Voices of Lebanon Valley College
150th Anniversary Oral History Project

Lebanon Valley College Archives—Vernon and Doris Bishop Library

Oral History of

George King

Alumnus, Class of 1968
Board of Trustees

Date: May 3, 2014
Interviewed by Art Ford
Professor *Emeritus* of English and Alumnus, Class of 1959

Transcribed by Jananne Ferrere
Vernon and Doris Bishop Library Student Worker and Alumna, Class of 2015

Copyright © Lebanon Valley College, Annville, PA

Notice: This is a transcript of an audio recorded interview conducted for the Lebanon Valley College Archives – Vernon and Doris Bishop Library. A draft of this transcript was edited and some corrections were made; therefore, the reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken word, rather than the written word.

Restrictions: The oral history transcript may be read, quoted from, cited and reproduced for purposes of research. It may not be published in full except by permission of Lebanon Valley College.

Mr. George King ’68, Board of Trustees—King describes life on campus during the turbulent 1960s. An economics and business administration double major, he worked through the years with a variety of companies and lived in cities from Houston to Hong Kong. He hired several LVC interns and alumni along the way. King served on the College’s Board of Trustees for a decade, beginning in 2005.

A: OK. We're here—this is Art Ford—we're here at my home. It's May 3, 2014. I'm here with George King, who was a student at the College at one time and came back to serve as a trustee as well. So anyway George, welcome, we're going to talk a little bit.

G: Good to see you, Dr. Ford.

A: First of all, let's start with something about yourself. What's your hometown?

G: I came from southern New Jersey, Somers Point, down at the Jersey shore.

A: OK, your mother and father—what were their occupations?

G: My father was a lineman and my mother worked for Prudential Insurance, after my brother and I were old enough for her to go back to work.

A: Either one a college graduate?

G: No.

A: All right. How about siblings?

G: My brother—I have one brother who lives in California, and he's a librarian, so he went to college. He's six years younger.

A: So you have one brother?

G: Yes.

A: OK. What high school did you attend?

G: I went to Mainland Regional High School, which is in Linwood, New Jersey. It covered three towns.

A: OK. Obviously close to your hometown?

G: Yes, next town over.

A: What sorts of extracurricular activities did you have in high school? What were you interested in?

G: My main interest was music. I played piano from when I was eight years old. I played with the jazz band and I played classical music, all different kinds of piano music. What got me interested in Lebanon Valley College was that it had a good music reputation and the guidance counselor at my local high school knew about Lebanon Valley's music reputation, and suggested it. I had already changed my mind about going into music as a profession, but that's how I wound up at Lebanon Valley. Of course I've always been an avid reader, and liked to play sports but had no talent in that direction.

A: (laughing) So it defined it for you?

G: Yes (laughing).

A: When did you graduate then, what year?

G: From high school?

A: From high school.

G: In '64.

A: OK. Did you go straight on to college then?

G: I went straight on to Lebanon Valley.

A: But you said largely the guidance counselor and knowledge of the music program caused you to be interested in Lebanon Valley?

G: Yes. In those days, there were three colleges I was intending to apply. I wanted to go to a small college, and I developed that idea on my own. I picked Swarthmore, Ursinus, and Lebanon Valley. When I came to Lebanon Valley, Dr. Clark Carmean—director of admissions—he gave

me a very personalized tour and I said, 'I would like to apply here. What are my chances of getting in?' He said, 'You can send in a form, but you're in.' (Laughing) So, it was much less formal in those days. He personally took me on the tour of the campus, but it was the interpersonal nature of the college that caused me to leave out Ursinus, which I dropped from my list because it was $10 for an application, and I could save $10 because I was no longer interested in Ursinus. I applied to Swarthmore and wound up on the waiting list, and I really preferred it over Lebanon Valley. Swarthmore was a sort of intense academic place and Carmean said, 'Wait and see what they say.' So, he extended the deadline to see if I got into Swarthmore, but he said I could come to Lebanon Valley.

A: So, you came to Lebanon Valley in?

G: '64.

A: Right, '64. When you arrived on campus for the first time and were meeting with Dr. Carmean, do you remember your first impressions of the College? The physical makeup of the College—any memories of that?

G: My memory—it was not as interesting as Ursinus or Swarthmore. Each one of them had an observatory, if I remember right, which impressed me, with a big telescope.

A: Lebanon Valley had a big telescope?

G: No, those two colleges did, but Lebanon Valley didn't. But to me, the memory was sort of "small-town America," which is not unlike where I grew up, which was "small-town America." It was farmland, and southern New Jersey in those days was farming territory, unlike it is now, but it was sort of like where I came from. I didn't come from an urban area. And it was a whole new thing. I didn't know what a nice dormitory would be versus an old, beat up dormitory. It

was just exciting to me to be around really academic, learned people versus what I had been through in high school.

A: Are you talking about the students or the faculty?

G: Faculty. I was immediately interested in the faculty.

A: Did you come as an economics major?

G: No, my intention was to major in English. But, I took a course in something called Economic Geography my freshman year, second semester, and it was a very early-level course in economics, and I decided that appealed to me. It fit more with how my mind operated. I had English Composition, but also had American Literature at Lebanon Valley the second year, which was kind of a memory course in those days taught by Dr. [George] Struble. I didn't much like memory courses. So, economics was definitely more appealing. I reversed direction and went into that. I had an interest in business because my family were small business people anyway, so it sort of fit. I was also mathematical and that sort of fit in well and we had this great professor who was head of the department, Dr. [Joseph] Tom. He really opened my eyes about a lot of things, in terms of critical thinking especially.

