UNCG ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM COLLECTION

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DATE: April 1972

EW: Suppose we start back at the beginning when you came to the Woman's College [of the University of North Carolina] or what then was the State Normal and Industrial College. How did you happen to come here, and what did you find when you came?

JS: Well, I came here because my father thought it was time for me to go away to school. I lived in a rural community. And while we had probably had most excellent schools for that particular community, the course of study did not prepare me for college. And so, my father had a conference with Dr. [Charles Duncan] McIver, who was then president of the State Normal and Industrial College. And he agreed to admit me, with some reservations to be sure, because I was very young. I was fourteen, going on fifteen, not quite—I was just fourteen and not just fourteen—I was about fourteen and a half. And just yesterday I was reading the letter that he wrote to my father. Isn't that interesting?

EW: It really is that you still have [it].

JS: I still have it. I threw it away because, after all, who wants it now? Why I still have it here if you want to see it.

EW: I'd like to see it.

JS: All right. And I—with some reservation since I say Dr. McIver agreed to let me come—had been away from home before, but this, I think, was the longest and most ambitious trip that I had ever taken, I suppose. I came on the train from my home near Salisbury. I was met at the station by one of the members of the faculty. I don't know which. But all girls who came to the college at the opening at that time were met by members of the faculty and were put on the streetcar. I remember very distinctly the ride on the streetcar. It was an old open streetcar with seats extending all the way across. And when we'd turn the corner at Tate [Street] some one of the twenty-five or thirty girls on the car yelled to me and said, "There's the college." I don't remember anything particular about going to my room. I was living in what was then—was to live in what was then called Midway [dormitory]. Midway was a building near—a wooden building, a frame building I should say—was near—was on the site of the present Alumnae House. It was named Midway because of the midway at the Chicago Exposition [1893]. Later the name was changed to Guilford Hall.

I can recall very distinctly my first meal; it was lunch. And it was in Spencer Dining Room. The two people at the table were Miss [Minnie Lou] Jamison [domestic

science instructor] and Miss [Viola] Boddie [chair of department of ancient languages], and Miss Boddie kept apologizing for being so awkward in the carving of the roast. I don't wonder that she was. Miss Jamison says, "Oh, it isn't your awkwardness. It's a tough roast." And it was extremely tough.

EW: How many girls were seated at the table with you then?

JS: I supposed there were ten. Those tables in Spencer at that time accommodated ten people.

EW: Do you remember how many students came that year to the college?

JS: Between four hundred and five hundred. I would say maybe four hundred and seventy-five.

EW: Were they then all fed in one dining room?

JS: Oh, yes. All in Spencer.

EW: And all served at the table?

JS: Oh, yes.

EW: Carving the roast included?

JS: Oh yes, yes. The meals—anything that was to be particularly hot was brought from the kitchen by some girl who volunteered to go back or whom the head of the table told to go back to the dining room and get it. But I recall—for example, the soup was on the table, sometimes mild, and sometimes tepid and sometimes pretty hot. And, of course, the roast was on the table. The desserts were always on the table. Sometimes we went back for biscuits, and sometimes we didn't.

EW: Did a faculty member always sit at one of the tables with the students?

JS: Or a senior. A faculty member or a senior. And it was considered a great breach of etiquette to leave the table before everyone had finished. When everyone had finished, the head of the table then said, "The table is excused," and we went out.

EW: Did this become a place for particularly good conversations between students and faculty or younger students and older students? Were you anxious to eat your meal and to get away, or did you really have a social hour there at the dining hall?

JS: Well, it was relatively conversational. I remember a great many exchanges of ideas at tables. And if a table happened to have an aggregation of students who were clever and quick, the tables sometimes stayed long after the others had left. And sometimes it was a real mark of distinction that a table stayed in the dining room longer than any other table. But one other person was always in the dining room until the tables were—the dining

room was completely cleared of students. That was Miss [Sue May] Kirkland, the lady principal. She dismissed her table when everyone had finished. And she sat there, usually sipping her tea. It was a great distinction to sit at Miss Kirkland's table and an equally great distinction to go back to the kitchen at the right time and get her pot of hot tea. And she just sat there slowly sipping her tea. And we passed by her table. We sometimes bowed to her, and sometimes did not. She didn't insist upon that. But I never raised my cup of tea to my lips now, or at least I rarely raise it, without thinking of how Miss Kirkland held her cup, the grace and the gentility of it.

EW: You often sat at the table with Miss Kirkland?

JS: Oh, no, never did. I was not one of Miss Kirkland's pets. No, I sat at Miss [Cornelia] Cora Strong [mathematics professor] was the head of the table at which I sat for I don't know how many years. Then I sat at a senior's table. Then, when I was a senior, I had a table of my own.

EW: Even though you described yourself as not being one of Miss Kirkland's pets, you seem to have particular affection and admiration for her. How did you come by that regard? Was she held in high esteem by all the girls whether they knew her well or not or from a distance?

