

Transcription of Interview of Dr. Leland Park by Desmond Niegowski 10 June 2015:

Des: What's your first memory of Dean Terry? When did you first meet him? Your general first impression?

Leland: I'm sure it was when I came to Davidson. I graduated from Davidson 1963 so I came to Davidson in 1959. He was not the chaplain then.

Des: He was the chaplain from '62 to '66, your junior and senior year.

Leland: So I knew him then and then I went away, graduate school and the army. I came back in '67 and at that time I guess he was at the church. I can't say I knew him too well then. Everybody knew him, of course. It was an all men's school and he was the dean. I'm not sure that there was an assistant dean--there may have been. But anyway, I do remember I was stationed in Raleigh and when I got the offer to come back here for the job in the library, I was excited about coming because I loved Davidson, but I thought this might be a pretty lonely place, for a single man, you know. Because I was 25, and when I came back I was the youngest professional person on the staff. I had been in a bachelor's club in Raleigh and I remember asking him [Will], "What's there to do around here? Because there wasn't much there." I had worked for a year in Charlotte at the public library before I went in the army. The library was wonderful, but Charlotte was really the place. They'd roll up the sidewalk professionally about 5:30 to 6:00. And I remember, he said, "No, there's not, but there's no reason you can't make it happen." Which is true. I saved that letter and not too long ago, last year or so, I was over at his house and I said, "Would you like to see this letter you wrote me? 'Cause it was 50 years ago," and he said, "It wasn't very encouraging," and I said, "No, it wasn't, but that's alright." But anyway, when I came back here, we got to know each other better then. We did a lot things together socially, some business-wise. But it was more of an occasion of--let me see, I'm 73 and he died at 82--8 or 9 years' difference in age. But at that time it didn't really matter; it didn't matter at all, to tell you the truth. It would in school, because you wouldn't have known each other. But we would pal around, as far as going to supper. My schedule was pretty busy in the library, but his was crazy, 24/7. Mine was close to that, but not quite that much. We got to know each other that way. As dean, more so. Obviously, we had business together in the campus and the use of the library and the students and what have you. He was also very nice about--I was a member of the faculty when I came back to the library in '75. And he asked me if I'd liked to be a freshman advisor and I said, "Well, yes, I would like that." And that was a real nice gesture on his part and I liked it so much I did another group every year rather than go two years and drop off. But that was a nice way for me to get to know students in a real personal way. And so we had a lot of things to do. As time grew on, we got to do different things together on campus and off. What year did he retire?

Eleanor and Des: '94

Leland: And I retired in '06. We had a good time. I didn't retire because I was mad--I just was old.

Des: I think he felt the same.

Leland: And the best preparation for retirement is having gone to a liberal arts college, because you're interested in everything. There's always something going on. Somebody I was talking to the other day, she's retired, she said she's so bored. I said, "It's your own damn fault. That's just

silly, there's too much going on." So anyway, I guess that's the background of how we got to become friends. And that was a nice thing.

Des: We don't want to miss any great stories. If you had to tell us the one Dean Terry story that you were personally a part of, what would that be?