A: When did you declare your economics major then? Was that during your freshmen year?

G: No, I think second year.

A: Second year.

G: The second year I had—I don't remember formally—but I lined up economics courses for the second year. So at the end of my freshmen year, I made up my mind not to major in English. I hadn't really taken any English courses except for English Composition the first year anyway. Didn't have any electives.

A: When you first arrived as freshmen, do you have any memories of what that was like or your reactions to the first couple of weeks let's say?

G: Well, I guess I was mainly impressed that I now had access to about 150 new girls (both laughing). They were all sort of different in size and shapes. In fact, one of them—they had activities for freshmen, remember this is 50 years ago—at one of the things that was so strikingly different that one might find today is that one of the students, whose name was Shearer, Dan Shearer, played the piano. He was one of our more prominent graduates, I would say—and there were two brothers that came here, maybe more of the Shearer family came here too, I don't know—played the piano and there was a woman whose name I don't remember, who sang and they sort of got all of the freshmen together and had this sing-along—and everybody of course was singing and it was 99% protestant white American kids that came out of Methodist churches and Lutheran churches and so forth—so they all knew how to sing. Singing was a common thing in those days. Now I would challenge anyone to get 150 kids thrown together and have them sing a song together at that age.

A: Even to know the song.

G: Even to know the song, or to sing it all together—maybe it was indecipherable—I don't know, they were probably Christian songs or Americana songs, those sort of patriotic songs, but the idea was to get the freshmen together. There was a tug-a-war between the freshmen and the sophomores, and the sophomores always won. There were these events to develop camaraderie around this group—to get the freshmen to pull together and bond and forget about being homesick and those kinds of things. There was also a hazing society called the White Hats, and the job of the White Hats was to cause the freshmen to memorize certain

things—the alma mater, different elements connected with the College—and then to stop them randomly on campus and have them recite some of this. Some of it was intense and the freshmen were afraid of these people, who were mostly sophomores. So during the second year, I became a White Hat. I graduated into becoming the “hazing guy.” That was another good way to meet girls, I found out, and I liked that about it. It was kind of an idea that is now archaic, but it was what went on in those days.

A: You’re here as a freshman, and you continued on as an economics major for the rest of the four years. What courses do you remember or were most fond of during that time? Related to that, what professors—you already mentioned Dr. Tom—any other ones?

G: Yes, that’s an easy question to answer because this kind of thing stays with you. Economic Geography was the first course in economics and that’s the one I remember best because Dr. Tom had a novel way of teaching. The idea of this course was to teach you about the world’s resources. In those days, environmentalism wasn’t something you thought of. Back then, resources were limited so you learned about other countries in the world and how the resources were distributed and how economics was the science of dealing with the distribution of relatively scarce resources. How does it get to wherever it winds up? So, what he did on the first day of class—he asked you to draw from memory, a map of the world. He handed out a blank piece of paper and said, ‘Draw a map of the world.’ So then you took the course. We were all there for the final exam. The first open-ended question from the final exam was “draw a map of the world.” (Laughing) and so, the point was, you compared that to the results from the first drawing.

A: Were your two drawings very different?

G: It got worse (laughing). No, they were very different. I had a much better vision of the world. So that was interesting and not to flatter you, but Contemporary Literature which you taught, Art, was another course that I remember in great detail. You and I have shared this story many times. You remembered years later, a remark that I made to you—that I get to read 10 books and I actually receive credit for this, which is good because I was a big reader anyway (laughing). To this day, I will debate the ones you made us I read and…

A: What other teachers in economics?

G: Yes, the Economics Department was very small and I took accounting courses with—I forget his name now—John…

A: John Grace.

G: John Grace, who was an accountant from Palmyra, and I have to say the courses were not exciting at all. I only ended up going into the accounting profession because when I graduated from Lebanon Valley, I didn't really have any ideas about grad school and I got a lucrative offer from Arthur Andersen, which was then a big accounting firm; so I took up accounting so I could become a CPA but the courses themselves were not very good. Robert Riley also taught some of those accounting courses and I had courses with him as well, which were also not very good. Accounting is taught in a more interesting way these days, but back then it was a very dry subject. It was mathematical and very easy. It was easy to make good grades without working especially hard. I found myself to be a natural, and so did my roommate at the time, Alan Hague. So, I wouldn't say there were any noteworthy people other than Dr. Tom in the Economics Department. But, I also took music. I took the History of Music for two semesters as an elective (it really didn't do anything for my résumé) with William Fairlamb. He was a

phenomenal instructor and I loved it—I learned so much. To this day, it is a good background for me because it's a hobby. There is a good Fairlamb story. At that time, the Beatles had come out with their psychedelic albums, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band and one other one called The Magical Mystery Tour. I was kind of outspoken in a lot of the classes, particularly ones I took outside of my major because I wasn't especially worried about being downgraded for being outspoken (laughing). Mr. Fairlamb and I had a great rapport in those classes because it was mostly music majors; it was a music major level course. But, I had a strong interest so I was in there. I kept telling him that he needed to get away from all of this classical music and give popular music a chance and that it was valid in the types of compositional techniques and so forth. He paid little service to that so I said, 'I just got this new Beatles album and I'm going to lend it to you. I want you to listen to it.' And he said, 'OK.' So I gave him the album and I sort of forgot about it. So on the very last day of class he did this brilliant lecture where he kind of wrapped everything together and went on from the early Greeks to modern 20th-century music. He finished up his lecture and he said, 'Now I'm going to play you an album that has had one of the greatest impacts on the musical world.' And I expected to hear Beethoven or Mozart, and he puts the needle on the turntable and you hear, "Roll up to the Magical Mystery Tour!" (Laughing.) It was the Beatles.