JS: Oh, yes. She was a Victorian lady. And we came in contact with her because every weekend when we went downtown we had to ask her—her office hours were on Friday afternoon immediately after lunch or Saturday morning immediately after breakfast. And we went to her apartment, lined up, handed her a slip of paper on which we had very carefully written the question, "Miss Kirkland, comma, may I go shopping today?" Period. Or question mark. We could have either. Question mark, I guess, then. Or we could say, "I wish to go shopping today." Signed our names and wrote the date in the lower left-hand corner. It must be in ink—the request. And under no circumstances were we to be dressed before we went. Otherwise, we would anticipate Miss Kirkland's reply. She took the little slip of paper and said, "Yes'm, yes'm." And then, later on I came to know her in various ways, as I might come with a request from my family to do something, to come home, or to go in town visiting, out of town visiting. I came to know her. And then, in my junior year I guess, I was asked to belong to her reading circle, which was a Sunday afternoon circle immediately after lunch. And if you were asked, you never refused no matter how much you had to do. You always accepted.

EW: Miss Kirkland herself invited you?

JS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. She made up a reading circle. And we—I guess I was in her reading circle in my freshman year, my second year at college. Because the first thing we had to do was to memorize the text of the funeral oration for Dr. McIver. And I can quote it. Would you like it?

EW: Start it. I want to know if you can remember it.

JS: Oh, yes. "Then this Daniel was referred among the presidents and princes of the land because of an excellent spirit was in him."

EW: You were a child well taught.

JS: Well, you could learn that. We had to memorize. We memorized a good many things from the Bible. And then, Miss Kirkland read us a very tear-jerking novel by Charlotte M. Yonge—it had a high reputation in that day—*The Heir of Redclyffe*. Have you ever read it?

EW: No, I haven't.

JS: Well—

EW: I should have been in Miss Kirkland's circle.

JS: And then, those in her circle would be interrupted from time to time to go to the door if there were callers and invite them in the parlor and go to the girl's room and get the girl.

EW: Where did these meetings take place? In Miss Kirkland's apartment? Where was her apartment?

JS: Her apartment was the first entrance as you go down College Avenue at Spencer [Residence Hall]. No one went in that door except Miss Kirkland and callers. No student ever went in that door.

EW: You had spoken of regulations concerning going downtown and callers. Did you then regard the regulations as being strict or perfectly normal and what you were accustomed to?

JS: At first I thought they were perfectly normal. Now, later on I was a senior—when I was a senior I could go downtown any time.

EW: Without a chaperone?

JS: Oh, yes, we never had to have chaperones to go to town.

EW: Or to church?

JS: No, no, we were never chaperoned.

EW: Only when the young men were involved were you chaperoned?

JS: Well, we weren't particularly chaperoned then. Miss Kirkland sat in her apartment in her sitting room. And the hall was across—I mean the parlor was across the hall. And I don't think anyone had any feeling that Miss Kirkland was eying at all. But all callers were

entertained in that parlor. And so, if there happened to be a spate of callers, they chaperoned each other pretty well.

EW: Do you think there was any rebelliousness in students then? And if so, what did you find to agitate about?

JS: Um, we agitated about—I don't know that we agitated about anything much. We studied.

EW: Did you have a student government when you were a student?

JS: No, the president of my class, Laura [Weill] Cone, Laura Weill [Class of 1910], wrote her graduating essay on student government in colleges. There was a little flurry about student government then. But the—I remember Miss Kirkland met us in the fall and told us the rules—rather elaborated upon the rules. It seems to me they would give them to us in written form in some way. And the students who presided over that meeting were marshals. And the marshals had very great prestige and, I may say, power. I recall once that Miss Kirkland was commending the marshals to us, and said to us, "The marshals really can do more with you than I can."

EW: You were a marshal when you were a student, weren't you?

JS: Yes, I was a marshal in my sophomore year, sophomore commencement. I wasn't in my junior year. That is, I was a marshal in my junior year; I was elected in my sophomore year.

EW: What are the student groups that were important—the Y[oung] W[omen's] C[hristian] A[ssociation], for example?

JS: Very important the YWCA was. And the societies.

EW: What were the societies?

JS: The literary societies were the most powerful organization of students I can conceive of.

EW: What were they like?

JS: Well, to begin with, they were secret societies.

EW: I thought Dr. McIver had outlawed secret societies?

JS: The Board of Trustees outlawed any other secret societies.

EW: But did not exclude—

JS: But did not exclude these two.

EW: Which were they?

JS: The Cornelian and the Adelphian [Literary Societies].

EW: And you were a member of which one?

JS: The Cornelian.

EW: In what way were they secret?

JS: Well, to begin with, each had a password.

EW: Do you remember the password?

JS: Indeed, I do, but I wouldn't tell you for the world.

EW: You are a true member.