Leland: I don't know if there's any one story. Sue will have the most of them, and Dr. Kuykendall. He was inordinately thoughtful of people. Let me back up and say: I think you'll find in talking to everybody that the secret about Will is that everybody felt like they had a very special relationship with him. Because of the position he was in, as well as if you're a preacher and a counselor, you feel like tattooed on your forehead is "Tell me everything." And people did. I told him, "I hope before you die, you don't tell everything." He enjoyed getting to know individuals. He enjoyed having people in. He was a good cook if you haven't heard, you should know. He'd do it at the drop of a hat. A real touching for me was I had a knee replacement in August. I had been over there a time or two before I had that. We got together right often. Anyway, the neighbors were so fond. It's a neat little town. They put up, not a website, but a link where you could sign up to bring him food every 2 days. They were wonderful! Will also realized he hadn't anything, but he didn't have to. But he called up and said he was bringing supper. And I know it was an effort for him, because it was to, you know, sit down and have supper with us. I had a friend from home looking after me after I got out of the hospital. He [Will] had to go back. Well, I know he had to go back, because he couldn't breathe very well and he was off his machine. You know he was on oxygen for a long time. But he brought supper and it was a very thoughtful thing to do and very typical of him. But he would have people in all through dinner. I'd be interested if the Kuykendalls tell you this story. When Kuykendall--John--was appointed President, he [Will] had John and Missy for supper. And he told them--he told me, anyway--he said, "You know what, it's very hard for somebody to call you a son of a bitch if they have had their feet under your table for supper." You can quote that if you want. I think I'd run it by Kuykendall first. But I know it's a true story. That was sort of in many ways his modus operandi as far as dealing with people: have them over. He was always very nice. He could whip up something. He had a garden for years and he loved to put up stuff, green beans and all that stuff. I wouldn't put Harris Teeter's out of business for the world. But anyway, he has kindness that way. When my mother was up here once, he asked us over to dinner once with some other people, which was really very nice. And of course your parents are impressed that you have nice friends. One year after she died, 'cause he didn't have any brothers and sisters, he had a couple of aunts he looked after. He had a timeshare down at Hilton Head at Christmas time, and I think in the summer, too. He said, "Why don't you go have Christmas with Auntie and me." Well it was very nice and also something I needed, which he could pick up on. Now, he wasn't perfect. Among other things, he was a Democrat.

Des: We saw your sticker on your car.

Eleanor: And we were like, "Are we at the right house?" 'Cause we knew that he was close friends with Dean Terry.

Leland: I keep that on the car just to irritate the crap out of people, you know. But he knows and Sue Ross knows it and nearly everybody else does, too--that this place is just lousy with Democrats. But I'm not going to listen him, terrible spiel. I just tell him, "If you want to talk that way, I'm going home." And you cannot do that. If he's over here, you cannot do that now. I'm not listening to this stuff. You've already made up your mind. I've made up my mind. We'll just stop

it there. He just thought that was terrible. But it worked. And it helped the friendship too. There are certain things you just don't talk about. But anyway, he had a basic kindness about it that was very nice, which I appreciated. He wasn't perfect. Because other than being a Democrat . . . We had a little system for years where we would take each other to dinner on our birthdays. His is in July and mine is October. He also knew I was not interested in being taken to Wendy's.

Des: Some place nice.

Leland: Yeah, exactly. And he did, but he knew not to test it, because I'm not going to go. At my age, I don't have to do this. Anyway, that was fun. His entertaining was a big feature for him. You probably heard people talk about his Christmas parties.

Des: Oh yeah, the eggnog parties.

Eleanor: We were going to ask. That was the next question.

Leland: It's just amazing. To get on that list was something. For years, I would help him when he had receptions. At Christmas time, I would work the table and serve the eggnog.

Eleanor: Prestigious.

Leland: And for me it was fun. One of the first women professors was Dr. Louise Nelson and she got real twisted if anybody ever asked her to pour punch. Women didn't do that. She was a professor, thank you kindly. I had as many degrees as she did, thank you. I liked it because then you got to see everybody because they were gonna come by. Also, you don't get stuck with anybody because they were going to move on. I really liked that and until I had the knee replacement last summer--until that really got bad the last two, three years--I did that. And I told him after that, I cannot risk picking up that bowl and dropping it at your party. For years, departments would have receptions Saturday before graduation.

Des: I think they still have that.

Leland: He would have one at his house, so I would work the punch bowl for him then. We had a good time because he always had a crowd, because everybody liked him and they like to take their mommas and say, "This is the dean." Mark that one down. Must not have been too bad while he was here. His entertaining was really something. Sue will probably tell you this, too, but one summer, you know where he lived? Where Cynthia Lewis lives?

Des: On College Street and Concord.

Leland: That's right. Well, one summer he had Dr. and Mrs. Spencer and Sue Ross and me for supper. The five of us sat on his porch and told stories until you just thought you were going to die from hardly breathing. And the Spencers are wonderful people. She's still living. They usually had to be a little circumspect when they were talking about him, about anybody or somebody brand new came to town. But among the 5 of us, seemed like no one cared. They just told stories, none of which I can remember, unfortunately. But there was this laughter going by, and people were asking the next day what was going on. It was such fun. We had nice times like that. So I can't say one particular time, to answer your question, but maybe that gives an overall answer.

