

CITATION

COMMENCEMENT, THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 1997

George Francis Ralston

George Francis Ralston, Dean Emeritus of Student Affairs at Wilkes University and Special Assistant for Alumni Affairs, now beginning your second half century of service to this grateful institution of higher learning, you began as a boy in Harrisonburg, Virginia, the youngest of nine children, where you must have acquired that courtly southern way. A farm boy, you completed your schooling near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, then returned south to the University of North Carolina where you were a star football player, a member of the Grail and Golden Fleece Honorary Societies and graduated with a BA in Biology with honors in 1940. You almost immediately started your affair with the Wyoming Valley by teaching biology and coaching football and basketball at Forty-Fort High School for a year before entering the U.S. Army in 1942 as a private. After

four difficult but challenging years of service in the Anti-Aircraft Artillery, earning two Purple Hearts, you left the Army in 1946 with the rank of Major, having demonstrated those qualities of leadership of your fellows that you would bring to this college during its formative years. Dr. Eugene Farley found you at Forty Fort High School and persuaded you to come to teach biology and coach at Bucknell University Junior College, soon to be Wilkes College, where over the next four decades you were Director of Athletics for thirteen years, Football Coach for eleven, Basketball Coach for ten, Baseball Coach for five, Dean of Men for twenty, and even, briefly, Dean of Women. Finally you became Dean of Student Affairs. In all the roles you have played at Wilkes, you more than anyone else helped to set the moral tone for this campus that includes the dedicated nurturing of students, high standards of conduct that you modeled in your own behavior, and affording second, sometimes third chances to growing young adults to learn from their mistakes without forfeiting future opportunities to be responsible, honorable and productive citizens. From your role as campus preacher, a man of deep faith without

dogmatism, you taught generations of Wilkes students to plan their work and to work their plan. In every gesture of your being, you met your students as equals and expressed your faith in their eventual worth as caring, moral adults even if you had occasionally to show them the straight road necessary to get them there. While you are usually visibly critical of second rate performance, you also demonstrate a buoyant optimistic belief that an individual can rise with disciplined effort to higher levels of achievement than he or she ever imagined possible. You became a living legend among student affairs professionals for your total, tireless dedication to students and their welfare. You also modeled a commitment to your community that is reflected in leadership roles with the YMCA, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross (where you must hold the life-time record for most pints of blood contributed), the Boy Scouts, the Wilkes-Barre Rotary, the Mental Health Board and your beloved First Presbyterian Church. On this campus as in our wider community, you have been a gentleman and a gentle man, a loving husband to your beautiful Helen and your four fortunate sons, David, John, Tom and Jamie, whom you

cherished but never coddled, and who are now a great credit to their parents as well as to their alma mater. When you left the Army, you still hoped to become a medical doctor, and did go on for graduate work at Harvard and Columbia Universities, but you gave up that ambition in order to serve Wilkes students and now, Wilkes alumni. No living individual knows more Wilkes alumni nor has such formidable recall of details both great and small that evidence your total interest in and involvement with them as human beings, their family origins, their failures and successes, their personal growth and character, and their life course after Wilkes. It is with particular pleasure that I, by the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University and by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, bestow upon you, George Francis Ralston, for a virtual lifetime of loving service to this University, the degree Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.

Congratulations Dr. Ralston.

The announcement that was sent out about this 60th anniversary Seminar Series, in which the presenters are listed, also includes a program note explaining the seminars, which says, "This series of seminars will celebrate the first sixty years of Wilkes University from the unique perspective of the speakers." The word Unique is the key word in the statement. This narrative of mine this evening is my life at BUJC and Wilkes. It is unique in that it is my personal experience, and I hope you will abide the personal, for it is the only experience I know well. Furthermore, those who conjured up this program proclaimed, "unique perspective", and thereby making a presentation in this style acceptable. There is not an attempt tonight to be historical, philosophical, or analytical: only to faithfully reminisce about sixty years in this beloved community; not to make too many judgments, but not to ignore them either. Just to tell it like it revealed itself to me over the years. If I proceed along these lines maybe it will be balm for the ancestors here, enlightenment for the active corps, and instruction of inspirational nature for those coming in the future. In all these reminiscences tonight, I wander back to my father's story about little "Willie", a classmate of his in the 6th grade. The teacher, Miss Ada Blackwood, my father always referred to her as a master teacher, asked little "Willie" to define gender, "Yes'm," Said Willie, "gender is divided into masculine and feminine – masculine is temperate and intemperate and feminine is frigid and torrid." This evening, I shall

try to be temperate in my remarks, if you will not be frigid in your discussion of them.

So that you can better know where I'm coming from in this saga, let me say that it began in the year 1946. I had just been released after five years of military service and had returned to Forty Fort High School where I had taught English and coached football and basketball. I had no teaching certification, but they needed someone and I had taught these one year before I entered the military service when I was just out of college, where I had been awarded a BA Degree in Biology. Forty Fort had kept in touch with me throughout the war and wanted me back. So, I got out of the army the last week of January '46 and was on duty the first week of February in Forty Fort. It was my intention to finish the year at Forty Fort, get together as much money as possible and go on to graduate or professional school. The latter part of April, I accompanied my school superintendent, Mr. Frank Walp, to Turner's Restaurant in Kingston where I was scheduled to speak to his Lion's club. On our way out, following the meeting, Mr. Walp spoke to Dr. and Mrs. Eugene Farley, who were having dinner at Turner's which was on their way out to their farm in Beaumont. Mr. Walp was a good friend of the Farley's and introduced me to them. This casual introduction marked the very beginning of a journey that has continued for almost forty-eight years. Of that casual introduction I remember the gentle loveliness of Mrs. Farley, the gangling, raw boned frame and shock of unruly rusty-blond hair of Dr. Farley.

In May of '46, Mr. Walp, Forty Fort School Superintendent, told me he had spoken with Dr. Farley at BUJC and they were in need of counselors to staff their Veterans' Guidance Center, which the college had established to test, counsel, and give guidance to the hundreds of World War II veteran's who were eager to take advantage of training and education offered under the GI Bill.

