by having been on the ground did we figure that out, so Pat and Mike were right, we needed somebody out there, I just happened to be the person who had to be that. We did establish good relations with the city, um we left in good debt it just wasn't financially feasible and especially now we couldn't have carried it, it was a good idea, we just didn't do quite all the leg work we needed to make it happen, but I think the legacy of it is that there's always a willingness for Wilkes to try something that maybe out of the box, and Westminster also couldn't make it work, umm they finally pulled out, but Northern Iowa pulled out, the only one stayed of the original group I don't know if you know this Tim but it was Benedictine U.

TG: I believe they've since left.

BC: Last year they were still in the building.

TG: I don't know, Benedictine, its Chicago I think, anyway [inaudible]

BC: Yeah they closed the Chicago site actually Tim, to make the Mesa one work.

TG: Ahh

BC: Yeah that's what they did. So, but that meant they shifted everything to that site, and yeah I am still in touch with Jo Wilson who they're still in our building and they took our offices over.

TG: That was an old court building right?

BC: Yep. And in fact we used to still get, our building was at 245 South Street and the new court house was 245 North Street at the other side of Main, and we would still get people wandering in the building when we first opened, to pay fines and look for the judges, so one of the jokes Bob Selinger and I, he was the Westminster director, joked about putting on a robe that may make money for Wilkes and Westminster by collecting fines because we kept getting people coming in

TG: It was perfect! Yeah

BC: Yeah, it was a great building.

CB: Thank you for this! And I hope that in our small way we've part of your closure experience which you were denied because of the pandemic. Umm you had a wonderful contribution today to reflect on your whole career. ..

BC: It was very sweet

CB: at least starting with Wilkes, and it's certainly invaluable for the rest of us. And Suzanna for posterity!

[Laughter of Suzanna]

BC: Yeah, well thank you for the opportunity and yes it was very kind of all of you, and umm I hope I said something that will help. It's a good institution, we've all served it in a lot of ways and yeah, Tim I'm fascinated to hear more about what you're doing you know, we can talk sometime umm because it is a whole different world out there and our program had kinda been on the forefront of writing that. And one of the best things you did was to allow me to stay reporting first to you then Pat, to report to the provost so we could be more nimble than other programs, and somehow other programs have got to figure out how to do that too.

TG: I think the fact is two things I would say, the more important point is I think anywhere you'd be Bonnie, you'd be nimble, seriously I think it's a mindset
[Laughter of Bonnie]

TG: to the extent that it enables people to support you and give you the benefit of walking...that probably was a good thing. I mean it's been a hugely successful career! I'm mostly encouraged by how you've adapted in this really really competitive environment, and you know its funny Bernie is facing the same thing uhh.

BC: He is! Well not now, but yeah those are the things Bernie was always worried about, we did share that, in fact to let you all know, I hired Bernie after he retired to work on an articulation agreement with me, he became my associate on a stipend! We had a blast because just sitting down with him and brainstorming which is how we came up with the certificate, with the 698 post, we actually approached local schools about the 4+1 possibility which is really what that certificate could be as well, and that okay hang out with Bernie for another six months, so he understands what Scotts gonna face and its gonna be harder for them because we can't do what we do online in writing but for the labs, and all of the stuff that nursing and pharmacy have to do, that's gonna be a real challenge.

TG: Yeah it is, although umm what we're seeing is developments because of the production of artificial intelligence and obviously a lot of real technological advances, and the fact that a lot of science students have the capability to receive that, manipulate it, I think the lab problem would be lost not gone but less than it was.

BC: You're probably right

TG: But, it's gonna be a totally different game, and it's only the nimble institutions that are gonna uhh I think thrive for sure and I think many are gonna go by the wayside. I do agree with you that Wilkes is pretty uniquely positioned programmatically.

CB: Alright! Thank you all for being a part of this! I think it was one of our most delightful sessions owing to our special guest.

TG: I mean we had a lot of delightful sessions by the way Bonnie, I mean this is not the pale company here that we're talking about!

[laughter of Bonnie]

CB: Including one with Owen Faut, we had a lovely session with Owen Faut.

BC: Oh good.

TG: We did! We did! Hahahaha

BC: So you all know the update of Harold yes?

TG: Yes

CB: No, I don't

TG: Would like to know.

BC: Okay, he's been in a nursing facility since December just before Christmas, and finally now Bob is able to see him again. They were married on the Wilkes campus last it would've been uhh October, after his wife had passed and so Bob called me, Bob Reite his partner asked if they

could have a ceremony on campus and I helped him. So Owen and I went to umm to Anne Skleder and they had a ceremony in the library, and so they're married but now Bob has not been able to see him till very recently, and now he's not able to see him again. Umm his Alzhemiers is bad yeah it's bad.

CB: Thank you for that update. Very sorry to hear that Steven Thomas has died

BC: Yeah.

CB: It was a real loss for Wilkes and community

TG: Yeah Wilkes Barre too.

BC: Susan McSavage, his wife is one of our alums, she just finished sadly finished a memoir last June that she read from as her capstone, and it's about being a caregiver for her mother who died when she was a junior in highschool, and her father who died when she was a junior in college, and as she's reading it Steven couldn't come to the reading because he'd just started chemo, he'd just been diagnosed. And all of us were just... it was beautifully written and heartbreaking, and then to see how that felt umm we were also hopeful though, but yeah it's a very sad loss. He's a very special guy.

CB: Thank you everybody. We'll see you together with Bernie next week

TG: Yeah that would be another wonderful session as well!

JR: July 30th right?

SC: July 30th yes, 1pm

TG: Yeah you should have an invitation. Jim, we've gotta fix your sound problem.

JR: You know something just appeared on to my screen saying, dial in I don't know why it popped up at that point

TG: Because they wanted you to go through the pain of going through my cell phone, you know [inaudible after this]

CB: Bonnie I'm glad we got to see you in the beginning!

TG: Yeah yeah

BC: Thank you

CB: which was lustrous as ever. So, Suzanna thank you for arranging all this at the last minute, which is really wonderful in terms of our timing.

SC: Yes.

CB: And we'll see you again!

SC: Yes, thank you so much Bonnie!

BC: Thank you Suzanna! Alright everybody, bye bye!

[Everybody says bye]