Des: It definitely does. So, as well as writing about Dean Terry, we're also writing about student life generally . . . What changes did you observe that were huge shifts with coeducation?

Leland: Sort of like my predecessor, I was very much against going coed. Everybody was, but it's been wonderful. I really mean that, it's been very nice. I'm real hot on the subject of it being equal, the same number of men and women. If you go sex blind, then all of a sudden it gets out of balance and it changes the atmosphere of the place. For a couple years, they didn't pay

much attention to that. The trustees sort of stood up on their legs and said, "Don't do that." And you could tell a certain atmosphere when there were measurably more women on campus than men. Getting back in balance and it's really very nice. One of the things that happened--and I don't know whether it was coeducation, I really think that it was the change in the drinking law.

Des: We're looking into that, too.

Leland: The thing that hurt on that was--and I'll tell you, I think Will didn't handle this right--he was told by the administration that for legal and insurance reasons, he could not go down on the court [Patterson Court]. Because if something happened, then that would drag the college into it. I think that's a bunch of hoo-rah. The college has got plenty of money and plenty of lawyers, they just [need to] say, "You! Figure out how you can do that, but I want our dean down on the court." That keeps things much more in line. I was an advisor for SAE for about ten years and I tried to go to everything that they had in order to have an old man's presence. But he couldn't do that and he regretted that . . . That was a loss for Will and a loss for the court, the students. 'Cause, as it ended up, a lot of people only got to know him only when they got in trouble rather than enjoying the social experience with him. I think that was a loss. And he didn't insist on--and I would have done this to, not that he asked me--I would not have let a fraternity or eating house be active on campus if they did not have a faculty advisor that was active. If you didn't have that, then you didn't have any balance. And also, you didn't have anybody to represent you, you know, when all hell broke loose. That's just important. There may have been legal reasons that he didn't do it, I don't know. But I think his and my life would have been a lot easier if he'd been more involved in the court. But again, it started from the college saying, "Legally, you can't get down there." I think that could have been broken and that they could have done it, but you know, that's why I'm a librarian and not a lawyer. He got involved when he could, though, 'cause he knew all those people. He learned how to call square-dancing.

Eleanor: He's good.

Desmond: We watched a video of him teaching the freshmen during orientation.

Eleanor: I square danced in highschool and I gotta say, he could have gone pro. He's so spry. Like, you see him and he's at least in his seventies and he's just rolling around on the floor and moving students into the right positions. It's amazing.

Leland: It was a smart thing to do. I have a feeling he learned how to do it when he was at the church, but I don't know. I'm just guessing on that. He had a good time doing that.

Des: The alcohol thing is really intriguing to me because my friend's parents who went to Davidson talked about how they would go have a beer with their professor and it was like this mature academic thing, in a way. You would be nineteen, but feel like you were an adult. But now, of course, that's never gonna happen. There's this new stigma, I guess, against stuff like that. Do you think in any way that has stifled conversations or relationships that might never really form?

Leland: I'm not sure I follow you.

Des: I guess talking to your professor at Summit is different than going to his or her office. So, do you think alcohol stuff, like--clearly it was the federal government that cracked down on it--but did it kind of stop intellectual discussion, in a way? You know what I'm saying?

Leland: I do, but I'll tell you, faculty and students can take blame on that. Because there's some faculty members, you know, that come here--we've been real blessed by having good faculty.

Des: Oh yeah.

Leland: But there's some of them who come in here and think they're really supper on a stick. They really do. It takes a few years for us to remind them that, as old Dr. Nelson used to say, "Your best job in the world is having got a job at Davidson." It's not some little place up North. Give us a break. And some of them never get over it. Most of them in time do and when they do, they realize the neat thing is *you*. And it's your loss if you don't get to know them [students]. If a faculty member feels that way, they're going to want to get to know you and they'll work out a time to have you over or to meet you for coffee or something like that.

Des: Exactly.

Leland: And similarly, you know, you won't sit around and be sitting in the shadows. You'll go by and, you know, they've got open hours. Go by and see them; ask them about the weather, if not the class.