Mr. Walp said it would be a good job for me for the summer and would give me money to further my education. If I was interested, I should contact Dr. Alderfer who was director of the center. I called Dr. Alderfer. He advised me to write a resume and come to see him. This I did and I was hired. The pay was \$60 per week. At this time the Guidance Center was a big, vital segment of BUJC. It was a significant source of income for the financially strapped college and a prime source for recruiting students. The spring and summer of '46, there were as many as ten of us working as counselors. With support personnel there must have been twenty on the staff, and the financial support by the Veteran's Affairs branch of the U.S. Government was a boon to the Junior College of major importance. The Guidance Center was a great department for the campus and it was staffed by a splendid group of professionals led by Dr. Alderfer. I fondly remember playing catch with him on the river common during the noon lunch break. He was a Swarthmore graduate who loved baseball, having been a semi-pro player in his early years. His wife at the time was housemother in old Weckesser Hall on Northampton Street.

It was probably the latter part of July (1946) when Dr. Farley wandered into the kitchen of old Barre Hall. It was my office for counseling veterans. The kitchen hadn't been used for years. The old coal stove was present, with its dank odor, and, don't ask me to explain it, but the door leading into the kitchen was low and undersized. I remember this, for I can clearly remember Dr. Farley ducking his head as he entered and saying in a booming voice, "so this is where you are; a fellow could decapitate himself getting in here. This was really the first I had seen or talked with him since Turner's Restaurant several months earlier. There was one other time. It was at the First Presbyterian Church, where the convocation for the BUJC class of '46 was held the first week in June. I stood in the narthex against the front door of the crowded sanctuary to hear Dr. Harold Urey of the University of Chicago and A-bomb fame, deliver the convocation address. Dr. Farley led the convocation and in the elevated pulpit at first Presbyterian Church, he appeared to be seven feet tall. That day in the kitchen of old Barre Hall, he told me the students were pressing to have a football team. (Over the years I learned that his use of the word "pressing" was not a suitable word in this case. No one ever "pressured" him. After years of experience with him, I rather feel that the students were probably desiring or requesting the formation of football.) Dr. Farley said a Board member and several other people in the community were urging him to appoint a local man who had been the star at Lafayette, "Dutch" Wermuth by name. But Dr. Farley said he didn't like what he saw in the man and didn't think he would fit in here. He said he understood that I

had some experience and wondered if I would be interested. "Think it over," he said, " and if you want it, write me a letter about yourself. I would like a response from you within the week." Well, I wrote the letter and Dr. Farley hired me. Not only did he want me to coach football; he wanted to start an entire athletic program. And in addition, he said the college was opening a new dormitory, Butler Hall, and I could live there as a proctor and get my meals in the dining room, which was to be opened in the fall in Barre Hall. My contract was for twelve months and it paid me \$2400. I never dreamed I would be so situated when I was separated from the service in February, just six months earlier.

September 1st 1946 I moved from my room in Forty Fort to Butler Hall. It didn't take much effort. My possessions were enclosed in two hand bags. I boarded a trackless trolley, got off at the Sterling Hotel, walked down River Street and into the room at the head of the stairs on the third floor of Butler Hall. This would be my home for the next nine years.

We launched our efforts for a football team and an intercollegiate athletic program in late summer of '46. We started from true scratch. There was no equipment, no facilities, no records and no instructions or directives from Dr. Farley. All that we could find of athletic nature was a little equipment – which we located in a cedar clothes closet on the third floor of Chase Hall. It wasn't worth an inventory. I remember what was there – 2 medicine balls, about ten Indian clubs, a half a dozen basketball uniform tops and several orange and blue block

B's -, the Bucknell athletic award. That's all there was to begin with – and by fall we had to schedule opponents, obtain practice facilities, make official affiliations, procure equipment and above all, get students out for the team and coach them properly. I was alone in that new venture; Dr. Farley had not mentioned assistants. He probably thought it would be overemphasis in athletics. For all that needed to be done, he did say, as if it were a munificent sum, that he would set aside \$2000 in the budget. (In today's terms that would equip just one player.) And, he added, "You know when you signed on here, you joined the 'loyal order of jack-asses'. I joined in 1936 and I hope you will go along, for we are on a great quest here." Over the years I was to hear that expression from him many times.

To get the athletic program going on this campus in the late summer of '46 it was the support of students that made a seemingly impossible objective a reality. The students were "hungry Gullivers" - the greatest breed of students I've ever known. These were days following the war and our students were eager for "life" and education. They were finally in college following the arid and austere days of military effort. Their bent was for a fast education, and along with it, they slaked their appetite with recreation, which had been missed. Almost without knowing it they "lived it up", got their education, and entered the world of work as soon as possible. They made hurried commitments and for the athletic program for which Dr. Farley said they were "pressing" him – they produced. In every way they were helpful. They used their meager personal funds, their

vehicles, their own equipment, their skills, and their political influence, to bring the program on board. (Let me explain this in greater detail.) And we did get football going that fall. When the call went out for candidates for the squad, thirty-eight candidates showed up. There were no recruits, just volunteers, and they worked hard, under almost primitive conditions. They persevered, played a six game schedule and won every Game scheduled – no ties. That's how football started back then at BUJC. (Tell the sequel banquet story.)