JS: I don't know anyone who would. I really do not know. And so we went into the society hall, a—what was the name of that girl? I mean the—uh, I don't know. She stood at the door anyway. She had a special name. And we whispered the password in her ear. And if we didn't whisper it correctly, she called us back and made us whisper it again so that she would be sure to get it. And then, all that went on inside that hall was absolutely secret.

EW: You can't tell us anything?

JS: I would not for anything under the sun.

EW: Was it important to you?

JS: At the time. I may say this much that I don't think it was of any world-shaking importance now.

EW: How did the organization impress upon new members such secrecy that has lasted so long with you? There must have been a fierce loyalty to this organization on the part of the members.

JS: Well, there was something in the initiation that impressed it upon us, and I will not tell you what it was.

EW: I didn't know you were so full of secrets. I thought they were going to come out.

JS: Now, I can tell you one thing that would show you. At one time the two societies were meeting at our [unclear] and call meetings. Often they had call meetings at the same time. I may say if there were matters concerning both societies, there was an officer—I've forgotten her name; a committee I believe. I've forgotten her name—it's name—which

met. The two groups met together and worked out certain problems that might affect both and then reported to each society. And so, often there would be some matter of concern that necessitated a meeting, a call meeting of the society. And at a call meeting a Cornelian girl got in the Adelphian hall. I'm told by an old Adelphian that as the meeting progressed, all at once someone rose and said, "I feel that we must stop all proceedings. I understand there's a Cornelian in this room." I think the girl was a very innocent, naïve sort of person, and she soon realized she was the object of scorn, contempt or horror, dejection or what not. So she began to run with about fifteen of the Adelphians running after her.

EW: Was the rivalry between these two literary societies very intense?

JS: Very.

EW: Could any girl belong to one or the other?

JS: Oh, heavens, no.

EW: Many girls were excluded?

JS: Oh no, every girl in the college belonged to one or the other.

EW: One or the other.

JS: I tell you how they were elected. There were two representatives from each society that visited every new girl. And—how shall I say—and judged her on the basis of one, two, three, or four, as the case may be. And these two groups put a girl on one list and a girl, who in every respect seemed to be her equal, on the other list. And when the two lists were made up, they were drawn by a neutral party, usually Miss Kirkland's maid who was a very respected Negro woman.

EW: Why do you think these societies were approved by the institution, by the Board of Trustees, by the lady principal?

JS: Oh, because they gave us very excellent experience in conducting meetings, coming to conclusions about important matters. We had a program at every meeting, and the societies met every two weeks.

EW: Were they educational more than social do you think?

JS: Oh, far more, far more. Debates between the two societies.

EW: Were these societies anything like the sororities that we know later?

JS: I would say no.

EW: Social sororities?

JS: I would say no because they had no affiliation outside the college. And, secondly, there was no discrimination in the choice of friendships. One of your best friends could be of the opposite society, and there was never any problem of them about it.

EW: How long do you think the organizations continued strong in the college community? At what point did the interest began to wane and why?

JS: I would say they began to wane in the early ’20s.

EW: That take the place of these?

JS: Yes, various organizations. Like the international club which was—and the consumer club.

EW: That sounds modern.

JS: Yes. And the music club. You see, music—and we had programs, music programs and literature programs. Or we gave plays. We gave a great many plays. The drama society took the place of that. So, I would say in the late ’20s—in the ’20s they began to wane. And I think they were done away with entirely in the ’40s, were they not? I don’t remember the date.

EW: I don’t remember either. Did you have a good time when you were a very young student coming to the State Normal [and] Industrial College? Was it all work, or was the play, the fellowship that you described in the organizations enough to make it a happy experience for you?

JS: Oh, I would say that I was very happy, indeed.

EW: And girls generally were?

JS: I think so.

EW: It was not an oppressive atmosphere?

JS: No. I think we enjoyed using our minds. I think there was a real enjoyment in it.

EW: What were the classes like? Talk about some of your teachers or some of your experiences in the classroom.

JS: Well, it’s hard to say how to describe it. I’ll describe my Latin class, Latin composition. Now, I would not say that Miss Boddie—the teacher of Latin at the college—was the most beloved person on the campus because she had a very sharp tongue. I think at times

she was unreasonable. But I think it was all in the interest of giving us the most. We had paid what would seem now mere pittance for our education.

EW: Do you remember what it was?

JS: Oh, yes. $171.00, I think, which included everything my first year. And then I got a—what do you call that? I got a scholarship from the state because I agreed to teach. And that reduced it by $45.00, which was tuition. I paid the other years $126.00 a year. But Miss Boddie felt that the state had given us a lot. And that we in turn must make the most of it.