Des: Right.

Leland: Sot that they know who you are. It's a two-way street. Jumping back just a little bit . . .

Des: That's fine.

Leland: One of the things that you probably heard is that Will was a great pulpiteer (preacher). I'd put him up right next to--not ahead of, but right next to--Dr. Kuykendall. 'Cause Kuykendall, he's just fabulous. And Will really was, too. But the thing he did at the first--and you probably hear people mention it and Dr. Blodgett has got a copy--he [Will] gave a speech to freshmen and their parents.

Des: Yeah, we listened to that on a tape.

Leland: . . . I think I recorded it. People didn't do that sort of thing then, but I'd take it with me, you know. But that was a spectacular speech and anyone who heard it never forgot it. You don't remember all the parts of it, but there are parts of it that you'll never forget. And your mother always remembered it, 'cause she says, "You remember what he said?"

Leland: [to Eleanor] You can go get some more ice and water, if you want it.

Eleanor: Thanks.

Leland: That was a distinctive thing that and I'll to you, I felt so sorry for Dean Shandley, his first year. Now, the freshmen that he talked to, they'd never heard him [Will] before so it didn't matter, but I know he was nervous about it. That evening after he got home, I called him up and I just said, "You did a wonderful job." And he did a nice job, but it's no comparison. I'm sure it's good now because he's had, you know, fifteen years of experience. It would please Will, I'm sure, to know that he wasn't as good as he was.

Des: Well, we watched a video of a roast when he retired.

Leland: Yes.

Des: There's a video of that, which we found pretty amusing, but at the end he says, "And when I leave, don't ask me about my successor, I'm not gonna say anything about him." So he seemed very professional that way. He didn't at all want to be compared or anything like that, regardless of what he actually thought in a political sense.

Leland: That's true, that's true. And he always had Dean Shandley over and on his Christmas list. He was really quite a speaker; he was good at that. He was. I'll tell you a funny little aside, though, and I've got it on my to-do list--do you all know Lib McGregor Simmons, the preacher?

Eleanor: Mhm. She did a really great job with the memorial service.

Leland: She did. And Will was so fond of her and we were talking once and he said, "She is a wonderful preacher, and she doesn't read it. I'm so jealous." Because Will wrote out every



sermon at everything. I wonder where all his sermons are . . . But it is really quite true; he was very good, but he always read them. I think Kuykendall does, too, to tell you the truth. I'm not sure. But! Lib doesn't. She is *amazing* . . . He [Will] had so many different roles at Davidson, there were few people who didn't know him. In fact, he went to school here and then he came back. I knew he was Y secretary for a while. And then, you know, as chaplain, as preacher--and preaching got him to know everybody in town. That is, if you weren't Presbyterian, you weren't really anybody. I went to St. Alban's back when it was over on Lorimer Street in that little house. Services were eight o'clock in the morning on Sunday, which was a *real* effort.

Des: Wow.

Eleanor: Ugh.

Leland: But there' weren't very many of us [Episcopalians]. Methodists did pretty well. He always liked music but didn't know very much about it, so he took a music appreciation course one year when he was here. I don't remember who was teaching it then. It doesn't matter. Anyway, I always that was sorta neat. Let's see, I mentioned Hilton Head. He loved Chautauqua. You know what that is?

Eleanor and Des: No.

Leland: It's in New York, I think. It's been there since God was young. It's one of these retreats--they have concerts, they have lectures, and they have discussions and everything else all summer.

Des: Okay.

Leland: The Goodells--that may be somebody you want to talk to. Tim Goodell. His brother, Roger Goodell, is the--

Des: Yeah!

Leland: You know who that is?

Des: I'm a big NFL fan. We have a picture of him, of him and Will together.

Leland: Okay. Well, Tim is Roger's brother; he went to Davidson and his family all had houses at Chautauqua . . . There's a lady here in town, Ms. Jones, she and her husband and family had a house up there for years. A lot of people used to just love to go there over the summer and they used to talk about the Chautauqua circuit, 'cause I think they used to send people out. You know, people really looked forward to that, rather than just going to the beach . . . Anyway, Will just *loved* going to Chautauqua. He even got involved with putting on a program about--I don't know whether it was college students or would-be preachers or whatever. But Tim Goodell, he could really fill you in on that. And he'd love to talk to you.