It was the latter part of September, just weeks after Dr. Farley had talked with me about the athletics, that I joined him in front of Butler Hall as he walked toward Chase. He asked how practices were going, how the Kirby Park facilities were working out, whether we had equipment, etc. And as we walked, I taking two steps to his one (you remember he walked in that long lazy gait, occasionally dragging his heels, gazing straight ahead; you always had the feeling when you walked with him that he was there physically, but his mind was dreaming of many other matters and your conversation was on the "aside agenda" which at the moment he would verbalize –directly – for he was direct – always – in everything.) he suggested we go to his office and all the time he was telling me about the growth in enrollment in veteran students especially and resident students. He said he had always done most of the advising of students, but he said he was much in arrears in this responsibility and there were many students who needed counseling and weren't getting it. He said, "We need a Dean of Men and I think you're the man for the job and I'd like you to take it on." He also said

Miss Sanguiliano was leaving to marry and I might have some responsibility for the women - until he could replace her. That was it. I was now Dean of Men (students really), Director of Athletics, football basketball and baseball coach, head proctor of residence halls, coordinator of activities and, a little later on I helped out in the Biology faculty by teaching the old Biology 100 course, a course required of all non-science majors and engineers. Need I remind you these were the early years. Formative years. We weren't yet on a "shakedown cruise". That was yet to come. They were golden days – and we were all too occupied to complain or bask in the sunshine.

A few days after Dr. Farley put me on as a dean, I came back from football practice and one of the boys let me out of his car in front of Butler Hall on River Street. It was a little after six o'clock and I was heading for the dining room which was in Barre Hall. As I approached Barre Hall, a brevalineal, statuesque lady with dark hair strode toward me, extended her hand and said, "I'm Norma Sanguiliano." I'd never seen her before, but I'd heard her name and of her fame. We had a gracious supper with the students and Miss Sanguiliano left and I never saw her again until Dr. Michalini's inauguration, thirty years later, which she and her husband attended. They had retired and were living back in this community.

Our dining that evening with our resident students, was a delightful experience. Mrs. Jervis, wife of our Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds,

was our cook – our first chef- and she was super. She did it all with one helper and a heavy-duty gas range in the old Barre Hall kitchen. That was our first dining room. Student dining in those days was a dignified experience. For the evening meal men wore coats and ties. All stood until thanks was given. There were tablecloths and cloth napkins at each setting. We had forty-eight tables in our first dining room. We were able to sustain the same gracious dining room tradition until 1965 when Pickering Hall was opened.

Of the entire sixty years of the dear university, forty-seven with which I am intimately acquainted, I consider the decades of the forties and fifties glorious and golden. These decades followed what one might say were formative years of the college and in this period innovations were profuse and profound. Possibly these years impressed me so much because I was young, new to situations, and impressionable. There were so many new challenges. The college had gone through a painful gestation, a meager birth, and was now about to bloom.

Grant me a little more time to review what it was like for us then, - and point out great people, groups and events which give color, character and tradition to this glorious place. Bare in mind, however, as I speak of events, of people, of situations – that students were always the heart of the matter. They were then, for all of us, and I hope they are today – the *raison d'être*.

Every morning about 7:30, I came out of Butler Hall. Sunday morning it was an hour later. I had breakfast in the dining room and was in my office before 8:00. I don't remember whether or not eight was the prescribed starting time, but classes began at eight and since faculty had to be in class, I just felt that administration shouldn't be favored. Furthermore, Dr. Farley usually came in before 9:00 and for fourteen years, our offices were adjacent, so I just felt there was no need to heap coals of fire on my head by being there after his arrival. My hide never did get thick enough to be impervious to such onslaughts.

Almost everything emanated from Chase Hall - everything administrative. In Chase we counted students, registered them, tested them, administered discipline, directed athletics, organized and coordinated activities. We were also part of the admissions process for we interviewed all applicants in those days. On Saturday mornings we would interview five or six of these applicants – even on Saturdays when there would be a home game. Typically practice was at 4:00. I would leave my office at 3:45, run (I didn't have a car until '49) up River Street, across the bridge, and through Kirby Park, into the old dressing room, change and be on the field by 4:00. From 4:00 on it was high masculine drama on the turf of Kirby Park. I wish I could tell you of the great things that happened there. Some of the conditions were almost primitive. But we survived and succeeded because of the great students in makeshift uniforms. The on-field leadership of that seminal athletic venture was nominal. It was I, the coach, twenty-seven years of age, and a student manager, who was a veteran, probably one or two

years younger than I – which was the case of 60% of our of that period. I must tell you a little about that manager, for his story is typical of what went on back yonder and gives color to our history. First, Clem was the only manager in the history of sports to end up with more equipment than he had at the beginning. As a war veteran, he, like most of us in World War II, had learned the “art” of moonlight requisition. Clem also had a bad back, a disability from service, and he was in pain much of the time, but he got us equipment as no other manager could. (Continue with various stories.)

An unsung hero of those early years and an integral ingredient of our beginning was Dr. Sam Davenport, MD, an early member of our Board of Trustees. Though never officially designated, Dr. Davenport was our school and team physician. In situations where Medical advice or treatment was needed at the college, Dr. Farley would just say, “See Sam Davenport.” I can still see him clearly, trudging slowly onto the scene in his long overcoat, felt hat, brim turned up in front and his black bag in hand. And if he was tired from an atrocious schedule, you might see him chomping on a wet cigar. Sam had been a doctor for the Kingston Coal Company and was accustomed to treating men injured in the mines. He wasn’t gentle. He was just the kind of doctor a coach needed in our situation. He didn’t coddle players. (Molosh story). Dr. Davenport was our college physician. We called upon him to give physical exams to freshmen during orientation week. He examined the entire group in about two hours. That’s how it was then. Dr. Davenport was a great servant of this institution. As

a trustee he may not have contributed great financial amounts, I don't know, but I do know that he gave a tremendous amount of himself and his time in service.