I remember the Latin composition class. We sat in the individual desks—rows, not chairs but desks. And Miss Boddie would say, "Miss So-and-So will take the first sentence." And it was to be translated into Latin. Next girl will take the second and so on and so on. And we knew after the first day—she never told us a second time what to do—we knew to go to the board. And the first thing to write our number on the board, "1" The next our name. Next draw a line, a vertical line on the board so the next girl could write "2" and her name and so on. Then we must hold in our mind the sentence that we had to translate. So we wrote as fast as we could the English. Then we wrote the Latin. And then, we sat down. In the meantime, the people at their seats were being given English sentences which were in the book. And they were to rise and give the Latin from memory. And by the time we finished with that, we—they finished with that, those of us at the board were at our seats, and we explained our sentence.

EW: Was Latin a requirement of every student?

JS: Almost.

EW: Had you had any preparation in Latin before—?

JS: Yes, I had. I was—so I entered the second preparatory class.

EW: Was there informality in this particular class? Could you ask questions if you didn't understand? Could you have any discussion, or was it as you're suggesting more recitation?

JS: There was no discussion in the Latin class, none at all that I remember. Might be a little, but certainly wasn't lively.

EW: And a very strict teacher?

JS: Very.

EW: What did you enjoy, then, about this class?

JS: The (How shall I put it?)—the consciousness that I had done something as nearly perfect as possible.

EW: Did you have this sort of feeling in other classes? Is this the general philosophy of teaching at the college then, or did it vary from one teacher to another in its strictness?

JS: It varied somewhat. In chemistry, for example, with Miss [Mary Macy] Petty [head of the chemistry department] there was far more conversation. She lectured, but we asked a good many questions. And, of course, the informality extended itself to the laboratory. There was a lot of informality in the laboratory.

EW: Was it exciting for girls to work in chemistry laboratories? We know that the scientists for a long time didn't make themselves available to large numbers of women. Do you remember any girls getting particularly excited about chemistry and ambitious to have careers in science?

JS: No, because so few girls were really ambitious about careers in science except the girls in biology. I suppose the interest in medicine. I guess more girls who were not going to study—not going to teach or go into music, were thinking of medicine. A great many of them—not many of them did. But they thought of medicine because the teacher of science was a very stimulating person, Dr. [Eugene W.] Gudger [head of biology department]. He had come with his doctorate from John Hopkins University. And along with his interest in science, he was also a very meticulous teacher. And so—

EW: Were there many men teachers?

JS: Well, let's see. About half and half I would say—maybe more women teachers than men.

EW: But you remember particularly Miss Petty in chemistry and Dr. Gudger in biology. Did you have Dr. Gudger?

JS: Oh, yes.

EW: How long did he stay with the college, do you remember?

JS: Um, let me see.

EW: Long enough so that there are many students—

JS: Oh, he was at the college ten or twelve or fifteen years. I don't remember how long.

EW: Was it assumed on the part of the teachers that most of these girls would have some kind of career teaching or music or maybe medicine?

JS: Or business with Mr.—under Mr. [Edward J.] Forney [head of the commercial department, college treasurer] in the first year commercial course.

EW: But this was not a finishing school to return girls to their homes with better graces and—

JS: Oh, no, under no conditions. No, we were supposed—I mean it was just unthinkable that we would do anything except—it was unthinkable that we wouldn't work.

EW: Who helped generate this philosophy in the students? Did you come with it from homes where they assumed that you would be working, or did the president of the institution suggest to you because it was a state institution that you should return part of your education and learning to the communities?

JS: I think both. Probably on the matter of the teachers, I must mention several others. You're coming back—

EW: Yes, I want you to go ahead.

JS: All right. Well, now, probably the most austere and the most beloved, both—I mean she was both–was Miss Mendenhall, Miss Gertrude Mendenhall, the teacher of mathematics, head of the mathematics department. She was a very generous, kind, really wonderful woman and so conscientious that in the classroom, for fear she wouldn't push us to our utmost, she was very austere. It's hard to say much more about her than that except—

EW: How did she also appear lovable?

JS: Well, if a girl failed, we were as sorry for Miss Mendenhall as we were for the girl. And I think practically the whole student—see, we had to go to chapel every day. And there was a girl—I remember her name, but I won't call it—who was a senior whose graduation was threatened by the fact that she had not passed her geometry. And so, periodically she took an examination in geometry trying to make it up and failed. And when we'd know about that, we'd see her come into chapel because the seniors sat on the stage. We would see her come into the chapel. And we could tell by her dejected face that she'd failed again. And we could also tell by—all of the members of the faculty sat on the chapel too, and we could tell by Miss Mendenhall's face that she'd failed. And finally, sometime in the spring the girl passed her examination.

EW: And there was rejoicing?

JS: And the word went all over the chapel of four hundred and seventy-five people that Stella had passed. And then, we looked at Miss Mendenhall and saw the relieved look on her face. Now the scent of goodness and kindness and sympathy of Miss Mendenhall was so communicated itself to the student body that—

EW: I believe you're saying that the teachers took a great interest in the students in their classes and outside their classes. What contact did they have with students outside classes? You've mentioned the chapel, the dining room association. How did they keep up with you in other ways more than just seeing you in the class? Did faculty and students mix very freely on the campus? Were there places where they went to talk informally? They might have tea together or—?