A: Now was he serious or?

G: He had a great sense of humor; he was not serious (laughing). Because he had also—there was a 20th-century composer called John Cage, and he wrote a song called *4'33'' of silence*. Because he was teaching all this so-called "serious music," he taught a little bit about John Cage. Clearly when he taught Cage, he thought this was preposterous—that sort of thing. He

demonstrated at the piano, he played a Cage composition, like flinging a bunch of tacks at the piano, and blowing a duck whistle under water (laughing). So he was performing this thing but he couldn't keep a straight face—and the class was roaring. So we all came to hate John Cage and never changed. Those were the kind of highlights. Alex Fehr was a political science professor that I remember. His courses were very popular. My roommate was English major, Jim Newcomer, and he actually enjoyed the classes taught by Struble, Struble, who was—I think they had a nickname for him—he was a white-haired man. But anyway, the nickname for Robert Riley was the "white rat" (laughing) who was the controller of the College and also taught the accounting courses. There was another nickname for Dr. Struble, but I didn't like the courses because they dealt with, like I said, memorization of characters and dates and things like that. That's all that comes to mind.

A: On a social side of things, were you in a fraternity?

G: Yes, I was in a fraternity called Kappa Lambda Sigma, or Kalo for short. When I was at Lebanon Valley and people might disagree, the sort of student leaders were in the Kalo fraternity, as opposed to the other two. One was called Philo and the other one was Knights of the Valley. So there were three men's social fraternities. The Knights of the Valley guys had their own building. It was a small, nice house and they lived in the house. That was sort of a traditional fraternity house setting. The others lived in a dorm—Kalo and Philo. Kalo and Philo were rivals. Philo at that time had more of the athletes and fewer of the student leaders, or academic-type kids. What's particularly interesting about this is that Philos tended to party harder and were more get into trouble kind of guys. If a guy today was a Philo guy, he would quarrel with this—but I'm telling you, that's the way it was (laughing). If you fast forward about

30 years, I was visiting the campus—maybe 25, 30 years after that, and I took my sons to see where I lived—where the Kalo dormitory was based. I went in there and I went into the bathroom—it was a Saturday morning and there were all kinds of empty containers of beer and half-full containers of beer and cups of beer, and it was just a disaster. Sometime after that, Kalo was disbanded as a fraternity by the College. What had happened was that over time, it became the animal house crowd. Philo had become the fraternity where the student leaders joined. So, it was interesting that over this period of time—I'm sure it happened gradually—they reversed positions. Another thing, there was a fraternity initiation; "hell night" they called it, and it was kind of frightening. You were put through this right of initiation, and following that, you were accepted as one of this crowd. It was sort of cliquish. It had upsides and downsides. There was certainly an element of pride, but there was also an element of too much pride, I guess in being in this group. As I said, I was involved with music and other departments, involved with the economics crowd, so I knew students from these other organizations. But, I felt as though their contacts became insular once they became a part of this fraternity. On initiation night, one guy got hurt and went to the hospital, and got stitches because he put his hand through a glass door—but it wasn't at the level of what you once read about—no connection with other colleges and initiations—it was kind of tame. It had traditions connected with it. There were a couple of events during my freshmen year that I would like to describe that were unusual, at this point?

A: Yes, go ahead.

G: So, I thought a little bit about this interview driving up. In my freshmen year, I had a roommate from Columbia, Pennsylvania who was an English major. It was a Sunday night, and

we had just come back from the Christmas break. We were in our room getting prepared for our lessons and studying, so forth, at about 8 o'clock at night. We heard some kind of ranting in the hallway. We all knew each other very well in this sort of corner of the freshmen dormitory—it was called Keister Hall, which was demolished a year or two later to make room for the Chapel. So, we went outside—I think I was one of the first to run out into the hall to see what was this noise was—there was this student, I will call him Pete—I remember his name, but it's not important. So, Pete was in the hallway and he was kneeling down and he was ranting—he was ranting religious things. He was ranting about how he earned his place in Heaven. He had his hands covering his eyes. I was startled and couldn't understand what was happening, but I could see there was blood coming through his fingers. It became evident that he could no longer see, and what had happened was there is a section of the Bible where it says, "If thine eye offends thee, pluck it out." When we went later into his room, we found his Bible was open to that page, and we went into the bathroom and we found a spoon all crumpled up, which he had used to remove his eyes—removed both of his eyes with a spoon. So, we ran down the hall—he was talking in a relatively calm voice, even though the words were crazy—and he said, 'George, I need some compresses or something like that'—he recognized my voice, and I went and got him some handkerchiefs and I held them out. Then I realized he couldn't see—he couldn't find them. That's when I deduced he was really blind. We ran down the hall and tried to find someone that had a dime to use the pay phone to call—whoever we called, an ambulance came. They took him away, and we never heard another word about him. It was never in the newspapers, it was never publicized; it just vanished into history. That's the way the College dealt with things like that at that time. So that was one story