In the 40's and 50's, the faculty, as in all colleges, was the backbone of the operation. It was small – fifty to sixty full-time and about twenty part-time teachers. There was great diversity of opinion. I know this for I was there for almost every faculty meeting and participated. From Participating, I learned the truth of the ancient definition of a faculty person as “someone who thinks otherwise”. Some shining stars on the faculty at that time were: Hall, Craig, Richards, Davies, Rosenberg, Reif, Mailey, and others, too. But there was also a strong component of less prominent part-time faculty who contributed great strength because they were excellent teachers. I have vivid memories of several great instructors from those years. Bob West was one. He taught math part-time. He began in the early years. He was a department chairman at Coughlin – a great teacher there and here. Another “lesser light” on the faculty was Stanley Chickson. Not many today would remember the name, but I remember and name him because so many alumni remember him and name him as a great teacher. His real name was Chicknosky. He wasn't highly regarded by the faculty or administration because of his unkempt appearance; his facility with English wasn't the best, and he kept a little cud of tobacco in his jaw even when teaching. Some said he verified what I heard when I first came to this area, “You can take a person out of the patch, but you can't take the patch out of the person”. Now I don't believe this is true, for Stan and other less remembered

faculty were great teachers. They added strength, color, and character to the faculty. Hundreds of alumni have testified to their excellence.

In addition to great teaching, the faculty in the 40's and 50's hassled over scores of issues. Often there was more heat than light. Simple issues were often made difficult and the complex – compound complex. The monthly faculty meetings were like most faculty meetings – they often tried one's patience. Consensus was an eternal struggle. But two monumental achievements of those years must be cited.

The curriculum being followed at the college at that time, in all fields, was inherited from Bucknell and the faculty felt that changes were needed. They wanted to bring the curriculum up to date. There was diversity within our faculty; Professors had come from a broad variety of educational experiences so that the potential for an enriched curriculum was good. Dr. Farley appointed a curriculum committee, which was to revise and develop a modern curriculum for our students. The faculty labored hard and long on a curriculum. Every change and every innovation was made after extensive, often heated debate. The basis for the curriculum available today really began at that time for curriculum development is an ongoing endeavor. In my judgment, this was one of two great achievements of the early faculty.

The other was the formulation of the "Marks of an Educated Man or Woman", statements of principles for which this institution exists. For me, this was the crowning achievement of the faculty in the 40's – and for all the years. The faculty forged the "Marks" in late '47, throughout all of '48, and in '49 culminated the project. I glory in the memories of my experience in that historically significant event in the history of Wilkes. Surely, "Marks of an Educated Man or Woman", how it was conceived, formulated and brought into being at this institution is a high point in the institution's history and merits a full chapter when a history is written.

The years I have been dwelling on were years of slow material growth at the college, but they were teeming with the creation of co-curricular organizations, campus activities, publications, faculty and community involvement that established the rituals and traditions of the college. Some activities had their beginnings in the BUJC years, but most were established in the '46 and '47 the very last year of BUJC and the first year of Wilkes.

An activity which must be mentioned in the program tonight, even though some may think not, is the all college assembly (some called it chapel) which was an integral part of the college even before my beginning here. Actually, the assembly was more than a co-circular activity; it was curricular because attendance was required for a student to graduate. For years, the eleven o'clock hour on Tuesday was kept free. It was "blocked out" by the scheduling office, the

registrar, for assembly. In the later years, the day was changed to Thursday, but the hour never changed. In '46 when the veterans began registering in greater numbers and enrollment soared, we began to hold assemblies in the sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church. (Narrate the format and place of the assembly.) The all college assembly was loathed by students because attendance was required. Faculty despised it because it took away an hour they could use for extra instruction, make-up exams, or just any department function they might conjure up. In my judgment, and contrary to the negativism of the students and the faculty, the all college assembly, which was an integral part of our curriculum for over 25 years, was a unique, weekly event of great educational value. The programs that were offered were quality events. There were lectures representative of all the disciplines; there were concerts, dramatic presentations, and debates. The main point is that everyone was there – together – the president, the administration, some faculty and all the students. There was communication – direct eyeball to eyeball communication. In those assemblies we assuredly had propinquity; but all importantly, we had community. It was family. And that is what the early college was, family. The all college assembly was a unique and sound educational feature of the early years here.

Until 1950 the college had no facility to accommodate indoor activities. We had a physical education requirement for both men and women and the indoor inter-collegiate sports were expanding as well as intramurals. As Director of Athletics and a coach at that time, I can tell you that our need for a facility was

great. (Tell how we practiced and played.) Dr. Farley knew our situation was terrible –I don't know if he realized just how awful – but in the summer of '49 he told me there was just a slight possibility of getting a vacant lot on South Franklin Street on which we might be able to build a gymnasium if he could get the money. He took me down there and we walked the area. The plot looked terrible but it was better than nothing, which was our condition at the time. Dr. Farley asked me to draw-up a plan for a facility to meet the needs of our activities at that time. This I did in the confines of my room in old Butler Hall.

In November of '49 I took the pencil and paper plan to our old friend, Colonel Atherton of Lacey, Atherton, and Davis at the Sterling Hotel. He used that basic plan, (incidentally, I still have that pencil sketch) to develop a final plan for the gym. In mid-winter of 1950, the Sordoni Construction Company broke ground to construct our first gym, the first freestanding construction on this campus. The building was completed by the early fall and ready for our use. It was dedicated the first week of November 1950, and Admiral Stark spoke. The construction of the gymnasium was, perhaps, the most important event in the history of the college to that date – not because it was the first freestanding building that the college had generated, but because the need was so great. The completion of the gym met the needs of individuals, groups, departments, and the community in so many ways. It would be difficult for anyone to mention an activity of any type – for which the gymnasium was not used. It wasn't just for sports activities. I can attest to that, for many times I had to cancel a practice so

that the Cue 'n Curtain could rehearse or set up for a production. That gym was the heart and the heartbeat of the college. It served for 40 years and it was brought into our history at a cost of \$250 thousand dollars. By any accounting, the best investment –EVER. The saga of the first Wilkes gymnasium is vitally important in the 60-year history of this institution.

Finally I conclude with a piece about a group of human beings, a student organization, which, when a history of Wilkes is written, must be cited as having played a significant role. The real life of an institution is not in buildings, laboratories, or equipment, but in its human beings, both individuals and groups. On a campus the human element means faculty, individually, and as a group; the students, individually and as groups. The Lettermen's Club is a student group to which I refer. As I evaluate memories of all the years here, I can think of no greater contribution to this institution than that made by the Lettermen's Club. The benefits, tangible and intangible, that have accrued to Wilkes as a legacy of the Letterman's Club merits a chapter of major significance.