JS: No, we didn't have tea. Well, there were so few of us literally, you see.

EW: For example, I came to your house when I was a student in 1960. And I can remember some lovely visits that we had here. Did you ever have that kind of visit with your teachers?

JS: Occasionally in their homes, but, well, we met them in the dining room, you see, three times a day—all the women.

EW: So, you never lacked a contact with your teachers?

JS: No. No.

EW: What other teachers were important to you?

JS: Well, they're all important. Every teacher I had. I knew and knew well—now, let me see. Miss Boddie, Miss Mendenhall. I mustn't say them.

EW: That's all right.

JS: Dr. Gudger. Miss [Mary Taylor] Moore was the registrar. I knew her.

EW: Who was president of the college at the time?

JS: Well, Dr. [Charles Duncan] McIver was president the first year. And he died—died on the train [in 1906]. He had gone with a committee from Greensboro to Raleigh to meet William Jennings Bryan [American democratic politician, member of congress, secretary of state], who was running for president. And came back on that special train and was taken sick somewhere on the train and died, apparently, of a heart attack.

EW: How was the news given to the students?

JS: We hadn't come.

EW: This was before the opening?

JS: This was before the opening, but we had a letter. Dr. [Julius I.] Foust was the vice president. And we had a letter from Dr. Foust. I guess he died two days before the opening because my letter came the day before I left home to come back to college. And, actually, when I came back the second year and was going out to the college on the streetcar, I passed the Masons, I guess, in their regalia coming back from Dr. McIver's funeral. So Dr. Foust then took over as vice president—as acting president for that year and, then, was made permanent president.

EW: Did you ever have any personal contact with Dr. McIver?

JS: Yes. I went to see him about a personal matter. I won't go into that. It was so trivial. But at the end of the first semester I had only—I had taken two courses that did not run through the year. So at that time had only thirteen hours of work, and I was supposed to have fifteen. And I went to see him to ask him what more I should take.

EW: And you felt free to go to the president to ask this question?

JS: Oh, heavens—not only free, I had to go. I couldn't take it without getting some permission from him.

EW: Did he know you all by name and knew something about you?

JS: Well, I suppose he did. But he didn't—I guess he knew me by name. You see, he was—the first year I went to college he was in Europe. And so, I didn't come to know him until the later on, I mean near the end, I guess, of his year. But in the middle of the year, he had to tell me what more to take.

EW: What were your impressions of your visit with him that day you went?

JS: Well, I had already seen him in chapel every day. He'd talk to us every day.

EW: He wasn't a fearsome figure then?

JS: Oh, no, he was a wide expansive figure. I'll never forget it. And I remember how the girls just practically took the roof off the building the day he came back from Europe and came on the platform and just—oh, they just stood and applauded and applauded and cheered and yelled. And he just took it all in—had great fun with it.

EW: Was that recognition from the girls that here was a leader not only admired on his own campus, but who was well known in a much broader range in the state and outside the state?

JS: I think so. But, again, you see I was in the preparatory department, and the seniors were so far beyond me. Those were really influential that my contact with them was from afar—far more than with my teachers really.

EW: Do you remember any particular expression of grief among the students after the college year started and Dr. McIver had died?

JS: Oh, my, yes. I think—well, actually now, this will sound a little funny perhaps. But I grew tired of so much crying in chapel. Everybody who came, Dr. McIver's friends and the members of the faculty, they eulogized Dr. McIver at the chapel exercises. And the girls all cried except me. I don't know that they all did. But I grew a little tired of the crying. Oh, they would deeply grieve. Now I'm simply recalling the reaction of probably a callused young teenager.

EW: You were ready to get on with the work?

JS: Just so. And I felt a certain loyalty to Dr. Foust. I felt that it was—I don't know how. I guess I was strangely perceptive for my age. But I felt a little resentment that everybody was crying about Dr. McIver, and nobody was saying very much about Dr. Foust, who was bearing the burden of the day.

EW: How would you characterize Dr. Foust as a man or a president of the institution?

JS: As a man with a vision and a man of absolute honesty.

EW: Was there affection felt for him among the students?

JS: Yes, I think there was. I think—of course, it's hard for me to compare the affection between the students and Dr. McIver with the affection between the students and Dr. Foust. But I loved Dr. Foust very much.

EW: You knew him personally?

JS: Yes, I knew him. I don't know whether Dr. McIver was quite as unshakable as Dr. Foust or not. I say Dr. Foust was a man of absolute honesty. And—

EW: Do you remember any particular incident regarding Dr. Foust in which you thought his strong character was particularly evident, anything that happened during his years of leadership?