that stuck with me. Being a resilient 18-year old, the next day we're in the dining hall, people are joking about this—it was amazing-no one got really devastated, like they do these days. We were resilient; the event was kind of traumatic when you think about it. The other thing that happened, that would amuse modern generations (and other things happened) occurred again in Keister Hall. In the freshmen experience—which I have to say, of the four years, the freshmen year is the most vivid in my mind. I think it's because it was such a change and I was becoming an adult. The whole sort of culture shock of living away from home with this group of people and having serious academics going on, and all of this—spending my own money to put myself through college. The other story is that they had one—wait, let me back up. One of my freshmen friends had helped the dorm counselor carry a very heavy trunk up to his room, which was on the third floor of Keister Hall. On that night, they had a fire drill at the girl's dormitory—one of the girl's dormitories. They took attendance, and they learned that one of the girls wasn't there, and they deduced where she might be, and indeed she had been in that trunk that was transported to the third floor with her boyfriend to spend the night in the freshmen dormitory (laughing). So, they were both suspended for the rest of the semester. I will make one other comment about college, that is so different from today and this sort of relates to my experiences as a trustee and my observations—I came from a family that wasn't particularly well off, it was a blue collar family—some family problems also—and so, no one had any real money to send me to college. I worked hard as a high schooler and saved my money. The short story is—I got to pay for my four years of college. I came out with a $300 national student defense loan to pay off over 10 years, but otherwise, I was able to finance and pay that college tuition, room and board myself. I'd say that no matter how much a young

person makes today in an odd side job and summer jobs, they would have a hard time accomplishing that. That's a difference, and I often think about how the costs are driven up from all of the added services that are in a college experience now and whether or not they would be learning more as a result of that or not.

A: You also said earlier, before we recorded, that your preparation here stood you in good stead when you went on to graduate school.

G: Not when I went to graduate school, when I went out into the work world. I didn't go to graduate school.

A: Oh, OK.

G: I've said this—we have something now called the Lazin Series, which puts people in classrooms, including me in your classroom in the year 2002—and when you recall, I dominated the entire class—you never got to teach any English that day (laughing)—but, there are several things about the Lebanon Valley experience. One was, even in those days, our communications skills—we graduated with good communication skills, especially in terms of writing. To this day, I see faulty writing all over the place, even in extremely well-educated and older people. I was just with a guy that went to Cambridge, and we argued about some grammar. But in any event, the ability to communicate—in terms of public speaking, Lebanon Valley did not stress that. That was not in the curriculum in those days. I think it is now. But, I didn't have any experience speaking; I got some of that in the extracurricular activities that I was involved in. So communications is a general thing, but I felt that other graduates that have been hired over the years have good communication skills.

A: From that era, is that what you mean?

G: No, even more recently. I think it's a trait that has stood us well over time.

A: What was it about Lebanon Valley that provided you with the opportunity to develop these skills—just a lot of papers or instruction?

G: I think a good freshmen English program.

A: Who did you have?

G: I had Rosalind Tucker, who was only here a short time. I think I only had her for one semester, and then Mrs. [Agnes] O'Donnell. I think for whatever reason, the teachers switched. The instruction was good, and yes there was a lot of writing, and I think what was critical was that the professors sat down and really corrected those themes. You started to see that you used grammar that was only OK, and of course we read a lot. At Lebanon Valley, I read a great deal. I would've read a lot as we know, but there was a lot of reading connected to most courses, and you learned to write from those readings. But you didn't learn public speaking; that would've been a criticism. The other thing is, I was an economics major and I think it was from Dr. Tom that I learned the critical thinking skills (Because economics is all about critical thinking.) Dr. Tom did things like having us read the academic journals in economics, those sort of required articles, not the whole journal, and analysis of those things. Toward my senior year, I felt prepared but I didn't have the funds to go to graduate school (the fellowships were few and far between in those days). But I think that I was well prepared to go into graduate work for economics for what I learned from his courses, and I had gone all the way up through the advanced economics courses with an independent study project. We had a range of independent study work in those days-you may not recall, but you came to my presentation on a paper I had written senior year about Taiwan—the economic development in Taiwan, post-

war program. I wrote that during my senior year as an independent study project done directly with Dr. Tom, and he went through and corrected it very carefully, and I learned how to do some rudimentary research. It was a reoccurring theme because later I went to live in Hong Kong, and Dr. Tom had written a book about Hong Kong, so there's a lot of connection there.

A: Let's change the pace a bit. You graduated in '68, so you were right in the middle of the famous decade-the '60s, all kinds of things happening. Were there any really—if you look at the University of Michigan, Columbia, Berkeley—lots of exciting things like that going on-was there anything like that going on here?