We organized the Lettermen's Club almost immediately following the end of the first football season in 1946. The original membership consisted of the entire football squad, and membership in the club for a year following consisted of the entire squad of each sport until late 1947, when we adopted a constitution and stipulated that any student who had earned a letter in an intercollegiate sport was eligible for membership.

The original concept undergirding the formation of a club consisting of student athletes who had represented the college on the playing field was that it would be a service club, not a sports club. As the members had held high the ideals of sport on the playing field, under the banner of their college, they were to serve other needs of the college and the community as well. This was stated in the original constitution of the club.

At first I wanted to call it the Monogram club, recollecting the club of similar nature at North Carolina of which I was a member, and from whence the idea of a Lettermen's Club came in the first place. But the students questioned the use of the word monogram. They researched the word with the English Department with Dr. Craig (most of the members had her for World Literature. And they prevailed. The way North Carolina formed its NC was a monogram, but the black B or the black W, which we awarded, was a letter. They brought in Webster's Intercollegiate Dictionary, 5th Edition and proved the point. It was called the Lettermen's Club, not the Monogram Club. I think the fact that so many the Lettermen had attended either Meyers or Nanticoke High Schools where there were similarly named clubs had a lot to do with it.

The Lettermen's Club served Wilkes College and this entire community for twenty-five years. Their most active, productive and glorious years were in the forties and fifties. That club was Wilkes incarnate. They served so well and they brought fame to Wilkes. It was truly a service club. For years they provided

most of the social events on campus: an annual Christmas Formal dance which was the highlight of the social calendar. They sponsored an annual Valentine Dance, an April Showers Ball, faculty teas, winter carnivals. In 1949 they produced the never to be forgotten musical extravaganza "All in Fun". They were the greatest fundraisers on campus and their annual raffle, the only raffle permitted by the college administration, raised thousands of dollars for the indigent family. A family was burned out in the Heights section of Wilkes-Barre; a life was lost. The Lettermen's Club repaired that home and reestablished the family. This is but a small segment of the Lettermen's Club story. The Club was accountable for much more. For me, the Club, its members and their accomplishments provided the most beautiful of memories in all my years on campus.

So that you can better know where I'm coming from in this saga, let me say that it began in the year 1946. I had just been released after five years of military service and had returned to Forty Fort High School where I had taught English and coached football and basketball. I had no teaching certification, but they needed someone and I had taught these one year before I entered the military service when I was just out of college, where I had been awarded a BA Degree in Biology. Forty Fort had kept in touch with me throughout the war and wanted me back. So, I got out of the army the last week of January '46 and was on duty the first week of February in Forty Fort. It was my intention to finish the year at Forty Fort, get together as much money as possible and go on to graduate or professional school. The latter part of April, I accompanied my school superintendent, Mr. Frank Walp, to Turner's Restaurant in Kingston where I was scheduled to speak to his Lion's club. On our way out, following the meeting, Mr. Walp spoke to Dr. and Mrs. Eugene Farley, who were having dinner at Turner's which was on their way out to their farm in Beaumont. Mr. Walp was a good friend of the Farley's and introduced me to them. This casual introduction marked the very beginning of a journey that has continued for almost forty-eight years. Of that casual introduction I remember the gentle loveliness of Mrs. Farley, the gangling, raw boned frame and shock of unruly rusty-blond hair of Dr. Farley.

In May of '46, Mr. Walp, Forty Fort School Superintendent, told me he had spoken with Dr. Farley at BUJC and they were in need of counselors to staff their

Veterans' Guidance Center, which the college had established to test, counsel, and give guidance to the hundreds of World War II veteran's who were eager to take advantage of training and education offered under the GI Bill.

Mr. Walp said it would be a good job for me for the summer and would give me money to further my education. If I was interested, I should contact Dr. Alderfer who was director of the center. I called Dr. Alderfer. He advised me to write a resume and come to see him. This I did and I was hired. The pay was \$60 per week. At this time the Guidance Center was a big, vital segment of BUJC. It was a significant source of income for the financially strapped college and a prime source for recruiting students. The spring and summer of '46, there were as many as ten of us working as counselors. With support personnel there must have been twenty on the staff, and the financial support by the Veteran's Affairs branch of the U.S. Government was a boon to the Junior College of major importance. The Guidance Center was a great department for the campus and it was staffed by a splendid group of professionals led by Dr. Alderfer. I fondly remember playing catch with him on the river common during the noon lunch break. He was a Swarthmore graduate who loved baseball, having been a semi-pro player in his early years. His wife at the time was housemother in old Weckesser Hall on Northampton Street.

It was probably the latter part of July (1946) when Dr. Farley wandered into the kitchen of old Barre Hall. It was my office for counseling veterans. The

kitchen hadn't been used for years. The old coal stove was present, with its dank odor, and, don't ask me to explain it, but the door leading into the kitchen was low and undersized. I remember this, for I can clearly remember Dr. Farley ducking his head as he entered and saying in a booming voice, "so this is where you are; a fellow could decapitate himself getting in here. This was really the first I had seen or talked with him since Turner's Restaurant several months earlier. There was one other time. It was at the First Presbyterian Church, where the convocation for the BUJC class of '46 was held the first week in June. I stood in the narthex against the front door of the crowded sanctuary to hear Dr. Harold Urey of the University of Chicago and A-bomb fame, deliver the convocation address. Dr. Farley led the convocation and in the elevated pulpit at first Presbyterian Church, he appeared to be seven feet tall. That day in the kitchen of old Barre Hall, he told me the students were pressing to have a football team. (Over the years I learned that his use of the word "pressing" was not a suitable word in this case. No one ever "pressured" him. After years of experience with him, I rather feel that the students were probably desiring or requesting the formation of football.) Dr. Farley said a Board member and several other people in the community were urging him to appoint a local man who had been the star at Lafayette, "Dutch" Wermuth by name. But Dr. Farley said he didn't like what he saw in the man and didn't think he would fit in here. He said he understood that I had some experience and wondered if I would be interested. "Think it over," he said, "and if you want it, write me a letter about yourself. I would like a response from you within the week." Well, I wrote the letter and Dr. Farley hired me. Not

only did he want me to coach football; he wanted to start an entire athletic program. And in addition, he said the college was opening a new dormitory, Butler Hall, and I could live there as a proctor and get my meals in the dining room, which was to be opened in the fall in Barre Hall. My contract was for twelve months and it paid me \$2400. I never dreamed I would be so situated when I was separated from the service in February, just six months earlier.