JS: Well, it would be hard to characterize his instances of his honesty. I just knew he was honest. I know—I can remember instances of his sympathy. He was a very sympathetic person.

EW: With particular students or faculty members?

JS: Well, I would stay with students first.

EW: Where did Dr. Foust live at the time? Was Mrs. [Lula Martin] McIver still living in the house that had been designated for the president when Dr. McIver was there?

JS: Yes. Dr. Foust lived on Spring Garden Street. The house was next to this one.

EW: Next to your house?

JS: Where I am living now.

EW: And did he live there for the duration of his presidency?

JS: No—at chancellor's or around the president's house—was built around 1923, or '24, or '25, sometime in there.

EW: On the present site?

JS: On the present site. It was that particular one.

EW: And Mrs. McIver continued to live in the little house?

JS: Yes.

EW: Where was that house located?

JS: Where the bell now is.

EW: Did you know Mrs. McIver? Was she still much involved with the campus after her husband's death?

JS: No. Mrs. McIver was very wise. She was a presence on the edge of the campus, but she never interfered. She wasn't involved at all. She was very wise.

EW: You spoke to me earlier of her involvement with the Betterment Society for Public Education in the state. This was after you graduated from the college that you had contact with her?

JS: I knew a little bit about it before. We would be told, I suppose, in our junior and senior years we were going out to be teachers that there was this Betterment Association. And on one occasion, I remember we were given booklets in chapel with the setting forth the work of the Betterment Association. We were pretty well-informed by the time we were seniors that there was a Betterment Association. And we better cooperate with it.

EW: Would you tell the story again that you told me earlier of your experience when Mrs. McIver came to speak to the audience you had assembled for public school interests?

JS: Yes. Be glad to. I was teaching in North Wilkesboro. And I think a member of the board of education in that town suggested that I probably mention Mrs. McIver and the Betterment Association, suggested that we ask her to come up and organize a Betterment Association in North Wilkesboro. And she came. And the first thing she did was to come to school that morning with us and go over the school building and go in the classrooms and listen. But not too much. Pretty soon she left. And then she came back.

And as soon as school was dismissed, there were a group of women whom I had invited. There were three of us from the college then who were interested in Mrs. McIver; a group of women were there waiting for her to address them. And she responded to the introduction very well. And then, almost immediately, she began to tell about how unsanitary the outbuildings were. And the women had come to hear some—I suppose, they were waiting for some comments about how rapidly the town was growing and how

good it was that they had a good school and good teachers and so on. Instead of that she told us in no uncertain terms that if children were exposed to such unsanitary conditions and died, we must not call it a dispensation of the Lord. We must call it our own dispensation. And I can see some of those women who were dressed up in their best clothes with fearsome ostrich plumes on the hats, I can see them sort of squirm in their seats. And then that night, we had in one of the hall—of the city, of the town I would say—a meeting of all the citizens, men too. And early in the speech we were informed about how unsanitary conditions were in that school on the hill.

EW: It made an impression on the audience?

JS: Oh, it made a great impression.

EW: How important do you think the college's leadership for public education was in the state? Here they were training girls who were become teachers. Mrs. McIver and others from the college were active throughout the state and working with public schools. Was the influence of the college on public education established early?

JS: Oh, yes. It would be hard, however, for me to assess it because there was still considerable opposition to the college in the state. There was a feeling, after all, that the state college would rival the denominational schools. And I could feel—even in this first place I went to teach, I could feel the undercurrent of opposition to state-supported education.

EW: When you were a young teacher, who were the leaders that you looked to from the college to save the day for state education in this particular controversy?

JS: Well, we looked to, of course, to the president of the college. And the state superintendent of instruction was Dr. [J. Y.] Joyner [former head of the English department] who had taught at the college, a close friend of Dr. McIver's. So Mr. Joyner, who was over the school, you see, the state schools [superintendent of public instruction], could be depended on. He was chairman of the board of trustees of the college [actually of the university system]. And he could be depended upon to save the day for state education. But it was a pretty hard fight; it was a hard fight.

EW: Well, did you find it easy to get a job as a public school teacher after you had graduated from this institution?

JS: Oh, my, yes.

EW: Because you were a graduate or because teachers were needed or because of your particular talents?

JS: I think it was primarily because teachers were needed. But I think the fact that I was a graduate was of equal importance. I don't think that my particular talents were known.

EW: Today I think that teachers from this institution, graduates who want to be teachers, are much sought after by not only school districts throughout the state, but outside the state. Was this beginning to be true when you graduated that a graduate from this institution wanting to the teachers, the school superintendent knew she would be well trained?

JS: Yes, I would say so.

EW: Despite some opposition in the state to the institution?

JS: Yes, I remember when I was employed, the chairman of the school board came down to the college and looked over a number of teachers who were seniors who were recommended by the head of the education department. And I was sent for to come in to see him and talk it over with him.

EW: Had you had any training before you graduated in student teaching?

