

Going back to the College as I first encountered it; I think that one of the things that impressed me was the fact that it was a rather young faculty, with very few people of long service on the faculty when I came here. Many new appointments had been made in the two preceding years. On the whole, it was a relatively young faculty. I was one of the older ones, really, coming here in my mid-forties. There were some older, of course. It became, I think, a rather close-knit faculty, with probably the people's social life more restricted to faculty colleagues than it is now.

Of those who were on the faculty then, how many are still around in the community?

Well, Dr. Hazelrigg, whom you know, was one of the young faculty members who welcomed us; Dr. Hill, Dr. Ellis, Mrs. Nichols, Dr. Leitcher. In a little older group, not quite my age but nearly, was Wilbur Robinson, who retired in math the same year I retired. He had been here about four years, I think, when I came. Dr. Walkup was here in chemistry. I may be missing some, but these are some of the people who are still around who were on the faculty at that time, and most of them my juniors by several years.

Could you describe the administrative structure as you remember it when you first arrived at the College?

It was very simple. You had the president; you had the dean of the College, who was at that time when I came, chairman of the English department and a fine scholar and, as I understood, teacher. I was much attracted to him. In fact, I probably would not have come if I had not been much attracted to Dean Hewlett. But he died in December of my first year here. There was a dean of women, who was primarily a personnel officer. And I believe Miss Mary Sweeney was then the dean of women or shortly became the dean of women. There was a dean of men, who was supposedly a personnel officer, who was also responsible for admissions; a man named Davis who I think left at the end of my first year here and was not immediately replaced by anyone with the title of dean. There was a chief business officer who was the business manager. That's it. It was a very uncomplicated and simple structure.

We had at that time (I checked this this morning) about 630 students, which did represent, I'm sure, the highest enrollment that the College had ever had. The enrollment was very heavy in war veterans.

Probably the average student was a little bit older than he would be normally?

Oh, yes. I think we had reached the point in '48 that the freshman class were probably all normal freshmen, or very nearly all normal freshmen. And it's significant of the enrollment bulge that the sophomore class was larger than the freshman class. That's something you'd almost never encounter otherwise.

The faculty salaries were, may I say, modest. And the housing in which we lived was correspondingly modest. This was a change because in the prewar years the faculty members had mostly had pretty good housing. I mean certainly the senior ones and the more or less permanent ones had pretty good housing; but we

surely didn't in my first two years here. Dean Hewlett had a nice house on Lexington Avenue. But I tell you, nobody else had much of anything.

I think one ought to mention the fact that Centre was pretty clearly and distinctively a church-related college when I came here. In its relationship to the Presbyterian Church we had (and this was a new deal) a weekly chapel service, which was supposed to be a service of religious worship which at first was held in what is now the furniture store at the corner of Broadway and Third (then the Second Presbyterian Church). And then, subsequently, when the enrollment went down and they could be accommodated in what is now the Presbyterian Church next door here, we moved over there for this weekly chapel service, for which they usually brought in a special preacher from outside. They usually were pretty good. You had good music. The choir did good music at these chapels. We also had a weekly convocation at which, most of the time, you had an outside speaker of greater or lesser ability or attractiveness, depending upon your luck, the budget, and so on. But that I think was an important aspect.

You mentioned fraternities, and certainly the fraternities were in the center of the College's social life for men and women in 1948. Though I was told that their affairs were not as elaborate as they had been a few years earlier. This was one of the things I was told before I came here. They were beyond all belief in their elaborateness, as compared to what the fraternities did at Miami University. I don't think that was entirely true over there. But, anyway, it wasn't so after I got here.

Aside from the fraternities, as you came to know the students, what other social life was there in Danville or in the Centre community in campus activities? What types of outlets did the students have?

Well, you had your normal program of athletics; you had your publications; you had drama, dramatic productions. I can't remember whether West Hill was doing it my first year or whether he was on leave that year. No, I think he did it my first year and was on leave maybe the second year. When Paul Cantrell came here first to take West's place for a year, Paul was age 25. So you had a variety of activities, enough to keep people busy enough. Boy meets girl; girl meets boy.

How about activities in the community where students--

I don't remember.

You mentioned the convocations and chapel; those were required?

Yes. You didn't absolutely have to go every time, but you had to go to most of the sessions in a semester.