September 1st 1946 I moved from my room in Forty Fort to Butler Hall. It didn't take much effort. My possessions were enclosed in two hand bags. I boarded a trackless trolley, got off at the Sterling Hotel, walked down River Street and into the room at the head of the stairs on the third floor of Butler Hall. This would be my home for the next nine years.

We launched our efforts for a football team and an intercollegiate athletic program in late summer of '46. We started from true scratch. There was no equipment, no facilities, no records and no instructions or directives from Dr. Farley. All that we could find of athletic nature was a little equipment – which we located in a cedar clothes closet on the third floor of Chase Hall. It wasn't worth an inventory. I remember what was there – 2 medicine balls, about ten Indian clubs, a half a dozen basketball uniform tops and several orange and blue block B's -, the Bucknell athletic award. That's all there was to begin with – and by fall we had to schedule opponents, obtain practice facilities, make official affiliations, procure equipment and above all, get students out for the team and coach them

properly. I was alone in that new venture; Dr. Farley had not mentioned assistants. He probably thought it would be overemphasis in athletics. For all that needed to be done, he did say, as if it were a munificent sum, that he would set aside \$2000 in the budget. (In today's terms that would equip just one player.) And, he added, "You know when you signed on here, you joined the 'loyal order of jack-asses'. I joined in 1936 and I hope you will go along, for we are on a great quest here." Over the years I was to hear that expression from him many times.

To get the athletic program going on this campus in the late summer of '46 it was the support of students that made a seemingly impossible objective a reality. The students were "hungry Gullivers" - the greatest breed of students I've ever known. These were days following the war and our students were eager for "life" and education. They were finally in college following the arid and austere days of military effort. Their bent was for a fast education, and along with it, they slaked their appetite with recreation, which had been missed. Almost without knowing it they "lived it up", got their education, and entered the world of work as soon as possible. They made hurried commitments and for the athletic program for which Dr. Farley said they were "pressing" him – they produced. In every way they were helpful. They used their meager personal funds, their vehicles, their own equipment, their skills, and their political influence, to bring the program on board. (Let me explain this in greater detail.) And we did get football going that fall. When the call went out for candidates for the squad,

thirty-eight candidates showed up. There were no recruits, just volunteers, and they worked hard, under almost primitive conditions. They persevered, played a six game schedule and won every Game scheduled – no ties. That's how football started back then at BUJC. (Tell the sequel banquet story.)

It was the latter part of September, just weeks after Dr. Farley had talked with me about the athletics, that I joined him in front of Butler Hall as he walked toward Chase. He asked how practices were going, how the Kirby Park facilities were working out, whether we had equipment, etc. And as we walked, I taking two steps to his one (you remember he walked in that long lazy gait, occasionally dragging his heels, gazing straight ahead; you always had the feeling when you walked with him that he was there physically, but his mind was dreaming of many other matters and your conversation was on the "aside agenda" which at the moment he would verbalize –directly – for he was direct – always – in everything.) he suggested we go to his office and all the time he was telling me about the growth in enrollment in veteran students especially and resident students. He said he had always done most of the advising of students, but he said he was much in arrears in this responsibility and there were many students who needed counseling and weren't getting it. He said, "We need a Dean of Men and I think you're the man for the job and I'd like you to take it on." He also said Miss Sanguiliano was leaving to marry and I might have some responsibility for the women - until he could replace her. That was it. I was now Dean of Men (students really), Director of Athletics, football basketball and baseball coach,

head proctor of residence halls, coordinator of activities and, a little later on I helped out in the Biology faculty by teaching the old Biology 100 course, a course required of all non-science majors and engineers. Need I remind you these were the early years. Formative years. We weren't yet on a "shakedown cruise". That was yet to come. They were golden days – and we were all too occupied to complain or bask in the sunshine.

A few days after Dr. Farley put me on as a dean, I came back from football practice and one of the boys let me out of his car in front of Butler Hall on River Street. It was a little after six o'clock and I was heading for the dining room which was in Barre Hall. As I approached Barre Hall, a brevalineal, statuesque lady with dark hair strode toward me, extended her hand and said, "I'm Norma Sangiuliano." I'd never seen her before, but I'd heard her name and of her fame. We had a gracious supper with the students and Miss Sangiuliano left and I never saw her again until Dr. Michalini's inauguration, thirty years later, which she and her husband attended. They had retired and were living back in this community.

Our dining that evening with our resident students, was a delightful experience. Mrs. Jervis, wife of our Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, was our cook – our first chef- and she was super. She did it all with one helper and a heavy-duty gas range in the old Barre Hall kitchen. That was our first dining room. Student dining in those days was a dignified experience. For the

evening meal men wore coats and ties. All stood until thanks was given. There were tablecloths and cloth napkins at each setting. We had forty-eight tables in our first dining room. We were able to sustain the same gracious dining room tradition until 1965 when Pickering Hall was opened.

Of the entire sixty years of the dear university, forty-seven with which I am intimately acquainted, I consider the decades of the forties and fifties glorious and golden. These decades followed what one might say were formative years of the college and in this period innovations were profuse and profound. Possibly these years impressed me so much because I was young, new to situations, and impressionable. There were so many new challenges. The college had gone through a painful gestation, a meager birth, and was now about to bloom.