Des: Cool. As long as we don't have to talk to his brother.

Leland: Oh no, don't go do that. Boy, he's had a year, hasn't he? . . . He [Will] loved to travel.

Eleanor: Oh yes.

Des: Interesting.

Leland: One of his travelling buddies was Hartley Hall. Dr. Hartley Hall went to Davidson. I think they went to school together. Toward the end, he was president of Union Theological Seminary.

Des: Oh wow.

Leland: Hartley would come down and see him at the beach or vice versa. And he would always come to his Christmas party, but they were so funny. You know, they were just like really good friends and just rag on each other all the time. Will said something like, "I'm not travelling with

him anymore. He snores.” And Hartley would just say, “You can’t hear it.” Oh, and that’s the other thing: Will couldn’t hear. And I would be telling him, “You gotta get hearing aids. I got ‘em. Why can’t you?” He said, “Well, Sue says I oughta get them, too.” He died without them. He was very generous in some ways, but was also tight as a tic and I’m sure he heard that they, you know, cost me six thousand dollars. That just brought him--“Well, I don’t believe I’ll do that . . .” I’m not trying to run him. I’m just telling you about the man . . . [*speaking of the Terry Scholarship*] Well, that gave him a lot of joy and a reason to be involved with students he might not have had otherwise . . . and it made a difference in a lot of kids. If you went to the service, well all those Terry scholars walked in together. A slew of them. You realize each one of those people had an individual relationship with Will, which is really something. And to be retired and still have that influence, that’s amazing. He would do so many nice things for them. I forgot who it was speaking in Charlotte. I went with some friends. Will had taken several of them [Terry scholars] and he paid for their tickets. There was a summer program, in Hilton Head, I can’t remember the name. But the who’s who of the world went there as far as the US. There were governors and supreme court justices and all that sort of stuff. If you got invited, it was really something not to pass up because the programs were just amazing. Bill and Hillary went to that back when he was governor of Arkansas. Well, my bumper sticker will tell you I don’t care... They had a good time and he got to know them there. Not to go calling on them, but I mean they knew each other. And when they opened the Clinton library, Will took three or four of them [Terry scholars] out there for the dedication. Of course, it rained the whole time which I thought was hilarious. But the fact that he took them to something that was historic, that was special that he would do that. I hope he had a Republican with him but I bet he didn’t. He did a lot of nice things like that for those people that enriched their lives. When I talk about (*ask Jan/Sharon*), because he was doing something all the time that other people can’t identify with, because when they retired...(*This is very unclear*)... I have one alumnus that named their first son after me, which was so sweet. He’s coming here this fall. He’s a freshman. Isn’t that neat? But it also makes you feel old. Those are some of the things that happen. Rarely, I’d say never, has an adult after you retire, do you have that close of a relationship with students that are still in school. And he had that. It was very fortunate for them. They had opportunities . . . they were nice kids and that was fun. But that opportunity that he had was probably singular for anybody that’s retired. I think that’s worth noting. Because he was so intellectually alive and until recently physically alive, he really could make a difference for those people. One of them was in a play in Blowing Rock one summer and he called and said, “Come on, let’s ride up there and go to the play.” We went up, went to the play, had supper with some friends and came back. But he kept up with all those people. And they, the number that came back to visit him when he was at the Pines, was really very touching... She [Stephanie Glaser] was so kind in making sure . . . she was a playmaker to make sure things happened. This is funny. We always used to talk about one thing or another. Nowadays, people just say, “Oh he passed.” And he said, “Don’t say that! Say I died!” I quite agree. You read in the paper about how somebody passed . . .

Eleanor: Having gone to the memorial, that was my first time meeting Will and that was vicarious and sudden. It was really an overwhelming experience for me... I’d really like to hear your thoughts on the memorial service and what it meant to you.