G: Yes. I'm glad you brought that topic up because I was thinking that might be something that other people do not recall. In '68—by then I was pretty well sorted out as far as my career was established. I had a job my senior year, second semester, I could sort of do whatever outside things that I liked. Of course, I just had to finish the independent study paper, but it was well along. In our particular group, we were very interested in the cataclysmic things that were going on in America in 1968. That particular year may be the most interesting year in the 20th-century. It may not be the most important, but there were so many changes taking place. One of the things that was going on was Eugene McCarthy running for President, so I personally started a McCarthy for President student organization on campus. We had a bunch of liberal-minded students come in and we did some volunteering in connection with other McCarthy efforts. It didn't lead to much, but it did lead to me meeting yet another girl who came to volunteer to work in the McCarthy office, so I was happy with it. The other thing that I would mention is—when I was a freshman, there was a liberal-minded guy, whose name was Paul, that was an upperclassmen and I wound up sitting at his table during meals. Now, at that time

incidentally, one had to wear a coat and tie to dinner every night. I remember—you know, it was usually the same sport coat every night or maybe the same tie, but anyway, the shirt would change every once in a while (laughing)—there was a lower classman that was suspended for a semester because he had worn a sweater that was cut off at the sleeves at the elbow, and they said that wasn't proper, you couldn't wear that. Also in my freshman year, probably the best student in the class, his name was Bruce—I'm not going to say his last name—grew a beard, and he started wearing overalls and this beard—remember this was 1965 era-and the College said he had to shave the beard, and he said, 'no, this is a matter of personal freedom. I want to keep this beard.' This was a guy that was a physics major and a straight A student. They forced him to shave the beard—he was going to be thrown out of the school, and he had a pretty good scholarship. This was the environment. There were dinners every night. Most of us took our meals in the dining hall. I never would have thought about skipping a meal—some people did, but I thought it was extravagant. Students did not have a lot of extra money at this College. There were not that many cars. On the social part of the environment—there were three penalties that particularly the girls, and the guys I guess, could encounter. They were called "doormus-doormus, roomus-roomus, and campus-campus." So if you were in trouble, you were confined to the campus, or to your dorm, or to your room. So those were the…

A: Severity.

G: Yes, severity. That's why I have an English professor doing this interview.

A: (laughing)

G: (laughing) I'm tired after two days of board meetings. What happened was—two of my classmates—I think they were sophomores at the time—I had gotten a car finally—I must have

been a junior because I had saved enough money to get a Sunbeam. So I had this car, and in those days, you didn't let anyone use your car. You were worried about accidents and you didn't pass around your car keys very readily. What happened was that there was a place in one of the girl's dormitories called, the "passion pit." Couples would sit on the couches and exhibit a mild amount of kissing and hugging, that sort of thing—embraces, whatever. The rule was that each one of you had to have a foot connected to the floor. Both feet could not leave the floor. Well, this couple violated that rule. They got punished, and could no longer be in the "passion pit" as part of their punishment—can't remember what else was in their punishment—campus—or something like that, but they couldn't be in the "passion pit." One night, I'm in my dormitory room and there's a knock at the door and it's the guy, who I didn't know very well by the way. I didn't know either one of them but they were in my class. He said sheepishly, 'George, your car is parked over there by the railroad. Could I borrow your car? I'm not going to move it; I would just like to use it.' (Laughing) So what could I say? Young love has its desires. So he used my car—only once. Now on to 1966 or 1967—this is serious stuff. The College decided to knock down the freshmen dorm, and build a Chapel. As I recall, it was about $1 million to build that Chapel. Something like that—quite a bit. Several of us were against that conceptually because we felt that it didn't make sense in terms of resources to build such an elaborate and expensive building for something that was only to be used one hour per week. Chapel at that time was required—every Tuesday morning, they took attendance and there was a required Chapel service—which we also didn't like because we didn't like the concept of requiring one to go to a religious service. That of course is long gone, but that's how it was in that time. It was that way through my whole tenure, but it may have stopped during then—I'm not sure.

Anyway, that required Chapel service was originally held at the Evangelical United Brethren Church on Main Street. We felt that as long as they wanted to have it there, it was no problem. We got used to the church for the hour so why build this huge Chapel in the middle of campus? We felt that the College had no student union building at the time—that was a more pressing need and there were more dormitories that later came. In any event, they built the Chapel. I was the treasurer of something that was called the student-faculty council. I can't remember what that was all about, but I was the treasurer of this thing, this organization. I found that there had been bank accounts set up. I found these old bank books and there was something like $6,000 sort of sitting there—nothing being done with it. I conceived a speaker program. Why doesn't someone come speak to the campus? Now, in those days, you had students coming up with these thoughts and ideas, and you just went and did it. There weren't all kinds of assistance, or ideas coming from above. I think we were a little more independent minded perhaps. Maybe that's wrong—there are things happening here, but there are so much going on already when you get there that you can just float into an existing activity, where when I came here, there wasn't a lot happening at a small college in Pennsylvania. Those of us who came from other places, and by the way, there were a number of international students, and a number of students from New Jersey and Long Island, and other places—there seemed to be a large reach for a small college in Pennsylvania, which was brought in by the music programs and the chemistry programs that were nationally known in those days. At any event, the Chapel was built and I wanted to have my speaker program, so the we contacted a speaker bureau and looked at the list of people and we came up with—let's see—with James Farmer.

A: Oh, James Farmer.

G: Sorry, I didn't think I would be able to remember him. With James Farmer, who was the national head of something called C.O.R.E—the Congress of Racial Equality, which was probably nearly as prominent in those days as the N.A.A.C.P. which was a major national organization of black people.

A: A little more revolutionary perhaps.

G: Yes, a little bit, but he was absolutely as legitimate as—or more so—than Martin Luther King Jr. In fact, I think he was more intelligent and a better speaker than Martin Luther King Jr. But he may not have been as good of an organizer or he may not have been as…

A: Charismatic.