Grant me a little more time to review what it was like for us then, - and point out great people, groups and events which give color, character and tradition to this glorious place. Bare in mind, however, as I speak of events, of people, of situations – that students were always the heart of the matter. They were then, for all of us, and I hope they are today – the *raison d'être*.

Every morning about 7:30, I came out of Butler Hall. Sunday morning it was an hour later. I had breakfast in the dining room and was in my office before 8:00. I don't remember whether or not eight was the prescribed starting time, but classes began at eight and since faculty had to be in class, I just felt that

administration shouldn't be favored. Furthermore, Dr. Farley usually came in before 9:00 and for fourteen years, our offices were adjacent, so I just felt there was not need to heap coals of fire on my head by being there after his arrival. My hide never did get thick enough to be impervious to such onslaughts.

Almost everything emanated from Chase Hall - everything administrative. In Chase we counted students, registered them, tested them, administered discipline, directed athletics, organized and coordinated activities. We were also part of the admissions process for we interviewed all applicants in those days. On Saturday mornings we would interview five or six of these applicants – even on Saturdays when there would be a home game. Typically practice was at 4:00. I would leave my office at 3:45, run (I didn't have a car until '49) up River Street, across the bridge, and through Kirby Park, into the old dressing room, change and be on the field by 4:00. From 4:00 on it was high masculine drama on the turf of Kirby Park. I wish I could tell you of the great things that happened there. Some of the conditions were almost primitive. But we survived and succeeded because of the great students in makeshift uniforms. The on-field leadership of that seminal athletic venture was nominal. It was I, the coach, twenty-seven years of age, and a student manager, who was a veteran, probably one or two years younger than I – which was the case of 60% of our of that period. I must tell you a little about that manager, for his story is typical of what went on back yonder and gives color to our history. First, Clem was the only manager in the history of sports to end up with more equipment than he had at the beginning.

As a war veteran, he, like most of us in World War II, had learned the "art" of moonlight requisition. Clem also had a bad back, a disability from service, and he was in pain much of the time, but he got us equipment as no other manager could. (Continue with various stories.)

An unsung hero of those early years and an integral ingredient of our beginning was Dr. Sam Davenport, MD, an early member of our Board of Trustees. Though never officially designated, Dr. Davenport was our school and team physician. In situations where Medical advice or treatment was needed at the college, Dr. Farley would just say, "See Sam Davenport." I can still see him clearly, trudging slowly onto the scene in his long overcoat, felt hat, brim turned up in front and his black bag in hand. And if he was tired from an atrocious schedule, you might see him chomping on a wet cigar. Sam had been a doctor for the Kingston Coal Company and was accustomed to treating men injured in the mines. He wasn't gentle. He was just the kind of doctor a coach needed in our situation. He didn't coddle players. (Molosh story). Dr. Davenport was our college physician. We called upon him to give physical exams to freshmen during orientation week. He examined the entire group in about two hours. That's how it was then. Dr. Davenport was a great servant of this institution. As a trustee he may not have contributed great financial amounts, I don't know, but I do know that he gave a tremendous amount of himself and his time in service.

In the 40's and 50's, the faculty, as in all colleges, was the backbone of the operation. It was small – fifty to sixty full-time and about twenty part-time teachers. There was great diversity of opinion. I know this for I was there for almost every faculty meeting and participated. From Participating, I learned the truth of the ancient definition of a faculty person as "someone who thinks otherwise". Some shining stars on the faculty at that time were: Hall, Craig, Richards, Davies, Rosenberg, Reif, Mailey, and others, too. But there was also a strong component of less prominent part-time faculty who contributed great strength because they were excellent teachers. I have vivid memories of several great instructors from those years. Bob West was one. He taught math part-time. He began in the early years. He was a department chairman at Coughlin – a great teacher there and here. Another "lesser light" on the faculty was Stanley Chickson. Not many today would remember the name, but I remember and name him because so many alumni remember him and name him as a great teacher. His real name was Chicknosky. He wasn't highly regarded by the faculty or administration because of his unkempt appearance; his facility with English wasn't the best, and he kept a little cud of tobacco in his jaw even when teaching. Some said he verified what I heard when I first came to this area, "You can take a person out of the patch, but you can't take the patch out of the person". Now I don't believe this is true, for Stan and other less remembered faculty were great teachers. They added strength, color, and character to the faculty. Hundreds of alumni have testified to their excellence.

In addition to great teaching, the faculty in the 40's and 50's hassled over scores of issues. Often there was more heat than light. Simple issues were often made difficult and the complex – compound complex. The monthly faculty meetings were like most faculty meetings – they often tried one's patience. Consensus was an eternal struggle. But two monumental achievements of those years must be cited.

The curriculum being followed at the college at that time, in all fields, was inherited from Bucknell and the faculty felt that changes were needed. They wanted to bring the curriculum up to date. There was diversity within our faculty; Professors had come from a broad variety of educational experiences so that the potential for an enriched curriculum was good. Dr. Farley appointed a curriculum committee, which was to revise and develop a modern curriculum for our students. The faculty labored hard and long on a curriculum. Every change and every innovation was made after extensive, often heated debate. The basis for the curriculum available today really began at that time for curriculum development is an ongoing endeavor. In my judgment, this was one of two great achievements of the early faculty.

The other was the formulation of the "Marks of an Educated Man or Woman", statements of principles for which this institution exists. For me, this was the crowning achievement of the faculty in the 40's – and for all the years. The faculty forged the "Marks" in late '47, throughout all of '48, and in '49

culminated the project. I glory in the memories of my experience in that historically significant event in the history of Wilkes. Surely, "Marks of an Educated Man or Woman", how it was conceived, formulated and brought into being at this institution is a high point in the institution's history and merits a full chapter when a history is written.

The years I have been dwelling on were years of slow material growth at the college, but they were teeming with the creation of co-curricular organizations, campus activities, publications, faculty and community involvement that established the rituals and traditions of the college. Some activities had their beginnings in the BUJC years, but most were established in the '46 and '47 the very last year of BUJC and the first year of Wilkes.