Maybe at this point it would be appropriate to describe a little bit further Centre's exact relationship with the Presbyterian Church at this point.

I looked at one of these catalogs and found this statement that named the number of members of the board, and in each year three of the members elected or reelected to the board were to be submitted for approval to the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky, belonging to what I will call the Northern Church. Two were to be submitted for approval to the Southern Church Synod through their own agencies. They were all automatically approved, I think, until 1955 when a couple weren't.



One was chosen by the Alumni Association. You had six new or reelected members each year, and this is the way they were chosen. I think that you could hardly say that the Church ever exercised any control. From their budgets both of these churches (and I'm not sure they did it the same way) provided a certain amount for the College treasury each year, but not a vast sum. And I think it tended to remain stationary as the College's needs grew. But it was never, in my experience, an oppressive relationship or a demanding relationship.

There were no constraints of any kind upon one's beliefs for the Centre entering students?

No, never any restriction at all on their belief. We used to publish the religious preferences of the students by total numbers. I think the Presbyterians were never more than about 40 percent, maybe 35 percent (something like that), among the students. Others were divided among all the other various options, or none. But members of the faculty were required to be at that period members of an "evangelical church." When I first learned of the position, I said to the chairman at Minnesota who mentioned it to me; I said, "Well, surely, can't an Episcopalian qualify?" "Oh", he said, "I guess so." And it turned out that many Episcopalians had qualified before, whether in full literal compliance or not is another question.

What do you remember most of the town of Danville when you came? What was the most striking to you?

Well, it struck me as an interesting old town, the oldest town in which I had lived up to that point in my life. I was impressed by the fine old homes and just sort of generally liked the atmosphere. But I must say, it's changed in a great many ways since 1948. Do you want that at this point?

Yes, it might be a good place to--

In the first place, most of the subdivisions which we know here either weren't in existence or have grown sizably since 1948. Green Acres was quite new and had not by any means reached its present limits. Weisiger Woods had not been started. Indian Hills, I think, had not been started or just barely started. Streamland had not been dreamed of. It was a more compact community than it is now.

It was clear that it was a railroad town. The railroad passenger trains were a major part of life in town. And, of course, the railroad yard down here was a major source of employment in the city of Danville; so that the railroad was a major industry. We had, as I remember, two northbound and two southbound trains (but maybe it was three each way) from Cincinnati to various points south and from various points south to Cincinnati. In fact, when I first came down here for an interview, I came by rail because it was quicker. It was easier to leave my car in Cincinnati at the station and come down by rail. I remember that the trains were full and crowded. I remember going back to Cincinnati, I think that same time, and in a long train of nine or ten cars I couldn't find a seat. Though I'd had an evening meal before I left here, I went into the dining car and ordered a little something just to get a place to sit down. We also had one train a day to and from Louisville, which was the kind that stopped at every crossroad, practically. I never rode on it but once. My parents were visiting us here, and our son was a small boy about seven, and he got sick. My wife was supposed to drive

my parents to catch their train. We had met them in Louisville. So I had to wake them up in the middle of the night and tell them that I was going to have to put them on this-- I had a class, and in those days we didn't cut classes to take parents to the railroad station. My wife couldn't leave her poor, sick little boy. So I had to put them on the train (I think it was 4:30 in the morning), and they got to Louisville at 8 and had about two minutes to catch a cab and get across town to another station to catch their train for Chicago. So the railroad was a very important part of the life of the town. You'd be surprised at the number of people who would drive down there on Sunday afternoon, for instance, to see the train come or show their kids the train coming in and out.

The industrial growth of the community since that time, of course, has been tremendous. Corning Glass came here, I think, in 1950, two years after I did. I think the only industrial plants here were Palm Beach and Jackson Chair and maybe one other. Anyway, all the industrial plants that were here, I think, except-- No, the shoe plant out on Hustonville Road was here, but I don't think in that location. So that most of the industries that are here have come since then. Of course they've brought with them an influx of executive and other personnel, particularly from points north, which I suppose has helped adulterate the "Kentucky" or southern temper of the community a little. The shopping centers are all new, and the bypass is new. When I came here there was no viaduct over the railroad, so that you crossed the railroad on either the Perryville Road, which passed Toliver School and went on out that way, or on the Parksville Road, which crossed with Walnut Street extended.

The State Hospital was an important adjunct to the community and, of course, has remained such until quite recently, as you well know.