Leland: I think everybody was very touched. A lovely service and he would have loved it. They had the reception over at the Lilly Gallery with an open bar with gin, which is his calling card. It

was very nice. He handled it well, because he had two fine preachers that he knew, but they were not local. They were from Raleigh and that was smart. Because then you didn't get anybody around here jealous that they weren't invited. I'm sure he did that on purpose. One of them, Art Ross, is a first cousin of Sue Ross that you will talk to . . . The other one is a student of his, or he knew as a student. White Memorial Presbyterian Church in Raleigh is one of the big Presbyterian churches. I'm not Presbyterian so I can't use the right word. It's not the diocese. Very large, very successful. Means a lot to a lot of people. They do interesting things like you may have heard him mention during the service about having a preacher in residence for a week or two. You're required to go up there and give a talk every day and preach on Sunday. A lot of work, but Will did it at least twice I think. Once with Art and I think once with, I can't remember the other man's name. He was good. That said something about Will that he wasn't just all fluff. He could preach but he could also lead good intellectual discussions. As I said first, everybody felt like they had a personal relationship with Will. It's an amazing thing to happen. There were many students who, and faculty, he didn't suffer them gladly. A faculty person who didn't understand what Davidson was about, he wouldn't go out to cut them down, but... And I would quite agree with him. If they don't think that this is some place special, go on. That was a special characteristic I thought.

Des: You said you were the faculty advisor of SAE... Faculty advisors don't do anything today. Can you speak to what you would do?

Leland: What fraternity are you in?

Des: KA.

Leland: I was the faculty advisor for KA for one year. Somebody told them they ought to have one. Well, I went down for lunch and that was the last time I saw them. After that, they said, "Thank you very much for your service." Anyway, I had good friends...

Des: What would you do for SAE? Because I don't have any conception of what...

Leland: Most of it is being there. I would attend their meetings. Monday night was their executive board and Tuesday night was the full meeting. If they had a dance or party on the weekend, I always dropped by. Mainly because that way I got to know them. If they know you, they're gonna ask on you or rely on you. And they're probably not going to do stuff that they ought not to do if you're there, just to be blunt. It makes sense. Your father walks in the door: "I don't believe so." It took a lot of time, but I thoroughly enjoyed and I got to know the guys well. Of course, they still got on trouble. That's just part of growing up. But the word was passed to me that they thought I didn't stop and that therefore I shouldn't be the advisor. Honestly, I was really hurt by that and I did resign. I still stayed good friends with them, but whoever was passing the word, I don't want to meet them in a dark alley. I didn't appreciate it. But anyway, because if I had a way to devise it, I would require, you know, give them hundred dollars a month or whatever it is to do it. But you gotta do those things I'm talking about. And then once a month all the advisors ought to meet with the dean. Tell him what's going on. He tells them what's going on. What he expects of them. We'd all have better relationships and probably less trouble... The court, guys and gals for that matter... if anything happens they get blamed right away. On the other hand, if they need some support, pass out programs or something like that, guess who they call? People on the court. And all those groups, I wrote a big article in the Davidsonian one time listing what they all did for service during the year. Amazing, amazing. Now, this was 20 years ago, but the amount of money they raised, the amount of time they



gave. But it's accepted and it's impressive. They did it on their own, because they didn't do it with any guidance. Again, that went back to the fact that Will wasn't allowed to get involved down there. That was, I just think that there was some way they could have done it. If not, take a bigger insurance policy out.

Eleanor: As our last question, I would really like to know, do you think there is an official Will Terry narrative?

Leland: I don't know if I know what you're talking about now.

Eleanor: Do you think there's an official story on Will Terry that is accepted and told and retold?

Leland: No. Because I think, that's a good question, but I don't think so. Because you would have to skim the surface, because so many people have their own feelings about him. Literally everybody does. I'll be at supper with three other people tonight and every one of them knew him. Everybody's got their own story to tell. And I don't think that you could generalize the "Will Terry story," except the fact that he was a part of everyone's life... That in itself, if I would to put a thing on his tombstone, one of the things I would say, "He cared about a lot of people and a lot of people cared about him." And that's true. It is indeed. Regardless of his politics. It was terrible, just terrible. But he made good eggnog. Had good parties.