An activity which must be mentioned in the program tonight, even though some may think not, is the all college assembly (some called it chapel) which was an integral part of the college even before my beginning here. Actually, the assembly was more than a co-circular activity; it was curricular because attendance was required for a student to graduate. For years, the eleven o'clock hour on Tuesday was kept free. It was "blocked out" by the scheduling office, the registrar, for assembly. In the later years, the day was changed to Thursday, but the hour never changed. In '46 when the veterans began registering in greater numbers and enrollment soared, we began to hold assemblies in the sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church. (Narrate the format and place of the assembly.)

The all college assembly was loathed by students because attendance was required. Faculty despised it because it took away an hour they could use for extra instruction, make-up exams, or just any department function they might conjure up. In my judgment, and contrary to the negativism of the students and the faculty, the all college assembly, which was an integral part of our curriculum for over 25 years, was a unique, weekly event of great educational value. The programs that were offered were quality events. There were lectures representative of all the disciplines; there were concerts, dramatic presentations, and debates. The main point is that everyone was there – together – the president, the administration, some faculty and all the students. There was communication – direct eyeball to eyeball communication. In those assemblies we assuredly had propinquity; but all importantly, we had community. It was family. And that is what the early college was, family. The all college assembly was a unique and sound educational feature of the early years here.

Until 1950 the college had no facility to accommodate indoor activities. We had a physical education requirement for both men and women and the indoor inter-collegiate sports were expanding as well as intramurals. As Director of Athletics and a coach at that time, I can tell you that our need for a facility was great. (Tell how we practiced and played.) Dr. Farley knew our situation was terrible – I don't know if he realized just how awful – but in the summer of '49 he told me there was just a slight possibility of getting a vacant lot on South Franklin Street on which we might be able to build a gymnasium if he could get the

money. He took me down there and we walked the area. The plot looked terrible but it was better than nothing, which was our condition at the time. Dr. Farley asked me to draw-up a plan for a facility to meet the needs of our activities at that time. This I did in the confines of my room in old Butler Hall.

In November of '49 I took the pencil and paper plan to our old friend, Colonel Atherton of Lacey, Atherton, and Davis at the Sterling Hotel. He used that basic plan, (incidentally, I still have that pencil sketch) to develop a final plan for the gym. In mid-winter of 1950, the Sordoni Construction Company broke ground to construct our first gym, the first freestanding construction on this campus. The building was completed by the early fall and ready for our use. It was dedicated the first week of November 1950, and Admiral Stark spoke. The construction of the gymnasium was, perhaps, the most important event in the history of the college to that date – not because it was the first freestanding building that the college had generated, but because the need was so great. The completion of the gym met the needs of individuals, groups, departments, and the community in so many ways. It would be difficult for anyone to mention an activity of any type – for which the gymnasium was not used. It wasn't just for sports activities. I can attest to that, for many times I had to cancel a practice so that the Cue 'n Curtain could rehearse or set up for a production. That gym was the heart and the heartbeat of the college. It served for 40 years and it was brought into our history at a cost of \$250 thousand dollars. By any accounting,

the best investment –EVER. The saga of the first Wilkes gymnasium is vitally important in the 60-year history of this institution.

Finally I conclude with a piece about a group of human beings, a student organization, which, when a history of Wilkes is written, must be cited as having played a significant role. The real life of an institution is not in buildings, laboratories, or equipment, but in its human beings, both individuals and groups. On a campus the human element means faculty, individually, and as a group; the students, individually and as groups. The Lettermen's Club is a student group to which I refer. As I evaluate memories of all the years here, I can think of no greater contribution to this institution than that made by the Lettermen's Club. The benefits, tangible and intangible, that have accrued to Wilkes as a legacy of the Letterman's Club merits a chapter of major significance.

We organized the Lettermen's Club almost immediately following the end of the first football season in 1946. The original membership consisted of the entire football squad, and membership in the club for a year following consisted of the entire squad of each sport until late 1947, when we adopted a constitution and stipulated that any student who had earned a letter in an intercollegiate sport was eligible for membership.

The original concept undergirding the formation of a club consisting of student athletes who had represented the college on the playing field was that it

would be a service club, not a sports club. As the members had held high the ideals of sport on the playing field, under the banner of their college, they were to serve other needs of the college and the community as well. This was stated in the original constitution of the club.

At first I wanted to call it the Monogram club, recollecting the club of similar nature at North Carolina of which I was a member, and from whence the idea of a Lettermen's Club came in the first place. But the students questioned the use of the word monogram. They researched the word with the English Department with Dr. Craig (most of the members had her for World Literature. And they prevailed. The way North Carolina formed its NC was a monogram, but the black B or the black W, which we awarded, was a letter. They brought in Webster' Intercollegiate Dictionary, 5th Edition and proved the point. It was called the Lettermen's Club, not the Monogram Club. I think the fact that so many the Lettermen had attended either Meyers or Nanticoke High Schools where there were similarly named clubs had a lot to do with it.

The Lettermen's Club served Wilkes College and this entire community for twenty-five years. Their most active, productive and glorious years were in the forties and fifties. That club was Wilkes incarnate. They served so well and they brought fame to Wilkes. It was truly a service club. For years they provided most of the social events on campus: an annual Christmas Formal dance which was the highlight of the social calendar. They sponsored an annual Valentine Dance, an April Showers Ball, faculty teas, winter carnivals. In 1949 they

produced the never to be forgotten musical extravaganza "All in Fun". They were the greatest fundraisers on campus and their annual raffle, the only raffle permitted by the college administration, raised thousands of dollars for the indigent family. A family was burned out in the Heights section of Wilkes-Barre; a life was lost. The Lettermen's Club repaired that home and reestablished the family. This is but a small segment of the Lettermen's Club story. The Club was accountable for much more. For me, the Club, its members and their accomplishments provided the most beautiful of memories in all my years on campus.