I think probably the other important change that's occurred here in those years would be the integration so far as color is concerned.

How has the situation changed from when you first came here?

Well, it has changed very completely in that in those days I suppose no black person could have been served in a "white" restaurant or a "white" motel or hotel. The public schools were strictly segregated under Kentucky law until after Brown v. The Board of Education. All the black students in town attended Bate School, which carried you from first grade through high school, on a site just in front of the present Bate Middle School. The color line was much more sharply drawn than it is today, certainly.

What was the situation at that time as far as Centre's policy? Was there an open policy for any black student who would want to attend?

No. This was not permitted under Kentucky law until Kentucky law--the Day Law, as it was called, which had been passed in 1904--was, I guess, repealed following Brown v. Board of Education. That, of course, is a part of another story, that is, the opening of Centre to black students. But it falls under one or two of these other topics you have listed here.

Do you remember much about the relationship between the College and the town in this early period? Was there a certain amount of antagonism, or did people get along fairly well with each other?



Oh, I don't know, really. I suppose there's always some antagonism, some bitterness. I don't recall that it was acute. I wasn't privy to much of it. But people in town with whom I was so in contact, I think received me better because I was connected with the College than they would have if I had come in here to work in some industry or merchandising establishment.

Boyle County is now a "dry" county. What can you remember of a "wet-dry" controversy?

It was dry when I got here; and there have been, I think, two local option elections since I've been here. One was quite early in the game, and there was quite a lot of bitterness about it, and one much more recently. Do you remember that, Bob? Was that in your time?

Yes, that was when I first came here.

I don't think there was a bitterness that time, but there had been on the earlier occasion. The attempt to open the community to the sale of intoxicating beverages was not successful either time, of course.

Getting back strictly for a moment to Centre, I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about President Groves--how you remember him, what your relationship was with him.

When I came here, President Groves was about 50 years of age. He'd been at the College for just about a year when the offer of my appointment was made in January of 1948. He had come in January of 1947, and he served ten and a half years. So he was about 50 when I came and about 60 when he resigned. He's a man about my height and my degree of baldness, but better looking. He is a scholarly man, I think, with a theological degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania.

But he had an interesting background. He had spent most of the time between acquiring his doctorate and coming to Kentucky in 1942 in Iran as a teacher and administrative officer in what you would call missionary colleges sponsored by the Presbyterian Church. He had left there in 1942, shall we say, early in the war, and was appointed to Centre as professor of religion and philosophy. He taught here for a couple of years, maybe. Then he went to the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and taught there, it couldn't have been more than about three years. Then he was brought back here as president in '47. He's a straightforward sort of man, and a man with whom I didn't at first feel as easy as I ultimately did come to feel.

He was a man who was interested, certainly, in building a strong faculty. And I think you would have to say that he did build a strong faculty, given the circumstances and given the very little money he had to spend, surprisingly good in fact. He was interested in students, as you would expect. You don't always get this in a president, but he really was interested in students and is to this day. He was here as recently as last October. We are very good friends now and have been for many years. He'll be asking about this former student and that former student. He's more likely to remember than I am, I think. Though I taught a pretty large percentage of those who were here in his time, and he didn't.

He was a good man who, well, in the end got into a conflict with a segment, at least, of the board of trustees actually over the matter of integration--some of the trustees. There was a little degree of pressure on him, I think, from the Northern Presbyterian Church to push for integration, for the free admission of qualified black students. And there was some very strong resistance by certain of the trustees. I think this contributed to the situation in which his tenure here came to an end. But, of course, when President Spragens was appointed, he made it a clear condition that they had to understand that this was coming in a year or two. So the chaps who were resisting it had no success.

President Groves had taken a stand for the admission of blacks?

Yes. He had been pushing the trustees in that direction, and they had not wished to be pushed. Most of this, you understand, is the sort of thing I knew by hearsay, not by direct evidence, by any means.

Again, in your early years, describe if you will the changes of the physical structure of the campus from when you first arrived.