JS: Oh, yes, I taught for a whole year in the training school.

EW: In the Curry Training School?

JS: In the Curry Training School.

EW: On the present site?

JS: Oh, my, no.

EW: Where was it then?

JS: It was where the science building now is, the Petty Science Building.

EW: Who was head of the training school then?

JS: Mr. [Robert A.] Merritt. And the head of the department of education was Mr. [Junius A.] Matheson. Both of them most excellent men.

EW: Who was your supervising teacher?

JS: One of the most amazing women I've ever known, Miss Annie Wiley [supervising teacher of Curry Training School]. She taught later in the Winston-Salem Schools. There's a Wiley School named for her there. And I've never understood her secret.

EW: You think she had a big influence on you in the kind of teacher—

JS: Oh, tremendous influence on me, oh, tremendous influence on me.

EW: What do you think she imparted most strongly to you?

JS: It would be hard to say, just everything.

EW: Love for subject? Was she an English teacher?

JS: No, she was, you see, the training school was only a grade school went through seventh grade.

EW: So, you took your training with young children and then did you teach young children?

JS: No, went into high school immediately. But the only thing we had for practice teaching was the training school.

EW: So, it was a love of teaching?

JS: Yes, love of teaching. I don't know how Miss Wiley did it. I wrote an article about her once, and if you want to read it, you may. It was published, some of the things I said about her. It was just most excellent. She was just wonderful. I remember one thing about her. I still do not know the secret of her teaching.

But I remember she was teaching a little scatter-brained girl how to analyze a problem in arithmetic. And the girl couldn't get it. And Miss Wiley was at the board putting up figures and saying, "Now, what happens here, Mary, and what happens here, and what happens here?" No, she couldn't get that. Normally, I would think the children would be bored to death with it. I can remember now the rapt attention with which they followed Miss Wiley and Mary in what must have been at least a ten-minute exercise. And, finally, when Mary got it, they all applauded. Now, that tells you worlds about—

EW: It does, indeed.

JS: —the atmosphere of that classroom.

EW: You were just talking about your affection and admiration for Miss Wiley as a teacher. Is there anybody else in your memory of your early years at the college who particularly has a place in your memory?

JS: Oh, yes, Miss Laura Coit because, not only in my memory but in the memory of every student who ever knew her, she is regarded with a greatest affection and admiration. She was the secretary of the college, which virtually amounted to being vice president of the college, and had charge of admissions, of the loan fund, all loan funds for students and practically all details connected with the college that the president found it difficult for him to handle. She had a beautiful face and a most extraordinary executive ability. Everybody loved and everybody admired her tremendously.

EW: What was your contact with her over the years, and what connections?

JS: Well, I was in her dormitory to begin with. Then, almost any matter that came up. I had to see her. I would go to her about it often before I would go to the president. And, as a

matter of fact, often matters would be settled with her before they would ever get to the president. Or if they weren't, she would make an appointment with me—for me with the president. And things would be already somewhat clarified before I went in there, in the president's office.

EW: She served under how many presidents?

JS: Under three. Under Dr. McIver, and Dr. Foust, and Dr. [Walter Clinton] Jackson.

EW: And under each one she continued to have this kind of—?

JS: Yes, she was not too well when Dr. Jackson became president. And, so she retired shortly afterwards, but she was under all three.

EW: Let's talk about when you came back to join the faculty in 1926 in the department of English. How did you find the college academically?

JS: Well, the standards had been raised very much by that time because the college had become an accredited college, a member of the Southern Association of Colleges [and Universities]. And I think there was far more independence of choice in subject matter and courses and that sort of thing among the students than there had been before and more conviction on their part as to why they were taking this subject. Students were much more independent in every way in their thinking. And, well, in what they took and how they would react and these things. The English department was still flourishing as it had in my day under Dr. [William Cunningham] Smith, who was the head of the English department [dean of faculty, dean of the College]. And he had gathered around him a very distinguished faculty. Then later on, after I had been in the college as an instructor in English for about ten years, the English department began to develop, under the stimulus of Dr. Jackson, a most extraordinary group of people who taught creative writing.

EW: Who were those people?

JS: [John Orley] Allen Tate [poet, essayist, social commentator, and poet laureate consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress], and his wife, Caroline Gordon [novelist and literary critic], and then later on a Randall Jarrell [poet, literary critic, children's author, essayist, and novelist, 11th poet laureate consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress] joined us, Hi[ram] Haydn [author, English professor], and—

EW: Peter Taylor [short story writer, winner of Pulitzer Prize for fiction].

JS: Peter Taylor, Robie Macauley [editor, novelist, critic]. That's about it.

EW: When you were teaching in the English department, were you consciously influenced by any of these earlier great teachers whom you have described? You have now the reputation of being a much beloved teacher for the University [of North Carolina] at

Greensboro. Were you just yourself, or do you see in your own life influences of these teachers?