G: Yes, but he was pretty charismatic. So, anyway he was brought in as the first speaker. Well, the local paper found out that we were bringing in a prominent black leader and the editorial page was full of vindictive statements about the College—Called us communists and leftists, all sorts of things. But more importantly, I went to the chaplain of the College at the time, Bemesderfer, James Bemesderfer, and said, 'We are going to have this speaker, can we do this in the Chapel? He's an ordained minister.' We were turned down and he said, 'No you have to do that in the gymnasium.' So here we had an ordained minister coming to the campus, and I said, 'Why is this?' and he said this was a secular event; the Chapel is only used for religious services. We had this massive, new, beautiful building sitting in the center of campus that we couldn't use because of the archaic thinking of that time. So James Farmer did come to the campus and spoke for two and a half hours without a note and he mesmerized everybody that was in that room. He was incredible.

A: I remember that. Do you remember when he started off? The building was called Lynch Gymnasium, named after a former president [Clyde Lynch]. He said, ‘I’m a little uncomfortable giving a speech in this building.’ (Laughing) Lynch. It just brought down the house.

G: I felt as though he was a dynamic speaker.

A: Well, yes. He was a dynamic speaker.

G: That was kind of the atmosphere—kind of conservative—the events of the ’60s I think changed the College a great deal, but I was there in the later ’60s, and then went out into the world. The other thing that was happening at the College during that time was that the Vietnam War was going on. Very typically when you graduated, you got a draft notice and you were in some camp getting ready to go over to Southeast Asia pretty quickly. But, a unit had opened at Indiantown Gap—an Army reserve unit and a number of students including myself found out about it and we were up there on weekends training during our senior year in those final months. Every other weekend, we were up there doing drills and so forth. We went to basic training—most of us went in August—by then, we worked for a month or two—I went to Arthur Andersen for six weeks—went off to basic training and six months later, I was back in the real world. But I then had six years’ worth of reserve meetings. We were lucky to have the Indiantown Gap connection.

A: Let’s use that as kind of a transition and building toward the time you had at the Board of Trustees. When you left, you went to Arthur Andersen. Give us a brief summary of the rest of your career from then until now.

G: Very brief.

A: Yes.

G: So I went to New York City for Arthur Andersen, and at that time, Lebanon Valley had two internships with Arthur Andersen—junior and senior year—which was some of the money I had earned—to go toward the college bills. I worked there for five years. I was, for a short amount of time—two years—with a chemical company. Then, in 1975, I began working for an oil company, which was owned by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company which was in North Carolina. With that company, I transferred to Houston in the oil business for two years. Then went to North Carolina in the parent company strategic planning group, for a year, and then I moved to Hong Kong for two years. I moved back to North Carolina for one year—a final stint with R.J. Reynolds. In 1984, I moved to New Jersey. We had moved five times in six years. So in '84, I moved to New Jersey to take a position with an oil service company that was mainly based in Houston, but they had a New York headquarters—so I did that for a few years. Then, I went to the energy publishing business with a small company so that I could stay situated in Northern New Jersey. About—I'm trying to remember the date—but about 15 years ago, you came to New York to see Obai Kabia and when you came on that trip—as the story goes—you asked if there were any other graduates living in New York that you might also visit and my name came up and you remembered me—contacted me and we had a visit. I had essentially completely turned away from the College—I don't even know if the Alumni Office had my address at that point—but I was back in New York. So then that rekindled my interest and one thing led to another and I joined the Board of Trustees in 2005—nine years ago. I have you (Art Ford) to blame for this because my contributions had to increase substantially as a member of the board (laughing).

A: Let's change the subject (laughing). Add a little bit of a personal note. You're married and children—tell me a little about your wife and children.

G: Well, my wife was…

A: Was she one of the many girls you met at Lebanon Valley?

G: Well actually, one of the many girls I met at Lebanon Valley was from the town that I now live in so I was able to find a house because of her—but when I moved to work in New York—it was 1970; two years out of Lebanon Valley. I was still somewhat involved in rebellious matters and liberal politics. I found a young guy—met by chance—a young guy who was running for the U.S. Congress on an environmental platform. I feel that it was one of the—maybe not the first—national campaigns that were centered on the environment. This was the beginning of the Green Party, if you think of it-in 1970. So I took a leave of absence from Arthur Andersen—they thought I was mad—to work with this guy. My wife came to knock on doors. She volunteered for this campaign. She was a registered nurse and she was out of work for a time. She was recuperating from surgery. I met her and we got married in 1971. She worked as a nurse for a while. We had children. She raised the children. Then she went back to work when they were near high school age. She recently retired from a cardiac unit. For the last 30 years, we have been in the same house in New Jersey. We raised two sons in that house—mostly in that house. They are in their late 30s now—one is a CPA the younger guy, and has been married for 10 years and I have a grandson whose name is Dylan Thomas King, who I am very proud of—and the other son is a computer security expert with the Treasury Department in Washington. He's got a pretty senior job. He got married later than his younger brother, and they now have a fetus that is one centimeter (laughing)—six weeks pregnant and you can hear 120 beats a

minute heart rate. That's different from 1968 when I was at Lebanon Valley (laughing). So that's my family. They're good kids and we deeply enjoy them.