I mentioned the two campuses, and you have probably seen pictures of the buildings on the women's campus, with the three connected buildings which were dormitories and classrooms and dining hall and what have you, and then the separated building which was a gymnasium for physical education and so on--swimming pool of a sort, and so on. The new buildings which were built here in President Groves time--well, let's say what was here. We had old Centre, the building that you see over there; and the two buildings, McReynolds and Wiseman, behind it. They were quite new. They had been built early in the '40s. In front of McReynolds there was a house called Hillcrest which had once been the president's home and which now, in 1948, was occupied--divided into two faculty apartments. Two faculty families occupied it. Craik House was across the street, the president's home. You had Old Main, which was the main classroom building. Young Hall, at roughly the site of the present Young Hall, was a science building. Breck Hall was the major men's dormitory, but it was as ugly as it could be. It had been through all sorts of renovations and changes and fires, and the paint was peeling and at different parts didn't match. It was perfectly awful until its face was lifted quite a few years after I came. It was as ugly as it could well be. The only gymnasium was the present Sutcliffe Hall. It had a running track around at the proper level. The basketball floor, of course, occupies most of the space. The bleachers were maybe three or four seats back on either side. That was pretty much the buildings.

Then in 1950 I think they added the Alumni Memorial Gymnasium which was substantially the building as you saw it when you came here, Bob, and which was only just last year enlarged by the renovation that was done. And then, in President Groves' time, they built on the women's campus a building called Weisiger Hall, which was intended to be the fine arts building and served as a fine arts building until this structure was completed, I think, in '74.

In President Spragens' time, of course, the place was completely redone. Everything else has happened since he came to the presidency, and, I think, since 1961, which was when the women moved over here and the dormitories on the north side of Main Street were built. Those were all little, rather unpretentious and not very impressive houses in there when I first came. They were all, of course, taken out. So 1961, I think, was the opening of Cowan and of those dormitories on the north side of Main Street.



I wanted to ask you if you remembered the one-story building that, I believe, was built behind Old Main. It was called, I believe, the "Hangout."

The College had acquired at the end of the war a number of old buildings. Some of them were used for what they called "Vet Village" for housing for married couples when I first came here. They were somewhere on campus--I can't even remember where--probably about where the Fraternity Quadrangle is, I think in that area. Then they also acquired an old Army surplus building of the kind that you used for a, shall we say, regimental recreation hall, and this was a snack bar. It was called the "The Hangout." You got the same kind of stuff you'd get in any snack bar, and you sat around and ate it and listened to the blaring of the record player. But it was sort of dingy. It was very dingy, to tell the truth. It was directly back of Old Main Hall.

The dormitories referred to as "Centreville", were those part of the buildings after the war?

That's "Medville."

That's Medville?

That village, yes; well, they called it Centreville, I guess. I can't remember how many people they had lodging for. I thought it was a good thing to have inexpensive lodging on campus for married couples. When we were looking for a new president in 1957, one of the trustees (I was the only faculty member on the trustees committee) asked me what I thought the College needed. I'm never very good at this kind of thing, but I said I thought it would be nice if they'd build some housing for married students. Oh! He didn't think so at all! He thought that would be an awful idea. He didn't want to encourage, shall we say, student marriages and this kind of thing.

The fraternities at this time were all located in, I assume, houses off-campus in various places.

Yes. Actually, my first year some of them still had nothing but quarters upstairs over store buildings in town. But I think by my second year they all had houses in the community. The Phi Deltas were where the Alumni House is, the Betas were where the Preston-Pruitt Funeral Home is, the Dekes had an old house which was on campus about where the parking lot is back of Young Hall. It was a very ancient house. The house where Hal Smith lived was built I think by Mr. Boles for the Phi Taus, I think about 1948 or '49. And the SAEs lived on North Fifth in a house which is still there. Sigma Chis-- I think the house they had was--Bob, isn't there a house between the house in which you live and--arent' there two houses west of that still?

Yes.

Well, it's the first one. It's the one next to you, the house where the Sigma Chis lived at that time.

The faculty when you first came here, during your early years--some you mentioned--a couple were on campus.

Oh, I tell you, the housing was pretty awful. We lived for three years in a little cottage on Proctor Street. Do you know the house on the Board of Education property which is now the headquarters of the Board of Education on Proctor Street.

I believe so.

Well, we lived just about opposite that, and there was a faculty couple next to us and another one down the street. We sublet from the owner through the College. I don't think that was the worst place anybody lived in. I think the first faculty couple that bought a proper house was Dr. Richey, who was professor of physics; you know Mrs. Richey. They bought out in Paula Heights, a nice house. We bought where we are, which is nothing great, in 1951. The Hazelriggs built pretty soon after that in Green Acres. So gradually we got better housed.