JS: Well, I think I've never gotten out from under the influence, and never hope to, of Dr. Smith, who was the head of the department. And I suppose I worked under him in some of his most productive years.

EW: What were the attitudes of the students? You said that in terms of the course requirements and the attitudes in the classroom, there was much more freedom, more independence, than there had been when you were a student. In general, when you came back to join in the faculty in 1926, did you find more student interest in things that were going on outside the campus, outside the state, things of a national, political, social nature?

JS: Yes, oh, yes. It was far more interested in such things. For example, I think World War I had quickened that interest. I recall that the students at that time were called upon to raise money for all sorts of work in World War I—rolling bandages (didn't do a lot of work to roll bandages), and knit socks, and knit sweaters and that sort of thing. And from that time on as the state itself was drawn into the national and international scene, the college was too.

EW: And for the Second World War, you found, again, an involvement in part of the students a concern, an awareness of national, international?

JS: Yes, and with this difference that there was much questioning even though we thought we were fighting a good war—there was much questioning about the war. Now in 1918 there was no questioning about the war. We all believed that we were going to war to make the world safe for democracy, as [President] Woodrow Wilson had called us to do. There was never any question about it. I met trains and gave out cigarettes, and I stood soup and soup—pots of soup, and all of that believing I was engaged in a holy cause.

EW: But this was not true of the Second World War?

JS: No, not quite the same.

EW: Was there any organized opposition on the part of the students and faculty to the United States' involvement?

JS: Well, I can't remember it was organized. But I do remember that there was an area—; there was a current of questioning all through.

EW: Do you find the present anxiety on the part of young people concerning the war in Indochina anything like the kinds of anxiety that were being expressed about World War II?

JS: It's so heightened now that there would be no comparison from my point of view.

EW: You think it grew out of the same sorts of concerns of the young people?

JS: No, I think it grew out of the issues involved.

EW: One of the people at the college who seemed to be most involved in national events was Miss Harriet Elliott [professor of history and political science, dean of women].

JS: Yes.

EW: Did you know Miss Elliott?

JS: Oh, yes, she—I knew her after I was graduated. And I've known her all along, and admired her very much.

EW: What influence did you see Miss Elliott having on the students?

JS: Bringing them, first of all, into the suffrage movement. Now there had been a little stirring in the suffrage movement even before she came, but she was vitally interested in the suffrage movement. [She] worked for it very hard.

EW: And did she, in fact, get the girls vitally interested in it?

JS: Oh my, yes.

EW: There was great concern on the part of the students?

JS: Oh, tremendous concern. And I remember while I was still in Greensboro, but not connected with the college, it was through Miss Elliott largely that Dr. Anna [Howard] Shaw [Methodist minister and an orator for women's suffrage and temperance] came to the college to speak, came a second time to speak in Greensboro and came a third time to deliver the commencement address.

EW: Did you hear her that time?

JS: Yes.

EW: We had arranged over a long period of time and passed a number of important changes in this institution, name changes, changes of other kinds, Miss Summerell. As you look back over this long history of your association with the institution, what is the one thing that stands out in your mind that the institution has stood for through the years?

JS: It has stood for a training of the mind, an enlargement of the interest and sympathies of people, to the end that the girls—the individuals, men and women, who come here now, owe—have a responsibility for our society, primarily for the state that has given them this institution, but far beyond the range of the state.

EW: And you believe that throughout the state and beyond the state, there are today thousands of alumni who, because of that training from this institution, are giving greater commitment to our community?

JS: Absolutely. I believe that. I think I had an awareness of it that goes into the very character of the individual. I became sharply aware of that just a few days ago when I had a letter from a student who was graduated here two years ago who is now doing graduate work at Northwestern University and told me that she was so pleased because she had already secured a position for next year in Connecticut. And she says, "I don't quite know why because there are many girls who have been"—she will get her degree this May. And says, "There are many girls who have been waiting a whole year to get a job, and I got this one. Now why?" And I couldn't help thinking partly because she could communicate in her person, in her whole attitude toward life, that philosophy that I just mentioned.

EW: Miss Summerell, has your association with the girls meant more than any other single thing to you?

JS: Oh, yes.

EW: And this is the basis of your continued affection for the place?

JS: Oh, by all means, yes. When I was graduated—when I was retired from the college, I saw to it that I had a group of girls who came down to see me once or twice a year, sometimes more often than that if they chose to throughout the year. I've never been without some little toehold in the college among the girls themselves.

EW: I believe it must always be called more than a toehold. We started with your remembering that you came here in 1905, a very young girl, and coming on the streetcar someone point out to you the college, and there it was. Now, coming to this institution things have changed so much. Let's hope that girls who come today have some of the same sort of enthusiasm in coming that you had in 1905.

JS: Well, I hope so.

EW: Thank you Miss Summerell.

JS: Thank you.

[End of Interview]