A: Let's talk about your time on the board then. Other than I told you to do it, why did you decide to become a member of the Board of Trustees?

G: Well, one of the things that happened was that Lebanon Valley—when you and I first got more involved—Lebanon Valley had a very vibrant international student program. I had hired a couple of kids into our company over the years, but not very many. What I had learned at that time, about 10 to 12 years ago, some of these students from the international program were having trouble finding jobs in America because they couldn't get an H1B Visa; a three-year Visa that would enable them to stay in the country. Companies didn't know about it and didn't seem to want to look at this from a legal perspective. I found that there were these great graduates that I could hire from the school and that I knew what their backgrounds would be because I was so familiar with it, and so we started hiring these students. I became connected with career services; I think that was one of the key things. We had a president, David Pollick, who started coming to New York to do some fundraising. Well, he didn't do too much of that but I would have lunch with him on occasion. It rekindled my interest in all of the good things that Lebanon Valley had been to me in my development. I felt somewhat a debt of gratitude for what I became because it was a school that gave me some freedoms—personal freedoms to develop as I was unfolding—not only in an intellectual way, but also in a societal way. So I felt that I enjoyed being around people that I had known from the early days, and the whole environment struck me as being very similar to what I had experienced. The personality of the College was the same. The buildings were different. The kinds of professors may have been somewhat

different but the College had a personality that persevered. It was there through all of those years. I felt comfortable there. It felt like coming back home when I first started to make a visit or two to the campus. The other thing that was instrumental was the Lazin Series. I had done that in 2002, and I would spend two full days here on campus attending classes and doing different things. I like that, too. Then at that point in my life I had the ability to contribute more financially, which is really expected of most board members. So I could manage that part of the thing and it was something that was a diversion from the "dog eat dog" world that is New York. I learned that the world of academia is not so genteel. At least on that side of it, that's how it all happened.

A: How about some of your highlights of your tenure as a board member? Good or bad?

G: I would say that the highlight for me consistently is the contact with students and faculty members that I wouldn't otherwise have. We've had faculty members on the board, and I've been able to—I usually gravitate more towards them—I was always interested in hearing about their disciplines and interacting with them. I have sort of a worldly perspective and they have an academic perspective. So these associations have been fun for me. The students—a lot of music students—often will perform at board meetings, or they'll come present something they have been working on. Some student board members have been hired including Greg Courturier—whom I met on the board. I just got a letter from him not too long ago—he has been out for some years.

A: And who was that again?

G: Greg Courturier.

A: OK.

G: Remember him? He was a little bit after your time. I have to say that in all reality, it's like pushing a very big rock uphill to make meaningful contributions to the College strategically and tactically as a member of the board. It is difficult.

A: Why is that? Is it the nature of the board, the makeup of the board?

G: I think it has to do with a lot of things. There are a number of factors that are interrelated. I believe that there is—while there is a respect for critical and skeptical comments and discussion at the meetings—there doesn't seem to be any movement in their direction. There's attention paid, but there's no mechanism for it to be translated into action. This is no reflection on any of the presidents that I have experienced, but I think that the agenda—that it is very hard to persuade the College to move in agile ways. I think that the reality of the future is that some of that is going to be necessary. A lot of the focus at the moment on the board is to subscribe to the fact that the College can wind up in jeopardy if it doesn't change in certain ways that it operates. But, I'm not sure we will come to the right conclusions. I think that there has been in varying degrees and in varying times—in the academic environment in general, this is nothing I think specifically about Lebanon Valley—there's a little failure to look honestly at political implications that one might change. So there are all kinds of considerations that we don't necessarily have any impact on. I feel that on the other hand, the role of the board is not to micromanage the College. I find that there's this kind of dialectic that we go from people making very detailed suggestions about how we should recruit students in some particular high school or something like that on the one end, and then on the other end there's this very broad brush that's not getting into where can you get a viable tactical change in what you are doing to better your job. I feel that the College needs to—it needs to change—I think this is something

we have currently overlooked—that we have not mentioned before—that we have a personality as a college—some colleges might have similar personalities, particularly in Pennsylvania—but there's something about that personality that I fear is in danger because I feel that the whole world of technology and modernism and survival and the business influence on what students are studying and what majors are offered, things like that—that we are entering a direction that is going to change the College considerably.

A: Can you elaborate on that just a bit? Change how?

G: There is in America—I think that one of the problems that I have with the board is that there is a group called Association of Governing Boards (AGB); I think trustees are at times too widely influenced by what that association says. I believe that association has developed a sort of herd mentality. It spawns all kinds of academic buzz words of the day. It discourages critical thinking in the way they operate. But in America, there is this view that private colleges are in peril and that one of the reasons that they are imperiled is that they're not producing students that are interesting to the work place. So, there are majors that—I'll take one, philosophy—you major in philosophy and graduate, what do you do for work? You drive a taxi cab or you work as a waitress/waiter. I think that's becoming particularly evident among colleges that may not have the cache of the more prestigious colleges, where many of those students can go to graduate school or get a job based on the name of their college no matter what they majored in. That there is more emphasis on Lebanon Valley coming out with a skill set rather than being a very broad based liberal arts student. So as a result, not just a Lebanon Valley issue, the liberal arts are under attack and I think that we haven't necessarily decided where we are in that whole change of the times.

A: Where do you think we should be?