You described earlier how you came to accept the post of dean of Centre. I wonder if you would summarize some of the changes in the position itself through the years you were there and the academic and social structure of the College during those ten years.

I think probably the most important thing that happened in those years, and I was going to get out my annual reports for those ten years, but I didn't remember to. But I think probably the most important thing that happened in those years was that we first really began seriously to attempt to, shall we say, raise the level of ability on the part of the students through a more selective admissions policy than we had before. We began using College Boards about 1956, but gave them no weight at all the first year. The first year was just to get experience. And gradually our technique I think became better over the years in selecting students, or discouraging students, encouraging prospects. So that by the time I'd left the dean's office we really had raised the measurable level of ability, as far as you can measure it by tests, considerably. And also, I think, the proportion coming from the top decile and second decile of their high school classes. I think probably that's the most significant change. We grew some in enrollment during those years, though not as much as we could have if we hadn't been trying to be more selective and to improve the level of things.

There was no significant change in the job. I was "lord high everything else" for all practical purposes during those ten years. People used to call me the "Dean of Men." Well, the only other dean--no, that's not true. I was going to say the only other dean was Dean of Woman, so I ought to be the Dean of Men. Obviously, she was a lady; I was a man, so I must have been the Dean of Men, but I wasn't and never did have that particular responsibility. We did have a personnel dean, actually. My good friend Leroy Ulrich was made Dean of Students when I was made Dean of the College. But he was not, shall we say, a typical personnel officer. He was more of a head counselor type, and a very good one. My next to the last year as dean I did have an assistant dean, who was Chuck Lee. The last year I had an associate dean, who was Charlie Whittle. It was a good thing we had one because I was laid up for nine weeks with a heart attack. That is, I was out of the office for that time. It's a good thing I wasn't teaching any classes, too. Nobody had to take over any extra classes.

How did the students change during those ten years, from your observations as administrator and teacher?



I think that on the whole there was much more seriousness about academics; I think there was much more. I may be trying to congratulate myself, you know; but I think that there was a distinct improvement in interest in things academic and in academic success. In those years we had a pretty rigid policy of dropping students who had a poor academic record. We got rid of them pretty soon; some after a semester and many after a year. We had too much attrition along that line, but it was a part of a program designed not to keep here people who weren't capable of doing the job or weren't willing to work enough to do the job. Of course we were increasingly concerned not to admit anybody who wasn't capable of doing the job. You can't measure the will; but you can, to a degree, measure the capacity. We probably missed some good people by discouraging some who we encouraged to go elsewhere. I think there was a greater degree of academic seriousness at the end of my ten years as dean than there was at the beginning. At the end of the time, and this was one reason why I was eager to get rid of the deanship, was that it was increasingly difficult to find good faculty, especially in certain fields. There was a great pressure in the early '60s on faculty personnel. We had gotten to the point where we had (I thought) improved things considerably in this regard. It was awfully hard to get good people in the languages and in economics. Of course economics is always hard; and the sciences, too, for that matter.

What would you attribute this to?

Well, it was the growth of student population in universities and colleges over the land, and the failure of the Ph.D. crop and the graduate school crop generally to keep up with them. Now, of course, we have the opposite problem for the sellers if not for the buyers. It was getting to the point where you'd have a vacancy and in the people you were willing to appoint you'd find one person. I remember an appointment we made in French early in the '60s, and we made it to a lady at the rank of full professor. Now we don't bring very many people here as full professor. I came as that, but I was 45 years old, and I had quite a lot of good experience--44 I think. But this lady had been a full professor where she was in a perfectly good state college in another state. She had a doctorate. She was the only person we found who wanted to come here whom we wanted to appoint--we were willing to appoint. We had to appoint her as a full professor. She stayed about five years. The next time we had a vacancy it might have been some boy with a bare master's degree and not just that whom we would have found. It was getting sort of tough then. I felt a real responsibility in this regard, and I didn't want to be a party to any bad appointments. I had always taken the view that this College (a college this size) cannot afford to appoint many duds. You'd better not do it. And there have been some in my time--real duds, I mean. But I was afraid we couldn't avoid it as well as we had, so I didn't want to be a party to these problems.

Tape 1, Side 2 (Part 2) Dr. Frank Heck Interview (continued)

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