G: Well, that's probably beyond the scope of this interview (laughing). But I feel that we really need to sit down and look at priorities. I think that there's a focus on going in too many directions—it's a bit like Attention Deficit Disorder, and that there isn't a narrowing of priorities. Maybe there is talk that we need to be 2,000 or 2,200 students because the economics are better. We need to build a new dorm now which is in the offing. Or maybe we should be smaller, by 100 or so students. I think that I'm concerned that we will lose the sort of intimate nature, which is partially based on its size, and there's something about when you cross that barrier and you get too big. The other thing that I will tell you is that students want bigger colleges. So there are a lot of sides to this equation. I don't know where we should be as an institution is the short answer. But I don't know if we are going about thinking of it in the right way because our way at Lebanon Valley is always to hire a consulting firm to tell us what we need to do and that is what we are doing in this case. In certain areas they have been very good, but in other areas they have not been very good. There was a consultant that showed up, an architect really, in the facilities committee about five years ago. They wanted to renovate the Carnegie Building, which is the most beautiful building on campus—a beautiful historic building on the campus without any close competition. They wanted to build a massive glass elevator/stairway behind it to be able to get disabled students up to the third floor—there is no elevator currently on the admissions side. They need to be met in another building due to access problems. I'm sympathetic to that, but I was on the Facilities Committee at that time and things just tended to sail through. There wasn't a skeptical viewpoint. Well, I just said one time, 'I just find this intolerable that you are going to junk up this building. This is a phenomenal

historical building. We just can't do this to it. That's just my opinion.' The response of the other committee members was a bit lukewarm—very lukewarm to what I was saying, but by the next meeting they thought about it and agreed with me. We shelved the project. It's kind of ironic but if you asked me what my best contribution had been over the years on this board, I would say preventing the set of elevators behind Carnegie Library. It was kind of ironic too because they—this is a new thing—when you become *emeritus* trustee, they give you a present—a picture of the Carnegie Library—so then I said, You see that? You would've had a glass elevator there.' (Laughing). So it's hard to make suggestions particularly if they're not close to what the herd view is. Particularly, if they are off the wall, they don't go in that direction. At the time when I talked about the library, that was somewhat off the wall because they had already done architectural initial plans for this structure.

A: Well you did anticipate my next question then: what you are most proud of?

G: Yes, I am proud of that. I have the ultimate respect for those who have run the board—and particularly the amount of time they spent—it's unbelievable the level of dedication and the hours and hours spent in that activity. They are at every committee meeting and other events, sporting events—all kinds of things. They plan the board meetings—it's like having a second job and a lot of overtime on the second job. So I have great respect for them. I feel that they all have welcomed my skeptical and critical approach. They have never said, 'George you are off base on that,' even though sometimes I don't find the best words to express myself. So I have to say that there is another problem with the board—that it's up to 36 people. That's a very big group to be having a meeting together. That's the process itself; I don't like a meeting with more than four people. I don't think a meeting with more than four people ever gets much

done. So the process itself sabotages the end result to some extent. That's not a condemnation of Lebanon Valley's board; it's more an observation of how these things operate. Another issue is to attract a group of givers—people that are going to give substantial contributions—I don't think that we are too far in that direction with this board. We've had a very substantial giver who has recently become an *emeritus* trustee. There hasn't been a replacement of someone that can give at that level.

A: I guess we should start thinking of winding this down.

G: OK.

A: One question I always ask people, there are some different answers to that, part of it depends on how much time you have spent with the College. You have spent a considerable amount of your life—beginning to especially now—with the College, but with what you have contributed with that. To turn that around a bit, what has Lebanon Valley College meant to you?

G: I think I've covered a lot of that. I came into a situation as a pretty socially unexposed and less than academically exposed person from a small town in South Jersey. I came here and I came out a very different person after those four years. Whatever I became, and not all of it was good, I made a lot of mistakes here and there. One of my mistakes I didn't even touch on when we were talking about the social environment, had to do with the level of alcohol on Lebanon Valley in those times. I had a problem with that in later years—that started at Lebanon Valley. It would have happened anywhere, I guess. But another thing that happened as a result of my economics exposure, with the way that Dr. Tom taught those courses, was that I became more interested in the world in general. Then my career led me in the direction of becoming

internationally minded, and living overseas. To this day, I am more interested in overseas events than domestic events. This sort of—I won't say all of it—this kernel of interest came from thinking about economics, which works differently in different places, and that same little course turned me on to the rest of the world. As far as the trustee years go, I felt that the people that had been trustees—had been people that almost all had a great interest and dedication to the College, however they perform. Their level of commitment and dedication, and their general interest may have been similar to mine, but they all come from different walks of life and ages, so forth. So it's nice to be with a different cross section of people that several times a year has this common background. Once again, being a part of the family. My only problem personally with that is that I live three hours away, so it's hard for me to be here as much as I'd like. I used to come for all of the committee meetings, which comprised six additional meetings a year. So a total of 54 hours of driving—if you do the math, that's a lot of driving. So I'd say being a part of that group, I have less feeling, like I said, that a trustee can make a difference in the College and what it can become. There's a point where you have to think about where it's going, not where it's been.

A: Good place to end, George.

G: OK. Enjoyed it!

A: Thank you very much.

G: I could go on for hours (laughing).

A: Well, thank you. You have gone on for hours in the past. I can attest to that (laughing).